

ERADICATION OF DICHOTOMIES BETWEEN THEOLOGY AND THE NATURAL WORLD IN WENDELL BERRY'S *JAYBER CROW*

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: The novel *Jayber Crow* (2000) by Wendell Berry is packed with his ecological and sociological concerns. This study aims to analyse Wendell Berry's novel *Jayber Crow* from ecocritical viewpoints, specifically ecotheology and environmental humanities.

Methodology: Descriptive analysis has been done by the researcher using primary data and secondary data.

Main Findings: A person's connection to the earth is a reflection of their divine and human interactions. Berry's Christian and agricultural ideas throughout the book demonstrate how improving oneself and working on the natural world are related.

Applications of this study: This research can help researchers and English literature students who are interested in the field of ecocriticism and environmental studies.

Novelty/Originality of this study: In this research, it is shown that man's work enables him to be imaginative because of his connection to a particular place. The novel *Jayber Crow* is a profoundly ecotheological narrative that aims to eliminate the dichotomies between theology and the natural world.

Keywords: Wendell Berry, *Jayber Crow*, Ecocriticism, Environmental Humanities, Ecotheology.

INTRODUCTION

Nature has been used as a subject setting by writers from the earliest times. The evolution of man's relationship with the environment, particularly in American literature, coincided with the discovery of fresh terrain suited for growth and production. Wendell Berry (1934) is an American writer, conservationist, cultural critic, and farmer in whose works we see the contours of this relationship rather vividly. *Jayber Crow*, his novel published in 2000, is dense with his ecological and societal concerns. Jayber (Protagonist) compares his early years at Squires Landing where he is raised by his aunt and her husband after losing his parents to an epidemic to his time in an orphanage called The Good Shepherd near the commencement of his recital of his life tale. He says, "At Squires Landing everything seemed to be held close in mind—in my mind or in some older or larger mind that my mind belonged to. The world was present when I shut my eyes, just as it was present when I opened them. At The Good Shepherd I entered for the first time a divided world—divided both from me and within itself" (Berry, 2001, p. 32). The lines of this divided world are clearly delineated for the young Jayber: "order was thought to emanate from the institution, and disorder from nature. Order was of the soul, whose claims the institution represented. Disorder was of the body, which was us" (p. 32).

Jayber Crow's life in the divided institutions of the church and higher education, as well as his return home, are detailed in this eponymous novel. The novel spends the most of its time chronicling the account of Jayber's recovery (healing) after he has returned home. Ultimately, it is a story about mending and restoring what was broken in our relationships with God, nature, and one another. It is a story about the rebirth of the sacramental and environmental imaginations, demonstrating how nature's order and the soul's order are inextricably linked. *Jayber Crow* is thus a deeply ecotheological narrative, working to repair the dualisms that exist between theology and environment. While Berry's poetry and nonfiction do this work as well, it is his fiction that allows us to observe the reconciliation process as we watch Jayber's relationship with physical and spiritual reality evolve over the course of his life.

Environmental Humanities and Ecotheology

"Wendell Berry is the grandfather of American agrarian writing, and his contribution to ecocritical scholarship covers a variety of topics and principles within ecocriticism. As a college educated farmer from rural Kentucky, Berry's agrarian philosophy stems from a personal devotion to both words and place" (Hoessly, 2019, p. 15). Because Berry emphasises the necessity of shifting human values and theological perspectives in order to right ecological wrongs, *Jayber Crow* embraces these distinctly ecocritical perspectives and initiates a dialogue between the worlds of ecocriticism, the environmental humanities, and ecotheology. According to Lawrence Buell, the primary driver of environmental change is the alteration of cultural values and practices, which marks out the environmental humanities from ecocriticism. Buell contends that ecological change will necessitate a change of heart because it will require changes in the economy and society. He describes how "homelessness" defines the modern human person, who exists without cultural coherence or memory defined by the country. Since the industrial revolution, humans have radically altered the earth, and we are now living in what is being called the Anthropocene, which is only a very brief period in the world's history.

Recognizing our participation in relation to that past, then, will bring healing. He argues that post-humanist approaches to earth-care will not ultimately be successful, because, at heart, “human beings above all... need to change” (Buell, 2017, p. 419). Enacting this change will require the work of the imagination.

Buell (2007) views holy tales as underpinning this effort, and this explicit link between ecological issues and theology connects us to the field of ecotheology. The answer of ecotheology to Lynn White Jr.’s thesis may be the best way to understand it. In “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” White blamed the ecological issue on Western Christianity and its anthropocentric interpretations, which have turned nature into an object to be dominated and exploited by people. In his view, the mistreatment of nature is related to a Christian utilitarianism toward nature: “We shall continue to have a worsening ecologic crisis until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man” (White, 1967, p. 1207). But White explains, “Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not” (p. 1207).

White’s predicted religious remedies have arrived in the form of ecotheology—which, in the words of Brotton, is “the study of how questions concerning our current understanding of ecology converge with theological inquiry to address the relationships between God, humans, and nonhumans” (Brotton, 2016, p. 16). According to Dalton and Simmons, the role of the ecotheologian is to “bring the immediacy of the ecological crisis to the Christian community so that it understands how this crisis ‘feels here and now’” (Dalton and Simmons, 2010, p. 11). Dieter T. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether emphasised in their influential edited book, *Christianity and Ecology*, that the first step in ecotheology was to “rediscover that all of the earth community is valuable to God” (Hessel and Ruether, 2000, p. 35). This rediscovery now necessitates reorienting ethics and cosmology around this fact. From *Nature to Creation*, a recent book by contemporary ecotheologian Norman Wirzba, accomplishes this crucial reorienting task. Christians, according to Wirzba, contribute to God’s death by making him unpleasant or useless in the created world. In order to reshape this relationship, we must reimagine an incarnated theology that speaks not just to who we are, but also to where we are. By considering the universe to be “created, sustained, and daily loved by God,” we as creatures are called to imitate this loving liturgy (Wirzba, 2015, p. 3). We are urged to love the world in the same way that the Creator did, and to stop making “the world inhospitable to the divine love that first created and daily refreshes it” (p. 30).

Jayber Crow, in particular, emphasises the ecotheological emphasis of nature’s sacramental and covenantal dimensions. John Hart’s work *Sacramental Commons* tries to widen our understanding of the sacraments by incorporating nature into this perspective. Hart defines a “natural sacrament” as a “place, event or creature in nature that, as a sign of Spirit’s immanence and presence, draws people toward the Spirit and simultaneously invites them to relate not only to the Spirit but to all living and nonliving creation” (Hart, 2006, p. 15). He encourages us to live with a sacramental consciousness, which he defines as “a creation centered consciousness; it sees signs of the Creator in creation” (p. 18). This is possible because, at these sacramental moments, the transcendent and immanent are inextricably intertwined. Jayber Crow’s existence by the river integrally integrates both realities for us, demonstrating us to comprehend the inseparability of sacramental and environmental imaginations. Another location where heaven and earth, as well as the physical and spiritual, come together is in covenants. Wirzba emphasises in *From Nature to Creation*, how God makes a covenant in Genesis between himself and all creatures of the earth. Wirzba emphasises how denying nature a role in the salvation narrative entails rejecting how God covenants not just with his people but also with the land: “When we confine creation to an originating event, we lose the sense of it as a dynamic place so cherished that God enters into covenant relationship with it” (Wirzba, 2015, p. 21). Ellen Davis’ work, “Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible”, explores the dignity that these covenantal relationships reveal in nature, as well as the interrelationship between this covenant with the land and the marriage covenant. Jayber’s marriage to Mattie exemplifies this sacramental and covenantal relationship, as well as its interconnection with a proper relationship with the earth.

In *Jayber Crow*, Berry advances the idea that labouring on the land and working with a community can lead to both personal and social wholeness. In this case, the concept is based on one’s longing for God, the Divine. This work can be classified as art if we agree with Berry that working in nature fosters completion and that the motivations are redemptive rather than destructive. Kroeker’s “Sexuality and the Sacramental Imagination” in Peters’ *Wendell Berry: Life and Work* supports Berry’s assertion that wholeness is connected to a “human’s longing for God, for the wholeness of all creation” (Kroeker, 2007, p. 134). Kroeker calls the longing in Berry’s writing “the darkness,” and he says, “And in this darkness in which the human self is emptied of its own dominating intentions, [the main character] himself and by extension all creation may be reshaped, mysteriously and wondrously regained” (p. 134). Berry lets their characters experience nature as a place where they can let go of their own selves in order to experience God. Thus, Berry’s theory advances a new school of ecocriticism that values hard work and diligence as being good for both nature and man. Berry doesn’t criticise what might seem like a bad relationship with the environment. Instead, he sees a positive relationship between human creativity, human completeness, the way the world is in its natural state. I employ an analytical method to describe Jayber Crow by Berry from an ecocritical perspective.

The purpose of this research is to show how Berry’s view of nature and God are related and to make the case that man’s labour gives him the ability to be imaginative because of his connection to a particular place.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive analysis has been done by the Researcher using primary data and secondary data.

The type of research is Descriptive analysis. The method used in the research is Normative and methodology used is Ecocritical criticism and to some extent New– historicism. Primary Data includes, Wendell Berry's *Jayber Crow*. In addition to books on Ecocriticism and Ecology, there are several works on Wendell Berry included as secondary data.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Environmental Work for Holistic Living

The agrarian and Christian principles in *Jayber Crow* make it one of Wendell Berry's finest works. This novel focuses on the relationships the narrator has with the locals and the land in Port William, Berry's imagined rural village. Through stories of location, *Jayber Crow* responds to Wendell Berry's environmental concerns. Jayber Crow, the protagonist, goes back to Port William as an adult and settles down to work as the local barber. Jayber's work at the barbershop and in his backyard garden help him get along better with both others and God. However, the way Jayber feels about the lady he secretly and passionately loves is a reflection of his feelings for Port William and the continuation of its existence. The narrative is shaped by his recollections of everyday, ordinary events and his responses to them, which reflect God's work in humanity. Berry skillfully crafts an ecocritical book by methodically detailing analogies of God's redemption in human existence through one man's effort in a specific region. In *Jayber Crow*, Berry provides a comprehensive depiction of how environmental and religious fervour bring together the body and intellect. In *On Farming and Food*, he describes this union as a "atonement between ourselves and our world, between economy and ecology, between the domestic and the wild" (Berry, 2009c, p. 7) that results from an understanding of the "health of all the creatures belonging to a given place" (p. 7). Environmental issues have resulted from man's exploitation of his own body as well as his possibly misguided religion, according to Berry. In his essay, "The Body and the Earth", he portrays man as a minor player in "Creation, asking "religious" questions such as, "What connections or responsibilities do we maintain between our bodies and the earth?" (Berry, 1994d, pp. 97–98). As a result of addressing these kinds of issues, *Jayber Crow* attempts to explain how man's need for a complete life can be seen in how he interacts with the land and his community. Readers can evaluate and discuss about this idea.

Berry divides the relationship between people and land into three parts: "Character," "Agriculture," and "Culture" (Berry, 1996e). These parts help people feel whole through their connections to the land and the community. Berry sheds light on consequent environmental challenges by unravelling and concentrating on these three human conundrums. He explains "the split between what we think and what we do is profound" (Berry, 1996e, p. 18) through a person's character—moral man's makeup must be expressed in his deeds. Because Berry is a farmer who cultivates the land, agriculture appears to be another obvious category for him, but his main focus is wilderness, or places that are separate from people and kept safe, because man's "roots" lie in nature (p. 28). As a result, maintaining wilderness is necessary for one to achieve or return to a holistic way of life. To protect wilderness, man must wisely "use" wilderness if he is to survive (p. 30). The environmentalist perspective is reinforced by the emphasis placed on making use of the land as a cooperative component of creation. Berry describes culture as "a communal order of memory, insight, value, work, conviviality, reverence, aspiration. It reveals the human necessities and the human limits" (p. 43). This study focuses on the work that the characters do on the land (husbandry), which encourages healthy relationships between people and the land and reflects people's relationships with God.

This narrative is largely framed by the idea that creation belongs to God as the main character recalls his work in a particular location. Living a holistic lifestyle is a religious practise. *Jayber Crow* uses a single man's attachment to a particular place to describe his journey toward wholeness. Through his work in the land, Jayber Crow gives the most accurate illustration of how man is connected to God or the divine. Man can recognise the divine through his land activity, or husbandry. Working in nature improves a person's physical and spiritual health, which has an impact on his or her interpersonal relationships. Jack Hicks describes Wendell Berry's writing in his essay "Wendell Berry's Husband to the World: A Place on Earth" as a return to wholeness and a departure from the "distinctly flawed being fallen from natural wholeness" (Hicks, 1979, p. 240). A person cannot achieve wholeness unless they acknowledge their need for it, even though the environment provides a space for both rootedness and wholeness. So, in this narrative, Jayber finds out about God's offer of wholeness either indirectly or directly by working in nature. Wholeness is described as "holy living" in James Shuman's introduction to "Wendell Berry and Religion: Heaven's Earthly Life," which "has to do with living well in relationship—to other persons, other creatures, and God" (Shuman and Owens, 2009, p. 7). Berry emphasises the relationship between man and the environment in his fictional town of Port William by emphasising local community, farming, and familial structures. Jayber Crow, the novel's protagonist, thinks back on his work in a certain place. This helps him understand how the spiritual and natural are connected.

Jayber Crow recounts his past in the first few chapters by discussing his connection to rural terrain. In 1937, a small town in Kentucky called Port William gives Jayber Crow the chance to start over by becoming the town barber. Jayber's life is told from the time he was a child until he leaves Port William. This shows that both the beginning and the end of a person's life are important, because Jayber thinks that working the land is a necessary part of living a full life; a life without work is incomplete. This concept is explored in Berry's "Citizenship Papers", which expands his agrarian vision to

include work that is truly committed to a place: “To live, we must go to work. To work, we must work in a place. Work affects everything in the place where it is done: the nature of the place itself and what is naturally there, the local ecosystem and watershed, the local landscape and its productivity, the local human neighborhood, the local memory” (Berry, 2003b, p. 33). Eventually, Berry’s concept—that in order to work effectively, a person needs to be aware of where they are and where they originated from—is revealed by Jayber’s character. Berry uses the word “husbandry” to mean “relationship” because this work starts in a place and then affects both the community and the person doing the work. As a result, work and place are inextricably linked, and (in Berry’s writings) Jayber’s entire life is spent working in a rural place.

A Christian ecocritical perspective is created by the relationship between physicality, or what is only temporary, and the unchanging promise of eternity. Berry uses this viewpoint to demonstrate the inexhaustible value of physical life. Berry is able to express how the human life “car[ries] in [it] the presence of eternity” through memory (Berry, 2001, p. 249). Jayber reflects on his early years and remembers that “[Port William’s] history was its living memory of itself, which passed over the years like a moving beam of light. It had a beginning that it had forgotten, and would have an end that it did not yet know. It seemed to have been there forever” (p. 3). The connection between Jayber and Port William reveals its “forgotten” past and narrates the beginnings of the “end.” Similar to Port William, the history of Jayber Crow is kept alive in his mind. Jayber recalls Port William’s places and people but above all, he recalls the land: “The river moved me strangely, and I loved it from the day I first laid eyes on it” (p. 18). As his utility in Port William expands to “gardening” and “milking and the care of the animals,” both “responsibilities” that gave Jayber a sense of “useful[ness],” (p. 27) his affection for the place grows. Jayber’s relationship to the land is founded on his usefulness. His work as a barber and his identity as a person are both tied to Port William because of this.

Jayber is a young child, but he longs for the land of Port William at the orphanage where he lives; even when he is not present, he is a part of the land and people. In his essay “A Native Hill,” Berry elaborates on the notion that a person’s history is connected to their land. He says, “It is impossible to escape the sense that I am involved in history” (Berry, 1968f, p. 8). Whenever Jayber “hear[d] or read the word home, that patch of country was what [he] thought of” (Berry, 2001, p. 36). This memory of the place demonstrates Jayber’s understanding of its existence and significance in his life. When Jayber reads Thoreau’s *Walden* in high school, he discovers a yearning for the wilderness that “made [him] want to live in a cabin in the woods . . . [a]lso I kept a list of words I especially liked independent, I remember, was one, and then tintinnabulation and self-reliant and free and outside” (p. 35). Jayber’s connection to Thoreau grows stronger as he remembers what life was like in Port William. However, Jayber’s self-reliance shows through in part because he depends on the land and what it has to offer, which is a chance to be part of something bigger than himself. After becoming an adult and relocating to Port William, Jayber utilises elucidations of the landscape to express his desire to live in the wilderness and depend on its unrestricted area:

“[T]emptation was not to go into the town at night but to escape into the countryside in the daytime. It was a fine, lovely part of the world—excellent, rolling farmland, with old ashes and oaks in the pastures, divided by streams with trees along the banks and patches of woods along the steeper slopes of the valley sides.” (Berry, 2001, p. 41)

Jayber, however, is also appreciative of Port William’s structures and the people who work within them. Since, they show the work of other people in Port William, he includes illustrations of little-known, independently owned shops and eateries. Jayber’s time away from Port William has, in a way, makes him more motivated to support himself as an employed member of the community. Unsurprisingly, Berry gives Jayber the first name “Jonah,” emphasising the similarity between Jayber’s journey back to Port William through a violent storm and that of the biblical character who entered a new land by way of the sea. When Jayber tries to go back to Port William, he must first wade through a flood before running into Burley Coulter, a fisherman who tells him how to get to town so that he can fill the open position of barber there. Burley saves Jayber from the flood by taking him to Port William in his boat, and Jayber says that he “would have recognized [Port William] by the look of the sky” (Berry, 2001, p. 93). Burley’s mother welcomes Jayber and keeps calling himself Jonah as he speaks to her. But as he becomes a resident of Port William rather than a stranger like the biblical Jonah, he changes his name later on in the novel. Upon seeing the barbershop for the first time, Jayber goes outside, “walking up and down and looking and stopping to think” (p. 103). His declaration that he will “have a garden” (p. 103) shows that he owns the place and may also be a response to the waters he had to cross to reach dry land. Berry makes use of this biblical reference to highlight the suffering that is inherent in the work that is required to belong to a particular location.

As he develops relations with individuals through his work in a small community, Jayber’s memories of Port William are shaped by the community’s history and his own interactions with the people there. These memories serve as the main point of reference for the rest of the story. According to John Leax in “Wendell Berry: Life and Work”, memory is “a creative force functioning not only in the present but as a source of hope” (Leax, 2007, p. 66). As a result, the memory narrative of Jayber offers commentary on the present and the future. When Jayber, now an adult, thinks back to how Port William has changed since he was a child, he sees that the way people work with the land helps define a community:

“And so there would always be more to remember that could no longer be seen. This is one of the things I can tell you that I have learned: our life here is in some way marginal to our own doings, and our doings are marginal to the greater forces that are always at work. Our history is always returning to a little patch of weeds and saplings

with an old chimney sticking up by itself. And I can tell you a further thing that I have learned, and here I look ahead to the resting of my case: I love the house that belonged to the chimney, holding it bright in memory, and I love the saplings and the weeds.” (Berry, 2001, pp. 37-38)

His recollection of this neighbourhood is inextricably linked to the natural setting. Consequently, the resident of Port William is unable to dissociate from the land; it is ingrained in his memories and daily life.

Because of his Christianity, Jayber thinks that physicality is necessary to more fully value and possibly understand the soul. The brief declaration that Jayber made early in life—to become a preacher and to forego a career in the ministry—have an impact on his remaining life in Port William. Jayber admits the “old division of body and soul” (Berry, 2001, p. 49) in the midst of his recall of his schooling to become a pastor. In his view, the body is part of the soul, yet the value of a person's body is separated from religious commitment. Jayber interweaves this idea of the soul and its role as an element of a physical body throughout the narrative: “And what about our bodies that always seemed to come off so badly in every contest with our soul? Did Jesus put on our flesh so that we might despise it?” (p. 50). He comes to the conclusion that he “wasn’t just a student or a going-to-be-preacher anymore. (He) was a lost traveler wandering in the woods, needing to be on my way somewhere but not knowing where” (p. 52). Berry, who “is reluctant to speak of heaven in his nonfiction, but he is able to give these words to Jayber because the fictive Port William is a ‘bible-based culture’ in which people remember Bible stories,” (p. 67) is brought up by Peters as he discusses this idea of home.

It's possible that theological explorations of Jaber are a prelude to his pursuit for a new life in Port William; much like a “lost traveler,” Jayber eventually finds both God and Port William. Jayber believes that one serves something other than oneself and therefore sees the land as a place where one can discover what it means to be whole. Because of this spirituality, work of Jayber on the land makes him whole by bringing his body and mind into harmony. In addition to acknowledging the religious nature of the church community, Jayber Crow also claims that it divides the body and the mind. The church, however, valued “good crops, good gardens, good livestock and work animals and dogs; they loved flowers and the shade of trees, and laughter and music; some of them could make you a fair speech on the pleasures of a good drink of water or a patch of wild raspberries” (Berry, 2001, p. 161). However, the church “scorned the beauty and goodness of this world” (p. 161). Jayber is “puzzle[d]” by this contradiction, and as a result, he transforms into “a man outside” (p. 161), which refers to a person who appreciates the natural beauty of the world and works within it. Additionally, Jayber can value work as a fulfilling aspect of life because he values land. a dichotomy is impossible because he values both land and work. Port William is Jayber's continuous source of life:

“What I had come to know (by feeling only) was that the place's true being, its presence you might say, was a sort of current, like an underground flow of water, except that they flowing was in all directions and yet did not flow away... To come into the presence of the place was to know life and death, and to be near in all your thoughts to laughter and to tears.” (Berry, 2001, pp. 205-206)

Berry's commitment to holistic living is demonstrated by his moral sensibility, which extends beyond routine management of the land. In the time he doesn't spend behind the barber chair, Jayber cultivates a garden, “[bringing] to life the useful things Aunt Cordie had taught [him]” (Berry, 2001, p. 129). He calls himself a “garden fanatic” and claims that he is “not over it yet” (p. 129). Jayber makes the connection between loss and holistic living right after he thinks about his gardening: “I began to live in my losses” (p. 130). Jayber's dedication to gardening over a lifetime serves as an example of how he has managed his feelings regarding expansion, contraction, and community utility. Without some form of salvation, being whole cannot take place. According to Jayber, salvation comes from God and manifests itself in the work he does in Port William, which necessitates suffering, which Jayber sees as an essential component of loving this or that place.

In her book *Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art*, Madeline L'Engle speaks about this suffering in Christian discipline, “[t]he discipline of creation, be it to paint, compose, write, is an effort toward wholeness” (L'Engle, 1995, p. 70). She then discusses the pain associated with the wholeness of an artist and comes to the conclusion that the grace of God enables the artist to overcome the pain and become whole (p. 72). Jayber's creation is at work in Port William just as Berry creates the novel, which is an act of creation. The novel expands on this idea with Christian ideas from the Bible, like loving others and living both temporarily and forever. Because of this, Jayber's work points to both God's grace and Jayber's act of creation. In *Redeeming the Gospel: The Christian Faith Reconsidered*, David A. Brondos describes salvation using “synonym terms such as wholeness, well-being, shalom, and justice” (Brondos, 2010, p. 180). Jayber recognises his necessity for salvation as a result of his love for the land and for other people, despite the fact that salvation can only be obtained from God. In addition, according to Brondos, the path to wholeness as a “behavior necessary for salvation to become a reality is above all love, understood as a commitment to seeking wholeness for all” (p. 180). The community and work of Jayber in Port William may thus be seen as a reflection of the work he does for God and the community he has built with God. Jayber acknowledges the pain connected to God's love as he describes his growing understanding of it:

“Just as a good man would not coerce the love of his wife, God does not coerce the love of His human creatures . . . To allow that love to exist fully and freely, He must allow it not to exist at all. His love is suffering. It is our freedom and His sorrow. To love the world as much even as I could love it would be suffering also, for I would

fail. And yet all the good I know is this, that a man might so love this world that it would break his heart.” (Berry, 2001, p. 254)

Jayber loves someone without expecting anything in return, just as God loves his children even when they don't love him back. Jayber's capacity to perceive the love of God as the most complete relationship is only strengthened by this lack of love, which is experienced as suffering. Because of this, Jayber is able to undergo a continual sanctification through the ordeal of pain in love for a lady named Mattie. The decentering that occurs as a result of the relationship of Jayber with Mattie enables Jayber to view himself as a man without fault who is in need of redemption. When Jayber first sees Mattie Chatham as a young schoolgirl, he is immediately drawn to her. Even after she grows up and gets married, Jayber's love for her keeps growing, even though she is now married to someone else. Even though Mattie is already married, Jayber marries himself to Mattie. He says this is a kind of recognition that only souls can perceive.

Jayber considers this marriage to be a “sacrifice” and he claims that he “love[d] her all her life— from the time before I ever saw her, it seems, and until she died” (Berry, 2001, pp. 247-48). This “secret” union, as Jayber refers to it, almost perfectly captures his initial impression of Mattie: that of being “visible in the dark” (p. 10). Jayber's love for Mattie goes beyond physical affection and outward displays of loyalty, but Mattie doesn't seem to know that. Because Jayber starts to love Mattie without any assurance that she will feel the same way about him, he experiences a love that decenters and becomes more reflective of “eternity” (p. 249). Decentering can also be expressed through love, as Jayber does when he says, “If you love somebody enough, and long enough, finally you must see yourself” (p. 197). In addition, he recognises that this love is aching because it reveals his “self-begotten desire” (p. 198). As a result, he decenters himself by loving someone else, even though she doesn't love him back. The work that Jayber accomplishes in land parallels to the process of differentiating oneself so that he can love Mattie. This is due to the fact that righteousness follows sanctification. The perspective that Jayber takes on Mattie's marriage to Troy, a character that Jayber does not hold in high regard, is one of the novel's key elements. Troy's disregard for the land to which he belongs highlights Jayber's contrarian belief that the foundation of happiness for people is their need for roots, community, and love. He says that Troy is “lonely,” and he ties this to the fact that he is separated from others and his wife to his loss of connection to the land: “He was lonely because he could imagine himself as anything but himself and as anywhere but where he was. His competitiveness and self-centeredness cut him off from any thought of shared life” (p. 194). Jayber says that he is “aloof” with a “zeal for newfangledness” (p. 278). The loneliness of Troy refers to the sense of alienation that comes from not being able to love one's land and community.

Berry's conception of farming naturally moves away from industrialization that uproots, encouraging a farmer to value the labor-intensive, slow work of his and other people's hands as a means of manufacture. Jayber talks about the use of farming machinery that replaces a community's labour as time goes on in Port William: “You couldn't see, back then, that this process would build up and go ever faster, until finally it would ravel out the entire old fabric of family work and exchanges of work among neighbors. The new way of farming was a way of dependence, not on land and creatures and neighbors but on machines and fuel and chemicals” (Berry, 2001, p. 183). However, it's the character of Troy that Berry uses to show how different Jayber is. Jayber puts more value on gardening and community than in technological advancements. At the end of the book, Jayber talks about how the new interstate, like Troy Chatham's concept of farming, will separate Port William from the rest of the country:

“By that time the interstate highway was boring its way into our valley and across it and out again on the other side. Everything it came to looked smaller than it had looked before. Whatever it came to that was in its way, it destroyed. It was a great stroke of pure geometry cut through the country maybe five miles down the river from Port William—close enough, that, now when the town is quiet, it can hear the sound of more traffic in a few minutes than ever went through it in a month.” (Berry, 2001, p. 281)

War, in Berry's opinion, is the antithesis of this work because it devastates both the land's physical health and the community's spiritual health, thereby having a negative impact on the work that man does in nature. Berry's opposition to war is the cause of Jayber's dislike of technology, and Jayber's anti-industrialist outlook is inspired by his conception of life before the war. According to Berry, war not only takes people's lives but also destroys agriculture, which he sees as the life of the land. Jayber observes that the decline of healthy agricultural productivity results from the industrialization of war, which results in the production of weapons. Berry utilises Jayber's growing experience of God's love in *Jayber Crow* to demonstrate the destructive causes and results of war. When Jayber thinks about it, he recognises that the war will eventually devastate Port William, destroying the capacity of community “to love one another” (Berry, 2001, p. 142). According to him, “[t]he thought of loving your enemies is opposite to war. You don't have to do it; you don't have to love one another. All you have to do is keep the thought in mind and Port William becomes visible, and you see its faces and know what it has to lose” (p. 142). Consequently, the wholeness of Jayber is determined by his connection to Port William and how well it is.

The acknowledgement of Jayber that God suffered and sacrificed for humanity relates to how he sees Port William and the misery he must endure there. Jayber believes that because God “put on mortal flesh” and “suffer[ed]” the “thoughts” and “death” of people, God is “compassionate” (p. 252). As a result, he equates Port William's way of life with that of a society that is living under (possibly submitted to it) the loving act of God:

“And I could imagine a Father who is yet like a mother hen spreading her wings before the storm or in the dusk before the dark night for the little ones of Port William to come in under . . . I could imagine God looking down upon it, its lives living by His spirit, breathing by His breath, knowing by His light, but each life living also (inescapably) by its own will—His own body given to be broken.” (Berry, 2001, p. 252)

One must decenter themselves in order to love another individual or a community, Jayber goes through a period of brokenness like Christ did, followed by a period in which he is alone. This brokenness is a physical as well as a spiritual experience. Jayber says his prayers as though he were “lying awake at night, afraid, with your head under the cover, hearing only the beating of your own heart. It is like a bird that has blundered down the flue and is caught indoors and flutters at the windowpanes” (Berry, 2001, p. 253). His prayer illustrates the interdependence of nature and man in a broken state by using the image of a bird. The work of man in interpersonal relationships, like marriage and community, exemplifies Berry’s writing is both ecocritical and religious because of the relationship of Jayber with God and nature. Berry provides or suggests remedies to land and self-related issues, so if the novel is just called “pastoral,” it hides the good things that people can and should do in nature as a way to heal and become whole. *Jayber Crow* shows a conventional perspective on land and family, but the modern era gives rise to a new landscape sensibility that not only contrasts city life but also shows the relationship of person with and in nature remarks on and sometimes reflects his or her association to God.

CONCLUSION

In the essay “The Idea of a Local Economy,” Berry says, “[t]he ‘environmental crisis’ has happened because the human household or economy is in conflict at almost every point with the household of nature” (Berry, 2002a, p. 249). Recent concern for the environment has resulted in ecocriticism’s continued legitimization within literary academia. Wendell Berry combines ideas about restoring the environment with Christian ideas about redemption. By doing this, he opens up new ways for ecocritical writing that has a religious connection to what people do on earth. The work that people do in nature is important to their relationship with the earth. However, it is initially religious and then becomes ecocritical because people are better able to interact with the natural world when their ties to and awareness of God are strengthened. Because of this, ecocritical writing necessitates collaboration with others while working outside in a natural setting. The relationship between a person and land represents his or her interpersonal and divine relationships. The work carried out in nature turns out to be the most comprehensive and all-encompassing, despite the fact that other relations reflect the struggle or determination of a character to love someone else. The Christian and agricultural notions of Berry in this novel try to demonstrate how work in nature and work on oneself are connected. As Berry may imply, both are a part of the life process, which has two possible outcomes: completeness or brokenness, or life or death.

LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

From the perspective of ecocriticism, this study is limited to just one text, *Jayber Crow* by Wendell Berry, but further studies should incorporate other texts by Berry.

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