Spring 2023

Reading in Place: Ordinary Language Philosophy, Wendell Berry, and Post Critique

Calvin L. Coon
Missouri State University, Calvin011@live.missouristate.edu

READING IN PLACE: ORDINARY LANGUAGE PHILOSOPHY, WENDELL BERRY, AND POSTCRITIQUE

A Master's Thesis

Presented to

The Graduate College of

Missouri State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts, English

By

Calvin Coon

December 2022

READING IN PLACE: ORDINARY LANGUAGE PHILOSOPHY, WENDELL BERRY, AND POSTCRITIQUE

English

Missouri State University, December 2022

Master of Arts

Calvin Coon

ABSTRACT

The twenty-first century, marked by neoliberalism and suspicious, visibly violent far-Right politics, has presented new challenges to critical and literary theorists. In response, some theorists advocate for a postcritical turn, challenging both the surface/depth picture of language and the privileged status of suspicion in interpretation in order to explore alternative pictures of language and reading that can better address the challenges of our own day. In this thesis, I connect one of these alternatives, Toril Moi's use of Ordinary Language Philosophy in literary studies, to Wendell Berry's prioritization of place in environmentalist activism. In connecting these two thinkers, I contend for ordinary placed reading, or a practice of reading that interprets literature according to the way it intervenes in the critic's own place of residence, in the natural, social, and agricultural realms. I then analyze Berry's novel *Jayber Crow* in order to illustrate how his protagonist, Jayber, exemplifies this mode of reading in his shift from displaced, suspicious reader to a reader embedded in his place and interpreting historical and technological developments according to its consequences for his placed community.

KEYWORDS: American literature, regionalism, Wendell Berry, postcritique, ordinary language philosophy and literary studies

READING IN PLACE: ORDINARY LANGUAGE PHILOSOPHY, WENDELL BERRY, AND POSTCRITIQUE

By

Calvin Coon

A Master's Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate College
Of Missouri State University
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts, English

December 2022

Approved:

Matthew Calihman, Ph.D., Thesis Committee Chair

Shannon Wooden, Ph.D., Committee Member

Alan Tinkler, Ph.D., Committee Member

Julie Masterson, Ph.D., Dean of the Graduate College

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis committee for challenging me to push my thinking with this project. You all have been a great source of wisdom and encouragement throughout my degree program here at MSU.

I would like to thank Dr. Madden for encouraging me throughout my entire degree program, from applying for conferences to submitting articles for publication. You have helped me believe in myself and my abilities as a researcher and a scholar, and for that I am grateful.

Thank you, Mom and Dad, for always saying yes when I have asked for books and for always insisting that I give my best effort in my studies. This project has been my best effort, and I hope you can be proud of it.

Thank you, Ethan, Payton, and Spencer, for your unwavering loyalty to me as a brother and friend. Our times of laughter and leisure mean more to me than you know. Ridgewood for life.

Thank you, Wendell Berry, for your relentless and compassionate advocacy for the earth and for towns like each of ours. I hope nothing in this thesis will get me banished to the island of explainers.

And, of course, thank you, Hannah, my beloved. Your gentleness and your wit call me to a deeper love for you and for the world. I love you more than I can express.

I dedicate this thesis to the side of the Ozarks hill that became Ridgewood Circle: the country of my birth.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

POSTCRITIQUE AND TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY LITERARY STUDIES

Wendell Berry prefaces his novel *Jayber Crow* (2000) with a posted notice, in a format familiar to anyone who has wandered to a property line while out in the country:

> NOTICE
> Persons attempting to find a "text" in this book will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a "subtext" will be banished; 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 ORDER OF THE AUTHOR.

For literary theorists and critics, this notice, reminiscent of Twain's in *Huckleberry Finn,* is rather abrasive, even cruel. After all, the various acts that Berry bans in his novel are, conventionally, the tools of our trade, the tasks which English departments expect of many faculty members. How should literary critics, as professional readers, receive this warning? One could, of course, interpret this notice as an obstinate author refusing to accept the poststructuralist-imposed death of the author, demanding that his genius intentions be sought, described, and admired. Alternatively, one might take the notice as the demands of a paranoid conservative, a hostile insistence on a commonsense reading–"just read the book! This is what it *obviously* means." Interpreting his warning in either of these ways leaves critical readers with two options. We might laugh at such an author for his futility in delaying his inevitable death and join the mob of poststructuralists closing in around him as Roland Barthes writes his eulogy. Or we might shake our heads as we pass by, casting a wide berth around his work, instead devoting our energies to less hostile and regressive authors and texts.

However, for those engaging with Berry's work, neither of these readings really do justice to Berry's writing. As I hope to demonstrate in the course of my analysis, while Berry is antagonistic towards many aspects of neoliberal, industrial and technocapitalist ideology and

praxis, he is far from hostile and paranoid, instead taking a generous and hopeful stance towards those beholden to the ideologies he critiques. He is in many ways a traditionalist, yet he is hardly regressive or complicit in an uncritical common sense. He seems little interested in a death-defying, immortal status as "author," claiming that all he is doing as a writer is "arranging the words on the pages," espousing ideas which "came to [him] freely" and which he "give[s]...freely away"; to Berry, the insistence on owning ideas makes writers "thieves" (*Sex, Economy, Freedom, and Community* xviii). His notice, then, might best be read less as a negation and more as an invitation: taking the order seriously and being disarmed of their usual affective positions and critical strategies, critical theorists and other readers might instead become open to new affective and strategic modes of reading beyond suspicious, antagonistic affects. Readers are bid to reconsider how one can read and, after recognizing the array of affective positions one can take towards literature and culture, to reconsider how one should approach and read the novel that lies beyond the notice.

How One Can Read: A Brief Survey of Hermeneutical Schools

In the early part of the twenty-first century, primarily from the late 2000s to the present, critical theorists have begun to describe both the history and the features of critical theory and literary/cultural criticism ("critique"), hoping to demonstrate the key tenets underlying all that critics call critique and the ubiquity of these tenets, as well as exploring other possibilities for doing critique in the twenty-first century. These theorists demonstrate how, despite the variety of theories–structuralism/poststructuralism, Marxist "symptomatic reading," Freudian analysis, Foucauldian and Greenblattian historicism, and the many descendants and intersections of these–critics typical, even hegemonically, share suspicion in common (Felski, "Suspicious Minds"

217). This "hermeneutics of suspicion," as Paul Ricœur termed this common stance towards language, developed over the latter half of the twentieth century into an influential, in some spheres nearly hegemonic, critical orientation towards texts among critics, despite whatever theoretical positions or propositions they hold and over which they disagree. Yet many contemporary postcritical theorists in the early twenty-first century have begun to question the disproportionate influence of suspicion in critical theory.

In *Freud and Philosophy,* Ricœur describes what he sees as two major schools of hermeneutics. The first, generally pre-modern and early modern school he terms the "Hermeneutics of Recollection," or "Hermeneutics of Trust." This hermeneutics, holding an affinity with (usually religious) faith, views the task of interpreting as the "restoration of meaning" (28). The role of the interpreter is to "surrender to the movement of meaning which, starting from the literal sense…points to something grasped in the region of the sacred" (29). This something is the "something intended" by the sign-creator (29). The interpreter comes to the text with "the expectation of being spoken to," due to belief in "the fullness of language," where the "second [i.e., deeper] meaning somehow dwells in the first [i.e., literal] meaning" and in the "revealing power of symbols," where the text has a *sensus plenior* that the exegete can elucidate through interpretation (29-31). This school, which Ricœur associates with the phenomenology of religion, believes there is a depth to a text, and that that depth-meaning is profound and, often, sublime, giving critics the role of seeking out these meanings to make manifest the profundity of the text or cultural practice (29).

The second school, the Hermeneutics of Suspicion, developed most fully in the nineteenth century as an antithesis to this trusting Hermeneutics of Recollection. Rita Felski, summarizing Ricœur's description of this school, identifies Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche as its

primary founders–though, as she also notes, this tradition of suspicion in interpretation goes back further to the heresy trials of the medieval ages (Felski, "Suspicious Minds" 216, 219). These thinkers, though diverse in focus, were all united in "the conviction that appearances are deceptive, that texts do not gracefully relinquish their meanings" (216). This legacy of suspicion was passed on to many other influential theorists, such as Foucault, Derrida, Barthes, Lacan, Althusser, and Jameson, until suspicion became ubiquitous in nearly every critical school descended from these thinkers. This suspicion has spread out from revolutionary thinkers, becoming not just a tool of Leftist ideology critique and revolution but an institutional practice in fields like medicine and criminology (221). In this ever-expanding mood of suspicion, the politics of revolution shifted from "affirmative or utopian projects of world-building" to a "rhetoric of subversion, estrangement, and critique" (218). Suspicion has become so hegemonic that there has developed "the assumption that whatever is *not* critical must therefore be *un*critical" (Felski, *Limits* 2).

In the Hermeneutics of Suspicion, the interpreter of signs or texts is called to quite a different task than the hermeneut of recollection: instead of restoring the deeper, glorious truth of the text, interpreters are given the task of "problematizing, interrogating and subverting," reading "against the grain…underscoring what it [i.e., the text] does not know and cannot understand" (Felski, *Uses* 2, "Suspicious Minds" 217). The meaning of a text is "darker, more unpalatable" than the Hermeneutics of Recollection would admit (Felski, "Suspicious Minds" 216). It is to be found in "what it [the text] refuses to own up to" ("Suspicious Minds" 223). Whether or not there are beautiful poetics or gripping narratives, "the most interesting aspect of a text is what it represses" (Best and Marcus 3). To force the text to give up this meaning, the critic must be agonistic: from a stance of "analytical detachment, critical vigilance, [and] guarded suspicion"

(Felski, *Uses* 2), the interpreter engages in "an inventive piecing together of signs to create new constellations of meaning," as they "[fashion] a sequence of cause and effect that correlates textual clues with underlying systems of political inequality or oppression" ("Suspicious Minds" 228, 224). Indeed, Felski reads this agonism as battle-like, seeing the Hermeneutics of Suspicion as offering critics "the role of poachers making raids on property they do not own," giving "a temporary triumph over the sovereignty of authors" ("Suspicious Minds" 228). Texts try to deceive through the deceit inherent to language, but they fail before the knowing critic ("Suspicious Minds" 223-24). This victory in battle, the exposure of concealed ideology, is the path to freedom and cultural transformation, making overcoming racist, sexist, homophobic, ableist ideology possible (Best and Marcus 15; Sedgwick 140).

To fight and win this battle with the text, the reader comes to the text with an "ethos…of againstness" and a stance of "knowingness," a "permanent skepticism and a sharply honed suspicion" (Felski, "Postcritical Reading" 4, *Uses* 4). This suspicion, Felski notes, is not merely cognitive or intellectual but affective, "a distinctive style and sensibility" ("Suspicious Minds" 216). The suspicious mindset prefers "distance rather than closeness; guardedness rather than openness; aggression rather than submission; [and] superiority rather than reverence" in its affective stance towards a text, and this broad category of critique is "driven by a spirit of disenchantment" ("Suspicious Minds" 222, 217). Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick concurs, drawing on Melanie Klein's concept of "position," defined as "the characteristic posture that the ego takes up with respect to its objects" (qtd. in Sedgwick 128). Sedgwick argues that critics primarily take a paranoid position to the text, always showing a "painful alertness to the dangers posed" by systems and texts around them (128). Instead of expecting to find a profound depth-meaning, as the Hermeneutics of Trust would, readers approach a text preparing to encounter deception and

subtle reinforcements of hegemonic ideology and institutional oppression. As an affect and position, suspicious hermeneutics comes with "its own specific pleasures" gained from its careful piecing together of textual clues and successfully surfacing the truth about the text ("Suspicious Minds" 216). It is also, as Sedgwick points out, a negative affect, pain-avoidant as much as pleasure-seeking, anticipating danger at every turn and doing whatever it takes to avoid being surprised by what it finds (130).

This affective position remains influential across particular sociopolitical interests and commitments in critical theory. Critics typically "diagnose" the text's lacunae or its misrepresentations and "allegorize" these as reflective of the world (Anker and Felski 8). Alternatively, critics often hold a relatively restricted canon of texts that "exhibit levels of self-consciousness mirroring their own," championing texts that share the critic's political investments and level of suspicion of the systems that marginalize them (9). Many scholars, of course, work outside of suspicious hermeneutics, with attention to texts and themes beyond those of identity politics and oppressive power formations. Moi notes that, though these have always existed, these are often considered outside the realm of "theory" (*Revolution* 99). This is either because this research does not meet the criteria of "generality"--that is, subsuming enough phenomena under its definitions and explanations (*Revolution* 99)--or because it is considered "uncritical" or too trustful, not properly participating in the activist aims of critical theory as such (Felski, *Limits* 2). These remain valuable in their realms of literary studies but are often relegated from discussions of critical theory.

In response to this hegemony, many literary critics have begun to question whether or not critique must stay wedded to suspicion and whether there is or should be a move into postcritical literary theory. These scholars often cite Latour's "Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?,"

Sedgwick's "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading," and Best and Marcus's "Surface Reading: An Introduction" as landmark postcritical texts. While these have often set the tone for the contentious discussions of the ongoing merits of critique and the need for postcritical thought, Felski has been the primary architect of postcritique as a distinct school of hermeneutics and theory. Postcritique, according to these thinkers, is primarily interested in examining the unquestioned status of suspicion (paranoia, in Sedgwick's terms, or symptomatic reading, for Best and Marcus), describing what consequences suspicion has on the literary/cultural studies field and the humanities' relationship to the wider social and political discourses, and embracing, rediscovering, and cultivating new ways of approaching texts that can respond to our own sociopolitical moment.

This school of thought is not, however, a repudiation of the many gains in theory and knowledge wrought by the Hermeneutics of Suspicion. Felski notes that the ideas found in suspicious critical theory "still resonate individually but…no longer add up to a compelling or comprehensive whole"—suspicion can and is still often warranted, but it does not hold up when made the dogma of literary criticism ("After Suspicion" 33). Felski specifically targets the dogma of suspicion in her questioning: "Why do scholars feel *impelled* to unmask and demystify?...What sustains their *certainty* that a text is withholding some vital information, that they *must* authorize their commentary by highlighting what is concealed, repressed, unsaid" ("Suspicious Minds" 218; emphasis added)? Postcritique, then, "refers to ways of reading that are informed by critique while pushing beyond it," seeking diversity of affective position rather than dogma (Felski, "Postcritical Reading" 4). As Sedgwick notes, paranoia is "one kind of cognitive/affective theoretical practice among other, alternative kinds" (126); even the most suspicious scholars exhibit various affects in the complex dances of reading, writing, and

teaching (Felski, *Limits* 4). Postcritique is interested in acknowledging the various affects and strategies one might take while doing rigorous, critical reading, asking "how else might we read if we were not ordained to read suspiciously" (Felski, "Suspicious Minds" 232)?

How *Jayber Crow* Has Been Read: A Survey of *Jayber Crow* Scholarship

Wendell Berry's work, as his preface to *Jayber Crow* might suggest, has generally eluded suspicious readings. In part, however, this is due to the relatively limited attention his fiction has received. As Ethan Mannon has noted, Berry's nonfiction essays, primarily on agrarianism, rurality, and environmentalism, vastly outweigh his novels and short stories in scholarly attention, and his fiction, when given attention, is "assign[ed]...a supporting role" to his essays' arguments (171). This focus on his nonfiction has tended to analyze Berry's own predominant interests: agriculture (Fiskio; Filipiak; Kuriakose), Christianity (Burkemper and Mahan; *Christianity and Literature*), and education (Meehan; Snauwaert; Schreck). Scholars who have critiqued Berry's fiction have similarly attended to ecological and religious themes.

Many scholars analyze the ecological and agrarian concerns of Berry's Port William fiction. Leaning heavily on *Jayber Crow,* Mannon reads the Port William narratives as developing Berry's thought on technology, work, and leisure. He looks at characters Burley Coulter's and Athey Keith's philosophies of farm work and leisure as models, for Berry, of sustainable work and land use (Mannon). Several scholars attend to place. Fritz Oehlschlaeger reads *Jayber Crow* alongside other Port William novels, *A Place on Earth* and *Hannah Coulter*, as "accounts of the practical peacemaking required of us…as citizens and patriots," countering a century of displacement and war (199). Similarly, Thomas Stanford III analyzes the realistically imperfect but nevertheless redeemed quality of Port William, focusing on the importance of love,

countering impersonal notions of community (Stanford). Lenka Filipova, for her part, analyzes Berry's promotion of fidelity to place and his opposition to displacing capitalistic forms of agribusiness that destroy local lands and communities (Filipova).

Several scholars read *Jayber Crow* through theological and religious lenses. Christina Lambert reads *Jayber Crow* from a blue-ecocritical and sacramental theological lens, analyzing the role water, namely the Kentucky River that runs alongside Port William, plays as a symbol in Berry's earth-embracing eschatology (Lambert). Hans Gustafson similarly compares the "sacramental spirituality" of Berry's Port William fiction to Dostoevsky's fiction, noting a "panscaramentality" in *Jayber Crow* (356). Andrew Ronnevik also analyzes *Jayber Crow's* eschatological vision, through the mediating symbols of the Kentucky River, the church (both in Port William and as an institution more broadly), the Port William Membership itself, and the character Mattie Keith, concluding that, for Crow, Heaven is "hidden but present" (55).

Several scholars have read *Jayber Crow,* as well as Berry's larger body of fiction, intertextually, comparing and contrasting themes in his works with philosophers, canonized writers, regionalists, and even his own nonfiction. Nancy Barta-Smith reads *Jayber Crow* against Berry's *The Unsettling of America* and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy to examine Berry's use of metaphors of marriage and motherhood to advocate for nurturing one's community. Anthony Esolen analyzes thematic and characterological convergences between *Jayber Crow* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Helen Maxson accounts for the various allusions in *Jayber Crow* and other Port William fiction, recognizing allusions to the Bible, Milton, Yeats, Swift, Byron, *The Odyssey* and *Ulysses,* and Twain, noting how these allusions "lower the boundaries between his own work and that of his literary forebears," connecting to and responding to the larger body of American and Western literature (103-04). Two scholars read Berry alongside Gary Snyder

regarding ecological and environmental concerns, comparing the writers' "ecopoetics," the "interaction of their poetics and politics" (Hönnighausen 356), and their ecological ethics in defining "the wild" (Robinson). Matt Wanat reads Berry's short story "A Jonquil for Mary Penn" in dialogue with Katherine Anne Porter's "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall" for how each addresses themes of "female isolation and connection within communities," in which these stories converge and conflict with one another ("From Jilting to Jonquil" 166). Wanat also explores the connections between Berry's fiction, Ann Pancake's fiction, and dystopian science fiction in their shared theme of linking the technological dissolution of placed communities and the technological devaluation and destruction of human bodies ("Dislocation, Dismemberment, Dystopia" 147).

Many critics place Berry in the American regionalist tradition. He is identified as a writer carrying on the legacy of Southern short fiction writers in the tradition of Faulkner, O'Connor, McCullers, and others (Peck). Klotter and Thompson Friend place Berry more specifically in the tradition of Kentucky writers, arguing that Berry produces some of the most faithful literary representations of the state (317). Katherine Ledford in her anthology of Appalachian writing notes that, though Berry's Kentucky River community is not strictly part of Appalachia, his contributions to Appalachian environmentalism have made him an important thinker and author for the region nonetheless (657).

These scholars work to place Berry's fiction into larger trends of Western, American, Southern/Appalachian, Christian, and environmentalist thought and literature. All of these writers, by addressing many of the concerns most central to Berry and his fiction as well as taking generous, reparative stances towards Berry's work, tend towards the Hermeneutics of Recollection almost exclusively, circumventing the Hermeneutics of Suspicion or any

postcritical (in the sense of retaining lessons from suspicious critique even after qualifying it) attitudes or readings. As these scholars show, these recollective interpretations are justified and are certainly in keeping with what Berry seems to desire for a reader of his text. Indeed, these scholars illuminate Berry's work with great insight. Yet, as I hope to demonstrate in the course of this thesis, Berry's insights on culture, agriculture, and place can also offer important contributions to critical theory and literary criticism, and his inclusion in these conversations most helpfully comes through the developing the emerging postcritical field. Berry's thought and fiction primes scholars for a postcritical hermeneutics, for ways of reading that move forward from (and with) suspicion into new ways of reading for new political, cultural, and literary challenges. Without reading Berry postcritically and incorporating Berry's own thought into postcritique, we are left with a truncated list of options for reading his work in response to the political and environmental crises that he (and critical theorists) hope to address and change.

How One Might Read Now: Postcritique and the Challenges for Suspicion

I return to Felski's question "how else might we read?" This postcritical provocation is a more generative way to respond to Berry's notice for readers of *Jayber Crow.* The recognition of the three different critical schools reminds literary critics that we have choice not just between critical theories (feminism, postcolonialism, queer theory, etc.) but between different ways of relating to a text, different affects that we can embody when we read, research, and write, that do not take away from rigorous, careful, intellectually valuable work. There is still much to make us suspicious (and, therefore, still a use for suspicious hermeneutics). However, as I will explain below, many of the once assumed advantages of the Hermeneutics of Suspicion and the assumed natural connection between suspicion and progressive critique and activism have been

undermined in the twenty-first century, particularly the past decade or so. Here I will address three developments which have undermined suspicious hermeneutics: the post-normative status of neoliberalism that calcifies the ideology into an ontology, evading epistemology-centered ideology critiques of knowledge production and normativity, the co-opting of suspicion by the far Right, and the self-consciously visible performances of violence and oppression by those whom ideology critique has identified as with power.

Berry's novel, told by its narrator in 1986 and published in 2000, is placed squarely in the age of neoliberalism, dated typically from the late 1970s through the current day. Wendy Brown, in her 2003 article defining neoliberalism and its incompatibility with liberal democracy, notes that in neoliberal ideology, human action is "cast in terms of a market rationality…as rational entrepreneurial action." It has become a "social analysis" for interpreting human action and interaction, and all action in all spheres of life is analyzed according to "considerations of profitability," by criteria of "utility, benefit, or satisfaction against a…grid of scarcity, supply and demand, and moral value-neutrality" (Brown). Since values are neutral, morality is reduced to "self-care" or "the ability to provide for [one's] own needs and service [one's] own ambitions," making one "calculating rather than rule-abiding" (Brown). Instead of believing in a "free" market (whose freedom has been largely debunked by critique), the government actively preserves and promotes the market through policymaking and norming (Brown). Whereas liberal democracy still idealized some form of public sphere for its community, the ideal neoliberal social body "would be the opposite of public-minded, indeed it would barely exist as a public. The body ceases to be a body but is, rather, a group of individual entrepreneurs and consumers" (Brown). Even though democracy is still a popular buzzword for the neoliberals (hence the "liberal" in neoliberal), Brown sees neoliberalism at odds with liberal democracy–not in the way

that totalitarianism is but in a way that destroys many features of democracy, like efforts of social justice and collective action, under the banner of entrepreneurial freedom (Brown).

Neoliberalism has, of course, drawn the attention of critical theory from its start. However, theorists have begun to question the efficacy of the field's standard critical theoretical tools for undermining and dismantling neoliberalism. Neoliberalism, Mitchum Huehls argues, has gone beyond a "normative formation" in a Foucauldian sense–an epistemological model, prescribing norms and disciplining its citizens to adhere to them–to also include a "post-normative formation," where its "power derive[s] from its hands-off, administrative shaping of a lived environments," outside of any active disciplining (3). In other words, it takes itself to create a normless and telos-less playing field, where intervention comes only in the form of preventing the inhibition of one's pursuit of profit maximization. This administrative role in neoliberalism has brought with it a neoliberal ontology: not only is neoliberalism a "social analysis," per Brown, but an assumed picture of what a person is. This ontological picture precedes critique's usual object of analysis: what we know and how we relate to one another in social formations. This new ontology Huehls terms the "neoliberal circle": neoliberalism "vacillate[s]" between addressing one's subjectivity, or "our unique individuality," and our objectivity, "our status as homogenized objects…part of a team, network, or community" (9-10). Importantly, these two aspects are treated as pure and distinct from each other, keeping us, though we are both, from recognizing ourselves as having "hybridity," or a "subject-object simultaneity" that is both of these concurrently and inseparably (8, 23). One is addressed as an individual, or one is addressed as a number among the masses–sometimes one, sometimes the other, but never as both at the same time in a complex, hybrid ontology. Because of this, neoliberalism can contain contentious, debated positions–debates between the rights of the individual and the compulsion to accept

one's status as a homogenized object, "a cog in the machine"–within itself (11). Neoliberalism can, in one instance, champion the individual subject, then, in the next, speak of groups as resources and markets to be accessed and used in the quest for profit maximization (11). Because it is able to do both, it is a tent wide enough to capture conflicting opinions. For instance, when it comes to feminism and activism regarding gender, neoliberalism can contain expressive individualism (having the right to perform gender as one senses to be most authentic, without fear of recrimination) and objective homogenization (certain social conservative reassertions of [traditionally defined] women's role in reproduction and domesticity, or, alternatively, some feminist arguments for increasing women's access to higher paying, but still cog-in-the-machine positions in corporations). While all contend with each other, all are also contained within neoliberalism in its post-normative, ontological formation, for none of them contrast themselves with the purification and vacillation between subjectivity and objectivity that neoliberalism has established.

Ideology critique, then, similarly fails to oppose neoliberalism, since it also typically maintains the same purifying, vacillating ontological picture. Critique alternates between "objective facts" to expose the exploitation behind euphemistic deception and "subjective values" to resist cold, dehumanizing forms of rationalism (14). One is objective now, and subjective later, but never both at the same time. Critique does not offer a true alternative to neoliberalism, as it rests on the same assumed ontology of purification and vacillation that precedes epistemological norms (14). Neoliberalism is flexible enough, as a post-normative ontology, to allow critics to critique its normative epistemology without really being threatened with disruption or transformation in its ontological formation.

In addition to this entanglement of critique with post-normative neoliberalism, critique's trademark affect of suspicion has become entangled with far-Right, regressive politics. Bruno Latour asks, "What has happened to critique?" as he reflects on the ways that suspicion in critique has become so popularized that it has become a tool for climate change deniers, 9/11 Truthers, and moon landing conspiracists (226-32). In the phenomena he names "instant revisionism," suspicion about the truth of events and the placement of them in a larger conspiracy narrative obscure the ability to talk about facts and reality (228). Mark Dery, in a close reading of the QAnon Shaman's manifesto after the January 6 insurrection, uses Frank Mintz's term "conspiracism," the "belief in the primacy of conspiracies in the unfolding of history," to understand the far Right (and increasingly mainstream Republican) suspicion towards Democrats and towards American political institutions more broadly (qtd. in Dery). Conspiracism, for Dery, "is what happens when the hermeneutics of suspicion escapes the page, into the wild": "anything can be a sign, a symbol, disinformation, propaganda, psy-ops, a subliminal message, evidence of dark designs and covert ops" (Dery). While confidence in political institutions has been eroded since the 1960s for much of the population, "it's the Right's *weaponization* of that uncertainty that spread the virus of conspiracism" (Dery). Suspicion has become so ubiquitous that both progressives and conservatives can denounce the same entity for radically different reasons: Henry Giroux can critique Disney for a "politics of innocence" that hides "the power of a multinational conglomerate that has little regard for free speech and public criticism," while *Fox and Friends* can critique Disney for "indoctrinat[ing]" children and families with a "woke agenda," for denouncing a homophobic and transphobic law (Giroux 32; Hill). As Umberto Eco argues, a defining feature of fascism is "obsession with a plot" in order to bring about identity and conformity (Eco). Fascism, the mortal enemy of ideology critique and

progressive democratic politics, takes up the same suspicious affective position towards the world as critique–a suspicion that is "asocial," detrimental to communal life and well-being (Felski, "Suspicious Minds" 221). In the widespread presence of suspicion, progressive social justice aims have often been lost or abandoned, and, as Sedgwick argues, a person being suspiciously critical "does not intrinsically or necessarily enjoin that person to any specific train of epistemological or narrative consequences" (124). Suspicion, having come to dominate progressivism, has now taken up a significant space in regressivism as well, undermining its status as a revolutionary tool.

Critique's need for suspicion has further been undermined by the growing vigor with which violent, oppressive people and groups publicly and visibly perform their violence and oppression. While there have always been examples of visible violence by oppressive power structures (lynching in the American South, for instance), one of the key tenets of the Hermeneutics of Suspicion is that social power structures and complicit literary texts most often seek to hide or stay blissfully unaware of their racism, sexism, homophobia, or ableism. Yet this assumption has been questioned and qualified by many postcritical scholars. Referencing the scandal of Abu Ghraib and the lack of governmental response to post-Katrina New Orleans, Best and Marcus note, "the assumption that domination can only do its work when veiled, which may once have sounded almost paranoid, now has a nostalgic, even utopic ring to it" (2). Reflecting upon published videos of beheadings by terrorist groups that "commit atrocities in order to release their videos," Toril Moi says, "we no longer believe that power always seeks to cover its tracks" ("'Nothing is Hidden'" 31). Indeed, while the Internet has made the unmasking of power structures more possible (#MeToo, #Blacklivesmatter), it has emboldened those who have been unmasked to seek maximum visibility. For instance, Payton Gendron, the White supremacist

who perpetrated a racially motivated mass shooting in Buffalo, New York, livestreamed his attack on Twitch (Browning). The visibility of every major and minor news network's week-long coverage was not enough; there was an embrace of visibility as a critical feature of the shooting. And, as Malcolm Gladwell has noted, the manifesto and video publications of mass shooters, getting the word out about their intentions and ideological motivations before, during, and after the act itself, are the *modus operandi* of mass shooters post-Columbine (Gladwell). While political institutions have traditionally at least attempted to cover their tracks, in the Trump era of politics, "the cruelty is the point," as public displays of ableism, sexism, racism, and homophobia became part of the package for much of the Republican Party (Serwer). In the face of visible oppression, Sedgwick asks, "what does a hermeneutics of suspicion and exposure have to say to social formations in which visibility itself constitutes much of the violence" (140)? Indeed, commitment to analyzing and exposing covert subjugation risks becoming tautological when the oppressors not only do not fear but also actively embrace their exposure.

The assumptions linking critique to suspicion have been weakened and somewhat undermined—high-visibility violence shields itself against the power of suspicion, while simultaneously wielding suspicion against progressive activism and programs–and neoliberalism stands over the battle, unable to be touched by either side. While postcritical theorists still recognize the value of suspicion, they question the deployment of it at all times, in all circumstances: reading suspiciously "unintentionally impoverish[es] the gene pool of literary-critical perspectives and skills. The trouble with a shallow gene pool, of course, is its diminished ability to respond to environmental (e.g., political) change" (Sedgwick 144). A new era of critique that diversifies the gene pool of affects, positions, and approaches, taking the lessons of the Hermeneutics of Trust and Suspicion (and, indeed, still turning to these when necessary, as

they still so often are) while responding to the unique challenges of this historical moment, will allow literary theory, both as a university institution and as a transformative political force, to adapt to the challenges of the twenty-first century.

In what follows, I will describe and implement one such way of reading: Toril Moi's use of Ordinary Language Philosophy (OLP) for doing the work of literary criticism. (I term this "doing the work" because, as I will show in the following, her use of OLP resists the conventional concept of "theory"). "Ordinary Language Philosophy" is a term that is used to denote the school of thought in the philosophy of language that was inaugurated by Wittgenstein and J.L. Austin, as interpreted and expanded by Stanley Cavell and Cora Diamond (Moi, *Revolution* 1). Moi, a feminist theorist, in various articles but most comprehensively in her book *Revolution of the Ordinary,* has been the primary driving force to bring the work of OLP into literary criticism and, more specifically, postcritical literary criticism. Using her work on ordinary language, with occasional recourse to Felski's and Huehls' use of Latourian Actor-Network Theory and Sedgwick's "reparative reading," I will argue that reading Berry's *Jayber Crow* in this way will both satisfy the demands laid out by Berry, reading his novel in the most symbiotic, reparative way, and generate new possibilities for reading and thinking in the twenty-first century–two goals that I believe are intertwined.

ORDINARY PLACED READING: LITERARY STUDIES AFTER ORDINARY LANGUAGE PHILOSOPHY AND WENDELL BERRY

Both the Hermeneutics of Trust and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion picture language through the metaphor of surface/depth: the word at the surface, and the meaning in the depths. Though, as we have seen, these two are very different from each other, both posit a gap between word and meaning, a gap that deconstructionists have enjoyed exposing and freely playing within, and that ideology critics and have exposed as the gap between innocuous formations and hidden violence and oppression. Yet this near-hegemonic picture of language has its detractors: Ludwig Wittgenstein, J.L. Austin and Stanley Cavell have developed in their philosophies an alternative picture of language, not to return our understanding of language to a naïve, commonsensical picture but to acknowledge and give attention to the vast array of things that people do with language and what language does in the world. Toril Moi uses this picture of language from Ordinary Language Philosophy (OLP) to similarly acknowledge and attend to the vast array of things that people do with literature and what literature does in the world. This picture, linked with Wendell Berry's thought and activism, offers revolutionarily ordinary picture of language and literature to make meaning more effectively in literary and cultural studies, offering generative responses to the cultural impasses that conventional suspicious literary criticism has had difficulty overcoming.

Ordinary Language Philosophy: Wittgenstein, Austin, and Cavell on Language

Central to the picture of language that Ordinary Language Philosophy asserts is the location of a word/utterance's meaning in its everyday, ordinary uses. The commonly identified

mantra for the Wittgensteinian philosophy of language is his statement that "the meaning of a word is its use in the language" (qtd. in Moi, *Revolution* 29). However, as Moi notes, this seemingly simple (or, as some have argued, simplistic) notion of meaning-as-use is hard to grasp, especially for those beholden to what Moi calls an Augustinian conception of language as primarily attaching names to entities–a conception, she argues, that includes structuralists and poststructuralists who hold the same picture from a skeptical stance (*Revolution* 27). "Use," she says, "is not a ground. Use is a practice grounded on nothing. Use is simply what we do" (29). Words are, in Austinian terms, always "performative" in that we, like with virtually any other available tool, do things when we employ language (Austin 91). Words, then, "get their meaning from the sentences they appear in," from what use the speaker is putting them towards (Moi, *Revolution* 34).

Language is used in what Wittgenstein calls "language-games." The term "language-game" is, as Moi notes, elusive of a clear definition, much like "game" more broadly: characteristics like having a winner, having multiple players, or having an objective might capture many games, but one could think of many examples of games that do not meet these criteria (47). The only commonalities across games, at least all the games that I know, are (1) that all players (even if one is playing alone) recognize that one is in a game, as opposed to whatever one was doing before or after the game; and (2) that there are rules (of varying levels of flexibility) governing the game that are distinct from what governs action before and after the game. These rules signal to players and observers that a game (and, to those familiar with enough games, which particular game) is or is not being played, such as when a soccer player refuses to touch the ball with his hands during the game but feels at liberty to pick up the ball as soon as the game is over. Beyond this, little unites the category of "game." The same is true for

Wittgenstein's language-games: a language-game, according to Moi, "does something reasonably specific. It is an action. It can be described by a verb" (*Revolution* 48). It is a variably rule-bound action that is commonly recognized as doing a particular, specific thing. Examples given by Wittgenstein include "giving orders, and acting on them…Reporting an event…Presenting the results of an experiment in tables and diagrams…Making up a story; and reading one…Cracking a joke" (qtd. in Moi, *Revolution* 46). As Moi notes, this list has few commonalities, differing in how much language is involved in the game (as opposed to "nonlinguistic action"), and how widespread the game is enacted in a social group (46). What they share in common is using language and, if done in one's first or well-learned language, recognition of when the game is enacted in ordinary life and agreement on certain rules or norms. There is not a fixed number of games that a language holds: as people wish to do new things with words, they establish new games, and when a group no longer wishes to do something (e.g., the language-game of negotiating a dowry in an arranged marriage), they simply stop playing that language-game (46)–although, of course, one might enact the language-game of dowry negotiation in the game of acting or telling a story. Just as children continually invent new games and grow out of old ones, so social groups invent and abandon language-games (with their own rules) as needed.

It is in language-games, these reasonably specific actions, that words get their meaning. A word means something when it is used. Moi opposes this to a theory of language that either posits a conceptual ground for the meaning of a word (in a thing, in a signified) or, believing that this ground is unstable or nonexistent, replaces the concept of a ground with the concept of groundlessness, or "iterability" (*Revolution* 71). These generalizable concepts, whether affirmed or denied, are quite beside the point for Wittgenstein, because his conception of meaning is never

generalized beyond how people are using words, meaning that there is no concept or ground to be deconstructed in the first place–only words being used by people to do things. Any attempt to set up words as having these sorts of generalizable meanings is, for Wittgenstein, to put language "on holiday," meaning that doing this is to stand in the way of words working in the world, thus creating confusion (qtd. in Moi, *Revolution* 48). For instance, to ask with the ontologists "what does it mean to *be*? What is being?" while interesting to consider, will not help much to understand what a parent means by telling their child "Be good," or what Hamlet means by "to be or not to be?" or what Lil Wayne means by saying "we be steady mobbin." The question, by trying to make a concept out of the word "being," prevents philosophers from attending to how "being" and "be" are already meaning, right under their noses, out on the street and in homes everywhere, being used to do a wide variety of things by ordinary people.

Language-games participate in what Wittgenstein calls "forms of life." This term, Moi notes, is often conflated with "social conventions," or the recognition that human behavior and practice is highly socially conditioned (*Revolution* 54). The "forms of life" of Wittgenstein does not negate this social constructivism; however, the vast number of practices that Wittgenstein has in mind includes the most ordinary, mundane practices that are not often marked as epistemologically load-bearing practices and therefore are not often brought into question in critique. Because of this, Moi argues, the practices are much more ingrained and difficult to change than many theorists seem to imply (55). An example Wittgenstein gives is the practice pointing at something: he asks readers to imagine that, in response to a person pointing, their interlocutor looks from the pointed finger to the wrist, instead of from the finger to the intended object (qtd. in Moi, *Revolution* 57). One could imagine such a case (therefore demonstrating the contingency of the practice of pointing), but those raised with Wittgenstein's (and America's)

notion of pointing will not easily imagine or practice it for themselves (57). The practice is contingent in that it could be different, but it is ingrained in such a way that it becomes, in a sense, naturalized to members of the social group (56).

Furthermore, a "form of life" consists of both this social conditioning and a person's natural and biological conditions and limitations (*Revolution* 56). While a person is obviously profoundly cultural, that same person also has a body and an ecology that exists and makes possible any form of life at all. For example, pointing, as we have seen, is socially conditioned; however, it is based to an extent on the natural condition of the arm, hand, and finger. Our social practice of pointing necessitates the anatomical body as a condition for the existence of the practice.[1] These forms of life, Moi says, "range from the purely biological to the completely cultural," varying in how natural and cultural they are, but containing both in an inextricable combination (56). The mutability of changing the form of life also ranges; natural conditions (such as climate changes or agricultural developments) and cultural conditions (colonization, Internet expansion) can change, reshaping the natural and cultural conditions of the forms of life, thereby changing the practices of the social group.

Wittgenstein and Cavell speak of a group's "agreement" on forms of life. Wittgenstein says, "it is in their *language* that human beings agree" (qtd. in Moi, *Revolution* 60). This has drawn the ire of many theorists who hear a return to normativity and prescriptivism. However, the emphasis here is on what a person is doing before any sort of judgment or valuation can happen: interlocutors must agree on what a speaker is doing before judgments about the statement can be made. If two people do not share an agreement on what is being done, there can be no possibility for interpretability, in Smith and Nelson's sense of the "meaning behind word/utterance," or the way one is using the word (334). For example, if someone were to make

a racist joke, I might respond with "I don't find that funny." However, in so saying, I agree that they are enacting the practice of telling a joke. If I grew up with no form of life of telling jokes, their statement would be uninterpretable to me, and I would struggle to make a proper judgment and response. Before evaluations can be made, there must be agreement on what is being done, thus OLP's insistence on agreement on shared language-games and forms of life.

Language-games play a significant role in the forms of life of a particular group. Language-games, of course, are cultural, but depend on the natural conditions of voice (or hands, for speakers of sign languages). Language also takes part with other practices in a group's forms of life. For example, if in the language-game of giving orders I were to say, "Go there!" and point, the form of life of pointing becomes part of the form of life of giving orders. Language-games, then, participate in forms of life–some are almost exclusively language-games, while some contain only non-linguistic forms. Language, like all other practices, combine natural and cultural factors into shared, agreed-upon forms that give clarity to a group's communal life.

To learn what a word means, then, is not primarily to know a definition but to learn what someone is doing whenever they employ the word. Moi argues that "to learn a language is not to learn a set of names, but to be trained in–to learn to recognize and participate in–a vast number of human practices" (*Revolution* 44). While a child will learn to attach the signifier "mama" to their mother and "ball" to a bouncy rubber sphere, they will much more pointedly learn "mama!" as a call for help and "ball!" as a request (or a demand). The child is invited into human activity, doing actions required for survival and participation in social life that they will continue to use to survive and participate into adulthood. This goes even for so-called extraordinary language, that language that is reserved for the usually highly educated elite–medical jargon, philosophical jargon, poetry. These are not outside of ordinary language-games but are themselves specific

language-games. Avid poetry readers, including poetry scholars, have been initiated into the game and have picked up on the rules. Much like the child being initiated into the practices that use "mama!" and "ball!" new readers can always be initiated, picking up the practices and "learning to see" as those who have seen for a long time (Moi, *Revolution* 33).

In order to get a grip on the meaning of a word, either when learning a language or when encountering misunderstanding or confusion, one looks closely at the way the word is used in its ordinary use. This close look is what Wittgenstein calls a "grammatical investigation." "Grammar" is the term for the rules of a language-game. When one does, in the course of playing their various language-games in their life, run into confusion, one undertakes a grammatical investigation to analyze the source of that confusion, the "criteria for using the word," in order to come to clarity (Moi, *Revolution* 53). This is what World Englishes scholars Smith and Nelson term "interpretability," the third level of "knowing" a word: beyond "intelligibility," which is "word/utterance recognition," and "comprehensibility," or "word/utterance meaning," interpretability is the "meaning behind word/utterance," or the way one is using the word (334). A word might be recognized and known, but until one knows what a speaker is doing with the word, what criteria they are using, the meaning of an utterance will be lost, as in Moi's move from "feed the cat," to "feed the meter," to the uninterpretable "feed the table"—which, she supposes, might be interpretable to a community where such an idiom transacts (*Revolution* 52). There is no single method for any and all grammatical investigations; the only direction Moi gives is to give "attentive investigation [to] the ordinary and the everyday…giv[ing] up the quest for ultimate explanations and grand theories" (Moi, *Revolution* 63). Or, as Felski implores in her use of Neophenomenology, we are to go "back to the things themselves" (*Uses* 17). The way that one comes to know what a word means is to give careful

account of examples of the word used in everyday language, of who says the word to whom, and "what work a word does in a sentence [and] the work the sentence does in the specific circumstances in which it is uttered" (Moi, *Revolution* 34). In this investigation, one "looks at what we should say when," getting a clear idea on "our criteria for using words in particular ways" (51-52).

This cuts against the standard theoretical strategy of coming to know the meaning of a word or utterance, which isolates the word/concept and generalizes it, seeking to apprehend a once-and-for-all meaning or, demonstrating its once-and-for-all undecidability. This way of thinking of language is what Wittgenstein calls the "craving for generality," or "the contemptuous attitude towards the particular case," which seeks to put knowledge into clearly defined conceptual categories (qtd. in Moi, *Revolution* 95). For example, as I have demonstrated above, the Hermeneutics of Suspicion has generally theorized language to have a surface and a depth and, because of this, an impetus to deceive. However, for Ordinary Language Philosophers, language is "infinite, open-ended, and fundamentally untheorizable," meaning that its uses are always too much in flux and too flexible to be put under any sort of theory; therefore, no one can put a word or an utterance (or language as such) into a generalizable, conceptual "meaning" (Moi, *Revolution* 95). This generality can, at best, make a word comprehensible (if it does not make it entirely incomprehensible, which sometimes happens), but gives no help to interpretability in specific circumstances. Instead, theorists look at examples of a word's use to get an idea of its meaning(s). Moi pushes against the theory of language's inherent deceptiveness, not to say that meaning is always self-evident or commonsensical but to pull away from the generalization and push towards concrete examples: language is not deceitful *per se,* but speakers can be deceitful ("'Nothing is Hidden'" 36). One might lie, or one might just as

well tell the truth. Sometimes deception is not even a useful concept to consider, like in the language-game of ordering food off of a restaurant menu. The work of an Ordinary Language Philosopher or an OLP-influenced literary critic, then, is not to create a theory of language, or oppressive language, or epistemology, but to examine examples of word-use, or examples of language used to oppress women or People of Color or disabled people, or under what circumstances a person might use the word "know" or express a certain type of knowledge. One learns by close attention to ordinary language, picking up on what the person is doing and what grammar guides the action done.

OLP and Literary Criticism

This picture of language, rejecting old pictures that emphasize concepts, representation, and naming, translates into an equally differing picture of reading and literary criticism. It unwrites several assumptions about language that undergird suspicious hermeneutics and much literary criticism, namely, the "literariness" of literary language (as opposed to ordinary language), the status of a text as an object, the picture of the reader as a knowing applier of a method to the text, and the picture of politics primarily centered on theories and concepts.

For Ordinary Language Philosophers, literature, in all its various genres, is a selection of several language-games among many. Often, texts are treated as something other than everyday language, and much time and effort has been spent on defining "literature," naming and describing what that special category consists of–an endeavor that, like other cravings for generality, is never quite settled. This Felski calls "theological" reading, which treats literature as set apart from and unconcerned with the everyday lives of readers, having value wholly outside of real-world use or consequence (*Uses* 4-5). Theological readings "are propelled by a deep-

seated discomfort with everyday language and thought," believing that literature is a special category of language outside of the ordinary (*Uses* 13). In contrast to this, instead of othering literature, OLP pictures literature as specific language-games among other language-games. The writing and reading of poetry, for example, is figured as a game, where writer and reader recognize themselves to be playing the game of poetry, with its own rules (which vary in degree of flexibility). Therefore, a reader will not be perplexed when they get fragmentary descriptions or clever double entendres at a poetry reading, because they know these are allowed in the game. If they got these fragmentary descriptions or double entendres from the mechanic working on their car, they might become suspicious that they are being scammed, because the rules for negotiating labor and economic exchanges value clarity more than the rules for poetry. Further, as Bakhtin has noted, novelistic discourse, while its own specific discourse, is primarily noteworthy as a genre in its creative arrangement of other discourses, of which he names letter-writing, diary-writing, speeches, and individual characters' speech and interaction (262). These discourses are ordinary, everyday language-games, which the author puts to use in the game of writing and reading novels, where readers come expecting to play the game and receive many different language-games within the story.

While other language-games, such as those in the marketplace or a social group, might happen more often than poetry or novel reading, all are examples of language-games, precluding the general distinction between literary and ordinary language. And, as Felski notes, reflective reading "is powered by, and indebted to, many of the same motives and structures that shape everyday thinking," and pretending otherwise, as many who read literature critically are inclined to do, misses the variety of ways literature does things in the ordinary, everyday world (*Uses* 13). In the same way that even literary language is a type of ordinary language, readers have

"ordinary motives for reading" (14). Writers and readers of whatever level of sophistication enter the language-games of literature as ordinary, everyday language users.

Second, OLP pictures literary texts primarily as actions or expressions, not as objects. Words and sentences, in Wittgenstein's view, are actions, and, as Moi notes, a literary text is a "particularly complex action or intervention," i.e., an action that enters into a network of already-happening action (Moi, "'Nothing is Hidden'" 36). Picturing the literary work as an action connects it to its actor: texts "reveal the speaker…[and] have consequences…spreading far beyond the original moment of utterance (Moi, *Revolution* 196). This somewhat lifts the ban on investigating intention: as Moi notes, "the 'death of the author' doesn't apply to actions, for actions aren't divorced from their doers in the same way as objects from their makers" ("'Nothing is Hidden'" 36). The author's action of creating their work can be examined and questioned as a complex process of decisions, strategies, inclusions, and commissions that have consequences (intended and unintended by the author) upon the communicative act to readers. I will elaborate on a different way of considering intention below, in my discussion of reading as acknowledgement.

As Moi notes, texts are both object and action (*Revolution* 196). This connects with Huehls' and Felski's use of Bruno Latour's actor-network theory in literary criticism. Latour's "networks" are made up of subject-object hybrid "actants"—"anything human or nonhuman that has an effect on anything else" that "forge[s] networks and alliances that produce significance and value" (Huehls 20). These networks are always in flux, connecting and disconnecting from each other for new significance (21). Texts are actants, having effects on others in the world when people buy and read them. Meaning, then, comes from acts of "coproduction between actors that [bring] new things to light rather than an endless rumination on a text's hidden

meanings or representational failures" (Felski, *Limits* 174). Ricœur helps explain how the two aspects of the text, object and action, work together. Even though much of his work is beholden to a gratuitous surface/depth picture of language and a "death of the author" picture of literature, he is right to recognize that "the sense of the text is the direction which it opens up for thought," which makes interpretation "an act of the text" ("What is a Text?" 150). The act of reading enacts the text, making it mean as it "finds at last an environment and an audience, a world and an intersubjective dimension" (146). In other words, a text sits as an inert object until the act of reading gives the text someone to act upon. As Felski notes, "history is not a box," and texts can move beyond periods and become attached to new eras, "mak[ing] a difference on those people they are attached to (*Limits* 154). In reading, "we encounter fresh ways of organizing perception" as we read texts that we become attached to (*Limits* 174). Literature, for OLP, primarily acts, expresses, and intervenes, rather than represents.

The third aspect of literary criticism that OLP undermines has more to do with specifically critical reading that usually happens in theoretical, professional spaces: that literary critics do not primarily approach the text with a method, but with a "spirit" of reading. Moi questions the reality of the reading method, questioning if what we usually term "method"—Marxist, feminist, disability, historicist readings employed in criticism–are actually methods at all. She notes the difficulty in explaining exactly what our methods are to other disciplines such as the sciences, beyond simply the method of close reading. Close reading, by her account, is the method, whether one is a rigidly traditional formalist or a determined deconstructionist ("'Nothing is Hidden'" 34). Instead, what are termed methods usually are our political investments, guiding our attention and spirits of reading. Referencing Cora Diamond's work, Moi defines "spirit," as an "attitude" towards the text, similar to Felski's "affect" and Sedgwick's

"position" (*Revolution* 63). This, and not a "method," is the primary driver of literary criticism: the spirit that one embodies when reading, leading to asking certain questions, whether those are questions about women, race, or class conflict, and accepting certain evidence and answers, such as historical conditions or other extratextual sources.

The spirit that OLP embodies is a "realistic" spirit that emphasizes attention to and acknowledgement of the action of the text, picturing reading as an adventure. Moi describes the realistic spirit as "ordinary…[where] attention–the willingness to look and see–is the very hallmark…encourag[ing] us to root around in the dusty rags of our lives [and] pay attention to particulars" (*Revolution* 63). The realistic reader gives attention to ordinary language and action, not overlooking it for the generalizable theories. Attention, the hallmark of the realistic spirit, is defined as a "just and loving gaze," that is "open and waiting in relation to reality" (Moi, *Revolution* 228). This echoes Felski's use of neophenomenology, which takes up "an undogmatic openness to a spectrum of literary responses" (*Uses* 18). This kind of attentive openness, Sedgwick notes in her promotion of the reparative position of reading, opens readers up to surprise, which paranoid reading usually tries to preclude; yet this surprise is not always a negative, oppressing power–it can be "additive and accretive" (149). In Best and Marcus' estimation, this attentiveness to the text–not to find some hidden depth, but to the text itself–is "itself a kind of freedom" (16). In attention to particulars, readers can encounter new problems and questions and generate profound readings of texts outside of the purview of dominant literary theories.

Suspicious readers, of course, give close attention to the texts they read, poring over the details of the texts and ruminating, even obsessing over their hidden meanings and their representations of particular social formations and identities. They give such close attention that

Sedgwick sees in paranoid reading a certain form of love (131). Yet critical theory, especially suspicious hermeneutics, typically attend to the text with what Sedgwick calls an "anticipatory" affect: beginning and ending with the expectation of finding oppression and deception in the text, and then attending to the text with "future oriented vigilance" to find these and avoid "bad surprises" (130). This future-oriented vigilance is done, somewhat paradoxically, by what Abraham Heschel terms "explaining" the text, which he defines as "seeing the present in the past tense," or "see[ing] what we already know" in the text (xii). This way of reading begins with past intellectual breakthroughs (be it a theory of oppression or deconstruction of a troublesome concept) and makes the past insight that which is seen in the present act of reading or makes the act of reading an exercise in seeing these past insights (xii). Sedgwick seems to suggest that paranoid readers mitigate the risk of present and future ideological interpellation or violence by resting on and returning to the trusty theories that delivered critics from past forms of delusion and oppression–breakthroughs by Marx, Foucault, Crenshaw, et al. The theories one employs help one avoid the "bad surprises" of deception or violence in the text, so attentive readings are often done on behalf of a generalized theory–either validating, correcting, or formulating a theory, whether it is about literature or about political concerns. Yet Heschel (and, I think, Sedgwick) note that this "repetitiveness" of the past blocks what he terms "insight," or "think[ing] in the present" (xii). This insight begins in "feeling painfully the lack of knowing" that about which readers concern themselves as they read and achieving the "breakthrough" of "seeing the phenomenon [i.e., the act of the text] from within" the text (xi-xii). For postcritical theorists, and OLP readers particularly, the attention is to the text and through the text. Broader theories and historical studies help aid in gaining insight from the text rather than explaining the text. Readers in the realistic spirit of OLP, setting aside generalized theories as the starting point

and the goal, attend to the text's own action and consequences–a practice in OLP called "acknowledgement."

Central to attentive reading is the practice of acknowledgement. Acknowledgement is "a response to the expressions of another…an effort to understand these expressions" (Moi, *Revolution* 216). Many theorists, captive to a picture of knowledge that operates on a certainty/skepticism binary, dismiss acknowledgment as impossible, given the uncertainty or deceptiveness of authorial intention. However, for Ordinary Language Philosophers, acknowledgement is a different picture of knowledge: it is a matter of responding to what we do know from our perceptions of another's actions, including their utterances–for instance, if we see someone choking, we respond with help, not critical doubt over if they are actually in danger or merely acting (206-07). The opposite of acknowledgement is not certainty or ignorance but "the absence of action, the absence of response, or a noncomprehending, inept, callous response" (208). Acknowledging a text moves critics from reading a text according to their own theoretical preoccupations to "try[ing] to discover the work's own concepts…understand[ing] our own position in relation to the work's concerns" (216-17). Readers acknowledge the claim that another's expression, even literary expression, has upon them, while also responding in an individual, personal manner, according to the reader's own spatial and temporal specifics and their own sociopolitical interests (208-09). A reader brings their own feelings and concerns to a text but also can be impacted by what the text itself does to them (Felski, *Limits* 178). Acknowledgement, then, is to engage in a dynamic relationship with a text, with each acting upon and responding to the other in a complex dance, instead of an active critic acting upon an inert object of a text.

In addition to the practice of acknowledgement, the realistic spirit cultivated by OLP pictures reading as an adventure led by the author and undertaken collaboratively with the reader. Reading in the spirit of adventure is to acknowledge the concerns of the author, going with them and letting them unfold their concerns, moving in the text from confusion to illumination (Moi, "Adventure of Reading" 131-32). Moi cites Beauvoir's understanding of reading from "Literature and Metaphysics" as a paradigmatic case of such a spirit: "A good novel…is an invitation to the reader to share the author's sense of exploration and discovery, to join her on an 'authentic adventure of the mind'" (qtd. in Moi, "Adventure of Reading" 133). This happens only when readers "let [a work] teach us how to read it" (132). This differs from the standard theoretical reading of texts, that starts with knowingness and goes to the text to demonstrate, refute, or formulate the theory; instead, reading in the spirit of OLP is best considered theoryless reading: "we begin…not with a method, but with our own sense of confusion…a reading is an attempt to get clear on something" (Moi, "'Nothing is Hidden'" 38). We begin lost, not sure what a text is trying to do or why it unfolds as it does, patiently attending to the details to achieve some sense of clarity as to what the text does.

For Moi, literary criticism's driving question ought to be "Why this?": a reader encounters a detail or a narrative that confuses or bewilders them, leading to questions about "motivations, reasons, intentions…repercussions, ramifications, consequences…issues of responsibility, ethics, and politics arising in and through the action" ("'Nothing is Hidden'" 36-37). Asking "why this?" is "to ask what *work* this feature does in the text" (*Revolution* 203). This question can be about any of the vast number of aspects in a text, depending on what captivates the readers or what the text leads them towards (Moi, "'Nothing is Hidden'" 46). As the reader gains clarity on the text, they also gain clarity on their own self: as Ricœur notes, "the

interpretation of a text ends up in the self-interpretation of a subject who henceforth understands himself better" ("What is a Text?" 145). A reader can ask, "why this?" in many different spirits, including suspiciously–if the situation warrants it, as it often does (Moi, "'Nothing is Hidden'" 37). Additionally, readers might read adventurously and still be duped or deluded, but this is not always the case (Felski, "Postcritical Reading" 5). As Best and Marcus note, "sometimes our subjectivity will help us see a text more clearly, and sometimes it will not" (18). The question may lead to different conclusions for different readers in different places and eras, but the central movement from confusion to clarity marks the act of reading for OLP.

In the same way that reading is pictured as the attention to and acknowledgment of examples rather than conceptualizing general theories, cultural critique and activism becomes marked by the analysis of examples of action, including language use. Critical theory, Moi notes, is susceptible to the craving for generality in the analysis of oppression. She looks at feminism specifically, noting the ways that, for instance, the contention over the definition of the word "woman," either trying to determine a once-and-for-all inclusive definition or dismissing the term as inherently exclusive, pulls activists away from the world where the word is used for identification and oppression (*Revolution* 90). Instead, she bids theorists to invest in the "power of the particular case," starting from ordinary, everyday experiences of language-use and oppression (90-92). In a way similar to literary criticism, a cultural theorist can begin with an experience that perplexes them–maybe because they are excluded from a place, or are attacked, physically or rhetorically, or have a felt sense of confinement, boredom, or dread–and analyze the details of the case to come to a clear view of the causes and effects of the experience (110). This is not to say that this analysis is infallible: one might overlook important details while trying to clarify and describe their experience. This is where turning to larger, harder-to-see forces (like

economic modes of production, or cultural hegemonies, or institutional pedagogy) for help in explaining becomes helpful (91). Further, one's conclusions about their experience might not quite capture what happens in another's case. When this happens, these two thinkers can compare and contrast their cases, looking for similarities and differences without the pressure to subsume both to one theory (97).

Moi recognizes that this perplexity with experience already drives many of the foundational texts of feminism. In her analysis of intersectionality, she shows that Kimberlé Crenshaw begins with the troubling experiences of particular legal cases where Black women received rulings that denied them redress for either racism or sexism. Crenshaw notes that Black women often suffer from two discriminations simultaneously in a way that might be compared to standing in the middle of a street intersection (*Revolution* 103). This, for Moi, is good work in attending to examples. The craving for generality happens when "intersectionality" is set up as a concept, abstracting it from concrete experiences and using it to subsume all examples under one theory (103). Instead, Crenshaw's work is best understood as the beginning of a clear view on the experiences of Black women in the legal field. This description shares some (but likely not all) features with, say, Black women's experiences when receiving healthcare or playing sports, which can help someone giving attention to these reach a clearer picture of the oppression happening there. Activists must begin with concrete examples, recourse to other examples and larger forces when needed, and then end with a description of the concrete case, which in turn can aid others' analyses and join the chorus of voices calling for systemic change.

Moi's use of OLP in literary studies and critical theory offers a new picture of language, reading, and political critique. Wendell Berry, in his preface to *Jayber Crow,* bid readers to generate new pictures and practices of reading beyond suspicion. Berry's thought, expressed in

six decades of wide-ranging essays, resonates greatly with Wittgenstein's, Cavell's, and Moi's attention to particular, ordinary language use and attentive acknowledgement of the adventure of reading. Additionally, Berry contributes to this tradition by concretizing language use and reading to particular, natural-social-agricultural[2] places, giving attention to *where* language is used to further understand *how* language is used. In the following section, I will describe Berry's emphasis on particular cases and particular places (as opposed to generalities and abstractions), before synthesizing his thought with OLP into a coherent picture of ordinary, placed, attentive reading that, I argue, is a generative, productive practice of critical and political reading that responds to the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Wendell Berry: Advocate for the Ordinary

In an interview with *Time,* Wendell Berry cites his wife Tanya's claim that his "knack for repeating [him]self" is his "principal asset" (Begley). While, as Berry scholars have demonstrated, these concerns are primarily ecological, agrarian, and religious in nature, Berry's nearly sixty years of nonfiction writing has covered a vast array of topics, from racism and the legacy of slavery (*The Hidden Wound*)*,* to the wars in Vietnam, Kuwait, and Afghanistan ("A Statement Against the War in Vietnam," "Peaceableness Towards Enemies," and "A Citizen's Response," respectively), to feminism ("Feminism, the Body, and the Machine"), among other occasional topics. The unifying self-repetition across all these topics and interests is Berry's relentless prioritization of the ordinary, the everyday, and the concrete and his polemicization against generalization and abstraction, the "craving for generality" that Moi resists in critical theory.

Berry devotes much of his analysis of environmental degradation to the ways that powerful forces and those that oppose them use language. He particularly takes issue with the way that modern institutions and movements, on both political sides, rely on both generalized and specialized language in their work, doing, in Berry's estimation, more harm than good. For Berry, these abuses of language are intertwined with the displacement of people from agricultural and rural communities lived in by families from one generation to the next. Americans have become "nomadic," in the sense that they forsake "complex knowledge of one's place" to join the mobile workforce of the industrial economy ("Regional Motive" 68). While he recognizes the value of nomadism in climates with little soil fertility, much of the United States has or had enough fertile land to settle in place and remain as farmers, making this trend unnecessary in the US ("Regional Motive" 68-69). He does not advocate that everyone become farmers–as we will see, his fiction narrates the lives of rural folks from a variety of professions–or that everyone necessarily leaves cities for rural communities. Instead, he argues for mode of life responsible to and attentive to the natural-social-agricultural community in which one lives, a mode of life of which small-scale farmers practicing regenerative agriculture form a paradigm (68-69). This mode of life, however, has been displaced by what he specifies elsewhere as the "industrial economy" which homogenizes particular places: "The evil of the industrial economy (capitalist or communist) is the abstractness inherent in its procedures–its inability to distinguish one place or person or creature from another" ("Out of Your Car" 23). This abstraction, which decenters an economy and mode of life of responsible agriculture, enables the "urban nomadism" that in turn further abstracts and homogenizes particular places ("Regional Motive" 69).

This abstracting nomadism, while leading to the abuse of land, also (or first) leads to the abuse of language and, therefore, thought and culture. This abstracted way of picturing and

talking about the world Berry calls "global thinking" and "national thinking," which he argues is an unrealistic and irresponsible way to think about the world: "those who have 'thought globally'...have done so by means of simplifications too extreme and oppressive to merit the name of thought.…Global thinking can only be statistical" ("Out of Your Car" 19-20). He calls such global thinkers "dangerous," identifying this mode of thinking with imperialists and corporationists, where the only thing one can do with this thinking is "be destructive on a very large scale" (19). He compares this abstract thinking to space satellite photographs of the earth, arguing that, like looking for one's neighborhood in one of these pictures, it is impossible for someone to recognize their neighborhood or township from such a distant point of view (20). As ecocritical scholar Lenka Filipova notes, when this abstraction from place becomes the standard, "individual places are stripped of their particularity other than their location on a map (51). This facilitates the industrialism-enabled nomadism that, with no long-term relationship to the land, facilitates land abuse and devaluation of placed communities (Berry, "Regional Motive" 68-69).

While the language of abstraction is used by destructive economists and politicians, Berry recognizes the danger of progressive justice movements fighting this abstraction with their own abstractions. These movements, when they fight in the arena of abstractions, cut themselves off from the real-world, ordinary practices that are necessary for progress. Referencing the Civil Rights movement and the environmentalist movement, Berry warns against movements abstracting their language until it "mean[s] anything that anybody wants it to mean," until the movement "lose[s] its language either to its own confusion about meaning and practice or to preemption by its enemies ("In Distrust of Movements" 284). Similarly, Berry argues that the discourse around sex that has been abstracted from local community to a "public language of sexuality" has become "inadequate to deal with the real issues and problems of

sexuality…degenerat[ing] into a stupefying and useless contest between so-called liberation and so-called morality" ("Sex, Economy, Freedom, and Community" 122). In the same essay, he indicts education in this useless abstraction, noting that it "has become increasingly useless as it has become increasingly public," failing to recognize that "real education is determined by community needs, not by public [i.e., generalized] tests" (123).

He attributes this uselessness in part to the "specialized" language of the university that transacts in abstract concepts and disciplinary divisions: this language, far from shaping the world or changing it, is a "cheat…hiding place…[and] an ambush" by failing to provide concrete language for community needs ("Loss of the University" 79). Even the Southern Agrarians, with whose resistance to industrialism Berry is often identified, practiced a regionalism while living far from their own region, practicing an "agrarianism without agriculture" that "reduced their effort to the level of an academic exercise" that was "doomed to remain theoretical" ("Regional Motive" 66-67). With such generalized, abstract discourse, any hope at democracy is in danger, as democratic pluralism becomes little more than an amalgamation of people displaced from local communities and cultures ("Sex, Economy, Freedom, and Community" 169). And, with this displacement, the destructive, imperialist, corporationist global thinkers can continue displacing and degrading local communities and ecologies through the tool of abstract language.

Berry's answer to the destructive tendencies of abstraction, similar to Moi's and Felski's, is to give full attention to ordinary, everyday lives and concrete language use. Berry advocates for what Filipova calls an "ethic of proximity" or, in his own words, the practice of "think[ing] little" (Filipova 39; Berry, "Think Little" 80). Instead of abstract, large-scale, generalizing movements, identities and political solutions are produced locally, "play[ing] out 'on the ground'" (Major 125). While he recognizes that human thought necessarily exists between the

abstract and the concrete, he cautions against abstraction and equates usefulness and efficacy with the movement away from the general towards the particular (Berry, "Word and Flesh" 197).

This turn towards the concrete requires "fidelity," defined by Filipova as a "commitment to a small local region" (38). To demonstrate the practice of fidelity, Berry turns to agriculture researcher and activist Wes Jackson's concept of the "eyes-to-acres ratio," which gauges the "competent watchfulness, aware of the nature and the history of the place, constantly present, always alert for signs of harm and signs of health" that a place has and needs (Berry, "Farming Without Farmers"). While each place varies in this ratio, Berry makes clear that in "global" or "national" thinking, there are not enough eyes per acre to understand what is really happening or to do anything about it. "The problems," for Berry, "if we describe them accurately, are all private and small. Or they are so initially," becoming global or national problems only as enough people give up close attention to the health of their place, becoming complicit in the problems ("Word and Flesh" 198). Therefore, the task to undo these problems is to undo them locally, as one assumes responsibility for and cares for the part of the world for which they can care for in a direct, connected relationship with few enough acres for their eyes to attend to. Berry focuses his reform efforts on "the responsible individual," "suggest[ing] that social progress will come, if at all, when people become more aware of their relationships and then labor to improve them" (Freyfogle 182). Indeed, instead of beginning with abstract global solutions, Berry argues that "the right local questions and answers will be the right global ones," and that, in considering involvement with institutions, goods, or movements, one should ask, "what will this do to our community? ("Out of Your Car" 20).

This line of thinking has led to two main lines of criticism: first, Freyfogle argues that the focus on "the responsible individual" in solving social and ecological crises risks missing the

workings of larger forces, institutions, and ideologies (184). This picture of the entrepreneurial individual, wedded to Jacksonian democratic ideals, is too dated to confront the workings of global capitalism (190). Berry, however, hardly posits the solipsistic picture of the individual that Freyfogle suggests. Berry prioritizes the role of community in mediating the relationship between the public and the private spheres. Community, for Berry, is "the commonwealth of common interests, commonly understood, of people living together in a place and wishing to continue to do so" and "a locally understood interdependence of local people, local culture, local economy, and local nature" ("Sex, Economy, Freedom, and Community" 120). Berry argues that the local community "has to intervene between public and private" before either sphere disintegrates sexuality into abstract public discourse or anti-community solipsism (118-19). The public and the private spheres destroy each other without communal mediation and intervention (119). Therefore, any understanding of a person cannot be abstracted to a public generality (like, say, in Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities") or reduced to the hyper-individualized Cartesian subject; the person is always a community-bound individual, shaping and shaped by their local community of nature, culture, and agriculture.

Along these lines, Filipova argues that Berry's agrarian ethic, which focuses on the local, becomes provincial and even tribalistic: his promotion of the local over the global "limit[s] the ecocritical discourse and environmental awareness to that of the domesticated," overlooking interlocal activism and large-scale ecological degradation (56). Although Berry might not be strictly individualistic, the refusal of global or national thinking is an apparent isolationism that allows injustice to exist *over there* as long as it does not exist *here*. However, Berry's work shows both an awareness of the larger network of humanity and the translocal efforts to understand and repair the world. While Berry emphasizes the priority of solving problems

locally, he also argues that solving problems locally in every locale is the path to adequately solving global and national problems ("Word and Flesh" 200). For instance, when arguing for such domestic-level change, he argues that it is not merely oil and coal producers but consumers and their "demand that energy be cheap and plentiful" that is driving environmental destruction (198). Here he does not hold particular consumers or communities at fault but nearly all communities in "'developed' countries"—consumers here becomes a large-scale demographic rather than discrete individuals (198). Therefore, for him, it is not one community's job to fix these issues; instead, he advocates for a widespread ideological turn towards communal and domestic health. This is underscored by the way he employs both micro- and macroscopic language in describing solutions for environmental revitalization: "The question here [is]…how to care for *each* of the planet's *millions* of human and natural neighborhoods, *each* of its *millions* of *small* pieces and parcels of land (200, emphasis added). In his argument as in his syntax, big and small changes are inseparable. He recognizes that our environmental crisis is a massive problem that will, in the end, require massive efforts to fix. However, he attempts to put large-scale solutions and small-scale work back in their proper relation. Each community does its own modest work in its own place, and as more places do this the large-scale problems are more and more solved. The large-scale solution is a matter of quantity—how many places are doing good reparative work in their own limited sphere?—rather than the quality of one big solution. If each place joins in the work of its own place, he argues, the work is done in all places, as global problem-solving seeks to do.

Further, being locally placed for Berry does not negate translocal solidarity and collaboration. If a community concretely solves problems of injustice and destruction, it might become an example which can inform other communities' attempts at solving similar problems.

While there is no general solution to these problems that can be followed in a top-down program, Berry encourages the study of literature (hence his advocacy for de-specialized liberal arts and literacy education ["In Defense of Literacy"; "The Loss of the University") and of practical examples from other places both to judge one's own attempts and to consider new possibilities for one's own place, to use as it fits the community's needs. Indeed, Berry rejects a community that refuses to learn from other places and times: while he critiques the Southern Agrarian regionalism for being displaced from their region, he also critiques a regionalism that would refuse to incorporate knowledge from the wider world, instead praising such thinkers as Thoreau for bringing knowledge and thought from other places to bear on his own, namely in his embrace of Eastern philosophy ("Regional Motive" 67). Part of the problem in the degradation of communities and ecologies is that there are very few living examples of health left to follow, and there are not many being cultivated. Thus, instead of connecting imaginatively to examples that can be enacted in new ways in new places, "we are left with theory and the bureaucracy and meddling that comes with theory" ("Word and Flesh" 199). Instead, Berry advocates for a translocal relationship of "imagination," where what plays out locally becomes connected to others through empathic acknowledgement and relationship (Major 120). As one is attentive to the needs of their own place and attentive to holistic questions of "judgment" and "criticism" that incorporate the interconnected knowledges of ecology, ethics, literature, and more, one might then participate in larger translocal communities and discourses (Berry, "The Loss of the University" 80-81). This for Berry is a healthy pluralism: instead of an amalgam of displaced people, a discourse between placed, healthy, locally active communities that act in mutual benefit and collaboration for shared aims of local health and justice ("Sex, Economy, Freedom,

and Community" 169). Action, however, always starts and ends locally, within the bounds of a place with the right ratio of eyes to acres.

This preference for the ordinary shapes Berry's understanding of literature as placed within the ordinary workings of the community. In his essay "Writer and Region," Berry rejects a literary regionalism that is beholden to "sentimentalization of or condescension to or apology for a province," arising either from the impulse to leave one's community or from the reflections of one who has left for "the Territory"–either geographically, in colonization or urbanization, or ideologically, as one leaves behind the place and takes on the viewpoints of a new place (89). Often this looks like writing literature primarily about individuals misunderstood or outcast by the community rather than the community and the persons within it (95). He looks closely at Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* as an ambivalent example of both a healthy relationship to one's region and a typical impulse to reject settlement into place. Twain, Berry argues, taught American writers that "*every* writer is a regional writer," arising from and responding to the concerns of a particular place, even if that place is decidedly cosmopolitan (89). For most of *Huckleberry Finn,* Twain, in Berry's reading, faithfully narrates and presents his place without sentimentality, self-consciousness, or disdain (83-84). However, Twain, like most American writers (and citizens), comes to relinquish responsibility to his place, closing down imaginative possibilities of placedness and attention to the ordinary (89). This happens in *Huckleberry Finn* in the last chapters when Huck plans to escape the confines of civilization and head towards the putatively uncivilized territory. Berry reads this as the refusal to see the array of possibilities between living with the oppression and injustice in one's community and abandoning one's community altogether–possibilities such as remaining and changing these structures from within (85). In contrast to this, Berry advocates a literature that participates in its place, working in it

and loving it, even while (contra sentimentalism) acknowledging the place's evils and griefs (94). This writing is not concerned with its place's being a widely recognized "center of culture," instead recognizing its own place as central for its own writing (84). It pays attention to its own place and responds to it, acknowledging that it fits into a larger literary and political picture but giving its attention to its own concerns first and letting it find its place in these larger pictures the transmission of texts to other places and the act of reading by otherwise placed readers, where it might intervene in these readers' pictures of the world.

Alongside this placed literature, which ends up connected to and transmitted within the larger literary world, Berry prioritizes local "literature" as valuable in self-understanding and local culture-building. Speaking of this literature by ordinary names of "songs and stories," Berry enlists these transacted myths and memories as weapons in the battle against destructive abstraction: "By telling and retelling those (i.e., local] stories, people told themselves who they were, where they were, and what they had done" ("Farming Without Farmers"). These placed stories, which Berry addresses in the midst of an essay on local land knowledge and food production, are erased by generalized stories of television and other global/national media. The abstract global/national economy cannot respect these sorts of local stories and songs that cannot be mass-produced and disseminated, and therefore it stops the transmission of these local literatures between people and generations. Therefore, the storytellers and singers must both fight for the survival of this art and enlist the art in the fight for the survival of local economies ("Farming Without Farmers")--much in the same way that Berry enlists literature in the fight against ecological destruction. This local, ordinary literature, Berry argues, has "incalculable" value that must be "acknowledged and respected," told and retold as seriously as any literature that readers insist on reading and teachers insist on teaching ("Farming Without Farmers").

Ordinary Placed Reading: Critique After OLP and Berry

Berry's ethic of proximity and his advocacy of attention to one's place mirrors the commitment to the ordinary found in Moi's use of OLP in literary studies. The primary assertion of OLP–"the meaning of a word is its use"—is concretized further by Berry's orientation to placed natural, social and agricultural relations. The meaning of a word is mediated by place, as words are put to use to do the things that a community needs and wants to do in response to its people, its communal relationships, its ecologies, and its practices of food production and consumption. This is not to say that place any more than use is a ground for the meaning of a word; rather, a place, like use, is a condition of possibility for language use and meaning making. A person speaks, writes, and posts from somewhere. Place, defined by relational proximity and longevity, made up of ecological, social (broadly inclusive), and agricultural dynamics, sets the terms for what is and can be done with language, what possibilities and limitations are placed upon language users: my landlocked Ozarks hometown, for example, does not afford the language of deep-sea fishing or whale watching, but instead particular practices of agriculture and recreation arising from rocky, forested highlands–until a local transcends for a time the Ozarks through interstate travel or internet communities. Still, however, those will be meaningless to those around them uninitiated into those language-games and forms of life and will remain to the initiated rather useless language distant from communities that use that language. Words are given meaning whenever they are given use in a place, making the meaning of the words concrete and particular. To modify the mantra of OLP: the meaning of a word is its use in the place of its use.

This is not to say, however, that a place fixes a word's meaning into an unchanging, essential definition. While one's place provides stability, it does not necessarily stagnate and

resist any change. Berry not only expects that communities will change their practices over time but also urges young people, in particular, to "escape" particular structures that prove to be unjust or stifling in order to make their communities more just and humane ("Writer and Region" 84). He acknowledges that this impulse to escape certain modes of communal living is often conflated with the impulse to escape the community altogether–a change which he does not endorse but does acknowledge is central to the American spirit (85). Beyond these changes within the community, changes can also happen to the community from the outside. In the era of mass migration, both in the form of Americans migrating for work or political preferences and of immigrants and refugees seeking safety and economic opportunity, and of mass media produced (for most people) elsewhere and disseminated to as many places as possible, local communities are faced with not only new words and concepts but also entirely new languages and language-games altogether. Further, as larger systemic forces of neoliberalism, technocapitalism, and nationalized hyper-politics (Jäger)—all of which largely play out in the a-geographical social media world–impinge upon the local, they give immediate access to the language and practices of places across the country and the world, obscuring the locality of the people using it. These new translocal discourses share some similarities with the "world of literature," as Ricœur calls it, that connected one in their own place to faraway and fantasy places; however, the quantity and the speed of the new discourse dissemination, namely twenty-four-hour news cycles, social media platforms, and digital streaming services, means that it touches all in the community with more immediacy than even mass-produced print literature can do.

All of these changes, some more constructive or destructive than others, keep communities and their language use from crystallizing into any sort of essentialism. As new developments happen in a community and the community needs to start doing something new,

new (or renewed) language will be developed to do those tasks or respond to those developments. As old practices are abandoned, whether through community disintegration or progress towards justice and liberation, people stop using particular words to do those things. Berry's question about new inventions and new innovations–"What will this do to our community?" ("Out of Your Car" 20)—does not preclude innovation at all, including innovation in language-use. Language users oriented towards their local community will likely change more slowly and more cautiously, but, when needed, they will change their language as new possibilities, limitations, and challenges arise.

With this understanding of language, OLP's grammatical investigation becomes attentive to the criteria of a word's use in a particular place, in a particular community. When there is confusion over a word's use–over what a person is doing when they use a particular word or sentence–one is bid to ask, "what are the criteria in this community for the use of these words?" For example, while one might consider the use of "woman" in legal discourses, or medical discourses, or Christian theological discourses, one might also consider how the word is used in, say, a coastal cosmopolitan city or a conservative, religious, rural town. The latter, which might place a high value on the so-called traditional nuclear family, might think in relatively exclusive terms about what and who constitutes a "woman," with recourse to sexual anatomy and traditional work and domestic roles. Meanwhile, a more progressive city might have already questioned and problematized those traditional pictures to also problematize traditional uses of "woman." This description is not to say that either is right in their use of the word; it instead gives us, as OLP seeks to give, a clear view on the source of confusion, clarifying what the proper course of action for social progress might be in a particular place.

This ordinary picture of language that analyzes and describes the use of language in a place similarly redefines the task of literary studies. Literary theory and criticism, with this picture of language, analyzes ways that literature not only represents a place but also how it acts within and upon a place. Since all language-games are placed within a local, natural-social-agricultural community, literature, as a set of particular language-games, also arises from and responds to the possibilities, challenges, and limitations of particular communities. Each literary text stands as an example not just of a subjective self but of a community of people, nature, and agriculture. These can, of course, range from examples that are more clearly based on real places (like Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County) to examples more loosely correlated with particular places, like one might find in science fiction that takes place in other galaxies. Texts might emphasize in their narrative either the individual or the community (American authors typically, in Berry's view, emphasizing the former ["Writer and Region" 95]). Texts might emphasize the natural, social, or the agricultural—the social, of course, taking the lion's share in literature due to the vast number of subjects under this heading and the vast amount of attention given by authors and scholars alike. Whatever an author emphasizes, the place of the author and their configuration of place in their writing helps determine what possibilities, challenges, and limitations the text might explore and encounter in its progression.

Each work of literature, as an example of a placed community and placed self, joins a larger world of interconnected examples. More precisely, following Ricœur, it simultaneously joins two larger worlds. The first is the "quasi-world of texts or *literature,*" where the work "is free to enter into relation with all the other texts," conversing with other literature in a way similar to "living speech" ("What is a Text?" 138). This is the world of canons, forms, and genres, where texts might be an example of a Modernist poem, or an American Gothic story, or

well-crafted heteroglossia, or a sonnet. This world of literature, in keeping with the principles of OLP, is not removed from the other types of language-games; it does, as many postmodern artists have demonstrated, use and interact with other, more ordinary forms of language. However, readers abide by the rules of literary language-games of literature that say we can and should read literary works intertextually with other works, thereby creating this quasi-world, of which each work contributes itself as an example.

Additionally, the literary work becomes an example of a placed community and a placed self. This is the work that historicism and regionalism typically do, asking questions of how literary texts represent the South, or Harlem, or Plains communities, which, in turn, become examples of American literature. Texts, then, offer illuminations of local and regional values, language-use, and institutions, giving coherent examples of how oppression, complicity, and resistance play out on the ground in concrete, particular examples. None of these, as OLP argues, can, even in concert with each other, conclusively conceptualize "American literature," or any of the various forms of oppression. Instead, they become examples of these in open-ended, interconnected networks of texts with varying degrees of shared features, without consciousness of or reference to a conceptual center. These works become examples of how Americans diversely think, act, and write, helping to form the plurality of places that Berry advocates ("Sex, Economy, Freedom, and Community" 168). In this pluralist network of placed literature, the works converse with each other through a reader's act of reading and placing texts in intertextual dialogue with one another. In this networked reading, readers, in Latour's and Felski's terms, attach and detach those works to and from themselves as they resonate with the work.

This plurality of examples, however, is an incomplete picture of literary texts. In Latourian terms, this refuses the acknowledgement of a work's status as hybrid, subject-object

actant, emphasizing only the objective aspect of the work. As an actant in the reader's network, literature also has a subjective, active aspect. This active aspect, as Ricœur notes, is "actualized" in the act of reading ("What is a Text?" 146). This picture of a literary text as action, as we have seen, is Moi's primary focus, calling this action both "expression" and "intervention" (*Revolution* 196, "'Nothing is Hidden'" 36). In this active, subjective role, a literary work, in its natural-social-agricultural place, both expresses this place to an otherwise placed (but perhaps similarly placed) reader and intervenes in that placed reader's own local state of affairs. Gadamer's "fusion of horizons," the interchange between a work's viewpoints and valuations (and prejudices) of the world and the reader's (273), is initiated by the read text: in Ricœur's analysis, interpretation is "less an act *on* the text, than an act *of* the text" ("What is a Text?" 148). This act is upon the reader who, by virtue of attentive, reflective reading, allows the text to act upon them.

Importantly, this act does not happen only to a solipsistic, isolated individual. In the same way that, for Berry, communal needs and solutions mediate public discourse on sexuality and private sexual intercourse ("Sex, Economy, Freedom, and Community" 119), the needs and norms of the local, natural-social- agricultural community of the reader mediates the public literary and political "worlds" and the private act of reading. The public, for Berry is a-geographical, translocal, and national. He relates it, fittingly enough, to the "republic," involving institutions, systems, and events "about which the public can confidently know" ("Sex, Economy, Freedom, and Community" 119, 118). Examples might include government, national economy, or political discourse. Communities, by contrast, are limited in geographic scope to those who live in a place together, a "locally understood interdependence of local people, local culture, local economy and local nature" ("Sex, Economy, Freedom, and Community 120). This

is not necessarily the same thing as an interpretive community, in Stanley Fish's sense: first, because it is much less concerned with epistemological communities than with geographical, ecological communities. Second, as with other theoretical concepts, deferring to "interpretive communities" re-enacts the "craving for generality" that risks ignoring or oversimplifying the particular examples that trouble the conceptual category. Third, and most important for my analysis, because this conception typically pictures readers and texts objectively, as passive, acted-upon entities–the writer and reader are constructed and, therefore, bound within limits. As we have seen, while this objective passivity is certainly part of the ontology of both persons and texts, both readers and texts are also in part active and able to, in the fusion of horizons, challenge and reconfigure these interpretive constructs to a greater degree than the concept of interpretive communities typically allows. The concept of the interpretive community primarily explains one direction of the act of reading: the movement from the public through the community to the reader, which misses the active and responsive movement from the private reading to the community and, ultimately, to the public.

Instead, community mediation serves primarily to concretize the ways that a text's concerns fuse with the reader's place's concerns. In a work that explores, for instance, a Victorian "angel in the house" who despises the lifestyle she is forced into, a reader reading in this Berrian, ordinary spirit, taking this text to be the expression of a localized example of oppressive domesticity, turns not to general theories of patriarchy and domesticity but to the ways that the language of gender is used there and the ways that their neighbors are privileged or oppressed by these particular uses of language. The text, then, as an action, intervenes for the reader in the state of affairs for cis women in that place, demonstrating how and why certain taken-for-granted practices are in reality damaging and, in some cases, introducing new

practices, both language and otherwise, that might be liberatory. Of course, as an example, these new possibilities are not conclusive; the work is still there to explore if it connects with the community needs. As an example, however, it can help the reader re-think and re-view their own place.

A literary work, then, is a hybrid subjective-objective actant in the local, natural-social-agricultural network around the placed reader, both belonging to and used by the reader and acting upon the reader, expressing its concerns to them and intervening in their practices and relations. Similarly, the reader is a hybrid subject-object, both acting upon the work by choosing it, purchasing it, attaching to it, and citing it (or not doing these), and being acted upon by the book. As we have seen, suspicious critique (and most critical theory) tends to narrowly focus on the subjective critic and the passive text and, at the same time, on unknowing readers who are passive before active ideologies in the passive text. I do not wish here to render critique passive and unknowing; instead, in the realistic spirit of OLP and the prioritization of the local by Berry, I wish to prioritize "look[ing] and see[ing]" (Moi, *Revolution* 63) both the particular placed action of the text and the particular placed needs of the reader's community–a spirit neither merely active nor passive but collaborative, marked by acknowledgement and the interchange between reader and text.

The attentive acknowledgement that Moi posits for reading, the "just and loving gaze" upon the concrete, particular details of the text that responds to the perceived action of the text, is, when done with a Berrian spirit, attentive both to the place that the text expresses and to the place which the reader inhabits. An ordinary reader in this sense gives attention to the text's concerns and to their own concerns, as Moi says, but they also attend to their community's concerns. This, as we have seen, will include much of what currently constitutes regionalism and

place studies. It will also include a regionalist inquiry into the reader's place, as the reader studies and better understands the concerns and challenges in their own natural-social-agricultural community, giving attention to how stories, songs, and other language-games are used in the world they bodily inhabit–creating, as it were, a sort of dialectical regionalism: an attentive description of the interchange of language use and forms of life between a literary work and a reader's world, in a focused, attentive manner and an acknowledgement of (i.e., a response to) the ways that work and the world intervene in each other's horizons. This attention to the place and text are, obviously, still done through the subjective position of the individual–one attends to their community and the text as a person of a particular gender, race, class, etc., which draws the reader's attention to certain language-use or textual features that someone who exists otherwise might not notice.[3] As Best and Marcus note, a reader's subjectivity respective to their community (and, I argue, the subjectivity of a place, respective to the wider world) might illuminate or obscure different aspects of the work or the world (18). Therefore, the placed reader will, to varying degrees, interrogate the text and be interrogated by the text. This doubly attentive, dialectical regionalism is a hallmark of Berry's writing, as he considers how language-use by industrialists and imperialists directly impact his Port Royal community, and of Moi's writing, as she considers the challenge to language presented by the 2011 terrorist attack in her native Norway, which, as attacks like this do, leave communities at a loss for words (*Revolution* 222-242). Readers in this ordinary spirit are bid (to lightly alter Karl Barth's admonition) to take their novel and take their local newspaper and read both ("Barth in Retirement").

The attention to the work itself, for OLP, pictures engagement with the text as an adventure. Reading as adventure, as Moi shows, is a collaborative process: the reader goes with the work (or the author, protagonist or narrator–readers can attach to any of these) almost as a

passenger, while the reader also actively responds to, empathizes with, objects to, and questions the work ("Adventure of Reading" 136). The adventure, broadly speaking, is from confusion (the conflict in the text and perplexity for the reader) to clarity (resolution in the text and understanding in the reader) ("'Nothing is Hidden'" 36). For the reader, the adventure of reading anything remotely complex only begins with the reading of the text, and it continues as the reader revisits the text to better understand how and why the work of literature worked out the way that it did, and the consequences and implications of such a work that unfolded in such a way (38). The reader, following the text, attentively asks "Why this?" and attentively traces the unfolding answer, coming to a sense of clarity about the text's expressive act.[4]

In this dialectical regionalism, the adventure of reading is extended into the adventure of life in a local place. This does not mean a historical metanarrative; instead, this refers to the narrativity that Louis Mink identifies as central to comprehending memory and history, the "grasping together" of successive events into a "single image"—comprehending the successive years from the 1830s to the turn of the twentieth century as one Victorian era, for instance, or comprehending 365 successive days as one present year (547). As humans, we organize and divide events into narratives, even if they do not reach the level of a Marxist or Christian grand narrative, both in our past (where Mink focuses) and, often, in the present. I, for example, am in the midst of an era comprehended as my 20s, or my graduate studies, or my time in Springfield, comprehended as a discrete narrative but one that is ongoing. These comprehended narratives come with their own challenges, possibilities, and limitations, and, therefore, can be pictured as an adventure in much the same way as reading literature–instead of collaborating with the author, one instead collaborates with the Actor-Network in which they find themselves and which they create.

Here the adventure of reading literature might intervene in the adventure of community life. As one comprehends the characters, settings, social formations, and narratives of literary works, these can reframe and reconfigure the people, places, social formations, and ongoing action of community life. Ricœur recognizes in the act of reading the "round-about way of understanding…the cultural signs in which the self contemplates himself and forms himself" ("What is a Text?" 145)—the re-viewing and re-imagining of the actants in the reader's network, imaginatively recasting our world according to the new things known from literature. This happens when someone is called "quixotic": the character and story of Don Quixote becomes a way of recognizing the impractical, idealistic person, helping understand the ways of being and the ways of living that come with being quixotic–for better or worse. As a reader becomes open to how certain modes of using language and certain modes of acting shape the places expressed in literature, they can appropriate new possibilities for seeing and responding to their own place.[5] As readers ask, "why this?" with the details of the text, they can more attentively ask "why this?" of the different practices and features of their own place. Readers not only go on the adventure in the text but go on the adventure of communal life with the text in their network as they go.

This reshapes the task of critical theorists and literary scholars who, going beyond attentive reading, write critically about literary works, eras, authors, themes, or political/theoretical concerns. OLP promotes theoryless reading, starting with a work, author, or literary era that leaves them with questions, working from the work through the work to clarity (Moi, "'Nothing is Hidden'" 38). Instead of starting with a theory, one starts with their placed self and the perplexing work. For well-read, well-trained scholars and theorists, bringing themselves to the text brings a lot of knowledge, both about literature (formal, historical, poetic knowledge) and about their primary political concerns (what resides in the realm of "theory,"

e.g., feminism, disability theory, queer theory). However, in a Berrian picture of critical reading, the reader must also bring with them what is known about their place: how is language used here? What are the concerns, values, and aims of people here? How is this place organized geographically, socially, economically? What picture of gender, race, class do people here have? How do people here exploit other people here, and how do other, larger forces exploit or destroy this place? These concerns, far from a general theory of social formation and oppression, can give shape to the aspects of texts that draw a reader's attention and confusion. Instead of treating the text as a proof or disproof of a theory, these concerns give us a starting point for the text to unfold its own concerns.

The act of critical writing, then, becomes a description of the fusion of horizons between placed literature and placed critics. The critic, knowing the literary work, their political concerns, and their place, offers their reading as an example of the expression and intervention that literature does in the natural, social, and agricultural dynamics of their place, illuminating certain shortcomings and blind spots in the formations and practices of their own community. Further, the placed reader, knowing how oppression and injustice are happening in their place, can illuminate shortcomings and blind spots in the work: where a work maybe puts too much trust in industrialism, an Appalachian or Ozarkian critic might work to explain how such industrialism ignores the destruction done in their own place and the widespread poverty it leaves in its wake. Both work and world fuse in the act of reading, and the critic offers their description of that fusion, not to build a theory but to add an example to the open, diverse polyphony of examples.

One does not have to ignore what we call theory altogether. As postcritical scholars insist, critical theory has contributed vital information to understanding social, economic, cultural, and environmental discourse and the workings of oppression. If a scholar interested in

gender studies and queer theory hopes to gain clarity on the (to them) perplexing relationship between two male characters in a novel, they might turn to queer theory and theories of homosociality for help. This, however, is in the service of getting clear on the relationship in question; the work's own unfolding of its concerns still guides the process, rather than the theory. The work might offer itself as an example of a homosocial erotic triangle, or it might not. In certain uses of language, and in certain places, this homosociality might unfold as Sedgwick describes, and in some language-uses it might not. This neither proves nor disproves Sedgwick's theory. Again, OLP is not interested in theory for theory's sake. Rather, the work and the place offer an example of a different form of life, of a different language-game, or of a different place, which requires its own description.

This locally situated, placed scholarship is difficult to do. It is easy, in the era of online communities, translocal academic communities, and national/global economies, to abstract social formations and oppression into general theories that we suppose hold true everywhere. There is, of course, some merit to this. The forces of economic and cultural imperialism, which the Internet and global economics have enabled, have produced an increasingly homogenized world, where people develop identity, community, and culture "without resort to geography" (Berry, "Writer and Region" 92). This homogenization includes prejudices and oppressive practices. A White supremacist in, say, the Pacific Northwest can get on the same page with a White supremacist in Georgia or Great Britain with relative ease. In such a homogenized world it is easier to say that something can be true both everywhere and nowhere in particular. Critical theorists can, it seems, more easily make authoritative theoretical claims that are universal and detached from their actual place.

However, this detachment ignores the fact that, despite the translocal communities of social media and academia, people, and theorists still live in communities with particular ecologies and agricultures. Our immediate environment should and does shape the responses we have to literature and cultural criticism. Most of this current chapter has been written as I work a temporary job at the local Park Board, where I have heard the unmasked bigotry and far-Right paranoia taking over the rural Ozarks, as well as my relative powerlessness to confront these as I work at the lowest rung of the workplace hierarchy. How could this not shape my response to critique and to Berry's fiction as much as Felski, Sedgwick, and Moi do? Like any other reader, I am inescapably placed, and this helps shape my responses to literature, no matter how disinterested and detached I pretend to be. To pretend, however, is to be dishonest, as dishonest as to pretend I do not read BIPOC authors as a White person. Instead, in the freedom of honesty, I can embrace my placedness, considering how texts intervene in my life in this place and responding in this place, for the social transformation of this place.

Furthermore, theorists and scholars might consider these homogenizing forces and the ways that they impact their local place. This work, already being done by postcolonial scholars and Indigenous activists, is also a focus of Berry's: when discussing large-scale homogenizing forces, he demonstrates their injustices and destruction not in the abstract but in the effects on Port Royal in Eastern Kentucky, where he lives. The problem with "national thinkers" that Berry identifies is that they abuse places far away from their own: "A landfill in my county receives daily many truckloads of garbage from New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. This is evidently all right with everybody but those of us who live here" ("Out of Your Car" 19). Readers are bid to consider how the language-games, practices, and formations of these

translocal, abstracting, homogenizing forces are changing (or are being resisted by) the language-games, practices, and formations of the local natural-social-agricultural community.

This orientation to the language and practices of the local can, of course, fall victim to an affective, romantic subjectivism that obscures the sort of clarity that criticism desires. However, as postcritical theorists argue, critics, by merit of being human beings, are affective beings, and bring certain affections to their work: a love for People of Color, or LGBTQ people, or women; a repulsion towards oppression, hierarchy, and injustice; a desire for a more just and equitable world. These already impinge upon their work; the work of reading in this placed, ordinary spirit would be to concretize these affections as towards a place and from a place, as the work of advocacy for marginalized people in the community (people already identified by theorists) and for marginalized communities within larger socioeconomic forces becomes the affective drive for literary and cultural theory. This affection reminds one of their responsibilities to their place, and the people there. Concrete, loving, responsible action can only take place in a place, and this emphasis on the local can help reconnect researchers to their students and English Departments to their communities.

This responsibility will require much from literary critics. We will have to, in Berry's words, "get out of [our] spaceship, out of [our] car, off [our] horse"—that is, our empyrean departments and campuses–"and walk over the ground" ("Out of Your Car" 20). We will have to, in some ways, un-discipline, working closely with and using those fields that already analyze language use in particular places, like sociolinguistics, English Education, even journalism–even, perhaps, schools of agriculture–to get clear on the concerns of our own places. We will have to put our local politics on par with the larger, more abstract national/global politics, trusting and

imagining that our work, as an example of just and equitable action, will join the plurality of just and equitable activisms in other places.

This ordinary placed reading is, I hope to demonstrate, a way of doing literary studies that can better respond to the challenges of the twenty-first century that I have delineated in the previous chapter. In the following chapter, I will attend to Berry's protagonist Jayber Crow as an exemplary placed reader, tracing his attentiveness to the ordinary language, practices, and residents (human and otherwise) of the Port William Membership as well as his attentiveness to the abstract forces and institutions that threaten Port William. I will describe Jayber's own sense of adventure as one leading back to a place, rather than into a new place or into displacement. I will conclude by laying out the ways that, I believe, reading in this ordinary, placed spirit can respond to the political and cultural challenges outlined in the first chapter, to give an account for some of the generative possibilities of this particular way of reading.

READING FROM THE BARBERSHOP: JAYBER CROW AS PLACED READER

As we have seen, Wendell Berry's emphasis on one's place as the site of responsible social analysis and activism is consistent with OLP's commitment to concrete, particular language use and forms of life as the privileged site of literary and cultural analysis. Berry, like Wittgenstein, Cavell, and Moi, prioritizes thinking through examples over the "craving for generality" often found in literary criticism. This recourse to abstraction is, in part, the target of Berry's preface in *Jayber Crow*; it is one of the modes of reading, alongside unwavering suspicion, that he bids readers to set aside before reading. This craving for generality is described (and decried) by Berry as "attempting to find a 'text' [or] a 'subtext'" in *Jayber Crow;* in other words, attempting to read against the grain of his novel in order to expose oppressive social formations and ideologies (Berry, *Jayber Crow*). Berry, as an environmental activist, has no problem exposing such formations in his writing, particularly in his nonfiction. However, in this warning he advocates a new way of interpreting these oppressive, exploitative systems. He does this through Jayber, the namesake and narrator of *Jayber Crow.* Jayber, through whom the events of the novel are comprehended and interpreted for the reader, models the way of interpreting the world for which OLP and Berry advocate. He is an example of an ordinary placed reader, who gives attention to and describes the forms of life, language-games, and communal networks of his place and the way that they are reconfigured and ultimately dissolved by various twentieth-century political, economic, and technological developments. His description of the reconfiguration of his place–which he makes a text through his narration–intervenes in the dominant horizon of twentieth-century political, economic, and technological change, which foregrounds national progress and growth and the dominant narrative (i.e., the history), of these

changes which construes these developments as universally positive. Instead of generating his own all-encompassing theory of twentieth-century history and technology, he fuses the horizon of his own particular place with the horizon of nationalist and industrialist discourses, offering his own place as an example of the consequences of these changes for communities like his own.

Jayber Crow, published in 2000, is Berry's ninth published book in his Port William series. This series, beginning with his 1960 novel, *Nathan Coulter,* and continuing through *How It Went,* a collection of short stories expected in late Fall 2022, narrates the lives and memories of Port William residents from the Civil War into the late twentieth century. Port William, a fictional town located on the Kentucky River in Eastern Kentucky, is a primarily agrarian rural town, where residents have longstanding genealogical connections to the community, handing down businesses and farmsteads from generation to generation. The various novels and stories of Port William narrate both the happenings of this community and the changes to and challenges faced by this community as American economic, technological, and agricultural developments reconfigure the cultural traditions and economic vitality of Port William.

Jayber Crow is the barber for Port William. The novel, narrated in 1986 when Jayber is seventy-two and semi-retired (*Jayber Crow* 12), is Jayber's recollection of and reflection upon his own life from his birth to the time of his telling. Jayber (whose first name is Jonah) is born on August 3rd, 1914 ("one day…before the beginning of total war" [11]) in Goforth, Kentucky, a small town a couple of miles from Port William with social and economic connections to Port William. Both of his parents die on the same day in February 1918, and the orphaned Jayber is adopted by his great-aunt and great-uncle, Cordelia and Otha Dagget, whom he calls Aunt Cordie and Uncle Othy, and lives with them in Squire's Landing, about two miles away, where they farm and own a store that sells goods that the town could not farm for itself. Jayber lives

with them, farming, helping out with the store, and observing with fascination the Kentucky River (both its natural beauty and the people it brings by the landing), until Aunt Cordie and Uncle Othy die about one year apart, leaving Jayber orphaned again at the age of ten.

He is sent to live at an orphanage far from Port William, where he develops an introverted, observational, contemplative personality, a strong distaste for institutions, a love for literature, and rudimentary barbering skills. While there, he thinks (though with misgivings) that he might be called by God into Christian ministry and goes to seminary on scholarship upon graduating the orphanage's school. However, once he is there, his questions about theology and ethics convince him that he cannot be a preacher, and at the advice of his New Testament Greek professor, he drops out of seminary with the recognition that he must "live…out" the questions in order to (possibly) find answers. He leaves for Lexington, where he works at the stockyards before getting a job as a barber and taking literature courses at a public university.

Then, without much explanation or rationale, he leaves Lexington during a Kentucky River flood and, though initially headed for Louisville, decides to return to Port William, following the flooded river until he arrives close to Squire's Landing. He meets Burley Coulter, who takes him to Port William and helps him acquire the recently vacated barber's shop to open his barbering business. Jayber remains Port William's barber until he retires. He becomes a part of the community, participating in its social life and giving up his ambition of making something of himself. He is attentive to the forms of life and the transmitted stories of Port William through his work and his friendships with Port William men, such as Burley Coulter. Two main sources of conflict animate the rest of the novel: the degradation of the town in the face of the political and economic developments of modernity and his unrequited love for Mattie Chatham.

As his life unfolds, Jayber observes and reflects upon the changes that modernity brings to Port William. He attempts to enlist in the military during World War II but is excluded because of a heart condition. He then observes how the town experiences foreboding and grief, as it sends its young men to World War II (and later the Vietnam War) and hears back about their deaths. He reflects as he remembers, questioning what role love (and a God of love) can have in a world of hatred and violence. He also watches as Port William's economy, culture, and agriculture are destroyed by a homogenized national economy, recognizing that Port William's prospects of future stability and prosperity are bleak.

Jayber also narrates his unrequited love for Mattie Chatham. He first notices her when she is a child (as Mattie Keith) as someone with remarkable perception and tenderness. He soon meets Troy Chatham, her high school sweetheart, and dislikes him for his arrogance, wondering how Mattie has come to love him. Troy and Mattie eventually marry, and they move onto the Keith farm. Her father, Athey, is a successful small-scale farmer with a symbiotic relationship with his farmland, livestock, and crops. Troy dismisses Athey's ethic of care, instead working to maximize the land's output, which includes using heavy machinery, working longer hours, taking out loans, and creating monocultures. This leads to conflict between Athey and Troy, with Mattie caught between her husband and the ethic she shares with her father. Troy is given more power to implement changes as Athey ages; meanwhile, Mattie continues the caring, responsible ethic of her father. Jayber sees her caring for young children at a church event and falls in love with her. He recognizes that this is a passion that he cannot act upon and works to suppress it as best as he can. Then, when he is at a Christmas party in Hargrave, he witnesses Troy cheating on Mattie with another woman. He decides to secretly commit himself to Mattie as a faithful husband, even though she cannot be his wife, in order to prove to himself that Mattie could have

a faithful husband. Committing to Mattie, he ends his romantic flings with other women. As Troy is destroying most of the farm and accumulating debt, Jayber and Mattie run into each other in the Nest Egg, a parcel of forest that Athey has left in his will to Mattie to save it from deforestation. They both escape from their respective troubles by taking contemplative walks in the Nest Egg, and the two occasionally see each other there, though without planning to do so and without romance. Mattie becomes terminally ill, and in desperation for money Troy levels the Nest Egg (359). Jayber sees Troy in this desperate state and finds himself with only sympathy for Troy in place of his long-held hatred (361). Jayber visits Mattie in the hospital, where he does not say how he feels but is able to experience her tenderness in their last interaction (363).

He tells his life not as a simple chronology of events but as a memory, a comprehended (in Mink's sense of "grasp[ed] together") singular whole. Because of this, his narration is interpolated with stories of others, stories from others, and his own reflections on events from his own life. He foreshadows the importance of an event in the light of a yet-untold event. Sometimes he comments on the understanding of the event or era that he had in the past, contrasting it with the way he understands it at his present, older state of mind. He also includes stories and perspectives from the time he is narrating that he has heard from others. His story takes place within the network of Port William memories and his own reflection of his place within this history, and his narration reflects this interplay between himself, his community, and the larger world.

Jayber thus inevitably narrates change in his mode of interpreting the world: he moves from an institution-induced craving for generality that confuses him–i.e., that prevents him from interpreting his world and his own situation within it–to a placed reading which enables him to

interpret himself and his world. This new mode of interpretation helps Jayber work to get clear on the causes and consequences of twentieth century historical events and technological development. His early life, as he identifies those questions which perplex him, is captive to a displaced, disengaged "craving for generality," the desire to conceptualize the world through abstraction and all-encompassing explanations (Moi, *Revolution* 92). In his time within the conservative institutions of the orphanage and seminary, he takes a typically suspicious position from which to interpret the workings of the institution: a stance of disengaged but antagonistic resistance, standing separate from the institution while problematizing and deconstructing its social and epistemological formulations. He embraces this upon his arrival at the university, and for a time loves the disengaged stance it promotes and the democratic, anti-authoritarian social formations that it offers. Yet here too he finds what Wittgenstein calls a "contemptuous attitude towards the particular case," the assumption that constructing a universal explanation under which to subsume disparate phenomena is the goal of one's studies (*Revolution* 92). This contempt leaves him mired in confusion, and it is only in his commitment to study his identity and his world through sustained, attentive, reflective engagement with a natural-social-agricultural place that he begins to get clear on these questions. He does not answer them or extrapolate any universal theories from his experience; instead, he offers his recollection of his life as an example of one moving from confusion to clarity in place and as an example of a place's relationship with larger sociopolitical forces.

Jayber in School: Displacement and the Craving for Generality

Jayber compares his two experiences of institutional education: one with conservative Christian schools (an orphanage school, Good Shepherd, and a seminary, Pigeonville College)

and the other with a public university, where he takes literature courses. In both of these, though they are set in opposition to each other, he finds a similar bent towards abstraction and generality: an abstraction that arises from a lack of attentive acknowledgement to the natural-social-agricultural place to which the schools belong and to the particular persons that belong to them. His life in these institutions cultivates in him a similar recourse to disengaged, displaced abstraction, as he embodies the characteristics of a suspicious critical reader: a reader who, disentangling themselves (as best as possible) from their situated subjectivity, works against the oppression of so-called commonsense knowledge and sociality and works towards theories that undermine and problematize the formations they oppose. Neither space, for him, brings clarity; that is, neither offers an understanding of himself or his world in which he recognizes himself or is made ready to act responsively in the world. Instead, their pictures of selves and world are, to use Wittgenstein's phrase, "on holiday" (*Revolution* 48), removing persons from the world in which they will act and giving pictures of the world that are not responsive to the place where they will live.

In his experience at the Christian schools, he is taught the theories and doctrines of conservative Christianity as the key for interpreting himself and his world. Upon arriving, he realizes that he is now displaced, disconnected from the world he has known; he is "in another world," a world that for the longest time makes him "[feel] like he might be nowhere" (Berry, *Jayber Crow* 30, 37). In this disconnected world, he is instructed in abstract propositions about God, the world, and himself. He is implicitly taught the binaries at the heart of Good Shepherd's dogma–order/disorder, soul/body, institution/nature, the latter terms being the loci of sin–that order the world of Good Shepherd and, the school claims, the entire world (32). These settled doctrines are taken by the teachers at Good Shepherd to be the theoretical key to understanding

oneself and one's world. As Jayber enters Pigeonville College for ministry training, he finds these same theories reinforced. Even as he has "doctrinal trouble" in the form of doubts about the Bible's inerrancy and the church's application of Jesus' teachings, he finds these abstract, propositional teachings reinforced as so-called answers to his questions: "They told me I needed to have more faith…to believe…to pray…to give up my questioning" (49, 52). These attempts to reinscribe the questioned doctrines are, Jayber recognizes, due to the professors' habitation solely within their dogmas and theories (52). The professors are unable to respond to a particular student with particular concerns on particular teachings, instead giving recourse to the propositions that are giving Jayber so much trouble. Their answers are tautological: the way to stop doubting is to stop doubting; the answer to "what is the point of praying to Him at all?" is to pray more (51-52). There is no room for confusion as a starting point; these professors begin with the sure footing of a doctrine and move through questions and interpretation to demonstrate the proposition, leaving little room for confusion or surprise when engaging in the act of reading either culture or literary texts. Generalized theories of infallibility and belief become the beginning and end of interpretation, where knowingness and vigilance against surprise become the key traits for readers to embody.

Jayber, thrown into these institutions after early experiences in placed, relational networks of affection, tries to resist this institutionalization through remembering his past. He holds to his memories of Uncle Othy and Aunt Cordie, remembering them before he falls asleep at night–remembering the land and the house as it was then (36). He attaches these memories to his picture of "home" to resist the orphanage's attempts to become home to him and erase his past (36). He reenacts these memories by making frequent escapes into both Canefield (the town adjacent to Good Shepherd) and into the surrounding countryside. These, for him, reenact the

free exploration of nature and the neighborly "free and casual comings and goings" of his life at Squire's Landing, where entanglement in communal networks shaped his identity, rather than disentangled abstractions that he finds at his schools (40-41). The remembering and reenacting protect his placed identity from homogenization: he is from a place with its own natural, social, and agricultural configuration, connected (even through memory) with particular people, despite the attempts to replace these with abstract notions of students, sinners, and saved souls.

Jayber also resists this institutional homogenization through reading literature. At Good Shepherd, he recognizes himself in many of the stories that he reads: he is drawn to stories of William Green Hill, Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn and David Copperfield, all orphans with whom he resonates, and to picture books of World War I, which help him better understand the conditions into which he is born (34-35). At Pigeonville College, he contrasts his experiences reading the stories of the Gospels with the doctrines of St. Paul; when he reads the Gospels, he can "imagine them…just shut [his] eyes and *see,*" and these stories offer him a more compelling theology than abstract doctrines after the tradition of St. Paul (50). This rift between, on the one hand, the stories that shape his perception of himself and, on the other hand, the doctrines that fail to formulate a recognizable picture of self or world gives rise to his doubts of the theories from the institution–his "doctrinal trouble" (49). These stories he reads form for him a network of images and narratives to help him frame his own experiences, becoming the "self-interpretation of a subject" that, Ricœur argues, is simultaneous with the interpretation of a text ("What is a Text?" 145). This developing network of images and narratives perplexes him as he forms it within the institutions yet in contrast with the institutions' doctrines, leaving him with confusion and questions.

Stories and memories constitute for Jayber a modicum of resistance to the homogenization and theorization of these conservative schools. However, despite his resistance, he comes to embody a displaced, antagonistic spirit from which to interpret and resist these institutions; in so doing, he reinforces their craving for generality instead of undoing it. Instead of being a placed, embedded person to resist abstraction, he takes on a disengaged stance toward his world; in a world "turned inward" upon itself (Berry, *Jayber Crow* 40), he mimics the turn inward, taking on a "solitary" stance towards the discourse of the orphanage, "looking out, seeing much, revealing little" (38). This world turned inward, with its arbitrary distinctions and definitions regarding order, disorder, nature, and culture, is artificial to Jayber, "not present unless [he] watched it" (32). Because of this, he in his solitary stance makes the habit of disengagement and suspicion, forming few connections with others with whom he might have solidarity and community (38).

From this displaced stance, he cannot fully resist the craving for generality of the orphanage. He passively accepts the orphanage's practice of renaming students, erasing his given name, Jonah, and instead naming him J. This practice, he recognizes, homogenizes the students by erasing their origins, making them "faceless…no longer the persons [they] had been" (31). Soon, he no longer can understand who he is by the name used by his parents and adoptive parents and goes by the orphanage's imposed name "J." well after his time at the orphanage, accepting this imposed alienation from his place and family of birth. His own history, fading the longer he is embedded in the Christian schools, is partly replaced by his "local histor[y]" constructed within the orphanage (38). As his past recedes in his memory, he can only remember it as it was when he lived there, with no connection to the place as it presently exists (37). While important in his efforts to resist homogenization, his pre-orphanage memory offers little more

than nostalgia with little connection to the present, living memory of the place. Even his questions, while asked of particular gaps and inconsistencies in the conservative doctrines of these schools, are asked in general, theorizable ways: instead of in response to particular enemies or wars, he asks if Christians can hate enemies or go to war. While pushing towards particulars, the questions remain at the level of the abstract, rather than the level of observed language-use, networks, or forms of life.

Without belonging to a place, Jayber must more or less accept the foundation of displacement into which he is thrown, even as he tries to negate many of the epistemological claims of these institutions. Moi notes a similar tendency in poststructuralist deconstruction: it rests on the same assumptions of generalized conceptual absolutes as the epistemologies and systems it hopes to deconstruct by forming generalized concepts for its negation of commonsense and closure ("They Practice Their Trades in Different Worlds" 806-13). As long as he is not embedded in a natural-social-agricultural place and attentive to its forms of life, Jayber must accept the abstraction of the Christian schools, negating its generalized claims in oppositional generalities. Where Good Shepherd homogenizes students into its disengaged world, Jayber distances himself not only from this particular world but from any placed world, a self-styled free subject with no history, connection, or obligations. His efforts, then, to critique and resist the school's epistemology leave unchallenged the displaced, disengaged, ontology that they prescribe as well.

With such an institutionalized experience at Good Shepherd and Pigeonville College that is subject to rigid dogmas, the public university in Lexington offers a disengaged stance towards the world from which to interpret, and act within, the world. While still at Good Shepherd, Jayber begins to embody the disengaged, antagonistic stance of suspicious critique, beginning

the work of questioning and problematizing its commonsense institutions and social formations. He moves to Lexington and enrolls in college with hope of freeing himself from his past, and is in some ways successful: after claiming for himself freedom from history or constraint (On a registration form: "Parents? None. Religion? None.…Sex? Yes"), he enrolls in literature courses to read and talk about books, which he could rarely do at the orphanage (Berry, *Jayber Crow* 69). He enjoys the exposure to the wide world of literature and to "the forbidden"—i.e., so-called sinful behaviors banned by the Christian institutions–and generally enjoys the freedom from the constraints and dogmas of Good Shepherd and Pigeonville (68). His action is unregulated, and the university presents itself as more democratic, without authority figures observing and disciplining its students (70). The university represents a break with tradition, positioning itself as "a threat to conventional wisdom," that offers "freedom for thought and study and experimentation," problematizing and disrupting the doctrines of conservatism and experimenting with new ways of being (70). He is free, unbound from commitment and able to dismantle and reconfigure his picture of self and world as he sees fit. He has found a place that matches his critical, suspicious spirit.

However, Jayber realizes that, despite the university's freedom from rigid doctrines, it (and he) is still bound to the same craving for generality and lack of attention to its place that infects the orphanage and seminary, blocking the way for clarity on identity and meaning for Jayber. While the university is "trying to be the world of the future" beyond dogma and doctrine, as opposed to "the world of the past" that Good Shepherd and Pigeonville are trying to preserve, it shares the Christian schools' failure to acknowledge of the particulars of its place and its students: "It was an island too, a floating or a 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…only life" (71). For many scholars and students, including himself, "they were not going to school to learn where they were, let alone the pleasures and pains of being there, or what ought to be said there" (160). The university is "a world unto itself," developing students not to become members of any place but to take on the picture of the future that the university imagined (70). In the rush for an abstractly defined progress, the university forgoes attention to its place, overlooking the particular needs of that place.

This lack of attention to particulars of its place means that Jayber makes no progress in moving through his confusion to clarity. None of his questions that so troubled him at Good Shepherd and Pigeonville are attended to at the university; in fact, while he learns everything he possibly can about literature and reads as many books as he can, in his classes he does not ask his questions or express his confusion (69). He recognizes that, because of the "aloofness," the lack of concern and attention from the school and its professors, he is becoming a person "from nowhere…a theoretical person from the sticks, who one day would go to a theoretical somewhere and make a theoretical something of himself," who exists without any sustained, affective ties to a place or a community (73). At the university he is no closer to clarity on his understanding of himself or his world; instead, he finds only a solipsistic so-called freedom, where he is not acknowledged beyond a universalized free subjectivity. His own questions about his identity, world, or fate are not answered, as the university is interested in only the universal future it is creating and the homogenized students it is creating for that future.

The disinterested, disengaged, displaced stance of the university is, per the suspicious hermeneutics of critique, the way to get free from biases and affective fallacies and rationally analyze and critique issues of identity and knowledge. He is promised freedom from constraint, "freedom for thought and study and experimentation" (70). Jayber does achieve this freedom,

becoming a disengaged subject unbound from many of the doctrines of his youth, able to observe and listen to the world from a disengaged position. Yet this freedom releases him into a new abstraction: the abstraction from responsibility to and relationships within a particular place, leaving him without any identity or direction beyond being "a theoretical person from the sticks, who one day would go to a theoretical somewhere and make a theoretical something of himself" (73). He is free to deconstruct those concepts and constructs imputed to him at Good Shepherd and Pigeonville, but this brings him again to the craving for generality, with new yet still theoretical concepts, leaving him as perplexed and alone as before, unable to think and act within the world. He has no ties in Lexington, so he decides one day to leave, with no explanation and, it seems, with no consequences for himself or Lexington (74). As he leaves, he is caught up in the flooding of the Kentucky River, numbered among the refugees displaced from their farms and homes, finding shelter with them in the capitol building in Frankfort (80). He partially recognizes his psychological state in the material state of the refugees: like them, he is displaced; unlike them, he was not placed before the flood, and therefore has lost nothing (81). This partial recognition, where he sees what he is and what he is missing, reroutes his journey from Louisville to Port William, where he supposes he might find a place in which to belong (82).

In the midst of this abstraction and disengagement, Jayber has two experiences that open for him an alternative to generality and call him back to a placed, ordinary reading of the world. First, while he is at Pigeonville College, asking his doctrinal questions to no avail, he finally turns to Dr. Ardmire, the feared New Testament Greek professor. He asks his questions and admits that he has no answers–no satisfactory doctrine or theory to turn to for certainty (53-54). Then, Ardmire opens an alternative way to get clear on these issues and questions: one does not start with a theory and reinforce or refute it through the act of reading but instead prioritizes

confusion and attention as a starting place for inquiry. He advises Jayber, "You have been given questions to which you cannot be *given* answers. You will have to live them out–perhaps a little at a time" (54). Instead of starting with a doctrine and laboring to demonstrate it (as his other professors recommend), Ardmire suggests that Jayber might take his confusion as a starting point to pay attention to what he does and what happens to him, not to formulate theories of ontology or epistemology to replace the conservative ones but to comprehend, interpret, and describe himself and his world through his connections with a place and with others.

Second, Jayber experiences generosity at the expense of suspicion. While leaving Pigeonville College, he hitches a ride from Port Williamite Sam Hanks. Though he knows who Sam is, Jayber lies about his connection to Sam and about his purpose for going to Lexington; he tells Sam that he is from Bell's Fork, that his mother is dying, and that he is going to Lexington to find work to support her. Sam gives him advice on where to find work in the city and upon arrival secretly slips a five-dollar bill in Jayber's pocket (59-60). Jayber, though deceitful, is met not with suspicion but with what Moi calls acknowledgement, "our response to the expressions and actions of another" (Moi, *Revolution* 208). This kind of acknowledgement is not necessarily naïve: Sam tells Jayber that "there's bastards in this world that would cut your throat for a quarter" (Berry, *Jayber Crow* 60). He has knowledge and (economic) power, giving him freedom to act towards Jayber however he wants. In his freedom he chooses generosity over certainty or skepticism regarding Jayber's situation, establishing a bond of responsibility with him. This relational bond, of two persons responsible for each other (as well as his shame for denying this bond with his lies) is in part what leads Jayber back to Port William, where he had known these bonds from an early age (82).

Jayber in Port William: Placed Reader

As Jayber returns to the Port William Membership, becoming the town barber and a participant in the town's life and history, he begins to embody the stance and practices of an Ordinary Placed reader. Instead of keeping a "critical distance," disengaging from the ordinary forms of life and relational networks of the community, he becomes embedded and participatory in the community, reading it from his embedded position. Instead of giving recourse to abstract, theoretical knowledge, he embraces the limited and specific horizon of his place, interpreting larger historical and systemic forces through the dialectical interventions between those forces and the life of Port William. This knowledge is not treated as a theory, in the sense of attempting to subsume discrete phenomena under a single explanation or set of explanations. Instead, he offers this knowledge as an example of a particular place's life and response to the changes of the twentieth century, allowing his example to intervene in otherwise-placed (or national) horizons and interpretations of the twentieth century in the United States.

Jayber, after embodying a critical distance from his world in order to interpret it, comes to read his natural-social-agricultural place from within, from a position embedded in the forms of life and language-games–"the town's ever-continuing conversation about itself" (121). This embeddedness allows him to interpret the twentieth century clearly from his particular horizon. His attentive gaze has been honed by his time at Good Shepherd and his practice of reading literature. This attentiveness remains crucial for his ongoing attempts to understand his world; however, this disposition can only bring (albeit partial) clarity when he focuses it upon a relatively limited sphere–what Berry elsewhere calls a reasonable "eyes-to-acres ratio" ("Farming Without Farmers").

He begins to interpret his world not as a disinterested subject but as an ordinary member of Port William. He takes up work as a barber, the vocation that has financially supported him during his studies. In doing so, he forsakes any disengaged, critical position–as "a preacher or a teacher or a student or a traveler–and becomes "classified" by the community as "Port William's bachelor barber" (*Jayber Crow* 123). Upon this classification, he gives up his so-called freedom of disengagement and displacement and accepts that this is his home, where he will stay–and stay he does, remaining in this role officially for thirty-two years and unofficially for another seventeen (3, 12). This means that, like the other lifelong residents of Port William, he "belong[s] to it, economically and otherwise"—that is, his fate and responsibility are identified with the town's fate and its needs (4). It also means that he is a "participant and subject in the town's ever-continuing conversation about itself," both actively and passively co-constructing its history and meaning with his fellow Port Williamites (121). He replaces the critical distance of an outsider with the embeddedness of an insider and participant, forming attachments instead of detachment, and interprets Port William's natural, social, and agricultural formations from within.

Alongside this embeddedness, Jayber practices attention, reflection, and description of the world in which he is embedded, all of which are crucial to this ordinary placed reading. When he returns to Port William, it takes him a while to become fully embedded: he is first a "stranger" to the town and then, for some time after, is a "bystander" requiring "a long time before [he is] *involved"* in the town's life (123). This is partly due to his own habits of bystanding, but it is more so due to some of the prejudices in the town. As a barber whose shop is "a precinct strictly masculine except on Saturday morning" and who is known to participate in the water drinking (i.e., whiskey drinking) parties with many of the other townsmen, he is

generally excluded from forms of life predominantly involving women (123). This includes, readers learn later, most of the town's Christian religious forms of life (159). As a relatively poor and unattractive bachelor, he is excluded from forms of life of courtship, marriage, and reproduction, forcing him to "pursue…bachelor's aims and satisfactions," aims that further stigmatize and exclude him from these forms of life (122-23). As an unsteadily employed barber, he is excluded from language-games and discourse about work (122). Indeed, though he is "glad to be classified," in Port William, he recognizes that he is "in a class by [him]self," embedded yet "bystander," attending to the town from both within and to the side (123). This ambivalent semi-excluded embeddedness allows Jayber to maintain a watchful, attentive gaze instead of the uncritical, unreflective mode of life of his neighbors who live without much thought to their daily lives (121). He observes the town from a stance of affection and obligation, taking upon himself the responsibility of "keep[ing] an eye on the town" from his shop in downtown Port William or from beside the main drag when he has no customers (4). This affords him a vantage point from which to read Port William and see how its life unfolds. Instead of watching the institution and taking a disengaged stance against it, he is able to give attention to the ordinary networks, forms of life, language-games, and histories that make up the natural, social, and agricultural place of Port William.

Port William: The Place Read

As an old man at the time of narration, Jayber is telling his narrative as a memory, as things that have mostly passed, with the exception of his occasional present reflection. His attention to the ordinary has already happened, and his narration in his present (1986 [12]) is more precisely his retention of the ordinary in memory; he has collected the observations, and

now he recollects them. Jayber through his narration gives attention to the totality of his memories, tracing the way that, as a totality, it has constructed his identity and his world. He recollects and reflects upon his memory so that he might comprehend himself from discrete memories, even where that necessitates acknowledging the irreconcilable fragmentation of some memories to his self-interpretation.

This work of remembering and comprehending is, for Jayber, the work of constructing Port William's history. Paul Ricœur in *Memory, History, and Forgetting* describes the different ways we use the language and the different objects of memory. He offers a spectrum of "memories," or the "thing intended" in the act of remembering (22). On one end is remembering "states of affairs," or "generalities" about the past (23). These are a person's remembering the way things were and the way things happened in the most general terms (23-24). On the other end is remembering "singular, unrepeatable events," stories that stand out as happening at a particular time and place and happening in a particular way (23). Near this end of the spectrum are events that a person remembers because they are familiar, because "they reappear as being the same" many times over (23). These are events that are remembered due to the quantity of happenings, their "emblematic character" alongside the quality of the event (23). Ricœur notes that, in the construction of "historical knowledge," the particular memories–singular and emblematic–"link up" with the general "states of affairs," creating a "propositional form" typically found when one does history (24). That is, from singular events, a historian creates general formulations about historical eras, ages, periods, and the like.

This linking up is, to an extent, what Jayber does with his recollected narrative. He attends to and retains the stories of Port William–"its living memory" of events singular and emblematic–and comprehends them as the "history"--the states of affairs across generations–of

Port William (Berry, *Jayber Crow* 3). Jayber considers himself a historian, not in the sense of constructing more general knowledge about eras and ages but in the sense of curating memories. For him a place's history is its network of memories: "[Port William's] history was its living memory of itself, which passed over the years like a moving beam of light" (3). He rejects creation myths, origin theories, or teleological theories of progress or decline: "It had a beginning that it had forgotten, and would have an end that it did not know" (3). This history is passed through oral storytelling between people and across generations, leaving Port William with "little written history," and instead with networks of remembered stories of people, places, and events (3). This is where Jayber's narration intervenes: as curator of discrete stories of Port William, he can describe and clarify Port William's place in the political, economic, and agricultural changes of the 20th Century, understanding what has happened and is happening to it and intervening in the dominant historical understanding of this time, reframing this picture according to its impact on rural agrarian places, of which Port William serves as an example.

The memories that Jayber recalls fall into roughly two categories: memories that others have passed along to him and memories of his own experiences and observations. These taken together form the history of Port William: a coherent comprehension of Port William as a place, which then affords the possibility of interpretability, or understanding the interventions between national and systemic forces and the placed community of Port William. These remembered stories inundate the novel, as they are interpolated at frequent intervals in the main narrative of Jayber's resettlement in Port William and his unrequited but faithful love for Mattie Chatham. Because of this, I will focus on a few of these memories, namely Chapter 1 for Jayber's own memories and the transmitted memories of Mat Feltner, as exemplary cases while also considering the effect of incorporating so many seeming asides within the novel.

As one who attends to the words and practices of others as an embedded outsider, Jayber holds the recollected stories of others in his own memory, transmitting them to his own audience in his own recollections. He notes the special attention he pays to the older men that frequent his shop: these men are "rememberers, carrying in their living thoughts all the history that such places as Port William ever have" (126). Through these rememberers, Jayber "remember[s] old men who remembered the Civil War…hav[ing] in [his] mind word-of-mouth memories more than a hundred years old" (352). These men, both in the barbershop and in other public spaces, tell stories of themselves and of others they have known. Sometimes these men tell their stories as they come to them: Athey Keith, for example, tells his stories in fragments, picking them up *in medias res* as they come to his mind, leaving Jayber to put the fragments together (for example, a story of pseudo-Klansmen–who terrorize whiskey makers and drinkers instead Black people–interrupting a hog-killing that twelve-year-old Athey was charged to oversee). Some stories are told when landmarks evoke attached memories. These memories are predominantly transmitted spontaneously, requiring the attention and retention of Jayber to be preserved.

One such memory transmitted spontaneously is Mat Feltner's recollection of a Civil War era pair of siblings, Ive and Verna Rowanberry. Ive joined the Confederate Army with little political investment in their cause, but he is captured on the way to enlist and becomes embittered towards the Union during his prisoner of war internment. Verna, meanwhile, married a man who fought and died for the Union Army. These two siblings held a grudge against each other, never speaking to each other again until Ive passed her in a store and did not recognize her, asking the store clerk "Who was that old woman?" (203-04). This memory is evoked by Mat's ritual of cleaning up the graves of his family's deceased, particularly those who he knew personally or heard of through transmitted stories (201-02). Jayber collects, recollects, and

reflects upon this memory: surely, despite Ive and Verna's hatred, there was "somebody who loved them both" (205). While this family was fractured by hatred, they were still bound by the "membership" of Port William, the relational, "frayed and always fraying, incomplete and yet ever-holding bonds of the various sorts of affection," that create and constitute the place of Port William (205). Mat's remembering and transmitting this story, and Jayber's own remembrance and transmission, are their attempts at fidelity to description of the placehood–the identity of the place–of Port William that is constructed through its remembered people, places and practices, and the relational bonds of affection and responsibility created between these.

In addition to the memories of others, Jayber offers his own recollected memories, contributing to the network of living memory that constitutes the history of Port William. This begins in the first chapter, emphasizing this history-telling purpose in writing before taking up his narration of his own life. As we have seen, he has made a habit out of finding a vantage point from which to observe the town and pay attention to what he sees. Most of what he sees he does not transmit, but he does describe some "astonishing sights" (5). These astonishing sights are moments that stand out to him from within the ordinary life of the town. These are discrete memories with little superficial connection: a plumber pulls a prank on the town mechanic by sticking a plunger to his bald head; Fee Berlew, kicked out of his house for the night due to drunkenness, dances in the street and barely escapes being hit by a car; the son of the town banker uses his violin as a baseball bat on his way to violin lessons; an old man carries his few possessions between his adult daughters' houses, whom he stays with in rotation, himself being homeless; Fee Berlew is kicked out of Jayber's barbershop for (once again) drunken disorderliness and stands outside hurling insults all night until he is sober, then going back to reconcile with Jayber (5-8).

These “astonishing sights” erupt out of the ordinary forms of life of the place–a prank as one works in a mechanic shop, and a verbal altercation as another works in a barbershop; a pickup baseball game and music lessons–and out of the ordinary relations of the place–spouses, parents and children, teacher and student. This emphasis on the ordinary is far from nostalgic or utopic. Later stories contribute memories of injustices, evils, and griefs, such as the story of Ive and Verna or the memory of a lynching of a young Black servant (250). Instead, the emphasis here is on the prioritization of the relationships between people over time, their lives together of practices and language. This is most clearly demonstrated in the second memory of Fee Berlew, where he is thrown out of the barbershop. The insults he uses arise from his knowledge of Jayber’s past: he calls Jayber a “clabber-headed stray” and “an orphan three days shy of a bastard” (7). Jayber is, in fact, an orphan, as both his parents and his adoptive parents died when he was three and ten, respectively. He was, more or less, three days shy of a bastard: he notes that his parents’ marriage was a “have-to case,” that they married after becoming pregnant with him–which everybody knew and gossiped about, so Jayber knew of this from an early age, too (13). These insults from Fee are particularly mean because he knows Jayber well; a person can best insult those whom they best know. Yet Jayber’s knowledge of Fee affords the possibility of repair. This dynamic–hurt and repair within sustained relationships–constitutes the drama of most of the memories that Jayber recollects and transmits (we will turn to the main aberration from this in the next section). In transmitting his own recollections, Jayber offers his own contribution to the living memory of Port William, connecting his attention to his own life to the attention others give to their own lives in previous eras to further construct Port William’s history.

These memories, both his original and his secondhand (even thirdhand) stories, describe individual relationships and forms of life; however, the totality of memories, anthologized and presented as a whole by Crow, constitutes the network of placed relationships–between natural, social, and agricultural entities–that constitute Port William. Individual memories crowd around and sometimes crowd out Jayber's narration of his own life: characters are introduced into his narrative with a memory that introduces him; characters tell stories, and Jayber pauses his own narration to tell one, two, or more of these. They, plus Jayber's reflection, are vast in number, making a comprehensive analysis of all of them overwhelming. This sheer vastness of speech acts is reminiscent of what Serpell notices in her phenomenology of cliché: the effect of these semantically empty clichés, she argues, is achieved "by *gathering*" them, in "heaping" one upon another ad nauseam (174). As clichés are heaped, they impose their sheer quantity upon the interlocutor, "spilling beyond the bounds of communication" with "an insistent materiality" that impresses itself upon the interlocutor's affect (174). The work is done upon the hearer of clichés (when one uses them for manipulation, as in *The Killer Inside Me,* which Serpell analyzes) by quantity of words, not quality. Jayber's memories are, of course, more meaningful than well-rehearsed clichés–although he does hint at the regular rehearsal of the stories transmitted in the town, as well as his rehearsed reflection upon them (Berry, *Jayber Crow* 256, 16). The quantity of the stories, then, complements instead of replaces the semantic quality of them: each is meaningful on its own, and as a heap it is meaningful. This heap of stories–stories of forms of life and relationships and events within these relationships–are "link[ed] up, in Ricœur's words (*Memory, History, Forgetting* 4), to construct Port William as a natural-social-agricultural place, a network of the relations of members across all three of these realms across time. The history, the "living memory of itself," is this gathering and arranging of the memories, of which Jayber

faithfully (albeit by his own description incompletely [13]) describes and arranges. In short, this recollected, gathered, arranged network of memories is the disclosure of Port William as a place, comprehended as a whole from disparate events happening in place.

With this disclosure of the place is the disclosure of its horizon, which foregrounds the sustenance and repair (i.e., the health) of symbiotic, responsible relationships within and across the natural, social, and agricultural realms. It foregrounds independence from other places and interdependence upon members to meet the places needs, as much as possible. It backgrounds, then, the imagined communities of national culture and economics, accessing these only as mediated through the community–in stores like Othy's for instance. It has its own blind spots, such as the inability to consistently extend equality to its Black members, or the lack of foresight to see its own demise in modernity and act against it (Berry, *Jayber Crow* 121, 279). However, as we will see in the next section, what it does see and concern itself with sits in the background of the horizon of the minds behind economic and technological innovators that foreground a homogenized national progress.

Port William and the Nation: Placed Reading as Intervention

Thus far, I have outlined the objective aspect of Jayber's curated, organized recollection of the living memory of Port William. These stories are held together for him as a comprehended whole, open for close reading, analysis, and critique, if he (or us, as readers) would like. Yet, as I argue in my previous chapter, literary works also have a subjective aspect, intervening in the state of affairs of a reader's place through a fusion of horizons, enacting in the act of reading. As Ricœur argues, interpretation is "an act of the text" ("What is a Text?" 150). The act of Jayber's anthology of Port William's memory is its intervention in the picture of twentieth century

history–that is, the dominant remembered and told configuration of technological and political events and their consequences for the world. This dominant picture foregrounds a universalized notion of national progress, which primarily denotes unlimited economic growth. In place of this universalizing picture, Jayber interprets these events from his limited position, describing this progress through their effect on Port William. This, in turn, becomes Berry's own intervention in this same history: in creating a fictional but realistic rural Kentucky town, he offers this place as an example of such rural agrarian Southern towns, fusing the horizons of such rural farming communities with that of a hegemonic political discourse that has constructed a homogenized national history. Jayber, as an ordinary placed reader, describes this fusion by interpreting national history through the consequences for and responses of his local place.

Jayber fuses the national and local horizons across several distinct but interrelated historical themes: war, changes in agricultural ideology and practice, developments in interstate travel, economic practice, and policy. Each of these spans across the interlocked natural, social, and agricultural realms. For the purposes of this analysis, I will focus on the fusion of horizons regarding developments in interstate travel in the twentieth century, which Crow connects to the causes and consequences of interstate travel. Jayber interprets these developments in their consequences for the natural, social, and agricultural life of Port William, intervening in pictures that frame these as national progress.

Translocal travel is, in Jayber's youth and before, relatively limited, creating a Port William that is both relatively independent and self-sustaining and constrained by the limits of its environment. Port William's connection to the wider world in Jayber's youth is primarily determined by the Kentucky River. He recognizes that, at the time he begins barbering, Port William is relatively self-sufficient: "the people of the town still belonged to it, economically

and otherwise" (Berry, *Jayber Crow* 4). Its source of economic and cultural connection to the wider world is the Kentucky River. Aunt Cordie and Uncle Othy run a store at a landing, selling goods that could not be produced locally (20). These goods are brought to Squires Landing by steamboats that travel the Kentucky River. Alongside these goods, travelers from all over the region and country pass through, as well as troupes of musicians and actors (18-19). The river is for Port William "a barrier and yet a connection": while it brings goods and culture from the wider world, it also protects the self-sustenance of Port William, requiring the town to produce a majority of its own food and culture (18). The river "shape[s] the land," determining the possibilities and limitations for translocal forms of life (18). There are roads that enable this connection to the wider world; Port Williamite Sam Hanks is driving fattened hogs to market in Lexington when Jayber hitches a ride with him (57). However, the use of these roads is subjected to the natural landscape: roads typically go from the river to the town to bring things from the river to the town, and vice versa, the river being the road that connects communities (166).

The Kentucky River and the natural landscape of Kentucky limit Port William's access to other places and, therefore, limit its dependence on other places, allowing it to cultivate its own networks, forms of life, and language-games in response to its own particular needs and concerns. Because of this, it retains its history (as we have already seen), its dialect (127), its music (128), and its leisurely entertainment (166). The local is foregrounded, and the national (the "imagined" [Anderson 6]) is mediated to people through the local. In its picture of the world, the health of the community (both its human and nonhuman members) is foregrounded and protected.

These networks and forms of life are what Jayber attends to as Port William encounters the forces of homogenization and nationalization that promise possibilities of identity

construction that transcend the limitations of one's local place. Two pictures of the world–on the one hand Port William, with its own horizon and concerns, and on the other hand the national economy with its own horizon and concerns–are pitted against each other in the development and refinement of interstate infrastructure and vehicles. Jayber does not refute the picture of this economic system with propositions or theories of mass transit; instead, he describes its consequences upon the people and networks within his place, intervening in the assumptions implicit in this universalizing, homogenizing picture: the assumption that this new mode of economic and cultural connectivity–and the new modes of limitless identity construction it affords–is equally progress for Americans everywhere. Jayber interprets these developments according to their consequences for this relatively independent, self-sustaining national-social-agricultural place.

The promise of transcendent identity construction implicit in this new mode of travel is alluring to many young Port Williamites, Jayber included. Jayber describes the effect that the expansion of cars and roads has on the ways that Port Williamites spend their weekend nights. After World War II, a road is constructed that goes from Port William to the larger Hargrave, replacing the time-consuming method of riding a boat on the river to travel from one to the other (Berry, *Jayber Crow* 166). Because of this, the region "open[s] up," allowing much quicker travel between the two (166). The result is that younger Port Williamites go to Hargrave for weekend leisure, displacing the "old homemade Saturday nights" of Port William for an otherwise-placed source of leisure (166). Jayber is initially allured by this promise as well, despite his earlier contentment with his placement in Port William. He justifies his participation in this because he wishes to go where he can transcend his "ineligibility" with which Port William has classified him and actualize his "waking dreams" of romantic and sexual

involvement with women (171). This hope for transcendence leads Jayber to go beyond the limits of his place, utilizing translocal travel to do this. However, this illusion is shattered when he sees Troy cheating on Mattie (the woman whom Jayber secretly loves) at a Hargrave Christmas party. He already deeply dislikes Troy, whom he knows is using heavy machinery to destroy the farm that his father-in-law has passed on to him, arrogantly chasing dreams of wealth at the expense of his family and his land. When Jayber sees Troy in Hargrave, he recognizes that Troy, like himself, is a "dreamer" that neglects fidelity to his family or to his farm in order to chase desires beyond the limitations and needs of his place–a dreaming that brought both of them to Hargrave and away from Port William (241). He knows from seeing the destruction that Troy's dreaming has wrought on his farm that technology-enabled transcendence is a possible danger to the health of Port William, Therefore, he swears off this dreaming, leaving his car in Hargrave and never owning one again (254). He recognizes that he is eschewing progress, but instead he allows Port William and the larger world to grow back to the proportions of his childhood, with Port William foregrounded and the national backgrounded (254).

In his commitment to Port William, he reinterprets the interstate system according to its consequences for Port William. Free from his own illusions of transcendence, he sees clearly some of the byproducts of interstate travel: while an individual can construct their identity limitlessly, a place with limited resources and a lack of adaptability is destroyed, losing whatever self-sustenance and independence it once had. He characterizes these roads similarly to "The War" and "The Economy," which he calls "freestanding creatures" and "independent operators" (273). This free, independent entity destroys the Port William in which Jayber is embedded, unraveling its local networks. Jayber describes natural destruction: "It [the interstate] interrupted the flow of water through the veins of the rock. … Big bulldozers cut the land away down to the

rock. Power drills bit into the rock. Explosions cracked and shook the rock and the pieces were hauled away" (281). The roads once were subject to the limits of the river and the landscape, but now the natural world is subjected to the road that is "a great stroke of pure geometry cut through the country" (281). He describes social dissolvement: "It divided neighbor from neighbor. It made distant what had been close, and close what had been distant" (281). As young people pursue opportunities beyond Port William, businesses and farms shut down because younger people that might continue their work are leaving to move elsewhere, choosing high-pay and low-responsibility work over modest work that is committed to the needs of Port William (274). He describes agricultural degradation: "The interstate cut through farms" in the same way that it cut through the river (281). It allows citizens of Louisville to recreate Port William as a suburb with housing developments, driving up the cost of farmland (282). The history of Port William is erased "This one, this great casting away of the earth, respected no presence, no limits. It remembered nothing. …Places where lives had been lived disappeared from the face of the world forever" (281). The transcendence and limitless growth that ease of interstate travel promises leaves Port William unable to sustain independent natural, social, and agricultural networks.

Jayber's horizon, which foregrounds Port William's natural-social-agricultural health, fuses with the horizon of powerful political and economic institutions, which foregrounds subjective individuality and the maximization of financial profit and individual autonomy. With this horizon people might throw off the concerns of their place and construct themselves through an array of choices beyond what their place offers. This horizon relegates the health of particular natural-social-agricultural places to the background. Jayber intervenes in this relegation by describing what he sees: a force of homogenization destroying unique placed communities. He

does not negate this other horizon with any sort of generalities about the interstate system or theories of nationalism or capitalism; he does not abstract Port William's condition into a statement about rurality or agriculture. He discloses Port William, a place with its own networks and forms of life, to his readers as an example of a place that is displaced and dissolved by the technologies of the twentieth century.

Importantly, these consequences are not hidden or repressed. These consequences are clear, in plain view of those attentive to the place. Port William's old men watch it happen, as construction workers flippantly dispose of expensive and perfectly usable machinery that slows their progress (281). Milo Settle experiences it whenever his Port William store has its supply of gasoline discontinued in favor of interstate gas stations (282). To the Port Williamites, (to use Wittgenstein's words), "nothing is hidden" (Moi, "'Nothing is Hidden'" 36); the consequences are not covert, only unacknowledged. Jayber, by describing these developments from an embedded position, invites his interlocutors to acknowledge what is happening, confronting the dominant horizon's refusal to see what is lost in its picture of progress.

Again, this intervention does not replace or negate any theories of progress. It does not make Port William the center of any picture of the world, except to its own members. Jayber does not castigate cities or governments *per se*, only inasmuch as they might make themselves a center for everyone else. Instead, Port William, as a fictional but realistic Kentucky town, serves as an example of the consequences of these developments. It bids otherwise placed readers to acknowledge the consequences for small Kentucky towns similar to Port William, allowing these places' picture of progress to intervene and reconfigure their understanding of such 20th Century developments as the interstate system and the impact on their own communities of these same developments. It joins other interventions from other places that might have similar or markedly

different experiences, opening up space for acknowledging the different pictures of these 20th Century developments in a plurality of intervention in the universalized picture of 20th Century progress.

Jayber's shift from displaced, disengaged reader to placed reader affords him the possibility of interpretation and advocacy that would be obscured by displacement: a clear view of the changes to a place as forces of a nationalized economy and culture reconfigure its life and networks. His subjectivity and his limited viewpoint–which, we must remember, is continually augmented with the literature he reads–enables responsible, affectionate attention to the changes to Port William that cannot be detected by powers that can only view Port William as "a black period about the size of the one that ends a sentence" (139). From here he can see and remember Port William, offering a retelling of the twentieth century to intervene in the dominant picture of history. He stands as an exemplary reader of one's ordinary place that resists the impulse towards disengaged, disembodied critique that constructs homogenizing all-encompassing theories as a goal for reading and interpreting.

ORDINARY PLACED READING IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

In devoting the previous chapter to describing Jayber's position and practices of interpretation, I am aware that I have not enacted the dialectical regionalism which I delineated in Chapter Two, which calls for describing the intervention between the work's place and the reader's place. While I do not embark on that particular adventure of reading, as Moi calls it, I hope here instead to briefly describe the trailhead of such an endeavor–that is, the line of inquiry with which this interpretive practice begins.

My attraction to this novel is, I confess, largely due to my self-recognition in the self and world Berry depicts here. Recognition, Felski notes, is a potent (albeit, theorists have shown, fallible) means by which literature intervenes in a person's or community's state of affairs (*Uses* 23-50). While Felski focuses the phenomenon of recognition on the personal and social levels, one can recognize their place in the ecological and agricultural realms as well. In *Jayber Crow,* the relationships between towns and cities in a region that are reconfigured by the highway system are recognizable to many who have grown up in rural American communities. My own birthplace–Neosho, in Southwest Missouri–bears many similarities in this way to Port William: it is connected by Interstate 49 to Joplin, a larger town where many Neosho residents go to spend their money and leisure time. Joplin, in turn, is connected to Springfield by Interstate 44, where the major state university of Southern Missouri (Missouri State) is located. Larger still is Kansas City and St. Louis, where many who go to Missouri State move after graduating, if, of course, they remain in state. This parallel configuration–Port William-Hargrave-Lexington-Louisville and Neosho-Joplin-Springfield-Kansas City–is recognizable to me; Berry's intervention, then, is reframing the multistep ascendency from Neosho/Port William to Kansas City/Louisville (a path

usually framed with the free entrepreneurial subject in the foreground) to put rural communal health in the foreground, reframing the Interstate system according to its consequences for Port William/Neosho instead of the opportunities afforded for Jayber/Ozark residents looking for advancement. This reframing is not a conclusive judgment on the Interstate system; it does, however, complicate the narrative of economic progress for both the nation and for individual subjects, giving a fuller picture of what might be lost in our quest for progress, and the costs of losing such things. This isn't to say the only way to live ethically is to stay in the town of one's birth. It is to say, however, that only with this fuller picture might one responsibly make choices about where they go or stay and how they engage with the community in which they live, asking of new technology Berry's question, "What will this do to our community?" alongside questions of what it can do for one's own goals of self-advancement ("Out of Your Car" 20).

In intervening thus, Berry's work calls for a response, in the form of acknowledgement or dismissal. This responsive reading is what Cavell and Moi call for in the practice of acknowledgement, of responding to what one sees in the action of the other (Moi, *Revolution* 205). Literary scholars might acknowledge this intervention in their own writing and teaching: in writing by describing the fusion of the novel's horizon and their own place's horizon regarding the concerns of the text (e.g., interstate travel and community dissolution), illuminating the way it reframes what is happening in the scholar's community; in teaching by challenging students in literature classrooms to rethink the logic of rural-to-urban (to suburban?) mobility through the literature that they read in literature programs. The responses are varied, by scholar, by place, and by historical moment, but as Berry intervenes in the logic of interstate mobility in *Jayber Crow,* a literary scholar reading in the spirit of OLP might acknowledge the intervention of the literary work in the world with their own response.

The question which I have been attempting to answer in my analysis of Moi's Ordinary Language Philosophy and Berry's attention to place is Felski's "how else might we read if we were not ordained to read suspiciously" ("Suspicious Minds" 232)? I considered three features of social and political formations in the twenty-first century that critique, dominated by suspicious hermeneutics, often struggles to adequately respond to: post-normative neoliberalism, Far-Right appropriation of suspicion, and self-consciously visible political violence. I am under no illusion that ordinary placed reading or a dialectical regionalism will solve these challenges completely, as though all we have been missing in the fight against neoliberalism and aggressively regressive politics is to give better attention to place or region. Nor do I think this is the only generative mode of reading: as I have said, there is still much to be suspicious of, and therefore immense utility and vitality in suspicious hermeneutics. I also recognize the ongoing merit of trustful hermeneutics and strands of postcritique besides those using OLP. However, I think that a turn towards reading in place and towards picturing texts as actions in the world holds promise in rethinking our engagement with these challenges.

Post-Normative Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism, in its post-normative formation, primarily tasks itself with clearing away inhibition and intervention from the social field in order to let the profit motive reign. Individual persons, conceiving of themselves as free entrepreneurial subjects, are empowered to self-consciously construct their identities through amassing as many relevant skills and relationships as possible out of the wide array of passive objects in order to maximize their own version of profit (Greenwald Smith). For neoliberals, "your network is your net worth" (Gale); that is, one

finds success in one's ability to attach to themselves as many advantageous objects (skills, technologies, persons) as possible.

Huehls argues that, since suspicious critique offers little in the way of truly dismantling this ontological-administrative formation, critical theorists and literary authors instead might (and, at least among some authors, have already begun to) accept the notion that meaning (even for literature) is, in the neoliberal age, bound up in where and to whom something is transmitted. Accepting this, they might strategically embed themselves as actors within the social field, making meaning through the transmission and attachment of language and literature within networks (in the Latourian sense of including human and nonhuman actors) instead of through disengagement and representation. From here, authors and critics might give attention to networks that already exist and strategically reconfigure/reconstruct their own networks in order to enact progressive ends of collective justice, equity, and holistic health: "Initial steps [to effect meaningful resistance to neoliberalism] might include altering the given configuration of specific social, economic, and cultural formations; rearranging the established distribution of bodies; and reshaping geographies of inclusion and exclusion" (Huehls 19). The paradigm for this is the politician who connects across party and special interest lines for small, successive, compromising progressive steps rather than the revolutionary who separates from the world in order to offer polemic and utopic demands (21). The end goal for the revolutionary and the politician might be the same, but one works from disengagement and the other from embeddedness and network connections. While the embedded critic-activist might risk complicity with neoliberalism, Huehls argues that unworking neoliberalism will likely come via configuring networks and alliances through neoliberal entrepreneurialism that unravel neoliberalism from within (19).

Ordinary Language Philosophy in many ways contributes to this strategic work. By treating literature as language-games within the world, it pictures texts not just as actions but actors which readers may attach to themselves and use, in neoliberal fashion, for certain ends. The literary work, in turn, might be said to use readers, in the sense that an author's vision of particular social formations and practices are enacted in the world through the reader whose aims are reshaped by the literature. All of this is contingent upon the choice of the self-constructed entrepreneurial subject to attach the work to their network identity.

Ordinary placed reading offers a tangible site for these attempts at reconfiguring networks towards progressive ends. I have advocated here for a turn towards literary and cultural studies that embraces the relatively limited position within a natural-social-agricultural place and analyzes both literature and social formations from that place's horizon. This turn necessitates scholars' enmeshment in communities, which acknowledges community members as subject-object hybrids. Indeed, the neoliberal free entrepreneurial subject and the neoliberal homogenized cog-in-the-machine object, the two purified ontological poles between which neoliberalism vacillates, can only remain purified when persons are abstracted from placed communities. Embeddedness in place, with longstanding ecological, social and agricultural relations, enables one to see the ways these relations construct persons as both subjects and objects, as "subjects and participants in the town's ever-continuing conversation about itself" (Berry, *Jayber Crow* 121). Jayber is never in doubt that he is both subjective actor and acted-upon object within the network that is Port William, and, as we have seen, it is precisely as this embedded hybrid being that his own epistemological endeavors can be undertaken. The emphasis on place prevents an ontological craving for generality that abstracts people into subjects and objects, instead formulating an ontology that takes environmental and social

particulars into account. Literary and cultural theorists might similarly do their critical work from within their own place through forging networks there, within the university and within the wider natural-social-agricultural community. This work is, of course, already starting to happen, as English departments take works formerly considered "low culture" as objects of study or study literature interdisciplinarily, in dialogue with medicine, science, or the environment. This work, however, can be further turned toward the local, as literary theorists build new networks of attachments within the ordinary life and networks of actors in a place.

From these attachments, new, surprising connections and avenues of transmission might be made. Scholars bring literature and cultural critique with them, meaning that, through the connections they develop, literary works might be transmitted to community members, intervening in members' understandings of their ecology, of their buying and spending choices, or of the marginalized members of the community. At the same time, these connections allow the transmission of local knowledge and forms of life that might intervene in the theorist's readings of literature and culture. This forging of these networks would require theorists to accept a hybrid critical position, giving up the view from nowhere and embracing a place within the community. However, in trading this disengaged position for an embedded position and reconfiguring networks for transmitting the knowledge gained from literary and cultural studies, I believe, as Huehls suggests, that such reconfigurations, while risking complicity with the entrepreneurial ontology of neoliberalism (or appearing resigned to incrementalism), can create surprising networks for the transmission of literature, critical theory, and local knowledge, which can create new, insightful, transformative readings of literature and culture for unworking the destructive consequences of neoliberalism, White supremacy, nationalism, and more.

Far-Right Suspicion and High Visibility Violence

In two distinct but complementary moves, the Far Right and, increasingly, mainstream conservatism have embraced its own version of suspicious hermeneutics and have embraced high visibility displays of political violence. These two often form a vicious circle: domestic terrorists often embrace conspiracy theories to justify their actions, and conservative politicians equivocate on rather clear causes and motivations behind these acts. These two together constitute what Moi calls the "difficulty of reality," a term from Cora Diamond describing "something we can't express in words," something that one experiences but finds difficult to put into adequate descriptive language (*Revolution* 232).

Moi's response to this difficulty is to cultivate a "just and loving gaze" that attempts to accurately describe reality, to "see the world as it is" (228). The act of writing is the putting into words what one sees from this gaze and the invitation for others to see the same thing in the same way (226). This commitment to accurate description is "an act of resistance" against powerful persons and institutions that proliferate empty and equivocating language to confuse and manipulate the public, even inciting people to acts of terrorism (242). Through close attention to the particulars of language use and accurate descriptions of particular events and practices, we might begin to undercut the difficulties of reality posed by doublespeak and by unspeakable violence.

This attentive description is further able to cut against double assault on reality and language by twenty-first century Far Right politics when it is aimed at the life of particular places. It rejects the insistence upon depth-meanings by emphasizing the evident violence and subjection enacted in one's place, by taking seriously Wittgenstein's argument that "nothing is hidden" (Moi, "'Nothing is Hidden'" 36). The subjection of particular people and particular

places in neoliberal capitalism is not hidden to those who attend to their own place, as Berry's careful attention to Kentucky demonstrates. The attention to place–and the attention to others' descriptions of their places–holds the possibility of undermining the deluge of talk emanating from nowhere and speaking for everywhere. This commitment to realism can offer clear descriptions of what is happening where and to whom, inviting people to look and see reality in place of the unreality created by unchecked suspicion.

Furthermore, in connecting to and working alongside members of one's place, one might undermine the suspicion leveled against the Left by the Right. In the turn towards place, we might make neighbors out of those who are paranoid of progressive aims. The turn towards place and towards the ordinary offers an alternative to the asocial tendencies of suspicious critique. As long as critics and English departments remain cloistered, we will struggle to endear ourselves to communities whose only picture of our work is painted by the Charlie Kirks of the world. In an ordinary placed reading, we might better formulate a vision for the progress of particular places, enabling the university, and literature departments in particular, to be part of their place and repair its relationship with its place.

In his ban on conventional critical practices for those reading his novel, Berry invites literary critics and scholars into a new way of reading not just his work but literature and culture more broadly. He invites us to consider what might happen if we rethink our commitment to suspicion and the assumption that unmitigated suspicion is the key towards unworking social inequities and ecological degradation that persist 150 years into suspicious hermeneutics. As we reconsider the possibilities for reading, we might embody Berry's own place-oriented ethic, reading from a commitment to the ordinary networks and the life of particular natural-social-agricultural places, prioritizing the ways that the horizons of particular places intervene in the

horizons of our own place and in the horizons of national and global discourses. This ordinary placed reading, instead of limiting our critical freedom, might offer new questions and answers from which to move beyond the limits of critique that so often prevent literature and critique from meaning within the world. The work to undoing the dire problems of our day is, of course, a massive task, but we must also consider the ways that our own places might prepare themselves to live in the national and global systems we hope to recreate and what our own communities need to respond to and resist the well-funded and well-oiled machines of abstraction and homogenization. We might, with Berry, know our world from within our own places, "find[ing it] still satisfyingly large and still full of beguiling nooks and crannies," and find a new freedom in attention to the ordinary ("Out of Your Car" 21).

NOTES

[1] Of course, disability, which profoundly reconfigures the "normal" natural body, can be the condition of possibility that reconfigures the social practice. Until the practice is reconfigured, though, the person either does the task in a different way or is excluded from the form of life.

[2] This phrase will be my shorthand for a holistic understanding of particular geographic communities. "Natural" encompasses wilderness and wildlife; "social" encompasses human-to-human community, including cultural, political, economic, familial, etc. relations; "agricultural" primarily encompasses farming and ranching ecologies, which include food and clothing production. Berry argues that "eating is an agricultural act" ("Pleasures of Eating" 143). And, I think he would agree, so is clothing oneself. However a town or city gets food is part of its agricultural life; a lack or neglect for local agriculture is, of course, part of the agricultural dimension of a place. I acknowledge how fraught each of these terms are; their complicated nature is meant to be fully imported into the analyses of particular places. I acknowledge, further, that these are not parsed so easily: the natural and the agricultural are, of course conditioned by the social, and the social is, to an extent, always bounded by the natural.

[3] This also frees the critic from any need to construct a so-called ideal reader. Inasmuch as a critic is attentive to their community's concerns and the text's concerns, they are ideal, meaning that they are responsible to work and place, giving a voice that can stand alongside other voices as examples of responses, instead of seeking and embodying a single ideal reader.

[4] I do not wish to convey a simple, linear process. This process, as readers of difficult texts know, may frustrate and confuse readers over many years, as a reader's knowledge and concerns change or as they realize a long-held thought about the text was wrong or shortsighted. This is much like the nature of adventures as it is: a simple hike in the woods and, say, climbing the Seven Summits, while both adventures, vary greatly in duration and difficulty–one might even fail in their adventure. The adventure of reading is much the same way.

[5] Ricœur, fittingly, calls the act of interpretation "appropriation," with its three senses of (1) understanding oneself, (2) "overcoming [the] cultural distance" between reader and text, and (3) enacting the text in the reader's own discourse ("What is a Text?" 145-46).

WORKS CITED

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. Verso, 1993.

Anker, Elizabeth S., and Rita Felski. "Introduction." *Critique and Postcritique,* edited by Elizabeth Anker and Rita Felski, Duke UP, 2017, 1-28.

Austin, J.L. *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford UP, 1962.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays.* Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. U of Texas P, 1992.

Barta-Smith, Nancy. "Nurturing the Earth: Mixing Metaphors in Wendell Barry's Jayber Crow and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy." *Literature, Writing, and the Natural World,* edited by James Guignard and T. P. Murphy, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009, pp. 48–68.

"Barth in Retirement." *Time*, Time Inc., 31 May 1963, content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,896838,00.html.

Begley, Sarah. "Wendell Berry Discusses His Book and Future of American Land." *Time*, Time, 26 Oct. 2017, time.com/4998280/wendell-berry/.

Berry, Wendell. "A Citizen's Response." *Wendell Berry: Essays 1993-2017*, edited by Jack Shoemaker, The Library of America, 2019, 239-255.

---. "Farming Without Farmers: If Industrial Agriculture Empties Farms of Farmers, Who Will Care for the Land?" *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 19 Mar. 2015, www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2015/03/farmland-without-farmers/388282/.

---. "Feminism, the Body, and the Machine." *The World-Ending Fire: The Essential Wendell Berry*, Counterpoint, 2018, 242-259.

---. *The Hidden Wound.* Counterpoint, 2010.

---. "In Defense of Literacy." *The World-Ending Fire: The Essential Wendell Berry*, Counterpoint, 2018, 292-295.

---. "In Distrust of Movements." *The World-Ending Fire: The Essential Wendell Berry*, Counterpoint, 2018, 282-291.

---. *Jayber Crow: A Novel.* Counterpoint, 2000.

---. “The Loss of the University.” *Home Economics: Fourteen Essays*, North Point Press, 1987, 76-97.

---. “Out of Your Car, Off Your Horse.” *Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community: Eight Essays*, Pantheon Books, 1993, 19-26.

---. “Peaceableness Toward Enemies.” *Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community: Eight Essays,* Pantheon Books, 1993, 69-92.

---. “The Pleasures of Eating.” *The World-Ending Fire: The Essential Wendell Berry,* Counterpoint, 2018, 143-150.

---. “The Regional Motive.” *A Continuous Harmony: Essays Cultural and Agricultural*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972, 63-70.

---. “Sex, Economy, Freedom, and Community.” *Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community: Eight Essays,* Pantheon Books, 1993, 117-173.

---. *Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community: Eight Essays.* Pantheon Books, 1993.

---. “A Statement Against the War in Vietnam.” *The Long-Legged House*, paperback ed., Shoemaker and Hoard, 2004, 64-75.

---. “Think Little.” *A Continuous Harmony: Essays Cultural and Agricultural*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972, 71-85.

---. “Word and Flesh.” *The World-Ending Fire: The Essential Wendell Berry*, Counterpoint, 2018, 228-233.

---. “Writer and Region.” *The World-Ending Fire: The Essential Wendell Berry*, Counterpoint, 2018, 81-97.

Best, Stephen, and Sharon Marcus. “Surface Reading: An Introduction.” *Representations,* vol. 108, no. 1, Fall 2009, pp. 1–21. *EBSCOhost*, doi.org/10.1525/rep.2009.108.1.1.

Brown, Wendy. "Neo-liberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy." *Theory & Event*, vol. 7 no. 1, 2003. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/tae.2003.0020.

Browning, Kellen. “The Gunman Broadcast the Attack on a Livestreaming Site.” *The New York Times,* The New York Times Company, 14 May 2022, www.nytimes.com/2022/05/14/nyregion/twitch-buffalo-shooting.html.

Burkemper, Elizabeth, and David C. Mahan. “The Wind’s Prayer, the World’s Sabbath: Spirit and Place in Lance Henson and Wendell Berry.” *Religions*, vol. 12, no. 9, Sept. 2021, pp. 1–12. *EBSCOhost*, doi.org/10.3390/rel12090697.

Christianity and Literature, special issue: Wendell Berry, vol. 56, no. 2, Winter 2007.

Dery, Mark. “A Close Reading of the Qanon Shaman's Conspiracy Manifesto.” *Literary Hub,* LitHub, 15 Nov. 2021, www.lithub.com/a-close-reading-of-the-qanon-shamans-conspiracy-manifesto/.

Eco, Umberto. “Ur-Fascism.” *The New York Review of Books*, 22 June 1995, www.nybooks.com/articles/1995/06/22/ur-fascism/.

Esolen, Anthony. “If Dante Were a Kentucky Barber.” *The Humane Vision of Wendell Berry*, edited by Mark T. Mitchell and Nathan Schlueter, Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI), 2011, pp. 255–74.

Felski, Rita. “After Suspicion.” *Profession*, 2009, pp. 28–35. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/25595909.

---. *The Limits of Critique.* U of Chicago P, 2015.

---. "Postcritical Reading." *American Book Review*, vol. 38 no. 5, 2017, p. 4-5. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/abr.2017.0077.

---. “Suspicious Minds.” *Poetics Today,* vol. 32, no. 2, 2011, pp. 215–34. *EBSCOhost*, doi.org/10.1215/03335372-1261208.

---. *Uses of Literature.* Blackwell, 2008.

Filipiak, Jeffrey. “The Work of Local Culture: Wendell Berry and Communities as the Source of Farming Knowledge.” *Agricultural History*, vol. 85, no. 2, 2011, pp. 174–94. *JSTOR*, doi.org/10.3098/ah.2011.85.2.174.

Filipova, Lenka. *Ecocriticism and the Sense of Place.* Routledge, 2021.

Fiskio, Janet. “Unsettling Ecocriticism: Rethinking Agrarianism, Place, and Citizenship.” *American Literature,* vol. 84, Jan. 2012, pp. 301–25. *EBSCOhost*, doi.org/10.1215/00029831-1587359.

Freyfogle, Eric. “Wendell Berry and the Limits of Populism.” *Wendell Berry: Life and Work*, edited by Jason Peters, The UP of Kentucky, 2007, 173-191.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method.* Seabury Press, 1975.

Gale, Porter. *Your Network Is Your Net Worth: Unlock the Hidden Power of Connections for Wealth, Success, and Happiness in the Digital Age*. Atria Books, 2013.

Giroux, Henry A. *Disturbing Pleasures: Learning Popular Culture*. Routledge, 1994.

Gladwell, Malcolm. “Thresholds of Violence: How School Shootings Spread.” *The New Yorker,* Condé Nast, 12 Oct. 2015, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/10/19/thresholds-of-violence.

Greenwald Smith, Rachel. “Six Propositions on Compromise Aesthetics.” *The Account: A Journal of Poetry, Prose, and Thought*, The Account, 2014, theaccountmagazine.com/article/six-propositions-on-compromise-aesthetics/.

Gustafson, Hans S. “Sacramental Spirituality in *The Brothers Karamazov* and Wendell Berry’s Port William Characters.” *Literature and Theology*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2013, pp. 345–63. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23926910.

Heschel, Abraham J. *The Prophets: An Introduction.* Harper & Row, 1962.

Hill, Bailee. “Parents Outraged over Disney's Pushback on Florida Parental Rights Law: 'Leave the Kids Alone'.” *Fox News,* FOX News Network, 31 Mar. 2022, www.foxnews.com/media/woke-disney-desantis-florida-parental-rights-outrage.

Hönnighausen, Lothar. “Ecopoetics: On Poetological Poems by Gary Snyder and Wendell Berry.” *Poetica*, vol. 28, no. 3/4, 1996, pp. 356–67. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/43028111.

Huehls, Mitchum. *After Critique: Twenty-First-Century Fiction in a Neoliberal Age.* Oxford UP, 2016.

Klotter, James C., and Craig Thompson Friend. *A New History of Kentucky.* The UP of Kentucky, 2018.

Kuriakose, Leena P. “A Culture of Agriculture for Sustainable Prosperity: A Prophetic Voice of Wendell Berry.” *Journal of Dharma*, vol. 46, no. 3, 2021, pp. 327–44.

Lambert, Christina J. “‘Beside This Corrupt and Holy Stream’: Sacramental Water in Wendell Berry’s Jayber Crow.” *Christianity & Literature,* vol. 70, no. 4, Dec. 2021, pp. 439–55.

Latour, Bruno. “Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern.” *Critical Inquiry,* vol. 30, no. 2, 2004, pp. 225–48. JSTOR, doi.org/10.1086/421123.

Ledford, Katherine, et al. “Wendell Berry 1934–.” *Writing Appalachia: An Anthology*, The UP of Kentucky, 2020.

Major, William. “Wendell Berry and the Affective Turn.” *Affective Ecocriticism: Emotion, Embodiment, Environment*, edited by Kyle Bladow and Jennifer Ladino, U of Nebraska P, 2018, pp. 117–32.

Mannon, Ethan. “Leisure and Technology in Port William: Wendell Berry’s Revelatory Fiction.” *The Mississippi Quarterly,* vol. 67, no. 2, 2014, pp. 171–92. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/26467969.

Maxson, Helen. “Balance and Boundaries: Literary Allusion in Fiction by Wendell Berry.” *CEA Critic*, vol. 73, no. 2, 2011, pp. 101–25. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/44378446.

Meehan, Sean Ross. “Environment of Liberal Education: Emerson, Berry, and the Rhetoric of Commonplaces.” *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment,* vol. 26, no. 2, 2019, pp. 358–78. *EBSCOhost*, doi.org/10.1093/isle/isz017.

Moi, Toril. “The Adventure of Reading: Literature and Philosophy, Cavell and Beauvoir.” *Literature and Theology*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2011, pp. 125–40. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23927546.

---. “‘Nothing is Hidden’: From Confusion to Clarity; or, Wittgenstein on Critique.” *Critique and Postcritique,* edited by Elizabeth Anker and Rita Felski, Duke UP, 2017, 31-49.

---. *Revolution of the Ordinary: Literary Studies After Wittgenstein, Austin, and Cavell.* U of Chicago P, 2017.

---. “‘They Practice Their Trades in Different Worlds’: Concepts in Poststructuralism and Ordinary Language Philosophy.” *New Literary History,* vol. 40, no. 4, May 2010, pp. 801–24. *EBSCOhost*, doi.org/10.1353/nlh.0.0131.

Oehlschlager, Fritz. *The Achievement of Wendell Berry: The Hard History of Love.* The UP of Kentucky, 2011.

Peck, David. “Regional Short Fiction.” *Salem Press Encyclopedia of Literature,* 2022.

Ricœur, Paul. *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation.* Yale UP , 1970.

---. *Memory, History, Forgetting.* Translated by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer. U of Chicago P, 2004.

---. “What is a Text?” *Mythic-Symbolic Language and Philosophical Anthropology: A Constructive Interpretation of the Thought of Paul Ricœur.* edited by David M. Rasmussen, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1971, 135-150.

Robinson, David M. “Wilderness and the Agrarian Principle: Gary Snyder, Wendell Berry, and the Ethical Definition of the ‘Wild.’” *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1999, pp. 15–27. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/44070385.

Ronnevik, Andrew. “An Earthly Heaven: The Eschatology of Wendell Berry’s Jayber Crow.” *Perspectives in Religious Studies,* vol. 48, no. 1, Spring 2021, pp. 39–56.

Schreck, Jane M. “Wendell Berry on Education: A Cultural Inheritance of Care.” *Educational Studie*s, vol. 55, no. 3, May 2019, pp. 315–26. *EBSCOhost*, doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2019.1605367.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Duke UP, 2003.

Serpell, C. Namwali. “A Heap of Cliché.” *Critique and Postcritique,* edited by Elizabeth Anker and Rita Felski, Duke UP, 2017, 153-182.

Serwer, Adam. “The Cruelty Is the Point.” *The Atlantic,* Atlantic Media Company, 25 Nov. 2019, www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/10/the-cruelty-is-the-point/572104/.

Smith, Larry E., and Cecil L. Nelson. “International Intelligibility of English: Directions and Resources.” *World Englishes,* Volume 4, Issue 3, 1985, pp. 333-342, *EBSCOhost*, doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-971x.1985.tb00423.x

Snauwaert, Dale T. “Wendell Berry, Liberalism, and Democratic Theory: Implications for the Rural School.” *Peabody Journal of Education,* vol. 67, no. 4, 1990, pp. 118–30. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1492683.

Stanford, Thomas W., III. "Membership and Its Privileges: The Vision of Family and Community in the Fiction of Wendell Berry." *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, vol. 14 no. 2, 2011, p. 118-130. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/log.2011.0016.

Wanat, Matt. “Dislocation, Dismemberment, Dystopia: From Cyberpunk to the Fiction of Wendell Berry and Ann Pancake.” *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, vol. 48, no. 1, 2015, pp. 147–70. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/43549875.

Wanat, Matt. “From Jilting to Jonquil: Katherine Anne Porter and Wendell Berry, Sustaining Connections, Re-Engendering the Rural.” *South: A Scholarly Journal*, vol. 49, no. 2, Apr. 2017, pp. 166–86. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/26432075.