Wendell Berry

A Futuristic Thinker

I have been asked by Harper’s to pen a response to Wendell Berry’s essay concerning his diversion to own a computer. Mr. Berry makes some points that I happen to agree with. I have grown lax in my ability to check my spelling and grammar by the rules I was taught in school. I leave all of that up to spell check and grammar check. I feel that most people would benefit from writing some communications in long hand just to keep their minds focused on spelling, grammar and penmanship. I also agree strongly with Mr. Berry in the fact that you should not feel obligated to own a computer just because everyone else owns one. Computers are very expensive and are obsolete almost as soon as you take them out of the box. As much as I respect Mr. Berry’s opinion, I just can’t let go of my laptop computer. To sit on the couch and write a paper or just surf the Internet feels like a blessing. It has become the way I write. Mr. Berry’s method of writing, though very romantic, just takes too much time.

Mr. Berry sets out several standards he bases his decision on in his article. One is that whatever replaces a typewriter should be purchased from a person’s shop that is nearby and can be taken back for repair when needed. I appreciate his concern for interaction with a real person in a small shop. This is a problem that is afflicting todays world. People would rather text or e-mail each other instead of interacting face-to-face. I know for a fact that someone yelling in your face with veins popping out on their forehead is not the same as getting a text in ALL CAPS, but you are both there and can respond to each other in the present. With the addition of wireless computers and cell phones in todays homes many people are islands in their own home. I have texted someone in the next room to bring me something instead of getting up and being with the other people in the house. I just seems easier than yelling “will you bring me my biology book?” This could get to be a big problem with communication that I will continue into my adult life if I don’t focus on it now.

Mr. Berry opened my eyes to some views I did not anticipate agreeing with after my reading of his essay. And while I don’t agree with many of his assertions I can at least contemplate his view of the world through his writing style. It is a lost art getting a book written by hand and working with your spouse and enjoying both. My hat is off to Mr. Berry for showing me a new, old, way of living life.