ABSTRACT

Imagining Membership and Its Obligations:
The Voice of John Ruskin in Wendell Berry's Fiction

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This study explores the ways in which John Ruskin's artistic and social criticism illuminate persuasive elements in Wendell Berry's fiction, primarily his three major novels: *A Place on Earth, Hannah Coulter,* and *Jayber Crow*. By attending to Ruskin's voice, readers of Berry learn how ethical formation requires cultivation of the imagination through an attentiveness to particulars that is informed both by sympathy and an affectionate sense of obligation to others. This insight transforms Berry's fiction from simply another mode of the social criticism found in his essays to a concrete vision of the good life.

Chapter One establishes a link between Ruskin and Berry in the similarities between the Agrarian Movement in twentieth-century America and Tory Radicalism in nineteenth-century England. Chapter Two discusses intertextuality, exploring the literary relationship between Ruskin and Berry in light of Berry's idea of "convocation." Chapter Three addresses realism and reconciles Ruskin's stance on realism with the emphasis on imagination that Berry claims for his fiction. Chapter Four examines Berry's novel, *A Place on Earth,* in light of Ruskin's argument with proponents of classical liberalism.

Ruskin's claim that obligations are not devoid of affection illuminates both community and care of the land in Berry's fiction. Chapter Five places Berry's short story, "Making It Home," in dialogue with Ruskin's speech to the military cadets at Woolrich Academy. The comparison reveals the close relationship between economic practices and practices of modern warfare, and clarifies the critique of military heroism implicit in the story's end. Chapter Six takes up the question of imagination's role in ethical formation. Ruskin's art criticism elucidates the connections, in *Hannah Coulter,* between vision, desire, and agricultural practice, as Hannah learns that attending to particulars is never just a matter of material perception. Chapter Seven returns to the themes of obligation and autonomy with a study of the protagonist in *Jayber Crow* as a pastoral figure. Comparison with Ruskin reveals an opposition between pastorship and institutional oversight that is similar to the nineteenth-century debates over the Poor Laws and that places Jayber in dialogue with opposing interpretations of professionalism.

Imagining Membership and Its Obligations:
The Voice of John Ruskin in Wendell Berry's Fiction

by

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A Dissertation

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DEDICATION

To Cindy, who has so beautifully modeled Berry's ideals

by creating a thriving, healthful homeplace that lives at the center of its own attention;

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The names of Wendell Berry and John Ruskin appear together in some surprising places. In an article about the 2004 United States presidential election, "Beyond left-right: Nader Coalition's Possible Appeal to Traditionalist Conservatives," Canadian journalist Mark Wegierski argues that Ralph Nader's "ultra-left" campaign, based largely on issues such as the environment and the excesses of corporations, could draw support from a surprising quarter. "Traditionalist-conservatives"— "ultra-right" voters who might be thought to support Bush—have much in common with Nader's ecology platform, Wegierski claims, from its emphasis on the need for rationing of resources, a practice "which traditionalists politely term 'thrift,'" to its distaste for the consumption-based society which is modern America.

> In its self-understanding, traditionalist philosophy shares with ecology a profound disgust with the late modern world, a critique of current-day capitalism, and an embrace of healthy and thrifty living — rejecting what it sees as the current-day, ad-driven, consumption culture of brand fetishism and profligate waste.

For such a world-view to win the day would require a sort of "neo-authoritarianism," a vision of the common good that would encourage conservation and a sense of community responsibility and discourage concentration of wealth in the very few. "There would have to be the establishment of belief-systems," Wegierski explains, "which would ensure the continuation of a virtually zero-growth, stationary-state economy without massive social chaos resulting." This vision could be drawn from a series of writers, both

old and new, a tradition "represented in the thought of figures like John Ruskin, William Morris, G.K. Chesterton, J.R.R. Tolkien, Christopher Lasch, and Wendell Berry."

Ruskin and Berry appear together in another context, the 2008 book *Slow Money* by Woody Tasch. That book, according to the foreword by Carlos Petrini, argues that, "we have to find a new form of economy, an economy that knows how to govern its limits, an economy that respects nature and acts at the service of man, a situation where political and humanistic choices govern the economy and not the other way around" (ix). Tasch suggests that our cultural and environmental problems are primarily financial, caused by "fast money," money that is not tied to sustainable practices or particular locations, money that is not limited by conceptions of stewardship or thrift. To help make his point, Tasch draws on a number of writers, economists, and cultural critics. He selects a passage from Wendell Berry that insists companies must hold themselves accountable, paying attention both to "*internal accounting*, which considers costs and benefits in reference only to the interest of the money-making enterprise itself; and *external accounting*, which considers the costs and benefits to the 'larger community'" (qtd in Tasch 33). Then Tasch draws similar language of accountability from Ruskin, encouraging financial organizations to distinguish between "wealth and *illth*," a phrase of Ruskin's which Tasch defines as "a distinction . . . that describes wealth created by 'progressive industries' as opposed to wealth created by 'ruinous chicane'" (81).

These two unrelated examples hint at the breadth of connection between Wendell Berry and John Ruskin. Further examination of their ideas reveals a tremendous commonality of thought. As Wegierski implies, neither Berry nor Ruskin may easily be classified as belonging to the political right or left. Both Berry and Ruskin speak a great

deal about the need for individual responsibility and hard work, yet both authors also have a strong communitarian component to their writing, and both are scathing critics of the excesses of capitalism and of reliance on the market to determine value. Both writers support the idea of private property, yet both interrogate society's assumptions about wealth, insisting together that only that which produces life may be considered wealth, and then only when it is in the hands of those who will use it for good. As regards the so-called "natural world," Berry and Ruskin are ecological thinkers, noting the effects of human activity on non-human nature and valuing that nature for its intrinsic worth, not merely for its potential as a "resource" for human disposing. Both writers, however, insist that the natural world is intended for responsible human use, and that it finds its highest expression in cooperation with human effort and imagination. Writing about women and feminism, both take positions that seem outdated to modern ears, emphasizing the need for domestic skills and homemaking, yet each balances this with the claim that men, too, need these abilities, and that values of caring and nurture ought to saturate the public sphere as well as the private. This is why, in their economic writings, both Berry and Ruskin lean heavily on the etymology of "economics" as "house management," and describe relations between workers and employers in terms of family and community. Finally, both writers find that human community works best on a small scale, where the effects of human action on the local and the particular may be clearly seen and understood. Ruskin typically describes problems of global economics in terms of a few people on an island, while Berry crystallizes the issues of a nation and of humanity in the comings and goings of a small, Kentucky town.[1]

[1] While these concepts may be found throughout the works of Berry and Ruskin, specific examples include the following: for discussions of real wealth, see Berry, "The Idea of a Local Economy,"

These similarities, and the historical, intellectual, and theoretical connections that will be explored in this chapter and the next, form the warrant for my comparison of John Ruskin and Wendell Berry. In view of this common ground, this study examines the ways in which John Ruskin's work illuminates persuasive elements in Wendell Berry's fiction. By attending to Ruskin's voice, readers of Berry learn how ethical formation requires cultivation of the imagination through an attentiveness to particulars that is informed both by sympathy and an affectionate sense of obligation to others. This insight transforms Berry's fiction from simply another mode of the social criticism found in his essays to a concrete vision of the good life.

While the similarities described above are most apparent in the non-fiction essays of both writers, I have chosen to focus on Berry's fiction because the connections are less obvious and in order to consider how the particularity of the novel may convey relevance, imagination and empathy that are not available to the essay. Ruskin recognized these limitations, and throughout his work, he often cites Dante, Spenser, Scott, and Dickens[2] for illustrations of his economic and artistic principles, acknowledging that poetry and fiction could embody his points in ways that his non-fiction essays could not. I contend that if Ruskin had known Berry's novels he would have found them no less powerful in rehabilitating the affections of readers.

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p. 257, and Ruskin, *Unto This Last* (1862), 17:84; for the interactions of nature and humanity, see Berry, "The Body and the Earth," p. 102, and Ruskin, *Modern Painters* II (1846), 4:147; for feminism, see Berry, "Feminism, the Body, and the Machine," p. 68 and Ruskin, "Of Queen's Gardens" (1865), 18:136; for economy as related to house management and family, see Berry, "The Whole Horse," p. 249, and Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, 17:42; for the importance of scale and economics, see Berry, "Think Little," p.86, and Ruskin, *A Joy For Ever* (1857), 16:94.

[2] For Dante and Spenser, see Ruskin's discussion of virtues and vices in *The Stones of Venice* (1853), 10.378 ff; for Scott's novels as models of virtue, see 34.607; for Dickens, see note on 17.31.

Berry is, of course, a poet as well as an essayist and novelist. I have not considered Berry's lyric poetry in this study because of limits of space and, more importantly, because so much of Berry's lyric poetry springs out of the narrative context provided by the Port William fiction. While a future study of Ruskin's voice in Berry's lyric poetry could prove profitable, especially considering Ruskin's emphasis on seeing and particularity, I have chosen here to explore the narrative context from which that poetry springs.

In light of these larger purposes, this study may be considered in two parts. Chapters one, two, and three comprise Part I, and establish a warrant for the pairing of these two authors by exploring the historical and theoretical similarities between them. Part II, consisting of chapters four through seven, examines specific instances of Ruskin's voice in Berry's fiction. The goal of this chapter, chapter one, is to establish the first part of the warrant for pairing these two authors.

Despite their sympathetic views toward many social issues, the direct relationship between Ruskin and Berry is difficult to specify. That Berry has read Ruskin is clear—he mentions him as an influence twice in essays and interviews—but Ruskin is not given the same prominent place in Berry's own writings as Henry David Thoreau, Wallace Stegner, or the Southern Agrarians. Chapter two of this study will consider the intertextual relationship between Berry and Ruskin in detail, but we shall begin by considering an important historical and intellectual link between the two. I argue that the Agrarian Movement, of which Berry is widely acknowledged to be a modern representative,[3] bears striking similarities to Tory Radicalism, the nineteenth-century movement of which

[3] See Kimberly Smith's *Wendell Berry and the Agrarian Tradition: A Common Grace* for a comprehensive study of Berry's Agrarian roots.

Ruskin was a prominent member. The Tory Radicals' cultural position—social conservatism combined with a radical critique of the economic status quo—is the best historical precedent for that of the Agrarians of the 1930s and after. If these are indeed parallel movements, they form an important, and hitherto unrecognized[4], link between Berry and Ruskin.

Berry's name will appear only rarely in this discussion of the Agrarians and the Tory Radicals, not because of any lack of agreement between Berry and Agrarianism, but rather that the connection may better serve as a foundation for the rest of this study. If the Agrarians and the Tory Radicals yield a fruitful comparison on their own, then their commonalities provide ground from which the connections between Ruskin and Berry might be examined. This study does not seek merely to point out similarities between Ruskin and Berry, but rather to claim that the two authors are united at the level of their fundamental traditions. To this end, Richard Weaver figures prominently in the discussion that follows. Weaver believed with the Vanderbilt Agrarians that "American culture, particularly its moral and ethical principles, was in a state of decay, largely caused by the culture's emphasis on science, materialism, and self, and its de-emphasis on spiritual values, discipline, and sacrifice" ("Richard Weaver"). He felt that the American South was "the last nonmaterialist civilization in the Western World" (*The Southern Tradition* 391), but that it had fallen, in part, for lack of an effective intellectual defense of its convictions. In his own writings, he sought to provide that defense, hoping to

[4] By connecting the Agrarians and the Tory Radicals, I am following the example of William Fahey's excellent article, "The Restoration of Propriety: Wendell Berry and the British Distributists." Fahey connects Berry and American agrarian writers from both the north and the south to the British Distributists of the first half of the twentieth century, writers such as Hilaire Belloc, G.K. Chesterton, and Fr. Vincent McNabb. The Tory Radicals were important predecessors for the Distributists, but the views of the latter were significantly modified by Catholic social teaching. For my purposes, a link between the Agrarians and the Tory Radicals establishes common ground with Ruskin and better emphasizes both groups' opposition to classical liberalism.

create a "*Summa Theologica* of timeless values common to the South and to other regional cultures in the premodern West" (Middleton). David Murray refers to him as the "Southern Aquinas" of the Agrarian Movement (26). That Weaver wrote in the Forties, Fifties and Sixties makes him an apt companion to Berry, since the Port William fiction deals with the cultural disintegration of that same time period.

To claim a connection between the Agrarians and the England of previous centuries is not new; the Agrarians say as much in many of their writings. The Agrarians are careful, however, to refer back to an England that was calm and settled, not the site of controversy and struggle. Weaver writes that "After the Revolution, [the South] settled down quite comfortably with its institutions, modeled on eighteenth-century England. . . . While Emerson in New England was declaiming, 'We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe,' the South was contentedly reading Sir Walter Scott" (*Southern Essays* 211). The emphasis on comfort and contentment is deliberate here, since Weaver argues earlier that the North, and not the South, rebelled from tradition, and thus carries the blame for disrupting what had been a workable model (7). Weaver's reference to Scott is also significant, since, as we shall see, the Agrarians justify much Southern culture through the authority of a tradition stretching back to a medieval England like that portrayed by Scott. For the Agrarians, references to England serve the rhetorical purpose of portraying a peaceful, settled community, utterly opposed to the pioneering and industrial spirit of the American North.

But the England of the Agrarians' past was, of course, a site of controversy and struggle, and we find among the Victorians a group of writers who responded to this struggle in ways that anticipate the Agrarians. The "Tory Radicals," the name given to

the group of progressive yet traditional reformers that included John Ruskin, Thomas Carlyle, Matthew Arnold, and William Morris, among others, looked back to the world of Scott, as well, as an ideal against which the pioneering and industrial spirit of the Utilitarians and the *laissez-faire* capitalists might be measured. Carlyle used Scott's protagonists as models for the sort of Hero he felt was necessary in modern England, and Cedric's Gurth became for him an example of the willing subordination that an inferior man ought to evidence before his superior. Similarly, Ruskin claimed to be "a violent Tory of the old school (Walter Scott's school, that is, and Homer's)" (*Works* 27.167). All of these men, Morris most notably, looked back to medieval England as a time when political structures and cultural values provided a stability and purpose lacking in the world of the Victorians. Like the Agrarians, their use of history was selective and rhetorically purposeful.

In his article, "The New Tory Radicals," John McGowan draws links between the twentieth-century "traditionalist conservatives" that Wegierski describes and their nineteenth-century antecedents, the Tory Radicals. For the first third of his article, he outlines the characteristics of the earlier movement, starting with organicism. McGowan contrasts an organic understanding of society with more mechanistic or rational approach.

> An organic society is one that has developed as a response to the unique conditions in which a given group (usually, but not always, national) lives . . . . Social coherence is a rather mysterious and fragile entity, and most conscious, rational efforts to rearrange society disrupt that primary coherence, introducing conflicts that promote disintegration. Tory Radicalism is almost identical to Burkean conservatism here. (478-79)

As a parallel to this, witness the Agrarians' focus on history, on the South's sense of continuity with England, already mentioned, and their resistance to Northern attempts to remake her in the North's image (e.g. the title of Vanderbilt Agrarian John Crowe

Ransom's essay "Reconstructed but Unregenerate"). When a culture sees itself as organic, McGowan argues, it inevitably elevates characteristics that seem irrational or emotive.

> The mysteriousness of social harmony leads to Tory Radicalism's irrational side, its tendency to believe that affective ties such as race, nation, heritage, and religion are more primary and 'natural' than considerations of interest or utility. This emphasis pits the Tory Radicals against the Benthamite liberals, who were their main nineteenth-century opponents. As we might expect from their ties to literary Romanticism, the Tory Radicals insisted that the liberals' understanding of human motivation was fundamentally flawed by its reduction of man to a dispassionate calculator of his economic interest. A society in which such interests dictated behavior must, the Tory Radicals argued, ignore all those traits that humans actually value most. (479)

This is very much in keeping with the Agrarian critique of the North: that the North attempts to make self-interest into society's *telos*, with the result that other human values are slighted. The Agrarians argue that "irrational" elements are more deeply formative of human character than calculated, economic self-interest. Allen Tate writes that the South would have won the war "had it possessed a sufficient faith in its own kind of God" (174). In contrast to the pragmatism of the Northerner, Tate claims, the Southerners "saw themselves as human beings living by a humane principle, from which they were unwilling to subtract the human so as to set the principle free to operate on an unlimited program of practicality" (172). As McGowan points out, a similar conflict in values between "humane principles" and "practicality" occurred half a century earlier between the Tory Radicals and the Utilitarians. The latter espoused pragmatics and calculating reason as better guides than sentiment for how to run a country. This instrumental, rationalist approach claimed that society responded to certain laws—laws of population, of supply and demand, of competition—just as the natural world responded to laws of

science. Both Ruskin and, later, the Agrarians found this analogy to be ill-conceived and dangerous. Because each felt that human behavior ought to be governed by authority and tradition, they emphatically rejected the notion that behavior was only subject to the laws of material limitations.

This rejection of the reduction of human motives to self-interest was characteristic of the Tory Radicals as a whole. Richard Altick describes Carlyle, Ruskin, and Dickens' opposition to the political economists.

> To them, as to their romantic predecessors, a man was a rich and potentially noble amalgam of senses, feelings, imagination, and intellect; to the political economists he was nothing more than an economic unit, a contributory digit to a statistical total. If the romantic view was unrealistically broad, the Utilitarian one was unrealistically narrow. It suffered from moral myopia. . . [and] rested, therefore, on a fatally incomplete comprehension of the springs and shades of human behavior. (137)

Ruskin delighted in pointing out Utilitarian "myopia" and criticized the idea that society is controlled by scientific or economic "laws." To apply such laws to human nature, Ruskin argues at the start of *Unto This Last*, political economy had to remove the "accidentals" of behavior—emotions and sentiments such as love, care, loyalty, and obligation—and consider mankind "merely as a covetous machine" (17.25). With mock generosity, Ruskin says that he would not quarrel with the claims of such a science,

> I am simply uninterested in them, as I should be in those of a science of gymnastics which assumed that men had no skeletons. It might be shown, on that supposition, that it would be advantageous to roll the students up into pellets, flatten them into cakes, or stretch them into cables; and that when these results were effected, the re-insertion of the skeleton would be attended with various inconveniences to their constitution. The reasoning might be admirable, the conclusions true, and the science deficient only in applicability. (17.26)

The organic nature of society means, for Ruskin, that it is held together by "the social affections." It follows that social interaction cannot be structured by laws or by science. Nashville Agrarian Lyle H. Lanier makes much the same argument when he considers John Dewey's claim that "the industrial, corporate order tends to make for an aggregate mental and emotional life, to promote human association" (145). Sounding much like Ruskin, Lanier writes, "It seems to me that two entirely different and even opposed conditions are confused here." The kind of activities encouraged by the "industrial, corporate order"—eating the same mass-produced food as others do, or attending a movie theater as part of the crowd—do not result in "real association" but rather "a sense of isolation" (146). These sorts of contacts are "fleeting, formal" and not genuine; genuine contacts are found primarily in agricultural communities, where there is a "stable population" and neighbors have "long acquaintance." Lanier's (and Ruskin's) critique of the order and planning of urban life is based on the idea that the affections tie society together, and that these cannot be formally arranged and ordered, but must spring organically from the right soil.

After organicism, authority is the second characteristic McGowan assigns to the Tory Radicals. It appears in many forms, beginning with Carlyle, whose Abbot Samson has to break a few heads to restore order to the abbey in *Past & Present*. For Carlyle, great men are necessary, and reverence for them is "a true religious Loyalty forever rooted" in the hearts of lesser men (*Sartor Resartus* 190). Ruskin ameliorates this slightly, settling for a paternalism that asks the master to consider that "as he would then treat his son, he is bound always to treat every one of his men. This is the only effective, true, or practical RULE which can be given on this point of political economy" (17.42).

Matthew Arnold moderates the issue of authority still further, seeking to base decisions on a disinterested criticism: "the best that is known and thought in the world." The variety of forms authority takes here might argue against a common characteristic, but all are united by a skepticism toward the assumption that conflicting interests must be the bedrock of social reality: "The Tory Radical is primarily oriented toward social harmony; conflicting interests or classes appear to him evidence of a fundamental unnaturalness, and the institutionalization of such conflicts by capitalism one of its most abhorrent features" (McGowan 480). Classical liberalism's claims that each person has the authority to decide his or her own interests and that the constant conflict of these interests should be the normative state for society are incompatible with this view. McGowan admits that Tory Radical views of authority are somewhat circular, and are heavily related to their views of organicism—an organic society will, by definition, accept the authority that has naturally grown to control it (480)—but this organicism makes authority both necessary and natural. An organism must have some central principle that organizes the actions of its parts; it cannot be in constant conflict within itself and be healthy. An organism must have structure, and, according to Weaver, structure means hierarchy (35).

Authority is a tricky issue in the modern world, a fact which plagues both the Agrarians and others who follow Tory Radical principles. Since the rise of fascism, Carlyle's hero-worship has lost status. The idea of Gurth as the happy slave of Cedric has fallen out of fashion, as well (though the Agrarians present a peculiar case here, as this manifestation of authority unfortunately still makes sense to them[5]). Most

[5] Berry separates himself from the corrupt Agrarian tradition of slavery in *The Hidden Wound* (1970). His argument—that slavery hurt, not only the slaves, but the white masters, as well, by separating

problematic for the Agrarians is the fact that the North won the war, and is therefore in a position of authority. This is the reason, along with organicism, for the Southerner's distaste for centralized systems, because they are seen as the means by which the Northerner extends his control. For the Agrarians, therefore, authority must take its mildest form, that of an overarching *telos* for society. This "Unsentimental Sentiment," which finds expression in Richard Weaver's chapter of the same name, is the essential authority for the Agrarians.

Toward the end of *Ideas Have Consequences*, Weaver writes that his main concern in the book has been "the question of how to preserve the spirit of obedience in a purely secular society" (145). Weaver does not specify the object of this obedience, but he likely means the need for some sort of ordering tradition in human communities. This sense of tradition becomes clearer as Weaver discusses its opposite. The secularization of society started surprisingly early, in Weaver's view, with William of Occam's doctrine of nominalism, the idea that there is no external reality, but only the different realities that each person perceives (3). Though this notion would seem to grant power and control to human beings, it actually robs them of it, as their newfound independence leaves them with nothing to stand on. Weaver highlights the irony of this unforeseen consequence.

> His decline can be represented as a long series of abdications. He has found less and less ground for authority at the same time he thought he was setting himself up as the center of authority in the universe; indeed, there seems to exist here a dialectical process which takes away his power

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the masters from the daily repetitive chores that allow "the elemental experience and the elemental wisdom available only to those in immediate free contact with the earth" (139)—is strikingly similar to Ruskin's argument, in *The Stones of Venice*, that society ought not to separate the designer and the laborer, that "the workman ought often to be thinking, and the thinker often to be working, and both should be gentlemen, in the best sense" (10.201).

> in proportion as he demonstrates that his independence entitles him to power. (7)

Liberation here is a false promise, as it was when Carlyle spoke of an insane man's freedom to run off a cliff, or Arnold of a rioter's freedom to hoot where he pleased, break what he pleased, and tear down what he pleased. The deceptive nature of independence and freedom is an old concern of Radical Tories.

The Agrarians are skeptical of "liberty" (understood as mere absence of constraint), holding that submission to a common vision is essential for community life. Weaver says that "Without the metaphysical dream it is impossible to think of men living together harmoniously over an extent of time," (18) and that "We have no authority to argue anything of a social or political nature unless we have shown by our primary volition that we approve some aspects of the existing world" (19). Certain things must be agreed upon before we can proceed, if society is to hold together. For Weaver, this "sense of 'oughtness'" derives from the conviction that "life and the world are to be cherished," a conviction that carries with it a sense that the world has meaning, and that our job is to respect the forms in which that meaning is made manifest. While the developed and cultured person looks "at the world through an aggregation of symbols" (19), Weaver explains, the "philosophically ignorant,"

> vitiate their own actions by failing to observe measure. This explains why precultural periods are characterized by formlessness and post-cultural by the clashing of forms. The darkling plain, swept by alarms, which threatens to be the world of our future, is an arena in which conflicting ideas, numerous after the accumulation of centuries, are freed from the discipline earlier imposed by ultimate conceptions. (20)

Here, again, we have the Tory Radical's fear of conflicting voices, as well as the conservative's respect for forms and institutions. (The darkling plain, swept by alarms,

alludes to "Dover Beach," by Arnold, the foremost critic of the many-voiced democracy.) In Weaver's hands, this respect for tradition becomes a discourse in literary genre. The "man of true culture" has "a deep respect" for the authority of forms and thus develops "a sense of style," for "style requires measure, whether in space or time, for measure imparts structure, and it is structure which is essential to intellectual apprehension" (23). He opposes this state of mind with that of the "barbarian" who desires "realism," in the sense that such a person desires to see a thing "as it is"—without mediation. This demand for "the access of immediacy" is not simply a literary taste, but a rejection of form, because the barbarian "suspect[s] rightly that forms will mean restraint" (24). Thus, this discourse on realism really concerns authority, about willingness to submit to *telos*, to the spiritualizing imagination which Weaver describes. "Every group regarding itself as emancipated," Weaver writes, "is convinced that its predecessors were fearful of reality . . . . Imagination and indirection it identifies with obscurantism; the mediate is an enemy to freedom" (26). Here we see again the Tory Radical's claim that cries for liberation are too often lies. Only by submission to some sort of authority or form can humans find freedom, and live together as civilized persons rather than barbarians.

For both the Tory Radicals and the Agrarians, authority finally comes to mean tradition. Carlyle and Ruskin frequently appealed to England's Anglo-Saxon past for models of appropriate social structure, just as the Agrarians sought to preserve certain aspects of the pre-Civil War South. In his article, "Wendell Berry and the Traditionalist Critique of Meritocracy," Jeremy Beer describes the point of view of the "traditionalist."

> The traditionalist . . . regards inhabitance within a community enlivened by a matrix of vital and living traditions as essential to human flourishing. This is a traditionalism that emerges from the other side of reason. It consists in the critical appropriation and appreciation of traditional

> practices and mores by a reason that has come to realize its own limits. It recognizes, as Wendell Berry has argued, that one of the purposes of culture is to guide us in acting well even though our knowledge is incomplete, as well as to *tell* us that our knowledge is incomplete—a perfectly rational proposition. (213)

This passage draws together McGowan's two fundamental Tory Radical characteristics of organicism and authority, and places them in context with Berry. For Berry, the Agrarians, and the Tory Radicals, tradition is an authority, but it is also "vital and living," and leads to an "enlivened" community. These are characteristics that reductive reason cannot replicate. Furthermore, Beer's traditionalist argues "from the other side of reason," from a stance which recognizes the limits of reason, much as McGowan's Tory Radicals demonstrate an "irrational side" in their "tendency to believe that affective ties such as race, nation, heritage, and religion" are stronger motivators than self-interest (479). These "affective" elements are, for the traditionalist, both evidence of the organic nature of flourishing human community and the proper authority for that living community.

Thus far, we have examined two aspects of the Tory Radicals and the Agrarians that support their conservatism: an organicism that values irrational elements such as heritage and religion above calculated self-interest and a shared vision of the good that functions as a community's authority. Both groups, however, took stances against the economic and political positions of their day, stances that can only be called radical and which often led to both groups being associated with "communism."

McGowan argues that the Tory Radicals differed from other conservatives in regard to the economic status quo.

> Their vehement rejection of capitalism renders their conservatism radical. Unlike Edmund Burke, whose image of society is echoed in their work,

> the Tory Radicals refused to endorse current social conditions in England as approximating their social ideal. Tory Radicalism parts company with standard conservative and neo-conservative positions in its refusal to offer any apology for capitalist social arrangements. (478)

At times, the Tory Radicals were confused with communists, often because of their own words: Ruskin called himself "a Communist of the old school—reddest also of the red," and Morris claimed that reading Ruskin and Carlyle led him to Marx. The Agrarians faced a similar problem, and were eager to distinguish their movement from New Deal socialism. Weaver describes the Agrarians' resistance to standard political categories.

> An interesting feature of *I'll Take My Stand* and a feature which made it obnoxious or incomprehensible to many was the fact that it was both anti-socialist and anti-capitalist. Before the public at a time when socialism in the guise of the New Deal was about to challenge American capitalism, it presented a third alternative in the form of a conservative agrarian social order. (*Southern Essays* 15-16)

Both groups maintained their identities by means of similar principles. McGowan cites three important reasons that the Tory Radicals could not consider communism as a viable course. First, Marxism, like capitalism, defines self-interest as the appropriate motivating force of human activity. Second, its focus on rational planning tends to create bureaucracies that are not different in practice from the corporate structures of capitalism. And third, Tory Radicals seek to maintain traditional moral discourse of which Marxists are completely dismissive (485). Significantly, each of these reasons is a distinctive of Agrarian thought. The Agrarians opposed the New Deal because, though appealing somewhat to a sense of national community, it still sought individual enrichment over the reconstruction of any viable local community; it created a huge bureaucracy, centralizing power even further than the corporations had done; and it had, by virtue of that

centralization, no ability to recognize and preserve a particular place's sense of identity and tradition (Weaver *Southern Essays* 16).

The Agrarians recognized the similarity between their stance toward capitalism and that held by the Tory Radicals. Ransom describes the futility of the capitalist lifestyle.

> Industrialism is a program under which men, using the latest scientific paraphernalia, sacrifice comfort, leisure, and the enjoyment of life to win Pyrrhic victories from nature at points of no strategic importance. Ruskin and Carlyle feared it nearly a hundred years ago, and now it may be said that their fears have been realized partly in England, and with almost fatal completeness in America. (15)

One aspect of the "latest scientific paraphernalia" is a kind of scientific language that obscures the social affections. Both Ruskin and Carlyle feared the power of economic language to blind people to the consequences of economic decisions. Hence, Ruskin takes the political scientists to task for designating as "profit" what can rightly be called only "advantage" and Carlyle derides the "cash-nexus" which comes to replace meaningful human interaction. In a similar vein, Ransom opposes capitalism's tendency to "translate" a farmer's beloved piece of land into "natural resources."

> A man can contemplate and explore, respect and love, an object as substantial as a farm or a native province. But he cannot contemplate, not explore, respect nor love, a mere turnover, such as an assemblage of 'natural resources,' a pile of money, a volume of produce, a market, or a credit system. It is into precisely these intangibles that industrialism would translate the farmer's farm. It means the dehumanization of his life. (19)

Neither the Tory Radicals nor the Agrarians are satisfied with modern industrialism's claims of productivity and progress. Ruskin distinguishes between two types of production: that intended to help human life and that which harms it.

> You may grow for your neighbour, at your liking, grapes or grape-shot; he will also, catallactically[6], grow grapes or grape-shot for you, and you will each reap what you have sown. . . . Production does not consist in things laboriously made, but in things serviceably consumable; and the question for the nation is not how much labour it employs, but how much life it produces. For as consumption is the end and aim of production, so life is the end and aim of consumption. (17.104)

Making a similar point in his "Critique on the Philosophy of Progress," Lanier quotes the nineteenth-century German philosopher Wilhelm Windelband approvingly: "The problem of progress really coincides with what Windelband has called the problem of Civilization, which asks the question 'whether and how far . . . the change in human impulses and in the relations of human life . . . has served to further the modern order and man's true happiness'" (125). What both the Tory Radicals and the Agrarians are opposing here is the economic determinism, common to both capitalism and communism, which sees economic activity and production as leading inevitably to human happiness. The Tory Radicals and the Agrarians insist that economic activity is not a good in itself, that it may result in evil as well as good. They attack the positive connotations of the word "progress." They propose to measure that progress not simply by the quantitative degree of change which results, but by qualitative values—such as "man's true happiness"—which do not automatically follow change, but must be sought out by those who know what is valuable.

On this question of value, both the Tory Radicals and the Agrarians reject "the market" as the sole determiner. Ruskin was among the first economists to speak of value in terms of use. Speaking of a foolish passenger who, in a shipwreck, fastened a belt around him with two hundred pounds of gold, and was later found drowned, Ruskin asks,

[6] "Catallactic: A proposed name for Political Economy as the 'science of exchanges'" ("Catallactic" *OED*).

"had he the gold? Or had the gold him?" (17.86). Playing on the similarity in root words between "value"—the worth of something—and "valiant"—"strong, for life," Ruskin writes,

> Hence, it follows that if a thing is to be useful, it must be not only of an availing nature, but in availing hands. Or, in accurate terms, usefulness is value in the hands of the valiant; so that this science of wealth . . . when regarded as the Science of Distribution, is distribution not absolute, but discriminate; not of every thing to every man, but of the right thing to the right man. A difficult science, dependent on more than arithmetic. (17.88)

The claim here that productivity alone is not enough, that what is being produced must be appropriate for the person who is to buy it, is echoed by Andrew Nelson Lytle in "The Hind Tit."

> If an abundance of those things which a people considers the goods and the riches of the earth defines wealth, then it follows that that particular culture is wealthy in proportion to the production and distribution of just those things and no others; and it does not depend upon what another people may consider the goods and riches, no matter how greatly those things have multiplied for them, nor how many individuals they have to possess them. What industrialism counts as the goods and riches of the earth the agrarian South does not, nor ever did. (207)

Ruskin's claim that distributing the useful to those who can use it is "a difficult science, dependent on more than arithmetic" invokes *telos*, and points toward criteria beyond the market price of a thing. Both Ruskin and Lytle are speaking of "values": ideals and beliefs which guide one's decisions, one's labor, one's purchases. The fact that neither capitalism nor communism takes into consideration whether production is appropriate to the buyer (and with the word "appropriate" we are back to Weaver's language of style and form) marks both the Tory Radicals and the Agrarians as radical traditionalists.

Even the Tory Radical most famous for seeing production as a virtue, Thomas Carlyle, stands with the Agrarians against industrialism. For Carlyle, work has a value in

itself: his answer to spiritual crisis is to "do the duty that lies nearest thee!" (148). It is important to note, however, that the word "duty" implies some higher value guiding one's action. Mere production is not enough to satisfy. Carlyle asks, "Will the whole Finance Ministers and Upholsterers and Confectioners of modern Europe undertake, in joint-stock company, to make one Shoeblack HAPPY? They cannot accomplish it, above an hour or two; for the Shoeblack also has a Soul quite other than his Stomach" (144). Weaver makes a parallel argument about production. He draws attention to the fact that, so far as wealth is a matter of material accumulation, we are wealthier than our ancestors, and yet we are not satisfied.

> Since modern man has not defined his way of life, he initiates himself into an endless series when he enters the struggle for an 'adequate' living. One of the strangest disparities of history lies between the sense of abundance felt by older and simpler societies and the sense of scarcity felt by the ostensibly richer societies of today. (14)

Carlyle's Shoeblack has a soul, which the finance ministers and upholsterers failed to take into their accounts when imagining human satisfaction. For Weaver, modern man has denied the presence of a soul, failed to "defin[e] his way of life," and neglected any value beyond "his Stomach." Thus, all the productivity and accumulation of modern life fail to make human beings happy. This failure to define adequately the good life is the consistent criticism that Tory Radicals and Agrarians aim at industrialism and capitalism.

A final protest which the Tory Radicals raise against the status quo is the inadequacy of self-interest as a guide for human behavior. In the Victorian period, classical liberalism was on the ascendant, with its doctrine that individuals must be free to determine and pursue their own idea of the good. We have already discussed how repugnant the resulting loss of authority was to the Tory Radicals. As regards the

importance of the individual versus that of the community, the Tory Radical position is somewhat more conflicted. McGowan explains that

> They have the same fundamentally ambivalent attitude toward the individual found in Christian ethics. The individual must be granted independence and autonomy if expected to make responsible, moral decisions. Yet the crucial decision called for is the renunciation of the claims of the self. For the Tory Radicals, the individual is deeply embedded within an organic network of relationships that constitute the conditions of daily life. (481)

There is a strong sense of moral responsibility in Tory Radical writing, and this requires individual freedom of choice. Rarely, though, are those choices made primarily for the benefit of the individual. This is the critique of liberalism, which sees self-interest alone as the motive power. Thus, Ruskin argues, "I have said balances of justice, meaning, in the term justice, to include affection,—such affection as one man *owes* to another. All right relations between master and operative, and all their best interests, ultimately depend on these" (17.28). What strikes the reader first in this passage is the notion of obligation, that one man, simply by virtue of being human, *owes* something to another. This is anathema to the contractual model of classical liberalism, in which the only obligations recognized are those entered into willingly. But Ruskin is not speaking solely of service, for he goes on to claim that such an attitude brings its own reward, that "the greatest material result obtainable by them will be, not through antagonism to each other, but through affection for each other" (17.30). Recognition of one's obligation to others, then, results in the best situation for one's self. This may seem a compromise that Ruskin makes to keep the interest of his audience, but it points to the fundamental manner of ordering in Tory Radicalism between the individual and the community.

Another way that denying merely economic self-interest actually benefits the denier appears in Ruskin's description of the professions. Soldiers, lawyers, physicians, and priests are accorded respect by society, Ruskin claims, because of the element of self-sacrifice involved in their work. Each has some standard, a value like courage or integrity, which will not be overridden by self-interest. The merchant is not a member of this group, for the merchant is perceived as acting only out of personal profit and advantage. Ruskin argues, however, that society would have to revise this judgment if the merchant could learn to act from a different motive: "[Society] must not cease to condemn selfishness; but they will have to discover a kind of commerce which is not exclusively selfish" (17.39). This kind of commerce comes about when merchants take it as their goal to understand their product, to obtain it in its purest form and highest quality, and to "distribut[e] it at the cheapest possible price where it is most needed" (17.40). The merchant is still paid a fee, but "this stipend is a due and necessary adjunct, . . . not the object of his life." The fee, the merchant's self-interest, takes second place to the obligation to provide for others. A greater reward, though, is the increased esteem given to the merchant who acts out of motives higher than self-interest, as he or she is given equal social standing with the military officer, the lawyer, the physician, and the priest.

This same tension between the rights of the individual and the obligations toward community are evident in the Agrarians. As mentioned earlier, the Civil War and its results gave a certain emphasis to individuality and autonomy in the Agrarian mind. Lanier is resistant to Dewey's attempts at social control, questioning whether "the old individualism was perhaps not at all an aberrant condition" (143). Sounding like Carlyle, Lanier goes on to claim that most of the good that has been done in history has been done

by "heroes," manifestations of individualism that Dewey rejects in favor of "a kind of collective generation and expression of group purposes and ideals" (144). In a similar vein, Weaver describes private property as "The Last Metaphysical Right" and celebrates the privacy, autonomy, and sanctuary for the individual that it affords (*Ideas* 132-34). But neither author is solely individualistic. Lanier's essay describes English democracy of the late eighteenth century as based on "an agrarian economy, upon an individualism which permitted great personal autonomy in the conduct of all phases of living, and which at the same time promoted social stability through attachment, in one form or another, to land" (131). The phrase "at the same time" reveals the Agrarian relationship between private and community interests: autonomy is necessary, and best expressed through private property, but, by tying that property to land, the Agrarians put the possessor in long-term relationships with others. When private property is not portable, it has no better defense than "social stability," which cannot be achieved alone. By tying the possessor to a particular place, private property becomes the strongest Agrarian guarantee for community.

As noted earlier, Weaver speaks of the need for shared *telos* in the chapter "The Unsentimental Sentiment": "Without the metaphysical dream it is impossible to think of men living together harmoniously over an extent of time. The dream carries with it an evaluation, which is the bond of spiritual community" (*Ideas* 18). Like the Tory Radicals, the Agrarians reject the liberal idea that each person determines his or her own vision. To the Agrarians, such individualism creates "Fragmentation and Obsession," the title of another of Weaver's chapters. "That fatal decision to make a separate self the measure of value" leads one to withdraw from community, "the spiritual community,

where men are related on the plane of sentiment and sympathy" (70-71). Such a withdrawal is unhealthy, as separation from community leads to egotism, and "No man who knows himself in his *ab extra* relationships can be egotistic." Weaver makes the point again as he contrasts the medieval view of knowledge with the modern one. The modern view, held since the time of Francis Bacon, sees knowledge as power, as something that makes its possessor great. The medieval view was quite different: knowledge is the road to humility, a means of "self-effacement" (72). Here, we are back to McGowan's description of the ambivalence of Tory Radicalism: "The individual must be granted independence and autonomy . . . Yet the crucial decision called for is the renunciation of the claims of self" (481).

Weaver discusses the positive consequences of that renunciation in Ruskinian terms. He compares the soldier and the merchant, finding that the first is more worthy of respect because "any undertaking that entails sacrifice of life has implications of transcendence" (32) (or, as Ruskin says, "truly, the man who does not know when to die, does not know how to live" (17.40)). Like a priest, the soldier is committed to an "*ultima ratio."* This differentiates him, in Weaver's eyes, from the "man of commerce [who] is by the nature of things a relativist; his mind is constantly on the fluctuating values of the market place" (32). This relativism, which is the hallmark of the modern world, "explains the tendency of all organic societies to exclude the trader from positions of influence and prestige."

Another parallel with Ruskin arises in Weaver's ideal social structure. As noted earlier, Ruskin uses the model of a family as the model for all right relations in society. In his chapter on "Distinction and Hierarchy," Weaver uses the same metaphor as he

contrasts the ideas of equality and fraternity. The two terms are very different, he claims, and he is disgusted that the French chose to conflate the two. The first is the watchword of liberalism, abstract but nonetheless possessing a certain appeal, while the second belongs to an older order, more tangible and exerting a visceral hold.

> The comity of peoples in groups large or small rests not upon this chimerical notion of equality but upon fraternity, a concept which long antedates it in history because it goes immeasurably deeper in human sentiment. The ancient feeling of brotherhood carries obligations of which equality knows nothing. It calls for respect and protection, for brotherhood is status in family, and family is by nature hierarchical. It demands patience with little brother, and it may sternly exact duty of big brother. It places people in a network of sentiment, not of rights—that *hortus siccus* of modern vainglory. (41-42)

This passage from Weaver is clearly evocative of Ruskin, both in its analogy between social and family structures and in its rejection of rights in favor of obligations. At the same time, the move from equality to fraternity manages to keep a sense of personal identity (which is endangered by "equality") while still placing the individual within the context of a larger community.

One final, and rueful, similarity between the Tory Radicals and the Agrarians is the rhetorical failure of both movements to bring about the changes for which they call. Both do an excellent job of pointing out the faults of society, but neither has proposed a solution that has become widely accepted. McGowan observes that "the great failure of nineteenth-century Tory Radicalism, then, is its inability to provide an effective agent for changing what it deplores. Its fear of rational social planning, of class action dictated by economic or political interest, and of the abuse of power by a tyrant rules out any calculable social action" (481). McGowan's argument turns on his conception of "effective" change and "calculable social action" as organized social and political

movements. I will argue shortly that this is not the only option for Berry and the Agrarians. For the moment, however, let us consider McGowan's analysis as a means of further connecting the Agrarians and the Tory Radicals. The three fears of the Tory Radicals—of centralized planning, of a society structured by self-interest, and of tyranny—apply directly to the Agrarians, as well. Speaking of the present-day descendants of Tory Radical philosophy—writers like Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Newman, and Christopher Lasch—McGowan finds a common, though deficient, strategy for change:

> They insist on judging society morally and thus uncover its deformation of individual life. But they reduce individual moral action almost exclusively to epistemology, heaping scorn on those benighted souls who fail to recognize how terrible the modern world is. Lasch and Newman, especially, delight in blaming the victim, outraged that so many people seem to like the world that has crippled them. All the new Tory Radical books are written as if the world would change if a large enough audience acknowledged the truth of the analysis of modern life they offer. (493)

This same sense of bitterness toward those who "seem to like the world that has crippled them" informs much Agrarian writing (and, indeed, much Southern rhetoric since the "War of Northern Aggression").

What McGowan calls an epistemological approach, which seeks to force the reader to recognize a self-evident reality, characterizes the final chapters of both Ruskin and Weaver. At the conclusion of *Unto This Last*, Ruskin ends with a plea that his readers "consider whether, even supposing it guiltless, luxury would be desired by any of us, if we saw clearly at our sides the suffering which accompanies it in the world" (17.114). Ruskin characterizes the causes of social injustice as blindness—"luxury at present can only be enjoyed by the ignorant; the cruelest man living could not sit at his feast, unless he sat blindfold. Raise the veil boldly; face the light"—and argues that

neglect of others is simply a failure to imagine their condition—"People would instantly care for others as well as themselves if only they could imagine others as well as themselves" (20.96). The implication here is that much of the injustice of the world is the result of failing to see the truth, failing to see the results of our actions. If we were to see that truth, Ruskin believes, most of us would mend our ways.

Weaver ends his own book with a similar appeal to epistemology, to the need to see clearly the realities before us. He tells the story from Lincoln Steffens' *Autobiography* of how Clemenceau, at Versailles, confronted Wilson, Lloyd George, and Orlando with the sacrifices that would have to be made if World War I were to be, as they had claimed, the war to end all wars. Once faced with the reality of these demands, "Clemenceau's colleagues soon made it plain that this was not at all what they had in mind, whereupon the French realist bluntly told them that they wanted not peace but war" (186). Weaver then puts himself in the role of the blunt realist:

> In the same way, we have to inform the multitude that restoration comes at a price. Suppose we give them an intimation of the cost through a series of questions. Are you ready, we must ask them, to grant that the law of reward is inflexible and that one cannot, by cunning or through complaints, obtain more than he puts in? Are you prepared to see that comfort may be a seduction and that the fetish of material prosperity will have to be pushed aside in favor of some sterner ideal? Do you see the necessity of accepting duties before you begin to talk of freedoms? These things will be very hard; they will call for deep reformation.

In both content and manner, this paragraph could have been written by Ruskin. Both authors are realists at heart, claiming to give their readers a more accurate picture of reality than has been hitherto available. Both demand that their readers open their eyes, and their minds, to grasp that reality and act upon it.

At the conclusion of his article, McGowan cites some of the positive lessons that may be learned from the Tory Radicals, both old and new. The Tory Radicals have taught us the complexity of human interaction and motive, that self-interest alone is not a satisfactory motivator. They have also shown us the need for traditions and shared visions sufficiently authoritative to give structure to society. For the Agrarians, these are both central concerns. As we have seen, the Agrarians and the Tory Radicals also share a complex and sometimes contradictory understanding of the individual, in which freedom to act must be tempered by the acknowledgement of responsibility to others. A final parallel is both groups' tendency to put their visions in concrete terms, emphasizing sight as a tool of moral conversion. Both Tory Radicals and Agrarians rely less on logic and argument than on vision and story, believing that human character may change if people see and hear the right things.

In light of this emphasis on vision, we might consider the significance of the novel as a means to implement these ideals. McGowan describes the Tory Radicals' insistence that political principles must be incarnated to be truly persuasive.

> There is every reason to believe that a truly living moral tradition (primarily a hybrid of a Christian ethics of the person and the bourgeois concept of 'rights') has proved a far more effective rallying point for various groups' resistance to modern social and economic practices than any simple appeal to material interests. (495)

Here, we return to McGowan's earlier criticisms, that Tory Radicalism failed "to provide an effective agent for changing what it deplores," and that the new Tory Radicals merely assume "the world would change if a large enough audience acknowledged the truth of the analysis of modern life they offer." Both of these criticisms are based in the perception that no social change is effective unless it takes the form of an organized

movement. But in the passage cited immediately above, McGowan recognizes the effectiveness of the kind of social commentary that is mediated by a prophetic stance, an incarnation or practice of radical principles. This prospect of "a truly living moral tradition" speaks clearly to the Agrarians. Thus, Ransom mourns that "the Southern tradition was physically impaired, and has ever since been unable to offer an attractive example of its philosophy in action" (21). Weaver writes that "we must avoid . . . the temptation of trying to teach virtue directly" (*Ideas* 130) and warns that the Southerner does not appreciate abstractions.

> The Southerner prefers to take in this whole through a kind of vision, in which the dominant features are a land and sky of high color, a lush climate, a spiritual community, a people inclined to be good humored even in the face of their eternal 'problems' and to adapt themselves to the broad rhythms of nature. (191-92)

Each of these passages points to the need for something more than mere principles, for something lived out, demonstrated, in the particularities of place and time. For this reason, I examine the connections between Ruskin's essays and Berry's fiction. As the previous discussion of Tory Radicals has shown, Ruskin's thought holds the seeds of many concepts fundamental to the Agrarians, yet he has often (and, in some cases, justly) been criticized for "trying to teach virtue directly." Berry's novels, however, (to amend Ransom) "offer an attractive example of" Ruskin's "philosophy in action," and thus teach through indirection and example. Donald Davidson, in his essay about art, claims that "the arts are not luxuries to be purchased but belong as a matter of course in the routine of . . . living" (51) and that "if art has any real importance in life, it is as a significant and beautiful way of shaping whatever there is to be shaped in life, secular and religious, private and public" (56). While Davidson's first claim resonates with Ruskin, who

argued for the necessity of art on the walls of houses, not only museums, the second claim brings us to Berry's fiction, for the novel and short story are the genres both comprehensive and particular enough to shape the "secular and religious, private and public." "Shaping" is important here, for it returns us to Weaver's discussion of form, and thus to the generic differences between the essay and the novel which it is the goal of this study to explore.

It may not be through the essay or the political speech that the shared vision of the Tory Radicals and the Agrarians is made manifest, despite the fact that those genres are most closely associated with the type of "calculable social action" that McGowan and others expect from an "effective" movement. I argue that the novel is far more "effective" in reaching an audience that is swayed by "irrational," rather than "calculable," values. In Weaver's terms, Berry's novels "take in this whole through a kind of vision" that embeds principles of economic and social criticism in the lives of readers by enlisting those readers' affections and imaginations. McGowan's "truly living moral tradition" is best embodied, not in a social movement, but in the actions of readers who have shared the same imaginative experience. Berry's novels provide this experience by remedying what Ransom called the South's inability "to offer an attractive example of its philosophy in action." As this chapter has shown, by incarnating the Agrarian vision in his fiction, Berry is also incarnating the vision of the Tory Radicals. This makes Wendell Berry and John Ruskin an especially helpful pairing for mutual illumination.

A study of Ruskin and Berry has not been made in the published literature. While many of the concerns that the two hold in common have been examined for each author,

no published work examines the common ground between the two, or allows their different historical and social contexts to illuminate each other. Although many studies of Ruskin have examined the emphases of this dissertation—liberalism, war, imagination, and pastorship—only a handful have sought his ideas in the works of other novelists. Emily Coit has examined Ruskin's theme of economic consumption in Eliot's *Middlemarch*, while Amit Chaudhuri and Gaurav Majumdar have followed his sense of the grotesque as it relates to D.H. Lawrence and Salman Rushdie, respectively. Ruskin's influence in America is less studied than his influence in England. Joseph Murphy examines Ruskin's influence on Willa Cather's descriptive landscapes, while Adam Parkes discusses the effect that the Ruskin/Whistler trial had on Henry James' composition of *Portrait of a Lady*. No studies, English or American, have sought to find a broad range of Ruskin's ideas in the works of a single author. An exception might be Rosenburg's *The Darkening Glass,* a partial chapter of which reveals Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture and writing as a modern manifestation of Ruskin's principles of organicism. Despite the brevity of this section, Rosenburg's argument that Ruskin's thought is evident throughout Wright's work characterizes the breadth of relationship I establish between Ruskin and Berry.

In Berry criticism, the majority of studies of literary antecedents tend to focus on the American tradition, linking Berry to past authors such as Thoreau and Emerson, or to contemporaries like Gary Snyder, Wallace Stegner, and Edward Abbey. Among studies of English and European antecedents, Jeremy Beer connects Berry's thoughts on tradition and conservatism to Edmund Burke, but the work focuses on Berry's essays and non-fiction prose rather than his novels. William Fahey, as noted earlier, links Berry to the

British Distributists, from the generation after Ruskin, and explores Berry's idea of "place" in light of Catholic social teaching. Nancy Barta-Smith examines *Jayber Crow* in light of the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and while her approach is similar to mine in its use of trans-Atlantic intertextuality, it focuses on questions of ecology and marriage in the novel rather than pastorship. Phillip Donnelly's study of Dante's voice in Berry's *Remembering* is another example of trans-Atlantic intertextuality and serves as a model for this project. Richard Church's discussion of the ethic of care practiced by Wheeler and Andy Catlett raises, in the context of law, the question of institutional versus pastoral approaches that I address in my chapter on *Jayber Crow*. Kimberly Smith's *Wendell Berry and the Agrarian Tradition* takes a comprehensive look at Berry's essays and novels in relation to various writers of the Agrarian Movement, but no work seeks to relate Berry's major novels to the ideas of a single author.

In Chapter two, I look at intertextuality in order to explore the literary relationship between Ruskin and Berry and to provide a theoretical basis for this study. Chapter three examines both authors in terms of realism, reconciling Ruskin's well-known stance on realism with the emphasis on imagination that Berry claims for his fiction. Chapter four begins the study of that fiction, examining *A Place on Earth* in light of Ruskin's argument with nineteenth-century proponents of classical liberalism. Although the language of caring and stewardship in the novel is part of the American tradition of nature writing, I argue that to read *A Place on Earth* in light of Ruskin is to realize that the book is about obligations, obligations that are informed by affection rooted in the characters of things and persons themselves. In this light, to learn from the land is

possible only through affection for the land and for those who have worked it in the past. To work the land is to accept the claims of others and to learn from them, so that you might, through proper care, fulfill your obligation to pass that land improved to those who come after you. This is a world, not of autonomy and rights—watchwords of classical liberalism—but of obligation, of affection owed. Chapter five places Berry's short story, "Making It Home," in dialogue with Ruskin's speech to the military cadets at Woolrich Academy. The comparison with Ruskin allows us to see the close relationship in Berry that economic practices such as division of labor, distribution, luxury, and speculation have with the practice of war, and illuminates the critique of military heroism implicit in the story's end, an anti-heroic stance which informs the majority of Berry's fiction. Chapter six takes up the question of imagination's role in providing meaning for human action. I argue that Ruskin's art criticism demonstrates that Berry's *Hannah Coulter* is not only the story of one woman's place in the Port William membership, but a novel about the formation of taste, about learning to know, to desire, and to love the right things in the right way. As regards the education of Hannah's children, Ruskin's ideas of beauty and virtue clarify the connections, in Berry's fiction, between vision, desire, and agricultural practice, as both of Hannah's sons succumb to a vision of human happiness that emphasizes upward mobility rather than return to a particular place, and which elevates a Kantian notion of freedom as the maximum number of options rather than an Aristotelian one of worthwhile ends. Chapter seven returns to the themes of obligation and autonomy with a study of *Jayber Crow* as a pastoral figure. While Jayber's care and concern for his sometimes wayward clients is apparent, comparison with Ruskin reveals an opposition between pastorship and institutional oversight in the novel which echoes

the nineteenth-century debate over the Poor Laws. Ruskin's writings on pastorship of the poor illuminate Jayber's conviction that community must be held together by love, while Ruskin's economic criticism connects Jayber's pastorship to the opposing land practices of Troy Chatham and Athey Keith, and places *Jayber Crow* in dialogue with opposing interpretations of professionalism.

CHAPTER TWO

Intertextuality: "Recalling past voices into presence"

In this chapter and the next, I examine two theoretical issues which must be explored before listening for Ruskin's voice in Berry's fiction: intertextuality and realism. In the process of clarifying these theoretical matters, these chapters also seek to extend the warrant for the comparison of these two authors, beyond that described in Chapter one's discussion of the links between the Agrarians and the Tory Radicals. If, as I argue in the pages that follow, Ruskin has a legitimate role as an intertextual presence in Berry's fiction, and if, as I argue in Chapter three, the two authors share a similar understanding of the relationship between realism and imagination, then their works should reward being studied together. In other words, these chapters seek both to clarify the theoretical approach of my study and to further justify the study, itself.

The first issue to be addressed is Ruskin's role in Berry's fiction. By approaching this question through the theory of intertextuality, I seek to describe Ruskin's place in a literary tradition in which Berry locates himself, and to listen for Ruskin's "voice" within Berry's works. To hear that voice is to better understand Berry's fiction. Our understanding of Berry's writing is not the only thing to profit by noting this connection; once Ruskin's presence is recognized, Berry's novels (to use an agricultural metaphor) provide rootstock from which Ruskin's ideas can grow in relevance for the present day, and find roots in American soil.

While this sort of interaction between authors is best facilitated by the critical theory of intertextuality, Berry is not sympathetic to that theory in its best-known form,

that proposed by Julia Kristeva (who coined the term) and Roland Barthes. Those writers' strong emphasis on the "death of the author" flies in the face of Berry's insistence, found in both his fiction and his critical essays, that we listen to the voices from the past, that we recall memories of particular people in particular places. Fortunately, there is an intertextuality more sympathetic to Berry's values in Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism and heteroglossia (which formed the basis of Kristeva's theories) as well as in the more recent theorizing of critics such as Elizabeth Friedman, Laurent Jenny, and Gregory Machacek. When we examine Berry through these writers, intertextuality comes not only to describe the relationship of Ruskin to Berry, but also to capture the complexities of Berry's own thinking about literary influence.

In describing this as an intertextual study, I seek to demonstrate that Ruskin's presence within Berry's work is not merely a matter of quotation or allusion, but rather—to borrow a phrase from Gregory Machacek—"a quality disseminated throughout a text" (524). Berry quotes Ruskin twice in his essay "Economy & Pleasure," first using Ruskin's phrase "covetous machines" to describe the economist's view of human beings, and secondly quoting his description of the affections as "an anomalous force, rendering every one of the political economist's calculations nugatory" (208, 212). These quotations are significant, if for no other reason than that they demonstrate Berry's direct familiarity with Ruskin's texts, but they are "distinguishable" from intertextuality "primarily by being brief, discrete, and local," qualities that Machacek uses to describe allusions (525). Of greater interest are those passages where Ruskin's thought *saturates* Berry's text (the verb is suggested by Machacek (524)), or, to use Laurent Jenny's words, where Ruskin's thought provides "a network of correlations" (41) to Berry's ideas. We

see this as Berry's essay continues. After quoting Ruskin on affection, Berry connects affection and pleasure, "advancing just a little beyond Ruskin's term, for pleasure is, so to speak, affection in action" (213). The rest of Berry's essay may be roughly summarized by three main points: that the competitive nature of some work may be likened to childhood play, but that "we probably begin to grow up . . . when we begin to understand that competition involves costs as well as benefits" (213); that our contemporary culture values recreation highly, but that "More and more, we take for granted that work must be destitute of pleasure" (215); and that healthy work ought not to be selfish or individualistic, but that it ought to partake of the nature of "kinships and friendships going far back" (217).

A reader unfamiliar with Ruskin, if asked to describe Ruskin's presence in this essay, would stop at page 212, with the second quotation. One familiar with Ruskin, however, would recognize, in Berry's three points, key arguments from the Victorian writer's social criticism. Berry's claim that the childhood glee in winning ought to be moderated in the "more serious" competition of adult work, because "the stakes are higher," is echoed in Ruskin's colorful description of economic winners and losers. In *Unto This Last,* after questioning the applicability of the word "profit," since, in most modern financial exchanges, wealth is not produced but simply changes hands, Ruskin describes the reasons for society's tendency to focus on the winners.

> the pluses, make a very positive and venerable appearance in the world, so that everyone is eager to learn the science which produces results so magnificent; whereas the minuses have, on the other hand, a tendency to retire into back streets, and other places of shade,—or even to get themselves wholly and finally put out of sight in graves: which renders the algebra of this science peculiar, and difficultly legible; a large number of its negative signs being written by the account-keeper in a kind of red ink,

> which starvation thins, and makes strangely pale, or even quite invisible ink, for the present. (17.92)

The half-whimsical tone of Ruskin's description, reminiscent, perhaps, of Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal*, is of a piece with Berry's describing adult work in the language of winners and losers of a child's game.[1] Both passages imply that we had best "grow up" and realize the seriousness of the consequences. Berry says that if we do not make this realization, "Eventually, the cost will be paid in scarcity or want of necessary goods" (214). Ruskin alludes to the same day of reckoning in his concluding phrase: the red ink of lost lives is invisible "for the present," but we will soon be held to account for our actions.

Berry's second point, that work ought not to be "destitute of pleasure," leads to a larger argument: that work ought not to be considered "drudgery," something from which modern humanity should free itself. Ruskin's "The Nature of Gothic" addresses the same issue. Though Ruskin is attacking the factory system in his essay—work that truly was drudgery, degrading to the human soul and harmful to the body—he does not advocate an escape from all work. Rather, he argues that the *kind* of work is important, that work ought to be guided by principles that make the worker a "man" rather than a "slave" (10.192), and that society must come to a "right understanding, on the part of all classes, of what kinds of labour are good for men, raising them, and making them happy" (10.196). Like Berry, Ruskin opposes the notion that all work is bad, arguing instead that workers ought to be allowed more self-determination, and that overseers ought to partake in the physical labor, for "it is only by labour that thought can be made healthy, and only by thought that labour can be made happy, and the two cannot be separated with

[1] For another instance in Ruskin of the "childishness" of modern financial practices, see p. 118.

impunity" (10.201). When Berry concludes this section with his recollections of the tobacco harvest, he emphasizes the role that conversation played in relieving the monotony of physical exertion: "Some of the best talk I have ever listened to I have heard during these times" (221). For such a well-read writer as Berry to describe this as some of the "best" conversation he has ever heard is high praise, and it echoes Ruskin's contention that thought and labor are mutually sustaining.

Berry's last point is made in the context of that tobacco harvest: that work ought to be informed by the kinships and friendships of family and community. In the factory settings of Victorian London, Ruskin could not hope for literal kinship among workers, but that did not stop him from using the metaphor of family to describe relations between workers and masters. In opposition to the political economists of his time, who made liberalism's claim that self-interest ought to regulate all business interactions between people, Ruskin argued that the master is "bound to treat every one of his men" "as he would then treat his son . . . . This is the only effective, true, or practical RULE which can be given on this point of political economy" (17.42). Like Berry, Ruskin found kinship and friendship to be the best models for labor relations.[2] Here we are back to the quotation about the motive power of affection with which Berry's essay began.

Berry has not merely plagiarized Ruskin in these examples; rather, his essay has demonstrated a high order of intertextuality. The change in subjects in the two previous sentences, from "Berry" to "his essay," is important, for intertextuality sometimes raises questions of authorial intent that we will examine in the pages that follow. What is more significant about the preceding discussion, however, is the difference between allusion or quotation—"brief, localized" phenomenon—and the larger, more holistic effect of

[2] For an interpretation of Ruskin that avoids many of the dangers of paternalism, see page 140.

intertextuality. In the three examples above, Jenny's "network of correlations" is established between the two texts (41). Ruskin's prose provides the "bits of the already said, the already organized, textual fragments" (45) which underpin the assumptions of Berry's text, allowing the knowing reader to add the developed thought of Ruskin's *Stones of Venice* and *Unto This Last* to Berry's already significant argument. In Mikhail Bakhtin's words, the "voice" of Ruskin's work "create[s] the background necessary for [the author's] own voice, outside of which his artistic prose nuances cannot be perceived, and without which they 'do not sound'" (278). As the above discussion has sought to illustrate, Berry's "nuances" are amplified and strengthened when read with a recognition of the intertextual presence of John Ruskin. In addition, Ruskin himself is strengthened and given relevance by the exchange. For each author, the issue is something far more significant than a momentary allusion. In the chapters that follow, I describe the same saturation of Ruskin throughout Berry's fiction and demonstrate that the same kinds of "nuances" become apparent in Berry's novels when they are read with an ear for Ruskin's voice.

Before approaching Berry's fiction, however, we must consider whether intertextuality as a critical theory is at all compatible with Berry's own understanding of the role that writers such as Ruskin have played in his work. While some aspects of intertextuality—the agency and identity of the author—are in tension with Berry's own claims about writing, the theory as a whole provides the best expression of Berry's understanding of literary influence. The controversial phrase, "the death of the author," is not fundamental to all forms of the theory, while intertextuality's core concepts of a

linguistic environment and dialogism embody key components in Berry's understanding of the creative process.

In order to understand the tensions between Berry's views and certain forms of intertextuality, we must look at Berry's description of literary tradition. The description occurs during an interview included in Morris Grubbs' book *Conversations with Wendell Berry*. In response to a question about "politically correct discourse" in American universities, discourse in which "European culture is deemed oppressive and all others are deemed liberating," Berry says,

> I am certainly aware of the current fashion among some intellectuals of disparaging European culture or Western civilization as somehow a total failure, or as something of no worth whatsoever. This, I think is fashion, not criticism. Criticism is the exercise of judgment, of discrimination, of careful observation and comparison. It does not condemn the best with the worst or the worthy with the worthless. At the very least, these condemners ought to acknowledge the existence of a long tradition of dissent from the prevailing violence and greed. They should remember people like William Blake, John Ruskin, Henry Thoreau, and Martin Luther King, and try to be honorable members of that company. (209)

In many ways, a statement like this is objectionable for an intertextual theorist like Kristeva and Barthes. Kristeva described the search for sources as "banal" ("Revolution" 111) and sought to overturn the hegemony of what Luis Montrose calls "the diachronic text of an autonomous literary history" (17). Similarly, Barthes insisted that intertextuality is not a matter of influence from the "great" authors of the canon, but rather of commonplaces; "citations" which are "anonymous, untraceable, and yet *already read*" (160). These commonplaces are determined, not by the author's intentions, but rather by the reader's experience with contemporary, that is "synchronic," culture. Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein point out that, after minimizing the importance of the author, the intertextuality of Kristeva and Barthes "organizes what is left, textual comparison,

into a formalist idiom where 'society,' 'culture' and 'history' share legibility with the verbal sequences that have traditionally been called 'texts' or 'works'" (19). These societal commonplaces infiltrate the mind of the author and insert themselves into the text, frequently without the author's control. Hence, both the agency of the author and the authority of any diachronic textual relation are deemed negligible in importance.

This is the sort of intertextual theorizing that Berry opposes. As the above passage suggests, Berry seeks to preserve a notion of literary tradition, and encourages a hierarchical appreciation of what is best in it. Berry claims that insight regarding texts is to be found not only in commonplaces, but in the writings of great authors, a select membership that is not open to all and that is certainly not anonymous.[3] By emphasizing the authors' "dissent from the prevailing violence and greed," Berry notes their agency, the rational choices made by each about how to live and what to write. The strength of these actions, the strength of their examples, has been communicated in writing that speaks with *author*-ity and is worthy of respect. This sense of a historical tradition carries over into the history of Berry's fictional world. In his article, "Biblical Convocation in Wendell Berry's *Remembering*," Phillip Donnelly draws attention to the importance, in Berry's fiction, of remembering the words of particular people. Elton Penn is a character of great steadiness and truth in *Remembering,* and this moral stature comes from his connectedness to the past.

> Elton's mind had been, in part, a convocation of the voices of predecessors saying appropriate things at appropriate times, talk-shortening sentences or phrases that he spoke to turn attention back to the job or the place or the concern at hand or for the pure pleasure he took in some propriety of

[3] In "The Work of Local Culture," Berry characterizes Harold Bloom's "anxiety of influence" as "an adolescent critical theory," contrasting it with "Spenser's filial admiration for Chaucer, or Dante's for Virgil" (165).

> remembrance; and he was a good enough mimic that when he recalled a saying its history would come with it. (18-19)

The phrase "propriety of remembrance" emphasizes the sense of moral and aesthetic decorum involved in such remembering, of bringing the voices of the past to bear on the present. Even the metaphor of "voices" works against anonymity, since a voice can be recognized in a way that a text cannot. Indeed, Michael Wharton and Elizabeth Still point out that Kristeva, in modifying the theories of Bakhtin, substituted "texts" for Bakhtin's word "voices," "in order to remove any apparent bias in Bakhtin toward the spoken word" (16). Donnelly points out that "The very mode of 'convocation,' as Berry deploys it, constitutes an alternative to the presumption of "intertextuality" that would, in service to interpretive abstraction, disregard embodied voices" (292). Berry stands against a kind of intertextuality that would substitute "texts" for "voices" because of what Donnelly calls the "remarkable integrity of his writing" (275): for Berry, words are not separable from the people who spoke them, nor even from the places in which they were spoken. Blake, Ruskin, Thoreau, and King are mentioned by Berry because they were answerable to their words in their place and time. Their membership in "a long tradition of dissent from the prevailing violence and greed" places them in the context of particular kinds of ethical actions and speech in relation to particular kinds of places.

This ethical sense of particular voice, though it distinguishes Berry from Kristeva and Barthes, forms a bridge connecting Berry to the intertextuality of Mikhail Bakhtin. In his introduction to Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination*, Michael Holquist writes,

> This extraordinary sensitivity to the immense plurality of experience more than anything else distinguishes Bakhtin from other moderns who have been obsessed with language. I emphasize experience here because Bakhtin's basic scenario for modeling variety is two actual people talking to each other in a specific dialogue at a particular time and in a particular

> place. But these persons would not confront each other as sovereign egos capable of sending messages to each other through the kind of uncluttered space envisioned by the artists who illustrate most receiver-sender models of communication. Rather, each of the two persons would be a consciousness at a specific point in the history of defining itself through the choice it has made—out of all the possible existing languages available to it at that moment—of a discourse to transcribe its intention *in this specific exchange*.
>
> The two will, like everyone else, have been born into an environment in which the air is already aswarm with names. (xx)

This passage articulates several issues which connect Bakhtin and Berry and make intertextuality a helpful way to describe Berry's method of dealing with both literary influence and the material world. Bakhtin's "sensitivity to the immense plurality of experience" is an appreciation for complexity, for interdependence. Holquist contrasts it with the "sovereign ego" which sees only "an uncluttered space." Bakhtin sets up the same contrast between an abstract simplicity and a particular complexity in *The Dialogic Imagination*. First he describes the "sovereign ego[tism]" of "the word," as it is traditionally understood.

> As treated by traditional stylistic thought, the word acknowledges only itself (that is, only its own context), its own object, its own direct expression and its own unitary and singular language. It acknowledges another word, one lying outside its own context, only as the neutral word of language, as the word of no one in particular, as simply the potential for speech. The direct word, as traditional stylistics understands it, encounters in its orientation toward the object only the resistance of the object itself (the impossibility of its being exhausted by a word, the impossibility of saying it all), but it does not encounter in its path toward the object the fundamental and richly varied opposition of another's word. No one hinders this word, no one argues with it. (276)

The theoretical language here finds a practical agrarian analogue in Berry's fiction, specifically the character of Troy Chatham in *Jayber Crow*. That the word "acknowledges only itself" in traditional stylistic thought recalls Jayber's thoughts when he comes upon the acres of ruined machinery at Troy's farm: "It and the farming on it

looked like an afterthought. It looked like what Troy had thought about last, after thinking about himself, his status, his machinery, and his debts" (340). Bakhtin's "word" is its own reference point, seeing other words only as "neutral," or as "potential" for its own speech. Similarly, Troy "was just propping himself up, asserting his superiority perhaps just by habit; nothing had required him to suspect that the reference point or measure of what he did or said might not be himself" (182). While his father-in-law, Athey, looks to the farm with an eye toward its improvement, Troy looks at it only for its potential to be exploited: "Never let a quarter's worth of equity stand idle. Use it or borrow against it" (179). Again like Bakhtin's "sovereign word," Troy encounters objects around him only in terms of their resistance—hence his early purchase of a tractor—and believes in the "impossibility of [the land's] being exhausted" by him. Troy represents, for Berry, the "professional" or "expert" view of the world, terms which, as we shall see, have also a literary application.

To move the discussion back to explicitly literary terms, we encounter the same view in Berry's essay "The Responsibility of the Poet." For Berry, poetry "has the power to remind poet and reader alike of things they have read and heard" (88). We shall return to this passage later, in relation to the idea of convocation, but for now we can note how poetry pays attention to other things: "A poem, too, may remind poet and reader alike of what is remembered or ought to be remembered—as in elegies, poems of history, love poems, celebrations of nature, poems of praise or worship, or poems as prayers" (89). In short, the word of the poem is not, in Bakhtin's word, "its own object." Whereas Bakhtin's word treated in "traditional stylistic thought . . . *does not encounter* in its path toward the object the fundamental and *richly varied opposition* of another's word"

(emphasis mine), Berry's poetic word "by its formal integrity . . . reminds us of the formal integrity of other works, creatures, and structures of the world. . . . By its form it alludes to other forms, evokes them, resonates with them, and so becomes a part of the system of analogies or harmonies by which we live" (89). As we shall see, this kind of recognition is precisely what Bakhtin argues for in his understanding of dialogism. The "sovereign ego" of the traditional word is the conventional understanding that Bakhtin must refute. Similarly, Berry faults the narrowness of the kind of poetry that does not acknowledge other forms and voices by calling it "professional." "Professional standards," he tells us, "the standards of ambition and selfishness . . . tend always to narrow the ground of judgment. But amateur standards, the standards of love, . . . enlarge the ground of judgment. The context of love is the world" (90). To apply professional standards to poetry is to narrow it, to disregard context and the words of others. To apply amateur standards, however, is to write with love, love for the words of others, for people, and for the world, itself. Troy's method of farming is professional, and it results in his emptiness, both spiritually and financially. Athey's farming is guided by love, and by a sensitivity to contexts around him. For Berry, writing and farming are guided by the same principles, and opposed by the same forces. We see those same principles and similar opposition in Bakhtin.

Bakhtin clearly outlines the alternative to seeing the word according to "traditional stylistic thought." The reality is that language is much more complex than the "sovereign word" allows, and that responsible use of language must take other voices into account.

> But no living word relates to its object in a *singular* way: between the word and its object, between the word and the speaking subject, there

> exists an elastic environment of other, alien words about the same object, the same theme, and this is an environment that it is often difficult to penetrate. It is precisely in the process of living interaction with this specific environment that the word may be individualized and given stylistic shape. (276)

This idea forms the basis of "what Kristeva will christen intertextuality" (Warton 3). Here we see why Richard Gray devotes a section of his study of intertextuality, *A Web of Words: The Great Dialogue in Southern Literature*, to Wendell Berry. In describing intertextuality, Gray quotes Berry's phrase "a system of nested systems" from *Standing by Words*. In its original context, the phrase is used to criticize the industrialization of agriculture, specifically the advent of dairy regulations which shut out the small producer. Berry claims that under the industrial model, "too much has been left out; the claims of family, community, and nature are all ignored" (48). We are reminded of Troy Chatham's lack of a reference point outside of his own financial success, particularly his ignorance of his wife, who was regarded by the community as his greatest asset. We also see the traditional word's refusal to acknowledge other words. Gray takes Berry's phrase and develops a view of intertextuality that echoes Bakhtin's language of environment above.

> The work, any work, exists, as it were, at the center of a series of gradually extending and often overlapping possibilities, the ripples going out from the "smaller system" of the particular poem, piece of prose fiction or nonfiction or play to those larger ones within which it is enclosed and to which it is connected by complex patterns of interdependence. Existing at the confluence of other texts, echoing and perhaps extending those texts, the vocal space it occupies resonates with the voices, the sounds of other writing from near and from far. (147)

We will address the presence of other voices shortly, but for now it is important to notice the ease with which the discussion has moved from essays on agricultural industry, to fiction, to critical theory. Berry is adept at preserving the key features of an idea or

term—in this case, environment— as he moves from one context to another. Unity and wholeness, as Donnelly argues, are at the center of his world view.

> Whether we consider Wendell Berry's poetry, his fiction, or his essays, the remarkable integrity of his writing can make it difficult to discuss one aspect of his work apart from the whole. Berry identifies himself as an "agrarian" (*Another Turn of the Crank* ix); in his vision, the life of the small family farm is central to a right understanding and practice of ecology, ethics, politics, religion, marriage, fiction, poetry, and faithful speech generally. (275)

This characteristic of Berry is evidence of a sort of intertextuality within his own work, and makes him an appropriate companion to John Ruskin, whose wide-ranging art and social criticism evidenced a similar internal congruity. My argument is that Ruskin and Berry are a beneficial pairing precisely because their ideas travel so well across generic boundaries.

The ease with which Berry crosses boundaries may be seen in another "environmental" parallel with Bakhtin. Returning to the contrast between two ways of thinking about language, Bakhtin again paints a picture of "the word" conceived in its traditional sense versus the more complex and truthful perspective which underlies intertextuality.

> The word plunges into the inexhaustible wealth and contradictory multiplicity of the object itself, with its 'virginal,' still 'unuttered' nature; therefore it presumes nothing beyond the borders of its own context (except, of course, what can be found in the treasure-house of language itself). The word forgets that its object has its own history of contradictory acts of verbal recognition, as well as that heteroglossia that is always present in such acts of recognition. (278)

Bakhtin is leading toward the idea that there is a context larger than that of "the treasure-house of language itself." In Kristeva and Barthe's hands, this concept will legitimize society and culture as "texts" to be read alongside of, and sometimes over, the language

of the author. In relation to Berry, however, we are led to notice Bakhtin's language of exploration and exploitation. "The word plunges into the inexhaustible wealth" of "'virginal' . . . nature," crossing "borders" as it pursues the "treasure-house." This is the language of the American frontier, of the pioneer and hero, always travelling to unexplored worlds and exploiting what he finds for his own gain. As such, it is the mindset which leads characters like Troy Chatham to cut down the forest known as "the Nest Egg," and which leads to practices such as mountain-top removal and strip mining. In short, Bakhtin and Berry set themselves against the same narrow professionalism that ignores the contingent multiplicities of particular contexts.

In contrast, Bakhtin describes the reality of things in the world of words, again using language that has metaphorical implications for non-human nature.

> Indeed, any concrete discourse (utterance) finds the object at which it was directed already as it were overlain with qualifications, open to dispute, charged with value, already enveloped in an obscuring mist—or, on the contrary, by the 'light' of alien words that have already been spoken about it. It is entangled, shot through with shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgments and accents. The word, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments, and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape discourse, may leave a trace in all its semantic layers, may complicate its expression and influence its entire stylistic profile. (276)

In effect, the frontier does not exist, or, if it ever existed, it was long before our time: "Only the mythical Adam," Bakhtin writes, "who approached a virginal and as yet verbally unqualified world with the first word, could really have escaped from start to finish this dialogic inter-orientation with the alien word that occurs in the object. Concrete historical human discourse does not have this privilege" (279). Even the explorers of the American frontier faced "an obscuring mist" and "alien value judgments

and accents" as they encountered the Native Americans. To assume that anything is truly untouched, in language or in nature, is a dangerous proposition.

In *A Place on Earth*, Berry briefly touches on the Adamic experience of virginal wilderness, as he describes the founding of Port William. Though memories are non-existent, the narrator imagines the experience of the first settlers: "There was never anything like it—that black humus, built up under the forest for thousands of years. There it was, dark as shadows under the trees, abundant and deep, waiting to be opened" (24). Within only "two or three generations," however, "the country was imponderably changed" (25). "It was like an island," Berry writes, "the past washing up to it, in fact, as the force of its becoming, but not as knowledge. Past and future bore against it under cover of darkness. Whoever wanted to make a beginning, then, had to begin with something already half-finished. And scarcely known." Berry's penultimate sentence echoes Bakhtin: "The word in language is half someone else's" (293). The reality of Port William is the reality of language: other claims have already been made; "it is entangled, shot through with shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgments and accents." Later in the novel, Mat Feltner tells his son Virgil that what humans do to the earth remains after them, that their actions are permanently recorded in the places that they live. Later still, Mat will consider how to resurrect Roger Merchant's land, realizing that its recovery from decades of abuse will take longer than his own life. We will discuss these passages in a later chapter in terms of liberalism and autonomy, but for now the parallels are with the dialogic nature of language. Bakhtin's description of dialogism and heteroglossia imagines language as taking place in a particular environment, with its own particular history. As such, it forms a perfect analogy with Berry's views of the land

and its proper stewardship, and, as we have seen, for Berry, treatment of the land is analogous to the treatment of language. Berry's Port William thus serves as a metaphor for intertextuality, and is itself a member of an intertextual relationship, unconsciously (probably) with Bakhtin, and consciously (certainly) with Berry's other writings about language and tradition.

By drawing this connection between Bakhtin's discussion of dialogism and Berry's image of "half-finished" land, we demonstrate the need for a diachronic perspective on language. In his article, "Allusion," a study of allusion within the context of intertextuality, Machacek takes Kristeva to task for leading discussions of intertextuality to focus on synchronic texts, those of a "contemporaneous semiotic field made up of literary and nonliterary texts," almost to the exclusion of diachronic texts, those connected "with earlier works of literature" (524). Machacek cites Louis Montrose's definition of new historicism as representative of the turn Kristeva gave to intertextuality: it is an approach that "reorients the axis of intertextuality, substituting for the diachronic text of an autonomous literary history the synchronic text of a cultural system" (17). To question the validity of this view, Machacek examines several editorial glosses, over three centuries, on a passage in *Paradise Lost* in which Milton alludes to Homer. He finds that the editors' comments on this passage differ tremendously as the cultures to which they are writing change. Machacek concludes that "whether and how one interprets an allusion, in other words, is a function of one's historical moment" (533). This leads Machacek to revise Montrose (and through him, Kristeva), to claim that the opposition between diachronic and synchronic,

> is a false dichotomy. It is false because there is no such thing as a "diachronic text of autonomous literary history." Milton alludes not to

> Homer but to mid-seventeenth-century Homer; and Hume is attuned to late-seventeenth-century Homer, Newton to mid-eighteenth-century Homer, and so on. But Montrose's implied dichotomy is also false because "cultural systems" cannot be fully understood synchronically. (534)

Just as the farmers of Port William cannot start with a blank slate, and Mat Feltner cannot ignore the past abuses of Roger Merchant's land, so intertextuality cannot afford to ignore the past as it considers the meanings of words and text. Machacek continues:

> Part of what cultures do is select from among the works that were valued in the past, assign contemporary significance to those works, and pass them on to the next generation. (Indeed, one might argue that this diachronic activity better deserves the name *culture* than the hypostasized society-at-a-given-historical-moment that has been the focus of recent "cultural" analysis.) (534)

We have returned to Berry's "long tradition of dissent from the prevailing violence and greed." The duty of culture, according to Machacek, is what Berry describes as "criticism": "the exercise of judgment, of discrimination, of careful observation and comparison." Any reader of Berry is quick to notice the dual meanings of the word "culture," and they are applicable here. To tend the land or the language requires discernment of what was done well in the past and the passing down of those lessons to future caretakers. Above all, it requires a sense that, like Port William, "past and future" bear up against us, that we are not simply an isolated historical moment. This is the insight of Bakhtin, an insight somewhat obscured by Kristeva and Barthes, but recovered by Machacek. As such, we can see Berry as a participant in the dialogue of intertextuality, even as one bearing a corrective message.

With the idea of a message-bearer, we return to Berry's notion of "convocation." Before the term is applied to Elton Penn in *Remembering*, it appears in Berry's important essay, "The Responsibility of the Poet." We have already discussed passages from this

essay in relation to Bakhtin's concept of a linguistic environment: for Berry, a poem "reminds us of the formal integrity of other works . . . and so becomes a part of the system" (89), and in this way demonstrates an awareness that is not available to the "traditional stylistic" conception of the "word," but that is available to intertextuality. As prominent in this essay as the language of integrity and systems, however, is the language of "voices": "Any poem worth the name is the product of convocation. It exists, literally, by recalling past voices into presence. . . . As a new poem is made, not only with the art but within it, past voices are convoked—to be changed, little or much, by the addition of another voice." Although this essay focuses on poetry, the understanding of influence it describes can be applied to fiction, as well. Within the essay, Berry connects the "formal integrity" of a poem to "the formal integrity of other works" (89) and concludes by placing Donald Davies' poem within a "pattern of reminding" that includes not only poems, but also prose passages from the Bible—the story of Jonah and the parable of the prodigal son—and the expository prose of sermons (92). Finally, his use of the precise term in the novella *Remembering*—" Elton's mind had been, in part, a convocation of the voices of predecessors saying appropriate things at appropriate times" (18)—demonstrates that the concept is applicable to more than just poetry. With these points in mind, I use the principles of this essay to illuminate the issue of convocation in Berry's fiction.

Just as Elton's exercise of "the propriety of remembrance" reminds him of what others have said before him and allows him to integrate that wisdom into his own daily activities, Berry's poem "exists at the center of a complex reminding" and "has the power to remind poet and reader alike of things they have read and heard" (88). Originality is of

little concern for Berry. Of Donald Davies' poem, "Advent," Berry writes that it is not original "as the times and lore of modern poetry have defined the term," but that it is nonetheless worthy of "our attention and respect": "By its justness and its music it charges its language with meaning; it adds itself authentically to its pattern of reminding, and thus re-awakens it and makes it new. It is original, then, not in somehow escaping its history, but in causing its history to resound and sing around it" (92). Poetry, according to Berry, and by analogy, fiction, cannot be written without this background of prior texts: "Poetry can be written only because it has been written" (89).

Among all Berry's essays, this one draws him closest to intertextuality. There is common ground to be found even with Kristeva, who wrote that Bakhtin held a "conception of the 'literary word' as an *intersection of textual surfaces* rather than a *point* (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings" ("Word" 36). Berry's poem is composed at a similar intersection of varied texts, in the midst of a similar dialogue. She continues of Bakhtin, that he considered "writing as a reading of the anterior literary corpus and the text as an absorption and a reply to another text" (39). Bakhtin's "absorption and a reply" is not far from Berry's poet who "re-awakens [the literary past] and makes it new," who rouses the voices of history so that he or she may sing with them. Kristeva and Barthe, like Berry, have little interest in originality. "Any text," according to Kristeva, "is constructed as a mosaic of quotations" ("Word" 37), and Barthes presents his notion of the commonplace by arguing that "the citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet *already read*" (160). With these claims, Kristeva and Barthes are preparing the way for the death of the author, as texts do not need authorial agency if they are simply a condensation of the commonplaces of the historical

moment, but Berry, although he eschews this authorless view of literature, comes surprisingly close to agreeing with them in the context of convocation. Kristeva and Barthes would claim a sentence like "Poetry can be written only because it has been written" (89) as intertextual, for it implies a literary world where texts grow out of other texts. For Berry, an author is still necessary to write the poem, but, like Kristeva and Barthes, that author is constructing the poem out of "a mosaic of quotations." In *Imagination in Place*, after attempting to list his "literary mentors, exemplars, teachers, and guides," Berry finally gives up, "more aware than before how incomplete any such list necessarily must be, and how necessarily confusing must be the issue of influence" (5). He then "add[s] further to the difficulty" by saying,

> I don't believe I am conscious of all the sources of my work. I dislike learned talk about 'the unconscious,' which always seems to imply that the very intelligent are able somehow to know what they don't know, but I mean only to acknowledge that much of what I have written has taken me by surprise. What I know does not yield a full or adequate accounting for what I have imagined. It seems to have been 'given.' My experience has taught me to believe in inspiration, about which I think nobody can speak with much authority. (5)

"Inspiration," here, should not lead us to think of the heavenly muse, for Berry is discussing human authors. Berry is certainly not rejecting authorial agency here, but he is complicating the question of influence, rejecting the model by which literary tradition is handed down in strict linear fashion, with a clearly traceable hierarchy of canonical writers. In other words, he is doing exactly what Kristeva and Barthes seek to do by arguing that writing was the result of an unconscious process of assimilation. Berry's view is not quite the traditional one, and as it varies from that tradition it tends toward intertextuality.

Among theorists of intertextuality, Bakhtin is the one with the closest ties to Berry's "convocation." When Berry writes that "a good poem—exists at the center of a complex reminding, to which it relates as both cause and effect. The process of this reminding is too complex ever to be fully mapped or explained," the emphasis on complexity recalls Bakhtin's account of the situation "the writer of artistic prose" faces when he or she begins to write about an object.

> Instead of the virginal fullness and inexhaustibility of the object itself, the prose writer confronts a multitude of routes, roads and paths that have been laid down in the object by social consciousness. Along with the internal contradictions inside the object itself, the prose writer witnesses as well the unfolding of social heteroglossia *surrounding* the object, the Tower-of-Babel mixing of languages that goes on around any object; the dialectics of the object are interwoven with the social dialogue surrounding it. (278)

With "virginal fullness and inexhaustibility," we are back at the language of environment, of pioneer metaphors for wilderness, and Bakhtin's point is that roads and trails already exist. The "multitude" of routes suggests Berry's description of a process "too complex ever to be fully mapped." Again like Berry, Bakhtin smoothly transitions from this geographic analogy to a vocal one, as he speaks of "social heteroglossia" and the "social dialogue surrounding" the object. Though the parallels here with convocation are obvious, there is a need for caution. Holquist, in a glossary, defines "heteroglossia" as the claim that "At any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions—social, historical, meteorological, physiological—that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions" (429). In speaking of the "environment" of language, this definition accords nicely with Berry's values; we need only recall Berry's admiration for Andrew Nelson Lytle's sentiment, expressed in *I'll Take My Stand*: "This example is taken, of

course, with the knowledge that the problem on any two hundred acres is never the same: the richness of the soil, its qualities, the neighborhood, the distance from market, the climate, water, and a thousand such things make the life on every farm distinctly individual" (217). Bakhtin's notion of a particular, unique context of voices is much like Berry's emphasis on the particularity of individual farms. This is mirrored in Holquist's next sentence, where he specifies that heteroglossia is a function "of a matrix of forces practically impossible to recoup, and therefore impossible to resolve." Again, this fits well with Berry's claim that farming is a complex business, requiring a mind able to balance a myriad of concerns. It also suggests the poem's origin within a "process of reminding too complex ever to be fully mapped or explained." Where Holquist's definition diverges from Berry, however, is in the claim that Bakhtin's heteroglossia "insure[s] that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions." Earlier in the definition, Holquist claimed that heteroglossia "insures the primacy of context over text." The tendency of each of Holquist's two clauses is to destabilize the inherent meaning of the text, to put it entirely at the mercy of its context. Berry's approach is somewhat different. When Berry claims that to understand a poem fully we must "place [it] within its pattern of reminding," he is respecting Bakhtin's claim that "the dialectics of the object are interwoven with the social dialogue surrounding it." Berry would not be so quick as Bakhtin, however, to insist that the meaning of a particular word is confined only to the place and time in which it was uttered. In regarding Davies' poem "Advent," Berry writes that,

> One can hardly read this poem without being reminded of the story of Jonah, of the parable of the prodigal son, of George Herbert's 'The

> Collar.' One may be reminded, too, of certain prosodic resolutions in the poems of Herbert, and of the tawdriness of spiritual irresolution in the works of T.S. Eliot. And of course one is reminded of sermons. The theme of this poem has been stated and re-stated in thousands of sermons that were spoken in the sleep of both speakers and hearers, spoken in the very sleep of the language. (91-92)

There are two things happening in this passage, one in tension with Bakhtin and one in sympathy with him. The tension arises in the fact that Berry sketches a coherent tradition, the Judeo-Christian tradition. The word "Advent" has a stable meaning within that tradition, and it is this foundation upon which Davies builds his poem. Berry is sympathetic to Bakhtin, however, in the diversity of voices within this history. The tradition is built from Old Testament history, New Testament parables, the sanctity of Herbert's *The Temple*, and the tawdriness of Eliot's "The Waste Land." It draws from the most alert compositions of literary masters and the most soporific dronings of unappreciated pastors, speaking "in the very sleep of the language." We see in Berry's "pattern of reminding" a tradition that is both formalized and remarkably diverse. Of heteroglossia, Holquist writes, "[it] is as close a conceptualization as is possible of that locus where centripetal and centrifugal forces collide" (428). For Bakhtin, "centripetal" forces "exercise . . . a homogenizing and hierarchicizing—influence," while "centrifugal" forces "create alternative, 'degraded' genres down below" (425). The first might seem to some like Berry's "Judeo-Christian tradition," while the centrifugal is epitomized in the voices of dissent within that tradition. Though Berry is reluctant to surrender meaning entirely to context, he and Bakhtin discern identical tensions in the play of voices surrounding that meaning.

The notion of a dialogue of voices ties Berry most clearly to Bakhtin. Both agree that a poem or novel must draw on what has been written in the past. Bakhtin writes that, for the novelist,

> The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes 'one's own' only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not, after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!), but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own. (293-94)

We see here why Bakhtin is a better theorist for Berry than Kristeva or Barthes. Bakhtin maintains a role for the author, as the one who "appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention." The author "must take the word, and make it one's own." Similarly, Berry writes that "As a new poem is made . . . past voices are convoked—to be changed, little or much, by the addition of another voice" (89). Davies' poem is worthy of respect because of its "justness and music," which "charges its language with meaning; [the poem] adds itself authentically to its pattern of reminding, and thus re-awakens it and makes it new" (92). In a delicate balance, Berry's poet and Bakhtin's novelist both draw from other's work and make it their own. This interchange is crucial for meaning. Bakhtin writes that "The linguistic significance of a given utterance is understood against the background of language, while its actual [i.e. particular, concrete] meaning is understood against the background of other concrete utterances on the same theme" (281). This background is Berry's "pattern of reminding." The form of a poem, Berry argues, is analogous "of the forms of other things. By its form it alludes to other forms, evokes them, resonates with them, and so becomes a part

of the system of analogies or harmonies by which we live. Thus the poet affirms and collaborates in the formality of the Creation" (89). For Berry, the "background" of a poetic utterance is more than just linguistic: it is cosmic. While Bakhtin might be uncomfortable with Berry's language of Creation, both writers insist that the background of other voices is necessary for the contemporary writer to communicate meaning. As Bakhtin says, "these voices create the background necessary for [the author's] own voice, outside of which his artistic prose nuances cannot be perceived, and without which they 'do not sound'" (278). The voice of the author cannot be understood without the support of a choir of voices from the past. In Berry's words, the poem "exists, literally, by recalling past voices into presence." Despite modern intertextuality's focus on the present cultural moment, an emphasis which Machacek finds inappropriate, its recognition of the past is an important connection to Berry. Jenny describes intertextuality's effect on the reader:

> Each intertextual reference is the occasion for an alternative: either one continues reading, taking it only as a segment like any other, integrated into the syntagmatic structure of the text, or else one turns to the source text, carrying out a sort of intellectual anamnesis where the intertextual reference appears like a paradigmatic element that has been displaced, deriving from a forgotten structure." (44)

Again, Berry's term "pattern of reminding" is useful, here as an analogue for "forgotten structure." More importantly, though, Jenny's description of intertextuality's ability to perform "a sort of intellectual anamnesis" calls to mind the title of Berry's novella *Remembering*, in which the idea of convocation plays such a significant part. Intertextuality's voices from the past become a critical means of understanding the present, as Machacek argued about synchronic and diachronic intertextuality, just as an individual's memories, in *Remembering*, are essential for his mental and spiritual health.

The metaphor of joined voices forms a lively, organic image in both Bakhtin and Berry. Bakhtin writes that "the word is born in a dialogue as a living rejoinder within it" (279) and that the object of the literary artist's work "is a focal point for heteroglot voices among which his own voice must also sound" (278). This notion of voices singing together informs the concluding sentence of Berry's essay: Davies' poem "is original, then, not in somehow escaping its history, but in causing its history to resound and sing around it" (92). Bakhtin's phrase "living rejoinder" captures the vitality that intertextuality can bring to a literary tradition, making it no longer "autonomous" but drawing it into conversation.

The vitality of an intertextual approach is promising for a study of Ruskin's presence in Berry's fiction. Bakhtin points out that there is sometimes an element of struggle between voices in a work.

> And not all words for just anyone submit equally easily to this appropriation, to this seizure and transformation into private property: many words stubbornly resist, others remain alien, sound foreign in the mouth of the one who appropriated them and who now speaks them; they cannot be assimilated into his context and fall out of it; it is as if they put themselves in quotation marks against the will of the speaker. Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated—overpopulated—with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process. (294)

If a passage is placed in quotation marks, it is simple allusion; it does not permeate the text, after the manner of deep intertextuality. Bakhtin's passage implies that the ease of appropriation is an indicator of the depth of intertextuality, and I demonstrate in the following chapters that Ruskin's voice does not sound foreign in Berry's mouth. Nonetheless, intertextuality is a "complicated process." Susan Friedman examines the effects of intertextuality between cultures in "Migration, Encounter, and Indigenation,"

and finds that "Historical, geographical, and cultural determinations (re)shape the text of origin to give it a particular, local coloration. Such transplantations result in culturally hybrid texts that emerge from the encounter of one cultural text and the belief-system out of which it comes with another" (260). In other words, as a text crosses a culture, or an ocean, it gains certain characteristics of that destination. We can see this happen as Ruskin's antipathy to liberalism is preserved in Berry's fiction, while Ruskin's framing of the issues in terms of urban poverty is modified in Berry's rural settings. As regards war, history regrettably repeats itself, and the expense and senseless brutality of the Napoleonic and Crimean Wars of Ruskin's time are repeated in the Vietnam and Cold Wars of Berry's. Ruskin's role as an art critic has no direct parallel in Berry's fictional world of Port William, but his ideas of taste and love of beauty are easily transferred to a rural setting, in which one's farm and land become the site of imaginative creation. Finally, Ruskin's desire for pastorship rather than an institutional approach to community problems derives in England from his own cultural inheritance of the *noblesse oblige* of the aristocracy, but finds equally fertile soil in the preference for self-government, rather than centralized government, among the citizens of Port William, Kentucky.

Laurent Jenny observes that "intertextuality is never anodyne" (61). Rather, it is "a mechanism of perturbation. Its function is to prevent meaning from becoming lethargic—to avert the triumph of the cliché by a process of transformation" (59). Careless readers find clichés in Berry, and a hopeless idealism in Ruskin. The gift of intertextuality, according to Jenny, is that a "semantic relaunching takes place whenever the element is placed in a new context . . . Whatever its avowed ideological underpinnings, the intertextual use of discourses always has a critical, playful, and

exploratory function. This makes it the most fitting instrument of expression in times of cultural breakdown and renaissance" (60-61). Both Berry and Ruskin see themselves as writers in times of cultural breakdown. Perhaps, if we are able to hear both their voices simultaneously, remembering might lead to a renaissance.

CHAPTER THREE

Realism and Imagination in Berry and Ruskin

The second theoretical issue related to reading Ruskin and Berry together is each author's stance toward realism. While much of the vitality of intertextuality comes from "perturbation"—Ruskin's ideas finding expression within a new context—this should not imply that there is no commonality of purpose between Ruskin and Berry. As with their involvement in, respectively, the Tory Radical and Agrarian movements, Ruskin and Berry's stances on realism are united in many fundamental assumptions and yet distinct, as each responds to and reacts against the particular cultural and artistic forces of his time. Ruskin, despite his focus on art, is often considered the first theorist of nineteenth-century literary realism, and Berry's writing is clearly in the realistic mode. Yet, what each writer means by "realism" is informed by a struggle against different extremes. Ruskin opposed two extremes, both the rule-bound approach of the Academy painters, for whom tradition was more important than accuracy, and the methods of scientists influenced by Darwinism, who described a reductive, mechanistic universe in which even the sensation of beauty had a physiological source. Ruskin's frequent use of the language of "fact" and "seeing" is a deliberate challenge to both, and especially against science's claim to describe all natural phenomena in reductive terms. Berry opposes the extreme of literary naturalism, in many ways a descendant of Darwinism in its emphasis both on scientific objectivity and on instinct and appetite as human motivators. Berry challenges these assumptions by portraying human beings as flawed and imperfect but yet redeemed by love. Despite these differences, however, both Ruskin and Berry rely heavily on

imagination in their responses to reductionism. For each writer, the imagination of the artist becomes a means by which the concrete details of the physical world are acknowledged and preserved, yet arranged to form a picture that is both true to the world's imperfection and expressive of a noble purpose.

As is implied in the summary above, I am contrasting Berry and Ruskin's realism with a realism which is reductive and scientific in its approach. Such a realism is exemplified in George Levine's study of nineteenth-century realism, *Dying to Know*. Levine describes the fundamental assumption of nineteenth-century science as the need for the observer to die as an individual, to figuratively remove him or herself from the observational situation. "Dying to know" means "a willingness to repress the aspiring, desiring, emotion-ridden self and everything merely personal, contingent, historical, material that might get in the way of acquiring knowledge" (2). As we shall see, nothing could be further from the sort of realism espoused by Ruskin and Berry. Levine notes that women were discouraged from scientific careers because, under this kind of thinking, they were viewed as too quick to identify with what they observed and too ready to be affected by it. Of nineteenth-century women in science and mathematics, Levine concludes that their "scientific ideals of impersonality are entwined with the ethical; objectivity and dispassion are saturated with feeling" (132). Ruskin's "science of aspects," however, insists that the scientist must be vulnerable to ethical and emotional impressions, that flowers, animals, mountains, and the like must be considered in regard to how they affect the human senses. As we shall note later in this discussion, this claim was central to Ruskin's opposition to Darwinism. Berry, as well, insists that the human element cannot be removed. He dislikes the term "environment" because it, like the

environmental movement, assumes that non-human nature exists (or should exist) outside of humanity's influence. Berry is an agrarian, and his fiction is set on small farms in small, rural communities, because he insists that human beings must acknowledge their role in nature, their inability to escape affecting their surroundings. For him, the objectivity of Levine's nineteenth-century scientists is a self-deceiving abstraction. To repress "everything merely personal, contingent, historical, material that might get in the way of acquiring knowledge" is to deny the particular, as well. For both Berry and Ruskin, realism must acknowledge the role of the observer and not be mislead by a false sense of objectivity which pretends to eliminate the human, the material, the particular.

In reacting against this scientific objectivity, both Berry and Ruskin are careful to avoid the extremes of Romanticism. They embrace a realism such as that described by René Wellek, a realism that prohibits an escape from the material world into the imaginative.

> [Realism] rejects the fantastic, the fairy-tale-like, the allegorical and the symbolic, the highly stylized, the purely abstract and decorative. It means that we want no myth, no *Maerchen*, no world of dreams. It implies also a rejection of the improbable, of pure chance, of extraordinary events, since reality is obviously conceived at that time, in spite of all local and personal differences, as the orderly world of nineteenth century science, a world of cause and effect. (10)

Berry's fictional world is one of relentless cause and effect, as his characters must continually learn proper stewardship of the land and care for each other by observing the results of their actions. Similarly, as we shall see, George Eliot admired Ruskin's realism because of its freedom from the vague subjectivity of popular Romanticism. Wellek's passage continues, however, describing the realist world as "a world without miracle, without transcendence even if the individual may have preserved a personal religious

faith," and here we see the complexity of Ruskin and Berry's position. For both authors, transcendence is possible through the imagination, but in an imaginative *embrace of* physical reality, rather than an *escape from* it. To borrow from Berry's title, life, itself, is the miracle. For Ruskin, there is no need for a divine vision while wandering among the mountains, for the mountains themselves provide that theophany. For Berry, rural life is not sanctified by its openness to mystical experience, but rather by the conviction that the natural world itself is Creation, and that responsible human interaction with non-human nature is a spiritual and ethical discipline.

Ruskin's position on realism, as we shall see, is marked by a tension between fidelity to observed realities—what he calls "facts"—and a desire that those realities should be communicated in such a way as to achieve a "noble purpose." The first goal is achieved by a rejection of idealism in favor of a view of the world which includes, and even highlights, imperfections, while the second goal is achieved by the "associative imagination," an aspect of the creative process which harmonizes imperfect particulars into a unified whole. Central to this second step is Ruskin's conviction that those imperfect particulars are not reducible merely to material objects, but are connected one to another, and to human beings, by an underlying spiritual likeness. Berry's realism deals directly with the harsh realities of human existence, but, like Ruskin, transforms those realities through imagination. The imagination, for Berry, is characteristic of the human mind in its Sympathetic mode (as opposed to the Rational), and describes the mind's ability to identify with and see itself as a part of the phenomenon it observes. This imaginative identification is embodied in Berry's fiction in the "membership," as individuals, flawed and incomplete in themselves, become part of a community, a

community that redeems the imperfections of its members through love and thereby allows for human flourishing.

Berry and Ruskin's similarity is a radical stance on realism which posits a balance between the polar views of their time. Ruskin begins his first major work of criticism, *Modern Painters*, by describing "two great and distinct ends" that the landscape painter must always keep in mind: "the first, to induce in the spectator's mind the faithful conception of any natural objects whatsoever; the second, to guide the spectator's mind to those objects most worthy of its contemplation, and to inform him of the thoughts and feelings with which these were regarded by the artist himself" (3.133). What is remarkable about this statement is that it combines both a fidelity to particular objects—a respect for the truths of the material world—with the artist's responsibility to guide the viewer toward "worthy" and noble "thoughts and feelings." This was a radical position for a young art critic to take in 1843, due to the near-complete dominance of the English art world by the Royal Academy's rule-based approach toward composition, set out clearly and authoritatively by Sir Joshua Reynolds' *Seven Discourses on Art*. At the end of Ruskin's life, his position had been rejected in literature, as the Aesthetic Movement of the 1890s dismantled the idea of the author guiding the reader to any "worthy . . . contemplation," and as the Realists sought to elevate fact alone as the only reliable subject for literature. For much of the twentieth century, these two divergent positions held sway. Wendell Berry's fiction, however, rejects this dichotomy, seeking to bring concrete detail and imagination back together, and can best be understood in terms of Ruskin's balance of ends. My central claim is that Ruskin and Berry are each marked by a unique position with regard to literary realism: although they reject the view that

reduces all reality to matter, they ground their ideals in the particularity of the material world. For both writers, imagination is not an escape from the harsh realities of physical existence, but a means to embrace that existence, to give form and meaning to the objects around them and to illuminate the nobility of non-human nature.

Ruskin's theory of realism is based on sight, on the act of noting attentively the physical characteristics of objects and animals present to the observer at a particular time. Ruskin pointed out that it is possible to observe something without really perceiving it, that it is not enough for an object to be in front of our eyes; rather, our minds must be engaged if we are really to see it (3.141). Ruskin found the ability to see in this way to be very rare, famously writing that "the greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something, and tell what it saw in a plain way. Hundreds of people can talk for one who can think, but thousands can think for one who can see. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion,—all in one" (5.333). As regards painting, he felt that art had become too rule-bound, that the Old Masters were poor subjects for imitation, all because artists had forgotten to really see their subjects. It was better, he wrote, to imitate Nature, to look at non-human nature directly: "I have always said, he who is closest to Nature is best. All rules are useless, all genius is useless, all labour is useless, if you do not give facts; the more facts you give, the greater you are; and there is no fact so unimportant as to be prudently despised, if it be possible to represent it" (5.173). Ruskin uses "fact" here, not in the scientific sense, but rather to describe sensible particulars as they appear at a given moment. Ruskin admired Turner because he painted each leaf on a tree differently; he did not follow the traditional generalization of what a leaf should look like, nor did he copy the leaves of the Old Masters. By claiming that rules and genius are

useless, Ruskin is taking an extreme position for his time. Even the eighteenth century, famous for its metaphor of art as a mirror, valued rules and traditions as a means of achieving that accuracy, based on the belief that artists of the past had a closer relationship with nature and should thus be imitated. Ruskin, on the other hand, felt that imitation and tradition tricked the mind into "seeing" what was not really there, but rather what the mind expected to be there.

As Dinah Birch points out, Ruskin's upbringing as a Non-Conformist Evangelical prepared him to defy tradition and expectation, and to question rules by testing them with personal experience (66). He advocated public art galleries, not so that the public could learn from the Old Masters, but so that they could critique them, teaching themselves to see by contrasting the portrayals of trees and stones in the paintings with the reality they perceived with their own eyes. Caroline Levine likens this inductive pedagogy to the scientific method (30) and suggests that this view goes far to explain why Ruskin argued that the geologist's ability to discern particular characteristics of rocks was an essential skill for a painter to learn (3.37). Making his point perhaps too strongly, Ruskin wrote in the first volume of *Modern Painters* that he would consider only "faithfulness in representing nature" in his judgment of paintings both ancient and modern: "I shall pay no regard whatsoever to what may be thought beautiful, or sublime, or imaginative. I shall look only for truth; bare, clear, downright statement of facts; showing in each particular, as far as I am able, what the truth of nature is, and then seeking for the plain expression of it, and for that alone" (3.138). Despite this claim, Ruskin will return with great interest to questions of the beautiful, the sublime, and, particularly, the imaginative,

but he is concerned here with making his case for realism, for absolute fidelity to concrete, observable particulars.

The connections between Ruskin's theories of landscape painting and the movement known as literary realism were first recognized by George Eliot. In her review of the third volume of *Modern Painters*, she praised his insistence on fidelity to nature: "The truth of infinite value that he teaches is realism, the doctrine that all truth and beauty are to be attained by a humble and faithful study of nature and not by substituting vague forms, bred by imagination on the mists of feeling, in place of definite, substantial reality" ("John Ruskin's *Modern Painters*," 368). Eliot perceptively separates Ruskin from pure Romanticism by emphasizing his disdain for "vague forms, bred by imagination on the mists of feeling." Ruskin had little interest in a Romanticism that sought escape from the physical world on the wings of imagination, nor for an aesthetic that privileged the artist's personal feeling to such a degree that it interfered with his or her perception of the external world. Ruskin's famous argument against the Pathetic Fallacy is a rebuke to this kind of Romanticism[1].

A significant danger of such a reliance on "definite, substantial reality" is the tendency to record every detail for its own sake, whether or not it communicates any larger significance. When novels are "obsessed with physical detail and topographical accuracy," according to the *Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms*, they risk becoming "little more than guidebooks or social documents" (198). The extreme result of such verisimilitude is Literary Naturalism, a mode of writing which "asks for accuracy in

[1] According to Patricia Ball, "Ruskin's theory of the fallacy . . . can be seen as a lever aiding his effort to move the imaginative centre away from the dominant self and towards the object in its independent nature. Whereas the Romantics discovered the rewards of self-exploration and read the universe in terms of such enrichment, Ruskin sees here only the threat of an impoverishing egotism" (77).

every detail, even frank descriptions of bodily functions. Humans are animals, controlled by instinct and environment. Scientific objectivity is used to document it all" ("Realism" 198). But here we must return to the opening paragraph of *Modern Painters*, and examine the other end of the scale which Ruskin was so careful to keep balanced.

According to Ruskin, the second "distinct end" of the landscape painter is to "guide the spectator's mind to those objects most worthy of its contemplation, and to inform him of the thoughts and feelings with which these were regarded by the artist himself" (3.133). Throughout *Modern Painters*, this insistence that objects be "worthy of contemplation" provides a counterpoint to Ruskin's fidelity to facts. In the third volume, he insists that an artist's style "is greater or less in exact proportion to the nobleness of the interests and passions involved in the subject" (5.49). This leads him to place religious art at the highest rank, followed by art depicting "great men," and finally by art depicting "ordinary life." Even within this third rank, there are levels of nobility according to subject.

> And in this ordinary life, he who represents deep thoughts and sorrows, as, for instance, Hunt, in his *Claudio and Isabella*, and such other works, is of the highest rank in his sphere; and he who represents the slight malignities and passions of the drawing-room, as, for instance, Leslie, of the second rank; he who represents the sports of boys, or simplicities of clowns, as Webster or Teniers, of the third rank; and he who represents brutalities and vices (for delight in them, and not for rebuke of them), of no rank at all, or rather of a negative rank, holding a certain order in the abyss. (5.49)

Here is Ruskin's rebuke to Naturalism, as brutalities and vices must not be portrayed, except with the sternest condemnation. Berry feels much the same way. In an essay on William Carlos Williams in the collection *Imagination in Place*, he argues that

> William's poems are not meant to plagiarize reality. Though they insist upon containing "the anti-poetic," they do not fall into the conventional trap of the "realism" that recognizes reality only by the violence,

> selfishness, and despair of the individualistic modern individual, alone for want of an adequate language. (163)

Similarly, he admires his friend and fellow writer Hayden Carruth because

> his complaints were not *merely* complaints. I think Yeats said (or if he didn't he should have) that we don't value literary works solely because of the pain in them. That may sound cruel, but it is true. It is a truth disregarded by the writers of our day who apparently think their realism is authenticated only by their fixation on misery, violence, ugliness, and despair. (70)

Though Berry does not ignore the pain and violence of the world—a point we shall return to later—neither does he glory in brutality and vice. His fiction is that of ordinary life, yet it concerns itself with "deep thoughts and sorrows."

Such was the importance of "noble truths . . . [and] noble emotions" (5.42) to Ruskin, that great art could not rely simply on technical expertise. "The artist deceives himself," Ruskin writes, when he seeks to flatter his subject "by treating it under rules of art [and] introducing into it accurate science." By doing so, he is "sacrificing his subject to his own vanity or pleasure, and losing truth, nobleness, and impressiveness for the sake of delightful lines or creditable pedantries" (5.53). This was the great failing of the Renaissance, according to Ruskin, that it so perfected accuracy of detail that technique became more important than feeling: "In early times art was employed for the display of religious facts; now, religious facts were employed for the display of art. . . . It was passing from the paths of life to the paths of death" (5.77). Ruskin cites as an example Raphael's "Madonna of the Chair." Describing the Madonna's features to be like those of a "simple Italian mother," Ruskin finds the work devoid of any sense of worship.

> [Raphael] could think of the Madonna now very calmly, with no desire to pour out the treasures of earth at her feet, or crown her brows with the golden shafts of heaven. He could think of her as an available subject for the display of transparent shadows, skilful tints, and scientific

> foreshortenings,—as a fair woman, forming, if well painted, a pleasant piece of furniture for the corner of a boudoir, and best imagined by combination of the beauties of the prettiest contadinas. He could think of her, in her last maternal agony, with academical discrimination; sketch in first her skeleton, invest her, in serene science, with the muscles of misery and the fibres of sorrow; then cast the grace of antique drapery over the nakedness of her desolation, and fulfil, with studious lustre of tears and delicately painted pallor, the perfect type of the "Mater Dolorosa." (5.78)

Ruskin realizes the tension within his own criticism. This precision and detail could have been a good thing, he maintains, "if it had been effected with a pure motive . . . if [the new truths] had been sought for truth's sake," but they were instead sought out of pride. The technical accuracy seeks to cover the fact that "the painter had no longer any religious passion to express." "Serene science" and "academical discrimination" here become descriptors for an abstract precision, attentive to detail but removed from feeling.

This precision is of a piece with the reductionism of the naturalistic writer, and Ruskin finds it extremely dangerous, because it allows the observer to separate reason and emotion, observation and noble feelings. Berry makes the same point when he discusses what he calls the Rational and Sympathetic Minds. In an essay called "Two Minds," Berry claims that the Rational Mind, "in order to go into business on its own, it has in effect withdrawn from all of human life that involves feeling, affection, familiarity, reverence, faith, and loyalty" (88). Like Raphael, it can delve into mysteries without the appropriate religious feeling. The Sympathetic Mind, on the other hand, "is moved by affection for its home place, the local topography, the local memories, and the local creatures" (89). It is important to note, however, that Berry is not arguing for one at the exclusion of the other.

> My purpose here is to argue in defense of the Sympathetic Mind. But my objection is not to the use of reason or to reasonability. I am objecting to the exclusiveness of the Rational Mind, which has limited itself to a

> selection of mental functions such as the empirical methodologies of analysis and experimentation and the attitudes of objectivity and realism. . . . The separability of the Rational Mind is not only the dominant fiction but also the master superstition of the modern age. (88)

The unity Berry seeks is reminiscent of Ruskin's two ends of art. Berry opposes the separability of the Rational mind in the same way that Ruskin opposed the separability of technique. Both writers would oppose literary naturalism because of this reductive separation of reality from sentiment, from feeling and imagination. In *Imagination in Place*, Berry describes the need for fiction to include imagination.

> If, in other words, you want to write a whole story about whole people—living souls, not "higher animals"—you must reach for a reality which is inaccessible merely to observation or perception but which in addition requires imagination, for imagination knows more than the eye sees, and also inspiration, which you can only hope and pray for. (14)

Observation requires imagination to make the story effective. To write about people as "living souls" requires something like the "religious passion" that Ruskin found lacking in Raphael. In Berry's day, literary naturalism is turning human beings into "higher animals"; in Ruskin's day, artistic objectivity is turning the Madonna into "a fair woman, forming, if well painted, a pleasant piece of furniture for the corner of a boudoir." This reductive vision, converting spiritual beings into mere material, is what both Berry and Ruskin staunchly oppose.

While Ruskin eschewed the reduction exemplified in Naturalism, he also fought against the opposite extreme: idealism. For Ruskin, idealism was a way of "disdaining ordinary truth," of refusing to acknowledge what is "painful" by covering it over with a fictional positivity which springs from "the fancy of the beholder" (5.100). In the third volume of *Modern Painters*, he describes three classes of artists: in the face of the mixture of good and evil in the world, "certain men chose the good and left the evil

(thence properly called Purists); others received both good and evil together (thence properly called Naturalists); and others had a tendency to choose the evil and leave the good, whom, for convenience' sake, I termed Sensualists" (5.103). The Sensualists concern us least here; they are the ones mentioned earlier, who celebrate "brutality and vice." It might be surprising, though, to realize that Ruskin sides with the Naturalists rather than the Purists. (Despite the similarity in terms, "Literary Naturalism," as the term is generally used, is, in its refusal to recognize the "good" of spiritual realities, closer to what Ruskin calls the Sensualists.) The Purist mentality refuses to portray what is evil, ugly, or imperfect. In doing so, it sets forth a vision of what things ought to be. Although both Ruskin and Berry have been accused of this type of idealism, both authors reject the Purist stance. Ruskin writes that "It is, however, evident, at the first thought, that all representations of nature without evil must either be ideals of a future world, or be false ideals, if they are understood to be representations of facts" (5.104). In other words, idealism is a "false thought," and, in matters of art, Ruskin tells us, "false thought is worse than the want of thought" (3.136)[2]. Berry gives the lie to the Purist ideal in the content of his fiction. Though brutality and vice are not celebrated in any of his works, *A Place on Earth* recounts a one-sided love affair that ends in a suicide, *Hannah Coulter* examines the loss of children to an alien culture, and *Jayber Crow* ends with an old-growth forest tract falling to the logger's greed. Of the Purist, Ruskin warns,

> Then, farther, the habit of disdaining ordinary truth, and seeking to alter it so as to fit the fancy of the beholder, gradually infects the mind in all its other operations; so that it begins to propose to itself an ideal in history, an ideal in general narration, an ideal in portraiture and description, and in

[2] A similar point is made by George Henry Lewes, an admirer of Ruskin, in 1859: "Art always aims at the representation of Reality, *i.e.* of Truth; and not departure from truth is permissible, except such as inevitably lies in the nature of the medium itself. Realism is thus the basis of all Art, and its antithesis is not Idealism, but *Falsism*" (493).

> everything else where truth may be painful or uninteresting; with the necessary result of more or less weakness, wickedness, and uselessness in all that is done or said, with the desire of concealing this painful truth. (5.100)

Idealism here becomes an infection which spreads from discipline to discipline. It is a frame of mind that "disdain[s] ordinary truth," that refuses to acknowledge whatever particular details do not fit its general plan. As such, it is not far from the abstracting force of "The Economy" as described in *Jayber Crow* or of "higher education" in *Hannah Coulter*. When Hannah reads the publications that her son Caleb writes as a professor of agricultural, she is reading the work of a purist.

> I read all of his publications that he brings me, and I have to say that they don't make me happy. I can't hear Caleb talking in them. And they speak of everything according to its general classification. Reading them always makes me think of this farm and how it has emerged, our of "agriculture" and its "soil types" and its collection of "species," as itself, our place, a place like no other, yielding to Nathan and me a life like no other. (132)

By proposing an abstract "ideal" of farming based on the categories and jargon of the academy, agricultural education is able to ignore, in Ruskin's terms, "where truth may be painful or uninteresting." What results from this sleight of hand is "weakness, wickedness, and uselessness." It is a story repeated throughout Berry's novels, from Roger Merchant's "a little light fawming" (*A Place on Earth* 107) to the advice of Troy Chatham's "experts" (*Jayber Crow* 342). Ultimately, the idealism of the Purist is a generalization, and, as such, refuses to acknowledge the particular. In a passage that looks forward to Berry, Ruskin specifies what is wrong with such an approach.

> I repeat then, generalization, as the word is commonly understood, is the act of a vulgar, incapable, and unthinking mind. To see in all mountains nothing but similar heaps of earth; in all rocks, nothing but similar concretions of solid matter; in all trees, nothing but similar accumulations of leaves, is no sign of high feeling or extended thought. The more we

> know, and the more we feel, the more we separate; we separate to obtain a more perfect unity. (3.37)

The clause "we separate to obtain a more perfect unity" captures the paradox of Ruskin and Berry's realism. Both authors embrace the particular, the concrete detail, as a means to understand the whole. The Purist, on the other hand, seeks to place his conception of the whole above the truths of the particular.

To this point, then, we have seen how both Ruskin and Berry evince a respect for the concrete particulars of the physical world without falling into the twin pitfalls of naturalism and idealism. What remains to be understood, then, is how these concrete particulars, neither wholly corrupt nor wholly perfect, might be ordered and arranged so as "to guide the spectator's mind " to "worthy" and noble thoughts and feelings. For both Ruskin and Berry, this is the work of the imagination.

In rejecting the Purist, Ruskin favors the course of what he calls the Naturalist, the observer/artist who recognizes "both good and evil" in the world and receives them together (5.103). This reception, however, is not entirely passive, not without agency. Rather than simply record the good and the bad together, the Naturalist orders reality through what Ruskin calls the "associative imagination." Of the Naturalist ideal, Ruskin asks,

> How does it meet [the] requirement . . . imperative on all great art, that it shall be inventive, and a product of the imagination? It meets it pre-eminently by that power of arrangement which I have endeavoured, at great length and with great pains, to define accurately in the chapter on Imagination associative in the second volume. That is to say, accepting the weaknesses, faults, and wrongnesses in all things that it sees, it so places and harmonizes them that they form a noble whole, in which the imperfection of each several part is not only harmless, but absolutely essential, and yet in which whatever is good in each several part shall be completely displayed. (5.111)

Ruskin's approach is realistic in that it refuses to ignore the imperfections of the world, yet it calls on the power of imagination to arrange and modify those imperfections Imagination gives structure to the artist's portrayal, and by portraying "inferior forms" alongside of the beautiful, is able "to bring out clearly what good there is in the inferior forms themselves" (5.112). The beautiful and the ugly are "harmonize[d]" by the "power of arrangement" of the imagination so that facts are respected and at the same time elevated. "It is to be kept in mind," Ruskin maintains, "that the naturalist ideal has always in it, to the full, the power expressed by those two words. It is naturalist, because studied from nature, and ideal, because it is mentally arranged in a certain manner" (5.113). Again, we have the balance between fidelity to observed reality and guidance toward objects worthy of contemplation.

In describing the Naturalist's willingness to accept imperfection, Ruskin touches on a key concept in both his and Berry's writings: imperfection. As noted above, the imagination for Ruskin brings harmony between components that are marked by "weaknesses, faults, and wrongnesses." Surprisingly, he argues that these imperfections strengthen, rather than weaken, the unity of the work of art.

> If, therefore, the combination made is to be harmonious, the artist must induce in each of its component parts (suppose two only, for simplicity's sake), such imperfection as that the other shall put it right. If one of them be perfect by itself, the other will be an excrescence. Both must be faulty when separate, and each corrected by the presence of the other. If he can accomplish this, the result will be beautiful; it will be a whole, an organized body with dependent members. (4.233)

As Ruskin would later point out in his chapter on "The Nature of Gothic," this is a particularly Christian aesthetic, in that it recognizes this world's fallenness and seeks its redemption. In the context of architecture, Ruskin explains that Greek and Assyrian

styles demand symmetry, exactitude, perfection, and thus make slaves of their workmen. The Gothic style, on the other hand, when faced with the imperfect human soul,

> not only recognizes its value; it confesses its imperfection, in only bestowing dignity upon the acknowledgment of unworthiness. That admission of lost power and fallen nature, which the Greek or Ninevite felt to be intensely painful, and as far as might be, altogether refused, the Christian makes daily and hourly, contemplating the fact of it without fear, as tending, in the end, to God's greater glory. (10.190)

Although Ruskin here attributes imperfection to "fallen nature," a few pages later, he treats it as a gift: "All things are literally better, lovelier, and more beloved for the imperfections which have been divinely appointed, that the law of human life may be Effort, and the law of human judgment, Mercy" (10.204). Effort and mercy foreshadow the twin loves of Order and Kindness, which Ruskin calls, in *Lectures on Art* (1870), "the two essential instincts of humanity" (20.88). If these are essential instincts, Ruskin argues, then God has appointed that there be imperfections to encourage them, and those who ignore or seek to eliminate imperfection are working at cross-purposes with God. This is a sort of *felix culpa*, but a fall that is fortunate not because of the promise of Christ but because of the ethical stance it necessitates. The idealism of the Greek is rejected before the realism of the Christian. Ruskin is advocating a recognition of imperfection, even a valuing of it, so long as the imagination is available to redeem it, to transform it into a harmonious whole.

In *Jayber Crow,* Berry examines the problem of imperfection at length. Jayber's "conversion" as he "walk[s] the way of love" from Hargrave to Port William, allows him to see that God embraces imperfection. As he looks over all his life lessons in the "light [of his] heart's love now shed upon it" (248), Jayber thinks, "God loves Port William as it is . . . Why else should He want it to be better than it is?" (251). While this statement

indicates a desire for improvement, it is based on an acceptance of imperfection, rather than a rejection of what is flawed. Whereas, in Jayber's experience, preachers had always emphasized the second half of John 3:16, with its focus on salvation, "where [Jayber] hung now was the first part. If God loved the world even *before* the event at Bethlehem, that meant he loved it as it was, with all its faults." This embrace of imperfection echoes Ruskin and clears Berry from the charge of being a Purist or Idealist in his portrayals of human experience. Ultimately, Jayber realizes that he must include himself in the roll of the terribly flawed.

> It is not a terrible thing to love the world, knowing that the world is always passing and irrecoverable, to be known only in loss. To love anything good, at any cost, is a bargain. It is a terrible thing to love the world, knowing that you are a human and therefore joined by kind to all that hates the world and hurries its passing—the violence and greed and falsehood that overcome the world that is meant to be overcome by love. (329)

In this passage, Jayber connects the state of being human with terrible flaws and vices, yet he, as human, is struggling to act in love. That the world is "known only in loss" expresses the elegiac tone that is Berry's great strength, and simultaneously differentiates that tone from a naïve nostalgia that looks back to a perfect past. The "loss" is not the loss of an idealized past, but rather the loss of perfection, and yet, it is only in this imperfection that the world can be known.

Berry's fiction is also illuminated by Ruskin's portrayal of harmony through the imagination, a unity of imperfect parts that results in an organic image: "it will be a whole, an organized body with dependent members" (4.233). The last word suggests Berry's membership, and we find significant parallels with Port William. When Jayber

describes what he likes about the church, he paints a picture of a membership of imperfect parts.

> What they came together for was to acknowledge, just by coming, their losses and failures and sorrows, their need for comfort, their faith always needing to be greater, their wish (in spite of all words and acts to the contrary) to love one another and to forgive and be forgiven, their need for one another's help and company and divine gifts, their hope (and experience) of love surpassing death, their gratitude. (163)

This spiritual community is made up of flawed people, but those flaws cause them to need each other. In Ruskin's words, each of them is "faulty when separate, and each corrected by the presence of the other" (4.223). Jayber later describes this "gathered community" as "imperfect and irresolute but held together by the frayed and always fraying, incomplete and yet ever-holding bonds of the various sorts of affection" (205). They are "corrected by the presence of the other" through love. Jayber "saw them all as somehow perfected, beyond time, by one another's love, compassion, and forgiveness, as it is said we may be perfected by grace" (205). In Jayber's description, love performs the service that imagination performs in Ruskin's account of unity: bringing the disparate parts together to form the "beautiful" result, the "organized body with dependent members."

As we shall see in chapter five on *Hannah Coulter*, imagination for Berry is an essential component of love. Imagination allows those in the membership to see others according to what they could be rather than according to what they are, and unifies people in a common vision of the good. Ruskin describes this kind of unified vision, using the term "membership" in a sense that is intended for art but that could easily be applied to Jayber's community.

> For, by the definition of Unity of Membership (the essential characteristic of greatness), not only certain couples or groups of parts, but all the parts of a noble work must be separately imperfect; each must imply, and ask for all the rest, and the glory of every one of them must consist in its relation to the rest; neither while so much as one is wanting can any be right. And it is evidently impossible to conceive, in each separate feature, a certain want or wrongness which can only be corrected by the other features of the picture (not by one or two merely, but by all), unless, together with the want, we conceive also of what is wanted, that is, of all the rest of the work or picture. (4.236)

The language of desire—"ask for," "wanting," "want"—applies to communities as well as portraits. Just as a picture wants, needs, a certain unity to achieve its "glory," so can a community feel the need for a certain unity to be the right kind of society. Here, we are back at the Agrarian insistence on shared *telos*. Furthermore, Ruskin argues that the want or need of an individual element of the painting is also felt by the whole work. At a very basic level, this is reflected in Berry's novels as people respond to the needs of those among them, as when Mat, Jack, and Ernest come together to rebuild Ida Crop's flooded homestead in *A Place on Earth*. The aid is more mutual in *Hannah Coulter*, as Hannah describes the tobacco harvests which bring everyone in the community together. "In the long anxious work of the tobacco harvest," Hannah says, "none of us considered that we were finished until everybody was finished" (94). This is a fictional portrayal of Ruskin's principle: "neither while so much as one is wanting can any be right" (4.236). Ruskin echoes Paul's metaphor of the body of Christ in this phrase, and that happens to be the source of Berry's idea of "membership," as well. In an interview with Indiana Public Radio, Berry explains the term.

> Burley Coulter's statement about membership [in *Hannah Coulter*] is I think a kind of improvement on St. Paul's idea referring to the early church that we are members of one another. Burley takes a bit larger view of the matter. What he says is we're members of each other, all of us, everything. The difference is not whether you are or are not, but whether

> you know you are or are not. . . . One of the issues that I have addressed in my fiction, which carries it a little apart from conventional realism, the question of how do people act toward each other who are conscious of being members of one another? It's a subject to my own way of thinking worth pursuing. ("Wendell Berry: The Value of Land and Food")

Berry's description of community and Ruskin's principle of composition draw on a common source, but by looking at Berry through Ruskin we see the importance of imperfection in this vision. Likewise, we see the similarities between imagination and love, an equivalence that Ruskin would have affirmed, as both Berry, and Berry's characters, seek to deal with flaws of others and of the world. This emphasis on imagination and love "carries" Berry's fiction "a little apart from conventional realism," which would only consider the imperfections.

Embracing imperfection through the transforming and redemptive action of the imagination is one way that Ruskin and Berry move from concrete particulars to noble thoughts and feelings. Another is by moving those particulars from a materialistic *schema*, with firm divisions between the observer and a mechanistic world, to a more organic one, where observer and observed share a common life and common experience. This is most evident in Ruskin's opposition to Darwinian science and in Berry's emphasis on unity and wholeness.

Despite his love for "facts" and his arguments for testing the Old Masters empirically, Ruskin was critical of many aspects of modern science. In 1879, he resigned his position as Slade Professor of Art at Oxford and cited as his reason the university's decision to allow vivisection. In a public talk on the subject, Ruskin maintained that vivisection severed "the great link which bound together the whole of creation, from its Maker to the lowest creature" (34.644). Jed Mayer, in "Ruskin, Vivisection, and

Scientific Knowledge," notes that throughout Ruskin's career as an art critic, he had maintained that the study of anatomy, as conducted through dissections, held little benefit for the artist. His approach to drawing held as its "first vital principle . . . that man is intended to observe with his eyes, and mind; not with microscope and knife" (25.xxx). The kind of knowledge gained through dissection was the wrong sort for the artist: "in representing, nay, in thinking of, and caring for, these beasts, man has to think of them essentially with their skins on them, and with their souls in them" (22.223). For Ruskin, the meaning discovered through anatomy and dissection is spurious, even fraudulent. A true understanding of another creature is gained only by respecting its outward form, its living spirit, and not by reducing it to its mechanical parts. Ruskin argued "that the pursuit of science should constantly be stayed by the love of beauty, and accuracy of knowledge by tenderness of emotion" (5.387).

Admittedly, attitudes such as these might make for "bad science," in the modern understanding, but they make for responsible realism in imaginative writing. When Ruskin limits science by beauty or tenderness of emotion, he is arguing, as Berry does, for a union of the Rational and Sympathetic Minds. As he wrote botany texts for young people, Ruskin insisted on including the literary and mythical connotations and stories related to each plant, as well as the more typical descriptions of the plant and its environment. Ruskin made the surprising claim that the literary and mythical meanings of plants, not only improved scientific understanding, but were "'incomparably *truer*' than the Darwinian—or, I will add, any other conceivable materialistic theory—because they are the instinctive products of the natural human mind, conscious of certain facts related to its fate and peace" (26.336). What the human mind brings in this case is

"imagination," and the presence of imagination is what distinguishes the "majestic science" of the past ages from "the wild theories or foul curiosities of our own" (339). "Wild" and "foul" are morally-loaded terms, and they describe attitudes which are not "stayed by the love of beauty." The root of the problem is "materialistic theory," the tendency of Darwinism to reduce all experience to mechanistic materiality, thus loosing humanity from any kind of ethical or moral anchor. In Darwinism, Ruskin is facing the ancestor of the literary realism that Berry confronted. Imagination is the solution, both for science and literature, because it ennobles its subjects.

Berry makes the connection in *Imagination in Place*:

> If what we see and experience . . . does not become real in imagination, then it never can become real to us, and we are forever divided from it. . . . As I am understanding it, imagination in this high sense shatters the frameworks of realism in the arts and empiricism in the sciences. It does so by placing the world and its creatures within a context of sanctity in which their worth is absolute and incalculable. (32)

Because Berry, like Ruskin, values observation of fact in his fiction, he sees the similarities between literature and science. He is able, though, again like Ruskin, to perceive the dangers to art in a scientific approach which considers everything as simply material. The "context of sanctity," with which imagination clothes the material world, is explained in a passage from *Sex, Economy, Community, and Freedom*:

> But 'environment' means that which surrounds or encircles us; it means a world separate from ourselves, outside us. The real state of things, of course, is far more complex and intimate and interesting than that. The world that environs us, that is around us, is also within us. We are made of it; we eat, drink, and breathe it; it is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. (34)

While this seems a passage solely about non-human nature, it has aesthetic implications. In his discussion of the inadequacy of the word "environment," Berry defines it as "a

world separate from ourselves, outside us," echoing the language of literary realism. Levine, speaking of the "new aesthetic that writers in the 1850s began to call 'realism,'" claims that "for these thinkers, the real was that which did not belong to the mind—that which stood separate from patterns of thought and belief" (3). This "alterity" or otherness of the world is a recognition of reality outside of the human mind and also an affirmation of a great gulf between the mind and the concrete, particular world. Berry makes the argument, however, that human beings are not so detachable from their surroundings. This claim recalls Ruskin's "great link" which binds together all creation and explains why Ruskin was opposed to vivisection and the microscope. While "seeing" is of utmost importance to Ruskin, it must not be performed in a manner which separates the viewer from the object viewed. Both vivisection and the microscope objectify what is at the other end of the scalpel or the lens. This was a significant component of Ruskin's argument with Darwinism. Mayer points out that, in explaining his reasons for resigning the Slade Professorship, Ruskin never directly "denounce[d] Darwin's theory as wrong, but merely mischievous, most particularly in its indirect promotion of a particularly invasive and destructive method of looking" (205). The sentiment is also reflected in *Modern Painters,* where Ruskin argues for the Divine significance of non-human nature.

> One lesson, however, we are invariably taught by all, however approached or viewed, that the work of the Great Spirit of nature is as deep and unapproachable in the lowest as in the noblest objects; that the Divine mind is as visible in its full energy of operation on every lowly bank and mouldering stone, as in the lifting of the pillars of heaven, and settling the foundation of the earth; and that to the rightly perceiving mind, there is the same infinity, the same majesty, the same power, the same unity, and the same perfection, manifest in the casting of the clay as in the scattering of the cloud, in the mouldering of the dust as in the kindling of the day-star. (3. 492-93)

This passage, in its valuing of the slightest physical detail, is of service to literary realism. George Eliot, who saw *Modern Painters* as a foundational work for the realistic novel, valued passages like this because they argued that art could portray "old women scraping carrots with their work-worn hands" as well as higher subjects like angels and Madonnas (*Adam Bede* 158). Eliot's observations have guided later interpretations of Ruskin's passage, which is typically read as emphasizing the importance of detail and portrayals of common life. Berry, however, brings a new insight. When we read Ruskin and Berry together, we recognize the emphasis in this passage on unity, on the work of the Divine mind unifying all natural objects, inanimate and animate. Ruskin's passage is about imagination more than realism in our usual sense of the word. Stephen Finley writes of Ruskin, "no man has ever held more exalted views of the holy materiality of the natural world" (16). As spiritual beings, humans are part of this unity, this "context of sanctity." These passages from both Berry and Ruskin work against a mindset which sees non-human nature as merely material, and prepare the way for the argument that objective observation alone, without either a spiritual or an imaginative component, is not enough.

As an agrarian writer, Berry is working within a tradition that is well-equipped to counter the claims of a materialistic realism. Richard Weaver, whose *Ideas Have Consequences* examines the philosophy behind agrarian ideals, insists that the desire for unmediated examination of phenomenon, is misguided in its pursuit of reality.

> This threat is best described as the desire of immediacy, for its aim is to dissolve the formal aspects of everything and to get at the suppositious reality behind them. It is characteristic of the barbarian, whether he appears in a precultural stage or emerges from below into the waning day of a civilization, to insist upon seeing a thing "as it is." The desire testifies that he has nothing in himself with which to spiritualize it; the relation is one of thing to thing without the intercession of imagination. Impatient of

> the veiling with which the man of higher type gives the world imaginative meaning, the barbarian and the Philistine, who is the barbarian living amid culture, demands the access of immediacy. Where the former wishes representation, the latter insists upon starkness of materiality, suspecting rightly that forms will mean restraint. (24)

"To insist upon seeing a thing 'as it is'" is, of course, the radical slogan of literary realism. It is also the justification for vivisection, for the kind of science that Ruskin deplored. Ruskin and Berry take the common position that the imagination must in some sense mediate the portrayal of reality. In *The Two Paths*, Ruskin argues that "the living power in all real schools of art" is "the love of nature," or fidelity to what is observed, but he follows this with a significant contrasting claim. Great art, he says, requires,

> the visible operation of human intellect in the presentation of truth, the evidence of what is properly called design or plan in the work, no less than . . . veracity. A looking-glass does not design—it receives and communicates indiscriminately all that passes before it; a painter designs when he chooses some things, refuses others, and arranges all. (16.285)

Great art must evidence "human design and authority in the way that fact is told" (16.270). Ruskin is demonstrating what Weaver calls "a deep respect for forms," a respect which Weaver says identifies "the man of true culture" (23). Both Weaver and Ruskin seek an "ideational pattern" to govern life (21). Whereas Weaver's barbarian seeks "the relation . . . of thing to thing without the intercession of the imagination," Ruskin's artist uses the imagination to harmonize, unify, and "spiritualize" his or her subjects. Berry strives to balance fact, imagination, and the limitations of form in *Imagination in Place*.

> One must not be misled by the claims of 'realism.' There is, true enough, a kind of writing that has an obligation to tell the truth about actual experience, and therefore it is obliged to accept the limits of what is actually or provably known. But works of imagination come of an impulse to transcend the limits of experience or provable knowledge in order to make a thing that is whole. No human work can become whole

> by including everything, but it can become whole in another way: by accepting its formal limits and then answering within those limits all the questions it raises. (3)

Berry's emphasis on "actual experience" in the first half of this quotation is of a piece with the Ruskin who wrote, "the more facts you give, the greater you are" (5.173). The language of wholeness, however, in the second half, echoes Ruskin's claims for the associative imagination, "that power of arrangement which . . . accepting the weaknesses, faults, and wrongnesses in all things that it sees . . . so places and harmonizes them that they form a noble whole" (5.111). In Berry's passage, the imagination "transcend[s] the limits of experience or provable knowledge in order to make a thing that is whole." Just as Jayber sees the people in his community "all as somehow perfected, beyond time, by one another's love, compassion, and forgiveness," so Berry sees the imperfections of his fictional subjects transcended by imagination.

In concluding our examination of Ruskin and Berry's stances on realism, we will examine in detail two passages from Berry's fiction. These passages are among the harshest and most objective in Berry's novels, describing scenes which would be easily amenable to the techniques of Literary Naturalism. The goal is to determine if Berry can rise to Ruskin's challenge of maintaining fidelity to the objective particulars of a scene while arranging and harmonizing those particulars through the imagination. As we shall see, Berry accomplishes this, avoiding both Naturalism and Idealism in his accounts, and goes further, drawing on myth and scripture to invest concrete details with a significance that transcends their physical state, thereby satisfying Ruskin's demand that details serve a noble purpose.

Our first example is the opening chapter of *A Place on Earth*. If any chapter in Berry were calculated to offend the sympathies of John Ruskin, this would be the one. As we recall, Ruskin placed tremendous importance on subject matter, classifying painters of "ordinary life" third, after painters of religious subjects and "great men," and within that lowest class, describing painters of "brutality and vice" as "holding a certain order in the abyss" (5.49). Of this last group, Ruskin's prime exemplar is the Dutch School of painting. According to Ruth Yeazell, author of *The Art of the Everyday*, Ruskin deplored the Dutch painters *not* for their lack of realism—on the contrary, their fidelity to nature was extraordinary—but for their "low" subject matter. In Ruskin's terms, the Dutch were "sots, gamblers, and debauchees, delighting in the reality of the alehouse more than in its pictures" (35.309). Berry's *A Place on Earth* begins with a card table and a sot. Would Ruskin consign this chapter, or its characters, to the abyss?

The scene opens on "The Empty Store" where a card game is taking place. Berry's description begins with the most mundane of details—"The seed bins are empty"—and continues with an almost photographic realism to describe "the slanting shadows and the slanting rainy light from the front windows," the "severe geometrical order" which the light imposes, and the "strict order and cleanness of the room" (3). The silence, competing only with the rain on the tin roof, provides the aural dimension of the scene, while various artifacts, a safe, its door ajar; a radio; a "large desk, its cover pulled down and locked," provide the props. At the back of the store, two windows "look out on a narrow lot covered with dead weed stalks, chicory and poke, and burdock, and the lighter brown napping of foxtail and wild oat" (4). In the middle of the lot stands a "disjointed heap of weather-blackened crates." Seen simply as a list of details, such

realism is devoid of meaning, of higher value or purpose. Ruskin described such technical accuracy by the Dutch painters with contempt, as "detail sought for its own sake. [It is] not the calculable bricks of the Dutch house-painters, nor the numbered hairs and mapped wrinkles of Denner, which constitute great art, they are the lowest and most contemptible art; but it is detail referred to a great end" (3.32). Whether Berry's detail is "sought for its own sake" or for "a great end" becomes clear on a second reading.

The objects are representative of the mental states of the men at the card-table. The door of the safe is ajar because "When Frank Lathrop cleaned out the store after his son Jasper went into the Army at the beginning of the war, he left the door of the safe ajar for fear that if he closed it he would never be able to work the combination to open it again" (3). The reluctance to close something, to put an end to something, for fear that it could not be resumed is what affects the minds of all who have sons or nephews in the war (a category which includes four of the five players). It is the same dread which keeps Mat from opening the government envelope which he knows will bring bad news about his son Virgil. Similarly, when Frank Lathrop locked up the store, and the desk, he had planned to burn the pile of crates in the lot, but "he felt his duty to his son was more finished than he wanted to believe. The act of burning seemed too final, too suggestive of a conclusion he was unable to face" (4). Upon leaving the game, Mat will look at the pile and consider it "a fact of the war; it remains for the same reason that he and Frank together have allowed the store to remain empty; they've foreclosed no possibilities" (6). The visual and aural descriptions of the room are also laden with meaning. The geometric shapes of the slanting lights "outline precisely the dimension of its silence and emptiness, but the strict order and cleanness of the room make it a silence that seems

actively expectant of sound, a carefully tended emptiness anticipating an arrival" (3). Similarly, the sound of the rain has been so continuous that "it seems to them the very presence and noise of emptiness. They have got used to the sound; consciousness, attentive to the details of the game, has overridden it, but at the back of their minds it persists." Both passages highlight the persistent sense of anticipation which grips the men, anticipation that knows "the uncertain nature of their involvement" in the war, anticipation which heightens "their sense of helplessness before an immeasurable fact" (10). Even the activity of the game is marked by this uncertainty: "So the rummy game is a creature of the war, shaped in the suspension of action, the suspension of all certain knowing, that the war has imposed on them" (12). The radio, which shares the silence with the rain, plays "so quietly that the music is no more than a series of stuttering accents like the far-off rattling of a snare drum" (4). It occupies its "niche among the boxes on the desk top, like an idol come to life above its altar, a crude cyclopean head erected and drowsily alert on the room's edge," until the news begins,

> And they hush for the precise voice of the announcer stating the facts of the war, continuing from the point at which it left off the hour before or the day before; the voice carefully objective, studiedly calm, a fact itself which remains whole and remote among the facts it utters. The words come to them unjudged, without lamentation or joy. Their quiet listening becomes an obedience, an homage. For a few minutes they let the war exist there in the room, calmly mouthing its deaths. (20)

The war is "an immeasurable fact," yet this voice tries to give it objective measure. These facts are a sort of false assurance, spoken by one not involved, one untouched by the tragedy. That these men must give such a voice homage reflects their passive, powerless state.

The connection between the Cyclops and the radio is clear to readers who know Homer's *Odyssey*. The Cyclops is called Polyphemus, which, according to Frederick Ahl and Hannah Roisman, means "The One Who Speaks Much," or "The One Much Spoken Of" (109). While there is some critical debate about which of these traditional interpretations is the more accurate, they are both equally applicable in Berry's usage, for the news on the radio both talks and is talked of. The image of the "crude, cyclopean head erected and drowsily alert on the room's edge . . . . calmly mouthing its deaths" refers literally to the casualty reports, but imaginatively recalls the picture of Polyphemus consuming Odysseus' comrades before his eyes. With just such casual savagery, the war is openly devouring the young men of Port William, while their fathers and uncles look on.

The image of the Cyclops emphasizes the extent to which the older men are imprisoned by the war. Even during the game, Mat feels an anxiety about the war that "has become . . . more of a physical state than anything else" (6). Were he to examine it "it would declare itself to be an extreme and desperate fear." Mat's fear is paralleled by that of Odysseus and his men, whose physical state is one of hopeless entrapment, awaiting the monster's return. They are not able to move the huge stone that blocks the entrance to the cave. Similarly, Mat and his fellows are not able to affect the war in any significant way but must wait for outside forces to bring resolution. Homer's story also raises questions about the role of human pride and bravado in violent conflict. At the start of Homer's episode, Odysseus and his men are finding all they need on an island some distance from the land of the Cyclopes. Odysseus, however, is not content to remain, but wishes to see the Cyclopes, despite the richness of his current state. With

hubris, he awaits the Cyclops at his cave, though his men wish to load the food and sheep into their boat and sail away: "But I wouldn't listen. It would have been far better / If I had!" (ll.218-19). Finally, they escape by hiding under Polyphemus' sheep (significantly, at the start of chapter one, Berry tells us that "A flock of sheep, heads down against the rain, straggles toward the barn at the top of the ridge for the night feeding" (4)), and Odysseus, safe on his boat, cannot resist a few final taunts:

> When we were offshore but still within earshot,
> I called out to the Cyclops, just to rub it in: . . .
> And when we were twice as far out to sea as before
> I called to the Cyclops again, with my men
> Hanging all over me and begging me not to: (ll. 473-74, 490-92)

With the last insult, Odysseus reveals his name to the monster, and the result is Polyphemus' prayer to Neptune, requesting that Odysseus not reach home alive, or if he does, "May he come late . . . and find trouble at home" (ll. 528-29). Neptune hears the prayer, and Odysseus' vanity adds ten years to his homecoming.

That Odysseus' bravado is the cause for much suffering for himself and his men concurs with Berry's writings on the causes of war. Though the men playing cards did not themselves cause the war, Berry is clear elsewhere that wars are often entered into because of foolishness, greed, or a lack of compassion. In *Hannah Coulter*, the "people of power kill children, the old send the young to die, because they have no imagination" (168). "By imagination," Hannah clarifies, "I mean knowledge and love. I mean compassion." In *Jayber Crow*, Jayber maintains that "Both sides, in making war, agree to these deaths, this dying of young soldiers in their pride," and finds himself personally culpable, "I felt involved in an old sickness of the world . . . . We had waded halfway across a bloody mire and could not get out except by wading halfway again, either

forward or back" (294). In Berry's fiction, it is often the bravado and restlessness of characters like Odysseus, or the aptly-named Troy, who bring destruction to themselves, their land, and their community. Homer's theme of return from war is particularly apt. *The Odyssey* is a poem about coming back home, and that is a frequent theme in Berry's novels. In *Hannah Coulter*, young people fail to return home because the modern industrial economy does not permit them. In *A Place on Earth*, war parallels the economy in robbing a community of its children. Although Mat Feltner may not have started the war, he will share in the consequences of Polyphemus' curse. Throughout the description of card game, Berry intersperses vignettes from Mat's morning at home, when he brings Hannah and Margaret the government letter telling them that Virgil was missing. Mat has found trouble in his house. Even when Mat is away from the cyclopean stare of the radio, he is still vulnerable to the stones cast by war.

Berry's chapter ends with a sot, Whacker Spradlin, the town drunk and provider of moonshine. Though the scene has something of comedy in it, coming immediately after the news of the war, and a few pages after Mat learns his son is missing in action, it has something of a sinister tone. Whacker's drunkenness recalls Polyphemus, and leads to an identification between Whacker and the war. He is introduced in the midst of a conversation about the weather, in a section headed "A Shift in the Wind."

> "It's March now," Old Jack says. "You can't tell what it'll do."
>
> "Well," Jayber says, "after it's stayed one way long enough you'll settle for nearly anything as long as it's different."
>
> Burley nods out the road in the direction of the river. "Speaking of anything, here comes Whacker."
>
> Even at that distance he is immense, his great paunch flaring his coat around him like a funnel. And at that distance it is already obvious he is drunk. (22)

Whacker's drunkenness makes him unpredictable, like the weather (and in the context of meteorology, his appearance as a "funnel" is frightening); like the weather, like the war, both Whacker and Polyphemus could appear at anytime. As the Cyclops was "a freak of nature, not like men who eat bread, / But like a lone wooded crag high in the mountains" (ll. 184-85), so Whacker is described as "immense," bearing down on them "like a locomotive." When they speak, he

> nods to them without looking at them or altering his gait, moving implacably forward, the downhill momentum of his great body seeming to dominate and threaten the pavement in front of him. He goes on past the drugstore and the poolroom.
>
> He goes on past Jayber Crow's barbershop at the bottom of the hill and starts up the next rise, looking straight ahead, his movements the same going uphill as going down, precarious and deliberate, as though he will go on through the town and beyond it in the same direction forever. (22-23)

He is implacable in his advance, literally "unpleasable." Likewise, Odysseus' gracious salutation is rejected by Polyphemus.

> You're dumb, stranger, or from far away,
> If you ask me to fear the Gods. . . .
> I wouldn't spare you or your men
> Out of fear of Zeus. I would spare them only
> If I myself wanted to. (ll. 265-66, 269-71)

The war cannot be reasoned with or spoken to; it does not stop to parley but goes on, heedless. This war will only give a nod, as Mat was only given a government letter to tell him of the loss of his son. The image of Whacker's drunken, unbalanced progress through this town, and onto the next, and onto the next, serves as a powerful metaphor for the immeasurable, uncertain, and silent progression of the war through the country. On the day that peace is announced, the comatose Whacker is "buried" in a mock funeral by Jayber and his friends. It is a scene full of Falstaffian humor—"We are hauling/His

aaaaaass/To the graveyard"—but it is also a symbolic act of "burying" the war itself, a war which has made itself drunk with the blood of men.

Both the significance given to the objects in the store and the intertextual relations between Berry's chapter and the *Odyssey* exemplify the ways in which imagination and literary forms can shape perception to a noble end. These imaginative elements give the story the "great end" that was essential to Ruskin's aesthetic. As we have seen, for Ruskin, myth was truer than objective observation of a merely material world. In a discussion of the myth of the birth of the Myrmidons, Ruskin derides "modern historians" who feel that they reach the truth by seeing "through" the myth, seeing that the story "signifies only the peopling of the island by a new tribe."

> Well, of course it does mean that, and it would equally have meant that whether you had been told that the new inhabitants were made of ants, or sticks, or leaves, or dust. But what you have to discern in any of the myths that have long dwelt in human thought is not what fact they represented, but what colour they were intended to give to it. (20.387)

In Berry's chapter, the story of the Cyclops gives war a particular "colour," a particular character. Just as the "commercial race of the Aegean" is made out of ants, so the war is made from a huge, drunken monster, blinded, revengeful, and seemingly provoked by those who suffer his rage. These connotations are not available to the abstract term "war." In a discussion of the various meanings implicit in the metaphor of the Wheel of Fortune, Ruskin writes, "These things are told or hinted to you, in the mythic picture, not with the impertinence and the narrowness of words, nor in any order compelling a monotonous succession of thought, but each as you choose or chance to read it, to be rested in or proceeded with as you will" (33.293). By using the imaginative figure of the Cyclops, Berry avoids the "impertinence" of didacticism and the "monotonous

succession" of reason, allowing instead the reader to rest or proceed through the various shades of meaning at will. This is the richness of Berry's fiction; just as Ruskin drew on myth as a way to interpret, but not replace, scientific observation, so Berry makes use of it to fully draw out the implications of the events he portrays.

A second example of literary form and imagination is in *Jayber Crow,* as Jayber crosses a flooded river, at night, during his journey back to Port William. It has been raining for days as Jayber has walked across Kentucky, but not until Frankfort is he faced with the river. In that panicked city, "the turmoil of the flood was right there to be seen" (77), as the streets are filled with traffic and people needing shelter, carrying their belongings from their flooded houses. As he approaches the river, he hears "the great sort of rushing roar" of the water: "The air was full of the fear of it—the waters and the sleet falling and the sky altogether dark above the little human lights that were winking and flashing and darting about" (78). He seeks a bridge, a way over the river, only to be turned away by a policeman who tells him that it is too dangerous to cross. "That bridge," he shouts to Jayber, "is liable to go any minute. They've lassoed a big barn right up the river yonder, and tied it up to some trees. If that barn breaks loose and hits this bridge, she's a *goner*, and you too if you're on it." Jayber makes the claim of community—"I've got to get to my people down there!"—and the policeman reluctantly allows him to pass. As Jayber crosses the bridge, he hears the "many-stranded sound of the river . . . like a living element . . . . like a big crowd shouting" and feels the throbbing through the bridge. At the middle of the bridge, he stops to look upstream.

> A strengthless, shapeless cloud of light that in the daytime would have seemed a shadow hovered over the river. Without trying exactly to see anything, but sort of just letting myself see, I could make out the troubled surface of the water and the shapes of things moving swiftly down—great

> rafts of drift, barrels, bottles, sawlogs, whole trees, pieces of furniture. I even saw what looked to be the gable of a house, with what might have been a cat perched on top. (79)

There is probably no episode in Berry better suited to naturalistic treatment than this. The flood is a raging force, insensible, indiscriminate, unaware of the "little human lights" and panicked crowds that are darting about it. By standing on the bridge, Jayber risks death, annihilation, by a force that is a "living element," a phrase that grants the river both objective distance and animal-like ferocity. By comparing the sound to "a big crowd shouting," Jayber emphasizes the anonymity of the river, the sense that it is not even subject to an individual will. Finally, the presence of barns, barrels, bottles, sawlogs, furniture, houses, and that most domestic of animals—the housecat—adrift among the driftwood and trees paints a picture of human forms torn from their moorings, even from their meanings. Human attempts at order, at settlement, have been rejected by unfeeling nature. Jayber's difficulty in seeing expresses a deeper problem: his inability to come to terms with what he sees. At first reading, language seems no more effective in assigning meaning to this chaos than the rope that strains to keep the broken barn in place.

It is most significant, then, to note that Berry refuses to treat this episode with merely an unrelieved sense of disconnection between the elements described. While the passages above demonstrate a certain "access of immediacy," they are contextualized within a narrative of purpose and imagination. This context begins well before the flood, before Jayber even sets out from Louisville, as he describes his decision to leave for Port William. There were no sudden revelations or blinding lights, but "a motion of the heart toward my origins. Far from rising above them, I was longing to sink into them until I

would know the fundamental things. I needed to know the original first chapter of the world" (73). As far as the reader knows at this point, this language of "fundamental things" and the "first chapter" refers simply to a return to humble beginnings. Jayber has refused to "make something" of himself. As we shall see momentarily, however, Berry is seeding his narrative with the biblical account of Creation. The theme of return to origins appears a few pages later. As the rain continues, Jayber begins to contemplate the state of the river he knows he must shortly cross.

> I had lived for my whole childhood, you might say, in sight of that river. I knew what a two-foot rise meant . . . And all along, as I was making my way back to it again, I got more and more excited. As I imagined the water rising in the river valley, I seemed to feel it rising in me. That feeling was my old life coming back to me, though I hadn't the words or even a thought for it. As in those first weeks at The Good Shepherd when I had longed to go home, I now longed to see the waters. (76-77)

Again, the passage could be read simply as setting the scene for his arrival in Port William, as well as providing a unity between Jayber's present state and childhood memories. His identification with the river, however—"As I imagined the water rising in the river valley, I seemed to feel it rising in me"—argues for a much more important role for the river than merely an obstacle to be passed. The river represents an aspect of Jayber's self that must be overcome, that must be put in order. The word "imagined" prepares us for the phrase "imagine myself as . . .," which, as we shall see later in this study, indicates decisions of personal identity and meaning. The proximity of "the Good Shepherd" and "I longed to see the waters" suggests baptism, a sort of spiritual regeneration that must occur before Jayber can continue with his life. The Christian imagery continues with the flood itself. Immediately after describing the "little human lights that were winking and flashing" above the flood, Jayber recalls that "it was exactly

what Aunt Cordie could make you imagine when she was in one of her end-of-the-world moods—the signs being fulfilled, and the dreadful horsemen about to make their way across the earth" (78). To reader's familiar with John's *Apocalypse*, the "many-stranded sound of the river" gains new significance as the "voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters" of Revelation 14:2. On the bridge, in his moment of crisis, words finally come to Jayber.

> And this is what it was like—the words were just right there in my mind, and I knew they were true: "the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." I'm not sure that I can tell you what was happening to me then, or that I know even now. At the time I surely wasn't trying to tell myself. But after all my years of reading in that book and hearing it read and believing and disbelieving it, I seemed to have wandered my way back to the beginning—not just of the book, but of the world—and all the rest was yet to come. I felt knowledge crawl over my skin. (79)

The acquisition of language, of metaphor, of imagination seems sudden to Jayber, but Berry has been preparing the reader for this since the chapter's beginning. With the reference to Genesis 1, we understand the significance of Jayber's desire "to know the original first chapter of the world" (73). We also recognize the "shapeless cloud of light that . . . hovered over the river" as the Spirit brooding upon the waters. This is a case of convocation, of what Berry calls "recalling past voices into presence" ("Responsibility" 89), and brings us back to our discussion of intertextuality. *Jayber Crow*, like a good poem, "exists at the center of a complex reminding, to which it relates as both cause and effect." As Jayber is reminded of the biblical precedent for his situation, he is given the Word/words he needs to make sense of his life. This passage also demonstrates how the flooded river gives Jayber the experience he needs to understand the Bible as never before. In a beautiful harmony, recalling Ruskin's imagination associative, the two

parts—the word and the experience—enlighten each other, make each other whole "as both cause and effect." Jayber's encounter with the flood is more than an episode in a journey, more even than a metaphor for Jayber's re-imagining of himself; it is a commentary on the nature of reading, on the intertextuality between, not only two texts—Berry's and the Bible, but text and experience. As text and experience intersect, each informs the other.

With this idea, we return to our beginning, the first chapter of *Modern Painters*, where Ruskin describes the two ends of art as "first, to induce in the spectator's mind the faithful conception of any natural objects whatsoever; . . . second, to guide the spectator's mind to those objects most worthy of its contemplation, and to inform him of the thoughts and feelings with which these were regarded by the artist himself" (3.133). To transfer this idea from painting to literature, the author of fiction provides in a single text both a particular, concrete experience and the imaginative insight with which to understand it. In the paragraph immediately following this passage, Ruskin metaphorically contrasts the two distinct ends.

> In attaining the first end the painter only places the spectator where he stands himself; he sets him before the landscape and leaves him. The spectator is alone. He may follow out his own thoughts as he would in the natural solitude; or he may remain untouched, unreflecting and regardless, as his disposition may incline him; but he has nothing of thought given to him; no new ideas, no unknown feelings, forced on his attention or his heart. The artist is his conveyance, not his companion, his horse, not his friend. But in attaining the second end, the artist not only places the spectator, but talks to him; makes him a sharer in his own strong feelings and quick thoughts; hurries him away in his own enthusiasm; guides him to all that is beautiful; snatches him from all that is base; and leaves him more than delighted, ennobled and instructed, under the sense of having not only beheld a new scene, but of having held communion with a new mind, and having been endowed for a time with the keen perception and the impetuous emotions of a nobler and more penetrating intelligence. (3.133-34)

This passage is extremely important for understanding the similarities between Berry and Ruskin. Ruskin begins with the first end of the artist, fidelity to the landscape, to the observed particulars of life, but moves quickly to the second end, guiding the viewer's mind. This is not guiding from a distance, however; rather, the artist and the viewer stand side-by-side, as "friend[s]" and "sharer[s]" in feelings and thoughts. Through the imaginative mediation of painting, the viewer gains "the sense of having not only beheld a new scene, but of having held communion with a new mind." Art, in other words, allows the viewer not just to view, but to experience—physically, emotionally, mentally—what the artist has imagined.

Both episodes from the novel demonstrate that Berry's understanding of realism is compatible with Ruskin's. Berry accurately describes people and things—the sensible particulars of a place—without surrendering to either type of reductionism, the mechanistic of science or the animalistic of literary naturalism. He portrays both the imperfections and limitations of the world, but gives meaning to that portrayal by arranging and harmonizing it through the imagination so that both object and thought are valued. The intertextuality of text and experience described in these two episodes brings us back to the beginning of this chapter, and forms a guiding template for this study of Wendell Berry and John Ruskin. My claim is that Ruskin's art and social criticism enlighten Berry's fiction in much the same way that the scriptures illuminate Jayber's experience of the flood (though Berry's work is much more structured than the flood, of course). At the same time, the experience of reading Berry's fiction invests Ruskin's principles with an imaginative reality. Just as the story of the flood enables both Jayber and the reader to experience the chaos and power of the moment of Creation, of Genesis

chapter one, so Berry's novels provide a particular imaginative experience of the ideas described in Ruskin's prose. I hope in this way to avoid the charge of Berry's "Notice" at the beginning of *Jayber Crow*: "persons attempting to explain, interpret, explicate, analyze, deconstruct, or otherwise 'understand' it will be exiled to a desert island in the company only of other explainers." By seeing Berry's fiction through the lens of a writer so like-minded as Ruskin, it is to be hoped that explanation, interpretation and analysis "should constantly be stayed by the love of beauty, and accuracy of knowledge by tenderness of emotion" (5.387). This study is not a deconstruction of Berry's world, but an accounting of the world Berry constructs amid a convocation of Ruskin's voice. The goal is not vivisection that reveals a skeleton of ideas, but conviviality that witnesses those ideas in motion, brought to life in particular people in particular places. In the fiction of Wendell Berry, we witness the principles of John Ruskin incarnated through Berry's imagination, "with their skins on them, and with their souls in them" (22.223).

CHAPTER FOUR

A Place on Earth: Autonomy and Obligation

Both Wendell Berry and John Ruskin write in times that are defined by classical liberalism. In the last half of the nineteenth century, Ruskin's England was changed economically and politically by the ideas of liberal writers such as Adam Smith, John Locke and Jeremy Bentham. Liberalism's distinct contribution was two-fold: first was the notion of individual autonomy, the right of the individual to choose his or her own good and to pursue it without interference. The business contract became the model for social ties, as relationships and obligations entered into willingly by both parties became primary. The elevation of self-interest was liberalism's second contribution. Locke said that we could not know the highest good for humanity and, therefore, could not structure society around it (Grant 17). Into this vacuum, self-interest was injected as the appropriate motive power, on the premise that each individual could decide for him or herself what was the highest good. The surprising result is that in an era as religious as the Victorian period, the pursuit of self-interest came to be recognized as appropriate, even as virtuous. As regards Berry, the United States, finds its origins in classical liberalism, and preserves many of liberalism's tenets in its economics and politics. The liberty to pursue one's own interest is enshrined in its founding documents and in its popular culture. Furthermore, Berry's status as an American writer, particularly a rural American writer, places him in the context of both pioneers and Romantic individualists, authors who, like Henry David Thoreau, left their communities to seek autonomy and isolation.

Neither Berry nor Ruskin, however, accepts the assumptions of liberalism. After Thomas Carlyle, Ruskin was one of the few significant cultural figures in nineteenth-century England to oppose liberalism's claim that individuals are independent of each other, that life may be conducted with no regard for anything but the individual's own interests. The four essays that comprise *Unto This Last*, his 1860 attack on the "science" of political economy, propose that relations between master and worker be guided by obligation and a concern for justice, rather than self-interest, and his essays on art, published throughout his life, argue for a sense of life's *telos*, an awareness of the highest human good that may be found in beauty. Similarly, Berry, through the creation of the fictional town of Port William, presents a picture of a community that exists through continuing fidelity to values such as obligation and responsibility, both to other members of the community and to the land that sustains them.

When Berry is read against the background of Ruskin's struggle with liberalism, and with an ear for Ruskin's voice within Berry's fiction, three insights regarding liberalism become apparent. First of all, he frequently places classically liberal propositions within the minds and actions of children, or of adults who act like children. Implicit in this juxtaposition is that liberalism is a fantasy that is not attainable by, nor desirable to, responsible, mature persons. Ruskin finds a similar childishness in the materialism of political economists. In his childish adults, Berry examines the legitimacy of instinct as a motivating force, with an eye towards liberalism's origins in the "state of nature." Both Berry and Ruskin disavow instinct as a legitimate motivator, substituting instead a *telos*, a good which is beyond self-interest and survival. Berry's second critique of liberalism appears in his emphasis on education and tradition. If the *telos* is to be

communicated, it must be passed down from one generation to the next. Both Berry and Ruskin contrast the substantial world of education and tradition with liberalism's shallow world of "beginnings without memories." Finally, Berry demonstrates how liberalism cannot provide an adequate *ethos* for stewardship of the land. The land is not a blank slate, nor is it a party to a contract that can be dissolved at will and forgotten. Rather, it is the place in which humans interact with non-human nature. Against liberalism's standard-less world of autonomous individuals, non-human nature provides a benchmark for Berry's characters, a standard by which they can measure their own progress toward the good. To work the land is to accept the claims of others, of their mistakes in the past, and to learn from them, so that you might, through proper care, fulfill your obligation to pass that land improved to those who come after you. This is a world, not of autonomy, but of Ruskin's "affection *owed*."[1]

In this chapter, I study Berry's struggle with liberalism in several works, focusing primarily on his first major novel, *A Place on Earth*. The issue appears in all of his novels, and most of his short stories, and thus forms the background for the following chapters of this study. A critique of the assumptions of liberalism informs Berry's perspectives on war, on education, and on pastorship. By noting the similarities between Ruskin and Berry on this topic, I connect Berry to a tradition of social thought that better characterizes his art than the American nature writing with which he is often identified.

In Berry's work, the inadequacies of liberalism are often seen when characters live lives of fantasy, as in the lives of children, or of men who are acting like children. In

[1] For an insightful discussion of Berry's advocacy of an Aristotelian democracy of self-governance and discipline over a liberal democracy of autonomy and rights, see Patrick J. Deneen's "Wendell Berry and Democratic Self-Governance." While Deneen's article is concerned primarily with Berry's essays, I agree with his claim that "Berry is perhaps our clearest and most profound thinker about an alternative understanding to the prevailing commitments of liberal democracy today" (74).

his novella *A World Lost*, Berry portrays a child's autonomy as Andy Catlett, age nine, disregards his Grandmother's warning not to swim in the pond alone. He exults in his freedom, both from authority and from any obligation or connection beyond the immediate present: "Back there at the pond by myself I could maintain for at least a while the illusion that I was no more than myself, Andy Catlett, as ancestorless as the first creature, neither the son of Bess and Wheeler Catlett nor the grandson of Dorie and Marce Catlett and Mat and Margaret Feltner" (10-11). The "illusion" that Andy is "as ancestorless as the first creature" is a pointed reference to liberalism, for, as George Parkin Grant points out in *English-Speaking Justice*, liberalism is based on the notion of the individual alone in a state of nature. For John Locke, this was a Hobbesian state of war of all against all, in which contracts with other individuals become necessary for survival (Grant 16). For modern liberals like John Rawls, it is the "original condition," in which an individual's calculations of his or her own interests set the limits for all members of society (35). In both cases, the individual is alone, with no prior connections, responsibilities or obligations. John Milbank, in *Theology & Social Theory*, derides this type of fantasy world, describing liberalism's tendency to "mak[e] normative the spatial relationships between adult, autonomous subjects, a habit which received its *reduction ad absurdum* in William Godwin's vision of a world of finite immortality, without sexual passion, without birth, and without death" (202). The absurdity of such a view, which in Berry is forgivable only in a child, is fundamental to Ruskin's critique of liberalism.

In the opening paragraphs of *Unto This Last*, Ruskin describes the assumptions of the political economists.

> "The social affections," says the economist, "are accidental and disturbing elements in human nature; but avarice and the desire of progress are constant elements. Let us eliminate the inconstants, and, considering the human being merely as a covetous machine, examine by what laws of labour, purchase, and sale, the greatest accumulative result in wealth is obtainable. Those laws once determined, it will be for each individual afterwards to introduce as much of the disturbing affectionate element as he chooses, and to determine for himself the result on the new conditions supposed." (17.25)

Ruskin argues that by removing these "inconstants" the economist removes what is fundamental to human nature: the drive to seek social connections with other human beings. This is what Locke and Rawls have done by establishing as determinative an original condition or state of nature in which an individual's interests are the only things to be considered. The social affections cannot simply be reintroduced later, because they, in Ruskin's words, "are not of the same nature as the constant ones: they alter the essence of the creature under examination the moment they are added." Ruskin dismisses a social theory based on such assumptions: "Observe, I neither impugn nor doubt the conclusion of the science if its terms are accepted. I am simply uninterested in them, as I should be in those of a science of gymnastics which assumed that men had no skeletons . . . . The reasoning might be admirable, the conclusions true, and the science deficient only in applicability" (17.26). Berry enacts the same dismissal by describing this philosophy as the world-view of a nine-year-old boy.

Berry, like Ruskin, is clear that accepting obligation and responsibility leads to becoming fully human. Andy does not perish in the forbidden pool, as we might expect—in the "black and cold" depths, he says, "it was revealed to me that if I drowned before I lived to be grown I would be sorry"—but he is forced to pass from childhood to

adulthood shortly afterward. Upon returning home, he is told that his father wishes to speak with him.

> And I remember how terribly I did not want to go. I had come in out of the great free outdoor world of my childhood—the world in which, in my childish fantasies, I hoped someday to be a man. But my father, even more than my mother with her peach switch, was the messenger of another world, in which, as I unwillingly knew, I was already involved in expectation and obligation, difficulty and sorrow. It was as if I knew this even from my father's smile, from the very touch of his hand. Later I would understand how surely even then he had begun to lead me to some of the world's truest pleasures, but I was far from such understanding then. (15-16)

In the context of liberalism, this passage is full of meaning. "I had come in out of the great free outdoor world of my childhood"—in its equivalence of freedom outdoors with childhood—is a line that would never have been written by an American nature writer of the liberal tradition such as Thoreau or Edward Abbey. For them, the "world's truest pleasures" are found in that free, outdoor world, not among the "expectation and obligation" of social relations. The passage reflects Berry's connection to the Agrarian tradition, a tradition which values the outdoor world of nature, but interacts with that nature through human community and the responsible human development of a particular place.

John Crowe Ransom, in "Reconstructed—but Unregenerate," contrasts this tradition with the American fascination with pioneering, and, in the process, links Agrarianism to the English tradition.

> England differs from America doubtless in several respects, but most notably in the fact that England did her pioneering an indefinite number of centuries ago, did it well enough, and has been living pretty tranquilly on her establishment ever since, with infrequent upheavals and replacements. . . . Their descendants have had the good sense to consider that this establishment was good enough for them. They have elected to live their comparatively easy and routine lives in accordance with the

> tradition which they inherited, and they have consequently enjoyed a leisure, a security, and an intellectual freedom that were never the portion of pioneers.
>
> The pioneering life is not the normal life, whatever some Americans may suppose. (3-4)

"The pioneering life" might best be expressed in Berry's essay "A Native Hill," in which he recalls "The Battle of the Fire-Brands," an incident in which a group of Kentucky roadbuilders, cutting a road along an Indian path, cut down several massive hickories to build a campfire, then enacted a bloody brawl with flaming cudgels, all for fun. Berry finds the episode emblematic of the differences between the Native Americans, who, like the peasants of the Old World, "were people who belonged deeply and intricately to their places. Their ways of life had evolved slowly in accordance with their knowledge of their land, of its needs, of their own relation of dependence and responsibility to it" (11), and the road builders, who "on the contrary, were *placeless* people. . . . Having left Europe far behind, they had not yet in any meaningful sense arrived in America, not yet having *devoted* themselves to any part of it in a way that would produce the intricate knowledge of it necessary to live in it without destroying it." Whereas the Indians created a path which is "the perfect adaptation, through experience and familiarity, of movement to place" (12), the pioneers build a road which "embodies a resistance against the landscape" and whose "tendency is to translate place into space in order to traverse it with the least effort." In *Jayber Crow*, Berry writes that the freeway "made distant what had been close, and close what had been distant" (281). The freedom implicit in the road—freedom from the responsibility and accountability to the land it traverses—neatly captures the pioneer spirit.

To return to *A World Lost*, when Andy "come[s] in" from this world of freedom and autonomy in the wild, he is enacting what Berry has done in his relationship to American nature writing, traded the pioneering spirit for a concern with establishment and tradition. The "peach switch" of Andy's mother is another connection with liberalism, for it represents self-interest. Liberalism is closely tied to Utilitarianism, the nineteenth-century doctrine that understood human behavior to be based in the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. The peach switch is part of this, and, as such, is probably appropriate to a child of Andy's age. Maturity, though, cannot be brought about simply by utilitarian methods. Berry writes that the father is the gateway to this other world, and Andy's father does not use self-interest as a motivator. If Andy accepts that he is "already involved in expectation and obligation," that he is not an autonomous individual, his father can lead him "to some of the world's truest pleasures." The progression from obligation to pleasure would make little sense to the classical liberal, who is defined, according to Grant, as one who sees liberty as the central human good (4). Nor is the connection between pleasure and "obligation, difficulty and sorrow" comprehensible to the Utilitarian of Ruskin's time, for whom the individual's pursuit of pleasure was the guiding concern. This passage exemplifies Berry's ability to take ideas such as autonomy, liberalism, and utilitarianism—subject matter usually thought appropriate for the essay—and express them with vividness and imagination in his fiction.

For Ruskin, right behavior is not determined simply by following one's own interests. Just as Andy cannot be made to grow solely through the peach switch, so, Ruskin maintains, humans need to put aside their own interests and be led by justice.

Rejecting the idea that business ought to be based on worker and master each pursuing his own interests, Ruskin argues that self-interest is too inadequate a guide.

> And the varieties of circumstance which influence these reciprocal interests are so endless, that all endeavour to deduce rules of action from balance of expediency is in vain. And it is meant to be in vain. For no human actions ever were intended by the Maker of men to be guided by balances of expediency, but by balances of justice. He has therefore rendered all endeavours to determine expediency futile for evermore. No man ever knew, or can know, what will be the ultimate result to himself, or to others, of any given line of conduct. But every man may know, and most of us do know, what is a just and unjust act. (17.26)

Grant explains that liberalism relies on the idea that human beings are the best "calculators" of their own interests. To be rational, in fact, means to be able to calculate one's interests (20). Ruskin here argues that such calculation is impossible. It is better to follow justice, a vision of human good, than to allow each individual to pursue his or her own idea of happiness. In the next paragraph, he clarifies that justice includes the social affections: "I have said balances of justice, meaning, in the term justice, to include affection,—such affection as one man *owes* to another. All right relations between master and operative, and all their best interests, ultimately depend on these" (17.28). Here, Ruskin draws on the Aristotelian sense of justice as giving what is owed, but, in his emphasis on affection, he incorporates the Christian notion of love as the highest virtue. These are the affections that the economists had removed as "inconstant factors," that Locke and Rawls ignore in their "original positions," and that Andy Catlett imagined himself without when he found himself "free" to swim in the forbidden pool.

This contrast between fundamental notions of human good, *telos*, and the chimerical lures of shifting interests is expressed in Berry by the older Andy Catlett. In

Andy Catlett: Early Travels, the eponymous narrator contrasts, in his middle age, the old world of his parents and grandparents with the new world around him.

> Increasingly over the last maybe forty years, the thought has come to me that the old world in which our people lived by the work of their hands, close to weather and earth, plants and animals, was the true world; and that the new world of cheap energy and ever cheaper money, honored greed, and dreams of liberation from every restraint, is mostly theater. This new world seems a jumble of scenery and props never quite believable, an economy of fantasies and moods, in which it is hard to remember either the timely world of nature or the eternal world of the prophets and poets. And I fear, I believe I know, that the doom of the older world I knew as a boy will finally afflict the new one that replaced it. (93)

This elegiac contrast of old and new is familiar to readers of Berry. What stands out to readers of Ruskin, however, are the elements of liberalism. The interests pursued by individuals—"cheap energy and ever cheaper money"—are contrasted with substantial, enduring goods—nature—seen in weather and land, plants and animals—and the "eternal world" of religion and literature. The phrase "honored greed" is a damning indictment of what liberalism has done by elevating self-interest to a fundamental human value. Berry is clear, though, that such a move only results in "an economy of fantasies." "Economy" is often a positive word in Berry, when it is attached to its root meaning of house-management, and applied toward things that support life, that increase well-being; in this context, though, it is "theater," closer to what is commonly meant by "materialism," an ill-fated chase after illusory wealth.

This is a prevalent theme in the Agrarians. Richard Weaver, in *Ideas Have Consequences*, claims that "since modern man has not defined his way of life, he initiates himself into an endless series when he enters the struggle for an 'adequate' living" (14). As Ransom points out, such an endless pursuit can never be reconciled to conservatism.

> All the true progressivists intend to have a program so elastic that they can always propose new worlds to conquer. If his Utopia were practicable really, and if the progressivist should secure it, he would then have to defend it from further progress, which would mean his transformation from a progressivist into a conservative. Which is unthinkable. (7)

The progressivist Utopia, in that it is never arrived at, never made real, recalls the "theater" aspect of Andy's analysis. The distinction between the old and new worlds is made in *Unto This Last* when Ruskin defines the concept of value. He first gives the true sense of value, which is very similar to Berry's idea of home economy: "To be ―valuable, therefore, is to ―avail towards life. A truly valuable or availing thing is that which leads to life with its whole strength. In proportion as it does not lead to life, or as its strength is broken, it is less valuable; in proportion as it leads away from life, it is unvaluable or malignant" (17.84). In contrast, the political economy of Ruskin's day describes as "valuable," things which do not "avail towards life." In a contrast between childhood and maturity much like Andy's, Ruskin differentiates a real economy from the false one of his time.

> The real science of political economy, which has yet to be distinguished from the bastard science, as medicine from witchcraft, and astronomy from astrology, is that which teaches nations to desire and labour for the things that lead to life: and which teaches them to scorn and destroy the things that lead to destruction. And if, in a state of infancy, they supposed indifferent things, such as excrescences of shell-fish, and pieces of blue and red stone, to be valuable, and spent large measures of the labour which ought to be employed for the extension and ennobling of life, in diving or digging for them, and cutting them into various shapes,—or if, in the same state of infancy, they imagine precious and beneficent things, such as air, light, and cleanliness, to be valueless,—or if, finally, they imagine the conditions of their own existence, by which alone they can truly possess or use anything, such, for instance, as peace, trust, and love, to be prudently exchangeable, when the markets offer, for gold, iron, or excrescences of shells—the great and only science of Political Economy teaches them, in all these cases, what is vanity, and what substance; and how the service of Death, the Lord of Waste, and of eternal emptiness,

> differs from the service of Wisdom, the Lady of Saving, and of eternal fullness. (17.85)

The passage has numerous parallels to Berry. True economy's ability to teach "nations to desire and labour for the things that lead to life" recalls Andy's old world "in which our people lived by the work of their hands, close to weather and earth, plants and animals." In contrast, Ruskin's "indifferent things, such as excrescences of shell-fish, and pieces of blue and red stone" mirror the cheap energy and cheaper money of Andy's present. Trading "precious and beneficient things, such as air, light, and cleanliness . . . peace, trust, and love" for temporary gain is a nice illustration of the results of the "honored greed" which Andy sees around him. Finally, Berry's contrast of "scenery and props, never quite believable" with "the prophets and the poets" echoes Ruskin's contrast of "Waste" with "Wisdom." Both describe the vanity of pursuing temporal interests rather than enduring values. The fact that both Berry and Ruskin tie their critiques of liberalism to economics is not surprising since, according to Grant, English liberalism was basically bourgeois and was intended more to liberate the spread of commercial industry than to preserve human rights (9). That both Berry and Ruskin tie these fantasy worlds of free choice to childhood and infancy is revealing, since Grant points out that liberalism makes adult, autonomous calculators who can judge their own interests the normative model for humanity (16). When Ruskin uses the figure of children playing on a beach to illustrate the political economist's superficial fascination with spectacle, he anticipates a striking element in the fictional world of novelists such as Berry. Berry and Ruskin seem to say that such "adult calculators," in their quest for lives free from obligation, are actually living a child's fantasy.

The adult living a child's fantasy is, surprisingly perhaps, a recurrent theme in Berry. One instance, in *Hannah Coulter*, recounts the dissolution of the marriage of Margaret, Hannah's daughter by Virgil Feltner, to Marcus, and the resulting rebellion of Virgie, their son. While divorce is obviously motivated by a desire for autonomy, Berry's account, when seen as a response to liberalism, yields sophisticated insights into human nature, insights mirroring those of Ruskin, a hundred years before. In Berry's account, Margaret and Marcus' marriage is, even before the divorce, marked by autonomy. They live in the city, where they can find jobs as teachers, but their schools are in two different directions. She has to buy a car to commute, and pay for it with credit. Hannah laments that "they would be one couple with two jobs, two incomes, and, if I'm not mistaken, two bank accounts" (119). Hannah's comment likely seems old-fashioned to most of Berry's readers, but this model of marriage is a new thing in the knowledge of the Port William membership. Significantly, this marriage develops outside of the membership, for within that community the web of relationships and obligations would not have required, nor allowed, such autonomy. This physical and financial autonomy results in emotional distance, and soon Marcus has fallen in love with a co-worker and asked for a divorce. In an ironic disavowal of autonomy, Marcus claims that "It had happened . . . because 'it wanted to happen.' Not because he wanted it to happen, of course" (140). Here Marcus adopts the language of obligation, an unfamiliar vocabulary for him, only to excuse actions of which he is ashamed. It is telling that Marcus only acknowledges an outside force in his life when negative events have occurred. If, as liberalism maintains, freedom is the only good, then bad things must be caused by obligations. For most of Berry's characters, recognizing the significance of

outside forces and adapting to them are signs of maturity, whether those forces are the weather, the land, or people to whom they are obligated. That Marcus does not respect Margaret's claim on him through marriage, but simultaneously admits that "it," the affair, "wanted to happen," demonstrates Marcus' hypocrisy.

Hannah recognizes this, of course, and can hardly restrain herself from going "to work on Marcus with a two-handed piss-ellum club" (141). In her calmer moments, though, she recalls her earlier good impressions of him, and her analysis of his behavior is that he has traded that potential for good character for his animal instincts.

> But Marcus, as I well knew, was not a frog. Marcus, in fact, had been pretty well what the recipe called for: handsome, smart, well-mannered, from a nice family, a promising young man in every way. So how come he ended up leaving his wife and boy, talking about "fulfillment" and his "need to be free"? "It's the time," I thought. "The time wants men to be as silly in character as they are by nature." (142)

After further ruminations on character and nature, in which she admits that the womanly instinct to be admired is often no better than manly instinct to do the admiring, Hannah settles on an animal metaphor more explicit than frogs: "One night I said to Nathan, 'What are we going to be, just a bunch of livestock? Are the men just going to breed from one to the next like buck sheep?'" (142). By moving the discussion to animal behavior, Berry is linking Marcus' fantasy-life of freedom to a life lived as an animal, a life lived by instinct. By refusing to acknowledge his obligations, Marcus has returned to a "state of nature."

"Nature" is a conflicted term, and one might think that Berry, as one of the Agrarians and close to the natural world, would elevate instinct. Weaver addresses the problems with acting on instinct in *Ideas Have Consequences*.

> Many cannot conceive why form should be allowed to impede the expression of honest hearts. The reason lies in one of the limitations imposed upon man: unformed expression is ever tending toward ignorance. Good intention is primary, but it is not enough: that is the lesson of the experiment of romanticism. (25)

Form and structure, which are created by culture, are necessary for humans to interact with nature. This reliance on human culture and tradition is how Agrarianism differs from much modern environmentalism, which glorifies the "natural" and the "wild." Marcus' actions, according to Weaver, likely result from a "desire for immediacy" which aims "to dissolve the formal aspects of everything," such as marriage and family," to get at the suppositious reality behind them" (24). For the Agrarians, however, these "formal aspects," which Weaver variously calls "structure," "measure," and "style," allow the right "apprehension" of reality. Berry states this another way in *The Art of the Commonplace*. Speaking about sexual "freedom," he writes:

> At the root of culture must be the realization that uncontrolled energy is disorderly—that in nature all energies move in forms; that, therefore, in a human order energies must be *given* forms. It must have been plain at the beginning, as cultural degeneracy has made it plain again and again, that one can be indiscriminately sexual but not indiscriminately responsible, and that irresponsible sexuality would undermine any possibility of culture since it implies a hierarchy based purely upon brute strength, cunning, regardless of value and of consequence. Fidelity can thus be seen as the necessary discipline of sexuality, the practical definition of sexual responsibility, or the definition of the moral limits within which such responsibility can be conceived and enacted. (116-17)

The success or failure of most characters in Berry's novels is decided by the extent to which they follow the dictates of form and measure and exercise careful stewardship of resources. This is what distinguishes a Mat Feltner or Elton Penn from a Roger Merchant or Troy Chatham. Ruskin shares this view. For him, nature is not a reservoir of passions and instincts, but a world of highly structured forms, the right apprehension of which is a

spiritually ennobling discipline. Early in his career, he linked nature to *telos* by defining "Vital Beauty" as "the appearance of felicitous fulfillment of function in living things" (4.146). He describes an alpine flower, having struggled to emerge from the snow and now "shudder[ing] over the icy cleft that it has cloven, as if partly wondering at its own icy grave." A person who is aware of the spiritual implications of nature will respond to this flower with admiration.

> There is now uttered to us a call for sympathy, now offered to us an image of moral purpose and achievement, which, however unconscious or senseless the creature may indeed be that so seems to call, cannot be heard without affection, nor contemplated without worship, by any of us whose heart is rightly tuned, or whose mind is clearly and surely sighted. (4.147)

Each object of nature, even one "unconscious or senseless," provides humanity with "an image of moral purpose and achievement." If that image of purpose is noble, as with the struggling flower, it evokes a response of worship in those who see it accurately and whose hearts are "rightly tuned." Ruskin spells out what a heart rightly tuned means in the next page: "for he who loves not God, nor his brother, cannot love the grass beneath his feet, and the creatures which live not for his uses, filling those spaces in the universe which he needs not; while on the other hand, none can love God, nor his human brother, without loving all things which his Father loves" (4:148). This is "worship," a recognition of the creature's intrinsic value—its "fulfillment of function"—and in appreciating it, we are fulfilled as well, for a right response to nature's beauty indicates a right spirit within us. Weaver says much the same when he finds this position to be the foundation from which other decisions are made: "we begin our other affirmations after a categorical statement that life and the world are to be cherished" (*Ideas* 19). Nature here

is not an avenue of escape from forms but an arena in which we are shaped and molded by them.

As regards instinct and "natural" drives, Ruskin's argument over nature arose not with Hobbes but with Darwin. As Jonathan Smith points out in *Charles Darwin and Victorian Visual Culture* Darwin threatened Ruskin by replacing a spiritual response to nature with an instinctual one. It is surprising to note that Ruskin was not an outspoken opponent of Darwin along the typical lines of Victorian debate. An avid amateur geologist himself, Ruskin said little against Darwin and Lyell's claims for the age of the earth. Having written a great deal about the changefulness of nature, he was likewise reluctant to oppose evolution too directly. Ruskin engaged Darwin, however, full force on the issue of beauty. What Darwin proposed was that humanity's appreciation of the beautiful is an instinctive response. Citing examples such as the color of the feathers of the male Argus pheasant, he argued that the love of beauty is based on distinctions which, at an earlier stage in evolution, led to reproductive success. This "physiological aesthetics," as Smith calls it, was applied to all manifestations of beauty, so that even the glory of a sunset and the colors of a Turner painting were derivative from "the coarse pleasures of beholding food" (Allen 188). Ruskin opposed this by claiming that beautiful plants, animals, and objects were created with people in mind. In *Queen of the Air*, Ruskin writes that a flower was "the part of the plant's form developed at the moment of its intensest life,"

> and this inner rapture is usually marked externally for us by the flush of one or more of the primary colours . . . in all cases, the presence of the strongest life is asserted by characters in which the human sight takes pleasure, and which seem prepared with distinct reference to us, or rather, bear, in being delightful, evidence of having been produced by the power of the same spirit as our own. (19.358)

This spiritual correspondence between flowers and people is evidence of what Ruskin called "the great link which [binds] together the whole of creation, from its Maker to the lowest creature" (34.644), thus making the appreciation of beauty a spiritual act, not a physical one. George Levine, in "Ruskin, Darwin, and the Matter of Matter," sets this comment in opposition to Darwin's insistence that everything about a flower has to do with sex (239), that the beauty and form of its petals is "prepared with distinct reference" to fertilization. In Ruskin's view, flowers bloom for human beings, choosing their colors and forms so as to please our eyes, and only incidentally to attract the antennae of pollinating insects. Smith points out that this rejection of reproductive purpose is not simply another instance of Ruskin's notorious sexual prudishness. Rather, it is Ruskin's attempt to elevate botanical discourse. "To connect plants to animals at the levels of reproduction, digestion, and locomotion," Smith writes, "was to connect them at their lowest common denominator" (167). For Ruskin, plants and animals are connected through delight and pleasure. The perception of beauty is evidence that humans have a spiritual nature higher than instinctual drives. Hannah Coulter's fear, that the desire for freedom from responsibility would cause men to lose their humanity, to become creatures of instinct, exactly parallels Ruskin's fear that the "physiological aesthetics" of Darwinism would "free" beauty from any moral qualities, and thus rob humanity of a spiritual connection to nature and a right understanding of itself.

Berry and Ruskin are exploring the same territory that Lewis explores in *The Abolition of Man*. For Lewis, instinct is an unreliable guide.

> Each instinct, if you listen to it, will claim to be gratified at the expense of all the rest. By the very act of listening to one rather than to others we have already prejudged the case. If we did not bring to the examination of

> our instincts a knowledge of their comparative dignity we could never learn it from them. And that knowledge cannot itself be instinctive: the judge cannot be one of the parties judged: or, if he is, the decision is worthless and there is no ground for placing the preservation of the species above self-preservation or sexual appetite. (23)

Lewis' point echoes Ruskin's criticism of self-interest cited earlier: "the varieties of circumstances which influence these reciprocal interests are so endless, that all endeavour to deduce rules of action from balance of expediency is in vain" (17.26). Both instinct and self-interest lack an outside standard, a stable basis for evaluation. For Ruskin, this need is met by moral values—"the balances of justice"—and by non-human nature—the "purity and order" that guides the development of the flower (25.249). Similarly, Lewis appeals to what he calls the *Tao*: "the doctrine of objective value, the belief that certain attitudes are really true, and others really false, to the kind of things the universe is and the kind of things we are" (12).[2] For Lewis, it is essential that human culture communicate this *Tao*, pass it down to the next generation. Instinct, of course, has no need of this, as education of the sort Lewis describes bridles instinct and subdues it. Significantly, liberalism rejects the *Tao*, as well; as Grant tells us, the great appeal of liberalism is that it needs no *Tao*, no answer to Hannah's question, "What are we going to be?"

> It is important to emphasize that this account of the derivation of the first principle of justice appears to Rawls to have the enormous advantage of not requiring any knowledge of the way things are beyond common sense. It does not depend on our being able to attain any knowledge of what human beings are fitted for. Our legal rights, so derived from the original position, in no way depend on any public affirmations concerning what is good. Indeed it would appear that according to Rawls enlightened human

[2] In "Two Economies," Berry refers to "the Tao" as "the totality of all creation, visible and invisible" and considers it a parallel to the western concept of "the Kingdom of God" (221). Both notions represent "The Great Economy," which Berry considers "the ultimate condition of our experience" and the greater context for all lesser economies of exchange.

> beings are quite clear that it is not possible to have knowledge of the highest good. (36)

Liberalism had its beginning with Locke's assumption that Hobbes' state of nature—which is a state of instinctive conflict—was normative. Grant makes the further point that, while contractual liberalism promised the best hope of surviving that state, it did not promise to lift humans out of it (16-18). In other words, the same instinctual motive forces remain, though modern liberalism has cast a veneer of civilization over them. Grant's longer passage echoes Lewis' reflections on instinct: "common sense," by disavowing any "knowledge of . . . [the] comparative dignity" of human ends, becomes simply a polite word for instinct. Marcus' assumption of autonomy, as Lewis predicts and Hannah perceives, results in the abolition of his humanity, as he returns to a state of nature in which man is nothing more than a breeding animal. The refusal to submit one's behavior to proper "ends" destroys humanity as effectively as scientific materialism did for Ruskin.

Berry's most nuanced, and most anguished, account of autonomy in tension with marriage comes in *A Place On Earth*, in Ernest's love for Ida Crop. This is not so much a story of star-crossed lovers, in which the man and woman seek freedom from society's conventions and limitations, as a tale of courtly love, in which conventions and limitations must be respected if the relationship is to be maintained. Ernest respects those limitations in his actions, but not in his mental life. Berry's study of Ernest's state of mind demonstrates that to be free, to be "set loose," is not always desirable. As a work of imaginative fiction, it teaches us to be suspicious of the lure of liberty and to recognize that some limitations are in our best interest. In Ernest and Ida's relationship, we see the "trap" with a vividness and physicality that an essay on political economy cannot

replicate. As such, this story complements Ruskin's essays as an eloquent critique of the values of liberalism.

Early in the novel, Ernest is introduced to us as a wounded veteran, quiet and somewhat separate from the community. Though he eats with Mat and Margaret, his sister, and lives in their house, he keeps mostly to himself, in a room over the kitchen which "had a separate entrance" (33). His real home is his workshop, his real community his tools. Of his work and shop, Berry writes, "After his carpenter's trade had been established, he seemed to withdraw into the established certainties and clear limits of it. He perfected his shop, making its work spaces neat and convenient. In his free time he became adept at fishing for bass. He perfected his silence" (33-34). The workshop is described as "orderly and warm" and "neat to perfection" (31). The handles of the tools are all worn to his grasp, and "by a kind of natural growth, everything here has come within his reach" (32). It is "orderly" and "neat," with "established certainties and clear limits," and he is closely identified with the tools, with the discipline, of his trade. The shop is a shelter for Ernest, a place to which he is deeply connected in a way that he is not connected to the community. His carpentry is central to his fulfillment, and for most of the novel, he is content to live within its limits.

He is hired, however, to repair the outbuildings of Gideon Crop's farm, after a disastrous flood which took the life of the Crop's daughter and sent Gideon, crazed with grief, into the wilderness. Before Ernest drives out to the Crop's place, he spends a good deal of time organizing his tools for the job and then cleaning and arranging his shop: "As he always does when the first outside work begins in the spring, Ernest felt a little reluctant to give up the orderly enclosure of the shop" (159). He senses that he is

stepping outside of clear limits, crossing borders that had previously formed his experience. When he first reaches the ruined bridge, though, his work dominates his mind, pulling him back under its influence: "It took him only a few seconds to foresee in some detail how he would have to go about the rebuilding of the bridge . . . . Almost without realizing it, his thoughts going ahead of him, he has begun his work . . . . Long before he is done, he already knows how it is going to be, and he is driven on by an appetite for the finished look of it" (160-62). This is a man consumed by an end he desires to reach; the recreation of the bridge becomes, for Ernest, a good to be achieved. He is still safely within the limits of his discipline. When the bridge is completed, however, and the border of the river breached, Ida enters within those limits. Even from across the bridge, "he feels the inwashing sense of the presence of her body" (163). When she reaches his side, she tells him, "I ain't been on this side of the creek in I don't know how long" (164). From this moment forward, we see Ernest slide from the safety and limitations of his workshop and his work into a fantasy world of love for Ida, a world which Berry describes, significantly, as a place of freedom.

This move from being tied to his work to being unmoored and dangerously free is apparent in Berry's descriptions of Ernest's labors. As we have seen above, his work on the bridge was marked by complete immersion in the task at hand. We see the same the next morning, as he begins to work on the barn roof: "And he has been surrounded by his own noise now for nearly three hours. . . . From time to time he goes down and stacks the sheets he has torn off, and drinks, and goes back up. Aside from that, he has hardly raised his eyes from his work. After each interruption the sounds of his work have enclosed him again, and carried him on" (166). Ernest is enclosed within the limits of his

work, as, during the winter, he is enclosed within the limits of his shop. Even after a brief lunch in Ida's kitchen, Ernest is able to focus again on completing the barn: "The day and the work are established around him again. He goes on, deeper in, with a kind of excitement growing in him, a kind of hunger for what it is possible to do before night. It becomes easier to go on than to stop" (170).

Ida's continual presence, however, bringing him water, serving him lunch, going about her own chores in range of his vision, begins to displace this focus. "But during the weeks that Ernest has been at work there," Berry writes, "eating in her kitchen, studying her ways and looks and movements, she has come into his mind. . . . Wherever she moves at her work, in or out of his sight, he is aware of her. A kind of imagining sight and touch carries his mind to her against his will" (195). As Ernest begins to fantasize about a life with Ida, Berry emphasizes that Ernest is transitioning from one type of existence to another. At first, Ernest imagines his shop lifted out of Port William and set down here beside her farm, but then he realizes he has already gone so far that he no longer wants the shop: "The orderly interior of his shop is remote from him now, of little use to him. In these moments of understanding, he knows that something behind him in his life is being destroyed. Even if he could escape and make his way back to it, it would no longer serve." His growing love for Ida has displaced the "established certainties and clear limits" that his shop and his work provided, yet, because Gideon is still alive—and Berry emphasizes again and again that she is still clearly Gideon's—Ernest has no new obligation to which to fasten himself.

At the summer's end, as Ernest finishes his work, Berry describes the situation clearly in terms of the dangers that arise when a human being has no *telos*, no purpose

with which to identify. For the first time in his life, Ernest has begun to dread the completion of a job.

> He has come in sight of the end of his work on the valley farm. And the return to winter work in the enclosure of his shop, which once so strongly appealed to him and which he would look forward to with such a deep presentiment of pleasure, has become unimaginable. He feels himself set loose and at large in the world, freed of all the limits of habit or duty or pleasure that might have held him back, pursuing through the boundlessness of his own fantasy his fleeting, hopeless obsession, pursued by a disaster to which he is blind. Like one of the damned, who with an indomitable loyalty even in Hell suffers only the thought of his irrecoverable sin, Ernest goes back each morning, always one day nearer the last, to his burning. (260)

In our discussion of liberalism and autonomy, it is significant that Berry chooses to describe Ernest's "boundlessness" as a "fantasy," and that he contrasts it with "the limits of . . . pleasure." This is odd terminology to a classical liberal, for whom liberty is the unquestioned good; it would make perfect sense to Ruskin, for whom obligation and recognition of relationship define mature human experience. Berry develops the dangers of this freedom through the metaphor of a rope. Immediately before the passage above, Berry writes, "But the sense of futility has grown in his mind to the sort of restrained terror that he would feel working without a rope on the incline of a high steep roof. It is the middle of August already, the downward slope of summer." The metaphor—strengthened by the phrase "downward slope of summer"—teaches a clear lesson: when working at a dangerous height, being bound to something stable is a good thing. Berry's metaphor recalls the earlier episode of Ernest taking apart the Crop's barn roof. This is early in the summer, and Ernest can still immerse himself in what he is doing, and fondly recall memories of past jobs.

> Finding he has worked beyond the reach of his rope, he thinks, "Uh-oh!" Nerves aching with the smooth hard slant of the metal as he crawls after

> the rope, he thinks of falling, and his thought shudders and whistles. "Shoo! Watch that! *That* won't do!" He hears Mat saying—having put him and Virgil to painting the roof of the feed barn, Virgil with a boy's bravery walking upright on the slant—"Be careful up there, boys. We haven't got time now for a funeral." And then, his voice lifting and hardening: "Virgil, damn it, when you move on that roof take hold of the rope. A man's work asks you to be a man. Don't play!" And again, his voice suddenly admitting what he feels: "Sweet boy, *don't* get hurt." The rope in his hand, Ernest feels the dread of falling loosen from him. "Good enough. *All right*." (167)

Once again, as with Andy Catlett at the pond and Ruskin's image of infants playing with baubles, we see that an irresponsible liberty is childish. Through the concrete illustration of a man at work, Berry delivers a piercing indictment of liberal principles. In contrast to the claims of classical liberalism, in which to be an adult means to be an autonomous calculator of one's own interest, Berry argues that "a man's work" asks one to take hold of the rope, to be mindful of relationships and responsibilities which, though flexible enough to allow a certain degree of freedom, still provide secure attachments to particular people and places. Through the novelistic techniques of narrative omniscience and vivid description of concrete actions, Berry puts the story of Ernest's ill-fated love into service as a persuasive argument against autonomy and liberalism. Whereas Ruskin, Lewis, and Grant, in their essays, are constrained to work primarily at the rhetorical level, Berry, as a novelist, is able to draw on other resources to show that the freedom of liberalism is childish and unrealistic, and that to be tied within certain limits is the only stable basis for human flourishing.

The arrival of Gideon's letter, announcing his immanent return, marks the end of Ernest's work on the place, and the end of Ernest's fantasy of a life with Ida. Until now, the fantasy had survived because it was unchallenged, though even before the letter it had "begun to be undermined by [Ernest's] understanding that it [was] licensed only by Ida's

innocence of it and by his failure to bring it to the test of any reality" (260). After Ida reads the letter to him, Ernest finishes his work a fated man.

> He seems to get through the rest of the day by holding on to the handle of the paint brush. He dangles from it, the place vanished around him as if sunk into the blinding whiteness of Gideon's letter. He holds to the handle of the brush, spreading whiteness, as one would hold to the last hand's-breadth of a swinging rope. (266)

Though he has hold of the rope, it is only by a hand's-breadth, and he will soon let go of it. His suicide is foreshadowed here by the image of a hanged man. The image recalls Lewis' *Abolition of Man*. Speaking of those who try to educate the young by rational materialism—the reductive approach, so feared by Ruskin, that does away with all notions of honor, goodness, and purpose—Lewis writes, "It is not that they are bad men. They are not men at all. Stepping outside the *Tao*, they have stepped into the void" (41). Ernest is not a rational materialist, but he has, in effect, stepped outside of the *Tao* by leaving the limits and certainties of his trade. This is a kind of freedom, but it is reductive, stripping Ernest of all that makes him human. Ernest's autonomy has led him off the edge of the roof.

Lewis' mention of education leads us to Berry's second critique of liberalism. *The Abolition of Man* is primarily an educational text, for education passes down the traditions that make up the *Tao*. Classical liberalism has little need for tradition, for, as we have seen, it finds its basis in a state of nature, an "original position," in which simple common sense and an idea of one's own desires are adequate guides. "Our legal rights," Grant tells us, ". . . in no way depend on any public affirmations concerning what is good" (36). Furthermore, one of the fundamental Agrarian critiques of modernity is that

it does not value history. Weaver writes of the irrational "presentism" of much modern discourse, the tendency to value "becoming over being":

> Modernism is in essence a provincialism, since it declines to look beyond the horizon of the moment, just as the countryman may view with suspicion whatever lies beyond his county. . . . It is apparent, moreover, that those who are in rebellion against memory are the ones who wish to live without knowledge . . . . A frank facing of the past is unpleasant to the tender-minded, teaching as it does sharp lessons of limitation and retribution. Yet, the painful lessons we would like to forget are precisely the ones which should be kept for reference. (*Ideas* 67)

When Weaver speaks of those "who wish to live without knowledge," he does not mean factual knowledge, but the *Tao*. Education communicates an understanding of the *Tao* from ancestors to children, creating a continuity through time. That this is not an emphasis of liberalism is evident when we recall Milbank's description of liberalism's "world of finite immortality . . . without birth, without death." Both Grant and Milbank emphasize that liberalism takes the "adult calculator" as normative, raising the question, "What role do children have?" Grant, in examining the implications of the *Roe vs. Wade* decision, says they have very little. The *Roe vs. Wade* decision, which, Grant says, epitomizes "modern liberalism in its pure contractual form," implicitly states that the very young, or the very old, do not count fully as persons.

> If foetuses are not persons, why should not the state decide that a week old, a two year old, a seventy or eighty year old is not a person "in the whole sense"? On what basis do we draw the line? Why are the retarded, the criminal or the mentally ill persons? What is it which divides adults from foetuses when the latter have only to cross the bridge of time to catch up with the former? Is the decision saying that what makes an individual a person, and therefore the possessor of rights, is the ability to calculate and assent to contracts? Why are beings so valuable as to require rights, just because they are capable of this calculation? What has happened to the stern demands of equal justice when it sacrifices the right to existence of the inarticulate to the convenience of the articulate? (72)

Weaver saw the same threat to the old and the young in modernity's decreased emphasis on sentiment, emotions such as affection and sympathy that bind society together:

> It is inevitable that the decay of sentiment should be accompanied by a deterioration of human relationships, both those of the family and those of friendly association, because the passion for immediacy concentrates upon the presently advantageous. After all, there is nothing but sentiment to bind us to the very old or to the very young. (30)

That Berry's novels give attention to the very old and the very young, and that Ruskin writes a great deal about the value both of education and of sentiment, sets these authors apart from liberalism. Their emphasis on education, their concern that those who have not yet "cross[ed] the bridge of time" are treated as persons and prepared for their roles as responsible adults, constitutes a second important critique of liberalism.

The education of the young appears throughout Berry's novels. In Ernest's memories of repairing the roof with Virgil, described above, he explains to Virgil that his father has sent him to work with Ernest because "you listen to me better than you do to him."

> Virgil laughs. "Why?" "Because he's your daddy and I'm not. That's the way it always is, and he knows that too. That's the reason he sends you to work with me as often as he does." For a moment he can see Virgil, paint bucket in one hand, brush in the other, sitting on the comb of the roof, looking down at him and grinning with a boy's perfect confidence in the superiority of youth to anything. (167)

This "superiority of youth" is a childish fantasy of autonomy, not unlike Andy Catlett's conviction that he could consider himself as "ancestorless" as the first human being. This mistaken superiority is what must be corrected in both Virgil and Andy, and it is corrected by those older than they. Andy's father becomes "the messenger of another world . . . [of] expectation and obligation, difficulty and sorrow" (15). This is a difficult message to receive, but it leads Andy to "some of the world's truest pleasures." Later in

the novella, Andy recalls asking his grandmother's permission to walk into town to visit Uncle Ernest at his shop. He recalls his sense of liberty.

> Once I was outdoors in the quiet, I recovered the sense of myself as a solitary traveler. It came to me that, starting from the tracks I stood in, there in front of the old house, I could have gone anywhere. But I was going to Uncle Ernest's shop because that was where Granny was expecting me to go, and it was where I wanted to go. (94)

We have a similar situation to the forbidden pond: Andy conceives himself a solitary, autonomous individual. But this time, because of the teaching of either father or grandmother, he settles on a different course and obeys willingly. That same evening, he asks permission again to walk into town to see his friends. Granny gives it again, with the injunction that he be back by eight. Andy observes, "And so she freed me and bound me at the same time, something she was good at" (99). In these passages, Granny's instructions become a guide to the young child, making him aware of expectations, binding him, yet allowing him the freedom to choose to follow.

As Virgil ages, he loses much of the arrogance of his youth, but he must still be taught. When Virgil is a teenager, his father gives him a parcel of land to farm on his own, in addition to his work on the family's acreage. Virgil plows a hillside that is too steep, and though Mat knows what is happening, he says nothing, hoping the boy will be lucky and that the crop will make. Two weeks later, however, a hard rain comes, and Mat knows that much of the disturbed topsoil has been washed away. He tells Virgil, "Let's go look at your crop." When the boy sees the damage, Mat brings the lesson.

> "Virgil," I said, "this is your fault. This is one of your contributions to the world." That was hard for me to say. And he took it hard. I saw he was about to cry. And bad as I hated to do it, I let it work in him while we stood there and looked. I knew he was hating the day he ever thought of raising a crop, ready to give up. Finally I put my arm around him and I

> said, “Be sorry, but don’t quit. What’s asked of you now is to see what you’ve done, and learn better.” (176)

At the end of this chapter, we will discuss this chapter in terms of the effects of Virgil’s actions on the earth. Here, we can notice the emphasis on education. In leading up to this story (Mat is talking to Hannah), Mat admits that he and other farmers have “been slow to have enough sense to farm this kind of land, and lack plenty yet.” Mat’s father made “some bad mistakes,” and though Mat “tried to learn from his,” he made mistakes of his own. Even had Virgil’s crop made, Mat had planned to “show him later what he’d done wrong.” The focus is on education, on passing down, from one generation to the next, the knowledge to live and work on “this kind of land,” this particular place.

Now that Virgil has failed to heed this tradition, non-human nature takes the role of teacher, and her pedagogy is visual. Berry twice uses the verb “looked” and ends with Mat’s warning, “What’s asked of you now is to see what you’ve done, and learn better.” Lewis’ *Tao,* though promulgated through tradition and education of the young by the old, has its roots in this recognition of the objective value of the world of non-human nature: “Until quite modern times all teachers and even all men believed the universe to be such that certain emotional reactions on our part could be either congruous or incongruous to it—believed, in fact, that objects did not merely receive, but could *merit*, our approval or disapproval, our reverence, or our contempt” (9). In this exchange, Mat is asking Virgil to see the reality before him and to experience the proper emotional reaction. A few pages later, Uncle Jack speaks of his own habit of rising early: “once [a man] is up, because his life has taught him, he can see what needs to be done. A man who has learned to see cannot help seeing” (199). That “life has taught him” implies that Uncle

Jack did not listen to his elders any better than Virgil has. He has been taught by the world of non-human nature how to see.

Ruskin's descriptions of education anticipate Berry's, particularly as regards sight. Ruskin wrote textbooks on drawing for children, making the startling claim that "the art of drawing . . . is of more real importance to the human race than that of writing" (5.376), and famously wrote that "hundreds of people can talk for one who can think, but thousands can think for one who can see. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion,--all in one" (5.333). These quotations are from *Modern Painters* and have obvious implications for aesthetics. In his later writing, however, Ruskin's emphasis on sight allowed him to move seamlessly into social criticism.

> It is constantly said that human nature is heartless. Do not believe it. Human nature is kind and generous; but it is narrow and blind; and can only with difficulty conceive anything but what it immediately sees and feels. People would instantly care for others as well as themselves if only they could imagine others as well as themselves. (20.92)

In this passage, imagination is a form of seeing, a point to which we shall return in my chapter on *Hannah Coulter,* but it should be noted that morality is primarily a matter of seeing and feeling, perceiving the objective reality and responding with the appropriate emotion. Much of Ruskin's economic writing is simply an attempt to educate his readers, to teach the middle and upper classes to see the results of their actions. In *Unto This Last*, he characterizes luxury as the result of a failure to see.

> Consider whether, even supposing it guiltless, luxury would be desired by any of us, if we saw clearly at our sides the suffering which accompanies it in the world. . . . Luxury at present can only be enjoyed by the ignorant; the cruelest man living could not sit at his feast, unless he sat blindfold. Raise the veil boldly; face the light. (228)

Surprisingly, perhaps, given his sympathy for the poor of London's cities, he does not attribute cruelty and pride to the rich. Rather, he recognizes their ignorance. As with Berry and Lewis, morality is taught by observing the world and holding those observations up to ethical standards, by being, in Uncle Jack's words, "a man who has learned to see."

Like Berry, Ruskin was deeply concerned with education, both of children and adults. Like Mat, Ruskin recognized the obligation of fathers to teach their sons, but Ruskin applied the analogy to the rich and the poor, a rhetorical move which flew in the face of liberal assumptions of autonomy. Answering the common charge that the poor cannot be hired because they cannot learn responsibility, Ruskin raises the question of education.

> It is proposed to better the condition of the labourer by giving him higher wages. "Nay", says the economist, "if you raise his wages, he will either drag people down to the same point of misery at which you found him; or drink your wages away." He will. I know it. Who gave him this will? Suppose it were your own son of whom you spoke, declaring to me that you dared not take him into your firm, nor even give him his just labourer's wages, because if you did, he would die of drunkenness, and leave half a score of children to the parish. "Who gave your son these dispositions?"—I should inquire. Has he them by inheritance or by education? By one or other they must come; and as in him, so also in the poor. (17.106)

Ruskin does not deny the base lives that many of the poor lead, nor their apparent lack, in many cases, of moral rigor. What he attacks instead is the failure of the rich, the educated, the morally upright, to pass these qualities on. Moreover, he puts it in terms of obligation, the obligation of a father to a son. Ruskin continues, extending the metaphor to that of parent and child.

> "But," it is answered, "they cannot receive education." Why not? That is precisely the point at issue. Charitable persons suppose the worst fault of

> the rich is to refuse the people meat; and the people cry for their meat, kept back by fraud, to the Lord of Multitudes. Alas! It is not meat of which the refusal is cruelest, or to which the claim is validest. The life is more than the meat. The rich not only refuse food to the poor; they refuse wisdom; they refuse virtue; they refuse salvation. Ye sheep without shepherd, it is not the pasture that has been shut from you, but the presence. Meat! Perhaps your right to that may be pleadable; but other rights have to be pleaded first. Claim your crumbs from the table, if you will; but claim them as children, not as dogs; claim your right to be fed, but claim more loudly your right to be holy, perfect, and pure. (17.106-107)

Ruskin is still talking about education, as it is wisdom and virtue that is needed as much, or more than, physical sustenance. But by extending the metaphor to parent and child, Ruskin further refutes the assumptions of classical liberalism. As Grant points out, the assumptions of liberalism do not account adequately for the very young. Based on the *Roe vs. Wade* decision, liberalism seems to argue that "what makes an individual a person, and therefore the possessor of rights, is the ability to calculate and assent to contracts" (72). By this reasoning, the very young, the very old, and the mentally ill are not persons "in the whole sense." Because Ruskin is aware of this vulnerability in liberalism (in *Unto This Last*, he attacks the idea that people act primarily out of self-interest by considering whether a starving mother might not share food with her children), he moves the terms of "rich and poor" to "more capable and less capable" and finally to "parent and child," aware that the rules of political economy grow less relevant as the relationship becomes more unequal. Likewise, Berry's focus on education of the young (and the care for the old) is not simply a realistic portrayal of the entire concerns of a functioning community (though it is that). Berry dwells on education because it acts as a wedge with which he may pry loose the assumptions of liberalism.

The great danger of recognizing the unequal status of members of society, of course, is that the inequality will be reified and made permanent. In the chapter on *Jayber Crow,* we will examine Ruskin and Berry's portrayals of philanthropy with this concern in mind. In the present context, the emphasis on children and education may be taken to argue that the poor, in Ruskin's view, will become "holy, perfect, and pure," will come to acquire the wisdom and virtue that only the rich now possess. Inequality is a fact of life for both Ruskin and Berry, and is essential for instruction to occur, but, for both authors, the inequality that moderns call "paternalism" is intended to disappear as the weaker member gains in knowledge and wisdom. Milbank writes that although Ruskin,

> stresses the all-importance of parental and pastoral roles, he wishes to remove them from their connection with wealth and privilege, and there is even a suggestion that the true character of these roles will only be secured if they are disseminated, and become as far as possible reciprocal in a kind of clerisy of all citizens. . . . The real point of necessity for hierarchy in Ruskin is the transitive relationship of education, where an unavoidable non-reciprocity nonetheless works towards its own cancellation. (201-202)

When Milbank refers to "cancellation," he means the ending, not of the ideas and virtues taught, but of the hierarchical character of the parental/pastoral relationship. The end result of this kind of education is a kind of equality, almost autonomy, that would be attractive to a classical liberal, but it is attained through recognizing the differences between people and establishing a hierarchy—the rich teaching the poor, the parents teaching their children—that raises up the lower partner.

Milbank's quotation is not a bad description of Port William: a clerisy of citizens marked by reciprocal relationships of "parental and pastoral roles." In *Hannah Coulter*, Berry examines the nature of freedom in a community marked by hierarchy. Hannah tells us how Nathan "hated the idea of working for a boss, and he hated being a boss.

Freedom, to him, was being free of being bossed and of being a boss" (132). This sounds much like a classical liberal's fear of hierarchy and love of freedom, except that in the next sentence, Hannah tells us how that freedom was realized: "He loved the old free work-swapping with our kinfolks and friends, who needed no bossing but out of their regard and respect for one another did what they were supposed to do." The words "regard and respect" indicate a hierarchy of esteem, esteem earned through long experience together. This is not a transaction motivated by self-interest, but rather by admiration and affection for the other person. This community of "kinfolks and friends" is not is defined by liberal rights, but by obligations of family—by its nature both hierarchical and non-contractual—and friendship—a relationship defined by the affective elements which liberalism tends to discount. This community is what Berry calls "the membership." After a conversation with Andy (now an adult), Hannah contemplates the difference between "membership" in a community and "employment" in the wider world.

> One of the attractions of moving away into the life of employment, I think, is being disconnected and free, unbothered by membership. It is a life of beginnings without memories, but it is a life too that ends without being remembered. The life of membership with all its cumbers is traded away for the life of employment that makes itself free by forgetting you clean as a whistle when you are not of any more use. When they get to retirement age, Margaret and Mattie and Caleb will be cast out of place and out of mind like worn-out replaceable parts, to be alone at the last maybe and soon forgotten.
>
> "But the membership," Andy said, "keeps the memories even of horses and mules and milk cows and dogs." (133-34)

As we saw with Nathan, there is a sense of freedom within the membership, but it is freedom with "cumbers." The memories of the membership are of lessons taught by adults to children or favors done by neighbors, and those memories carry with them obligations. Hannah tells us in an earlier passage on the membership that "every account

was paid in full by the understanding that when we were needed we would go, and when we had need the others, or enough of them, would come" (94). Employment, in contrast, is free of memories and obligations, "disconnected." It has its hierarchy, too, that of the "useful" and the "forgotten." Andy's comment, that the membership remembers and honors its animals tells us that even the most hierarchical of relationships, that of human and animal, is, within the membership, marked by regard and respect.

Hannah's reflections on the world of employment versus the world of membership recalls a similar distinction in Ruskin's works. In a passage from "The Nature of Gothic," Ruskin writes,

> I know not if a day is ever to come when the nature of right freedom will be understood, and when men will see that to obey another man, to labour for him, yield reverence to him or to his place, is not slavery. . . . There is, indeed, a reverence which is servile, that is to say, irrational or selfish; but there is also noble reverence, that is to say, reasonable and loving; and a man is never so noble as when he is reverent in this kind; nay, even if the feeling pass the bounds of mere reason, so that it be loving, a man is raised by it. (10.195)

The word "reverence" indicates the same "regard and respect" which motivates the network of "kinfolks and friends" of which Nathan is a member. In Berry's novels, characters frequently go beyond "the bounds of mere reason" in their service to one another. Self-interest cannot explain the willingness of Burley Coulter and Mat Feltner to help Ida Crop during her husband's absence. In part, they act out of reverence for Gideon's example, in part, out of sympathy for the couple's loss. The main motive, however, is membership, a recognition of the obligations that connect members of the community. Berry and Ruskin raise the question of whether "reverence" or "autonomous freedom" is the matrix of human nobility, and both answer that to labor for another in love and regard is the better way.

For both Ruskin and Berry, love and gratitude are immensely important to human nobility. Ruskin goes on to speak of the love that Scott's "mountain servants" bore for their chiefs, and of the sacrifices "made by men to each other" "in all ages and all countries." Significantly, he speaks of these sacrifices as "gifts of the heart" which "ennobled the men who gave, not less than the men who received them." The use of "gift" makes it clear that it is not slavery, or manipulation, or coercion which lead these men to die, but rather a sense of obligation. Ruskin then contrasts this state with the condition of the "free laborer" under industrial capitalism.

> But to feel their souls withering within them, unthanked, to find their whole being sunk into an unrecognized abyss, to be counted off into a heap of mechanism numbered with its wheels, and weighed with its hammer strokes—this, nature bade not,—this, God blesses not,—this, humanity for no long time is able to endure. (10.195)

To the modern reader, Ruskin seems to miss the point. Working conditions and pay seem more significant issues than gratitude for the poor of England. The same reader might see Berry's contrast of membership and employment as misleading, since a job in a city is likely to be far less physically taxing than the farm labor his characters seem to prefer. For Ruskin, however, as for Berry, affective concerns such as respect, love, and gratitude are as important, if not more important, than physical conditions of labor. Charles R. Pinches, in an essay on Milbank and Berry, argues that hierarchical structure is necessary if society is to support these kinds of sentiments.

> [Hierarchical] relations—including the deference shown within them, which is always subtle and varied—matter because they sustain the rich and specific moral landscape in which the particularities of human relations of various sorts can be worked through. As a start, they sustain the relations between parents and children that enable moral training to occur, wisdom to be passed on, and gratefulness to be specifically extended. (247)

"Deference," in both Ruskin and Berry, is never portrayed through the abject relation of master and slave; rather, it is "always subtle and varied": the respect given to another for work well done, the deference given to age for a life well lived, the honor a child shows to the parent who cares for him or her. This "rich and specific moral landscape" stands in marked contrast to what Grant describes as the "aridity" of the social contract, a system that presupposes the equality of members and replaces gratitude with fair exchange. Much of the sexual revolution of the 60s and 70s, Grant believes, was fueled by the recognition that humans cannot live for long in the stifling air of contract relations. Ruskin's emphasis on "souls withering" and "whole being[s] sunk . . . unrecognized," and Berry's characterization of human beings treated as "worn-out, replaceable parts" capture this same dissatisfaction. While both Scott's Highland peasants and Berry's rural townspeople seem to be living in worse material conditions than the city-dwellers of their time, and in social structures that are less equal, the reverence and respect that mark both tribe and membership make a positive qualitative difference to the human spirit.

Hannah's description of "employment" as "a life of beginnings without memories" points to the role of the land in Berry's work and prepares us for Berry's third critique of liberalism. The world of employment is an urban world in Berry's novels, in part because to work the land is impossible without considering the past. The second chapter of *A Place on Earth* introduces the community of Port William with a brief history of human activity on the land (previously cited in Chapter two). For the first settlers, the place would have been incredibly rewarding. "That black humus, built up under the forest for thousands of years" was unlike anything before or since; "you could

believe, for once, that the earth might give back to a man more than it took from him" (24). But that land of new beginnings was transformed.

> In two or three generations the country was imponderably changed, its memories, explanations, justifications fallen away from it. The first-arrivers left it diminished and detached from its sources. It was like an island, the past washing up to it, in fact, as the force of its becoming, but not as knowledge. Past and future bore against it under cover of darkness. Whoever wanted to make a beginning, then, had to begin with something already half-finished. And scarcely known. (25)

This is, of course, a comment on the environment, and on the exploitive agricultural practices of the first settlers. In the context of liberalism, however, it is an indictment of the concept of an "original condition," a situation in which individuals can begin without obligations, with a blank slate. Pinches detects this sort of rejection of history in Jeffrey Stout, whose *Democracy and Tradition* argues that liberal societies need no traditions other than "democratic piety." Pinches finds this sentiment lacking in particularity and prescribes Berry's fiction as a cure.

> So this is what I wish Stout would learn from Wendell Berry. Insofar as democratic piety requires us to name no names, to connect with no specific neighbors or parents or grandparents or children, it soars over the land that is America like the disembodied spirits we have seen Hauerwas earlier mention. The democrat who is grateful for no more than the 'sources of [his] progress through life' dangles detached, even cynical, imagining that, with a brief bow and a wave to the past, he can get on with that progress as he himself defines it. (250)

Stout's "unspecified gratefulness" is not enough to support a society. Rather, traditions and social structures must "draw us into direct contact with what we have inherited, the good and the bad, from particular people to whom we are connected (like it or not) by story" (251). This is the importance of Berry's recognition that "Whoever wanted to make a beginning [in Port William], then, had to begin with something already half-finished." Whoever would farm this land must recognize its complexity, its many-

facetedness, its history. The memories and stories of the past, telling us, as they do, of the "good and bad" that we have inherited, cannot be disregarded.

As with Ruskin's justice, a proper relationship with the land is based on obligation and relationship. Toward the novel's end, the night before Ernest's funeral, Mat and Old Jack stay up all night with his body. They speak of the land they both have known and loved.

> The old man spoke of the names and landmarks and happenings of a time before Mat's birth, and Mat listened, his mind drawn back before its own beginning, held and quieted by the vision of another time, and by the sense of the continuance of the land, the place, through all that has happened on it and to it—its history of a little cherishing and much abuse. For as always it was finally the land that they spoke of, fascinated as they have been all their lives by what has happened to it, their own ties to it, the wife of their race, more lovely and bountiful and kind than they have usually deserved, more demanding than they have often been able to bear. (298)

This is husbandry in its truest sense, or, in Ruskin's terms, the affection each man *owes* the land. Again, there is the sense of prior commitments; the "names and landmarks and happenings of a time before Mat's birth" demonstrate that this is not a beginning without memories. Just as Ruskin's justice impinged on autonomy by demanding obligation, Berry's land frustrates those who see it only as an arena for their calculations of self-interest. It is "lovely and bountiful and kind" but also "demanding." It has its own interests, as it were, and requires courting and finally commitment if the relationship is to be fully realized. Deneen makes a clear connection between an awareness of history, the demands of nature, and the inadequacy of liberalism.

> Berry . . . forcefully rejects a basic feature of liberal anthropology that conceives of humans as *choosers* who are largely liberated from obligations and considerations of the past and the future. Liberal anthropology portrays a humanity driven by choices made in the present that, moreover, throws suspicion upon the inherited or traditional as an arbitrary imposition upon the liberty of individuals. For Berry, we are

> always at least partially governed by the past as we are also partially governed by nature. (79)

As noted above, nature has an agenda of its own; it is not entirely subject to human beings, and, in fact, sometimes governs human action. Furthermore, choices made in the past by other human beings, as in Berry's description of Port William, exert a similar governing force. Nature and history limit the autonomy of every individual.

This perspective on the land also recalls Lewis' *Tao*, which requires a proper valuing of and respect for the things around us.

> 'Can you be righteous,' asks Traherne, 'unless you be just in rendering to things their due esteem? All things were made to be yours and you were made to prize them according to their value.' St. Augustine defines virtue as *ordo amoris*, the ordinate condition of the affections in which every object is accorded that kind and degree of love which is appropriate to it. (10)

With this passage, we remember Ruskin's claim that "he who loves not God, nor his brother, cannot love the grass beneath his feet, and the creatures which live not for his uses, filling those spaces in the universe which he needs not" (4.148). Here, both Ruskin and Lewis are talking about the *Tao,* about having the proper emotional response to non-human nature. The reservations, "which live not for his uses . . . which he needs not," are important, for they remove any sense of utilitarian motive from the affectionate response. Ruskin does not say that we should admire only those creatures which we can use to further our own self-interest, our own calculations. Rather, we should delight in the intrinsic good of the creature itself. The connection between the *Tao* and care for the land and its creatures is evident in Mat Feltner's care for his sheep. Of Mat's meticulous care in preparing the sheep for birthing, Berry writes,

> In spite of the difficulty and weariness, he goes about his work with greater interest and excitement than at any other time of the year. This is

> the crisis of increase—what he was born to, and what he chose. When he has made sure of the life of whatever is newborn—when he has done, at any rate, all that can be done—he is at peace with himself. His labor has been his necessity and his desire. (84)

That his labor is both necessity and desire speaks to the comprehensive nature of this activity. To care for the creatures of the earth is to respect the *Tao;* for Mat, it becomes an intrinsic good, as this reverence for the objective value of nature makes him "at peace with himself." Berry characterizes the activity with a mix of obligation and free choice: he is born to it and he chooses it. The paradox is similar to Andy's grandmother binding him and freeing him simultaneously. Mat has achieved wealth as Ruskin defines it: "that man is richest who, having perfected the functions of his own life to the utmost, has also the widest helpful influence, both personal, and by means of his possessions, over the lives of others" (17.105). The second half of the definition is critical. In classical liberalism, a successful life is defined by fulfilling one's own self-interests; in Berry and Ruskin, success always has an element of caring for others, for something beyond ourselves.

For an example of what happens when that obligation to care is not realized, we need only to look at Mat's cousin, Roger Merchant. Roger styles himself a gentleman farmer, after the "cultivated and enlightened" example of his father. In reality, Berry tells us, his father "lived on his land like a blight, troubled only by the slowness with which it could be converted into cash, unable to see or care beyond his line fences" (105). Roger, however, has inherited none of his father's farming abilities and now lives in a run-down house in the middle of "five hundred acres of land, plundered by old Griffith Merchant in his lifetime, ignored by Roger in his" (106). Rather than keep his own house in repair, he has retreated to the kitchen while the other rooms give way to weather and mice. His

land has fared no better. While tenant farmers, such as the Crops, keep some of it in respectable shape, most of it is "overgrown with bushes and trees."

> Some of it Roger has never seen; much of it he has not seen since his boyhood; most of it, if taken to it, he would not recognize. In all his life he has built nothing, added nothing, repaired nothing. For twelve years Whacker Spradlin has kept him supplied with whiskey, making the seven-mile round trip from his place to Roger's in all weather, as faithfully as the prophet's raven. (106-107)

Roger has failed in his obligations to the land. In terms of Lewis' *Tao*, he has failed to give ordinate affections to the things around him, even to his house. The self-pitying Roger has fled responsibility. While his father was unable to see beyond his own fences, Roger does not even see within those fences.

> When Roger drinks his aim is prostration. His fits of drunkenness extend to remarkable lengths. He has been known to go for months without getting out of bed except to answer what he calls "the physiological summons." He has been known to lie dormant through the coming and going of a whole summer. (107)

His existence is animal-like, at best child-like, totally absorbed in himself. Like Marcus, Roger lost his humanity when he gave up his obligation to care for the people and things around him. He is alone, in his bed, answering only the "call of nature." When Mat and Burley find him after a particularly severe bout of drunkenness, he has fouled his sheets "like a baby" (145). In his freedom from responsibility, he has given up being a mature adult, even a human being.

After Mat and Burley discover Roger in his drunkenness, Mat compels Roger to give him legal authority to oversee the land. Mat knows that it is not possible to start over, that after Roger there will be "a diminishment of the earth and of human possibility" (151). As with Port William, Mat must work within the context of decisions already made, mistakes of others that are beyond taking back. It is a work of recovery

that will go beyond himself, for some of the hillsides "will have to be owned by its thickets longer than Mat will live" (150). Mat realizes that he must be motivated by something other than self-interest.

> But a few days ago, if he had considered expending time and bother on this land, he would have considered also the possibility that he might later be able to buy it. But now Virgil is missing, and Mat needs no more land for himself. He is too old now to need it—if he ever did. This new work must be done for the sake of the land itself—and for the sake of no one he can foresee, someone who will come later, who will depend then on what is done now. (150)

It is significant that Mat never considers selling the property. This is, of course, an Agrarian value. Andrew Lytle, in the essay "The Hind Tit," writes that "stocks and bonds and cities did not constitute wealth to the planter" (208). "Broad acres" are wealth for the agrarian. In *Unto This Last*, Ruskin describes this tendency to hold wealth in tangible form as a sort of natural governor on accumulation: if the rich man possesses too much, "his stores must rot, for he cannot consume them. He can eat no more than another man could eat, and wear no more than another man could wear" (17.45). Political economy, however, admits no need for such restraint, and instead encourages the conversion of goods to cash. Such merchants, like Berry's Merchants, "would rather calculate the value of their horses and fields by the number of guineas they could get for them, than the value of their guineas by the number of horses and fields they could buy with them." Mat's restraint, as well as his willingness to go beyond self-interest and consider "someone who will come later," are signs that this is not the world of classical liberalism. Lewis says that an acceptance of the *Tao* is necessary to this kind of thinking: "Only people educated in a particular way have ever had the idea 'posterity' before their minds at all. It is difficult to assign to instinct our attitude towards an object which exists

only for reflective men" (25). In *Sex, Economy, Community, and Freedom*, Berry makes a similar point when discussing the inaccuracy of seeing the "environment" as something external to human beings.

> This world, this Creation, belongs in a limited sense to us, for we may rightfully require certain things of it—the things necessary to keep us fully alive as the kind of creatures we are—but we also belong to it, and it makes certain rightful claims on us: that we care properly for it, that we leave it undiminished not just to our children but to all the creatures who will live in it after us. None of this intimacy and responsibility is conveyed by the word *environment*. (34)

This passage recalls Ruskin's "great link which [binds] together the whole of creation, from its Maker to the lowest creature" (34.644), as well as his emphasis that we must love "the creatures which live not for [our] uses, filling those spaces in the universe which [we need] not" (4.148). Paramount, though, is the sense of obligation, both to the Creation itself and to those (both humans and creatures) who will come after us. Both Creation and our children "mak[e] certain rightful claims on us." When working with the land, any actions that are taken will extend cross time. When Mat reproves Virgil for working a section of land that was too steep, he is trying, in Jeffrey Bilbro's words, to "creat[e] the possibility that his work will be continued and the healthy patterns of the land will be nurtured after his death" ("Form" 92). Mat tells Virgil that "a man's life is always dealing with permanence—that the most dangerous kind of irresponsibility is to think of your doings as temporary. That, anyhow, is what I've tried to keep before myself. What you do on the earth, the earth makes permanent" (176). We are back to the opening description of Port William. The land serves as a sort of permanent educational transcript, indelibly recording, in its fields and gullies, the achievements and mistakes of the people who have worked on it. With Roger Merchant's land, Mat holds himself

answerable to the unborn. Similarly, Ruskin, extending obligations not through time but through space, insisted that the rich hold themselves answerable to the poor they could not see. In all these cases, liberalism's contract, with its strict limitation of concerned parties, is rejected.

When read together, Berry and Ruskin provide a comprehensive critique of classical liberalism, refuting the doctrine's insistence on autonomy, its rejection of tradition, and its ignorance of history. Ruskin's emphases on economics, education, and obligation find particular applications in the daily life of the Port William community, while Berry's fiction imaginatively transforms Ruskin's principles by bringing them into new contexts.

CHAPTER FIVE

"Making It Home": Seeing War as Work

While this study is primarily focused on Ruskin's voice in Berry's major novels, the short story "Making It Home" provides a unique opportunity to bring the two authors into conversation on the topics of war and heroism. The story is recognized as one of Berry's best, but it has not received the same critical attention as "Fidelity," while Ruskin's stance on war, and particularly his speech to the cadets at Woolrich Academy, has been overshadowed by his aesthetic and economic writings. In this chapter, I examine, in both authors, the connections between economics and war, and highlight their shared anti-heroic stance, a position which leads Ruskin and Berry to celebrate the mundane work of day-to-day living over the more glorious actions of military conquest.

Although Berry's "Making It Home" can be seen as a meditation on the ancient contrast between soldier and farmer, it may be better understood as an exploration of the way in which the term "work" includes both warfare and farming. Such a perspective allows work and warfare to be judged by the same criteria, revealing both the sanguine nature of liberal economics and the mental and ethical laxity of military life, a laxity too often hidden by the assumption that military service is by its nature heroic, the highest and most honorable of callings. These similarities are explored at length by Ruskin, who repeatedly framed the activities of the merchants and financiers of his day in terms of warfare and bloodshed. Conversely, he found contemporary military culture to be permeated with the values of the marketplace and factory. Berry makes the same links in his short story. When "Making It Home" is read in the context provided by Ruskin, it

reveals the connections between the obvious destructiveness of warfare and the more subtle, but equally destructive, machinations of economics. Through such a reading, the short story becomes more than simply a tale of war, and appears more deeply connected with Berry's other works on economy and human nature.

From the beginning, Berry is clear that the contrast between Art Rowanberry's military service and his life at home is a contrast, not primarily between warrior and farmer, but between two types of work. Although Art has been a soldier, this has never been his identity. The first mention of his military experience—"He walked . . . like a man who had been taught to march, and he wore a uniform"—is followed immediately by "whatever was military in his walk was an overlay, like the uniform, for he had been a man long before he had been a soldier, and a farmer long before he had been a man" (84). That walk, in fact, is better characterized as a "reconciliation to the forms and distances of the land such as comes only to those who have from childhood been accustomed to the land's work." Even Art's gait is due to his early experience with work. On the next page, the connection between his walk and his work is continued. Because of his travels, Art knows that he walks on a "whole round world" turning in a "great, empty distance" (85). "'Here,' he thought, 'is where we do what we are going to do—the only chance we got.'" We are placed on this earth to work, Berry says, and what Art is going to do will be different from what he has been doing.

After an initial meditation on killing, the fear of it and the doing of it, Berry introduces the idea of destructive work, labor that has negative results: "the fighting had been like work, only a lot of people got killed and a lot of things got destroyed. It was

not work that *made* much of anything" (86). Berry goes on to contrast the destructive work of war with the productive work of those displaced, or destroyed, by the war.

> You had a thing on your mind that you wanted, or wanted to get to, and anything at all that stood in your way, you had the right to destroy. If what was in the way were women and little children, you would not even know it, and it was all the same. When your power is in a big gun, you don't have any small intentions. Whatever you want to hit, you want to make dust out of it. Farms, houses, whole towns—things that people had made well and cared for a long time—you made nothing of. (86)

The "farms, houses, whole towns" are the products of positive work, work that is beneficial and productive. "Women and little children" are a part of this, as their presence indicates the labor of rearing children, of making homes and families. All of this is turned to "dust," to "nothing," by the work of warfare. The result of having been so long immersed in this type of effort is an inability to see anything as permanent or complete. Looking at the countryside around him, Art thinks,

> Everything was only pieces put together that were ready to fly apart, and nothing was whole. . . And you could not look at a house or a schoolhouse or a church without knowing how, rightly hit, it would just shake down inside itself into a pile of stones and ashes. There was nothing you could look at that was whole—man or beast or house or tree—that had the right to stay whole very long. There was nothing above the ground that was whole but you had the measure of it and could separate its pieces and bring it down. (88)

This situation is an odd reversal: many of Berry's characters are able to build houses and barns—to raise up structures by the work of their hands—but here Art has learned the secret of undoing that skill. The work of warfare is a mode of deconstruction. It goes beyond houses and churches to human beings, so that Art cannot "look at a man without knowing how little it would take to kill him. For a man was nothing but just a little morsel of soft flesh and brittle bone inside of some clothes" (88). This outlook leads to a kind of materialism, seeing human beings, not as souls, but only as parts of bodies stuck

together, understandable in a man who has seen "tatters of human flesh hanging in the limbs of trees along with pieces of machines . . . bodies without heads, arms and legs without bodies, strewn around indifferently as chips" (87). The juxtaposition of the organic and the inorganic—flesh and machines, bodies and chips—destroys any connection between the spiritual and the material, any unity between flesh and spirit. Berry implies that this acceptance of materialism, removing all sentiment and affection that give houses and human beings meaning, is the inevitable result of engaging in destructive work. Art's body has been healed of its wounds, but his mind and soul require salvation if he is to regain his humanity.

Berry provides that salvation by returning Art to a different kind of work. As Art draws within sight of his farm, Berry tells us that Art "knew the place in all the successions of the year: from the little blooms that came in the earliest spring to the fallen red leaves of October, from the songs of the nesting birds to the anxious wintering of the little things that left their tracks in snow, from the first furrow to the last load of the harvest" (102). The progression from plants, to animals, to people shows integration between humanity and nature and, more importantly, a place for human work within the natural order. The labor of furrow and harvest is given equal importance to the natural features of the land. Berry then continues with a lengthy paragraph describing the actions of the two men and a boy at work. At first, we are told that "he could see that plowing had been started." Then, there is a thorough description of the field and its furrows. Then we see the plowmen, "heads . . . bent to their work," and the boy following industriously behind, "pick[ing] something up from the freshly turned earth and dropp[ing] it into the can." Walking after the boy is a dog. Only at that point, does Berry

tell us what Art surely knew from the first, that these are members of his family. The delay adds some suspense to the account, as the reader guesses the significance of these figures, but it also forces us to see them first at work. The implication is that Art recognizes them by what they do as much as by their figures or faces. This is precisely the case with the dog: "the hound was probably Old Bawler who made it a part of his business to be always at work." A lazier pet would not have been so distinguished.

When Art steps through the fence and makes himself known to them, the first words spoken concern work:

> Mart came around onto the headland then and stopped his team. He and Art shook hands, grinning at each other.
> "You reckon your foot'll still fit in a furrow?"
> Art nodded. "I reckon it still will."

The alliteration of "foot . . . fit . . . furrow" suggests a folk proverb, but it is an image of planting, like Odysseus planting an oar and it growing into a tree. Art is ready to return to his work, to take root again in the soil he will till. Art looks about him, at the farmhouses, barns, fields, and hillsides, and then at his father, brother, and nephew. Berry writes, "They stood up in their lives around him now in such a way that he could not imagine their deaths." These human beings are no longer machines, no longer parts held tenuously together, and the houses and outbuildings no longer imminent piles of stone and ash. As Art's father reaches out to him, touches him, to confirm the reality of his son's presence, Art himself bends down to confirm the earth's.

> Art reached down and picked up a handful of earth from the furrow nearest him. "You're plowing it just a little wet, ain't you?"
> "Well, we've had a wet time," Mart said. "We felt like we had to go ahead. Maybe we'll get another hard frost. We could yet."
> Art said, "Well, I reckon we might."

These words, just before the father's closing, concern work. But this is more than two brothers masking their emotions with small talk. Art's gesture, reminiscent of God taking dust from the ground to create Adam, is a significant one for Berry. "The Man Born to Farming," the first work of Berry's *Farming: A Hand Book*, develops the image.

> The grower of trees, the gardener, the man born to farming,
> Whose hands reach into the ground and sprout,
> To him the soil is a divine drug. He enters into death
> Yearly, and comes back rejoicing. He has seen the light lie down
> In the dung heap, and rise again in the corn. (3)

In the redemptive thread of the story, the action of reaching into the soil, or planting his foot in a furrow, represents Art's own recreation. He has entered into death, and seen the light of men's eyes die away amid the refuse of war, but he has come back to life. Art has experienced a kind of resurrection. He is a new creation, and he is ready to work, and to see his work as good.

Although economics as such are not mentioned directly in this short story, aside from the ubiquity of work, other writings by Berry and writings of the Agrarians suggest a link between warfare and economics. In *Jayber Crow*, Jayber observes,

> It seemed that The War and The Economy were more and more closely related. They were the Siamese twins of our age, dressed alike, joined head to head, ready at any moment to merge into a single unified Siamese, when the crossed eyes of government should uncross. The War was good for The Economy. There was a certain airy, wordy kind of patriotism that added profit to its virtue. There was money in it, as Troy Chatham would say, who himself was being used by The Economy like lead in a pencil or in a gun. After he was used up, he would not be given a second chance. There is no rebirth in The Economy. (273-74)

The lack of rebirth in "The Economy" and the obvious destructiveness of "The War" are a clear contrast to the resurrection, just described, that Art is granted through a return to the work of farming. "The War" and "The Economy" are arts of finality—all they touch

is either destroyed or used up—while farming is an art of dying and being born again. Jayber had earlier noted that countries store up "funds of weapons," and that people are used up "like lead in a pencil or in a gun." The mixing of metaphors, financial and martial, embodies in syntax the point that Berry is trying to make: that war and economics are of a piece. Later, Jayber considers the extent to which the two activities borrow from each other:

> For The Economy was studying the purpose of The War, which is to purchase and not have. The customers of the war (all of us, that is) purchase life at a great cost and yet lose it.
>
> And The War was just as busily studying the purpose of The Economy, which is to cause people to purchase what they do not need or do not want, and to receive patiently what they did not expect.
>
> Having paid for life, we receive death. By now, in this nineteen hundred and eighty-sixth Year of Our Lord, we all have purchased how many shares in death? How many bombs, shells, mines, guns, grenades, poisons, anonymous murders, nameless sufferings, official secrets? But not the controlling share. Death cannot be marketed in controlling shares. (275-76)

That a passage that begins with eggs—Jayber is bemoaning the Economy's trick of getting people who could raise their own eggs to buy them—ends with bombs and grenades is another example of the mixing of war and economics in Berry's prose. We see it also in the idea of purchasing "shares in death." That "Death cannot be marketed in controlling shares" explains Jayber's capitalization of "The War" and "The Economy." Jayber calls them "freestanding creatures" and "independent operators" (273). They are capitalized, like the names of gods, because they are beyond the control of the human culture that created them.

In linking the economy and warfare, Berry is firmly within the Agrarian tradition. Andrew Nelson Lytle's essay, "The Hind Tit," sounds a common theme by describing Reconstruction as a continuation of the war.

> Since 1865 an agrarian Union has been changed into an industrial empire bent on conquest of the earth's goods and ports to sell them in. This means warfare, a struggle over markets, leading, in the end, to actual military conflict between nations. But, in the meantime, the terrific effort to manufacture ammunition—that is, wealth—so that imperialism may prevail, has brought upon the social body a more deadly conflict, one which promises to deprive it, not of life, but of living . . . . It is a war to the death between technology and the ordinary human functions of living. (202)

Just as Jayber's Port William neglected its own stories and memories in favor of "The News of the World, [which] seemed to do principally with The War and The Economy" (273), Lytle's South is tempted to allow its traditions and "ordinary human functions of living" to be subsumed by the advance of technology. Wealth and materialism are weapons in this war, and technology threatens to replace all that is human. Industrialism, says Lytle, must be dreaded "like a pizen snake," for it is a mode of economics which has much in common with the belligerent rapacity of America's first explorers.

> For the South long since finished its pioneering. It can only do violence to its provincial life when it allows itself to be forced into the aggressive state of mind of an earlier period. To such end does bookkeeping lead. It is the numbering of a farm's resources—its stacks of fodder, bushels of corn, bales of cotton, its stock and implements, and the hundreds of things which make up its economy. And as the only reason to number them is to turn them into cash—that is, into weapons for warfare—the agrarian South is bound to go when the first page is turned and the first mark crosses the ledger. (234)

That bookkeeping leads to aggression might seem unlikely, but Lytle is clear that something is lost when things are turned into numbers. A parallel with science might be helpful. In *Life is a Miracle*, Berry attacks the reductionism of modern science by pointing out its crucial shortcoming.

> Reductionism . . . has one inherent limitation that that is paramount, and that is abstraction: its tendency to allow the particular to be absorbed or obscured by the general. It is a curious paradox of science that its empirical knowledge of the material world gives rise to abstractions such

> as statistical averages which have no materiality and exist only as ideas. There is, empirically speaking, no average and no type. Between the species and the specimen the creature itself, the individual creature, is lost. (39)

As modern science turns individual creatures into abstractions, statistics that may be manipulated and reshaped, so the industrialism of the North threatened to turn the particular things of farming—animals, grain, tools—into "resources," numbers on a ledger that may be added and subtracted without reference to their nature or intrinsic good. The creature is lost when only the species (or specie) is considered.

Both Lytle and Berry are concerned that abstraction will lead to a loss of care. Berry sees this as a very real danger of reductionism.

> The giveaway is that even scientists do not speak of their loved ones in categorical terms as "a woman," "a man," "a child," or "a case." Affection requires us to break out of the abstractions, the categories, and confront the creature itself in its life in its place. . . . To defend what we love we need a particularizing language, for we love what we particularly know. (41)

While Berry admits that reductive thinking can be beneficial in certain contexts, he argues that "it cannot replace, and it cannot become, the language of familiarity, reverence, and affection by which things of value ultimately are protected." Just as Art has to learn to see things in their particular identities—as people, buildings, and communities he knows, and not just as objects which can be blown apart if they stand in his way—so the scientist and industrialist must adopt a new language of particularity if they are to care for what is before them. To value the objects of this world, the Creation, is an important part of the Agrarian *ethos*; industrialism threatens that mindset by converting everything in its path into raw materials—such as trees or minerals—or capital—such as the fodder, cotton and implements in the passage above. Such things,

through the abstractions of the ledger books, become casualties in the war of industrialism, and, as Jayber said, "There is no rebirth in The Economy." Without a language of caring, there can be no new life.

These ideas of Berry's and the Agrarians find a precedent in the writings of John Ruskin, for whom the description of capitalism in military terms was a common trope. Early in *Unto This Last*, Ruskin examines the "moral sign" attached to wealth in terms that are suggestive of Art's distinction between work that is productive and destructive:

> It is impossible to conclude, of any given mass of acquired wealth, merely by the fact of its existence, whether it signifies good or evil to the nation in the midst of which it exists. Its real value depends on the moral sign attached to it, just as sternly as that of a mathematical quantity depends on the algebraical sign attached to it. (17.52)

Those who govern their buying and selling simply by price, buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest, ignore a host of other ethical concerns. In the end, Ruskin says, it is not price that should determine a purchase, but justice: "One thing only you can know: namely, whether this dealing of yours is a just and faithful one, which is all you need concern yourself about respecting it; sure thus to have done your own part in bringing about ultimately in the world a state of things which will not issue in pillage or in death" (17.54). Just as Berry moved easily from eggs to grenades, so Ruskin moves from economic transactions to "pillage and death." That financial dealings can have such a result is one of Ruskin's fundamental insights. In "The Work of Iron," he writes,

> you will find that wherever and whenever men are endeavouring to make money hastily, and to avoid the labour which Providence has appointed to be the only source of honourable profit;—and also wherever and whenever they permit themselves to spend it luxuriously, without reflecting how far they are misguiding the labour of others;—there and then, in either case, they are literally and infallibly causing, for their own benefit or their own pleasure, a certain annual number of human deaths; (16.406)

Like Berry and the Agrarians, Ruskin is quick to see the ways in which economic transactions can be used as weapons to harm another. Wealth is not morally neutral, but exerts a power over people, whether positive or negative.

Speculation and spending are not precisely labor, and Ruskin extends his analysis of positives and negatives to the realm of production and consumption. Whereas economists like Ricardo and Mill consider only the profit gained through production of goods, Ruskin insists that consumption also be taken into account.

> it matters, so far as the labourer's immediate profit is concerned, not an iron filing whether I employ him in growing a peach, or forging a bombshell; but my probable mode of consumption of those articles matters seriously. Admit that it is to be in both cases —unselfish, and the difference, to him, is final, whether when his child is ill, I walk into his cottage and give it the peach, or drop the shell down his chimney, and blow his roof off. (17.103)

After following this martial illustration with the wry comment that "the capitalist's consumption of the peach is apt to be selfish, and of the shell, distributive," Ruskin emphasizes the importance of consumption in every economic transaction.

> It is, therefore, the manner and issue of consumption which are the real tests of production. Production does not consist in things laboriously made, but in things serviceably consumable; and the question for the nation is not how much labour it employs, but how much life it produces. For as consumption is the end and aim of production, so life is the end and aim of consumption. (17.104)

Ruskin's greatest criticism of the economists of his time was that they seemed blind to issues of consumption. If it could be proved that a laborer was paid for making the shell, it was enough, even if that shell were later used to destroy his own house ("this is the broad and general fact, that on due . . . commercial principles, *somebody's* roof must go off in fulfillment of the bomb's destiny"). This blindness results from abstraction, a drawing away from the tangible results of a transaction, considering it instead as a

theoretical exercise. This tendency toward abstraction is described by Berry, in a passage noted earlier, when Art considers the power of modern weaponry.

> You had a thing on your mind that you wanted, or wanted to get to, and anything at all that stood in your way, you had the right to destroy. If what was in the way were women and little children, you would not even know it, and it was all the same. When your power is in a big gun, you don't have any small intentions. Whatever you want to hit, you want to make dust out of it. Farms, houses, whole towns—things that people had made well and cared for a long time—you made nothing of. (86)

While we have already examined this passage in terms of two types of work, we must also recognize the role that abstraction plays here. Berry contrasts the "thing on your mind" with the "things that people had made well and cared for." The mental image is what justifies the physical action. "The right to destroy" is a mental concept, a way of looking at the world that erases particularity: "If what was in the way were women and little children, you would not even know it, and it was all the same." This abstraction is only magnified by the technology of "a big gun," since that allows the destruction of objects that are literally out of sight. Berry's implied concern, and Ruskin's explicit one, is that we be made cognizant of what we are destroying. Berry does this by having Art flash back to the war in the moments before he greets his father and brother: "Art stood as if still in his absence, as if looking out of his absence at them, who did not know he was there, and he had to shake his head. He had to shake his head twice to persuade himself that he did not hear, from somewhere off in the distance, the heavy footsteps of artillery rounds striding toward them" (103). For an instant, Art is literally abstracted, and that absence allows the possibility of destruction. The message is clear that this family could easily be the victims of those artillery rounds, that Art's family and homestead could be the thing "that stood in your way." Reading Berry and Ruskin

together, we see the parallels between the abstracting effects of both economics and war. Considering again financial speculation, Ruskin asks his readers,

> Have you ever deliberately set yourselves to imagine and measure the suffering, the guilt, and the mortality caused necessarily by the failure of any large-dealing merchant, or largely-branched bank? Take it at the lowest possible supposition—count, at the fewest you choose, the families whose means of support have been involved in the catastrophe. Then, on the morning after the intelligence of ruin, let us go forth amongst them in earnest thought; let us use that imagination which we waste so often on fictitious sorrow, to measure the stern facts of that multitudinous distress; strike open the private doors of their chambers, and enter silently into the midst of the domestic misery; look upon the old men, who had reserved for their failing strength some remainder of rest in the evening-tide of life, cast helplessly back into its trouble and tumult; look upon the active strength of middle age suddenly blasted into incapacity—its hopes crushed, and its hardly-earned rewards snatched away in the same instant—at once the heart withered, and the right arm snapped; look upon the piteous children, delicately nurtured, whose soft eyes, now large with wonder at their parents‘ grief, must soon be set in the dimness of famine. (16.403-04)

This is Ruskin's attempt to reverse the abstracting effect of political economy, to put a face to the numbers in the ledger books which Lytle so feared, to keep human lives from being turned into so much cash gained or lost. This emphasis on sight is consistent throughout Ruskin's work. In his autobiography, *Praeterita*, Ruskin contrasts healthy sight with the technology of war in a discourse on, of all things, flowers. Claiming that microscopic examination of flowers was unnecessary, the instrument a "crutch" that robbed the eyes of "the natural pleasures of sight,' he writes, "But in health of mind and body, men should see with their own eyes, hear and speak without trumpets, walk on their feet, not on wheels, and work and war with their arms, not with engine-beams, nor rifles warranted to kill twenty men at a shot before you can see them" (35.430). Microscopes and long-distance rifles are both technologies that remove the observer from the observed, with, Ruskin claims, a proportionate loss in understanding: "Dissect or

magnify them, and all you discover or learn at last will be that oaks, roses, and daisies, are all made of fibres and bubbles; and these again, of charcoal and water; but, for all their peeping and probing, nobody knows how." To kill "twenty men at a shot before you can see them" is a similar failure of apprehension, an inability to appreciate the worth of what you cannot see. Perhaps Berry has Ruskin in mind as Art looks about him at the story's end: "Art looked up the creek and across it at the house and outbuildings and barn. He looked at the half-plowed field on the valley floor with the wooded hillsides around it and the blinding blue sky over it. He looked again and again at his father and his young nephew and his brother" (104). Sight is what makes this place real to him. The abstraction of war, which led him to think of "the great, empty distance that the world was turning in" rather than of "the place where he was" (85), is here reversed as Art uses his eyes, rather than the power of a big gun, to make real, to, literally, *realize* what is around him.

Ruskin, then, helps us to see "Making It Home" as a critique of some of the same habits of mind that motivate the exploitive capitalism of both authors' time. Berry's contrast of two types of work—productive and destructive—leads to a comparison of two fields of human endeavor—the military and the economic. Both fields require the discipline of clear sight to counteract the abstracting tendencies of distance and complexity. The perils of warfare are obvious. Less so are the perils of an economy that has regard only for profit, with no consideration of right consumption or the nature of true wealth.

Ruskin also leads us to another realization about Berry's story: the extent to which the soldier's life is affected by the economic principle of division of labor. Art

voices the typical soldier's complaint when he contemplates the distance between those making the decisions and those doing the fighting: "The government was made up of people who thought about fighting, not of those who did it. The men sitting behind desks—they spent other men to buy ground" (91). Again, the last clause mixes military and economic metaphors. What is distinctive, though, is the contrast between thinking and doing. In Berry's fiction, thought separated from action is a dangerous thing. In the passage quoted earlier, if "you had a thing on your mind that you wanted," then women, children, houses, and farms could all be destroyed in order to fulfill that vision and "you would not even know it." There is an implicit contrast in this passage between having something in "mind" and "know[ing]" it, with the latter having connotations of relationship and of caring, even loving, as in the biblical sense of "knowing" another person, or as in the way one "knows" a place. As we have seen in both Berry and Ruskin, both military and economic thinking tend toward abstraction. The separation of thinking and doing continues with Art himself.

> At first, before he was all the way in it, there was something he liked about the war, a reduction that in a way was pleasing. From a man used to doing and thinking for himself, he became a man who did what he was told.
>
> 'That laying around half a day, waiting for somebody else to think—that was something I had to *learn*.'
>
> It was fairly restful. Even basic training tired him less than what he would ordinarily have done at that time of year. He gained weight.
>
> And from a man with a farm and crops and stock to worry about, he became a man who worried only about himself and the little bunch of stuff he needed to sleep, dress, eat, and fight. (92)

The important word here is "reduction." Art is less of a man in his military service than he was as a farmer. The transition from a man with responsibilities to "a man who worried only about himself" reminds us of Berry's critique of liberalism: children and

immature adults consider only themselves. Here, again, self-interest is not the mark of maturity. The army makes Art into something of a child, one who "did what he was told." In the context of the earlier quote, we see that the offices of thinking and doing have been split between Art and "the men behind the desks." Both are only half-men.

The concept of the divided individual is a potent one in Ruskin. He ought to have paid Adam Smith a royalty each time he used the term "division of labour" in mocking capitalism's tendency to separate the thinking person from the working one. In "The Nature of Gothic," he applies Smith's concept to the mental condition of the factory hands.

> We have much studied and much perfected, of late, the great civilized invention of the division of labour; only we give it a false name. It is not, truly speaking, the labour that is divided; but the men:—Divided into mere segments of men—broken into small fragments and crumbs of life; so that all the little piece of intelligence that is left in a man is not enough to make a pin, or a nail, but exhausts itself in making the point of a pin or the head of a nail. (10.196)

Ruskin is drawing attention to the same "reduction" that Berry described in Art. The manufacturing mentality of division of labor, when applied to the military, has the same dehumanizing effect. A few pages further on, Ruskin defends his claim that an artist ought to be an active worker in his studio. He is arguing against the idea that an artist ought only to design and, in the name of efficiency, leave the actual manufacture to less-skilled workers.

> We are always in these days endeavouring to separate the two; we want one man to be always thinking, and another to be always working, and we call one a gentleman, and the other an operative; whereas the workman ought often to be thinking, and the thinker often to be working, and both should be gentlemen, in the best sense. As it is, we make both ungentle, the one envying, the other despising, his brother; and the mass of society is made up of morbid thinkers, and miserable workers. Now it is only by labour that thought can be made healthy, and only by thought that labour

> can be made happy, and the two cannot be separated with impunity. (10.201)

Though Art is not necessarily made miserable by not being allowed to think, the deprivation is clearly not a positive experience for him. That he gains weight reflects that the life is unhealthy, unbalanced. Neither does Berry portray the men behind the desks as positive examples. They are "morbid thinkers" in the sense that their thoughts are of death; they "spen[d] other men to buy ground" (91) much the same way a factory owner spends the lives of his workers in order to "buy," to attain, his profits. This contrast between making a profit and making human beings, between efficiency and humanity, runs throughout Ruskin. To the manufacturers, he says, "And observe, you are put to stern choice in this matter. You must either make a tool of the creature, or a man of him. You cannot make both" (10.192). In his address to the cadets of the Royal Military Academy at Woolrich in 1865, Ruskin warns the soldiers that they are subject to the same threat. By joining the army, he tells them, "You find that you have put yourselves into the hand of your country as a weapon. You have vowed to strike, when she bids you, and to stay scabbarded when she bids you" (18.482). While Ruskin admits that there may be good in this, he questions the wisdom of robbing the bravest and best of England of their thought and volition.

> It is the error especially of modern times, of which we cannot yet know all the calamitous consequences--to take away the best blood and strength of the nation, all the soul-substance of it that is brave, and careless of reward, and scornful of pain, and faithful in trust; and to cast that into steel, and make a mere sword of it; taking away its voice and will; but to keep the worst part of the nation--whatever is cowardly, avaricious, sensual, and faithless--and to give to this the voice, to this the authority, to this the chief privilege, where there is least capacity, of thought. (18.484)

With considerable sarcasm, he goes on to praise "this beautiful division of labour (her brave men fighting, and her cowards thinking)" (18.485), and worry that these cadets have become the slaves of the baser folk who stayed home: "You are not true soldiers, if you only mean to stand at a shop door, to protect shop-boys who are cheating inside" (18.484). In an odd mix of praise and condemnation, Ruskin tells the cadets that they have the potential to be the leaders of England, that they represent her noblest virtues and her bravest actions, but that they have allowed themselves to become enslaved.

> But remember, good and noble as this state may be, it is a state of slavery. There are different kinds of slaves and different masters. Some slaves are scourged to their work by whips, others are scourged to it by restlessness or ambition. It does not matter what the whip is; it is none the less a whip, because you have cut thongs for it out of your own souls: the fact, so far, of slavery, is in being driven to your work without thought, at another's bidding. Again, some slaves are bought with money, and others with praise. It matters not what the purchase-money is. The distinguishing sign of slavery is to have a price, and be bought for it. Again, it matters not what kind of work you are set on; some slaves are set to forced diggings, others to forced marches; some dig furrows, others field-works, and others graves. Some press the juice of reeds, and some the juice of vines, and some the blood of men. The fact of the captivity is the same whatever work we are set upon, though the fruits of the toil may be different. (18.482)

In this passage, Ruskin dissolves the division between military service and an exploitive economy. The definition of slavery, for Ruskin, is "being driven to your work without thought, at another's bidding." Art does what he is told and waits for someone else to think. The soldiers are just as much slaves as the hands who are called upon to create "servile ornament" in the factories of England.

> Alas! If read rightly, these perfectnesses [of industrial products] are signs of a slavery in our England a thousand times more bitter and more degrading than that of the scourged African, or helot Greek. Men may be beaten, chained, tormented, yoked like cattle, slaughtered like summer flies, and yet remain in one sense, and the best sense, free. But to smother their souls with them, to blight and hew into rotting pollards the suckling

> branches of their human intelligence, to make the flesh and skin which, after the worm's work on it, is to see God, into leathern thongs to yoke machinery with,—this is to be slave-masters indeed. (10.193)

The repetition of "thong," whether to make whips or to yoke machinery, underlines the parallel between the two types of slavery. To divide the mind from the body is to make a person less than human, a slave, yet that is the means used by both the manufacturer and the military general.

To modify our earlier comparison of positive and negative work, Art is moving from work that involved only his body to work that involves both body and soul. We see first his rebellion from his childish dependence on the military. Art is pleased to think of his own independence: "'I ain't marching,' he thought. 'I am going somewhere'" (90). He "had come a long way, trusting somebody else to know where he was, and now he knew where he was himself" (83). Even his unwillingness to wait for a bus reflects a choice to imitate the maturity of his forefathers: "It did not occur to him, any more than it would have occurred to his grandfather, to wait upon a machine for something he could furnish for himself" (90). In *Unto This Last*, in a passage that contrasts mightily with the lassitude of Art's situation in the army, Ruskin maintains that "Labour is of a higher or lower order, as it includes more or fewer of the elements of life: and labour of good quality, in any kind, includes always as much intellect and feeling as will fully and harmoniously regulate the physical force" (17.95). Art is moving toward this kind of higher labor as he resumes an adult's responsibility over "farm and crops and stock." Watching his father plowing, Art notes that he "leaned his plow over so that it could ride around the headland on the share and right handle" (103). This is not the observation of a novice, but of one skilled at a complex task. Even his question to his brother—"You're plowing it just a little wet, ain't you?"—is not simply small talk, but a query that expects

a considered response, an accounting of his brother's thoughts regarding the possibility of another hard frost. This transition to rewarding, thoughtful work demonstrates by contrast the demeaning nature of military labor. The reductive character of Art's experience as a soldier is precisely that of the workman's experience in a Victorian factory. Ruskin and Berry see modern warfare as inextricably caught in the methodologies of economics, to the soldier's detriment. The paradox both develop is the non-obvious damage done to those doing, rather than just suffering, violence.

Reading Berry's story in light of these two ideas—of the destructive activity of war as parallel to the destructive labor of capitalist greed and of the soldier as victim of a dehumanizing division of labor—makes clear the reason for two puzzling aspects of the story: its anti-heroic stance and the biblical intertextuality of its ending. Both Berry and Ruskin share an anti-heroic perspective on military service, though with some differences. Berry approaches the issue with Art musing on his relationship to his government. After expressing relief that the relationship is effectively over, that he owes the government nothing and that the government owes him nothing, he reconsiders the last point: "But the government seemed to think that it owed him praise. It wanted to speak of what he and the others had done as heroic and glorious. Now that the war was coming to an end, the government wanted to speak of their glorious victories" (91). The fact that Art does not want the government's recognition, indeed doesn't want it to owe him anything, is testimony that he desires independence more than any social status or material benefit that might make him a slave, put him "in service," again. But his motive for rejecting heroism is also based in respect for his fellow soldiers who died. Of the government, he says, "'They talk about victory as if they know all them dead boys was

glad to die. The dead boys ain't never been asked how glad they was. If they had it to do again, might be they wouldn't do it, or might be they would. But they ain't been asked.'" (91). It may seem ironic that he refuses to call the dead "heroes" out of respect for them, but he realizes that the men had become the "slaves" of Ruskin's lecture and that they did not choose their fate. To call them heroes is to obscure the fact of that slavery, to cover up the element of compulsion in the government's call, for one cannot call an action heroic if it is compelled. Art's desire not to call them heroes is an attempt to separate the memory of his comrades from something faintly shameful, something they did not choose but which chose them, and which, in their lives, and, now, even in their deaths, hopes to gain something at their expense.

Ruskin's anti-heroic stance is more qualified. He is no enemy of martial glory, and he starts his address to the cadets at Woolrich with the claim that "no great art ever yet rose on earth, but among a nation of soldiers" (18.459). He feels strongly, though, that the less glamorous arts of making a home and raising the necessities of life ought to take a higher place than military endeavor. In *Unto This Last*, he contrasts negative and positive labor, the first being exemplified by murder, the second by child-rearing. He follows this with a footnote:

> Observe, I say, —rearing, not —begetting. The praise is in the seventh season, not in *sporhto* [seed-time], nor in *futalia* [planting time], but in *opwra* [harvest]. It is strange that men always praise enthusiastically any person who, by a momentary exertion, saves a life; but praise very hesitatingly a person who, by exertion and self-denial prolonged through years, creates one. (17.97)

To his cadets, he makes the same point more bluntly, accusing them of sentimentality in their enlistment, the same sentimentality that leads a young girl to join a convent. These

young men have romanticized military life because they are afraid to face the decidedly unromantic, but necessary, realities of daily living.

> If you cared to do your duty to your country in a prosaic and unsentimental way, depend upon it, there is now truer duty to be done in raising harvests than in burning them; more in building houses, than in shelling them--more in winning money by your own work, wherewith to help men, than in taxing other people's work, for money wherewith to slay men; more duty finally, in honest and unselfish living than in honest and unselfish dying, though that seems to your boys' eyes the bravest. So far then, as for your own honour, and the honour of your families, you choose brave death in a red coat before brave life in a black one. (18.482)

Ruskin's anti-heroism, then, comes from the contrast between productive and destructive labor, although in this case the world of economics is not a negative parallel. Rather, economy, insofar as it means the management of a house in an honest, humble way of living, becomes an unrecognized heroism, much as Art's father and brother, in Berry's story, stand tall in the reader's mind, taller than any military figures from Art's past.

Ruskin's ambivalence toward heroism informs the conclusion to "Making It Home," in which Berry draws on the parable of the prodigal son to qualify the Norman Rockwell stereotype of the soldier's heroic return home. As in the parable, the father in Berry's story sees Art first. The brother is here, as well, though of a sweeter temper than his biblical counterpart. The young nephew in Berry's story plays the part of the biblical servant at the story's last lines.

> [Art] heard his father's voice riding up in his throat as he had never heard it, and he saw that his father had turned to the boy and was speaking to him:
>
> "Honey, run yonder to the house. Tell your granny to set on another plate. For we have our own that was gone and has come again." (105)

The passage echoes the biblical version: "But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And

bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." The language of return echoes the poem cited earlier—"He enters into death / Yearly, and comes back rejoicing"—and solidifies the theme of resurrection throughout the story.

Yet the implication of Berry's use of this parable is not wholly positive. Kyle Childress notes this parable often provides for Berry "a lens through which he defines and sees what community, friendship, and extended family look like" (77). In the context of Ruskin's anti-heroism, however, the similarities raise the question: in what way is the parable of the prodigal son an appropriate parallel for the story of a returning soldier? Insofar as both concern a father's love for his child, there is nothing unsettling here. Though Art's father is more laconic than the biblical father, he shows great tenderness for his son, reaching out to touch him repeatedly, speaking to him with a cracked voice and tears in his eyes. Yet, while the emphasis of the parable is shared equally between father and son, Berry's story is much more about Art than his father. Thus, if we see the parable in this story, we must assume that it in some way addresses Art's situation.

The last sentence of the parable hints at two ways to view Art's experience. The first half, "my son was dead, and is alive again," is clearly applicable to Art's near-fatal injury, as well as his symbolic rebirth and baptism as he journeyed through his own country. The second half, "he was lost, and is found," is more troubling. While it could simply refer to Art's journey through the countryside, gradually recovering his bearings as he nears familiar territory, the moral lesson of the parable brings up another meaning to the term "lost." The son had, of course, "wasted his substance with riotous living," and, as the older brother in the parable makes clear, one cannot read the son's story and

simply focus on the joy of the homecoming. Art, however, is no profligate (except, perhaps, for one night in Paris), so if the burden of guilt is not on the soldier himself, it must be on the act of soldiering. Here, we recall Ruskin's earlier characterization of soldiers as slaves, as swords to be wielded or scabbarded as the nation decides. The Prodigal son was, likewise, in a state of slavery, economic in his case, forced to care for an unclean animal in a foreign country. For Ruskin, however, the parallels between soldiering and the Prodigal son go even further. At the end of his Woolrich speech, Ruskin tells his listeners that the profession of the soldier is typically marked by an attitude not far from that of the son who demands his inheritance early.

> No youth who was earnestly busy with any peaceful subject of study, or set on any serviceable course of action, ever voluntarily became a soldier. Occupy him early, and wisely, in agriculture or business, in science or in literature, and he will never think of war otherwise than as a calamity . But leave him idle; and, the more brave and active and capable he is by nature, the more he will thirst for some appointed field for action; and find, in the passion and peril of battle, the only satisfying fulfilment of his unoccupied being. And from the earliest incipient civilisation until now, the population of the earth divides itself, when you look at it widely, into two races; one of workers, and the other of players--one tilling the ground, manufacturing, building, and otherwise providing for the necessities of life;--the other part proudly idle , and continually therefore needing recreation, in which they use the productive and laborious orders partly as their cattle, and partly as their puppets or pieces in the game of death. (18.466)

The contrast between the worker and the idle "continually . . . needing recreation" recalls Berry's contrast of the "stickers" and the "boomers," terms Berry borrowed from Stegner to describe those who stay in one place and make something of it and those who continually wander from one place to another, exploiting their surroundings as they move ("It All Turns on Affection"). The phrase "proudly idle" has an air of biblical condemnation about it (perhaps one of the many reasons that Ruskin's speech was

expunged from the records of the Academy) and connects soldiering to the wastefulness of the prodigal son. With the "workers" and "players," we are back at the contrast between productive and unproductive activity. As we have seen above, Art was "lost" to productive work while a soldier. His father and brother had to carry on without him, and they welcome the return of his labor. Furthermore, he was lost as a complete person, having become a soldier who had no responsibility beyond his kit. If responsible choice is the mark of humanity, then to lose responsibility is to lose one's personhood. In essence, the allusion to the parable sums up Berry's (and Ruskin's) anti-heroic stance: the soldier's duty, while not something to be condemned, is seen as something of a lapse, a straying, from what is productive and worthwhile. His return is to be celebrated, not with stories of heroism that make day-to-day existence at home seem dull in comparison, as the government would wish, but rather with anticipation of the soldier's casting off of old habits and resuming a fuller life at home.

CHAPTER SIX

Hannah Coulter: Imagination, Desire, and the Practice of Farming

Hannah Coulter, Berry's only novel told from the perspective of a female character, recounts Hannah's girlhood, her marriage to Virgil and the loss of him in the war, her membership in Virgil's family and in the larger community, her marriage to Nathan, the raising of their children to adulthood, and, finally, an old woman's role as the keeper of memories. As such, it is a family history, an intimate look into the dreams, hopes, and loves of the families and marriages that keep Berry's fictional community vital. When read alongside Ruskin, however, a new perspective emerges.

A key insight of Ruskin's art criticism is that appreciation of beauty is more than just an aesthetic response; it involves a moral faculty that needs to be trained and developed. Ruskin adamantly rejects any attempt to see beauty as merely sensual or as a matter of intellect, claiming that "impressions of beauty . . . are neither sensual nor intellectual, but moral" (4.42). "The sensation of beauty," he continues a few pages later, "is dependent on a pure, right, and open state of the heart. Dependent both for its truth and for its intensity, insomuch that even the right after-action of the Intellect upon facts of beauty so apprehended, is dependent on the acuteness of the heart-feeling about them" (4.49). After the first condition of moral rightness is met, intellect makes an appearance here as an agent, as the initiator of action, but it is itself dependent upon the "acuteness of heart-feeling" in order to act correctly. "Heart-feeling" is related to imagination, as Ruskin maintains that "all true and deep emotion is imaginative, both in conception and expression" (4.287). Imagination is not purely an intellectual process, but one guided by

emotion, especially by love for what is good and beautiful. In the next volume of *Modern Painters*, he describes susceptibility to beautiful or awe-inspiring sensations as a function of the imagination: "the real majesty of the appearance of the thing to us, depends upon the degree in which we ourselves possess the power of understanding it,—that penetrating, possession-taking power of the imagination, which has been long ago defined as the very life of the man, considered as a seeing creature" (5.177). Ruskin plays on both senses of the word "vision" in this passage, both as a physical sense that apprehends present beauty and as a "possession-taking power," an imaginative understanding of what is and what might be. Ruskin insists that imagination enables the right government of the passions, and that right government leads to moral action. In his *Lectures on Art*, he gives the imagination a high status as a motivator.

> You will find farther, that as of love, so of all the other passions, the right government and exaltation begins in that of the Imagination, which is lord over them. For to subdue the passions, which is thought so often to be the sum of duty respecting them, is possible enough to a proud dullness; but to excite them rightly, and make them strong for good, is the work of the unselfish imagination. (20.92)

This is not the typical moralistic notion of ethics as limiting and curbing the imagination; imagination here is not concerned with restraining passion but rather with stimulating it. This is the active understanding of imagination and vision that Ruskin brings to Berry: imagination can motivate to right action, to right practice. Furthermore, imagination is deeply related to love and care for others, both other human beings and non-human nature. In his *Lectures on Art*, Ruskin describes "the two essential instincts of humanity: the love of Order and the love of Kindness."

> By the love of order the moral energy is to deal with the earth, and to dress it, and keep it; and with all rebellious and dissolute forces in lower creatures, or in ourselves. By the love of doing kindness it is to deal

> rightly with all surrounding life. And then, grafted on these, we are to make every other passion perfect; so that they may every one have full strength and yet be absolutely under control. (20.88)

The combined loves of order and kindness results in a desire to work with the earth and its creatures in a careful, thoughtful way, mindful always of their intrinsic worth. This is an ethic to which Berry would subscribe. The last sentence indicates that personal growth may be "grafted on" to these twin loves, so that loving the right things becomes a means of moral perfection. Over all of this, Ruskin places the imagination: "I press to the conclusion which I wish to leave with you, that all you can rightly do, or honourably become, depends on the government of these two instincts of order and kindness, by this great Imaginative faculty, which gives you inheritance of the past, grasp of the present, authority over the future" (20.93). Imagination for Ruskin, then, is fundamentally necessary to moral action. Recognizing and responding to beauty, it both enlivens and governs the passions, resulting in a love for order and kindness. These twin desires, embody an ethic of care for one's surroundings which also perfects one's character, while imagination, governing over them, allows an understanding of the past through memory, the present through sight, and the future through a vision of what might be.

Ruskin's art criticism can elucidate *Hannah Coulter* because the story is, in some sense, about the formation of taste, about learning to know, desire, and love the right things in the right way. Verbs like "know," "imagine," and "love" gain a significance in this reading, as Hannah Coulter learns to share the visions of Virgil and Nathan, and as she seeks to train the tastes of her children so that they might desire to care for the family farm and continue their membership and involvement in the community of Port William. Without Ruskin's insight, we tend to read Hannah's story as simply that of a young

woman becoming a wife and mother, and we read her children's story as that of a generation forced to leave the land because of economic conditions. Ruskin, however, leads us to consider the supreme importance of the imagination. As, in Ruskin's view, the imaginative apprehension of beauty promotes moral growth, so, for Berry, an imaginative vision of human flourishing, conceived within the practice of care for the land and in the context of one's own community, leads to right agricultural practice.

Though much of the latter half of the novel concerns Hannah's reflections on the raising of her own children, the first half focuses on the character development of Hannah herself. She comes from rude beginnings: a run-down house and a family that can barely make ends meet. The death of her mother leaves her further adrift, a condition made worse by her father's unfortunate marriage the next year. After Hannah finishes high school, her grandmother sends her to live with an older female friend in Port William, who takes Hannah under her wing and serves as a sort of base from which she makes forays into the larger society. She gains some polish and self-confidence by working for Wheeler Catlett, the local attorney, but her most significant moral growth comes from being courted by Virgil Feltner.

While young love always seems to turn one's life upside down, Hannah makes it clear that knowing Virgil and his family makes a fundamental change in her. For one thing, the Feltners are a more successful family than hers, both in terms of the quantity and upkeep of their land and the health and strength of their family relationships. Virgil also seems beyond her deserving. Hannah emphasizes the substantial changes that he leads her to undergo. During one late night talk, Virgil begins telling her "the things I

needed to know in order to know him." He speaks about the particulars of farming, about the mules losing their winter coats.

> Virgil spoke of that as something old in the world that caused an ancient happiness in him. He was trying to show me the shape of his life, and what might become the shape of it. He was seeing the time to come as a possibility, as a life that he loved. And though maybe neither of us fully understood what he was doing, he made me love it. It wasn't as though I was being swept away by some irresistible emotion. The thought of resistance never entered my mind. When I imagined him entering the life he saw, I imagined myself entering it too. It was becoming a possibility that belonged to us both.
>
> It is entirely clear to me now. We were coming together into the presence of something good that was possible in this world. I have to see it now as a sad hope, because we were able to use up so little of it, but it was no less a beautiful one. (28)

This lyrical passage seems quite romantic, but the sentiments and ideas it contains actually work against the stereotypes of romance. What is being described here is Hannah's first step in learning to love the right things. This is more than learning to love Virgil, though that is part of it. This is a process of ordering her knowledge and training her imagination, in ways that will affect her actions and choices, in ways that will change the "shape" of her life.

In order to "know" Virgil, she must first "know" certain things. The first use of the word "know" is personal, intimate, almost (but not yet for Hannah and Virgil) recalling the biblical sense of "know" as sexual relationship. The second sense of the word is applied to things, to activities, here to the practice of farming. These activities form "the shape of his life," and, though the girl Hannah might have originally been attracted to the physical form of Virgil, the shape of his life is what the woman comes to love. Likewise, he visualizes, not her face, but "a possibility . . . a life that he loved," a life that includes her and yet is more than her. In another break from romantic stereotype,

the word "love" is not primarily an emotion, something that sweeps a young girl off her feet. Rather, it is an aspect of the imagination. This is not empty fantasizing, but visualizing a good that is not here yet, but that is worth pursuing, "that [is] possible in this world." She is learning to train her imagination for things worthy of love. Finally, what she imagines is beautiful. Again, the word is not used of her lover, but rather of the hope she shares with him. Beauty here gains a nobility, a sense of truth, substance, and worth, that is missing from most lovers' idylls; it speaks more of morality and choice than of physical attraction.

What Berry has done with this passage is turn what would normally be an emotional moment into a teleological one. In his book, *John Ruskin and the Ethics of Consumption*, David Craig says of teleology that "On this type of approach, the central tasks of ethical reflection include trying to envision the good itself and describing the moral character and the social roles, relationships, and obligations required for people to be able to pursue the ends of a good life" (2). Hannah is "trying to envision the good itself" and is discovering how her relationship with Virgil, with his family, and with his farm, will help her attain that good. Craig continues: "The task is to form one's character, to train one's desires, so as to be able to seek out the proper ends of a good and full life, a life that consists in meeting obligations to others while living bountifully" (37). This is what Craig calls "flourishing," and he finds it throughout Ruskin's corpus, as when in *Modern Painters II* he says, "for *I* call any creature "happy" that can love, or that can exult in its sense of life:" (4:7) or when Ruskin defines "vital beauty" in Aristotelian terms, as "the appearance of felicitous fulfilment of function in living things, more especially of the joyful and right exertion of perfect life in man" (4.64). In *Hannah*

Coulter, we see this teleological emphasis again and again, as young people direct their lives towards goals that are worthy or unworthy, and as they realize and fulfill their obligations to their family and community, or disavow their membership.

One of the first requirements of a teleological approach to life is that love must be a choice, must not be "an irresistible emotion." As we might guess from our earlier examination of Ruskin, Berry and liberalism, the choice we are describing is Aristotelian rather than Kantian. That is, it is freedom to pursue the *telos*, the good, rather than simply freedom to exert one's will. Choice alone is not a good for either Berry or Ruskin; it is praiseworthy only within the context of an agreed-upon vision for the "felicitous fulfillment of function in living things." The struggle of Hannah Coulter in particular, and Port William in general, is to train her children to appreciate that vision, and to reject a world where unguided choice, Kantian choice, is an end in itself. Yet, choice there must be, for were this vision irresistible, there could be no moral worth, no development of character, in choosing to love the right things. Ruskin deals with this interaction of choice and taste at the start of *Modern Painters II*, by raising the question of "in what way an impression of sense, or the preference of one, may be a subject of *will*, and therefore of moral duty or delinquency" (4.52). Ruskin is talking about the apprehension of beauty, which may seem a very different thing than love, but the two are not dissimilar. Like Berry's description of love, Ruskin's view of beauty is not one of mere emotion or feeling, but has more to do with character: "it is evident that the sensation of beauty is not sensual on the one hand, nor is it intellectual on the other, but is dependent on a pure, right, and open state of the heart" (4.49). In the biblical language in which Ruskin was steeped, the state of the heart means far more than emotion. A pure

heart speaks to moral action, to volition, to ethical choice. Ruskin admits that "it does not at first appear easy to prove that men ought to like one thing rather than another;" (4.52) but finally concludes that such control over one's preferences is possible, calling again on the scriptures as witness:

> And seeing that wherever power of any kind is given there is responsibility attached, it is the duty of men to prefer certain impressions of sense to others, *because* they have the power of doing so. And this is precisely analogous to the law of the moral world, whereby men are supposed not only capable of governing their likes and dislikes, but the whole culpability or propriety of actions is dependent upon this capability; so that men are guilty or otherwise, not for what they do, but for what they desire, the command being not Thou shalt obey, but Thou shalt love, the Lord thy God; a vain command if men were not capable of governing and directing their affection. (4.54)

The passage is typical of Ruskin in the way it builds bridges between disciplines and fields usually thought disparate. The word "analogous" forges a connection between aesthetics and morality, as well as between beauty and divinity. The love of beautiful things is here compared to the love of God; this is not surprising, since Ruskin says later in the same volume that beauty is always "something Divine; either the approving voice of God, the glorious symbol of Him, the evidence of His kind presence, or the obedience to His will by Him induced and supported" (4.210). Since human beings can choose to love or not to love God, Ruskin reasons that the same agency must exist in the love of beauty. The link between the aesthetic and moral is elaborated when Ruskin encourages his readers to a "right accepting and reading of" the "lessons" that beautiful objects and joyful creatures teach (4.147). To accept these lessons involves both an openness to the world and a heart that is pure.

> Whence, in fine, looking to the whole kingdom of organic nature, we find that our full receiving of its beauty depends, first on the sensibility, and then on the accuracy and faithfulness, of the heart in its moral judgments;

> so that it is necessary that we should not only love all creatures well, but esteem them in that order which is according to God's laws and not according to our own human passions and predilections. (4.161)

The injunction here to "love" and "esteem" "according to God's laws and not . . . to our own human passions and predilections" clearly addresses the issue of agency. Craig calls this idea, that people have a spiritual obligation to notice and desire the beauty God has made in the world, "the duty of delight" (35), and the term captures the sense of moral obligation inherent in Ruskin's account of the love for beauty.

Like Ruskin, Berry suggests that love and desire are a matter of ethical choice rather than passing sensual impression. Repeatedly in *Hannah Coulter*, Berry takes the romantic stereotype of love as an emotion and recasts it as something subject to human volition. By doing so, he emphasizes the extreme importance of choice in human life, and, thus, the importance of having the right desires. Imagination becomes a moral quality, not simply a means of escape.

This perspective emotion is exemplified in Hannah's experience with Virgil's family. After Virgil is reported missing, Hannah is amazed by the way that his family welcomes her into their midst: "I went into love with Virgil, and of course we were not the only ones there. To be in love with Virgil was to be there, in love, with his parents, his family, his place, his baby" (50). She continues the metaphor by referring to love as a place: "Sometimes too I could see that love is a great room with a lot of doors, where we are invited to knock and come in. . . . Some do not come in. Some may stay out forever. Some come in together and leave separately. Some come in and stay, until they die, and after" (51). Berry takes the idea of being "in love" and makes it a physical location rather than a state of mind. It is no longer an emotion, but a place that can become one's own, a

place where one can abide for all life. On the other hand, it is also a place one can choose not to enter, or that one can choose to leave. Years later, when Marcus leaves Hannah's daughter Margaret and their son Virgie, for another woman, "It had happened, Marcus said, because 'it wanted to happen.' Not because he wanted it to happen, of course" (140). This is the stereotype: that one can't help being in love, or out of it. Berry's metaphor of the rooms, like Ruskin's analogy of the love of God, tells a different story.

As the older Hannah recalls her life with Nathan, she talks of the farm where they spent their lives: "Here, on this place, among its stories remembered and forgotten, Nathan and I made our love for each other. . . . Love in this world doesn't come out of thin air. It is not something thought up. Like ourselves, it grows out of the ground. It has a body and a place" (88). Like "to know" in the earlier passage with Virgil, the phrase to "make love" takes on a new sense here. Rather than being solely a descriptor for sexual intimacy, it becomes a metaphor for the work that goes into building, or, better, cultivating a relationship. Humanity was not produced *ex nihilo*; rather, Adam was made from the dust. The food raised on a farm comes out of the ground, and then only with tender care. Similarly, love is not an irresistible emotion or a feeling "out of thin air," but something cultivated, something crafted by two people in cooperation with the ground, with the world of non-human nature around them. It is a "task," as Craig said of ethical reflection, a practice and a discipline.

The term "practice" is a useful one for this discussion, especially as Alasdair MacIntyre defines it in *After Virtue*:

> [A practice is] any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form

> of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended. (187)

A healthy marriage, seen in this light, is a practice: a complex and cooperative social activity which makes the person who practices it better in some way, and better able to continue the activity. "Practice" might also be applied to Ruskin's concept of art, in which art is both "the result of a certain ethical state in the nation" and a source of influence which "has a tendency to reproduce the ethical state which first developed it" (19.166, 19.176). "You must have the right moral state first, or you cannot have the art," Ruskin argues in his lecture "On the Relation of Art to Morals," "But when the art is once obtained, its reflected action enhances and completes the moral state out of which it arose, and, above all, communicates the exultation to other minds which are already morally capable of the like" (20.73). This circularity is seen again in Berry, as Hannah continues to describe their life together: "By our work we kept and improved our place, and in return for our work the place gave us back our life" (89). "Life" here does not refer merely to physical sustenance; rather, it is the "coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity" that Hannah and Nathan share. It is not automatic, however. For Ruskin, the moral action of art could only be communicated to "other minds which are already morally capable of the like." Unless viewers had been trained to appreciate and desire the beautiful, they could not be susceptible to its moral lessons.[1] Similarly, the story of *Hannah Coulter* is one of Hannah and Nathan continually choosing to embrace and love the vision they share, and of their attempt to

[1] The aesthetic training to which Ruskin refers was the product of long hours of study. Though Ruskin sought to provide that training through his writing and encouraged the display of art in free, public galleries, such education was beyond the reach of many. By working through the more accessible medium of the novel, Berry can communicate the same principles to a wider audience.

pass this love on to their children. Berry is intensely conscious, as is Ruskin, that the practice can be abandoned in a generation if the imaginative vision is lost.[2]

Craig quotes MacIntyre in his discussion of Ruskin's "The Nature of Gothic." Contrasting Ruskin's vision of meaningful work with that of Carlyle's, in which any kind of work had value, Craig argues that Ruskin's description of the building of the cathedral, in "The Nature of Gothic," fits the criteria of practice in that it is cooperative, has standards of excellence, allows freedom of expression which increases the creativity of the workers, and allows for extension of the craft into new areas (101). This sort of practice is embodied in *Hannah Coulter* as Hannah, a young woman at her first job, overhears Wheeler Catlett talking with some of the older farmers. "They were men with long memories who loved farming and whose lives had been given to ideals: good land, good grass, good animals, good crops, good work" (22). As we know from elsewhere in Berry's fiction, farming, especially tobacco farming, is a community affair. Richard Church points out this communal aspect of farming in *Hannah Coulter*: "It is not just that they are all people who do the same thing for a living—in this case farming. Rather, it is that their way of farming requires them to work together, a shared activity that not only requires them to be present with one another but also binds them to one another" (182). Church's comment captures MacIntyre's sense of practice as a "socially established cooperative human activity," as the practice creates bonds, a coherent group, among the people who perform it. The ideals that the farmers describe—"Good land, good grass, good animals, good crops, good work"—describe, in MacIntyre's words, the "standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of" the activity

[2] Fritz Oehlschlaeger, in *The Achievement of Wendell Berry: The Hard History of Love*, applies MacIntyre's "practice" to Berry's personal life as a farmer in his chapter "Practices, Particulars, and Virtues: What Mules Taught Wendell Berry."

of farming. They are the "human conceptions of the ends and goods" which a practice is meant to extend. The fact that these men are speaking out of "long memories" demonstrates that this practice has been "systematically extended," though the continuation of that practice is at risk as the young fail to seek after those same "ends and goods."

MacIntyre's discussion of practice claims that the goods sought by such an activity must be "internal" to the practice itself. Craig explains that "external goods" would be those that come from outside the activity, things like wealth and fame. "Internal goods," on the other hand, are only attainable through that particular activity, as, to paraphrase MacIntyre, one learns from playing chess what only chess can teach (102). At its most basic level, the contrast between external and internal goods is a contrast between working for money and working for the love of the work itself. MacIntyre describes the portrait painter who "is able to achieve many goods which are in the sense just defined external to the practice of portrait painting—fame, wealth, social status, even a measure of power and influence at courts upon occasion." However, these benefits "are not to be confused with the goods which are internal to the practice" (189). For a portrait painter, the internal good is the ability to portray the personality of the subject in the portrait of the face. Craig cites Ruskin's address "The Influence of Imagination in Architecture," in which Ruskin tells architects that they must not put monetary gain before their craft: "You may like making money exceedingly; but if it come to a fair question, whether you are to make five hundred pounds less by this business, or to spoil your building, and you choose to spoil your building, there's an end of you . . . . You are *not artists*. You are mechanics, and drudges" (16.370). In Berry's

novel, Hannah says of farming: "I don't think there is an argument for being a farmer. There are only two reasons to farm: because you have to, and because you love to. The ones who choose to farm choose for love. Necessity ends the argument, and so does love" (129). Farming here is its own reward. There is no reason to farm other than the intrinsic rewards of farming itself, which are "good land, good grass, good animals, good crops, good work." This difference between intrinsic and external good is a significant theme in Berry, as bad farming considers only what can be taken from the earth, how fertility and life can be converted to money. This is the mindset of Kelly Crowley, the "developer" who visits Hannah toward the end of the novel. Kelly assumes that, after Nathan's death, Hannah will move into town and sell her land. He also assumes, Hannah tells us, "that as an old widow woman I would not know what I had or the worth of it" (177). Hannah understands Kelly's idea of the good that might be made of her farm, and she is shaken by it.

> The sound of his engine had hardly died away before I realized that I could no longer imagine our place, I couldn't see it in my mind's eye. What did *he* see in it? A "country place" for some rich professional person in Louisville or Cincinnati, with our old once-renewed buildings shoved into a heap and burnt and everything brand-new? A hunting preserve for some sportsman's club? A housing development called "The Woodlands"? Whatever vision he had of the place as it might be had driven the place as it is out of my mind. (178)

We have a struggle here of competing imaginations, competing visions of the good. Kelly sees the potential of development for rich clients, development which would destroy the history of the place. Even the sportsman's club, perhaps the least radical transformation of the land, would be based in an exploitive economy of use, with little concern for the happiness and vitality of the land's animal life. Hannah's response to Kelly, that she plans on putting it into a land trust as a wildlife preserve, indicates a

respect for the intrinsic good of the land itself, in Ruskin's terms, a desire for the "felicitous fulfillment of function in living things." The contrast is also seen in the exploitive farming of Roger Merchant or Troy Chatham, versus the practice of their respective counterparts, Mat Feltner and Athey Keith, in *A Place on Earth* and *Jayber Crow*.

Ruskin addresses this notion of intrinsic and external good directly in *Modern Painters II*, relating it to the health and happiness of the object or being observed.

> Now I wish particularly to impress upon the reader that all these higher sensations of beauty in the plant arise from our unselfish sympathy with its happiness, and not from any view of the qualities in it which may bring good to us, nor even from our acknowledgment in it of any moral condition beyond that of mere felicity; . . . so that we even find that in this respect, the moment we begin to look upon any creature as subordinate to some purpose out of itself, some of the sense of organic beauty is lost. (4.152-53)

Ruskin insists here that an object's beauty not be confused with its utility. By setting the plant's "felicity" above its usefulness, he reflects the concerns of Mat Feltner and Athey Keith, for whom the health of the land and its animals is a higher concern than their own pocketbooks. This is not to say that the land and animals may not be useful to them, for livestock and crops are the farmer's means of sustenance, but rather that their usefulness is not the farmer's first consideration. If the land and animals are allowed to sicken in the name of financial gain, that financial gain will be short-lived. Far better to care for the land and animals, and continue in a mutually prosperous relationship with them. Here we see the connection between beauty and ethics, between imagination and practice. Only as Berry's characters see—have a vision for—the land as having value and beauty in itself, can they engage in the right practice of stewardship.

MacIntyre's understanding of practice as a "socially established cooperative human activity" is developed at length in Berry and, to some degree, in Ruskin. When Hannah reflects back on her decision to marry Virgil, she describes the change in perspective that she was forced to undergo.

> Like maybe any young woman of that time, I had thought of marriage as promises to be kept until death, as having a house, living together, working together, sleeping together, raising a family. But Virgil's and my marriage was going to have to be more than that. It was going to have to be part of a place already decided for it, and part of a story begun long ago and going on.
>
> The Feltner place had been in that family a long time—since the first white people settled here. Virgil had taken his place, after his father, in the line of those who were gone and those who were to come. It was something I needed to get into my mind. The love he bore to me was his own, but also it was a love that had been borne to him, by people he knew, people I now knew, people he loved. That, I think, was what put tears in his eyes when he looked at me. (33)

Hannah initially conceives of marriage as an individual decision, or at most a decision between two people. Her experience with the Feltners, however, convinces her that marriage involves many people, both alive and dead. Her relationship with Virgil must take its place as "part of a story begun long ago and going on." Like Wheeler Catlett, "a man who held himself answerable to the dead" (137), Hannah must choose to recognize her obligations to the past, and she must willingly take the place that has been prepared for her. The contrasting choice is seen in her older son, Mattie. As an adult, he visits home occasionally, but he has little in common with Nathan and Hannah, little to discuss. When conversation turns to the farm, or to the community of Port William, "the memories . . . seem a little odd to him now, as if from another life" (124). Hannah observes of his departure for college, "It was *his* life that Mattie was living in after that,

not ours" (123). In contrast to Virgil and Hannah, Mattie is unwilling to "take[e] his place, after his father, in the line of those who were gone and those who were to come."

"Place" is, for Berry, always a word loaded with connotations, and here it means both one's place in a social structure and one's physical place. We see the tension in the passage above: "The Feltner place had been in that family a long time—since the first white people settled here. Virgil had taken his place, after his father, in the line of those who were gone and those who were to come." The shift from physical place to societal place adds a dimension to MacIntyre's sense of practice, for Berry always sees human society within the context of non-human nature. It is for this reason that Hannah's relationships with both Virgil and Nathan must begin in a physical homesite with both past and future significance. During their courting, Virgil takes Hannah to "what the living Feltners called 'the far place'" (34), the ruins of an old log cabin between two stone chimneys. There, Virgil invites her to take in the view, of which she exclaims, "You can see the whole world!" Virgil's reply, "Some of the best of it, anyway," indicates that this place is *telos* for him, a vision of the good. Yet, his vision can still be affected by her willingness or ability to share it. After discussing where they might build the house, Virgil says "That's just a thought I had. It's a thought you could change. You've changed my thoughts a plenty already" (35). The physical place enters into negotiation with MacIntyre's "socially established cooperative human activity" and plays a role in the continuation of practice.

Nathan and Hannah share a similar visionary moment tied to a particular place. Having settled on asking Hannah to be his wife, Nathan buys the old Cuthbert farm and begins to repair its marginal fields and derelict buildings. His "proposal" consists of

inviting Hannah to this farm one evening and asking her, "Well, what would you call this?" Her reply, "I guess . . . you'd still have to call it a farm" (71), is good, but not good enough. After they speak further about what the place "offered," she speaks in terms of vision: "It, plus what you see in it, plus what you want from it, could be a farm." This statement moves things forward; Nathan turns to her, and as he tells her, "It's not the Feltner place," Hannah realizes that "he was asking if I would marry him." Only when Hannah went beyond a simple description of what she saw to an imaginative vision of the future, to a vision shared with Nathan, could their relationship progress. In both of these episodes, the practice of marriage and the practice of farming are dependent upon two people sharing a vision, and this vision is best defined within the context of a particular place.[3]

Berry grounds MacIntyre's concept of societal practice in the tangible world of non-human nature. Significantly, this is something that can only be done in fiction. D. Brent Laytham, writing of the passage cited earlier, in which Nathan and Hannah's love "grows out of the ground. . . [with] a body and a place," describes the many-faceted nature of Hannah's relationship to her farm.

> Because Hannah's many loves were grown on this soil and patterned by working this place, love for the place is not in competition with love for her family. Instead, continuing to love the place keeps her connected with those, now gone, whom she has loved there and connects her too with the God whose love creates all things. (176)

[3] Jeffrey Bilbro's article, "A Form for Living in the Midst of Loss: Faithful Marriage in the Revisions of Wendell Berry's *A Place on Earth*," examines the analogies between marriage and farming in Berry's novels. Both marriage and farming on small properties are, according to Bilbro, ways "to imagine and carry out proper, faithful action" (90). Like a practice, the "tightly limited form[s]" of marriage and farming "contain the highest possibility of successful fidelity in a world where so much is unknown and mysterious."

This passage demonstrates the multiple references and connections that fiction can establish within a single place, particularly when a series of stories and novels, like Berry's Port William fiction, have a common setting. Oehlschlaeger finds a similar connection between practice and personal relationships.

> To learn a practice in this way is to find oneself in the midst of an ongoing history. The practice must be learned from others; what one learns, in fact, is the history of others' experiments in the practice. . . . As one can also see that this practice is vital to the lives of those for whom one cares, one comes to care about the practice or discipline. Learning it becomes an act of love, a way of giving allegiance to those who have come before one and found it good. (40)

Caring about a practice stems from the care and love one feels for others involved in that practice. Oehlschlaeger's insight illuminates why Hannah moves so easily between her love of Virgil, of Virgil's family, of their place and of the practice of farming. Oehlschlaeger argues that a practice cannot be passed down except through a rich environment of traditions, relationships, and shared experience: "When this process takes place within the context of rural or agricultural life, it is inevitably fleshly, embodied, particular. Mules differ; pieces of land differ; hillsides differ; bottomlands differ. These are things good farmers know" (40). The particularity of Berry's fiction, with its places and histories, its characters and memories, allows Berry to enrich MacIntyre's ideas by describing both the human characters who form covenants with each other and the physical surroundings, saturated with human history and memory, within which these commitments take place.

While we have already seen how Ruskin's ideas of art and beauty parallel MacIntyre's descriptions of intrinsic goods and of practice extending itself, Ruskin also mirrors Berry's revision of MacIntyre described above: the interaction of human

community and particular place in sustaining practice and vision. The close relationship between art and human community is a common theme of Ruskin's writings. The "love of order" and "desire of beauty" mark the "course of the arts of great nations" (20.90), and Ruskin characterizes the Greeks as possessing "a deep relation within themselves between their power of perceiving beauty, and the honour of domestic affection" (20.91). This second passage links perception of the beautiful and domestic health in a way of which Berry would have approved. Hannah Coulter's education in learning to love the right things results in the "honour of domestic affection" settling on her own home. In *Modern Painters II*, Ruskin describes a sophisticated, vain aesthetic—an "appetite of tasteful cruelty" which cannot feel pleasure unless "Caligula-like, it concentrate the labour of a million of lives into the sensation of an hour" (4.62). He then contrasts this with a "deep delight from the meanest objects of creation," which "shall not separate us from our fellows, nor require the sacrifice of any duty or occupation, but which shall bind us closer to men and to God." The difference between Caligula and fellow feeling makes Ruskin's point that a proper taste for art and beauty brings people together in healthy relationships, just as, in Berry, a healthy vision of marriage and farming holds couples and families together. Finally, as already noted in our discussion of practice replicating itself, art for Ruskin "is the result of a certain ethical state in the nation," and also "has a tendency to reproduce the ethical state which first developed it" (19.166, 176). In the context of human communities, this parallels Hannah's observation that "the love [Virgil] bore me was his own, but was also a love that had been borne to him" (33). Both art and love are practices that are supported by the presence of art and love in the past. History has momentum.

Ruskin also helps us to understand the significance of Berry's contribution to MacIntyre: his addition of particular place as crucial to the dynamic of practice. Frances O'Gorman argues, in "Ruskin's Memorial Landscapes," that Ruskin's interest in architecture is, in many ways, an interest in memory, in the way that buildings preserve the vision and labor of their creators. While his early writings saw the natural world as a means of understanding God, Ruskin's later works focused more on human participation with nature. As he lost his Evangelical faith, he became more concerned with what people did with nature. Of this transition, Craig writes, "Although [Ruskin] retains his teleological approach to ethics, he begins to relocate the source of the telos from God's perfect Creation to the cultures and the activities that people make for themselves" (77). This is reflected in his fascination with ruins, what O'Gorman calls "built environments" (27). In *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, he contrasts the beauty of natural forms (the shape of leaves, ferns, and grasses) with "the sense of human labour and care" found in the remains of a building.

> How great this latter influence we may perhaps judge, by considering that there is not a cluster of weeds growing in any cranny of ruin which has not a beauty in all respects *nearly* equal, and, in some, immeasurably superior, to that of the most elaborate sculpture of its stones: and that all our interest in the carved work, our sense of its richness, though it is tenfold less rich than the knots of grass beside it; of its delicacy, though it is a thousandfold less delicate; of its admirableness, though a millionfold less admirable; results from our consciousness of its being the work of poor, clumsy, toilsome man. Its true delightfulness depends on our discovering in it the record of thoughts, and intents, and trials, and heart-breakings—of recoveries and joyfulnesses of success: all this *can* be traced by a practised eye; but, granting it even obscure, it is presumed or understood; and in that is the worth of the thing, just as much as the worth of any thing else we call precious. (8.81)

The world of non-human nature alone, despite its ornament and intricacy, does not take center stage. Rather, Ruskin values the place for its evidence of a human past, for the memories incarnate in the stones.

Likewise, Virgil and Hannah at "the far place" feel "surrounded" by "the ghost of the house," and imagine the lives lived within it. When Hannah takes in the view of the river from the front yard, she tells us that "it needed a long look because you had to think of how old it was, and of how many voices had spoken and hushed again beside it" (34). Before leaving, they peer into the old well: "A stone wall went to the bedrock, beautiful as that old work almost always is, and below that the well opened through layer after layer of time to a flat disk of light where we saw our two faces looking back up at us right out of the innards of the world" (35). The beauty and carefulness of the labor which dug the well serves to carry them back through time, and simultaneously situates them within the story of human life in that place. Though Virgil dies in the war and they never live between those chimneys, the framing of their faces together in the well demonstrates the role that place has in the practice of their relationship. The "true delightfulness" they experience there is based on their "discovering in it the record of thoughts, and intents, and trials, and heart-breakings" of human activities of the past.

Memory is a significant purpose of architecture for Ruskin, for it connects the present to the past. In *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, he writes that "There are but two strong conquerors of the forgetfulness of men, Poetry and Architecture" (8.224). In *Modern Painters IV*, Ruskin contrasts the modern efficiency of England, which knocks down or restores its ancient buildings, with Europe, which lets them stand. During a trip to France, seeing the children playing around the ruins of an ancient cathedral, the

peasants storing their grain in it, he writes: "No one wonders at it, or thinks of it as separate, and of another time; we feel the ancient world to be a real thing, and one with the new: antiquity is no dream; it is rather the children playing about the old stones that are the dream. But all is continuous; and the words, 'from generation to generation,' understandable there" (6.13). In contrast, England is a land of "a living present, consisting merely of what is 'fashionable' and 'old fashioned.'" Her citizens cannot imagine the past; it is remote, inaccessible, the subject of history books. We see in the European view Hannah's willingness that her marriage "be part of a place already decided for it, and part of a story begun long ago and going on" (33). At the novel's end, Hannah muses, "Like a lot of old people I have known, I am now living in two places: the place as it was and the place as it is. As it was it is almost always present to me, with the dead moving about in it as they were" (180). Hannah embodies the biblical perspective of Ruskin's phrase "from generation to generation": she has a sense of history, of covenant, of her place in a story, as well as her place in a land chosen for her and by her, a place to which she belongs. Pinches sees Hannah's sentiments as fundamental to Berry's fiction: "If we are to belong in Berry's sense, our ties to the past through memory must be particular and direct. We must be able to name the ones who hold us in this pattern of timeful human life. We belong not to everyone but to our family, our neighborhood, and our people. We belong not to any place but to a specific one" (248). For Berry, as for Hannah, "all is continuous." In contrast, the "living present" of England is the perspective of secular modernity, and is exemplified in Hannah's son Mattie, discussed above, for whom the memories of the past "seem to be from another life" (124), or in Kelly, the developer who sees in the Coulter farm "a

country place for some rich professional person in Louisville or Cincinnati, with our old once-renewed buildings shoved into a heap and burnt and everything brand-new" (178). Ruskin's description of the ruins also suggests Andy Catlett's characterization of the modern world of employment as one marked by forgetfulness.

> It is a life of beginnings without memories, but it is a life too that ends without being remembered. The life of membership with all its cumbers is traded away for the life of employment that makes itself free by forgetting you clean as a whistle when you are not of any more use. . . . 'But the membership,' Andy said, 'keeps the memories even of horses and mules and milk cows and dogs.' (133)

One of the "cumbers" of the life of membership is being tied to a particular place. For Berry, as for Ruskin, evidence of humanity's interaction with place, whether in the form of a derelict farm or a cathedral ruin, forms a powerful anchor for both the continued practice of care for land and people and for the imaginative vision necessary to desire that practice.

The title of Craig's study, *John Ruskin and the Ethics of Consumption*, points to key questions that Ruskin brings to Berry. According to Craig,

> [Ruskin] insists that questions of character always intervene between people's desires and purposes. He asks, for example, what have people made of themselves, and what have they been made by others to be? What activities, excellences, and enjoyments are people capable of or not? What desires and purposes inform people's assessments of goods and their choices as consumers? (7)

Craig finds Ruskin's conclusion to be that "individuals succeed in cultivating, or fail to cultivate, their virtues as a result of the activities in which they choose to engage. This participation in specific activities also helps to define the ends and goods that people pursue, especially the ends and goods that they share with other people" (11). This focus on consumption rather than production, on the type of person buying a product rather

than on the product itself, sets Ruskin apart from political economists like John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx (8). When others were arguing about how to increase production, Ruskin was emphasizing both "the production of a thing essentially useful [and] the production of the capacity to use it" (17.154). "The final object of political economy," he writes, "is to use everything and to use it nobly" (17.102), and he defines wealth as "the possession of the valuable by the valiant" (17.88). The key questions, then, for Ruskin, are "What type of person makes a good consumer? Does he or she desire the right sort of things?" These questions place him in the company of Berry, whose concerns, as we have seen, are teleological.

In *Hannah Coulter*, this focus on consumption is most evident in the training of children. Ruskin writes in *Aratra Pentelici*, that "all aesthetics depend on the health of soul and body, and the proper exercise of both, not only through years, but generations. Only by harmony of both collateral and successive lives can the great doctrine of the Muses be received which enables men . . . to have pleasure rightly" (20.208). The emphasis here on "generations" and the "harmony of both collateral and successive lives" points to the role of community and family in training children to desire the right things. Hannah is successful in affecting her children's early lives. The work she and Nathan did together "kept and improved our place, and in return for our work the place gave us back our life. The children knew this. For a long time this was the knowledge they most belonged to" (89). "Belonged to" describes a kind of training that is not free choice. We have here Milbank's paternalism: the teacher/student dynamic is necessary for a time but will cancel itself out as the children grow to adulthood. Oehlschlaeger also discusses the self-cancelling nature of the hierarchies necessary for practice: "One can see that those

who are concerned to transmit the practice do so not because they want to bind or enslave the future to the past but because they care about passing on a way of life they have found to be good. Education becomes inseparable from love" (40). While some aspects of this training seem to impinge on free will, education is ultimately a way of passing on a good. Elsewhere in the novel, Hannah recalls Nathan's words about Danny Branch's boyhood, following his Uncle Burley through the woods. Of the lore of "game and fish and nuts and berries and herbs and marketable pelts . . . . '[Danny] knows more about all that than he knows he knows,' Nathan said, who knew a good deal about it himself and from the same source" (149). Hannah, herself, has been the product of this kind of training, as she realizes when faced with the lack of the same training in Mattie's children. Her attempts to take them to see bird's nests or to fish always fail: "They don't much like any of it. By no fault of theirs, they don't know enough to like it. They don't know the things that I and even their daddy have known since before we knew anything" (125). Ruskin's claim that learning to have pleasure in the right things results from discipline exercised "not only through years, but generations" rings true in Hannah's realization that the practice has been discontinued with Mattie's decision not to value the care of the land.

The saddest chapters in *Hannah Coulter* are those devoted to her two sons, Mattie and Caleb, neither of whom chose to share the vision of their parents. Berry describes their choices as failures of knowledge and imagination. Mattie never showed great interest in what his father had to teach him. Though Hannah enjoys watching Mattie pursue his own interests, she admits that "as for farming, he did the work he was expected to do, and that was all . . . . He wouldn't see work and do it on his own. Nathan would teach and prompt and occasionally plead and sometimes give him hell direct. But

Mattie was looking away. He wasn't interested" (122). The emphasis on Mattie's not seeing, on his looking away, indicates that Mattie lacks a "vision" for farming. The metaphor continues when Hannah, in a rare break from her husband, takes her son's side: "Nathan had good eyes and I trusted them, but I couldn't make myself care enough that Mattie should look with Nathan's eyes and see what he saw" (122). "He's not you," she tells Nathan, "He's maybe never going to see what you see or want what you want." The language is significant, because what one sees is important to what one loves and therefore becomes. As Craig puts it,

> All virtues-centered ethics entail a close, almost circular, relationship between character and vision. In order to develop one's character well, one must see how certain activities and excellences have their point in the good. In order to envision the good, one must cultivate the character needed to pursue key aspects of it. (121)

Hannah's decision not to see with her husband's eyes, and to allow her son not to do so, is a difference in understanding the good. Earlier in their relationship, Hannah discussed how she and Nathan could see "with the light of love" (73), could imagine their lives and their future together. They were seeing a common good and letting that vision mold them. Seeing "with the light of love" is necessary because "The ones who choose to farm choose to love" (129). We have already seen how important vision is to Ruskin's aesthetic. In the context of *Hannah Coulter*, we remember that Ruskin's imaginative vision is closely tied to "heart-feeling," and imagination governs the twin loves of order and kindness. Berry and Ruskin revise Craig's discussion of virtue ethics by adding love and desire to the equation. One must cultivate not only the character needed to pursue the good, but a love for the good itself.

The result of Mattie's refusal to share this vision is evident when he returns to visit with his own children.

> He was always looking away, and now when he is here it appears really that he doesn't see where he is. His children, as they have come along, have picked this up from him. When they are here they don't know where they are. And maybe it is not possible for them to find out. They don't want to know. (124)

It is not simply that his children were not taught to appreciate bird's nests and fishing; they have inherited their father's legacy of looking away. "They don't want to know" the things that Hannah wants to show them. When Mattie comes to his father's funeral, for a visit of less than an hour, Hannah observes that her son is trapped within the hectic pace of his life.

> I knew that he didn't have the strength to get free. His life was being driven by a kind of flywheel. He had submitted to it and accepted it. It was turning fast. To slow it down or stop it and come to a place that was moving with the motion only of time and loss and slow grief was more, that day, than he could imagine. (164)

Amid the mechanical metaphor of flywheel and machine, Berry points out a failure of the imagination. Mattie has failed to grasp the vision, failed to see and imagine correctly, and so he has lost his grip on the good.

For Caleb, the failure of vision comes through education. He seems almost predestined to farming, born to it (127), but the agricultural college leads him away from that practice. In this case, education attacks the practice of good farming by disconnecting it from place: "The big idea of education, from first to last, is the idea of a better place. Not a better place where you are, because you want it to be better and have been to school and learned to make it better, but a better place somewhere else. In order

to move up, you have got to move on" (112). This abstraction from a particular place is evident when Hannah reads Caleb's articles.

> I read all of his publications that he brings me, and I have to say that they don't make me happy. I can't hear Caleb talking in them. And they speak of everything according to its general classification. Reading them always makes me think of this farm and how it has emerged, out of "agriculture" and its "soil types" and its collection of "species," as itself, our place, a place like no other, yielding to Nathan and me a life like no other. (132)

The unique qualities of a particular place, as we saw above, are a fundamental element in Berry's understanding of practice. By removing place from Caleb's understanding of agriculture, education has crippled Caleb's imaginative understanding of what good farming can be. Hannah implies that Caleb is aware of this crippling. Of his life as a professor of agriculture, she says,

> He didn't love farming enough to be a farmer, much as he loved it, but he loved it too much to be entirely happy doing anything else . . . There is the same kind of apology in him that you see in some of the sweeter drunks. He is always trying to make up the difference between the life he has and the life he imagines he might have had. (131)

Again, Berry highlights the failure of imagination, the failure to see and pursue the good. The good itself has not changed; what has changed is the ability of human beings to perceive and desire that good. Of this passage, Stanley Hauerwas remarks that "[Berry's] problem with technology and specialization is that they tend to become ends in themselves, producing people with no ends" (23). As with Ruskin, the valuable can be possessed only by the valiant.

Of the Greeks, Ruskin wrote that "when a nation with mimetic instinct and imaginative longing is also thus occupied earnestly in the discovery of Ethic law, that effort gradually brings precision and truth into all its manual acts" (20.228). Though the context is sculpture, the connection between beauty, imagination, and "manual acts" is

applicable to Berry. When a community of people gain an "imaginative longing" for a certain version of the beautiful, and allow that imaginative and aesthetic desire to affect their choices, "Ethic law," they will learn to act rightly with regard to the world around them. In *Hannah Coulter*, Berry creates a contemporary application of Ruskin's insight. Hannah's triumph is that she learns to love and desire the practice of farming and the particular places in which that farming occurs; her tragedy is that she cannot pass this longing on to her children.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Jayber Crow: Victorian Pastorship in Port William

Wendell Berry's novel, *Jayber Crow*, tells the story of one man's search for his vocation, and of the deep love he feels for the people of Port William, the town in which he practices his trade. What is not immediately obvious, however, is the extent to which this is a story of the values that must structure a successful community. When read in the context of John Ruskin's efforts to clarify right relations between the rich and the poor, Jayber's distaste for institutions and tender concern for the members of Port William embody the pastoral responsibility that, according to Ruskin and other Victorians, members of a community must assume for each other. Jayber's willingness to operate within a gift exchange rather than on the basis of self-interest applies this pastoral idea to the realm of business, drawing connections between Ruskin's idea of profession and "commonwealth" and *Jayber Crow*'s theme of "love without possessing." The two authors complement each other: Ruskin gives Berry's novel a theoretical and historical context by which it gains a significance wider than the story of one man, while the particularity of Berry's novel offers the opportunity to cultivate the discernment necessary to unite profession and affection, expressing through the interactions of individual characters the relations that Ruskin felt should govern entire classes. As Berry tells the story through his protagonist's thoughts and feelings, the reader is allowed to grow with Jayber into this union of profession and affection, a union that Ruskin would refer to as "pastorship."

To understand the importance of pastorship, we must first understand it in terms of its polar opposite, the institutional approach. A pastoral approach emphasizes personal relationship between the one caring and the one being cared for, a relationship which allows in-depth knowledge of each person's economic situation, moral character, and role within the community. Ideally, both members of a pastoral relationship learn from each other. An institutional approach has no sense of personal relationship, preferring the "fairness" of anonymity to the possible biases inherent in relationship. An institution does not learn from, is not changed by, the person being cared for. Berry examines these contrasting approaches in his story, first describing in detail an institutional approach to regulating human behavior. Virtually from the novel's beginning, the protagonist of *Jayber Crow* has no love for institutions. Looking back on his experience as a ten-year-old at the Good Shepherd Orphanage, Jayber tells us, "I dislike the life of institutions and organizations, and I am slow to trust people who willingly live such a life" (33). Berry describes the routines of institutional life in detail.

> We stood in line for meals, for our thrice-daily entrances into the school building, for church, for almost anything that required going through a door. There were daily inspections of our rooms. There were nightly bed checks. There were supervised study halls and recreation periods. We were all assigned jobs that were necessary to our own feeding and shelter, and of course our work was closely supervised. We all, I think, had the feeling that we were being watched, not by God, which was the endlessly repeated warning, but by Brother Whitespade and his faculty, who evidently lusted to know all that we least wanted to tell. And to these ever-watching eyes we reacted in ways peculiar to ourselves. Some lived lives of flagrant indifference or transparency, seeming to have no secrets that they wanted to keep. Others, like me, developed inward lives of the intensest privacy. (32)

Jayber describes how observation is the primary means of institutional control at the orphanage in a way that is reminiscent of the Panopticon, the prison design proposed by

the nineteenth-century Utilitarian Jeremy Bentham. In the Panopticon, the inmates never know when they are being observed, with the result that they feel they are constantly visible, much as Jayber describes above.

The one-sided nature of vision in the Good Shepherd Orphanage is evident from Jayber's first encounter with Brother Whitespade, the institution's director.

> Brother Whitespade's desk was as wide as a field. It was as wide maybe as an ocean. For a minute or two I didn't think I could see across it. And then I could see Brother Whitespade over there, looking at me pointedly through a pair of steel-rimmed eyeglasses and smiling in a way that gave me no comfort. His stare was the most concentrated part of him. Otherwise he was a soft man with a smooth face, wavy hair, and a tight collar. But all that he was seemed to be gathered up in his eyes and pointed across that wide desk at me. (30)

The spectacles are the defining feature of this man, and the young Jayber is the object of their stare, under which he needs "a minute or two" before he can even return the gaze. More whimsically, the parallel with Bentham's prisoners is evident again when Jayber attempts to escape from the orphanage for a bit of fishing. Jayber is "almost out of sight" when he looks back and sees Brother Whitespade standing in the distance, facing him. Jayber throws himself to the ground, "hoping he couldn't see that far," and tries to hide among the stalks of dead weeds. When he "raised [his] head to peep around," Brother Whitespade is advancing, and when he "looked again," the man is upon him. Only then does he realize he is wearing a bright red sweater (42). The red sweater is the punch line to an amusing incident, but it emphasizes the extreme visibility of the clients of the Good Shepherd Orphanage. Like the inmates of Bentham's prison, they are always visible, but never sure if they have been seen.

Michel Foucault adopts the institution of the Panopticon as a metaphor for the modern state in his book *Discipline and Punish*, describing the relationship of

government to citizen as one characterized by power of the former over the latter. Berry's account of Jayber's first meeting with Whitespade parallels this Foucauldian aspect of the Panopticon.

> I knew all of a sudden that I was facing a man who was filled with power, and that I had no power, none. I could not have told you this then, for the knowledge did not come to me in words. It came into me as a hollow place that opened slowly and ached under my breastbone. I knew that I had come there by no thought of my own. I was a long way removed from any thought of my own. I had no thought.
>
> I was who? A little somebody who could have been anybody, looking across that wide desk at Brother Whitespade. I knew that I could not even leave until he told me to go. (30-31)

This is, of course, the perspective of a young child, but it is accurate, for Brother Whitespade exerts near complete control over his institution. As Foucault would predict, this disparity of power results in a loss of identity for Jayber. Already in the passage above he is losing the ability to think for himself, even to think. He has become "a little somebody who could have been anybody." The name itself is the next casualty; Whitespade calls him "J," and Jayber learns that "all of us orphans—who were called 'students'—were known by the initial letters of our first names along with our last names" (31).

> We were thus not quite nameless, but also not quite named. The effect was curious. For a while anyhow, and for how long a while it would be hard to say, we all acted on the assumption that we were no longer the persons we had been—which for all practical purposes was the correct assumption. We became in some way faceless to ourselves and to one another. . . . I remember walking around saying my name to myself—"Jonah Crow, Jonah Crow"—until it seemed that it could never have belonged to me or to anybody else. (32)

The children internalize the anonymity, both as regards themselves and each other. When new students arrive, Jayber tells us that they are called "newboy" and "newgirl" until the newness wears off (38). They have begun to adopt the discipline of the

institution and to apply it to each other. Under constant surveillance, without power and with only the minimal personal identity, they have begun to conform. The young J. Crow resists, but only with the most strenuous effort, writing words that he likes—"tintinnabulation," "home," "neighbor"—and student's identities—"E. Lawler"—in a little book he carries with him. But this act of resistance carries its own punishment, for Jayber becomes isolated from the other children. He writes Elizabeth Lawler's name in his book because she has moved from being a "newgirl," friendless and alone, to being accepted by the other children, a status J. Crow has never achieved. Such was the power of Bentham's Panopticon.

The Panopticon never existed, of course, beyond Bentham's notebooks. The workhouses of Victorian England, however, that were established as part of the reforms following the New Poor Law of 1839, were based on the Panopticon's principles. Berry's novel gains significance when we explore this comparison, and in the Victorians' struggle to define the role of such institutions we find further parallels between John Ruskin and *Jayber Crow*. Though Ruskin never met Bentham—he was J. Crow's age when Bentham died—Ruskin spent his life combating many of the Utilitarian principles that Bentham articulated. Ruskin's antipathy toward institutions such as the workhouse matches Jayber's, and, in the face of society's need for some kind of oversight and structure, the two men find surprisingly similar solutions.

The history of pastorship in England begins in Elizabethan times, when poverty was dealt with in a pastoral manner, with each parish being responsible to care for its own poor, using funds collected through the church. Workhouses existed, but the poor within them were treated with compassion, and the discipline exerted therein was

intended to restore them to full membership in the community. After the New Poor Law reforms, the Victorian workhouse was based on the Utilitarian principle that people act in ways that lead to their own pleasure. If poverty were to be discouraged, therefore, it must be made unpleasant. Rather than build up or restore their clients, the designers of the workhouse regimen aimed to wear down both their body and psyche. Lauren Goodlad, in her book *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State,* describes the ways in which this goal was achieved. She examines Harriet Martineau's short story "The Hamlets" (1836), which tells of a small English town, many of whose inhabitants are poor and quite happy to accept relief under the old parish system. The town is laboring under parish poor fees, until a newcomer volunteers to reform the workhouse according to utilitarian principles. He first builds a wall to separate the workhouse from the community, so as to give its occupants a sense of isolation, and then makes the workhouse itself less comfortable. As a result of these changes, poverty vanishes practically overnight, as the poor, who had been comfortable with their previous state, suddenly find penury untenable. Goodlad sees Martineau's story as too optimistic in its conclusions, but perfectly realistic in its portrayals of the workhouse, itself.

> Martineau's tale thus illustrates a symbolic strategy reiterated by many practices of the new regime: for example, the ultra-durable but uncomfortable workhouse uniform; the sufficient but unappealing bread and water diet; the hygienic but humiliating compulsory bath; and the task of work— physically laborious, but materially unproductive and financially unremunerative (see Crowther, *Workhouse* 42, 195). In each case a formally rational institutional practice achieves a doubly deterrent effect, mortifying pauper bodies in a way that symbolizes their social negation. According to the new social order, paupers are neither subjects in a reciprocal character-building relation nor objects of prolonged sociological investigation or carceral reform. They are, instead, what Steven Marcus has described as "the first unperson[s] in modern history" (Engels 236). (55)

The power of the workhouse to dissolve identity was such that Jessie Philips, the pregnant and friendless heroine of Frances Trollope's *Jessie Philips: A Tale of the New Poor Law* (1844), seeks out the workhouse to "hide [herself] . . . from all eyes." Compared to the workhouse, there is no place which better possesses "the faculty of obliterating, from the minds of all without, the remembrance even of the names and the existence of those within it" (qtd in Goodlad 74). The obliteration of names reminds us of the Good Shepherd, and it is this sort of institution that J. Crow fought with his little book, the book in which he kept the words and memories that reminded him of another place, a place to which he "defiantly" belonged (38). For Berry, this kind of institutionalized anonymity defines more than the orphanage; it recalls the contrast between the membership of Port William and the world of "employment," as described in Hannah Coulter.

> One of the attractions of moving away into the life of employment, I think, is being disconnected and free, unbothered by membership. It is a life of beginnings without memories, but it is a life too that ends without being remembered. The life of membership with all its cumbers is traded away for the life of employment that makes itself free by forgetting you clean as a whistle when you are not of any more use. . . . 'But the membership,' Andy said, 'keeps the memories even of horses and mules and milk cows and dogs.' (133)

The world of the membership is one in which people are motivated by recognition and love, rather than by the shame and weakness of anonymity and depersonalization, but Berry recognizes that the workhouse vision still guides much of the world. In *Jayber Crow*, Berry emphasizes again the need for recognition and love as the adult Jayber describes how his vision of the "gathered church" became that of a "gathered community,"

> imperfect and irresolute but held together by the frayed and always fraying, incomplete and yet ever-holding bonds of the various sorts of affection. There had maybe never been anybody who had not been loved by somebody, who had been loved by somebody else, and so on and on . . . . It was a community always disappointed in itself, disappointing its members, always trying to contain its divisions and gentle its meanness, always failing and yet always preserving a sort of will toward goodwill. I knew that, in the midst of all the ignorance and error, this was a membership. (205)

This is not an ideal world—Jayber is clear that there are failures and shortcomings within the community—but the community handles these disappointments with encouragement and love, not "social negation."

On the question of how to deal with human shortcomings, Ruskin clearly sides with Berry. In *Munera Pulveris*, he describes the role of respect in reformation of character.

> The true instruments of reformation are employment and reward—not punishment. Aid the willing, honour the virtuous, and compel the idle into occupation, and there will be no need for the compelling of any into the great and last indolence of death. The beginning of all true reformation among the criminal classes depends on the establishment of institutions for their active employment, while their criminality is still unripe, and their feelings of self-respect, capacities of affection, and sense of justice not altogether quenched. (17.542)

Although this passage mentions "institutions" which "compel the idle into occupation," Ruskin's vision is not that of the Poor Law reformers. Martineau's workhouse prescribed physical labor that was "physically laborious, but materially unproductive and financially unremunerative," in other words, work which accomplished nothing useful. In contrast, Ruskin asks for "active employment," and in a later passage for "work which shall be worth it, and which, in process of time, will redeem their own characters, and make them happy and serviceable members of society" (17.545). Membership in society, not exclusion or separation, is the goal of Ruskin's program. The Good Shepherd orphanage,

however, like the workhouse, has separation as its goal. Jayber tells us, "One thing you would sooner or later realize about The Good Shepherd was that it had no neighbors. Like (I think) most institutions, it was turned inward, trying to be a world in itself" (40). The similarity here between the orphanage and the workhouse points to a larger claim in both Berry and Ruskin: that society based on competition and self-interest will always seek to isolate and dehumanize those who are too weak to succeed. In the essay "Economy & Pleasure," Berry describes the problem.

> The idea of competition always implies, and in fact requires, that any community must be divided into a class of winners and a class of losers. This division is radically different from other social divisions: that of the more able and the less able, or that of the richer and the poorer, or even that of the rulers and the ruled. These latter divisions have existed throughout history and at times, at least, have been ameliorated by social and religious ideals that instructed the strong to help the weak. As a purely economic ideal, competition does not contain or imply any such instructions. In fact, the defenders of the ideal of competition have never known what to do with or for the losers. The losers simply accumulate in human dumps, like stores of industrial waste, until they gain enough misery and strength to overpower the winners. . . . There is no limit to the damage and the suffering implicit in this willingness that losers should exist as a normal economic cost. (208)

The workhouse and, to some extent, the orphanage are "human dumps" in which society places those who are no longer useful. (We remember *Hannah Coulter*'s description of "the life of employment that makes itself free by forgetting you clean as a whistle when you are not of any more use.") Ruskin, in his time, recognized the same unwillingness of a competitive economic system to deal with those who lose.

> No almsgiving of money is so helpful as almsgiving of care and thought; the giving of money without thought is indeed continually mischievous; but the invective of the economist against indiscriminate charity is idle, if it be not coupled with pleading for discriminate charity, and, above all, for that charity which discerns the uses that people may be put to, and helps them by setting them to work in those services. That is the help beyond all others; find out how to make useless people useful, and let them earn their

> money instead of begging it. Few are so feeble as to be incapable of all occupation, none so faultful but that occupation, well chosen, and kindly compelled, will be medicine for them in soul and body. (17.540)

Both Berry and Ruskin go beyond the idea of instrumental use—that these people must be made "useful to society"—and focus instead on use that is in accord with the intrinsic good of the person, hence Berry's need for "social and religious ideals that instructed the strong to help the weak" and Ruskin's claim that appropriate work "will be medicine for them in soul and body." Any effective form of social organization must find a way, not simply to put the poor to work, but to bring make them part of the community. In a time when workhouse labor is designed to be "materially unproductive," Ruskin prescribes work that is meaningful, meant to give them skills that make them into worthy, useful members of society. Ruskin's "almsgiving of care and thought" is also a good description of the love which binds the members of Jayber's "gathered community," a community which does not allow exclusion, even for those who desire it: "for the community must always be marred by members who are indifferent to it or against it, who are nonetheless its members and maybe nonetheless essential to it" (205). Both Berry and Ruskin maintain that all members of the community are essential.

Jayber's dislike of institutions continues throughout his life, forming a consistent theme of the novel. Although the church ought to be the institution that most clearly exerts a pastoral influence, both Jayber and Ruskin found organized religion wanting, and justified their rejection of it in remarkably similar terms. Jayber explains his difficulties with the church by describing the young pastors who come briefly to serve at Port William, before achieving promotion to larger venues.

> The preachers were always young students from the seminary who wore, you might say, the mantle of power but not the mantle of knowledge.

> They wouldn't stay long enough to know where they were, for one thing. . . . They seemed to have come from some Never-Never Land where the professionally devout were forever young. They were not going to school to learn where they were, let alone the pleasures and the pains of being there, or what ought to be said there. You couldn't learn those things in a school. (160)

These are men who use the institutions of church and school to acquire power. Drawing their education and training from an institution, however, separates them from the particular place they have come to serve. Jayber comments that none of the pastors grow old in Port William, implying that only long experience in a particular place will give appreciation of it. As a result of their youth, Port William's pastors fail to appreciate the place they are at. In school, they learned,

> to have a very high opinion of God and a very low opinion of His works—although they could tell you that this world had been made by God Himself.
>
> What they didn't see was that it was beautiful, and that some of the greatest beauties are the briefest. They had imagined the church, which is an organization, but not the world, which is an order and a mystery. To them, the church did not exist in the world where people earn their living and have their being, but rather in the world where they fear death and Hell, which is not much of a world.

Like the orphanage, the institution of religion seeks to set itself up as an independent reality, an alternative to the outside, or in this case, the physical world. Because Jayber has a "very high opinion" of God's works, he cannot reject the world of non-human nature to serve this other world of metaphysical terror. Nor does he think most people can.

> In Port William, more than anyplace else I had been, this religion that scorned the beauty and goodness of this world was a puzzle to me. To begin with, I didn't think anybody believed it. I still don't think so. Those world-condemning sermons were preached to people who, on Sunday mornings, would be wearing their prettiest clothes. . . . The people who heard those sermons loved good crops, good gardens, good livestock and work animals and dogs; they loved flowers and the shade of trees, and

> laughter and music; some of them could make you fair speech on the pleasures of a good drink of water or a patch of wild raspberries. While the wickedness of the flesh was being preached from the pulpit, the young husbands and wives and the courting couples sat thigh to thigh, full of yearning and joy, and the old people thought of the beauty of the children. (161)

The particularity of the sensual details in this passage work against any attraction for the abstract afterlife being preached from the pulpit. That such mundane items as a drink of water or a patch of berries could outweigh, or at least equal, the prospect of eternal reward reflects the importance that Berry, like Ruskin, places on the created world.[1] In 1858, in Turin, Italy, John Ruskin reached a similar conclusion about the institutional church as he sat copying a picture by Paul Veronese. He had attended a Waldensian chapel service that morning, full of Evangelical disdain for this world and desire for the next, and the beauty of the picture, complemented by the band music filtering into the museum from the square outside, began to work a contrast in Ruskin's mind.

> I was struck by the Gorgeousness of life which the world seems to develop, when it is made the best of. The band was playing some passages of brilliant music at the time, and this music blended so thoroughly with Veronese's splendour; the beautiful notes seeming to form one whole with the lovely forms and colours, and powerful human creatures. Can it be possible that all this power and beauty is adverse to the honor of the Maker of it? Has God made faces beautiful and limbs strong, and created these strange, fiery, fantastic energies, and created the splendour of substance and the love of it; created gold, and pearls, and crystal, and the sun that makes them gorgeous; and filled human fancy with all splendid thoughts; and given to the human touch its power of placing and brightening and perfecting, only that these things may lead His creatures away from Him? (7.xli)

For Ruskin, as for Jayber, the separation preached in the chapel is counteracted by the pull of beauty. Interestingly, Ruskin sees the music as a uniting force in this passage,

[1] It is also a measure of both authors' preference for the ordinary over the heroic, examined above in Chapter Five. In "The Gift of Good Land," Berry finds Christianity wanting because of its tendency to promote the heroic over the everyday: "It may, in some ways, be easier to be Samson than to be a good husband or wife day after day for fifty years" (300).

"form[ing] one whole with the lovely forms and colours, and powerful human creatures." The "human creatures" are likely the ones portrayed in the painting, but by implication the viewers of the painting and/or listeners to the music are also drawn together in the experience of beauty. Art and the beauty of the world, like the pleasures of Berry's non-human nature, are attractive, and as human beings are drawn toward beauty, they come in contact with other people, similarly drawn. Like Jayber, Ruskin looks to the minister as the one responsible for religion's antipathy for the material world. He contrasts the minister with the artist, who is a sort of minister for the material world.

> And is this mighty Paul Veronese, in whose soul there is a strength as of the snowy mountains, and within whose brain all the pomp and majesty of humanity floats in a marshaled glory, capacious and serene like clouds at sunset—this man whose finger is as fire, and whose eye is like the morning—is he a servant of the devil; and is the poor little wretch in a tidy black tie, to whom I have been listening this Sunday morning expounding Nothing with a twang—is he a servant of God?

Ruskin tells us elsewhere the content of that sermon—"that they were the only children of God in Turin; and that all the people in the world out of the sight of Monte Viso, would be damned" (29.89)—but "expounding Nothing with a twang" serves as description enough. Religious institutions, by setting up an alternate reality, discount the reality of the physical world, calling it "Nothing." The Waldensian preacher, like Port William's, focuses on a world where people "fear death and Hell" rather than love the creation and the human beings around them.

Ruskin's preacher, both in his Calvinist "remnant" theology and his disdain for the physical world, creates a sense of "insiders" and "outsiders." This is similar to the isolation created by institutions, both the Good Shepherd orphanage and the Victorian workhouse. Jayber seeks to break down these divisions, and finds support in the Bible.

> As I have read the Gospels over the years, the belief has grown in me that Christ did not come to found an organized religion but came instead to found an unorganized one. He seems to have come to carry religion out of the temples into the fields and sheep pastures, onto the roadsides and the banks of rivers, into the houses of sinners and publicans, into the town and the wilderness, toward the membership of all that is here. (321)

Jayber's Jesus is not working towards separation, but towards integration, towards "membership," by reaching out to both people and places that had not been considered sacred. Like the music in Ruskin's passage, Jesus' work seeks "to form one whole." In his article "Ruskin and the Institutions," Robert Hewison examines this aspect of institutions: "institutions are established and run by individuals, but their effect is to create an abstraction: the principle and practice of the institution to which the individual member must defer, or become an outsider" (218). Jayber never submits meekly to these sorts of "principle[s] and practice[s]." As a child in the orphanage, he kept his book of memories, and he leaves the religiously-oriented Pigeonville College, in part, because he "couldn't imagine [him]self" as "Brother Crow." Though he values much about the church in Port William, Jayber tells us that the young pastors "made me see how cut off I was. Even when I was sitting in the church, I was a man outside" (161). Later, he calls himself "the ultimate Protestant" (321). This outsider status is another link between Jayber and Ruskin. As Jayber discusses the university at Lexington, he says that, like the orphanage, it "had been hard at work trying to be a world unto itself" (70). He attacks it for its deliberate separation from the world of experience. The university is "an island too, a floating or flying island. It was preparing people from the world of the past for the world of the future, and what was missing was the world of the present, where every body was living its small, short, surprising, miserable, wonderful, blessed, damaged, only life" (71).

Dinah Birch argues that Ruskin's Dissenting Evangelical upbringing, ironically, prepared him to question the very institutions—the church and the university—that raised him up. "He persistently argues," Birch writes, "that the authority of science, knowledge, and scholarship has no value if it is not felt and lived by its possessor. 'Be assured,' he tells us, 'there is no part of the furniture of a man 's mind which he has a right to exult in, but that which he has hewn and fashioned for himself' (XI, 72)" (66). Here, Ruskin argues for mixing the world of the present with that of the past, the world of experience with the "science, knowledge, and scholarship" of the university. Hewison traces this tendency in Ruskin's continual refusal to accept the separation of disciplines in the university throughout his lectures for the Slade Professorship.

> As the course of lectures progressed through the following years . . . Ruskin's characteristic method of discourse led him to stray across the categories from engraving to economics and mythology in *Ariadne Florentina* (1872), to lectures on ornithology in 1873 and geology in 1874. For Ruskin "the teaching of Art, as I understand it, is the teaching of all things" (29.86), but this was not what the authorities had in mind for the Slade Professorship. (222)

To deny the legitimacy of the categories of an institution is, in effect, to deny the institution's borders, and hence the identity of the institution, itself. Ruskin does not keep economics separate from art anymore than Jayber keeps religion separate from the natural world. Ruskin would resign that professorship and eventually write, with more relish than dismay, "Such as I am, to my own amazement, I stand—so far as I can discern—alone in conviction, in hope, and in resolution, in the wilderness of this modern world" (28.425). Like Jayber, he is an institutional outsider.

Ruskin and Berry are similar, not only in their attitude toward institutions, but in their sense of the alternatives. In this regard, Ruskin helps us to see an aspect of *Jayber*

Crow that is important to the governance of the fictional communities in all of Berry's novels: the emphasis on pastorship rather than institutions as a means of guiding society. Goodlad draws the concept of pastorship from the later writings of Foucault. Foucault, Goodlad explains, came to understand that the Panopticon model for the State was more applicable to Continental than English politics. The British were far more skeptical than the French of state power, and Goodlad describes the "contrast between the simple domination required to rule a 'rough despotic community' and the challenge of governing liberal Britain" by citing Walter Bagehot in 1856: "A free intellectual community is a complicated network of ramified relations, interlacing and passing hither and thither, old and new. . . . You are never sure what effect any force or any change may produce on a framework so exquisite and so involved" (386). Faced with a society which sees itself primarily as a network of relationships, Foucault reconceptualized his view of governmentality to include pastorship, based, according to Goodlad, on "the ancient Christian concept of the shepherd's intensive care for his flock" (18). This metaphor gave more significance to human agency than the Panopticon model, with a corresponding de-emphasis on the state (18). Bagehot's vision of Britain as a network of relationships is not far from Berry's concept of membership, and the independence of "liberal Britain" is inherited in the contrariness of rural America. The nineteenth-century model of pastorship, particularly as it was elucidated by Ruskin, allows us to see, in characters such as Athey Keith and Jayber Crow, the pastoral principles which govern the Port William community.

In Victorian Britain, pastorship took many forms, but all the approaches had in common a focus on personal interaction, a quality that institutions such as the

workhouses of the New Poor Law could not supply. The Scottish Evangelical Thomas Chalmers was one of the first advocates of a pastoral system of oversight for the poor. Chalmers felt that collecting funds for the poor through taxes, and then using those funds through the relief systems of the Poor Laws, was ineffective, promoting more evils than it solved. Instead, he wanted to invigorate the churches and schools, making them into the agencies of change in their communities. Chalmers persuaded the city of Glasgow to create a new parish, of 10,000 working class citizens, and to allow him to build schools and organize church ministries within its bounds (Goodlad 41). From the church of the parish, Chalmers sent out 200 deacons, each assigned to visit a portion of the families of the parish. Goodlad describes Chalmers' goals:

> Chalmers saw charity as an active Christian principle— integral to the path of achieving "Christian freedom"—not a passive obligation like the rates paid to maintain a poor law. . . . The Christian's duty was to extend the realm of positive principle, transforming society into "a godly commonwealth of Christian communities" (Brown 111– 12). Charity thus consisted not only in a monetary exchange but also (and more primarily) in a pastoral exchange involving the "judgment," "examination," and "time and attention" of donors. For Chalmers, in other words, charity described a deeply interpersonal relation: "that benevolence which moved the giver to sift each case, even at the cost of self-sacrifice in time and energy, so that the relief forthcoming was the most likely to promote the moral character and the sturdy independence that was [its] chief aim" (Young and Ashton 75). (41)

Chalmers insisted that this work must be local, that each deacon must "concentrate the full influence of his character and office, on his own distinct and separate" area (111). Furthermore, his stated intention was "to multiply, not monopolize, the pastoral role," envisioning a situation in which the poor would gain the skills to help each other, and thus become "the most effective instruments of their own amelioration" (170). His method, though paternalistic in its recognition of hierarchy, was so in the way that

Milbank describes as "work[ing] toward its own cancellation" (*Theology* 202). The actions of the deacons would eventually be reciprocated by the poor as the poor began to reform themselves and each other, thus become equals to their pastors (Goodlad 45).

Milbank sees the same kind of spirit in Ruskin's writings about hierarchy: "Although [Ruskin] stresses the all-importance of parental and pastoral roles, he wishes to remove them from their connection with wealth and privilege, and there is even a suggestion that the true character of these roles will only be secured if they are disseminated, and become as far as possible reciprocal in a kind of clerisy of all citizens" (201). Unlike Carlyle, Ruskin was unwilling to grant that some people would always need to be led by others, that they could never be educated in self-control and independence. His hierarchies are usually temporary and are most effective when spread throughout an entire community. When Ruskin specified his plan for helping with the poor of England's cities, he described a model firmly within Chalmers' pastoral mode.

> The thing actually needing to be done is this—that over every hundred (more or less) of the families composing a Christian State, there should be appointed an overseer, or bishop, to render account, to the State, of the life of every individual in those families; and to have care both of their interest and conduct to such an extent as they may be willing to admit, or as their faults may justify: so that it may be impossible for any person, however humble, to suffer from unknown want, or live in unrecognised crime;—such help and observance being rendered without officiousness either of interference or inquisition (the limits of both being determined by national law), but with the patient and gentle watchfulness which true Christian pastors now exercise over their flocks; only with a higher legal authority presently to be defined, of interference on due occasion. (17.379)

While the prospect of Bishops "render[ing] account . . . to the State" sounds institutional in itself, Ruskin's approach is pastoral in that it emphasizes personal contact: human beings, exercising the patience and gentleness that no institution can replicate, mediate the relationship between the families and the State. With words such as "overseer,"

”unrecognized,” “observance,” and “watchfulness,” Ruskin is playing on the Greek etymology of “bishop,” *episkopos*. A bishop is “a person who sees” (18.72), and the failures of the church arise from the failure to recognize this responsibility: “Nearly all the evils in the Church have arisen from bishops desiring power more than light. They want authority, not outlook.” One is reminded of Jayber’s contention that the pastors of Port William “wore, you might say, the mantle of power but not the mantle of knowledge.” In contrast to those pastors, who “wouldn’t stay long enough to know where they were,” Ruskin requires his bishops to know where they are.

> The first thing, therefore, that a bishop has to do is at least to put himself in a position in which, at any moment, he can obtain the history, from childhood, of every living soul in his diocese, and of its present state. Down in that back street, Bill and Nancy, knocking each other’s teeth out!—Does the bishop know all about it? Has he his eye upon them? Has he had his eye upon them? Can he circumstantially explain to us how Bill got into the habit of beating Nancy about the head? If he cannot, he is no bishop, though he had a mitre as high as Salisbury steeple; he is no bishop,—he has sought to be at the helm instead of the masthead; he has no sight of things. (18.72)

The knowledge that Ruskin and Berry want in their religious leaders is not a knowledge of theology but knowledge of their place, of their community, of the people and things around them. This is knowledge to be gained by familiarity with people and their stories.

> Such overseers shall be not only the pastors, but the biographers, of their people; a written statement of the principal events in the life of each family being annually required to be rendered by them to a superior State Officer. These records, laid up in public offices, would soon furnish indications of the families whom it would be advantageous to the nation to advance in position, or distinguish with honour, and aid by such reward as it should be the object of every Government to distribute no less punctually, and far more frankly, than it distributes punishment. (17.379)

Jayber’s shop would be the logical place for a biographer of the people to begin. Again and again, Jayber points out that the barber hears all the stories of the community. This

makes him an effective narrator for Berry, but it also connects him clearly to a pastoral tradition that values this kind of personal knowledge above the abstract, statistical knowledge of institutions set up by social science. In the mention of reward in this passage, we hear an echo of Ruskin's claim (cited earlier) that "the true instruments of reformation are employment and reward—not punishment" as well as of Chalmers' emphasis on "positive principle." It is also a refutation of the utilitarian approach favored by institutions, which appeals to shame and self-interest as motive forces. After assuring his readers that this recording of histories would involve no coercion, no invasion of privacy, that the overseers would only write down what was publicly observable, Ruskin cites an unforeseen advantage of his plan: "in a little while it would come to be felt that the true history of a nation was indeed not of its wars, but of its households" (17.380). This ideal of domestic accomplishments replacing martial history resonates with Berry and Ruskin's anti-heroic stances, discussed earlier in the context of "Making It Home." Both authors see the attention to detail involved in pastorship as a means to tell the "true history" of a community. For Berry, the contrast is not so much between domestic life and military, but between the rhythms and complexities of a life lived close to non-human nature, and in a particular place, against the seemingly more "relevant" life of technological advancement and globalization. *Jayber Crow* and the other novels of the Port William membership, like the histories of Ruskin's pastors, provide a fictional corrective to the modern definition of "true" history.

Pastorship forms a subtle theme in *Jayber Crow*. The differences in management styles between Athey Keith and his son in law Troy Chatham are a contrast between pastorship and exploitation. Athey seeks to shield his land from harm: "He was always

studying his fields, thinking of ways to protect them" (179). Athey keeps a significant portion of his woodland untouched, and "he protected it from timber buyers by asking considerably more for it than its market value." He seeks a surplus of resources: "'Wherever I look,' he said, 'I want to see more than I need, and have more than I use.'" Troy, on the other hand, "said, in effect, 'Whatever I see, I want.' What he asked of the land was all it had" (181). Nothing that he owns is protected from his greed: "Never let a quarter's worth of equity stand idle. Use it or borrow against it" (179). Troy views the farm as the means to his own success, swallowing it up in his own identity, thinking "the farm existed to serve and enlarge him" (182). Athey's view also involves personal identity, but in his case the farm's identity is more significant than his own. He is "not exactly, or not only, what is called a 'landowner.' He was the farm's farmer, but also its creature and belonging. He lived its life, and it lived his; he knew that, of the two lives, his was meant to be the smaller and the shorter." To place these men in the context of the gospels, Troy is like the "hired hand" who "cares nothing for the sheep" and runs away. His relationship is entirely economic, and his first concern is his own life. Athey, on the other hand, is like the good shepherd who "knows" his sheep and lays down his life for them. To "know" in the biblical sense is a relationship of extreme intimacy, as in Athey's deep familiarity and identification with the farm. Athey knows the farm will outlast him and his concerns; he is willing to spend his life, to lay it down, to ensure its continuation.

Athey acts much the same way toward his two tenants. With regard to their families, Athey "dealt generously . . . seeing that they had all the garden space they could use, pasture for their milk cows, grain for their poultry and meat hogs, and firewood from

the woodlots and fencerows. He gave them work and paid them fairly when they were not in their crops. His assumption was that if they prospered, he would prosper" (179). This assumption of mutual prosperity is another manifestation of the "reciprocality" that Milbank said characterized Ruskin's sense of hierarchy, and that Chalmers said should characterize effective pastorship. Athey's treatment of his tenant has significant parallels with Ruskin's discussion, in *Munera Pulveris*, of the source and nature of riches. Using the hypothetical scenario of "a society of peasants, living on a river-shore, exposed to destructive inundation at somewhat extended intervals," Ruskin considers two responses (17.265). Though he is often accused of idealism, Ruskin acknowledges the wasteful habits of people, stating that "the greater part of them [will] indolently keep in tillage just as much land as supplies them with daily food . . . leave their children idle, and take no precautions against the rise of the stream." One farmer, however, cultivates his land carefully, keeps his children working at his side, and builds a barrier against the flood. When that inevitable occasion arises, the flood destroys the land and homes of the improvident peasants, leaving only the land of the industrious peasant intact. He is, of course, approached by the others for help, for his "granaries are full." The question becomes "on what terms his aid is to be granted." Again the realist, Ruskin says, "Clearly, not on terms of mere charity. To maintain his neighbours in idleness would be not only his ruin, but theirs." Neither the pastorship of Chalmers, nor the membership of Port William is characterized by continual charity. Ruskin's provident peasant "will require work from them. . . . The men are now his slaves;—nothing less, and nothing more. On pain of starvation, he can force them to work in the manner . . . he chooses. And it is by his wisdom in this choice that the worthiness of his mastership is proved, or

its unworthiness" (17.266). In Ruskin's story, he sets the others to work first building a rampart against the flood, then cleaning out their fields and planting them, then building houses "in safer places, with the best material they can find." Food and clothing are given on the basis of security to be repaid when the crops come again. Ruskin concludes by summing up the expenses and benefits for the industrious peasant.

> We may conceive this security to be redeemed, and the debt paid at the end of a few years. The prudent peasant has sustained no loss; *but is no richer than he was, and has had all his trouble for nothing.* But he has enriched his neighbours materially; bettered their houses, secured their land, and rendered them, in worldly matters, equal to himself. In all rational and final sense, he has been throughout their true Lord and King. (17. 266-67)

This is pastorship, to protect and guide one's neighbors for their own benefit. In taking care of his tenants, rather than trying to wring every spare cent from them, Athey is a true land-Lord. Ruskin's italics point to the difference between this system and that of capitalists like Troy Chatham: expenditure here does not serve the spender, at least not directly. Ruskin develops the point as he continues the scenario, considering "his probable line of conduct, presuming his object to be exclusively the increase of his own fortune." Self-interest would dictate that the prudent peasant allows his neighbors only to build the crudest of huts, and employs them instead on expanding his own house in exchange for their food. Furthermore, he buys his neighbors' land, again in exchange for food, leaving only the minimum they need to survive. As family members multiply, he takes their sons and daughters to be servants in his own now-magnificent estate. Ruskin describes the woeful consequences of such choices.

> And now, without any abuse of right, we should find established all the phenomena of poverty and riches, which (it is supposed necessarily) accompany modern civilization. In one part of the district, we should have unhealthy land, miserable dwellings, and half-starved poor; in another, a

> well-ordered estate, well-fed servants, and refined conditions of highly-educated and luxurious life. (17.267-68)

"Without any abuse of right" is Ruskin's admission that all has been done legally in this second scenario. Indeed, he adds in a footnote that "the legal right to keep what you have worked for, and use it as you please, is the corner-stone of all economy" (17.266). Ruskin's point is two-fold. First, spending one's money for others, after putting aside enough for one's maintenance in old age, is the better course. It leads to contentment and respect, by "checking the wing of accumulative desire in the mid-volley, and leading to peace of possession and fulness of fruition in old age, [and] is also wholesome in that by the freedom of gift, together with present help and counsel, it at once endears and dignifies age in the sight of youth" (17.277). We can see here both the dignity that Athey is accorded by the townspeople in his old age and the scorn in which they hold Troy. Secondly, Ruskin's story demonstrates the damage that the accumulation of extravagant wealth wreaks on society and the land. In an earlier passage, Ruskin had urged that the question of what to do with riches is not the most pertinent one. Rather, we had best examine how the riches came to be. Great riches, he argues, never come from one's own hand.

> Success (while society is guided by laws of competition) signifies always so much victory over your neighbour as to obtain the direction of his work, and to take the profits of it. This is the real source of all great riches. No man can become largely rich by his personal toil. The work of his own hands, wisely directed, will indeed always maintain himself and his family, and make fitting provision for his age. But it is only by the discovery of some method of taxing the labour of others that he can become opulent. (17.264)

The point is relevant both for Victorian capitalists and the membership of Port William. While Athey and Troy do not exploit other people in their work (though Athey certainly

has that opportunity in his dealings with his tenants), they each, to varying degrees, take their profits from the land they farm. Troy's exploitive behavior towards his land is founded almost equally in ambition and ignorance.

> His competitiveness and self-centeredness cut him off from any thought of shared life. He wanted to have more because he thought that having more would make him able to live more, and he was lonely because he never thought of the sources, the places, where he was going to get what he wanted to have, or of what his having it might cost others. (194)

Like the self-interested landowner in Ruskin's fable, Troy has taken everything he can from the land around him. He has gained a few "servants" in the form of the "two or three acres . . . [of] old or broken or worn-out machines" that Jayber discovers at the novel's end, but has left soil that was "pale and hard, lifeless, and in places deeply gullied" (340). In his exploitive agricultural practices, Troy has discovered "some method of taxing the labor of others," though in this case the "other" is his own land. Athey, however, has "wisely directed" his own work, seeking only to "maintain himself and his family, and make fitting provision for his age." He recognizes the order of the farm, seeing that the patterns of crop and harvest, birth and death "were virtually the farm's own understanding of what it was doing, of what it could do without diminishment" (182). "The farm," like Ruskin's first provident landowner, and like Athey, himself, "desired all of its lives to flourish."

Athey's care of his farm and his tenants stands as an illustration of pastorship, over and against Troy's model of self-interested exploitation. As such, Berry's novel serves as an elaboration of Ruskin's story of the peasants by the riverside. In return, Ruskin's tale brings a wider context to Berry's and makes clear the contrast between a self-interest that destroys its wielder and his surroundings and a pastorship that "check[s]

the wing of accumulative desire in the mid-volley, and lead[s] to peace of possession and fulness of fruition in old age."

Even after he moves to town, Athey's pastoral role continues. After observing him settle a fight by a simple "Boys, don't do that," Jayber characterizes Athey's effect on the community.

> Such was Athey's influence when he walked among us. As he got older he seemed to become always more tender. He cared for his mules and his cow and spoke of them as if they were members of his family. He always had something to say to babies and small children. He talked to the dogs he met in his passages through town. (231)

The caring is still here, as is the identification with animals, speaking to them and treating them as if they were family. His acceptance of little children ties Athey to Jesus, as does the echo of John chapter 1 in the phrase "he walked among us." Berry portrays Athey as a sort of Christ figure, a good shepherd, in contrast to the self-interested Troy.

The tenderness of Athey for the things in his care helps us to see Jayber's pastoral role in the novel. From the very beginning, Jayber is connected by Berry with ideas of love, tenderness and caring. When Aunt Cordie dies and Jayber is sent to the Good Shepherd Orphanage, he tells us that he "went out of the hands of love, which certainly included charity as we know it, and into the hands of charity as we know it, which included love only as it might" (30). In this sentence, "charity" is something less personal than love, as the orphanage demonstrates an approach more institutional than personal, controlling the children through utilitarian measures that appeal to self-interest rather than higher motives: "we seemed forever involved in some form of punishment . . . losing little privileges that seemed to have been given for the purpose of being revoked" (33). Later, as an adult, Jayber spends the night in Louisville in a more pastoral

institution, a community center set up for victims of the flood. He rises early to leave, but is captured by the sight of his sleeping neighbors: "I remember how small and still and tender they looked. If I could have done it, I would have liked to tiptoe around and just lay my hand on each one" (83). Though he does not know them, Jayber would bless this flock, if he could. As Port William's barber, he gets the chance to lay his hands on his customers. Oehlschlaeger notes that Jayber's role as barber has some similarities to a spiritual office.

> He holds people's heads in his hands, sometimes noting quirks of genetic resemblance not in accord with the official accounts of lineage. He can sometimes see from men's eyes and carriage that they know their time is short. Who but the barber would come closest to that kind of Godlike knowledge of the number of hairs on each of our heads? (225)

For Jayber, this close contact cannot help but lead to relationship: "I came to feel a tenderness for them all. This was something new to me. It gave me a curious pleasure to touch them, to help them in and out of the chair, to shave their weather-toughened old faces" (127). Considering the wise-cracks and ribaldry that go on in Jayber's shop, such emotional vulnerability is unexpected.

The emphasis in these passages, on the touch of love rather than the stroke of discipline, echoes a concern in Ruskin's time with the nature of pastorship. According to Goodlad, the workhouses of the New Poor Law were designed to motivate by a mixture of self-interest and shame. Self-interest was appealed to by the harsh living conditions and difficult work of the poorhouse, shame in the "anxious unwillingness even 'to appear to be a pauper'" (59). For a certain type of social scientist, "the [New Poor] law presented an opportunity to solidify a materialist worldview in which atomized individuals pursued self-interest in mechanically predictable ways" (56). Citing a

contrast with Ruskin, Goodlad writes, "As Ruskin was to put it in *Unto This Last* (1862), the reification of political economy threatened the "social affections," and reduced the human being to a soulless "covetous machine" (168). The 1834 act was thus the chief legislative means through which *homo economicus*— the calculating subject of bourgeois individualism— was concretized and propagated" (83). As already noted, Jayber's orphanage works by self-interested fear of discipline. While the orphanage does not use shame to the degree of the workhouse, the constant observation creates something like it: "And to these ever-watching eyes we reacted in ways peculiar to ourselves. Some lived lives of flagrant indifference or transparency, seeming to have no secrets that they wanted to keep. Others, like me, developed inward lives of the intensest privacy" (32). One defense against the institution is to become shame-less. The students' reactions show that the Good Shepherd orphanage fails to provide the loving contact that marks true pastorship. Jayber's desire to touch others marks him as a pastor. Remarking on Dickens' emphasis on the need for personal contact, Goodlad describes the principles of the Charity Organization Society of the late 1860s.

> Nowhere is the similarity between Dickens's novels and the COS stronger than in their mutual privileging of the personal. COS papers repeatedly contrast the impersonal state to the sympathetic knowledge of charitable volunteers. In 1870 Sir Charles Trevelyan, an early COS supporter, argued against any perversion of the charitable relationship: "By passing through official hands," he insisted, charity "loses the redeeming influence of personal kindness" (qtd. in Behlmer, "Character-Building" 59). Octavia Hill, a founding COS member, concurred: "no radical cure of those who have fallen low can be effected" "without a strong personal influence" (qtd. in Maurice 257). (114)

"Official hands" is a synecdoche without warmth. It robs the metaphor of "handling" of all its personal sensation and meaning. Ruskin emphasizes these warmer aspects of touch in *Sesames & Lilies*, as he defines vulgarity as "want of sensation,"

> It is in the blunt hand and the dead heart, in the diseased habit, in the hardened conscience, that men become vulgar; they are for ever vulgar, precisely in proportion as they are incapable of sympathy,—of quick understanding,—of all that, in deep insistence on the common, but most accurate term, may be called the ―tact or ―touch-faculty, of body and soul: that tact which the Mimosa has in trees, which the pure woman has above all creatures; fineness and fullness of sensation, beyond reason;—the guide and sanctifier of reason itself. (18.80)

Jayber's desire to lay his hands on the sleeping figures in the shelter and his pleasure in handling the faces of his clients reveals that he is rich in "touch-faculty." To Ruskin, this characteristic is critical to developing sympathy for others.

Ruskin gave financial sponsorship to Octavia Hill's scheme for worker's housing, because he accepted her claim that women make the best landlords, that they, more than men, are able to enter into a sympathetic relationship with their tenants. For Hill, this was achieved through frequent, direct contact, interactions that allowed the landlord to know the needs of the tenant and, when appropriate, meet those needs. This privileging of women as sympathetic was congenial to Ruskin, as the passage above demonstrates. Though much of *Sesames & Lilies* has been derided in the last few decades for its apparent consignment of women to merely domestic roles, recent studies have emphasized that Ruskin encourages the "pure woman" to exercise her "tact" in activities outside of the home. After telling young women to "every day, make some little piece of useful clothing, sewn with your own fingers as strongly as it can be stitched," he makes a surprising connection between the domestic and the public realms:

> And accumulate these things by you until you hear of some honest persons in need of clothing, which may often too sorrowfully be; and, even though you should be deceived, and give them to the dishonest, and hear of their being at once taken to the pawnbroker's, never mind that, for the pawnbroker must sell them to some one who has need of them. That is no business of yours; what concerns you is only that when you see a half-naked child, you should have good and fresh clothes to give it, if its

> parents will let it be taught to wear them. If they will not, consider how they came to be of such a mind, which it will be wholesome for you beyond most subjects of inquiry to ascertain. But after you have gone on doing this a little while, you will begin to understand the meaning of at least one chapter of your Bible, Proverbs xxxi.3 without need of any laboured comment, sermon, or meditation. (18.40)

What is remarkable about this passage is its emphasis on direct, personal contact with the poor. Ruskin tells the women to observe—"when you see a half-naked child"—to meet needs needs—"give"—and to continue monitoring—"and hear of their being taken at once to the pawnbroker's." This is hardly insisting that young women be angels in the house. Ruskin would have them at the gates of the city, like the woman of Proverbs 31. In *Jayber Crow*, the women play a similar role. While speaking of Mattie Chatham's virtues as a wife and mother, Jayber, like Ruskin, transitions from the domestic to the public sphere. Mattie "was, to my eye, a good mother who liked and enjoyed her children, leaving them free within limits that both she and they understood. But she was also coming into responsibility for the community" (189).

> You don't have to know Port William long before you see that whatever coherence it has is largely owing to certain women . . . . Some women seem more likely to act on what they know than most men. The men are not uncharitable; they are quick to get together to harvest a crop for a neighbor who gets sick. But it is the women more than the men who see to it that cooked food goes where it is needed, that no house goes without fuel in the winter, that no child goes without toys at Christmas, that the preacher knows where he should go with a word of comfort. (189-90)

In a surprising reversal of men's and women's roles, this is pastorship that directs even the pastor (Berry calls it "a charity that includes the church rather than the other way around"). Here we see that the mutual support of a community, so important both to Berry's fiction and his essays, is largely a function of its women, of their "tact or ―touch-faculty, of body and soul… which the pure woman has above all creatures."

This is true in settings as traditional and patriarchal as 1940s rural America or Victorian England. Goodlad writes of the connections between Victorian feminine domesticity and charitable works.

> "It is from" the secret fountains of "domestic life," Sarah Ellis gushed in a representative panegyric on the middle-class home, "that those streams of affection are supplied, from which we have to draw, in our intercourse with society, and with the world" (83). Ellis's conduct manuals testify to the perceived desirability of a Habermasian link between domestic affections and the public sphere. Through such rhetoric it was possible to imagine civic life as an extension of one's own homely realm— in other words, as personal. Troubling differences between private sanctuary and public marketplace, between domestic cooperation and capitalist rivalry, between feminine self-sacrifice and masculine competition were, at least provisionally, superseded by a notion of civil society in which private and public mores were intimately linked and seamlessly bound. (37-8)

Through women like Octavia Hill, as well as the fictional figures such as Allan Woodcourt, the domestically-minded doctor of Dickens' *Bleak House*, women's influence becomes a mark of pastorship: "Indeed, it seems likely that one of the most important pastoral developments of the prewar era— the turn-of-the-century transition from charitable volunteer to modern social worker— depended on the kind of ideological overlap between feminine domesticity and professionalism which Allan Woodcourt exemplifies" (109).

The same overlap between home and work appears in the character of Jayber Crow himself. Throughout the book, Burley makes much of the fact that Jayber lives above his office—"'Yessir,' he said, 'it's fine. You got your working and your living right here together'" (124)—and it is at this place of home and work that Jayber performs his most obvious act of pastorship, loaning Mattie the money for Jimmie's bail (283). When the state inspector arrives, the blend of domesticity and profession is strikingly apparent: "Maybe you can understand why I minded if you recollect that my shop was

only partly my place of business. Partly it was my living room. It was Port William's living room, or one of them" (289). The tenderness of his feelings toward his customers, his calling them "guests" when the state inspector arrives, his giving of the bail money, all point to the curious link, both in *Jayber Crow* and Victorian pastorship, "between domestic affections and the public sphere." Of Mattie's visit for Jimmie's bail, Jayber reflects, "You might say that this was the ridiculousness that a married ineligible bachelor barber's upstairs room was specifically prepared for" (282). The statement might apply as well to the odd interactions between public and domestic in Jayber's life.

Jayber's position in the community, at least as far as gender roles are concerned, is ridiculous. Immediately after the passage praising Mattie's acceptance of community responsibilities, Jayber admits that, as the community's "ineligible bachelor," he is "perhaps always a little more hopelessly marginal to the womanhood of Port William" (190). His unmarried status, as well as the low social status of his jobs—gravedigger, church janitor, barber—make him something other than the typical Port William male. However, Jayber goes on to explain that this very marginality draws him into the pastoral work of the women.

> And yet I was something more than an observer. I was more or less tolerated because of my usefulness . . . . I continued to attend the services and other gatherings at the church, just in case I was needed to open or shut the windows or bring in extra chairs, and to make sure all the lights were turned off afterward. And so I was having a good bit to do, in a servantly way, with the women, who often had reason to tell me what needed to be done or what needed getting ready for. (190)

Rather than take a typical role of masculine leadership, Jayber becomes a servant. We are now in the Gospel of John, the disciple whom Jesus loved best. By working alongside the women, Jayber, in his "servantly way," is enacting the pastorship that Jesus

models in John, chapter 13: pastorship through service in the most mundane, basic, domestic tasks.

Jayber's thoughts about love are not only related to this blending of domestic and public lives, to Jayber's connections to the worlds both of men and women, but also they take on a more theological significance. When the young men of Port William are called away to war, Jayber returns to his questions about the commands of Christ, questions that had unsettled him as a young man in Pigeonville College: "[War] was caused, I thought, by people failing to love one another, failing to love their enemies. I was glad enough that I had not become a preacher, and so would not have to go through a war pretending that Jesus had not told us to love our enemies" (142). Jayber's rejection of the ministry is not a matter of taking the Bible lightly, but rather of taking it too seriously. Though no lover of the institutional church, he cares deeply for the congregation. The realization first dawns on him through his job as grave-digger.

> I feel a little uneasy in calling them "the dead," for I am as mystified as anybody by the transformation known as death, and the Resurrection is more real to me than most things I have not yet seen. I understand that people's dead bodies are not exactly them, and yet as I dug down to where they were, I would be mindful of them, and respectful, and would feel a curious affection for them all. I thought and thought about them. It was endlessly moving to me to walk among the stones. . . . Why I should have felt tender toward them all was not clear to me, but I did. (158)

As grave-digger, he has a flock of sorts for which he cares. "I thought and thought about them" does not reflect a morbid spirit, but an interest in persons from the past. It also reflects the mental exertion—"that benevolence which moved the giver to sift each case" (Young and Ashton, qtd in Goodlad 41)—that Chalmers said was necessary to real pastorship. This caring also puts him in mind of theological issues such as the Resurrection and the nature of identity. He is aware of the difficulties of relating to

living church members, but even they are included in a vision of love he has one afternoon, having fallen asleep after his janitorial duties. He has a vision of the congregation across time—"all the people gathered there who had ever been there"—and he "seemed to love them all with a love that was mine merely because it included me" (165).

The realization that love is greater than Jayber, that it comes from outside him, marks a new stage in Jayber's theology: he begins to talk about God as the source of love. His "gathered community" is a "membership" held together by love. Despite the people's shortcomings and divisions, Jayber "saw them all as somehow perfected, beyond time, by one another's love, compassion, and forgiveness, as it is said we may be perfected by grace" (205). As the community is likened to the church, so the love is likened to God's grace. We see here that love gains a status that is more than merely a feeling, and its source is seen as coming from beyond the community. To be perfected by love recognizes the seriousness of not loving. Faced with divisiveness in the person of Cecelia, Jayber admits his dislike for her, but recognizes that "Even so, failing to love somebody is a failure" (208). Later, in an extensive meditation on John 3:16, Jayber wonders, "What answer can human intelligence make to God's love for the world? What answer, for that matter, can it make to our own love for the world? If a person loved the world—really loved it and forgave its wrongs and so might have his own wrongs forgiven—what would be next?" (252). In the novel's last pages, as "an old man full of love" (356), he is given the chance to see what could happen. While Troy Chatham is directing the machines which will cut down the Nest Egg, he recognizes that the neediness in Troy is not unlike the neediness in himself, and, for the first time in forty

years, does not hate him. Troy is "redeemed" in Jayber's eyes, "by Mattie's long-abiding love for him, as I myself had been by my love for her" (361).

Jayber's love, then, provides spiritual enlightenment and eventually leads him to act out Christ's forgiveness of the world, a world represented in the harshness, greed and selfishness of Troy. Though it is Mattie's love that redeems them both, Jayber's encounter with Troy at the Nest Egg is a moment of pain and crisis that is a crucifixion of sorts for Jayber. Jayber's pity is aroused by his recognition of Troy's unwillingness to face the truth about his actions: "Troy was a beaten man and knew it, and was trying not to know it . . . . So there he was, a man who had been given everything and did not know it, who had lost it all and now knew it, and who was boasting and grinning only to pretend for a few hours longer that he did not know it" (360). The repetition of "did not know it" recalls Jesus' words, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." If Troy were to confess his lostness, Jayber says, he could accept the forgiveness that Jayber has to offer: "I stood facing the man that I had hated for forty years, and I did not hate him. If he had acknowledged then what he finally would not be able to avoid acknowledging, I would have hugged him. If I could have done it, I would have liked to pick him up like a child and carry him to some place of safety and calm" (361). Jayber is willing to carry Troy, sins and all, like a child, if Troy will only confess his need. After his forgiveness of Troy, Jayber retreats to the wilderness to lie down: "Like a woman or an animal in labor, I longed to lie down, for I was heavy, not with new life but with much dying, many deaths. I had in me the shaking of the fall of all things" (361). The destruction of the Nest Egg is tantamount to the destruction of the world. Like Christ, Jayber bears the death of the world in his person. He finds a log to lay behind, hidden

from view. His need for secrecy—"Nobody would find me there, and I needed not to be found"—recalls John 7:34 "Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come," as well as John 8:21 "I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come." Jayber's sleep is not a restful one.

> I fell into a dreadful sleep that maybe was my death itself. I became one with the earth and was anything but at peace. I heard the motors speeding along the pavements and the rivers, the tractors in the fields, the airplanes in the sky, and always, always that chainsaw in the woods. I heard the big trees tearing and breaking their way to the ground, and the thumps of little creatures run over on the road. (361)

To an agrarian, these mechanical blasphemies are the sins of the world. Jayber descends into a Hell of sorts. His waking is a resurrection: "It could have been three hours or three weeks that I suffered that dream, but I knew when I woke that it was more than three hours and less than three weeks, for it was early morning and the time of year was the same. I was bewildered, having been changed by my bitter sleep more than I yet could know" (361). "More than three hours and less than three weeks" leaves the thought of "three days" prominent in the mind, and Jayber's being "changed" suggests a new body, such as Jesus warned Mary Magdalene not to touch (John 20:17). A crying woman, Mattie, is the first person Jayber sees after he rises, but whether she is Mary Magdalene is not certain, since his appearance before her is one of worship. The visitation is more suggestive of Christ before the Father, since her smile, which Jayber "will not see again in this world" (363), clothes him all in light[2]. In this sense, Mattie's redemptive love represents God's love, and Jayber's act of forgiveness represents Christ's act of atonement. Jayber, the "gatekeeper" of the men of Port William (155),

[2] For another interpretation of this smile, see p. 260.

becomes the Good Shepherd of John chapter 10, ultimately taking his community's sins upon himself.

For all of its associations with the Good Book, the concept of pastorship is not without its critics. The foremost criticism was that pastorship ensured the continuance of class divisions. Goodlad describes the contradictions involved in reaching out to others of a different social class.

> The idealized pastoral relations through which character building . . . was seen to take place depended on intrinsically unequal relations between rich and poor, educated and uneducated, colonizer and colonized. Liberal governance (both domestic and colonial) was thus structured around a hallowed but contradictory concept of the social bond. Pastorship was conceived as a reciprocal relation between morally equal actors, even as vast inequalities of wealth and power were tolerated and, indeed, stabilized. (24-5)

Although Chalmers, Ruskin, and Milbank emphasize the moral equality of the poor and the rich, none of them say a great deal about their economic equality. As a way of avoiding this problem, those affiliated with the pastorship ideal in the nineteenth century tend to speak against the desire to attain a better standard of living. Instead, they emphasize upward mobility in character, the notion that people can improve themselves morally, that even those in the most degrading circumstances can rise above their surroundings and make themselves better people. Though men and women like Chalmers wanted the physical needs of the poor met, having those poor adopt the middle class ethic of accumulation was not the goal. The need for pastorship to embrace character and contentment, and to oppose economic striving after status, helps explain the prominence given these same themes in *Jayber Crow*. Jayber's refusal to pursue upward mobility in his job, his emphasis on the ability of himself and others to improve in

character, and his opposition toward Troy and Cecilia's economic ambitions are all necessary components of a pastoral outlook on life.

The first fifth or so of the novel concerning Jayber's childhood and young adulthood addresses his search for a career. Though he is drawn to barbering as a young boy, simply out of interest for the trade, he tells Brother Whitespade that he has felt a call to preach, and is sent to Pigeonville College. Once there, he realizes that he was mistaken, that he cannot imagine himself as "Brother Crow" and that he has fundamental problems with religion's handling of the Bible. Barbering to pay the bills, he enrolls in the university at Lexington to be trained as a teacher. This choice, too, proves false: "I didn't mean I wanted to be a schoolteacher. I just made that my pretense to be there, for I had never heard that anybody ever went to a university just to read books. There had to be a real reason—namely, something you wanted to do later" (69). But Jayber does not sign up for education courses, does not pay much mind to what he "want[s] to do later." He earns good grades, but cares little for that, and eventually confronts his passivity as regards career goals.

> I was going along and going along, led by this love I had of reading books and pushed by the feeling, left over from my earlier teachers, that I ought to make something out of myself and rise above my humble origins . . . . But aside from my declaration that I wanted to be a teacher, I had made no "career preparation" at all. . . . I was not preparing for any career or life that the university recommended or that I could imagine. I tried to imagine myself as a teacher, but I had no more success at that than I'd had at imagining myself as a preacher—though, as before, I sort of dreamed of a salary and a wife. The future was coming to me, but I had not so much as lifted a foot to go to it. (71)

Jayber gains some direction when he realizes that he is more drawn to the memories of his life in Squires Landing than to a hypothetical future promised by the university. He resists the idea that he needs to change himself into something "better."

> I was living, but I was not living my life. So far as I could see, I was going nowhere. . . . Without a loved life to live, I was becoming more and more a theoretical person, as if I might have been a figment of institutional self-justification: a theoretical ignorant person from the sticks, who one day would go to a theoretical somewhere and make a theoretical something of himself—the implication being that until he became that something he would be nothing. (73)

The mention of institutions in this passage is important, for it recalls the institution of the orphanage. There, Jayber resisted the forces of institutional conformity by keeping a secret life, recorded in his journal, of memories of Squires Landing. That these memories again help him resist the university demonstrates the significance in Berry's fiction of returning to one's roots, even if that means forsaking educational opportunities. Jayber is fighting what Berry's friend Wes Jackson calls "the university's only one serious major: upward mobility" (3), and he chooses to embrace a life that is socially and economically insignificant, but which defines him as a person. Jayber's choice reflects the same values that Jayber comes to admire in Danny and Helen Branch: "The Branches seemed uninterested in getting somewhere and making something of themselves. What they liked was making something of nearly nothing" (312). By returning to the "sticks" of Squires Landing and Port William, Jayber will make himself a life.

Jayber Crow's refusal to "make something" of himself echoes the advice of Ruskin, who wrote in the final pages of *Unto This Last*,

> What is chiefly needed in England at the present day is to show the quantity of pleasure that may be obtained by a consistent, well-administered competence, modest, confessed, and laborious. We need examples of people who, leaving Heaven to decide whether they are to rise in the world, decide for themselves that they will be happy in it, and have resolved to seek—not greater wealth, but simpler pleasure; not higher fortune, but deeper felicity; making the first of possessions, self-possession; and honouring themselves in the harmless pride and calm pursuits of peace. (17.112)

Ruskin is not countenancing injustice—he specifies at the start of this passage that "There are perhaps some circumstances of life in which Providence has no intention that people should be content"—but he is opposing the mindset, so prevalent in a capitalist economy, that the only way to happiness is through improving one's economic status. Later, in *Munera Pulveris*, Ruskin writes of a "law of wise life," whose "chief use" would be,

> that some temperance and measure will be put to the acquisitiveness of commerce. For as things stand, a man holds it his duty to be temperate in his food, and of his body, but for no duty to be temperate in his riches, and of his mind. He sees that he ought not to waste his youth and his flesh for luxury; but he will waste his age, and his soul, for money, and think he does no wrong, nor know the delirium tremens of the intellect for disease. But the law of life is, that a man should fix the sum he desires to make annually, as the food he desires to eat daily; and stay when he has reached the limit, refusing increase of business, and leaving it to others, so obtaining due freedom of time for better thoughts. (17.277-78)

In both of these passages, Ruskin emphasizes the benefits to character that come with contentment. To moderate the desire to improve one's self economically gains one the time and energy to improve morally. In fact, for the Victorians, improvement of character becomes a worthy exchange for economic aid. Discussing the research of Alan J. Kidd, Goodlad describes the interactions between the pastoral figures like Chalmers and the poor to whom they minister as a sort of "gift economy."

> Kidd thus reasons that the Victorian "obsession" with character, including the determination to withhold charity from the "undeserving" poor, was a means to simulating mutual exchange between unequal actors. Impoverished recipients of charity "reciprocated" by exhibiting moral probity and, in so doing, enhanced the status of their beneficiaries. (38)

"Charitable pastorship" thus becomes "a common investment in character building: a basis on which to unite individuals and to bridge private and public lives." Without a belief in "the limitless improvability of all human beings" (24), pastorship becomes

simply another aristocratic excuse to continue the status quo. With that belief, it becomes a means to improve human life on a level deeper than material wealth.

The novel *Jayber Crow* whole-heartedly affirms "the limitless improvability of all human beings." We have already seen passages in which he speaks of the people of the community being "perfected by love" (205) and in which he describes not loving others as a "failure" (208). Jayber's failure to love Cecelia Overhold prompts him to consider what her ambition to leave Port William can teach about self-improvement.

> Theoretically, there is always a better place for a person to live, better work to do, a better spouse to wed, better friends to have. But then this person must meet herself coming back. Theoretically, there always is a better inhabitant of this place, a better member of this community, a better worker, spouse, and friend than she is. This surely describes one of the circles of Hell, and who hasn't traveled around it a time or two? (210)

Jayber's conclusion suggests that time and energy spent complaining would be better spent in developing one's character. Further, it implies that such development is possible. The fear that it is not grips Jayber at the bar in Hargrave when Troy, his arms around a girl who is not Mattie, winks over her shoulder at him. Jayber escapes through a bathroom window, a narrow egress symbolizing a rebirth, and writes to his date Clydie, "I don't know when we will see each other again. I am changeable, I hope. Here are the keys to the car" (239). His desire is not to change for Clydie, but from Troy: "I was thinking, 'Oh, I have got to change or die. Oh I have got to give up my life or die.' Maybe I was wanting to get to a place where I could not be mistaken, at least in my own mind, for Troy Chatham" (239). In a long walk home, in the dark, Jayber begins to seriously wrestle with his own identity, shaken by the ease with which Troy "identified" with him on the dance floor.

> What Troy Chatham was was my business—not because I chose to make it my business, but because it was. It was my business because I did not want to be what he was, and that was no sure thing. It was a fearful thing to be like him. But what I saw, walking up that dark road, was that it would also be a fearful thing to be unlike him. I saw that I had to try to become a man unimaginable to Troy Chatham, a man he could not imagine raising his hand to with the thumb and forefinger circled—but to do that I would have to become a man yet unimaginable to myself. (241)

Jayber, who as a young man could not "imagine" himself a pastor or a teacher, must finally imagine what he is to become. For too long, he has not done this work, and as a result he has slipped into an identity he despises. His work through the remainder of the novel is to develop into something he admires.

To return to the context of Victorian pastorship, Jayber's desire to improve his character represents what Goodlad calls the "moral" worldview as against the "materialist." Chalmers' focus on the moral equality of the poor, the "limitless improvability" of their character was staunchly opposed by the utilitarian reformers, social scientists like Edwin Chadwick and writers like Martineau, who sought to make self-interest and economic ambition the driving engines for societal reform. Goodlad describes the conflict between these ethical and materialist approaches.

> This mode of descriptive character flourished in a period of relative political quiescence; but it was hardly invulnerable. Indeed, its most serious challenge derived from within capitalist development itself: in the increasing leveling and materialism to which character might be subject in a mass bourgeois culture. The depersonalizing logic of the New Poor Law suggested that economic independence was the single most important mark of social status: outweighing such old-fashioned notions as character (see chap. 2). . . . Anti–New Poor Law novels such as *Oliver Twist* and *Jessie Phillips* responded to this materialistic assault on character by depicting the disastrous consequences of embourgeoisement. Divested of its transcendent moral content, and subject to impersonal economic criteria, character would devolve into a mere facade: a superficial display of vulgar accouterments and "respectable" pretensions. (26)

The materialism of the bourgeoise world view is two-fold: both in its emphasis on wealth and in its reductiveness, its focus on a "single most important mark of social status." This was attractive to the social scientists.

> For Chadwick and his ilk the [New Poor] law presented an opportunity to solidify a materialist worldview in which atomized individuals pursued self-interest in mechanically predictable ways. Chadwick unambivalently defined morality in objective terms— as a variable that could be quantified and measured through, for example, the reduction of poor rates. (56)

Ruskin's argument against the political economists, however, was that such reductive reasoning always leads to false conclusions when applied to human experience. His reply to thinkers like Chadwick is that economic status is not always a reliable indicator of morality.

> In a community regulated only by laws of demand and supply, but protected from open violence, the persons who become rich are, generally speaking, industrious, resolute, proud, covetous, prompt, methodical, sensible, unimaginative, insensitive, and ignorant. The persons who remain poor are the entirely foolish, the entirely wise, the idle, the reckless, the humble, the thoughtful, the dull, the imaginative, the sensitive, the well-informed, the improvident, the irregularly and impulsively wicked, the clumsy knave, the open thief, and the entirely merciful, just, and godly person. (17.90)

To the Utilitarians, so elusive a standard as character would never do. If poverty is to be eliminated, so they reasoned, a verifiable goal must be established, and economic status must take precedence over character as the badge of societal approval. Shame at economic failure must become so strong that people are literally driven to succeed. Goodlad explains that there was no middle ground: "For the socially ambitious, character must be either rejected or, as in Martineau's tale, recast in materialist terms to confirm newfound economic gains" (72).

In this light, we turn to *Jayber Crow* with greater appreciation for the significance of characters such as Cecelia Overhold and Troy Chatham, for they represent the corrosive effect that personal ambition and economic greed have on character. Cecelia sees Port William and everyone in it as "beneath her" (151). In contrast, she speaks of Los Angeles, her sister's home, which Cecelia sees as "the one Utopia of the world" (152).

> "Oh," she would say, "it's a real place, a wonderful place. You can see the stars of the picture shows alive. You can step right out your back door and pick an orange from a tree. Everything out there is up-to-date. Dorothy has such lovely friends." This "California" was the stick she used to measure Port William, and to beat it with. (152)

This description of California, with its superficial emphasis on fame and material goods, is a perfect example of what Goodlad called "embourgeoisement," the substitution of economic success for character as the measure of human worth. Cecelia is distinguished by a drive for something better so overriding that it distorts her perceptions of value: "Cecelia thought that whatever she already had was no good, by virtue of the fact that she already had it. The things she desired all were things she didn't have" (209). This is the same ambition that motivates the characters in Martineau's fictional community to stay out of the work house. Cecelia recognizes in Jayber the denial of this kind of ambition: "She knew that I had taken courses at the university and was a reader of books; that I had become by choice a mere barber, grave digger, and church janitor in Port William. Maybe that was what she could not forgive me for" (209). He represents an opposite spirit, the moral worldview, and between the two there is no compromise.

Troy demonstrates a similar contempt for his surroundings, but Berry develops it into a deeper commentary on identity. His contempt for the "old-fashioned" farmers of

Port William is as palpable as Cecelia's. When conversation at Jayber's shop turns to the decrease in the number of farmers in the country,

> Troy Chatham, if he was there, would hold himself outside this conversation. But he could not be too much aloof from it, because he needed to stay close enough to look down on it. He despised their fear and the old-fashioned, nearly lost hope that was the cause and meaning of their fear. To Troy, in his zeal for newfangledness, they and their thoughts were as out-of-date as last year's snow. They were leftovers, obsolete. The world, ever advancing toward better things, was just waiting for them to get out of the way. (278)

As Los Angeles is for Cecelia, the future is Troy's utopia. He is firmly in the progressivist camp. Like Cecelia, he places great value on superficial criteria such as "newfangledness," the latest fashions of agricultural technology. He is not able to imagine the worth of knowledge that is handed down, of techniques that are based in tradition and character more than expert advice. As Goodlad has already pointed out, this pursuit of material status has a deleterious effect on character. Berry demonstrates the principle at work in Troy.

> He wanted to be seated on power, driving on and on. His belief (his religion, you might as well say) was that if he went on covering ever more ground with ever greater power, discounting the costs in worry, weariness, and soil erosion, he could finally be a success, a real businessman, with an office he actually sat and worked in. He would have status. People would look at him with envy.
>
> He was a dreamer. He could not imagine himself as he was or where he was. And so he dreamed of himself as he would never be. (271)

The last lines of the passage recall an earlier one, where Jayber muses on Troy's loneliness: "He was lonely because he could imagine himself as anything but himself and as anywhere but where he was" (194). In *Jayber Crow*, the phrase "to imagine one's self as . . ." is the marker for discussions of personal identity and character. Jayber cannot imagine himself as a preacher or teacher, so he does not pursue those roads. He

reaches a resolution on his way home from the bar in Hargrave, when he begins to imagine himself as something worthy, as the faithful husband of Mattie Chatham. Significantly, Jayber says he must "try to become a man unimaginable to Troy Chatham" (241). In that sentence, Berry is implying that Troy cannot imagine himself as something worthy, certainly not as a faithful husband. With the notion of "imagining one's self," Berry sets up a strong contrast between Jayber and Troy. Troy's failure to imagine himself is a failure of character, and leads him to rely on "dreams," which in Berry's lexicon are a poor substitute.

Materialism works against pastorship by eroding both contentment and character, and finally by isolating its victim. Jayber understands that Troy's acquisitiveness results in a deep loneliness: "From watching Troy when he was more or less alone and when he was with other people, I knew that he was a lonely man, and I knew this without compassion. . . . His competitiveness and self-centeredness cut him off from any thought of shared life" (194). Both Troy and Cecelia are isolated by their desire for material success and economic status: "Looking back now, after so long a time, the hardest knowledge I have is of the people I have known who have been most lonely: Troy Chatham and Cecelia Overhold, the one made lonely by ambition, the other by anger, and both by pride always clambering upward over its rubble" (210).

This isolation of the ambitious individual is portrayed, incredibly, as something positive in Martineau's "The Hamlets." In the life of the village before the New Poor Law plan is implemented, there is a great deal of camaraderie, especially amongst the poor. Mr. Barry, the reformer, takes the Old Poor Law workhouse and builds a wall

around it, without even a peephole to the outside. Goodlad explains that "The symbolic purport of these changes is unmistakable."

> The Old Poor Law workhouse was—like the parish school with which Chalmers sought to replace it—an organic part of the community. Residents such as Goody Gidney, who has called the workhouse home for seventy years, were full and free participants in the community culture. The new deterrent workhouse measures up to higher standards of cleanliness and functionality than many Old Poor Law structures. But, unlike them, it is marked off and excluded from the social body. (55)

When Goody Gidney dies at the story's end, her former companions, most of whom have left the workhouse and "made something" of themselves, are unwilling to attend her funeral, fearful of the perception that they might be paupers themselves. The irony is that this sense of isolation is not manifested exclusively by the poor, but that the successful, those who have left the workhouse, are marked by it, as well.

> In representing the new-model workhouse as an effective means to solving the problem of pauperism, Martineau thus implies a number of far-reaching consequences. Chalmers's ideal community was unified by a common investment in character building. Laboring-class parishioners would demonstrate their moral fiber through communal as well as individual self-reliance: helping, when necessary, to relieve the misfortunes of their poorest neighbors. In Martineau's tale the absence of "good-natured" confraternity and the anxious unwillingness even "to appear to be a pauper" marks the rise of a bourgeois-individualist identity (based on acquired assets and pretentious display) and the corresponding decline of a moral identity (based on stable and fully knowable relations within the community). (59)

The "embourgeoisement" of the community is its destruction.

In *Jayber Crow*, we see this in "The Interstate" and "The Economy," the materialistic influences of which Jayber records in the last third of the book. We see it more poignantly in Troy himself. Like Martineau's bourgeoisie, he rejects the "stable and fully knowable relations within the community"—scorns them, in fact—and trusts

instead to his own desires to guide him. Jayber diagnoses the problem as one of "Troy's own point of reference."

> At first, his point of reference was himself, his own wants and his ambition. There is nothing surprising or unforgivable about that, maybe, in a young man. But Troy never outgrew it. I don't think he ever caught on, despite what it cost him, that one of his reference points might have been and ought to have been Mattie. His vanity and pride and self-assurance (pretended or not) obscured her to him from the start. . . . Maybe Troy's contempt for Athey caused him to ignore what really was the best opportunity of his life, which was to love, honor, and cherish Athey's daughter. Or maybe Troy was, in the ways that counted most, just an incurable chucklehead. (338)

Troy has the opportunity to receive pastorship, both the hierarchical tutelage and care from a superior—Athey and Mattie—and the reciprocal advice and support of equals—the Port William community. His selfish desire to make something of himself, however, robs him of that opportunity, leaving him with superficial success and a deep-seated loneliness.

It should not be thought, however, that pastorship and economic success of any sort are inimical. Jayber Crow manages to "make a living," though it is not on the terms dictated by "The Economy." Rather, it is on the terms which Ruskin sets when he describes the merchant as a member of "the five great intellectual professions" (17.39), alongside the soldier, pastor, physician, and lawyer. Ruskin grants this high status for merchants because he imagines them to fill a pastoral role, as we shall see, with regard to the community. Jayber Crow's loving nature, already examined, and his willingness to work without pay, to be examined here, qualify him for membership in this great profession.

In the vocational odyssey of the novel, the first great movement is Jayber's decision to return to Port William to barber, and the second is his decision to leave the

shop rather than submit to the rules of the state inspector. If the mark of a profession is accountability to some larger body, a board or certifying organization, then it could be said that Jayber leaves barbering as soon as it becomes a profession. In Jayber's view, though, he is leaving as soon as it becomes an institution. The mild-mannered inspector comes to represent the impersonal, panopticonal presence of Brother Whitespade.

> For [the inspector] himself, I sort of felt sorry. But he was not there as himself. He was the man across the desk, the one I had so dreaded to meet again. But this time, I thought, it was not a desk but a whole building full of sub-assistant-secretaries. He did not speak for himself but for a man behind a desk who spoke for a man behind another desk, who also did not speak for himself.
>
> The inspector, or the man inside the inspector, was just a young fellow with black wavy hair and black-rimmed glasses who had got Somewhere and made Something of himself. (289)

In the context of the Victorian debate about pastorship, this description unites the institutional approach of the Utilitarians—the man behind the desk—and the bourgeois emphasis on self-improvement—making something of one's self. Both are detrimental to pastorship, and Jayber rightly perceives that he cannot live within such parameters. His initial decision is simply to retire, to live beside the river and read and fish. His customers, however, follow him, and soon he is giving haircuts for free, though his customers, without fail, leave a "donation" equal to what he charged in town. We have moved from economic self-interest to pastorship in the voluntary and trusting nature of the interaction between Jayber and his customers, and in Jayber's willingness to cut hair without a contract for compensation. Describing his relationship with his customers, Jayber first comments on their dwindling numbers due to age, and then speaks of their attitude: "the ones who have remained have been faithful. Their coming is made even more an act of faith because in this house on the river I have no mirrors on the walls.

Here, I am the sole judge of my work. When they climb into the chair, they have to trust me" (306). The language here—a faithful remnant, "an act of faith"—is clearly religious, and this invests Jayber with a pastoral mantle. His flock trusts him—they know his voice—and they come to him to be shorn. He is still the Johannine gatekeeper of this community. Jayber's willingness to work for free, and to receive donations from his customers, reflects the reciprocity that marked Chalmers' ideal pastoral community, his desire "to multiply, not monopolize, the pastoral role" (Goodlad 45). Although Jayber loses some of his customers—mothers with children, the young who prefer to drive rather than walk—he maintains his core of old men.

> When they had a little time on their hands, mainly on Saturdays, [they] would come sauntering down the path from the road, sometimes three or four together, to get haircuts, to visit, to sit and talk and look at the river, and then to leave their donations, always dollar bills, somewhat secretly laid down on the kitchen table or on the shelf where the water bucket sits or by the lamp on the stand by the bed. (306)

This is the literal realization of Chalmers' ideal of charity, which "consisted not only in a monetary exchange but also (and more primarily) in a pastoral exchange involving the 'judgment,' 'examination,' and 'time and attention' of donors" (Goodlad 41). Jayber's shop has always been the site of this kind of community interaction. In *A Place on Earth*, Berry describes the scene at Jayber's shop late one night, after Mat has told Burley and the other customers that Virgil is missing: "Jayber sits quietly in his chair, keeping the shop open for them, their talk his gift" (82). Now, at the river, Jayber's customers talk again, making their presence a gift back to Jayber.

When Ruskin, in the first chapter of *Unto This Last*, argues for the merchant's status as one of the great professions, he does so by reversing the commonly-accepted notions of how one does business. He first diagnoses the merchant's present lack of

status as being due to their perceived self-interest. Ruskin points out that the soldier has always had more respect than other professions.

> And this is right.
>
> For the soldier‘s trade, verily and essentially, is not in slaying, but being slain. This, without well knowing its own meaning, the world honours it for. A bravo’s trade is slaying; but the world has never respected bravos more than merchants: the reason it honours the soldier is, because he holds his life at the service of the State. (17.36-37)

Physicians and lawyers, likewise, hold values higher than their own self-interest, codes of behavior which they will not transgress, no matter the detriment to themselves. Pastors, being obliged to speak of and act upon the truth of God’s word, have the highest code to follow, and we trust them to put it before their self-interest. Of the merchant, however, the public’s opinion is not so high.

> And the essential reason for such preference will be found to lie in the fact that the merchant is presumed to act always selfishly. His work may be very necessary to the community; but the motive of it is understood to be wholly personal. The merchant‘s first object in all his dealings must be (the public believe) to get as much for himself, and leave as little to his neighbour (or customer) as possible. (17.38)

In Martineau’s world of “embourgeoisement,” this is as it should be. In fact, in promoting self-interest and respectability as motive forces to escape poverty, the New Poor Law reformers were advocating the extension of the merchant’s selfishness to all members of society.

Ruskin, however, moves in the opposite direction. The public, he maintains, must learn to think differently about the merchant’s trade.

> They must not cease to condemn selfishness; but they will have to discover a kind of commerce which is not exclusively selfish. Or, rather, they will have to discover that there never was, or can be, any other kind of commerce; that this which they have called commerce was not commerce at all, but cozening; and that a true merchant differs as much from a merchant according to laws of modern political economy, as the

> hero of the Excursion from Autolycus. They will find that . . . in true commerce, as in true preaching, or true fighting, it is necessary to admit the idea of occasional voluntary loss;—that sixpences have to be lost, as well as lives, under a sense of duty; that the market may have its martyrdoms as well as the pulpit; and trade its heroisms as well as war. (17.38-9)

Ruskin takes aim at the assumptions of "modern political economy," proposing as normative a practice that is radically different than the status quo. Jayber describes his riverside barber shop in much the same way: "I was running, you might say, an 'underground' barbershop, a guerrilla free enterprise off in the woods, born out of the world into the world again" (306). Berry's use of the term "free enterprise" here is ironic, for Jayber and his customers are free of the very assumptions upon which capitalism is founded.

> I took their donations freely as they were given. It was freedom we were living in, after all, down here on the river, on the edge of things. I had come here to be free (though only, maybe, for as long as possible) of the man across the desk, of the gloved hand of inspection and regulation. My customers (my friends, my guests) and I made a little bootleg society in which we freely came and went, took and gave. (306)

This is an economic system founded on gift rather than fee, on shared trust rather than self-interest. Oehlschlaeger describes Jayber's river shop as a response to "The Economy," "an increasingly conscious refusal of engagement in mainstream economic life" (223). The closing phrases—"we freely came and went, took and gave"—give the sense of a common purse. Ruskin makes the same sort of move as he describes his vision of a "commonwealth." In a true commonwealth, Ruskin maintains, "the fortunes of private persons should be small . . . but the common treasure of the whole nation should be of superb and precious things in redundant quantity" (27.121). Gold and silver bullion are reserved for trade with other countries, while the nation's wealth is concentrated in

what is usable: "noble horses, cattle, and sheep, on the public lands; and vast spaces of land for culture, exercise, and garden, round the cities, full of flowers, which, being everybody's property, nobody could gather; and of birds which, being everybody's property, nobody could shoot." Ruskin plays on the words "common" and "wealth" in order to revise the popular understanding of the term as a synonym for "nation." His emphasis on what is shared and on what gives life perfectly parallels Berry's revision of "free enterprise," from an economic system built on self-interest to a system built on free gifts. Jayber's community by the riverside becomes a similar commonwealth, in which the wealth of individuals is small, but the rewards of and for the community are great.

This reversal of economic assumptions, the substitution of "lawless charity" for the ordered, regulated contracts of the "getting-and-spending modern world" (314), signifies in *Jayber Crow* the triumph of the pastoral, moral worldview over the self-interested, material one. In the closing pages of the novel, Jayber realizes that "This is a book about Heaven. I know it now. It floats among us like a cloud and is the realest thing we know and the least to be captured, the least to be possessed by anybody for himself" (351). This heaven is realized most fully a few pages later, when, like Dante with Beatrice[3], he is surrounded by the light from the smile of Mattie, the woman he loved without possessing. Economically, it is realized in the gift exchange of the riverside shop, where neither money nor services are possessed, but are instead freely shared. Seen in the context of Ruskin and the Victorian notion of pastorship, Jayber's tenderness for his community and Athey's care for his farm become loves without possession, to be contrasted with Cecelia and Troy and The Economy, all of which

[3] Bilbro has explored the connections between *Jayber Crow* and Dante's *La Vita Nuova* in his dissertation "God's Wildness: The Christian Roots of Ecological Ethics in American Literature."

possess without love. As a story of pastorship, *Jayber Crow* is a novel not about "making something" of one's life, but of laying it down for one's friends.

Epilogue

When Wendell Berry delivered the 41st annual Jefferson Lecture for the National Endowment for the Humanities on April 23, 2012, he spoke to many of the concerns of this study. Berry began with convocation, admitting that while "I speak for myself, . . . I speak also for predecessors and allies, without whom I could not speak at all." One of these past voices was the British author E.M. Forster, whose novel *Howard's End* provided the lecture's title, "It All Turns on Affection." As both kindness and the decay of rural life are potent themes in the novel, Forster was a powerful intertextual presence throughout the speech, particularly at the conclusion, when Berry drew on the novel's vivid portrayal of Henry Wilcox, "the novel's plain man of business," to make the point that "knowledge without affection leads us astray." Berry began with an exposure of the contradictions implicit in James B. Duke's self-characterization as "industrialist" and "philanthropist." The presence of these words on opposite sides of the founder's statue at Duke University revealed to Berry a man "terrifyingly ignorant, even terrifyingly innocent, of the connections between his industry"—which had ruined the livelihoods of myriad small farmers—"and his philanthropy"—which sought to relieve the newly-made poor.

The blindness of this political economy formed a contrast to the discussion of imagination that followed, in which Berry claimed that "The sense of the verb 'to imagine' contains the full richness of the verb 'to see,'" and that "imagination thrives on contact, on tangible connection" to the concrete details of a particular place. "[In order]

to have a place," Berry said, "to live and belong in a place, to live from a place without destroying it, we must imagine it. By imagination, we see it illuminated by its own unique character and by our love for it." As imagination is applied to a particular place or person, it leads to sympathy, and, finally, to affection. Berry then connected affection to economics, appealing to the word's root meaning of "home management," and cited the Agrarian writer Allen Tate for his concept of "effective ownership," which "is personal, and therefore can at least possibly be intimate, familial, and affectionate." Recognizing that "there is some risk in making affection the pivot of an argument about economy," Berry refuted the idea that affection was "merely subjective."

> The risk, I think, is only that affection is personal. And one of the endeavors of human cultures from the beginning has been to qualify and direct the influence of emotion. The word "affection" and the terms of value that cluster around it—love, care, sympathy, mercy, forbearance, respect, reverence—have histories and meanings that raise the issue of worth. We should, as our culture has warned us over and over again, give our affection to things that are true, just, and beautiful.

Berry encouraged an ownership that takes a respectful stance toward Nature, our "impartial mother," recognizing that we are "at once limited and unendingly responsible" in our dealings with the earth and with each other. At the lecture's end, he returned to truth and beauty, as he nominated "economy for an equal standing among the arts and humanities," arguing that "the arts of adapting kindly the many human households to the earth's many ecosystems and human neighborhoods" are of equal value with music, painting, and literature.

A reader of Ruskin, listening to this speech, hears Ruskin's voice throughout, from the terrifying blindness of the wealthy industrialist, to the inclusion of affection, care, and reverence in discussions of political economy; from the need for imagination to

teach us both to see and to value the world before us, to the importance of learning to love the right things, of giving our affections to things that are "true, just, and beautiful." Ruskin's status as both an art critic and a social critic is reflected in the lecture's twin emphases on economics and imagination. Berry's closing plea, that the art of home management be included among the fine arts, perfectly parallels Ruskin's contention that people must not "live under one school of architecture and worship under another" (18.440), while Tate's claim that "effective ownership is . . . intimate, familial, affectionate," a claim which captures the essence of Berry's speech, is of a piece with Ruskin's insistence that true wealth is that which produces life, and that the single rule for political economy is that the master must treat his workers as members of his family (17.42). That Berry would, at the age of 77, rely on so many of Ruskin's themes in a message to so broad an audience, allows us to sense the affection with which the latter writer regards the earlier, and to imagine the continuing significance of Ruskin's place in Berry's work.

One goal of this study has been to elucidate commonalities such as these, to connect Wendell Berry to John Ruskin in the comprehensive, far-reaching way that Kimberly Smith has connected Berry to the Agrarians. Ruskin's ideas, of course, do not appear unchanged in this new context. Both the Jefferson Lecture and Berry's fiction demonstrate that Ruskin's principles require concrete reimagining in Berry's particular place. When this occurs, Ruskin gains a new relevance to modern thought, especially to American thought, as his social principles—hitherto consigned to the history of British public policy—critique the liberalism which structures modern American life. Furthermore, his aesthetic principles—usually treated in the context of Turner and

nineteenth-century art—become, in the context of Berry, crucial guides for the practice of right imagining, especially in rural life. Berry gains from this connection to Ruskin by being grafted on to another tradition beyond that of American nature writing, a tradition that at first appears too involved in the urban culture of England to have relevance. Reading Berry's fiction in light of Ruskin allows one to see that, for Berry, obligation cannot be devoid of affection, and that ethical growth must follow from an attention to particulars that is never wholly materialistic, but rather imaginative. The comparison with Ruskin elucidates the difference between the essay and the novel, so that Berry's fiction may be read as a concrete vision of the good life, and not simply as a fictional representation of his essays' arguments. To attend to Ruskin's voice in Berry's fiction allows one to perceive the connection in both authors between ethics, imagination, and particularity, a connection which is realized most fully in the imagination of the sympathetic and attentive reader.

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