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AGRICULTURAL ETHICS IN WENDELL BERRY'S CONTEMPORARY
NOVELS: *A PLACE ON EARTH, REMEMBERING AND HANNAH COULTER*

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This thesis examines Wendell Berry's (1934-) concept of agricultural ethics as reflected in his three novels which capture the changing condition of traditional farming in America during the second half of the twentieth century: *A Place on Earth* (1967) which depicts the lives of traditional farmers who are encountering the loss of their loved ones to World War II, *Remembering* (1988) which presents the impact of technologies upon farmers, and *Hannah Coulter* (2004) which demonstrates an attempt of a farmer who is trying to come to terms with changes during the time of the demise of traditional farming. Applying American conservationist Aldo Leopold's notion of "land ethics" and Berry's discussion on the ethical treatment of the land in his non-fiction prose, this thesis argues that Berry's agricultural ethics constitutes not only the reciprocal relationship between the land and farmers who tend animals and plants with dedicated work and attentive care but also mutual bonds of farmers' family members and those among neighbors in the same community. His agricultural ethics also includes farmers' sense of connectedness with their ancestors who cared for the land and their responsibility to protect the land for future generations. Berry strongly believes in traditional farming as conducive to agricultural ethics. In addition to fostering ecological conscience, it also enriches farmers' lives with an aesthetic sense and provides them with emotional and spiritual fulfillment. Moreover, Berry views that industrial farming and urban living can deprive farmers of their spirit and relationship with the land and bring about the collapse of the family and community.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The world in the twentieth century is encountering more serious environmental concerns as natural resources that feed several billions of population have been decreasing in both quantity and quality. Environmental scholars and advocates have given scientific and moral explanations and launched a number of campaigns in order to awaken people to a need for wiser and more careful uses of nature. More specifically, the call for a better care of natural resources is aimed at the field of agriculture in which humans heavily depend on, and benefit from, the natural world for their food production. Agricultural practices become one of the important issues in environmental ethics as decisions of people engaged in supplying and demanding food can lead to positive or negative ways in which they interact with nature. Reviewing technologists' role in helping farmers increase their produce, Maarten J. Chrispeels and Dina F. Mandoli, of The American Society of Plant Biologists, admit in their article "Agricultural Ethics" that an emphasis on producing a large amount of food for a number of people is not an adequate direction in agriculture though it is justified by people who support utilitarianism (4-5). As pressure for a need to protect the environment begins to mount on their field of biological studies and technologies, Chrispeels and Mandoli have become more aware of a practice that can keep them, along with other people involved in agriculture, in line with good treatment of nature which they call "agricultural ethics." The two scientists explain that agricultural ethics, or agrarianism, is about "choices for people engaged in agriculture either directly as farmers, or indirectly as government regulators, extension agents, researchers, CEOs, industrial workers, lawmakers, technology developers, consumers,

or protestors” (4). These people are currently confronted with choices in agricultural issues, and one way to justify whether they are making right or wrong decisions is to use a need for the better protection of land and nature as a criterion. Farmers, for example, can choose whether to use pesticides introduced by agricultural technologists to ensure a high amount of crops wanted under commercial farming while consumers can indirectly control farming practices by choosing not to rely on chemicals-based farming and buy only organic products. This better treatment of land has encouraged scholars to study ethical aspects of a wide range of issues in agriculture. As Paul B. Thompson, an agricultural economist and philosopher, points out in *The Spirit of the Soil: Agriculture and Environmental Ethics* (1995), these issues include “food safety, international trade, and world hunger.” In his view, one of the most important issues in this vast field of agricultural ethics is “the demise of family farming” which is closely related to the impact of industrial farming and technologies on small-scale farming (16, 24).

In the literary sphere, agricultural ethics has also gained interest as part of ecocriticism though more discussions and studies are still needed for better understanding of the relation between a need to farm and produce food and a need to protect land and nature. Critics have explored and identified environmental aspects in literary works since 1970s and, according to Lawrence Buell, Ursula K. Heise and Karen Thornber who trace the development of ecocriticism in “Literature and Environment,” such an interest has grown much stronger in the 1990s, with the initial focus on the study of the close relationship between humans and their places, and in following decades, the interest has expanded to cover the connection between environment and studies in other issues, including sciences, gender, and postcolonialism (418-26). However, critics want to see more enthusiasm in the study

of human-land interactions in rural and farming contexts. For example, in his 2007 article, “The Agrarian Vision and Ecocriticism,” William Major expresses his disappointment with the passive response to the topics of agrarianism in the 2003 conference of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment. The meeting’s theme “the *solid* earth! the *actual* world!” suggested the discussion of land, which included farming among the most relevant activities; however, there was only one session on agricultural issues. Major’s reflection aims to remind literary critics that agrarianism is as important as other topics in ecocriticism in paving the way for more understanding of human dependence on, and relationship with, land. Christopher J. Cobb also supports giving more attention to agricultural issues in his 2008 article “Teaching the Literature of Agriculture” by demonstrating that a close look into agriculture “offers opportunities to introduce students to the interaction of nature and culture because agriculture is the practice by which culture in its most basic forms...is made out of nature” (320). He explains that human civilization, as our cultural heritage, has been built since people permanently lived on certain places where they employed natural resources and farmed. It is not until humans have secured food from the land their agricultural practices that they, without any concern over hunger, can proceed further to creating more sophisticated way of living. With this understanding, Cobb notes, students can “conceive of their personal relationships to nature more fully” (320). It is the awareness that can urge people to see more clearly the value of land and nature and to adopt the good treatment of land while continuing their agricultural activities.

American Thinkers and Agricultural Ethics

Ideas regarding agricultural ethics given by many major American thinkers, including politicians, writers, native Americans, scholars and conservationists, can be traced back to the late eighteenth century when the term “yeoman” was used as a model of farmers whose role was the symbol of both politics and morality. In the article “Yeoman,” the University of Virginia points out the political dimension of the yeoman. Yeoman farmers worked on small plots of land but, unlike tenant farmers who worked under supervision of landlords, these farmers owned their farmland and thus, worked freely. The idea that yeoman farmers were able to work without employers was preferred by the Republicans, led by third US President Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), as this concept of independence corresponds to a certain degree with a goal of these politicians’ support of the distribution of power to local governments, who could oversee various affairs more freely rather than having the central government solely take a key role.

Apart from its connection with the Republicans’ political ideologies, the role of yeoman farmers also makes an important contribution to morality. Henry Nash Smith’s *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (1950), which examines major writings on American agrarianism and virtuous farmers in the late eighteenth century, can help shed light on this point. Smith cites a quotation from Jefferson which appears in his letter to James Madison, dated October 28, 1785. In his reference to the yeoman, Jefferson wrote that these “small land holders are the most precious part of a state” (qtd. in Smith 128). The statement not only reflects Jefferson’s admiration for the yeoman’s role as a major drive for the Republican concept but the word “small” can also imply these farmers’ virtues. That yeoman farmers chose to own small farmland is linked with the concept of moderate and

humble status which statesman Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) and Michel Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur (1735-1813) viewed as one of their virtuous characteristics. Smith also quotes Franklin's words to Benjamin Vaughan in his letter dated July 26, 1784, which describes the yeoman as "industrious frugal Farmers, inhabiting the interior Part of these American states..." (125). The important virtue of the yeoman farmers in Franklin's view is their desire only for subsistence living through hard working on farms in the interior, or western, part of America. This lifestyle, that kept them away from the east coast's material competitiveness, is also discussed by Crèvecoeur in his *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782). Smith points out that Crèvecoeur disagreed with the two extreme lifestyles of many people who enjoyed making money in the eastern states and, on the other hand, of pioneers who settled further inland and struggled to survive in wooded and mountainous areas under harsh conditions. In Crèvecoeur's belief, Smith indicates, the two lifestyles would lead to "undesirable social conditions" but for the yeoman who adopted simple farming, it is "the middle condition [that] offered a unique opportunity for human virtue and happiness" (127). It is the virtue of living humbly and moderately under the farmers' close relationship with land which gives a contrastive picture from luxurious but greedy life in cities.

However, this model living of the yeoman was greatly challenged in the nineteenth century when urban living in the East expanded further to the West. More acres of land were acquired due to growing demands for expanding more residential areas and venturing on new businesses. The old, intimate bond with land, as seen among yeoman farmers and, especially, American Indians, was inevitably threatened by the mercenary view that treated land as property. One example was an attempt of the white settlers to acquire land of a group of native Americans in Kitsap County

which is presently in Washington State. The whites' decision to occupy the native people's land drew a warning from an American Indian leader Chief Sealth or Seattle¹ in his 1854 speech calling the whites to treat land with more respect. Doctor Henry A. Smith (1830-1905) claimed that he heard Sealth's words during his meeting with the whites, organized by then Washington Territory governor Isaac Ingalls, and took notes of what Sealth said. Out of his worry over the possible sacrilege of land which could occur on the path of changing and developing landscapes, Sealth calls for love for land which had been regarded as a holy benefactor since the first ancestors of the Indians. In "Henry A. Smith, Chief Seattle's 1854 Speech," Sealth said:

Our dead never forget the beautiful world that gave them being....

[T]he very dust under your [the whites'] feet responds more lovingly to our footsteps than to yours, because it is the ashes of our ancestors, and our bare feet are conscious of the sympathetic touch, for the soil is rich with the life of our kindred.

Sealth's words illustrate the Indians' strong love and bond with land which not only serves as their shelter but is also the crucial part to their "being" because their lives were given and maintained by the land and once they died, they returned to the land. For the living ones, the land held their memories of their ancestors as well as reminded them of deep gratitude toward the land. Sealth's treatment of land as the mother of all Indians became an opposition to the materialistic view of land and natural resources, which, in the nineteenth century, supported commercial purposes rather than encouraged people to live in a subsistent way.

Another American thinker who shares Sealth's environmentally friendly stance is Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), the writer of *Walden*, published in 1854. In this book, in which he records his two-year and two-month experience of living a simple life at Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts, Thoreau discusses the notion of land as property in a farming context as he takes farmers who followed this attitude to task. He disapproved of farmers who treated land as a mere factor of production and only aimed to gain harvests without any care for the land. He notes:

By avarice and selfishness, and a grovelling habit, from which none of us is free, of regarding the soil as property, or the means of acquiring property chiefly, the landscape is deformed, husbandry is degraded with us, and the farmer leads the meanest of lives. He knows Nature but as a robber. (149).

In Thoreau's opinion, farmers who regarded their farmland as only property clung to the belief that they acquired land only for uses and what they loved was not the land and the natural world but what their land would produce – sellable crops. This attitude could easily change them into exploiters, or even “robber[s]” of the land. They would be more like merchants who were concerned about money and would never farm with husbandry like yeoman. Eventually, they would be unable to perform the role of land caretakers, who, through their love for the land, have more ethical relationship with it.

In addition to some farmers' tendency to commercialize land, technology was another factor that greatly influenced lives of city people and countrymen and changed people's relationship with the land. As noticed by Smith in his discussion of the American westward expansion in the nineteenth century in *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*, the most powerful technology was the “steam

power” that “hastened the transition from subsistence to commercial agriculture” (156). The change raised questions of how agricultural ethics in the eighteenth century, seen through the moderate, humble lifestyle of yeoman farmers enjoying working closely with plants and soil, would completely give in to farming for money. In *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (1964), which examines the effects of technologies on pastoral life through a study of nineteenth-century American literature, Leo Marx demonstrates that the growth of technologies, applauded for their role in supporting American industry, can undermine the old way of small farming. He points out that, as seen in nineteenth-century American literature, the steam-driven locomotive is the “leading symbol of the new industrial power” that “appears in the woods, suddenly shattering the harmony of the green hollow” (Marx 27). Even though the train was the effective means of transportation of farm produce and people, the nineteenth-century American writers tended to view it negatively as an intrusion into the old, pastoral living of farmers. When the “harmony of the green hollow” was disrupted by the locomotive which is an alien to the pasture, it can be interpreted that the machine came between the relationship between farmers and land, causing farmers to depend more on technologies than their work and care for land.

The impact of technologies became even more evident when farmers in the twentieth century increasingly regarded machines as a core part of their farming. One worry is that if farmers’ strong bond with land was replaced by the machines, they would hardly maintain their agricultural ethics. *The Grapes of Wrath*, the 1939 novel by John Steinbeck (1902-1968), who won the Noble Prize for literature in 1962, reflects the impact of machines, including tractors, on farmers during the Great Depression in the first half of the twentieth century. According to Horst Groene who

examines the role of machines in “Agrarianism and Technology in Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*, machines, both used on and outside farms, become more influential in farmers’ lives while their relationship with land is losing importance as the novel moves toward the end. Groene notes that the agricultural machines “sever the emotional bond between Man and Nature, which can only exist where farmers till the soil with their own hands” (130-31). What is most concerned here is not physical impact that technologies will bring to farmland, but it is the development of a new relationship between farmers and machines which will replace their bond with the land. As farmers depend more on machines, they can be easily misled into believing that because of machines, they can harvest high crop yields. As a result, farmers’ gratitude toward the land as well as the intimate relationship with it can be put into oblivion.

More use of technologies in farming not only threatens to change the attitudes and the pattern of living of farmers but also raises the alarm for stronger protection of land and nature. Since farming is a career that much engages in the use of natural resources, especially more land acquisition by means of deforestation, agrarianism involves a discussion on ways to preserve, or conserve, nature. A major debate on the use and protection of natural resources in the twentieth century was between John Muir (1838-1914), a naturalist and the co-founder of American environmental group Sierra Club and Gifford Pinchot (1865-1946), a conservationist and founder of the United States Forest Service over the construction of the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir in the Yosemite National Park, California, in 1913. In *The Spirit of the Soil: Agriculture and Environmental Ethics*, Thompson, citing Bryan Norton’s book *Toward Unity Among Environmentalists* (1994) in his discussion of the debate, notes that Muir opposed the construction, stressing a need to preserve the forest in its natural state

whereas Pinchot, despite his agreement with a need to take care of nature, argued that parts of forest were needed to be sacrificed for the reservoir, which was aimed to provide water for residents in San Francisco (7). The dam was eventually completed in 1923. Their debate has led to a deep division in environmental protection in America: preservation vs conservation. Muir presents his strict and relentless preservation of wilderness in his book *Our National Parks*, published in 1905. While many people value forest areas only for physical benefits, such as logs and land for building and farming, Muir contends that forests also hold a spiritual value which can be perceived only when humans go into the wild. As he states in the first part of chapter 1 in his book, “[a]wakening from the stupefying effects of the vice of over-industry and the deadly apathy of luxury, they [humans] are trying as best they can to mix and enrich their own little ongoings with those of Nature, and to get rid of rust and disease.” In Muir’s view, wilderness has a healing power that can cleanse and reinvigorate people’s mind marred by the corrupt lives in cities and thus, it deserves serious protection. However, in 1910 book *A Fight for Conservation*, Pinchot argues that forests and other natural resources can be used to benefit a number of people and, at the same time, receive good protection. He declares in chapter 4 in his book: “Conservation is development.” For Pinchot, people will be encouraged to protect nature when they realize that its natural resources have a value for them and can be used to improve and develop their living conditions. People’s realization of nature’s usefulness will build up a need to use the resources in a sustainable way.

However, Pinchot’s notion of the wise use of natural resources for people’s benefits was challenged by another leading American conservationist Aldo Leopold (1887-1948). In his posthumous book *A Sand County Almanac* (1949), he introduces a new environmental protection idea known as “land ethics” which promotes the wise

use of natural resources as a result of humans' care for non-human beings which live in the same community – the earth's ecosystem. Land ethics calls on people not to restrict their ethical behaviour only to their interactions among themselves, but they should extend their scope of morality to cover non-human beings like plants, animals, soil and water, too, in order to ensure that all of them can live harmoniously on the earth. In Leopold's view, an act will be considered right if it aims to "preserve the integrity, stability...of the biotic community" (225). The "biotic community" is the land where human and non-human beings are interrelated to each other. A care for the living of members in the community will lead humans to develop bonds with the land, or community, because they will think more of other benefits, as well as their community, rather than letting themselves be trapped in their self-interest. In the case of farmers, they will see less importance to depend greatly on technologies, despite their promise of the large amount of farm produce, because they, under land ethics, will turn their interest toward the harmonious co-existence of soil, plants, trees, animals and water which are all important to make the community stable and healthy.

The considerable treatment of non-human beings is also supported by Gary Snyder, an American ecopoet who was a member of the anti-materialism Beat movement in the 1960s. In his view, the belief that humans are as equal as non-human beings in terms of their membership of an ecosystem is a basis for environmental protection. Snyder discusses this view in his book *Practice of the Wild* (1990) as he calls for a co-existence, not a clash, between humans and nature, or "a civilization that can live fully and creatively together with wildness" (6). Snyder discusses his own experience as a farm boy which awakened him to the equality of human and non-human beings in living in the same place. "I grew up on a small farm with cows and chickens," Snyder recalls, "and with a second-growth forest right at the back fence, so

I had the good fortune of seeing humans and animals as in the same realm” (15-16). Snyder’s notion of the “same realm” reflects his impression that farmers, animals and the forests can live together without a feeling that there is a border line to separate them in classes or species. However, he is disappointed with the fact that many people still believe that they are different from, or even superior to, animals because such a belief can easily cause them to dominate other species and employ natural resources without control. The poet reminds people that they are, indeed, a type of animals having a right equal to other species’ in living on the earth. Humans, Snyder stresses, “must contemplate the shared ground of our common biological being before emphasizing the differences” (16). The picture of farmers living in the same realm with non-human beings, illustrated by Snyder, is thus an example that farmers, despite their necessity to make use of natural resources, can develop their harmonious relationship with nature through their daily farm life which connects them closely with land. This belief in the affinity of human and non-human beings can also add to agricultural ethics.

Wendell Berry as a Farmer and an Agrarian Philosopher

This thesis continues to explore agricultural ethics in the twentieth century to examine its role in promoting farmers’ good treatment of land amid mainstream industrial agriculture in America. It focuses on the works and thoughts of contemporary American novelist Wendell Berry, who is also a poet, a university lecturer and also a farmer. Berry was born on August 5, 1934 and grew up as a farm boy absorbing love and bonds with land in Kentucky. According to his biographer Herman Nibbelink, Berry’s attachment to farming was anchored firmly in his mind though he later developed an interest in language and literature, which led to his

studies in the Bachelor's and Master's degree programs in English at the University of Kentucky. His interest in writing also guided him to join a writing class at Stanford University under the Wallace Stegner Writing Fellowship. He enjoyed being a university lecturer of English but decided to end his teaching career in order to devote himself to farming on a piece of land in Kentucky that he purchased in 1965 (89). His passion for family farming, which matches the traditional way of farming with little dependence on technologies, as well as his communication of his agricultural insights through both fiction and non-fiction are main reasons for selecting his works for discussion in the thesis.

Berry's works include essays, poems and novels which convey his support of husbandry as a basis for friendly interactions between farmers and land. In his 28 collections of essays he has written since 1969, Berry both criticizes profit-oriented, industrial agriculture and supports new ideas about sustainable farming. Examples of his well-known essay collections are *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (1977), *The Gift of Good Land: Further Essays Cultural and Agricultural* (1981) and *It All Turns on Affection: The Jefferson Lecture and Other Essays* (2012). Moreover, he published 23 books of poetry which mostly capture his observation and experience of pastoral life and, as Nibbelink notes, the expression of "who he is at each stage of his development as a poet" (99). For fiction, Berry has so far written 15 books. The most well-known is the Port William series, the stories and novels about the lives of farmers' strong bond with their hometown, Port William, in Kentucky. In this series, Berry fictionalizes the town and characters, basing their lives on his own farming experience. Berry's first novel, also the first in this series, is *Nathan Coulter*, published in 1960, and his latest work, which is also in the Port William series, is *A Place in Time: Twenty Stories of the Port William Membership*, published in 2012.

This thesis will analyze Berry's following novels: *A Place on Earth* (1967), *Remembering* (1988) and *Hannah Coulter* (2004), all of which are parts of the episodes of pastoral lives in the fictional town of Port William, in order to examine the writers' agrarianism. Spanning over the period from the end of the Second World War to the turn of the twenty-first century, the novels narrate attempts to maintain farmers' love and bonds with land though they are hardly immutable when time changes. In *A Place on Earth*, farmers' bonds with farmland and their traditional farming still remain intact as they manage to come to terms with haunting agony caused by the death of their young Port William men in the front line of the battle. The farmers' intimate relationship with the land is greatly challenged in *Remembering* in which industrial farming prompts farmers to think of their land purely in terms of commercial production. However, as Berry metaphorically illustrates through the healing of the mental wound of protagonist Andy Catlett whose hand is cut by a machine, many farmers are still able to protect their traditional farming against technology-based agriculture. The biggest threat to the continuance of the old way of family farming is seen in *Hannah Coulter* when many farmers are replaced by machines and young Port William people are drained out of their neighborhood again by, this time, their own need to work elsewhere. The situation causes Hannah Coulter to resort to her memories of the past in order to maintain her love and care for land with an even greater awareness of their value. In the three novels, the thesis will emphasize issues related to the conflict between, on the one hand, the intensive, profitable farming, technologies and urban lives and, on the other hand, small traditional but more eco-friendly farming. Analyzing the farmers' attempts to maintain the good treatment and protection of land, the thesis hopes to bring to light Berry's agricultural insights, that form his version of agricultural ethics.

It is important to note that the three novels can be contextualized in both environmental and socio-political circumstances of the US in the second half of the twentieth century. The books share a similar stance with environmentalists' attempts to better protect soil, trees, animals and people against increasing pollution and waste which are by-products of industrial and technological development. In *Almanac of American History*, James Miller and John Thompson point out that the ecological awareness began to take shape in the late nineteenth century, especially when Sierra Club, an environmental organization, was founded in 1892. However, serious environmental actions were not clearly seen until the 1960s. One reason is that environmental activism faced "competition with other issues" (294). America was kept hectic in dealing with its foreign policies, notably its leading role in the Cold War against former communist USSR at the end of the Second World War in 1945 as well as its involvement in the Vietnam War during the 1960s and the 1970s (282, 292). At home, the American society also struggled against the racial division between white and black Americans. As Adam Fairelough states in an article "Better Day Coming: Civil Rights in America in the Twentieth Century," African Americans' non-violent approaches and protests against the unfair treatment of people of different races peaked during the period from 1963 to 1965 and eventually led to the enactment of Civil Rights Act in 1964, putting an end to racial segregation. Amid these conflicts and confusions, the voices of environmental advocates managed to gain attention from both the government and people who had been gradually awakened to the dangers of environmental problems. The publication of *Silent Spring* by science writer Rachel Carson in 1962 paved the way for greater efforts to protect nature. The book rings alarm bells of the hazardous effects of a type of an insecticide called "dichlorodiphenyl-trichlorethylene," or DDT, which was used in agriculture. Miller and

Thompson indicate that the book which “opened Americans’ eyes to the ecological cost of progress” marked the start of serious environmental policies and campaigns in America. One major subsequent event occurred in 1972 when the US Congress and late US President Richard Nixon founded the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to keep the environment clean and free of human-made pollution though its legal requirements for environmentally friendly acts were viewed as big financial burdens by businesses (294-95). Berry’s three novels also share a similar environmental tone with Carson’s and EPA’s as his books encourage small farmers to protect their land against the unpleasant impact of industrial farming and choose farming practices that are both good to the environment and their community.

Objectives and Arguments

The existing criticism of *A Place on Earth*, *Remembering* and *Hannah Coulter* can be divided into two themes: a look into Berry’s messages of the strong connection between farmers’ lives and land and among farmers themselves and an emphasis of a Christian aspect of their living. Among critics who study the bond between farmers and land is Jeffrey Bilbro who, in his 2010 article “A Form of Living in the Mist of Loss: Faithful Marriage in Revisions of Wendell Berry’s *A Place on Earth*.” Bilbro notes that the importance of love and loyalty between a couple is a basis for their emotional and ethical relationship with land (96). In “Wendell Berry’s Husband to the World: *A Place on Earth*” (1979), Jack Hicks also discusses the farmers’ love for land by comparing their good treatment of land with the role of a husband who loves and takes care of his wife (240). Critics also discuss the bond among farmers in the same community in *Hannah Coulter*. In his 2011 article “Membership and Its Privileges: The Vision of Family and Community in the Fiction of Wendell Berry,” Thomas W.

Stanford III finds that the novel promotes strong love in farmers' families as a springboard for love and help to their neighbors (124). On the side of Christian reading of the novels, Hicks, in the same article, also gives a reason behind farmers' care for land in *A Place on Earth* as a duty of the stewards of the gift, or land, from God (242). As for critics who analyze *Remembering*, they mainly link the novel with Christianity. In "Reading the Theology of the Body into Wendell Berry's *Remembering*," (2010), Nathan Schlueter, who views the novel as an allegory of the fall of man due to his disobedience to God, compares the machine accident, that cuts Andy's hand, with humans' unsuccessful attempt to use technology to "conceal their fault," or the original sin. In his 2007 article "Biblical Convocation in Wendell Berry's *Remembering*," Phillip J. Donnelly discusses St Paul's view of humans' right hand as "fellowship" and points out that Andy's lost hand causes him to lose faith in almost everything (279). One example, as suggested in the novel, is Andy's feeling of being alienated from his once familiar pattern of collective farming work in Port William community. The analysis of *Hannah Coulter* also focuses on its religious aspect. Jason Peters, who reviews the novel in "The Tenderness of Remembering" (2005), discusses a scene when Hannah's grandson, who is plagued with troubles and mistakes, returns to his grandmother and asks for permission to farm. Peters interprets the act as an attempt to "redeem" his wrongdoings through working and taking care of land (51).

Though the existing criticism has led to a better understanding of farmers' behavior in ethical and religious aspects as portrayed in the three novels, the analysis does not examine agricultural ethics which concerns husbandry and the protection of natural resources. This thesis will fill up this lack by looking more closely into daily farm chores, which are not largely examined by some critics, and identifying the

farmers' thoughts and acts that make them love the farm, land and nature. In its attempt to delve into Berry's agricultural ethics, the thesis has three major objectives. Firstly, it aims to investigate how Berry presents different dimensions of farmers-land relationships. It will discuss various perceptions that the farmers have toward the land; for instance, land as the wilderness, the romantic view of land, land as a living thing and land as a place to learn the truth of life. The study will find how these views, which are far different from the view of the land as property, are related to the traditional way of family farming and agrarian ethics. Secondly, the thesis will study Berry's views on traditional agriculture as opposed to industrial agriculture, which has become a mainstream practice among many American farmers since the end of the Second World War. It will focus on how Berry presents his agrarian views through his characters and why he supports traditional agriculture though it does not promise high crop yields, compared with those made by industrial agriculture. These questions will lead to an understanding of how Berry presents the disadvantages of modern agriculture. Finally, the thesis will identify threats to traditional farming, which make many farmers unable to maintain their strong bond with the land. It will determine why the threats cause a clash of attitudes between farmers who want to maintain the old way of farming and those who want a more comfortable living.

To answer these questions, the novels will be analyzed through the lens of land ethics of Leopold and Berry's own ideas of good farming he propounds both in his fiction and non-fiction. The land ethics will help examine the behaviour of the characters in the three novels to find out why their attitudes and acts are in line with Leopold's emphasis of the love for a community or an ecosystem, which corresponds with Berry's support of the harmonious living between farmers and land. Meanwhile, Berry's ideas of moral issues in agriculture will serve to explicate reasons behind

certain thoughts and acts of his characters. Berry's ideas, usually his discussions of the friendly relationships among farmers, animals, and land and factors that lead to their disappearance, will be taken from *What Are People for?* (1990), *A Gift of Good Land: Further Essays Cultural and Agricultural* (1981), *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (1977) and his 1980 poetic work *A Part*. With this approach, the thesis hopes to unveil Berry's version of agrarianism which is illustrated, both directly and implicitly, through the farming life in his novels.

This thesis will be divided into five chapters. After chapter 1, which is the introduction, the thesis will analyze *A Place on Earth* in chapter 2, *Remembering* in chapter 3 and *Hannah Coulter* in chapter 4, followed by the conclusion in chapter 5. In *The Place on Earth*, it will discuss Berry's portrayal of farming life, in which farmers, animals and land are strongly related, and argue that their traditional way of farming illustrates the mutual relationships between farmers and land in ethical, ecological, esthetical and spiritual aspects. The impact of industrial agriculture and farming machines will be studied in *Remembering* in order to contend that, despite the benefits of the modern farming in increasing harvests and profits, Berry still supports small and simple farming as an appropriate way of living with a healing power to help farmers in time of hardship. In *Hannah Coulter*, the thesis will examine the role of technology, education and urban living as threats that can change farmers' lives in Port William, arguing that the three factors will separate farmers from the old but good traditional farm life which has long held their love with land.

Note

1 There has been a debate over the authenticity of the speech of Chief Sealth, who is believed to live between 1786 and 1866, because, according to Washington State

librarian Nancy Zussy, “there is no verbatim transcript in existence.” There are various versions of Sealth’s speech. The oldest one was published in a column of Dr. Henry A. Smith in *Seattle Sunday Star* on October 29, 1854.

CHAPTER II
TRADITIONAL FARMING AND AGRARIAN ETHICS
IN A *PLACE ON EARTH*

In “The Agrarian Vision and Ecocriticism” (2007), William Major warns environmental scholars and ecocritics against their scarce study of how rural people contribute to environmental protection and, in a larger context, their inclination toward an attitude that humans are threats to nature (51, 56). His comment reflects the belief that humans and nature, in fact, can co-exist though it is evident that increasing natural degradation and pollution result mainly from human activities. But instead of clinging to the conflict between humans and nature, Major suggests a study of rural lives, especially farmers’, as one of the ways to examine how humans can harmoniously live with nature. From preparing soil for growing crops to feeding animals in barns, farmers develop an intimate relationship with a place they live in. If one looks more contemplatively at the relationship, they can study how agriculture can be an example of the co-existence between human and non-human beings. Major believes that this study can lead environmental scholars and ecocritics to more understanding of “agrarian ethics,” which is essential in environmental studies (53).

Agrarian ethics, or agrarianism, can be defined as good conducts based on the need of humans to depend on land. According to Eric T. Freyfogle, the basis for agrarian ethics is the “truth that people everywhere are part of the land community, just as dependent as other life on the land’s fertility” (qtd. in Major 54). This dependence urges humans to develop their close relationship with land and among factors that determine its fertility is how well humans treat land. The moral behavior

on farms is born out of this relationship and it plays a key role in directing farmers' treatment of land.

Farmers who follow agrarian ethics also tend to carefully screen out types of modernity in agriculture that may weaken their relationship with land. As Major points out, "agrarianism is essentially a conservative doctrine" because it casts doubts on "the supposed benefits of progress, technology, industry and the relentless ad campaigns that feed them" (55). It is true that industrial farming promises more crop yields and that such new technologies as pesticides help farmers fight against weeds effectively. However, the intensive use of land for a higher amount of harvests and soil contamination caused by chemicals will definitely exert devastating long-term impacts on the land and farmers themselves. Major calls farmers who are aware of the negative impacts of the modernity as "agrarians," and it is clear that a close look at their pastoral lives is not simply a study of farming, but it is an issue of ethics.

Aldo Leopold also suggests his own version of good farmers when he discusses the roles of farmers in *A Sand County Almanac* (1949). Leopold admits that many farmers restrict their views of farmland only as a source of production, but he believes that there must be a group of farmers who disagree with this economic perception of land and treat "the land as a biota, and its function as something broader" (221). A "biota" is defined as a community in which living and non-living things depend on each other along the complex web of food chains. The interdependence between soil, corns, cows and farmers is exemplified by Leopold as a part of the web and, in his view, farmers whose activities do not harm the interrelationships in their community are regarded as doing right acts under land ethics (215, 224). The function of farmland thus does not simply serve as a place to grow crops for money, but it is extended to cover such a role as being a place for the

harmonious living among all community members. Under Leopold's moral principles, farmers cannot think only of their self-interest, but they need to broaden their perception of land by having thoughts for the interests of others living in the same place as well. In other words, it is the whole community which is the most important.

This holistic and ethical view of land can occur only when humans have true understanding of their inhabitation in a place. Gary Snyder, who awakens people to the importance of a place in *Practice of the Wild* (1990), stresses that living in a place does not simply mean having shelter, but it also concerns inhabitants' knowledge, familiarity and relationships with their surroundings. The knowledge of a local pine Douglas Fir during Snyder's boyhood on a farm between Lake Washington and Puget Sound in Washington State leads him and his neighbors to develop an intimate relationship with the land. The existence of the tree, which signifies the amount of rainfall and a type of terrain, tells farmers what crops they should grow, helps builders determine the slope of house roofs, and advises residents what raincoats best fit the weather. Knowing what is taught by the plant makes people more aware of the distinctive features of the place they inhabit and, Snyder observes, they "can truly feel more at home" (38). Home does not only provide residents with shelter but it also fills them with memories and serves as a place with which they develop bonds in their lifetime. Snyder's recall of his place, distinguished from other areas by the species of pine known locally as *Luctatciyats*, reflects a fact that culture and nature are inseparable. The daily livings and lifestyles of farmers and other residents in this locality are shaped by their natural environment. This close relationship between people and the land is essential for genuine inhabitation from which holistic and moral mind can derive. Leopold also shares this opinion with Snyder when he states

that humans “can be ethical in relation to something we can see, feel, understand, love, or otherwise have faith in” (214).

Based on these discussions on agrarian ethics, this chapter aims at studying how farmers, portrayed in *A Place on Earth* (1967) by Wendell Berry, interact with animals and land in order to examine how and why their daily routines, which have rarely been an issue of discussion among scholars, engage them in their ethical treatment of land. The scope of the analysis ranges from the transformation of wilderness to farmland by early settlers, who built the town of Port William in Kentucky, to the farming lives of their descendants in the 1940s at the end of the Second World War. Many scenes show that the war grips the farmers with fear of the deaths of their loved ones, but the novel also alternates them with the approaching new lives on the farms at the start of the cropping season. The latter scenes depict a picture of American country life before the arrival of farm machines and modern agriculture. With a close look at such central characters as Mat Feltner, a devoted farmer who struggles against the loss of his son, and other fellow farmers who continue to keep their places alive under what will be called by this chapter as the “traditional way of farming,” the study will eventually lead to my argument that farmers can earn self-esteem, happiness, peace and mental strength, which cannot be bought by money, through their work and care for animals and land developed under the traditional farming context.

Wilderness to Farmland

In *A Place on Earth*, Berry makes it clear that early settlers in Port William cannot avoid the acts of axing trees, burning weeds and clearing a forest, which mean the destruction of the original vegetation. However, he does not present the

transformation of parts of the wilderness into cultivated land as an image of human conquest over nature, in which farmers root out unwanted plants in order to grow desirable crops. This representation is different from those in many literary texts which tend to compare deforestation to the rape of a woman. One example of this metaphor of sexual offense is described in Snyder's poem "Front Lines" which portrays loggers commanding the land to "spread your legs" (13). But this portrayal of the aggressive act to plunder natural resources is, however, absent in Berry's novel. He describes the farmers' attempt to render the wilderness inhabitable as their vigorous hard work that is inseparable from their commitment to the land. "The first-comers lost everything to the wilderness but their names. And for a considerable length of time after they arrived, the wilderness continued to make demands of them" (26). The wild land here is not described as a woman vulnerable to axes and fire, but it is animated as an authoritative figure demanding farmers to sacrifice almost everything while they clear and till the land. The farmers are now no longer the controllers and exploiters of nature; instead, a question of whether their farming will be successful depends on the way they interact with the land. The wilderness "asked, among other things, too much of their attention and energy to leave time or strength for record keeping" (26). The hard work can be clearly sensed in this scene. The wilderness requires farmers to bring forth all their great care and labor and spend most of their day farming. The farmers thus seem to be dependent on the land and are left with little power to negotiate the hardship.

However, it does not mean that the wilderness is taking revenge on humans as if it were their ruthless slave-driver. The wild land is teaching the farmers about their reciprocal relationship in which the humans can enjoy the fruits of their efforts through their labor and the care they first give to the land. Once a farmer fulfills the

land's demands, the land "might give back to a man more than it took from him" and it "welcomed him everywhere he puts down his hand or his foot or his seed" (27). Berry calls this willingness of the land to be plowed as being "responsive," a reward to the farmers for their contributions to the land. Their relationship reflects that the use and good treatment of land can go together during the transformation of parts of the wilderness into the farmland. This view is contrary to a negative perception that human use of land is only harmful to nature.

The reciprocal relationship between the land and the farmers is essential in building part of Berry's agricultural ethics. Whereas it is unarguable, as Freyfogle points out, that humans depend on land, a question of whether land also depends on humans needs to be examined and clarified. As living and non-living beings interrelate in a balance of food chains, the wild area can live by itself without help or care from humans until one day when a group of farmers settles in and begins to cultivate the land. The land which is being cultivated needs human attention. When Berry describes that the wilderness "makes demands" on the farmers, he views it in the context of cultivation in which humans change the land from one status to another. The presence of farmers causes the food chains to adjust to a new balance from, in Leopold's words, the "soil-oak-deer-..." to "soil-corn-cow-farmer" relationships (215). It is this new environment in which the reciprocal relationship between cultivated land and farmers occurs. The farmers want the land to produce crops while the land needs "attention and energy" from the farmers. "Attention" which implies care, and "energy" which signifies labor and work, can be considered as indispensable not only for the ethical treatment of the land, but for the survival of the farmers as well. If the farmers fall short of these two qualities, it will be difficult for them to

maintain the reciprocal relationship with the cultivated land and their cultivation can fail as a result.

In fact, attention and energy are captured in the word “agriculture.” According to *A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*, agriculture derives from the combination of two Latin words – *ager* which means an acre or a field and *cultura* which derives from a Latin verb *colere* meaning to till (“ager,” “cultura,” and “colere,” def.). “Agriculture” is literally defined as the tilling of land. The dictionary further explains that *colere*, additionally means to attend to, which has a sense of taking care of something. Agriculture thus implies two senses – to till and to take care. The word stresses again that land use and land stewardship must go together.

In his attempt to portray the reciprocal relationship between farmers and the land, Berry chooses to highlight traditional farming in the novel, which is set in the 1940s. The old way of farming plays an important role in maintaining the reciprocity because the interdependence between farmers and land is strong in the absence of modern farming machines. Berry portrays traditional farming as a picture of farmers equipped with two important factors – care and work. He does not mention sophisticated tools such as tractors although historically, according to Bruce L. Gardner who studies impacts of farming technologies in *American Agriculture in the Twentieth Century*, tractors were among 51 prominent technologies and innovations available in the early twentieth century which were listed in 1940 by the US Department of Agriculture (9). That Berry opts to ignore the existence of farming technologies and to emphasize human work on the land in his narrative may be accounted for by the fact that machines can disrupt farmers’ reciprocal relationship with land, which includes soil and animals. Their intervention can cause farmers to

rely too much on farming facilities and lose their active role in establishing the relationship with the land.

In *A Place on Earth*, farmers' good treatment of animals can be seen in the old way of plowing with horses or mules, a common picture of farming before the arrival of tractors. It is an activity that can foster agricultural ethics because the nature of work requires farmers to respect the animals they work with. Feeding the animals with ears of corn and water in stables is necessary in farmers' daily routines, but it is not sufficient to reinforce their reciprocal relationship. Out in a field, farmers also treat horses and mules as fellow beings, not machines or slaves. In a scene in which Mat's relative Jack Beechum observes his tenant, Elton Penn, plowing with three horses, Elton directs the team towards Old Jack and slowly he calls them to stop to greet him. Elton calls "Whoa! Whoa boys!" in a tone that is "full of praise. He speaks as he might speak to three other men well known to him" (209). The young farmer treats his horses as friends, and his tone of voice suggests that he also admires and respects the ability of his team which can draw a heavy harrow powerfully to break up the earth. It is this tender treatment of his horses that causes in part the animals to "move in a way that shows they know exactly who they have behind them and what he expects" (209). Without respect and good words for the animals, it is hard to imagine that they would follow the farmers' orders. Berry concludes the relationship between the animals and farmers in *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agricultural* (1977): "A relationship between a person and a work animal is analogous to a relationship between two people. Success depends upon the animal's willingness and upon its health" (93). Mules and horses, like humans, have their own thoughts and can choose whether or not to follow the commands. Elton proves that the animals need both good care to stay healthy and respect from farmers; then, they will be

willing to help farmers go through the hard job. Contrary to Elton, Mat's grandchild, Henry Catlett, fails even to command mules to smoothly pull a wagon. He, together with his brother and Mat's servant, Joe Banion, sits in the wagon when he shouts "come up, you son of a bitch!" (245). His words provoke the animals and they suddenly run out of control until Joe manages to calm them down again. Joe warns Henry that they can be killed because "the mules ain't going to stand to be insulted that way" (246). The calls of animals as "boys" or "bitch" in the two scenes draw different responses from the animals. Horses and mules need respect and cannot stand a bad treatment. The respect for the animals is essential in the traditional farming, which depends largely on animal labor, and this concern for, and appreciation of, their feelings can strengthen the farmers' ethical relationship with their animals.

Another aspect of farmers' stewardship of the land is their concern for the soil. A scene in which Mat's son, Virgil, is plunged into an agony due to the death of his first crops reflects his great awareness of his commitment to protect the soil. Virgil tries growing crops on a slope area though, from his father's experience, he has learned that it is "hard to keep it from washing" and he himself "expect[s] [he's] seen half the topsoil goes off of some farms around here in my time" (180). Mat's concern reflects a farmers' duty to take good care of soil which can be washed away by rain water or blown elsewhere by a wind. The best way to protect it against destruction is to cover it with plants and build windbreaks, the rows of tress grown near the field to reduce the impact of the wind ("The Facts Underneath it All"). To stop the wind from blowing the soil away, farmers in Port William leave parts of the wood in their original state without changing them and to brace for water that can erode the topsoil, planting crops is a good solution. However, Virgil tries to do the latter to no avail as an overnight downpour sweeps crops and soil in its path. "Virgil," Mat reacts after

seeing the devastated scene, “this is your fault. This is one of your contributions to the world” (180). Mat’s view of planting crops as one of “contributions to the world” reflects the importance of farming which is not just a rural career to sell crops for money. Farmers are tasked with a duty to protect soil to ensure that it remains nourished and is able to nourish plants. Virgil is “about to cry” because he witnesses the failure of his attempt to protect the soil and plant the crops (180). The young man’s expression reflects his great care for the crops and the soil. The more devotion he has to the land, the more sadness he receives when his care turns fruitless.

In addition to the farmers’ love for the land, another characteristic which constitutes the picture of traditional farming is farmers’ heavy work due to little or no help from modern farming technologies. The absence of the technologies creates an environment in which farmers need to depend on their efforts to keep their places alive. While the farmers’ care for the living and non-living beings reflect their good intention and love for the land, work translates these thoughts and feelings into actions. Old Jack admires the daily routines of Elton and his wife, Mary, when he sees the couple working diligently on his place. Mary, who is fetching water from a well for boiling before washing cloths, greets him and then “she has gone on with her work, paying no attention to him. It pleases him that she has started her work so early in the morning, and that she goes about it without stopping to talk” (208). Her husband, in the following scene, has a brief break from plowing with horses to talk and update Old Jack on what has been done on his land. When the conversation ends, immediately “the young man swings up onto the harrow seat” and he “does not look back. As though no interruption has taken place, the great hooves lift and fall, the harrow disks slice through the ground” (210). Berry is using the couple’s enormous concentration on house and farm jobs to emphasize the importance of work. The lack

of washing machines and tractors causes Mary and Elton to work harder than farmers of the modern day. Since the couple has no facilities to rely on, it is their labor that enables them to take good care of the land. Work is therefore a means by which humans concretely express their love and care for the land.

Two Types of Farmers

Though the nature of traditional farming, which requires intensive attention and energy for animals, crops and soil, keeps farmers in line with land ethics, it cannot ensure that all farmers will adopt this stewardship. Berry portrays two types of farmers in the same farming context, distinguishing them by their attitudes towards land and farming. The first group of farmers treats land as an asset and farming as an occupation to make money. Among them are Mat's cousin Griffith Merchant. Griffith is a well-being farmer who lives on revenues made from tobacco crops sold by his tenant farmers on his land. He "lived on his land like a blight, troubled only by the slowness with which it could be converted into cash, unable to see or care beyond his line fences" (109). His lifestyle, which centers largely on his self-interest, illustrates that he lets money play an influential role rather than develops relationships with his surroundings ranging from persons living next door to farm animals and the land. He prefers to see a quick change of harvests to money, enjoying accumulating money rather than devoting his attention and energy in the field like such farmers as Elton. When he pays much of his attention to money, a little of it is left for his neighbors living next to his backyard, not to mention horses, mules and cultivated land. Even if a natural disaster slammed his community, Griffith would be concerned only with himself and his own property: "if Armageddon had blazed to those boundaries and stopped, he would have noticed it only to think that he had been rightly spared" (109).

Griffith's role can be an example of a businessman who successfully capitalizes his crop field, but in Berry's view, he is nothing but a "blight," an image of a farmer who is useless and makes no contributions to his environment as depicted by Berry through the reciprocal relationship between farmers and land.

There are not only landlords like Griffith who are interested in wealth accumulation but also their field tenants, who have their minds filled with money concerns. The tenants' relationship with Griffith's son, Roger, is only a business issue; the negotiations on the sales of tobacco crops are only a contact between them. Roger has his lawyer collect half of the revenues from his tenants as rents for living and farming on the land while his tenants "pester the lawyer in order to secure minimum supplies and to keep their houses and barns standing" (111). These tenants are so keen on protecting their interests that their requests tend to be annoying, but their behavior results in part from Roger, too. Their repeated calls to secure even the minimum shares of tobacco revenues imply that Roger does not easily give in to the demands of his tenants on money issues. He is not a kind of farmer with a gentle heart and thoughts for others' feelings. Roger's only interest in business talks leads to the confrontation of interests between him and his tenants who need to turn their attention and energy to protect their shares of money. Tenants on Old Jack's tobacco farm are also motivated by the concerns for money and estate issues. Usually these tenants live and work on adjacent farms and come to the old man's place only to "take on the extra work" and instead of overseeing land well, they "nearly worried Old Jack to death with their poor ways of doing – messing at their work or neglecting it, losing his tools or leaving them in the rain, forgetting to fasten gates, mistreating the stock" (207). The tenants are distracted from attention and energy for land because they view farming on Old Jack's land as extra work from which they can obtain extra money.

Their behavior indicates that they view land as a source of revenue, an attitude hostile to land ethics, and because the land belongs to Old Jack, they see no duty to protect the asset they do not own.

The money-conscious attitude among these tenants, who hardly work happily with horses and mules and land in the field, results partly from their poverty. Poor tobacco farmers' concerns over money are discussed by Jackie Ham in "Child Labor in the American South: Kentucky Tobacco Farms." Though tobaccos are considered as cash crops in Kentucky, which especially bolstered the state economy in the nineteenth century, many farmers were dogged with financial troubles. Many farmers in Kentucky had no money to own land; in addition, they had to work under the "crop-lien system," in which they bought materials needed for planting the crops on credit. Usually farmers ended up with failure to earn enough money to repay their debts. One reason, Ham explains, was low tobacco prices which were allegedly caused by the attempt of businessmen to monopolize American tobacco industry in the early twentieth century. These problems are not illustrated in detail in the novel, but many poor farmers in Port William are worried over money issues. Their burden to pay rents to land owners, known as cash rental tenancy, cause many of them to find ways out of poverty and climb, as Gardner calls, the "agricultural ladder" toward a point that they can own the land (55). John Crop, a tenant of Roger, is an example of farmers who are struggling to climb up the ladder. Unfortunately, his savings are not enough to buy some plots of farmland and worse, even if he had more money, "he still would not have had enough. Roger looked on the place as an heirloom. He would not sell" (114).

The second group of farmers consists of well-being farmers such as Old Jack and poor ones like John and Elton who farm as tenants; however, they do not share

the same attitude with the first group. These farmers do not pay attention to whether the land can bring them money, but they emphasize how properly they work and how well they treat the land. Old Jack does not concern himself with ways to change crops to cash, but he pays attention to the work and attention to all elements that constitute the farmland. The old man is pleased with orderliness in his place well preserved by the Penns, his tenants. Tools are well kept in a farm shed; plants are under good care, and Elton and his wife always wake up in the pre-dawn to begin their daily house and farm jobs (208-09). For Old Jack, his happiness rests on the good treatment of the land, not profits from planting tobaccos, so it is not surprising to see him applaud Elton and his wife for their work and attention to the land. Whether they will be able to make huge profits is not Old Jack's criterion for finding tenants to succeed him in overseeing his farmland.

Like Elton, John is a poor but good farmer. Though he knows he has a slim chance to buy the farmland from Roger, no matter how much money he has, he keeps on giving good treatment to the land he has lived on. It is true that John primarily tends to Roger's land because he wants to own it some day in the future and thus, as he tells his son, Gideon, "we don't want to buy a place we've ruined ourselves" (114). However, when he later learns that a land deal with Roger hardly turns successful because the landlord tends to keep his land as family inheritance, he does not quit his duty to oversee the land simply out of the fact that the land does not belong to him. John is determined to keep on spending attention and energy to the land he has developed a bond with. Even when he sees his son lean on the axe handle during his break from the field work, he suddenly tells him "that axe handle ain't made to lean on" (114). His comment shows, to some extent, his preoccupation with continuous work on land. It is this quality that is later instilled into Gideon as he follows his

father by keeping on working and caring for the farmland, though his father and he have never owned it. The land has still been “regularly mowed and sensibly cultivated” and “in the sheds and outbuildings things are put away neatly on their shelves and hooks.... There is a small building that has apparently at some time been rescued from collapse, pulled back, straightened, rebraced, and made into a toolshed” (113). It is evident that John and Gideon have never stopped putting their attention and energy into keeping of the place they live in.

Agricultural Ethics: The Convergence of Spirituality, Beauty and Ecology

The friendly attitude towards land and farming of the second group of farmers leads to a question of what is behind their way of thinking. Earlier discussions of agricultural ethics have given some explanations. Freyfogle suggests that human dependence on land is a basis for land protection while Leopold points out that human awareness and understanding of land as an ecosystem rather than a property also keeps them in line with the ethics. Moreover, the two preceding examples, in which Old Jack is pleased with the orderliness on his farmland and John is satisfied with relentless working, illustrate that farmers can also earn happiness while they work and take care of the land. These emotional effects, in addition to the fulfillment of farmers’ physical needs for food, can be another part of Berry’s agricultural ethics which emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between farmers and the land. In *A Place on Earth*, good farmers are aware that if they keep on farming with love, their lives will be happy and their happy lives can, in turn, enhance their urge to maintain their good relationship with land. The devotion of attention and energy to farmland can thus easily anchor in the minds of such farmers as John, Old Jack and Elton because this group of farmers gives weight to non-monetary gains, i.e. the physical

and emotional fulfillment, whereas, for the other group, which includes Griffith and poor tenants who view land as an asset, they appear to be happier with monetary gains, or revenues from crop sales.

The non-monetary gains stem mainly from farmers' relationship with the direct results of their work. These gains are rewards that fulfill farmers physically and emotionally in return for their attention and energy given to farmland. The gains are born out of farmers' appreciation of the direct results of their work, which differentiate them from farmers who work for money. Elton and his wife who grow vegetables, feed hens and pigs and milk cows are an example of farmers who enjoy the results of their work and rely less on money they earn from crop sales. "These people," Old Jack comments, "are not the kind who will be running to the grocery store to buy all they eat" (208). This relationship between farmers and their work is explained by Paul B. Thompson in *The Spirit of the Soil: Agriculture and Environmental Ethics* (1995). Referring to Berry's view of work value, Thompson points out that good farmers are not like city people and some farmers, whose "relationship between work and survival is mediated by money" (81). The latter group of farmers first farm for money in order to go to a next step to spend the money they earn on things that keep them alive and make them happy. However, farmers, who are less dependent on money, happily work and acquire food directly from farms and gardens in their house yards.

Along with satisfying their physical needs, the farmers also have their mind fulfilled emotionally with a range of rewards from self-esteem, happiness, peace and mental strength. Such jobs as controlling horses while plowing and taking care of lambs in a barn, which will be discussed in the following paragraphs, will illustrate

how farmers simply gain happiness from their work and care for land without being distracted by the amount of money they can earn.

Driving horses or mules straight and moving heavy harrows to follow their footsteps are considered as one of the most demanding but rewarding works. Farmers who work with horses and mules in a field have to deal with the difficult job of driving and plowing at the same time. Berry reflects the difficulty of the job through a conversation between Old Jack and Floy Mahew's boy as the old man does not believe the boy can alone command a team of mules to plow land in a hotel yard. The boy says "Yessir. I'll try" when he is asked whether he can plow a straight furrow. His answer prompts Old Jack to react "What in the hell does that mean? 'Yessir. I'll try.' Well, I'll drive straight. You just keep your plow running level" (190). Because of the boy's lack of experience and poor skill in controlling the mules, two persons are needed to work with the team of mules. The work illustrates that farmers have to spend much labor on getting both harrows and animals move in desired directions to make straight furrows, which are parts of successful cultivation.

However, though plowing with horses and mules are difficult, the work fills farmers with a sense of self-esteem once they can manage to successfully control the animals. The scene in which Old Jack sees Elton smoothly direct his team of horses to plow the land illustrates that he is fascinated by the young man's plowmanship and comments to himself: "the man is driving, not riding" (209). The applause gives a picture that he does not only ride the horses back and forth along the field but he also drives a harrow on which he sits to make the straight lines of furrows. This work is, in fact, needed to be done by two farmers if they are not equipped with good plowing skills, but Elton alone manages it all. When Old Jack admires him, he notices that the young man "recognizes the value of the compliment and appreciates it" (210). Elton's

appreciation reflects his pride in achieving a job that cannot be done by everyone even farmers themselves. The more difficult the job is, the more self-esteem he achieves when he completes it. More importantly, however, his self-esteem would never have arisen if Elton had not worked, given respect and love to his horses or valued this emotional reward when he looks at the neat furrows of plowed land.

As working with horses or mules fills farmers with pride, their close relationship with the land also enhances their awareness of the pleasantness of the place. Berry delineates this moment of happiness that is experienced by Mat's daughter-in-law, Hannah Feltner, as she, together with her baby, rests atop a ridge near Mat's tobacco field. Though her cheerfulness does not result from farming, Hannah lets her acquaintance with the land makes her more attuned to its sounds as if she were listening to it playing the music of life. Portraying the young mother's happiness derived from her careful listening to the voices of the place made similar to a musical performance, Berry describes:

She becomes conscious now of the stirring and murmuring of the life of the place – the voices and comings and goings in the town below her, the humming of insects among the blooms of the fields, now and again the far-off bleating of Mat's sheep somewhere back of the hill. (242)

The music, made up of voices of various sources, can be interpreted as that of an orchestra with various musical instruments playing an allegro of a symphony with melodies, high and low and loud and weak, following one another in a short succession to form the lively, rapid movement. That Hannah "becomes conscious" of the life of the place, expressed in the form of the voice of insects near her and those in the town and the hill faraway, illustrates that she can recognize their whereabouts and

that she is interested in them. This knowledge and enthusiasm are a result of the close relationship between Hannah and the land. Their connectedness is, as discussed in earlier paragraphs, strongly developed in the context of traditional way of farming, in which there are not many facilities to distract farmers from their work and care for the land. The place-conscious feeling not only enable Hannah to appreciate the beauty and liveliness of the land but her knowledge of the place, including another example of Hannah's recognition of a unique, yellow-striped fly in Port William named "steady bee," is also an important part of farmers' good treatment of the land. The scene reiterates Leopold's notion of motives behind his land ethics as he says humans can develop ethical relationship with land when they know, understand, love and value it (214).

The esthetic quality of the relationship between farmers and land can also be seen in a scene in which Mat's fatigue and anxiety fade at the sight of the life of his hometown. Not only does the picturesque and lively neighborhood in Port William refresh Mat and keep his spirits high but it also reflects the harmonious relationships among the members at his place. In this scene, Mat was taking home his wife's brother, Ernest Finley, who suffered awful experience in the First World War. Ernest survived the Great War, but on the day he was discharged from a hospital, Mat learned that his wounds were so severe that he was left crippled and since then his cheerfulness was gone. From a train trip to the town of Hargrave and another one-hour drive to Port William, the two finally arrived at their home. In their scenic journey to Port William, Berry describes:

From the top of the first ridge they could see Port William lying in the sun ahead of them, the white steeple of the church pointing up over the cluster of treetops and roofs....The maples, in the perfect foliage of early June, dappled the

road and the white house fronts with their shade. Flowers were in bloom in the yards...[A] yellow cat sat licking itself. Behind them the fog, a white sunlit cloud, filled the valley to the brim.

[When they reached the house and parked the car, Mat could hear] a susurrantion of the wakefulness of the town, in which the noon meal was being prepared, the floors were being swept, time was unwinding in the kitchen clocks,....

There were the smells of honeysuckle, of barns, of cooking, of hay curing, of horse dung warming and drying in the road. (35)

The wakefulness of the place alleviates Mat's afflictions as if he were "waking from death" (35). The "death" refers to his sorrow when he sees the plight of Ernest who was made a victim of the war. Like Hannah, Mat is brightened by the vitality of the place which energizes and leads him to a happier mode of mind. If what Mat sees and all the sounds and smells he perceives are caught and painted on a canvas, they will create a painting of the American countryside ideal for esthetic appreciation. One way to understand Mat's experience of this homeward-bound scene is to analyze it from a cognitive viewpoint, or the use of the thinking and understanding process to appreciate the environment's beauty. Philosophy professor Allen Carlson explains in his article "Environmental Aesthetics" that cognitivism is one of the approaches in which the appreciation of natural beauty is generated by "the knowledge provided by the natural sciences and especially sciences such as geology, biology and ecology." Carlson considers Leopold as an appreciator of natural beauty in this tradition. In his land ethics, which supports good conducts to keep an ecosystem in good health, Leopold asserts that "a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community" (225). The beauty of the biotic community depends on the right acts of humans who interact with other members along the food

chains in the ecosystem. Leopold's emphasis on the knowledge and importance of the interdependence of living and non-living beings can be applied to comprehend Mat's esthetic experience. In Mat's homeward-bound scene, Berry juxtaposes the smells of honeysuckle, barns, cooking, curing hay and drying horse dung together, which seem, at a first glance, irrelevant to the picturesque quality of the painting. However, when their interrelationships are considered, the beauty begins to come into sight. Berry puts them in a context of one of the "workday mornings" (35) to illustrate the working of all community members which are important in maintaining their interrelationships. As farmers are working in the fields or the barns, their wives are preparing lunches for them. The honeysuckle grown on Mat's place looked after by his family keeps Mat in a pleasant mood with its fragrance. Meanwhile, the sun helps farmers dry the collected hay to be made as feeds for their livestock, and horse dung certainly comes from grass or corn ears and water fed by the farmers who rely on their labor. This understanding of their interrelationships is the beauty of the painting. Berry uses smells, from sweet scent of the flower to the stench of the dung, to illustrate their harmonious relationships which are important to keep the whole place healthy under Leopold's land ethics.

Apart from the self-esteem and esthetic experience, another reward farmers receive from their dedicated work on the farm is a peaceful feeling. Mat experiences inner peace when his desire to ensure the safe births of lambs in a sheep barn is satisfied. "He hungers for the births and lives of his animals, as though the life of his place must be held up by him" (88). Mat's desire illustrates that he does not feed sheep and cows only to get wool or milk from them, but he is also eager to see and protect their lives, especially those of the newborns. His awareness of farmers' role as a nurturer of crops and animals, which is, in one sense, very close to that of a creator,

can be a reason behind his strong desire. Generally a creator, no matter what roles she or he assumes – an artist, a composer, an architect, an engineer or even a carpenter – has an urge that what she or he brings into existence must turn out useful and beautiful. Likewise, Mat is committed to ensuring the good health of animals in his place since their births, an attitude corresponding to land ethics that demands humans to expand their care to non-human members living in the same community. When Mat sees a lamb die due to its mother's unsuccessful labor, he blames himself and "thinks with guilt of his failure" (89). For Mat, he is pleased when lambs are born safely and healthily. His inspection of lambing is usually carried out late at night when he is already tired of day work, but "in spite of the difficulty and weariness, he goes about his work with greater interest and excitement" and "when he has made sure of the life of whatever is newborn...he is at peace with himself" (88). The scene illustrates two sides of the work. The difficulty requires Mat to give attention and energy to the job while its result, the lives of the lambs, rewards him with a peaceful feeling. His excitement to see the safe births of the lambs and the subsequent peaceful feeling are so powerful that the difficulty of work is ignored.

Peace is the feeling of wholeness in Mat's mind that enables him to come to terms with the state of fragmentation during the Second World War. The man is on the verge of seeing his heart shattered after his son, Virgil, is reported missing during his military mission. Though the thought of the possible death of his son traps Mat in deep anxiety, the time in the sheep barn re-energizes him with the feeling of wholeness. There, he must make sure that the lambs are born healthily one by one. When Mat successfully helps one ewe deliver a lamb, seeing it born to the care of its mother, his mind is fulfilled with peace and satisfaction. Mat holds "his thoughts near to these things that his work and care have made familiar again" and he is "conscious

only of the nearness of this place: the ewe and lamb in the lighted pen” (90). His thoughts and awareness of his animals keep Mat away from the damaged and broken feelings brought by the war and replenish his mind with the lives he is adding to the world. The sense of destruction of the war is thus replaced by the image of creation and the feeling of wholeness.

Outside the sheep barn, the lives of young crops also energize Hannah who, like Mat, is in deep sorrow. She grieves for the loss of her husband, Virgil, who is eventually believed to have been killed in the war. However, when going out to a cultivated field, she is gleamed with vitality and sees her reeling mind swing back to the balance again. Walking along the rows of tobacco on Mat’s farm, Hannah is pleased by their “white-stemmed plants [which] have begun to grow” on the newly plowed land (241). As the growth of the cultivated crops is a result of the farmers’ good treatment of the plants and soil, the crops, in return, reward Hannah with a cure to her sadness. These tobacco seedlings build an atmosphere similar to the birth scene in Mat’s sheep barn. New lives again expel her grief and replace it with happiness. Under the sunshine and amid the rows of small green tobaccos, Hannah feels “the world going on, her life continuing with all that is alive” (241). The “world” refers not only to the young tobacco but also to her surrounding living and non-living beings on the place. Like all humans who have, deep down inside their soul, a strong urge to live on, Hannah is likely to feel relieved and happy at a sight of things that reflect humans’ most basic need – the desire for survival.

Though the lives of the lamb and tobacco seedlings respectively play a major role in relieving the sadness of Mat and Hannah, Berry points out in the end of the novel that the restful encounter with the change from life to death can really expel

their grief over the losses. Mat goes a step further than Hannah in his spiritual development when he can let go of his clinging to life and is ready to meet deaths willingly. During his search for a missing cow in a wood, Mat stops by a tree and notices that an area which was cleared and worked for cultivation is occupied by wild plants. A sight of the change of the land and the death of the crop field awakens Mat to a truth that he cannot preserve his farmland and this understanding of the change frees him from his deep anxiety over the death of his son. The change from the cultivated land into the wild one reminds Mat that his work and attention he devotes to his crop field will one day face a similar fate when he dies and nobody succeeds him as a farmer. He thinks:

Although the meanings of those clearings and his devotion to them remain firm in his mind, he knows without sorrow that they will end, the order he has made and kept in them will be overthrown, the effortless order of wilderness will return. (321)

The “clearings” refers to the clearing of weeds and land which is prerequisite before cultivation. However, Berry does not elaborate on what the “meanings” are. If Mat’s background is taken into account, the “meanings” may refer to his attention and energy he devotes to the daily chores to create and maintain lives of his animals and the place, or, in other words, the ethical treatment of land which can be seen, for example, through his great care of lambs in the sheep barn. However, it is quite astonishing that Berry, at the end of *A Place on Earth*, unveils the fact that even constant work and attention to the land, which the writer emphasizes throughout the novel, cannot last long as they are also subject to change. The death of the farmland may cast doubt over whether Mat’s work and care are useless in a long term because his work and care for the land will eventually disappear together with the deaths of

Mat and other farmers. However, Berry notes that Mat's dedication to the meanings of clearings "remain firm in his mind" (321). The land can be transformed back into the wilderness, but the transformation cannot affect the good intention of farmers. Here Berry stresses that the ethical treatment of land is always essential to farming. However, when the human-made order of farming, followed by good farmers such as Mat, is made humble to the change, or impermanence, it is Berry's intention to assert that farmers must also be under the law of nature. Berry uses the change to illustrate that humans will never overcome the natural order, no matter how good their actions are, and they, like other living and non-living beings anywhere on earth, are not more than the members of the community. This non-anthropocentric view places Berry closer to Leopold, whose land ethics also views humans as parts of an ecosystem. The view can also be a basis for the development of the ethical relationship with land because humans will not be misled to think that they are the center of the place and the controller, or even the exploiter, of nature.

For Mat, he first tries to resist changes, which includes the prospect that his farmland will die one day as well as his haunting thought of the death of Virgil, but he eventually lets go his clinging to life. Mat realizes that the changes are "made a necessity and a part of a design, where death can only give into life" (321). The "design" can be interpreted as the natural law or, in the Christian point of view, God. However, one may question as to what enables Mat to mindfully encounter deaths. It is not just his discovery of humans' useless effort to resist the changes, but his background as a traditional farmer is also quintessential in making possible his acceptance of the changes. Given Mat's experience, his everyday life cannot avoid the pictures of births and deaths of animals, crops and weeds. As a farmer, Mat has been introduced to the ordinariness of the cycle of births and deaths while he, along

with other farmers, continues his work and good treatment of land. This background prepares Mat for another reward he gains from building up a close relationship with the land, strengthened under the traditional way of farming. It is the spiritual reward of the better understanding of the inevitable cycle of births and deaths. Like farming in which the death of weeds allows for the birth of crops, Mat realizes in the wood that after the death of the crop field, wild plants are born again. Death is not a final destination, but it is part of the cycle which keeps turning. The death of farmland gives way to the revival of a wood which impresses Mat with a feeling that it is “a good place to rest, and now to be resting there makes him happy” (320).

Mat’s understanding of the cycle of births and deaths, which is based on his farming experience, reiterates that farming is not just an activity of planting and harvesting crops, but it is the work that supports a close relationship between humans and land which enables them to invigorate their mind with mental strength, peace, happiness and self-esteem. Berry makes it clear that his characters in the novel derive them from their ethics; that is, farmers can gain these rewards if they adopt a good treatment of land through their work and care. Under Berry’s agricultural ethics, which is strong in the traditional farming, a farmer works hard and takes great care of land; then, as Berry states earlier in his novel, the land “might give back to a man more than it took from him” (29). This reciprocal relationship keeps agricultural ethics alive. Farming in the eyes of Berry is thus an issue of ethics. While farmers continue their good treatment of land, they not only enjoy collecting food and crops they grow with hard work and care but also grow happiness in their minds.

CHAPTER III

THE REVIVAL OF BOND WITH LAND THROUGH

THE MEMORIES OF TRADITIONAL FARMING IN *REMEMBERING*

In *Remembering* (1988), Wendell Berry makes a sharp criticism of industrial farming, casting doubt on the merit of agribusiness. He is worried that the growing influence of industrial farming will replace traditional farming, under which, as he points out in *A Place on Earth* (1967), farmers adopt the ethical treatment of land based on their reciprocal relationship. While *A Place on Earth* portrays the horse plowing in traditional American pasture during the Second World War, Berry sets *Remembering* in 1976, thirty one years after the end of the war. Historically, 1976 was part of the five-year regime of then US Secretary of Agriculture, Earl Butz, who is known as a keen supporter of the large-scale commercial farming. His attempts to take the United States towards the modern way of farming, which throws weight behind machines as new farmhands and profits as a main goal of farming, have dissatisfied Berry. Among Butz's statements made during his term, considered highly unacceptable to Berry who comments on them in *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (1977), is that farmers "should plow 'fencerow to fencerow'" for a large amount of harvests (vii). Berry's dislike of Butz's idea is reflected in a scene in *Remembering* when agricultural journalist Andrew, or Andy, Catlett reacts that he "did not learn anything" from interviewing national outstanding farmer Bill Meikelberger whose crop field leaves almost no space for trees, vegetable, animals and even his neighbors except the rows of corns (61, 63). The vast tract of land filled only with a single crop lacks liveliness harmoniously created by the co-existence of farmers, crops, horses and a backyard garden, which is often seen in the traditional

farming context. Industrial farming evidently downgrades farmers' relation with land to only an economic tie, the situation always taken to task by Berry in his fiction and non-fiction.

However, one cannot reject the fact that industrial farming has become American mainstream agriculture, which eventually sends the old-fashioned and less efficient plowing with horses to oblivion. Berry accepts the fact, but, in *Remembering*, he continues to reflect his disapproval of it. For example, he rarely refers to such powerful machines as farm tractors. Instead of depicting how tractors can help farmers do their jobs, Berry opts to present that the machines need help from farmers who have to "fill the gas tanks and check the oil" or provides the detailed delineation of a scene in which Andy and an Amish man plow the land with a team of horses (65, 90). These evidence Berry's favor for traditional farming and his attempt to preserve the old way of plowing with animals, though in fact, as Bruce L. Gardner explains the tractors' influence in *American Agriculture in the Twentieth Century* (2002), the arrival of tractors "swept the alternatives [horses and mules] out of the way" and tractors have become reliable machines for farmers since the mid-1900s (10-11).

Yet, Berry continues to question the merit of industrial farming in his writings. His most salient opposition to industrial farming is evident in *Remembering*, especially in his portrayal of Andy's loss of his right hand to a corn-picking machine which weakens his connection with land and neighbors. When his hand is accidentally cut by the machine, Andy is severely affected. He struggles to cope with the mental wound through the remembering of past relationships with land and members of his community. Berry's frequent use of flashbacks brings readers to the old pictures of farmers' care for land. While modern agriculture urges farmers to look into a promising bright future, believed to be attained by new farming machines and good

marketing, Berry encourages them to look back into the past to find the real value of their jobs. Though he sets Andy in San Francisco, where the journalist-turned-farmer goes for a pre-dawn walk from his hotel room to the Golden Gate, and then in a plane where he takes for a trip home, most parts of the novel portray his remembrances of the past – both pleasant and unpleasant – and his recall of memories of his neighbors. In the end, Andy can cure his mental wound and it is only through his remembering of the past that saves him from being further plunged into the negative impact of the machine, which represents industrial farming.

Though Berry's stance against industrial farming is apparent in *Remembering*, Phillip J. Donnelly, who examines the Christian aspect of the novel in "Biblical Convocation in Wendell Berry's *Remembering*," notes that Andy's attempt to cure his suffering does not necessarily reflect Berry's intention to preserve traditional farming. Donnelly views the impact of the lost hand on Andy's mind as Berry's attempt to illustrate the close connection between the human body and soul. He refers to Berry's article "The Body and the Earth" in which Berry expresses his opposition to dualism by "guard[ing] against the attempt to think about either the body or soul without reference to the other" (280). Body and soul are inseparable, Donnelly explains; when one's body is damaged, one cannot avoid certain spiritual impacts. In *Remembering*, the lost hand leads to the mental pain which is described by Berry as Andy's loss of trust in himself and his wife as well as distrust he feels in others. At the end of the novel, when Andy manages to restore his trust, this cure of his mental pain also metaphorically leads to the "restoration" of his right hand. The comparison is Berry's illustration of the close relationship between body and soul.

While this chapter will further analyze the spiritual aspect of Andy's lost hand in *Remembering*, it will, however, argue that Berry's major aim is to advocate

agricultural ethics in traditional farming and oppose more uses of machines in money-based, industrial farming. It will study how the restoration of Andy's wounded mind and his relationships with land and neighbors, which are adversely affected by industrial farming, is made possible by the remembrance of traditional farming in the past. This chapter will therefore analyze Andy's views of industrial farming, the significance of the lost right hand and his struggle to piece together his shattered confidence in maintaining his connections with land in order to argue that the recall of the farmers' bonds with land and among themselves under traditional farming heals Andy's mental wound.

Traditional Farming versus Industrial Farming

In *Remembering*, Berry points out the conflict between industrial and traditional farming mainly through a conference on agriculture, an interview with rich farmer Bill Meikelberger and a talk with an Amish¹ man Isaac Troyer. The conference on "The Future of the American Food System" features industrial farming as a new way of living for farmers. One of the prominent guests at the conference is a high-ranking agricultural official invited to deliver a speech before participants gathering in "a great university of the Midwest" (5). The location of the university, the background of the speaker and the essence of his talk which is aimed at convincing listeners of the merit of industrial farming are all used to serve Berry's intention to criticise Earl Lauder Butz, the late US Secretary of Agriculture between 1971 and 1976, and his controversial agricultural policies. In the novel, the "high agricultural official" is introduced as an "old farm boy" who, along his career path, was first a professor of agriculture, the board chairman of an agribusiness firm, an agricultural official, and finally a high agricultural official (8). Though his name is not given, his background

is much similar to Butz's. In an obituary article on his death in 2008 written by Richard Goldstein, Butz is described as being "born on a farm near Albion, [Indiana]...and grew up guiding horse-drawn plows." He then served as the head of the agricultural economics department at Purdue University, the "great university" in the Midwest State of Indiana, after being granted Purdue's doctorate degree in agricultural economics. He later served on the boards of many agricultural companies. In addition, he became an assistant secretary of agriculture and was finally promoted to the top post of secretary of agriculture ("Earl L. Butz"). Berry refers to Butz because his policies greatly changed and affected American agriculture. In *Remembering*, the high agricultural official views farmland as "great food production machine" and with the help of technologies, he is confident that American farmers "can feed the world" (10). Apparently he is trying to convince the participants, whom Andy calls "old farm boys" (15), of the country's capability to make its farm produce a major export to the world market, and he thus insists on his stance against the subsistent living which is part of traditional farming. However, the large-scale farming once led the US to the oversupply of crops, and an attempt to export a large number of them caused the country to face their shortage. According to Goldstein, this situation happened during Butz's term when he urged American farmers to sell their crops abroad to earn more profits and solve then the excessive amount of American grain. However, as commented by Joel Solkoff in "The Politics of Food," the export failed to solve the American agricultural problem because, on one occasion, Butz's decision to export the large amount of grain to Russia "transformed the basic problem of US agricultural policy from what to do with the surplus to how to make up for the shortage" (qtd. in Goldstein). This problem shows that the mass-scale industrial farming had a flaw. Farmers who replace their small-scale family

farming with profits-based farming cannot always expect a satisfactory outcome. Berry's use of the agricultural conference to refer to Butz opens a debate on his agricultural policies which are not always beneficial to farmers and, in Berry's eyes, should not be used to shape the future of American agriculture.

At the conference, Andy takes notes of the speech of the high agricultural official with his left hand. The action seems, on the surface, nothing more than making shorthand by the unskilled hand, but the scene can be interpreted as Berry's intention to destabilize the official's message because of his disapproval of industrial farming. The official tells his audience that the development towards the new farming is good to American farmers because it has freed the majority of them from "groveling in the earth" while the rest are "enjoying the amenities of life – color TV, automobiles, indoor toilets...." Though, along the path of making American agriculture a "big business," farmers cannot avoid encountering a "breakdown in the old family unit,... fewer neighbors,...soil erosion and water shortages," the problems are simply viewed as "trade-offs" and farmers have to learn how to "[a]dapt or die. Get big or get out" (10). The official is speaking in a confident tone and plays down the adversities because they can be compensated by a large amount of farm produce that is believed to keep both farmers and the United States wealthy. However, Berry demonstrates his opposition to the speech by having Andy use his "clumsy, hesitant, uneducated left hand" to transcribe it in the abbreviated words with the ugly shapes of "rude twists and angles, with unexpected jerks" (9,23). This poor manner of writing can be read as Berry's attempt to reduce the importance and even reliability of the official's speech. Andy shortens his speech to "[g]rvlng in rth. Big biz. Amnty of lf: TV. Trd-offs:fam...nghbrs, soil, wtr...Adpt or die. Gt bg or gt out" (10). These abbreviated words illustrate inconsistency and a lack of standard shorthand rules in

writing. For example, Andy does not always stick to writing abbreviated words as he uses both “big” and “bg” and while he tends to omit vowels and maintain the first and final letters of each word, he breaks the rule by writing “rth” which does not make sense what word it stands for because, like the word “adapt,” the first letter of “earth” is important to give a clue of its meaning. Thus, his texts can implicitly create a sense of being unreliable and the official’s speech is eventually reduced to gibberish.

In the novel, the notion that farmers can move towards more comfortable lives by being “free from groveling in the earth” is also viewed as a threat to the ethical relationship between farmers and land, which is fostered under the traditional farming context. The high agricultural official’s words reflect that he does not realize the value of the close relationship between farmers and land, viewing their working with land as a representation of inadequate, or even poor, standard of living and thus supporting farmers’ freedom from farming jobs. For those who still maintain their career, they are encouraged to make themselves the “new farm boys” who are “as savvy financially as bankers” enjoying the fulfillment of material needs ranging from color TV sets, automobiles to affordability to spend holidays in Florida or Arizona (10). This view is in conflict with Berry’s agricultural ethics presented through *A Place on Earth*. As described in chapter 2, the novel, set in 1945, features the reciprocal relationship between farmers and land in which they relentlessly work and care for land in return for being happy with the beauty of pastoral scenes and awakened to the insight of cycle of births and deaths². According to Berry, farmers, who follow the traditional way of farming, enjoy emotional in addition to physical outcomes of their work. But if farmers transform themselves into bankers, with an aim to be free from what is considered as “groveling” on land rather than having a close tie with it, Berry’s agricultural ethics will be put on the verge of disappearance. Money will then

come between the relationship between land and farmers who will think only to capitalize earth and crops for getting richer. This attitude can also eventually damage the ecological relationship between the farmers and the land, which is a core of American conservationist Aldo Leopold's land ethics. Instead of being aware of the interdependent relationships between human and non-human beings along the web of food chains such as "soil-corn-cow-farmer³," exemplified by Leopold in *A Sand County Almanac* (1949), the farmers assess their surroundings in terms of cash, letting economic values shape their relationship with land. They work out of their desire for money to buy modern amenities they want, rather than out of their love and care for land, which is crucial in the agricultural ethics.

In addition to the degraded relationship with land, another quotation from the high agricultural official's speech that food can be turned into "the most powerful weapon" is even more harmful because such a view can lead to the total destruction of land. The official's words are the reminder of the similar quotation of Butz who preferred using farm produce as a political tool in negotiating with foreign countries to force them to do things in favor of Washington. According to Laurence Simon's "The Ethics of Triage: A Perspective on the World Food Conference," the quotation "Food is a weapon" is part of Butz's interview with *Time* magazine in 1974 when he referred to how the US, which then benefited from its massive amount of crop yields, compelled countries troubled by food shortages to improve their farming if they wanted the US to grant them food aids. However, Berry disagrees with politicizing farm produce to support US foreign policies. In *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture*, he argues that Butz was sending a wrong message to farmers without having a serious care for any unpleasant consequences that would follow. "This militarizing of food is the greatest threat so far raised against farmland" and it will

eventually “encourage the destruction, by overuse, of farmland.” (9). In *Remembering*, Berry has the high agricultural official use Butz’s statement again in order to criticize its idea and the official’s act that apparently boasts about the US abundant harvests under industrial farming.

Another aspect of industrial farming, which is presented through academic papers in the conference, is the tendency to understand agriculture in economic models. That is, any agricultural activities become quantifiable and their values are reduced to numbers. Andy calls this image of industrial farming as “abstractions by which things and lives are transformed into money” (31). In one presentation, a decision to choose between family farms with old traditions and modern farms with the promising high volume of harvests is made through a “quantimetric model” presented by an agricultural economist. He conditions that “the matrix of coefficients of endogenous variables must be triangular, and the variance-covariance matrix of structural equation disturbances must be diagonal” (14). This language of the purely technical terms functions to illustrate the prospects of lucrative farming businesses. However, not only could it be hardly understood by listeners but its focus on the business aspect of farming also misleads farmers into developing the monetary relationship with land. Under the new relationship, farmers’ labor and farming activities incur costs, so the ultimate aim of farmers is to earn income to cover the money they have paid. Instead of planting crops or raising sheep and enjoying the sight of their growth and strong health, which are basically considered as the direct outcomes of work and care, the farmers who adopt commercial farming think of how much money they will get as if they were not planting crops, but cash. Andy calls this act “abstract farming” because it does not give a picture of healthy crops, but it concerns the calculation of income in the mind of these farmers. In the conference,

Andy remembers a farmer named Elton Penn who would have responded to the abstractions by saying “if you’re going to talk to me, fellow, you’ll have to walk” (15). “Walk” is an action. Andy’s thought of it can be interpreted as his desire to walk out of the abstract farming to a basic thing like walking which is more concrete and can be directly experienced.

Andy’s opposition to industrial farming can be also seen through his talks with Meikelberger and Isaac. Meikelberger follows the large-scale farming, recommended by the high agricultural official. His wealthy life is similar to the picture given by the official, but his place is lifeless and his health is poor. In contrast, Isaac lives the subsistent farming. He values all members – both human and non-human beings – on his place in addition to his crops. Isaac does not have much money, but his place is rich with lives and he is healthy. Berry’s comparison of the two farmers’ farming practices aims at illustrating the negative image of industrial farming and, at the same time, promoting the value of traditional farming.

Meikelberger’s goal to commercialize crops differentiates him from Isaac because he rarely loves or appreciates lives which he perceives as not having economic values, though they are, in fact, important to his place. The 2,000 acres of his place lack the diversity of lives because Meikelberger cares and plants only profitable corn and employs “a herd of machines” which replaces the scene of neighboring farmers helping one another (61). Andy wonders whether Meikelberger has ever heard birds singing. “Meikelberger had no birds, except for the English sparrows that lived from his wasted grain, and even if he had had them he could not have heard them over the noise of his machines” (65). Berry portrays Meikelberger’s lifeless place which is more like a factory than a pasture to illustrate what farmers have to sacrifice if they adopt industrial farming. Ecologically, the profit motive of

such farmers as Meikelbeger is decreasing the biodiversity of lives on the place and, ethically, his action silences other voices which also have rights to living on land. However, as “[t]hese creatures are members of the biotic community [ecosystem],” Leopold asserts, “its stability depends on its integrity, [and] they are entitled to continuance” (210). Leopold believes that the health of land cannot wholly depend on humans’ decision and management because the presence of other members of the community is also important to keep the balance of the place, where living and non-living beings are interrelated in the web of food chains.

Isaac is better aware of this concept of the ecosystem than Meikelberger. He shuns industrial farming and his living is on the opposite end of Meikelberger. Under the Amish³ way of life, Isaac avoids unnecessary technologies and continues to maintain a good relationship with members of his community. Andy meets Isaac while he is plowing with three horses. At the sight of this traditional tilling on an area covering only eighty acres, he is prompted to talk to the Amish man on many issues from Isaac’s relationship with neighbors to his views on machines:

And then Andy told him about Meikelberger’s farm. Had Isaac ever thought of buying more land – say, a neighbor’s farm?

“Well, if I did I’d have to go in debt to buy it, and to farm it. It would take more time and help than I’ve got. And I’d lose my neighbor.”

“You’d rather have your neighbor?”

“We’re supposed to love our neighbors as ourselves. We try. If you need them, it helps.”

“Have you ever thought of mechanizing the place you have?”

“What for? So my children can work in a factory? (69)

Isaac’s answers reflect that he is uncomfortable with large-scale farming because it will drag him into issues other than farming such as debt management. Thus, he does

not need a number of machines to run his farm. His farming on the small plot of land requires not more than human labor and animals. However, Isaac's most important reason is his view on the relationship with neighbors because it reflects the Amish value of the importance of their community. The Amish believe that living as a "pure community" separated from "the modern worldly society" is a way to salvation and that loving and helping each other is part of their daily lives ("The Amish"). The love among community members as well as care for the whole community correspond with their ethics: farmers' love and care for land which keeps them spiritually healthy in return under Berry's agricultural ethics in *A Place on Earth* and the care for the balance of a biotic community under Leopold's land ethics. In *Remembering*, it is this love and care that maintain the good and harmonious relationship between farmers and land on Isaac's place. Though his place is small, it is rich with lives:

[Andy] saw the garden, newly worked and partly planted behind the house...and the small orchard with beehives under the trees. He saw fifteen guernsey cows and two more black mares in a pasture. He saw a stallion in a paddock beside the barn, and behind the barn a pen from which he could hear the sounds of pigs. He saw hens scratching in a poultry yard. Now and then he could hear the voices of children. On neighboring farms, he could see other teams plowing. (66)

The scene illustrates the harmonious living among plants, animals and farmers on the place. All are considered as members of Isaac's community. So, when he tells Andy that humans should love neighbors as themselves, his "neighbors" should therefore refer not only to humans but also to non-human beings. Moreover, the relationships among these neighbors are well nurtured by Amish religious beliefs which have been able to resist the influence of industrial farming.

Loss of the Right Hand as Weakened Relationships with the Land

Andy is so impressed by Isaac's traditional farming that he decides to write the Amish man's story in place of Meikelberger's in *Scientific Farming* though the decision costs him his journalistic job. However, Andy's opposition to industrial farming later loses steam and his relationship with land is affected after his right hand is accidentally amputated by a corn picker. Though Andy dislikes the modern farming discussed at the agricultural conference, he cannot protest it actively after the accident. In San Francisco, one day after his participation in the meeting, he clearly feels his lack of enthusiasm to protest the money-motivated farming when he recalls experts talking about it at the conference. "Andy has been moved by the possibility of acting in opposition to this, but he does not feel it now. It has gone away. He feels himself strangely fixed, cut off, unable to want either to stand or to move" (32). The phrase "strangely fixed" refers to Andy's lost right hand which is now replaced by a "mechanical hook" (25). Although it is useful in certain tasks, the device cannot cure Andy's wound because he still has almost no energy left to mend his shattered confidence caused mainly by his feeling of being unable to use his right hand to work. The following quotation delineates how the accident weakens Andy's connections with his surroundings: "All the world then became to him a steep slope, and he a man descending, staggering and falling, unable to reach out to tree trunk or branch or root to catch and hold on" (23). The metaphorical depiction of Andy's failure to stand firmly on the ground and hold parts of the tree reflects the severe impact of the accident on Andy's interactions with land and the natural world. The image of Andy's struggling in vain to reach out to nature illustrates his longing for an intimate relationship with nature, which is typical among many farmers before their lives are

influenced by machines and the modern farming. Without the right hand that connects him with the environment, Andy is discouraged from the traditional farming he has chosen and feels too tired to protect it against commercial farming, which is replacing the old but good pastoral way of living.

The loss of Andy's right hand to the corn picker reflects the dark side of machines, which are generally boasted about by supporters of industrial farming. In *Remembering*, the corn picker aims at helping farmers quicken their harvesting of corn, but when it is broken, the work stops and for Andy it leaves him with a mental wound besides his deformed body. Berry points out in this scene that technical errors can make the corn picker, together with other machines, a dangerous tool. The corn picker cannot stop damaging Andy's hand because it "did not know the difference between a cornstalk and a man's arm" (12). The machine is designed to harvest corns at a great speed, but, unlike humans, the machine cannot sense, think and decide what it should or should not do. Its function is only to pick up corns and do no other jobs. As a result, despite its ability to help farmers easily get through the hard job, the machine can be very harmful when it does not work properly. Berry's criticism of the machine intends to warn farmers against totally relying on this lifeless "farmhand."

Since the accident, Andy has been trapped by the thought haunting him that he is unable to work, help and express love for land and neighbors, all of which are crucial activities of his farming life. With only one unskilled, left hand, Andy finds that his relationships with his neighbors and animals are being weakened because he cannot work with them normally and effectively. Before the accident, Andy's neighbor, Nathan Coulter, along with other farmers, helped Andy plant alfalfa and, in return, Nathan asked Andy to help him sometime (32). After the accident, Andy tries to help Nathan and other neighbors farm but he does it "only as a nuisance, he felt, to

them and to himself. He had little belief that they needed him or that he could help them” (32). Evaluating himself, Andy believes that his ability to work is now gone with the right hand. The job of plowing with a team of horses also becomes too difficult for him with only the left hand, or that he has his 12-year-old son Marcellus direct the animals alone makes the boy risk being injured by the horses (26). With less or no working with his neighbors and the animals, Andy’s relationships with them are not so strong as those in the past because the work links members of the community, including animals, together. Furthermore, Berry’s portrayal of the impact of the lost right hand on Andy’s work holds some resemblance to the impact of machines on traditional farming. The arrival of the machines makes possible an aim to make progress in one’s farming career because farmers can work faster and more effectively. However, more machines mean fewer neighbors helping each other and fewer horses because they are replaced by farm tractors. Eventually, as farmers develop more dependence on the machines, they will be put into the same situation as Andy, that is, they will live as if they, too, lost the right hand because their connections with neighbors and animals are gone.

In addition to Andy’s difficulties at work, the accident also weakens Andy’s expression of love and care for land. “His hand had been given to him [Andy] for a helpmeet, to love and to cherish, until he died” (26). The right hand is important to Andy as a medium through which he “reached out to the world,” or interacted with his surroundings (23). One example of Andy’s expression of love for the land is depicted in a scene of his dancing with his wife, Flora, who is metaphorically compared with land. With only one hand, Andy cannot dance skillfully as he once did and is gripped with fear that his relationship with Flora will not be the same. He only recalls his happy past while struggling against the sad present:

He remembered...how his right hand had danced with its awkward partner and made it graceful;.... He remembered his poise as a two-handed lover, when he reached out to Flora and held and touched her, until the smooths and swells of her ached in his palm and fingers, and his hand knew her as a man knows his homeland. Now the hand that joined him to her had been cast away, and he mourned over it as over a priceless map or manual forever lost. (24)

The right hand, for Andy, is important since he uses it in dancing with, and expressing love for, Flora. However, not only does the intimate moment between the couple illustrate how the husband acts romantically towards his wife, but Berry's statement that "his hand knew her as a man knows his homeland" also suggests that this moment can be interpreted as pointing to the relationship between a farmer and land. Andy's comparing of Flora with the land reflects a perception of land as a woman. The destruction of his right hand by the machine, which results in Andy's lack of confidence to express love for his wife, can be interpreted as the threatening impact of machines on the farmer's, or husband's, relationship to the land.

It is important to note that while the metaphorical use of a woman as land is common in American literature, Berry does not describe the image of land as a woman vulnerable to male dominance in the farming context. His comparison of the couple's dancing with the relationship between farmers and land can be further illustrated as the equal roles of the husband and wife if this scene of dancing is juxtaposed with a passage from Berry's *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture*:

Farmers and land are thus involved in a sort of dance in which the

partners are always at opposite sexual poles, and the lead keeps changing: the farmer, as seed-bearer, causes growth: the land, as seed-bearer, causes the harvest. (8)

Here a farmer, who is compared to a father, and land, which is viewed as a mother, share the equal roles in taking care of crops. Berry does not present the father as superior to the mother because their roles are not fixed and keep changing like those in dancers. To ensure beautiful dancing, a male dancer who is often perceived as a dance leader has to reduce his role occasionally in order to allow his partner to take the center stage. Such a swing of the roles is also seen in the relationship of a farmer and land, or, metaphorically, a father and a mother. The farmer is, at one time, considered as a “seed-bearer” who gives seeds to the land, which is the father’s role, but, at another time, he has to nurture young crops, which is the mother’s role. Likewise, land is the receiver of seeds and nurturer of young crops, which are considered as the mother’s role, but she assumes the father’s role, too, because she is eventually the “seed-bearer” who gives seeds to the farmer. The land and the farmer thus take turns being father and mother in order to bring about successful farming.

However, for Andy, the lost right hand makes him unable to continue the role of a farmer working actively on land and act as a “two-handed lover” dancing with the woman he loves. The lack of confidence in love and work makes Andy unable to maintain ethical relationship with the land because these two factors are the core of agricultural ethics. As Berry points out in *A Place on Earth*, farmers have to work hard and take good care of land in return for healthy crops and happy living on farms. For Andy, while his love for the land sparks his intention to take care of the land, his work and contribution to his place transform his love into action. Love and work connect Andy with the land, so without them, he feels helplessly alienated from his

place. As reflected through his thought, Andy feels that the loss of his hand cuts him off from his strong intention to protect traditional farming (32). This unpleasant situation, which is caused by a machine, makes him see the decay of his ethical relationship with the land.

Remembering as a Way to Recover from the Weakened Relationships

Unable to accept his handicap, Andy first reacts to the loss of the right hand with anger at many things from his surroundings to himself. He has more frequent and serious quarrels with Flora. He dislikes the mechanical hook because it becomes a nuisance rather than a help to his left hand. He also keeps on blaming himself for his past careless act. But with anger, Andy is hindered from forgiving himself and moving towards a new life, in which he can continue his routines with one hand. Andy is dissatisfied with himself because he “had betrayed his hand” and “put his precious hand into a machine” (26). This thought reflects Andy’s high regard for his right hand, a representation of human labor, and, at the same time, it puts the machine, the core of modern farming, in a bad light. However, the more importance Andy gives to the right hand, the more difficult it is for him to accept the fact that he has lost it. He is thus trapped in his own anger. “He raged, and he raged at his rage,... He remained devoted to his lost hand, to his body as it had been, to his life as he had wanted it to be; he could not give them up” (28). Andy still wants to be “old Andy,” with two hands to work, love and dance. Though he knows that it is impossible to return to this favorable condition, his furious resistance to the radical turn in his life after the accident blocks him from curing his mental wound, a step important to pave the way for adjusting himself to a new life.

However, Andy's response to the loss of his hand significantly changes after he leaves home for the conference. A string of memories of Port William and his neighbors that he allows to gradually occupy his mind while he is spending time alone in San Francisco and on a plane plays an important role in lessening his anger. In a hotel room, before he leaves for a pre-dawn walk on the streets of San Francisco, Andy is, at first, stung by anger while he is putting on his mechanical hook. "[H]e is taken by rage at the oddity of his handless arm and the hook...He flings the hook into the waste basket, pleased by the sound of the heavy fall of it. 'Let there where you belong, you rattled bastard!'" (31). But Andy's anger is gone when he is later overwhelmed by the memories which lead him back to his childhood and further to the time of his ancestors. His calmer mood corresponds with his changed perception towards the mechanical hook. Before checking out of the hotel, Andy first wants to leave the hook in the basket, but suddenly he thinks: "No. Get it. It is only a tool" (58). Instead of calling it "bastard," he now views it as a "tool." While Andy knows that the hook cannot replace his right hand, he learns that it is pointless to unleash his anger at it and keeps mourning for the permanently divided right hand. "[H]is hand has left him. It has died, and is at peace" (58). Though his mood is still grabbed with grief, Andy is much calmed down. When the anger leaves him, his mind is ready for being cured.

Two key factors that induce Andy to recall people and Port William neighborhood are his loneliness and care for them while he is living far away from home. San Francisco is about 2,000 miles from Port William in Kentucky and the two places are completely different. In Port William, Andy is known by his neighbors and he has daily interactions with them. In contrast, as he walks alone along a street in San Francisco, Andy feels that he is only a "walker in the dark" (37). Instead of

identifying himself as Andy, a farmer in Port William, he sees himself as a walker who holds no identity. Nobody knows him except only as a man walking. His status can be viewed, in Leopold's words, as being excluded from the "biotic community⁴," in which human and non-human beings relate interdependently to one another. Outside the Port William community, Andy has nothing to do with the land where he used to grow crops, tend to animals and help neighbors on the farms. This situation, in which he has no one to interact with, awakens Andy to the importance of his daily routines which become even more valuable to him once he is deprived of them. He, therefore, looks into his mind from where he starts traveling back, through remembering, to his homeland and to the moments when he was surrounded by a circle of friends and family. His care for his family and friends plays a key role in fuelling his remembering them. Despite the quarrels with Flora and the discouragement to join other farmers in doing farm work, he still thinks of them a lot. "If Flora wanted him now, how would she find him? How would a call or letter find him with news of any death or grief" (42)? His reflection demonstrates that Andy has the care for his fellows so much that he imagines possible bad incidents that some of them may face. Like Flora who has no idea about him in San Francisco, Andy does not know what is happening to people in Port William. The lack of knowledge of his loved and familiar ones causes Andy to think more of them and this state of mind intensifies his memories of these people. For lonely and anxious Andy, he finds that only memories can bridge him with his community and its members while he is far away from home.

Three of Andy's memories which involve traditional farming are most influential as they serve as a cure to his mental wound, caused by the lost hand. Berry organizes the sequence of these memories by having Andy hear, through his

imagination, “the sound of hoofbeats” which leads him to the first two memories of his great-grandfather, Ben Feltner, and grandfather, Marce Catlett (43-44). Not only do the hoofbeats refer to horses driven by his two ancestors but they also give the image of traditional farming because horses are farm animals crucial in the old way of plowing. Andy’s third memory of his working with his grandmother, Dorie Catlett, in a henhouse also illustrates the old way of raising chickens as the two preferred waiting to see them gradually hatch out to buying grown chickens from a factory (47). These pictures which surface in Andy’s mind while he is finding ways out of his problem have a significant impact on him. After remembering, Andy feels better and has a stronger desire to mend his damaged ties with the land and the people in Port William. Andy reflects this feeling through his thought of coming back home: “I must go now. If I am going to go, it is time” (50). Physically Andy’s return will bring him closer to his place and people, making no more the distance between him and the neighborhood. The phrase “go now” that shows his determination to get closer to them without hesitation, can be also viewed, mentally, as his intention to restore the intimate relationships with the land and the people and discard the feeling of self-alienation which he was trapped in earlier.

Andy’s first hearing of hoofbeats which takes him back to the thought of his family bloodline reminds him of their connectedness to the land and the unbroken continuity of farming practices passed along generation after generation. Andy hears the hoofbeats as he is remembering his great-grandfather Ben who, one day in 1868, rode a horse to meet his lover, Nancy Beechum, who later married him. The scene prompts Andy to further think of the couple’s line of descendants in Port William:

Beyond that meeting, Mat, his grandfather, wakens, crying, in his cradle, and Bess, Andy’s mother, in hers, and Andy in his, and Andy’s own children in

theirs: Betty, named Elizabeth for his mother, and Marcie, named Marcellus for his great-grandfather Catlett.... (44)

Not only does this bloodline include people to whom Andy is related but it also gives a picture of how his family has long been rooted in the same place, the farmland in Port William. From Ben and Nancy to Andy and his two children, all were born, lived, worked, died, or would die in this neighborhood. The relationship between the family and the land has lasted for 107 years until Andy's time in 1975. His family and the land are inseparable as the family needs the land as a core part of their life while the land needs care from the family members to remain in good shape. Amid this strong tie, their legacy, which is the small-scale, family-run farming, has been passed on from one generation to another. One example is the plowing with horses which has been continuously taught to younger generations despite the arrival of more powerful tractors. Ben relied on horses and so do Andy and his son. The hearing of hoofbeats indicates that Andy still feels related to horses. Outside this imagination, he also does hear their sound, especially while he passes on the knowledge of how to direct a team of horses to plow land to his 12-year-old son, Marcie (26). The recall of hoofbeats and the family bloodline comes as Andy is suffering from the bad impact of the lost right hand. It can help remind him of the continuity of the family farming which can be further preserved if he does not have himself trapped in agony, the state of mind which can make him the first person to break the line of traditional farming.

Andy's remembering of the old way of raising chickens during his childhood also reflects his desire to keep this farming legacy alive despite the appearance of modern hen farming. In the memory, young Andy and his grandmother, Dorie, were talking about hen farming when Dorie asked him:

“You know, you can just order the chickens from a factory now, and they send them to you through the mail.”

“But this is the *best* way, ain’t it?” He hopes it is, for he loves it.

“It’s the cheapest. And the oldest. It’s been done this way a long time.”

(47)

Their dialogue demonstrates their disapproval of industrial farming which promises a new, faster way to get chicken than having hens incubate eggs one by one. Andy’s emphatic reply that the old way is the “*best* way” reflects that he values the traditional hen raising rather than the profits-based agribusiness and that he desires to keep on doing this best way, which has been being done by his ancestors. This memory reminds Andy of the farming legacy at the moment when he feels discouraged from doing farming work after the loss of his right hand. Ethically, Andy’s love for the old way of hen raising, together with the inherited farming practices he recalls when hearing the hoofbeats, can be also interpreted as another aspect of Berry’s agricultural ethics because the two scenes emphasize his view of ancestors and farming inheritance for their children as an inspiration to protect harmonious relationship with land and traditional farming knowledge that is crucial to keep land, animals and plants healthy.

Another picture of traditional farming that flashes into Andy’s mind is love among neighbors. The picture occurs when Andy hears the second arrival of hoofbeats of a horse driven by his grandfather Marce to make friends with new neighbor, Elton Penn, at his house. The memory reminds Andy of the value of relationship among neighbors under the traditional farming context. “I’m Marce Catlett. I’m your neighbor. I’ve come to make your acquaintance,” Marce greeted Elton as the young man was working in a barn. They then talked on many issues, ranging from Marce’s family, which included his son Wheeler and two grandchildren,

Andy and his younger brother Henry, to Elton's wife, Marry who was doing house work actively (45-46). Through their dialogs, Berry sets the mood of intimacy being formed by having Marce and Elton learn a bit more of each other's families rather than befriend through only a small talk. After their meeting, the two families became good friends. They, Andy recalls, "were neighbors, and in that neighborhood, Andy and Henry grew familiar and learned much" (46). The words "neighbors" and "neighborhood" in view of Andy are not just people living next door and the place that they work in, but they give a sense of each householder being the member of a big family in the home named Port William. The friendly acts of these farmers are based on ethics among people who, according to Andy's friend Isaac, should love one another. Their close relationship, which is rare in an industrial farming community, can be also considered as another aspect of Berry's agricultural ethics which emphasizes neighbors' relationships in the traditional farming context. For Andy, his memory of love and bonds among his community members reflects that his mind is still connected with them though his lack of confidence to work keeps him apart from his neighbors.

The three memories of his homeland and people remind Andy of his commitment to protecting traditional farming which is losing its importance to industrial farming. The recall of his family's connectedness with the land, the old ways of plowing with horses and raising chicken, that have been inherited through different generations, as well as the love among neighbors awakens Andy to the value of traditional farming which promotes the close and harmonious relationships with the land, animals and people. With the increasingly influential industrial farming, Andy realizes the old way of farming is facing threats because of the replacement of human labor by machines and the departure of many old farmers, including Marce and Jack

Beechum, who leases his farm to Elton after Elton proves himself a good caretaker of land. “Old Jack Beechum was already gone from his place. In two years Marce was dead, the horse and mule teams were going, the tractors and other large machines were coming, the old ways were ending” (47). Andy’s thought of them, which is described in a sad tone, encourages him to protect the traditional farming. He remembers Dorie who would like to know whether Andy wanted to continue doing the old way of raising chickens by asking him: “How long, do you reckon?” and he replied: “Oh, forever.” (47). Andy’s answer reminds himself of his promise, made to his grandmother, to protect the traditional way of farming. To keep his words, Andy, while still struggling against the weakened ties with the land and the people, learns that he must first find ways out of his despair in order to restore his connections with everything that he is related to.

The recall of his past helps Andy come to terms with the lost hand as it expels his feeling of self-alienation and teaches him a spiritual lesson of pain and joy in life. Through memories, Andy not only comes to realize the value of the traditional farming but also feels that it can heal his agony of being unable to use his hands to take control of things and thus to confidently maintain relationships with his surroundings through work and love. As he earlier mourns, “when he lost his hand he lost his hold” (23). However, when he is led by the memories to the old pattern of living, Andy feels: “He is held, though he does not hold. He is caught up again in the old pattern of entrances: of minds into minds, minds into place, places into minds” (48). The “old pattern of entrances” refers to traditional farming which takes him to the value of relationships between “minds” and “minds,” or people and people who include Andy’s ancestors passing on farming knowledge to their children as well as his thoughtful neighbors. He is also led to the value of relationships between “minds”

and “places,” or people and the land, in which the former takes good care of the latter which gives physical and spiritual sustenance in return. The images are so powerful that Andy feels assured that, although he has lost his hand and his “hold,” or power to take control, he has actually been held or sustained by all relationships formed and joined by traditional farming. The feeling relieves his mental wound because he now feels more secure by the “hand” of the traditional farming that has still held his existence.

That Andy is held by the traditional farming also gives him a clearer picture of the farming life in Port William, which is not just the picture of a green field where farmers and animals are working peacefully. Andy learns that it consists of both joy and pain and that, by embracing them both, he can really come to terms with his lost hand. He is aware of this truth after he is taken, by his mind, to his farmland:

He has met again his one life and one death, and he takes them back. It is as though, leaving, he has met himself already returning, pushing in front of him a barn seventy-five feet by forty, and a hundred acres of land, six generations of his own history, partly failed, and a few dead and living whose love has claimed him forever. He will be partial, and he will die; he will live out the truth of that. Though he does not hold, he is held. He is grieving, and he is full of joy. (48)

Andy’s departure from his homeland is not only viewed, physically, as a long distance between him and his place, but it is also, mentally, a weakened relationship with the land. However, the “leaving” from his neighborhood prompts Andy to realize what he is losing and the importance of “returning” home to reconnect himself with the land and the people. This stronger awareness of the relationships and living in his farming community prompts Andy to think more of the truth of life there which is made up of good and bad moments among community members, including himself.

Looking back into the long history of his family, Andy sees failure, hardship and deaths along with such good things as love and care that the family gives him. Both happiness and sadness do take turns coming to individual lives regardless of what they desire. For Andy, his hand has already left him and one day his whole body will be gone. Andy sees the truth of life and realizes that he should not resist it, but rather, live under it, enjoying the joy and grieving over the grief. “Word of death and grief *has* reached him, and it is word of his own death and grief, which are his life too,....” (48). Instead of having himself completely trapped in the sadness caused by the lost hand, he now views this incident from a new angle. It is only a part of his life; it is only what he faces while he is walking along the path of traditional farming which, he knows, is his happiness.

This discovery leads Andy to another memory of his ancestor getting through a hard job of traditional farming. The memory reassures him that the place where he faces bad things is the same place where he can find good things and happiness. Andy’s grandfather, Mat Feltner, teaches Andy this lesson, through the story of his childhood when he helped Jack cut tall corn by a creek. Exhausted by the hard work, they were tortured by the extremely hot weather and the air was so thin that they could hardly breathe. Mat wanted to finish the job quickly to leave for a “better place” (49). However, after Jack’s advice on soaking themselves in the creek, Mat felt much relieved and realized that the better place was not elsewhere, but the place where he was working. “[I]t had been there all the time,” Mat told Andy, “A little flowing stream” (49). The place where Mat experienced the hotness of the hot day is the same place where he enjoyed the coolness of the creek. In Andy’s case, Port William, the place where he lost his hand, is exactly the place where he can find happiness by interacting with the people and the land.

In the novel, Berry narrates Andy's spiritual moment when he eventually finds a way out of his problem by using a light metaphor to depict the change of darkness to light in San Francisco. Berry sets a time when Andy went for a walk along the streets of San Francisco in a pre-dawn when darkness still covered most parts of the city (36). Some birds began to sing, but Andy felt "excluded from the songs around him" (37). His state of mind was evidently filled with unhappiness and Berry uses the dark surroundings to highlight Andy's gloomy mood. However, at the San Francisco Bridge, Andy's mood changes after he is taken, through remembering, to the pictures of the land and the people doing traditional farming. He is much relieved and becomes happier. This state of mind corresponds with Berry's description of stronger sunlight and brightness in the sky: "The bridge has begun to shine. He turns and sees that the sun has risen and is making a path toward him across the water" (48). Berry illustrates the clarity of Andy's mind by accentuating the illumination of the light through the whole scene: "The whole bay is shining now, the islands, the city on its hills, the wooden houses and the towers, the green treetops, the flashing waves and wings, the glory that moves all things resplendent everywhere" (49). Not only does Berry compare the light to wisdom that guides Andy out of the darkness of his earlier confusion but the word "glory" also refers to the light of God which Berry takes from "la gloria⁵," the engraved word in front of a church which Andy earlier walked past on his way to the bridge. The light of God, which "moves all things," expels the darkness of the world and also energizes Andy by driving sadness and trouble out of his mind.

The memories of traditional farming have awakened Andy to his commitment to protecting the old way of farming and enabled him, then fragile, to have more courage to accept the pain and resume his inherited pattern of living. However,

despite these bold steps, Andy has still been left with a question of how he can begin the new life with one hand. Not until Andy recalls his relatives and himself choosing determinedly to pursue farming rather than studying and working in urban cities does he find the answer. It is, as Andy has come to realize, trust in what he chooses that can help him continue living with one hand. Mat and Wheeler, Andy's father, as well as Andy himself are the role models of people who make decisions based on their trust rather than always simply follow what others consider as a "successful" life. Mat was determined to be a farmer in a small neighborhood though he can climb up the social ladder through higher education. His decision is against an expectation of an old man he met on a ferry who believes that Mat will leave Port William to make use of his university knowledge (52-53). As for Wheeler, he disappointed an outstanding politician, Forrest Franklin, who valued the widely recognized path from universities to good careers in cities, by refusing a job in Chicago in order to live simply and humbly with land and animals and be happy to see "good pastures, and the cattle coming to the spring in the evening to drink" (56-57). Mat's and Wheeler's choice of farming has been passed on to Andy who also followed their track when he decided to put his career security at risk by quitting a journalistic career in Chicago to farm at a place which, at that time, "had lain idle" rife with "growing weeds and bushes" (72-73). Andy remembers how he and Flora then turned this untidy place to good farmland. "[I]t requires trust," Andy thinks, recalling his decision to live the way he liked though he did not even know whether his family would successfully farm there: "One cannot know enough to trust. To trust is simply to give oneself; the giving is for future, for which there is no evidence" (91-92). Andy made the choice before he really knew whether his decision was correct, but after twelve years of efforts and work on the land, his family has managed to give new life and beauty to their place,

known in Port William as the Harford Place (91). As Andy is now making a choice again, he thus decides to continue working and taking care of his farmland though he has only one hand left. He does not know what will happen to him, but he has a trust in what he has chosen. For Andy, the sight of “good pastures, and the cattle coming to the spring in the evening to drink” would be considered as a miraculous gift from the land in return for his love and trust in it.

Berry symbolically reveals Andy’s confidence in his decision to reconnect himself with the land and the people through a reaction of a young woman sitting beside him on the plane, that is taking him home. In *Remembering*, a woman is often compared to the land (57). When Andy’s weakened tie with the land is highlighted, Berry often refers to the protagonist’s sour and distant relationship with women such as his quarrel with Flora, his lack of confidence to dance with women and the distrust that women at the airport feel toward him and strangers (29, 78-79). In a scene toward the novel’s end, a young woman, who sits next to Andy on the plane, is at first cautious about Andy whom she sees as a stranger. However, when she notices that Andy is crying, out of his realization of the way out of his grief, she suddenly expresses her concern for him:

“Are you all right?”

It is the young woman in the seat next to him, who to his astonishment is patting his arm.

“Yes. I’ve been all right before, and I’m all right now.” (94)

The disappearance of the woman’s distrust toward Andy can be viewed metaphorically as the restored relationship between Andy and the land. Just as Andy learns to trust the love of his wife, or, metaphorically, the land where he practices the

inherited farming, so he, who is left with only one hand, finally finds that, with trust, he can still maintain the good relationship with the land and the people, which is quintessential for his attempt to preserve his family's legacy of traditional farming.

Andy's success to cure his mental wound demonstrates Berry's belief that traditional farming, which, in his view, does not regard profits as a major goal, can continue despite the strong influence of industrial farming. Though the old farming cannot promise farmers a faster track towards wealth, according to *Remembering*, it is unfair to conclude too quickly that the farming is simply an old-fashioned, inefficient method. The traditional farming has implicit value that deserves preservation and thus, secures a place for itself in the changing world. Andy's trust in the traditional farming and his commitment to continuing his ancestors' duty to protect it for younger generations stems from his remembering of its value which largely involves the intimate relationships among humans and between humans and the land. Through Andy's eyes, traditional farming thus plays significant roles in relieving him of sadness, providing him with spiritual sustenance and anchoring his existence in the loving bonds of his human and non-human "family" in this particular place.

Notes

1 The Amish is a Protestant group of Mennonite Swiss Brethren, a branch of Anabaptism in Europe with a tradition to re-baptize its followers after their first baptism in their infancy. The Amish, first settling in Pennsylvania in 1730s, is known for their preservation of the nineteenth-century lifestyle. They avoid many modern technologies as they prefer living peacefully and harmoniously with nature as a way to please God ("The Amish").

2 These emotional rewards are emphasized by Wendell Berry as the most important outcomes of the work and care for land. In *A Place on Earth*, as farmers' grief over the deaths of their loved ones in the Second World War enshrouds their community, they manage to find ways out of the somber atmosphere through the beauty of cultivated fields and even their own experience of daily farming chores. In the novel, Hannah Coulter, who loses her husband in the war, becomes more cheerful as she is soothed by newly grown tobacco plants on well-plowed land while Mat Feltner can eventually cope with his agony due to the death of his son when he sees the birth of wild plants on the dead farmland (241, 321). The sight reminds Mat of his farming experience in which he sees the cycle of births and deaths of weeds, crops and farm animals. He learns that the death of crops leads to the birth of wild plants and that, as he witnesses pastoral lives, the death of weeds results in the birth of crops.

3 Aldo Leopold defines land ethics in *A Sand County Almanac* as ecological conscience which keeps people in line with practices to preserve an ecosystem whose beauty and balance are based on the interdependent relationship among its members (203-04).

4 The "biotic community" is mentioned when Leopold explains the concept of land ethics in *A Sand County Almanac*. Ethically the biotic community refers to Leopold's belief that community members, covering human and non-human beings, are equally important in making their place, or ecosystem, alive and healthy (203-04). Each member hardly lives on if they do not help or depend on one another. In Andy's case, he is also an important part in the Port William community as the land where he has

settled and farmed needs care from him in return. Without this relationship, Andy can hardly maintain his farmer status.

5 The whole engraved sentence written in Latin reads: “La gloria di colui che tutto muove per l’universo penetra e risplende” (39). According to Donald DeMarco, the sentence is the opening line of thirteenth-century Italian poet Danté Alighieri’s “Paradiso” which treats God as light penetrating and resplendent in the universe. In his article “The Christian Meaning of Life,” DeMarco gives its translation as “The glory [la luce di Dio] of the One who moves all things penetrates the universe and reverberates [re-glows].”

CHAPTER IV
IN SEARCH OF A “BETTER PLACE” AMID
DECLINING TRADITIONAL FARMING IN *HANNAH COULTER*

Hannah Coulter is among the latest novels in Wendell Berry’s series of farming life in the fictional town of Port William in Kentucky. Though this 2004 novel continues to reflect the spirit of traditional farming with least disturbance of machines and large-scale commercial inclination, it is a narrative of the old pastoral living on a decline. Since it covers the large period from the 1920s to the 2000s, *Hannah Coulter* shares the old air and smell of farming with horses in the 1940s described in great detail in its predecessor *A Place on Earth* (1967) and proceeds through the period of heavily promoted industrial agriculture in the 1970s, which is the setting of *Remembering* (1988). What makes *Hannah Coulter* differ from the two novels is that while *A Place on Earth* focuses on the concern over the death of people during the Second World War, *Hannah Coulter* highlights the looming death of farmland because many people leave farming and their homeland for what they view as “a better place.” This problem also appears to be more severe than the impact of machines-based farming on farmers’ relationship with land as described in *Remembering*.

Among those who leave Port William are all three children of Hannah Coulter. Thinking of their departures for city jobs, Hannah “felt them like amputations” (Berry, *Hannah* 116). A similar feeling is described in *Remembering* when protagonist Andy Catlett’s right hand is severed by a corn picker, an accident that shatters his confidence to farm and express his love for land. Like Andy, Hannah feels that she lacks “hands” to help her and her husband, Nathan Coulter, farm and take

care of the place. However, the two characters react differently to the problems as Andy chooses to struggle against his mental wound while Hannah accepts her children's choice and only clings to a hope for someone to succeed her in taking care of land. One reason behind their actions is that the scale of their problem is different. Andy's weakened relationship with land is an individual problem and he himself has full power to solve it. In contrast, the problem in *Hannah Coulter* is presented at the community level in which Hannah's children, together with those of other farmers, give more value to other careers such as teaching, engineering and trading, than farming though the latter promotes close relationship between farmers and land. It is more difficult to Hannah to change others as she has no power over their thoughts. These people are letting their old places be occupied by expanding cities. Eventually, Hannah thinks, "our work and care will be bulldozed away to make room for something fancier" and she only has a hope for the opposite to occur by living on to see whether the old tie between farmers and land "may fare in bad time" (5, 83).

One way Hannah uses to relieve her feeling of the uncertainty of the farming community in the future is to meditate on the certain and unchanged events of the past and to imagine that she narrates her story to Andy. The novel is thus presented in a memoir telling Hannah's life, her two marriages, her place and her and her husbands' work and care for it:

I tell it [the story] with patience, going over it again and again in order to get it right. Often as my mind moves back and forth over it, I imagine that I am telling it to Andy....

As I have told it over, the past visible again in the present, the dead living still in their absence, this dream of time seems to come to rest in eternity. (158)

In Hannah's memories, the dead ones become alive again and the old time, when traditional farming was strong, returns to life. The thought of these people and their living in "eternity" reflects Hannah's desire to preserve them against changes. That she very much cares for the accuracy of the story also indicates that the story, which features the old relationship between farmers and land, is very important. It is therefore not surprising that Hannah wants Andy to be her listener because "[h]e loves us all, the whole membership, living and dead. He has listened to us all" (158). Because of the importance of the story, she needs a listener, who loves farming and can ensure her that the story will not fall on deaf ears. In *Hannah Coulter*, though it is unclear whether Hannah and a few farmers who still have strong ties with land can finally protect their places, the story of Hannah's life and her place can be a booster for her spirit, and all the things she loves, at least in her memories, will never change.

Existing criticism on *Hannah Coulter* tends to focus on two related issues: the notion of membership and the Christian concepts of love and redeeming grace. In 2011 article "Membership and Its Privileges: The Vision of Family and Community in the Fiction of Wendell Berry," Thomas W. Stanford III defines this membership as "a communion of persons bound together by kinship and friendship, by shared memories and history, by working together on the land, and, most crucially, by self-sacrificing love" (119). Stanford asserts that the other-regarding love is based on virtues followed relentlessly by family members who are supportive to one another and by couples who maintain their fidelity. "If one loves well in marriage, and, it might be added, if one loves well within a family, one may love well in the community" (124). Stanford's observation reminds *Hannah Coulter's* readers of the unbroken marriage of almost half a century between Hannah and Nathan. Nathan expands the scope of fidelity and love in his couple life and family to cover his neighborhood. Not only has

Nathan never thought of leaving his homeland to find jobs in a city but he always considers his neighbors' work as his own. As Hannah observes, his neighbors, like Nathan, also express their selfless-love and offer help in return. It is a practice based on "the understanding that when we were needed we would go, and when we had need the others, or enough of them, would come" (94).

Stanford is also among critics who read the novel in light of Christianity. He argues that Berry bases his idea of membership on St. Paul's writing in Romans I 2:4-5. In Paul's teaching on love, he regards people as "members of one another" because they are related to each other like organs which function together to make the body stay healthy (qtd. in Stanford 121). Jason Peters who reviews *Hannah Coulter* in 2005 article "The Tenderness of Remembering" sees a link with Christianity in a scene when Virgie, Hannah's grandson who has run away from home for seven years, comes back to his grandmother. He decides to work at the place where he, during his childhood, enjoyed farming with Nathan before he left for girls, city jobs and even drugs. "Virgie, who, destitute, is drawn by ancient bonds of affection to the Coulter farm, the grace of which may be sufficient to redeem him" (51). Since the words "grace" and "redeem" refer to Divine Grace and the sacrifice of Jesus for the salvation of all mankind, Peters contends that the "grace" that Virgie receives from the farm suggests the healing power of farming which is similar to Christ's redeeming grace.

Focusing on the issue of agrarian ethics, this chapter will examine threats to traditional farming that deprive Port William people of their sense of membership, a topic that has not been much analyzed. In addition to identifying two major threats – tractors and the general perception of farmers towards farming career – this chapter will examine why farmers fail to resist the threats. Furthermore, in its analysis of *Hannah Coulter's* narrative, it will examine why the novel which captures the decline

of traditional farming still insists upon the preservation of the traditional way of farming which is indispensable for agricultural ethics. The chapter first discusses the negative aspect of tractors and farmers' attitude towards farming, which strongly affect farming life in Port William, especially Hannah's. It then looks into the significance of marriage and love of Hannah and her two husbands as well as their strong belief that the traditional way of farming, which is ignored by many young farmers, is a path towards a "better place" they are looking for. The analysis will lead to my argument that a better place is, in fact, not a place which promises better economic opportunities, as claimed by many Port William people, but it is a place where residents see the value of loving, working and living in it.

Tractors as a Threat to Traditional Farming

Hannah Coulter portrays the traditional farming community in Port William as being on the verge of disappearance. It can be seen that tractors and farmers' view of their own work as being menial and thus inferior to other professions are two major reasons behind the decline of traditional farming. Tractors, which arrived in Port William after the end of the Second World War, replaced human labor and gradually changed the relationship among farmers. To make things worse, some farmers also thought that they themselves or the younger generation who should be given educational opportunities should leave farming behind and look for jobs that promise better financial rewards and higher social status. This attitude greatly changes their relationship with land. The situation is not only a threat to traditional farming but it also strongly affects the community's agricultural ethics.

Our discussion of *A Place on Earth* in chapter 2 points out that Berry's concept of agricultural ethics include the reciprocal relationship between farmers and

the land in which farmers work for and take care of land in return for physical and emotional satisfaction as well as spiritual fulfillment. In *Hannah Coulter*, like its predecessor *Remembering*, Berry reiterates, and in more details, the close relationship among farmers, which is common and strong in Port William before the arrival of tractors, as integral part of his notion of agricultural ethics. He suggests this dimension of agricultural ethics in a scene in which Hannah describes Nathan's love for the old way of farming. Her husband's love for traditional farming is translated into his willingness to give and receive help from his neighbors "who needed no bossing but out of their regard and respect for one another did what they were supposed to do" and as a result, "the [farm] work was freely given in exchange for work freely given" (93, 132). Their thought and care for others explain the ethical aspect of their relationship while the "trade" of their labor reflects their generally accepted rule that if one helps others, one will be helped in return. This kind of relationship shares the same principle of the reciprocal relationship between farmers and land which emphasizes mutual interaction and interdependence. The relationship among farmers is characterized by the same reciprocity and it can be thus considered as part of Berry's agricultural ethics.

The impact of tractors on the ethical relationship among farmers in Port William is first not clearly seen. Farmers who decided to buy them reason that they needed the machines to replace laborers who were hardly found in the post-war period. "[I]t seemed the right thing to do," Hannah comments, "help was scarce after the war than before" (92). Such scarcity did not only happen to tobacco plantations in Port William, but, historically, farmers planting other crops also bore the brunt. Richard Day, who discusses the use of cotton-picking machines in the mid-twentieth century in "The Economics of Technological Change and the Demise of the

Sharecropper,” finds that many farmers left farmland during the period of 1940-1949 for jobs related to the war and that from 1950 to 1957, “labor was pushed out by the new technology as it became more and more widely used in cotton farming” (qtd. in Gardner, 18). In *Hannah Coulter*, tractors, which can work faster than laborers and horses, eventually secured their place on farmland and permanently replaced many farmers in Port William.

Nathan is among those farmers who bought tractors. His decision seemed to be “right” at first as, with one tractor, he could do more jobs than before. However, Hannah later realizes that the replacement of the machine adversely affected help and ties among members of the Port William. Their membership was weakened because, as Hannah comments, “when the tractors came, the people began to go” (92). Not only did the tractors replace farmers and subsequently decrease their number but they also took away the atmosphere of cooperative working. Hannah mourns: “The old neighborliness has about gone from it now. The old harvest crews and their talk and laughter at kitchen tables loaded with food have been replaced by machines” (179). Her recall of the gathering of neighbors at the kitchen shows her nostalgia for the warm, relaxing atmosphere she experienced when the “harvest crews” finished collecting crops together. Now such a relationship re-appears to Hannah only as a memory.

A closer look into the tractor impact also finds that the machine undermines the agricultural ethics of farmers who still farm. The fact that “[a] tractor made it possible for one man to cover more ground in a day than he could with a team [of horses or mules]” indicates that tractors will also put an end to joint working and interdependence among farmers (92). The machine enables a farmer to go through hard jobs without help from their neighbors. As a result, they tend to work separately

rather than jointly and finally the old care for their neighbors and dependence on one another will disappear. In return for faster work, the farmers not only need to pay for fuel and maintenance bills but their ethical relationship among them is also a price for their modern way of living.

The ethical aspect of the tractor impact can also be considered under Aldo Leopold's land ethics. The American conservationist explains, in his book *A Sand County Almanac*, that land ethics values "the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community," or the health of ecosystem, and that this moral principle opposes any individual acts harmful to the balance of the community (215, 225). The interdependence among farmers in Port William corresponds to land ethics in a way that their relationship gives importance to the overall success of their community in cropping and harvesting. This characteristic is referred to by Hannah in her explanation of membership. She says: "In the long, anxious work of the tobacco harvest none of us considered that we were finished until everybody was finished" (94). However, the use of tractors in Port William is a threat to land ethics as it destroys the community-conscious interactions among farmers. Hannah comments that "[t]ractors made farmers dependent on the big companies as they never had been before" (92). Tractor owners are developing a new relationship with the companies which have nothing to do with the health and stability of Port William community and only consider the farmers as their prospective customers. These farmers need to rely on the companies' technology to make sure that their tractors will function smoothly. They also tend to spend more time thinking of the profits gained on their own piece of land rather than those of farmers next door who also farm with tractors. The picture that Hannah's uncle-in-law, Burley Coulter, who prefers to "count up the number of

farms he had worked on in his life,” which reflects his care for neighbors’ farms and community as a whole, can hardly be found in the presence of tractors.

This adverse impact of tractors raises the question of whether relying on the machines is really a good path for farmers in the Port William community. The novel illustrates that some farmers choose not to buy them and they can still live on. Danny Branch is an example of farmers who stick to the people-based farming. The novel portrays his family as playing a key role in keeping ties among family members, which is a basis for the agricultural ethics of helping and working together. “I think Danny has had the right idea,” notes Hannah, “all the Branches are still doing their work mainly with horse and mule teams, and all of them are still farming. And there are a lot of Branches” (92). Danny makes it clear that he prefers working and depending on their children, not machines. His choice illustrates a picture of the interdependence among people and animals. Without tractors, all his seven children are important to him and they still go on working together on farmland. Nathan’s family is, in contrast, an example of the disintegration of family members. He wants his children to continue farming, but in what can be considered as a paradoxical decision, he bought a tractor and saw all three children leave their homeland. His family life can be a microcosm of the break-up in the close relationships among family members in Port William when more tractors are used to replace people.

Another reason for farmers who do not shift to tractors-based farming is told by Burley who insists that “he saw no reason to change and he was not in a hurry” (91). His view, on one hand, indicates his awareness of the tractors’ working efficiency, but, on the other hand, it casts doubt on whether farmers really need to improve their speed. The phrase “in a hurry” implies the busy lifestyle of farmers working against time and thus requiring machines to help speed up jobs. However, in

Burley's community which has been long based on small but sustainable farming, do farmers really need tractors which seem to better fit larger, industrial farming? The novel again takes the Branch family as an example of self-sufficient farming that refuses to hinge its existence on technology.

If horses or mules will work cheaper than a tractor, then they work horses or mules. They use their cisterns and wells, even if the city water line goes right through their front yards. They catch or shoot or find or grow nearly everything they eat. (152)

In Hannah's view, the Branches' pattern of living needs little or no improvement. They have people, animals and all necessary things to sustain their lives. Their family may be hectic at work because they are committed to daily chores, but their lifestyle does not suggest that they have to work on a rush with tractors and other modern machines to ensure a large quantity of crops for sales.

The comparison between farmers who buy and do not buy tractors implies Berry's question on the merit of the machines. The writer evidently favors Burley's and Danny's choice and opposes Nathan's. Hannah's realization that her husband and other farmers may make a wrong decision reflects Berry's concern over the impact of tractors on farmers' agricultural ethics. He further discusses its impact on land and takes the tractor's efficiency to task in his essay, "Going back – or Ahead – to Horses," compiled in his 1981 book *The Gift of Good Land: Further Essays Cultural and Agricultural*. In his attempt to persuade farmers to return to the old way of farming with teams of horses or mules, Berry writes:

Unlike a tractor, a team [of horses] will always start; it is not so quickly stopped by mud or snow; and it does far less damage to soft ground....with a good

team, feeding hay out on the ground is a one-person job – whereas with a tractor a hand is needed to drive and another to unload. (190)

Here the image of the tractor is not presented in a flattering light. The machine is not at all friendly to the certain type of soil prone to damage. It is also sometimes not a reliable companion for farmers in terms of work efficiency because it can go wrong by the natural hindrances and can complicate the farmers' job which is supposed to be easily done since it needs more help to finish the job.

Negative Attitudes toward Farming

Another reason behind the decline of traditional farming in Port William can be seen in the attitude of many farmers who feel that their career is inferior to other professions. These farmers use only an economic criterion to evaluate their career and, as a result, they are willing to leave their farmland for a better place where they can earn more money. In a scene in which Hannah mourns the decision of her son Caleb, who graduates with a doctoral degree in agriculture, to be a university researcher and lecturer instead of a farmer, Hannah refers to some influence of the “voices of farm-raised people” on his choice of working:

I can almost hear, the voices that were speaking to him, voices of people he had learned to respect, and they were saying, “Caleb, you’re too bright to be a farmer.”

“Caleb, why go home and work your ass off for what you’ll earn? Things are going to get worse for farmers.” And they were true prophets. The farmers were at the bottom of the heap. And they were fewer for them, farming worse and earning less every year. (128)

These voices are concerned only about material outcomes, especially money, that farmers can get from land without thinking of love and pleasure, which are also crucial in their interactions with the place they live in. Their encouragement to Caleb to leave farmland suggests that farming cannot assure him of good monetary returns and that the career only fits people with low education. Even Hannah, despite her love for pastoral living, agrees to some extent with these voices because, in terms of financial status, farmers are at the lowest level of the economic hierarchy, compared with other professions of well-educated people.

This attitude toward farming indicates that the farm-raised people farm out of necessity rather than love and thus, the ethical relationship with land, which is a core of traditional farming, is not in their eyes. Observing motivations behind the farming career, Hannah notes: “There are only two reasons to farm: because you have to, and because you love to” (129). Farming can be primarily viewed in economic terms as an act to satisfy human basic needs. Many farmers in Port William have to farm because of a need to earn money for their families. However, sticking to this view alone can mislead them to regarding land only as a source of income. Consequently, they are willing to leave the land or sell it when they see better financial opportunities. Such a view is seen when Kelly Crowley, an old farm boy who turns himself to a real estate dealer, approaches Hannah in order to buy her place for a new land development project. “You have a nice place here, Mrs. Coulter,” Kelly says during his visit to Hannah’s house, “if you ever decide to sell, I surely would be obliged if you’d give me a chance to talk with you” (178). However, Hannah immediately rejects the offer. Though it is true that she is among farmers who primarily need to earn money, her mind is filled with love for farming, too. She not only view her farmland as a place to sustain her family but, in her response to Kelly’s praise for her place, she also says:

“A lot of work and love has gone into the keeping of it” (177). Love is behind Hannah’s ethical relationship with land and it is important to protect farmland and traditional way of farming which are at risk of being ignored if farmers have only an economic tie with it.

However, Hannah’s comment of the hardship and financial concerns over farming and her subsequent decision to support her children’s high education reflects a conflict in her mind between the love for farmland and a desire for a more comfortable and civilized life. She uses the same standard as that of the farm-raised people to make judgement about farming career when asking herself: “How could you look straight at your boy and argued that he ought to spend his life at the hardest work, worrying about money and the weather?” (129) Hannah’s initial perception of her surroundings also points to her conflict. When she and Nathan first settled in a house on their newly bought, abandoned farm, Hannah was not impressed by the rough and dull atmosphere of living in the plain, undecorated house and had not felt cheerful until she was given curtains by Mrs. Feltner. “The curtains civilized the place and gave it a touch of warmth and care that pleased us all” (77). Hannah links the feelings of warmth and care with the decorated curtains which, in her opinion, make the house look more civilized. With curtains, her house is not just a simple shelter, but it is well kept, more elaborately furnished and turned into a place of higher value and more comfortable feeling. Hannah’s appreciation of a touch of civilization on her place reflects that she herself also views the old way of farming, with least machines and amenities, as the primitive way of living. Despite the influence of these negative feelings towards farming, Hannah is, in the other side of her mind, also aware of the value of farmers’ work and care for land. Choosing to be one of farmers working with husbandry, she differentiates herself from other Port William residents who appear to

develop only an economic tie with land with little or no love for their farming career, and she also brands them only as “farm-raised people.”

There is only one mistake resulting from the conflict between her love for the traditional way of farming and her full support of her children’s study in universities as a springboard for a better career path. While Hannah is eventually determined to be a good farmer, she does not do much enough to awaken her children to the choice of succeeding their parents in farming. “...I wonder it many a time, if the other choice, the choice of coming home, might not have been made clearer” (151).

Hannah’s children are easily attracted to high education because it not only fulfills their dreams to embark on careers of their choice but also leads them to a “better place” with a prospect of financial prosperity. After graduation, Margaret becomes a teacher, Caleb chooses to be a university researcher in agriculture, and Mattie pursues and progresses in an engineering career. Each of them prefers living in a new place that expels their worries over money to secure their living. Education promises them the place they think most suitable to them. In Hannah’s comment, “The big idea of education, from first to last, is the idea of a better place” (112). Education serves the children as a path to the places where they are not required to encounter hard farming work but can earn more than farmers can. Mattie is an example of farm-raised people who feel that somewhere else better fits them than the farmland in Port William. Unlike his elder sister and younger brother, who still have some interest in farming chores, Mattie never has such an idea in his mind and always looks for a better place. When he was a farm boy, he never had good feelings towards his work because, Hannah observed, “[h]e did exactly what he was told to do, right up to the line, and no more.” Then, after graduation, Mattie, who was drawn to a better

workplace far from his home, “lit out for the West Coast where he had been offered a high-paying, high-technological job” (122-23).

Hannah does not totally reject education as, during her school days, she was always aware of a brighter future it promised and thus gave full attention to every subject, especially those that equipped her with secretarial skills. Her attentiveness to education is also evidenced by her role as her school’s valedictorian. However, Hannah later makes a blame on education when she realizes that it shares a role in weakening farmers’ reciprocal relationship with land, an impact viewed by Berry as a threat to agricultural ethics. “The way of education leads away from home,” Hannah comments while criticizing the idea of a better place, “In order to move up, you have got to move on” (112). The departures of Hannah’s children lead to the degradation of their relationship with land. The phrase “move up” not only refers to the children’s higher education but also their promising higher economic status. However, in order to reach the point of their desires, they need to “move on,” an act that gradually drives them away from home and land they once had relationship with. Margaret, Mattie and Caleb eventually feel no need to depend on farmland and though Margaret and Caleb still have some love for pastoral life, they are not required to translate their love into work and good treatment of land. The change in their relationship with land, when combined with similar acts by other young Port William people who leave farming career, can lead to the decline of traditional farming. Though Caleb shows his mother that he is still somewhat linked with farming by doing his agricultural researches, his academic articles reflect that Caleb loses the old eyes to look at the land the way his parents and other farmers do:

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

Education turns Caleb into an agricultural specialist who is trained to view farming in scientific terms. Unlike his parents who know nothing about agricultural science but employ inherited, practical knowledge of farming, Caleb is absorbed with theoretical approaches to farming and his objective explanation of it with the use of technical terms. Such approaches keep him away from daily farming life that his parents are familiar with, thereby, making him unable to see how his life is formed by farming and the land. He is not aware that his reciprocal relationship with land disappears and that the treatment of land with love also becomes impossible as his profession in the academia trains him to look at farming as an object of study that can be mastered by scientific methods. However, in Hannah's view, farming is more than agricultural knowledge made scholastic with explanations in the "unknown tongue" (132). Caleb's research paper makes her aware that the meaning of place is more than the classification of "soil types" because "[their] place," where she and Nathan farm and live on build their identities as farmers and give them unique living shaped by daily work and the intimate relationship with the land.

This view of Hannah is a reflection of Berry's criticism of the dominant attitude toward education as a means for material betterment and his worry over its adverse effect on the relationship between farmers and the land. To counter the mainstream, Berry suggests a different approach to education. In fact, Berry asserts, it is people's view and use of education, not education itself, that plays an influential

role in strengthening or weakening their ties with land. The farm-raised people, including Hannah at a young age, value schooling at high schools and universities because of their promise of economic rewards somewhere else in the future. In contrast, the Branch family does not treat the formal learning at schools as part of their career success. They want only “education” that can foster learners’ love for land and equip them with skills necessary to support their living:

Every one of them seemed to have a perfect faith in the education they got outside of school, which they didn’t even call “education.” Out of school, they earned what they evidently thought they needed most to know: to keep house, to raise a garden or a crop, to care for livestock, to break a mule or shoe one, to fix a motor and almost anything else, to hunt, fish, trap, preserve a hide, hive a swarm, cook or preserve anything edible, and to take pleasure in such things. (152)

The true education in the Branches’ eyes is not necessarily placed in a classroom setting. Their daily farm and house jobs are good teachers because they teach them things most relevant to human basic needs. In other words, the Branches are really learning how to make a living. More importantly, they also learn to “take pleasure in such things,” the most important feeling that paves the way for their love for land. Once they are happy with their daily chores and have no urge to look for jobs which are more comfortable and profitable, it will be easy for them to grow their love for their place, plants, animals, people and the whole neighborhood. As a result, all members of the Branch family feel no need to leave homeland and look for a better place.

The love for land, in Berry’s view, is even more important than the knowledge to preserve it. Greg Garrard, who analyzes Berry’s agrarianism in his article “Dwelling,” notes that Berry does not emphasize the significance of ecology, which

examines interdependence among members in an ecosystem and is often used as main sustenance to environmental campaigns. Berry is aware of the benefits of the ecological knowledge, but he believes that it should not be held in higher regard than love for the land because the knowledge of ecology only explains the physical relationship between people, animals, plants and other elements in an ecosystem while love for the land translates the knowledge into action, stimulating humans to protect nature and sustain close relationship with the natural world. In his book *What Are People For?*, Berry reasons: “To be well used, creatures and places must be used sympathetically, just as they must be known sympathetically to be well known” (qtd. in Garrard 113). He is here arguing that sympathetic love towards others is the basis for good ties between people and their surroundings. Thus, the knowledge of how nature functions must be combined with this love in order to better maintain the harmonious relationship among species. Unfortunately, some other farmers replace their love with economic concerns, so when they think that they do not need to depend on land and should go elsewhere, they do it without delay. Their physical and economic tie with the land is not enough to permanently attach them with their homeland.

A Path toward a “Better Place”

In *Hannah Coulter*, Berry criticizes Port William residents’ definition of “a better place,” which is based on their economic concerns, and argues that a better place is indeed built up by farmers’ love of the land and their neighbors. That many Port William residents, whom Hannah calls “farm-raised people,” link a better place with a place which promises monetary gains not only reflect their dissatisfaction with subsistence farming on their homeland but also shows their shallow view of what

should be a bright future. “People are living as if they think they are in a movie,” Hannah comments, “[t]hey are all looking in one direction, toward ‘a better place,’ and what they see is no thicker than a screen” (179). These people fail to look into what is behind exhausted farming jobs, from which they want to escape. As Berry suggests in the novel, it is love for land and neighbors that drives farmers to work hard though they gain only moderate pay, which hardly makes them rich like farmers who adopt industrial farming or those working in cities. For Berry, a place that is full of love is a better place. He thus views people who are not aware of this mental aspect of their relationships with land and neighbors as walking on a wrong track in their search of a good place to live in.

The novel illustrates a path toward a better place through a change in Hannah’s perception of land from a girl who has no special bond with land to a woman who regards land as her life. As earlier discussed, Hannah was initially not aware of the intimate bond between farmers and land because she did not plan to be a farmer and what she studied at school only prepared her for working as a secretary. However, after her two marriages, she has begun to see the importance of land. Marrying with Virgil Feltner awakens Hannah to a fact that land not only function as a source of food and a habitat but it also holds the story of farmers working on it which will be passed on to their children in the form of farming knowledge. In her second marriage with Nathan Coulter, the couple’s love nurtures her and Nathan’s love for land which is so strong that Hannah regards land as her life. As a result, Hannah and farmers who share the same love for land devote themselves to working on and taking care of land and their contributions unite them and also build love among them. Through the development of Hannah’s perception of land, the novel suggests that love for land and neighbors is fundamental to a better place and a path

toward it is built up by, according to Berry, the traditional way of farming, which urges them to express love for land and among themselves.

To give a clear picture of his version of a better place, Berry compares different beliefs between Hannah who sticks to simple pastoral living and her two children who leave farmland for places which promise them more secure financial status. Following his emphasis on the influence of marriages on individual lives, Berry also illustrates the relationship between marriages and the lives of Hannah's son and daughter. On their path toward a better place, what Mattie and Margaret experience at the end of their search is completely different from their mother's, a contrast that raises questions on the idea of a better place among young people of Port William.

Hannah's son, Mattie, becomes a successful businessman after he leaves farmland but has never found true happiness in his marriages. The CEO of an information technology company, Mattie is bound to keep up with busy schedules, devoting himself to "earning a lot of money and flying here and there about the world," and, on the path of this businesses-oriented lifestyle, Mattie married twice and "between those two there was another woman he was at least travelling with" (123-24). Mattie's endless search of new business opportunities worldwide, driven by his desire for financially better places, is done at a cost of healthy marriages because frequent travel strips him of time to live with his wife and build a family on a place which will be their home. A weak relationship with his first wife causes him to marry again but, showing no sign to be a faithful husband, he eventually ends up with developing a new relationship with another woman. One unpleasant impact of Mattie's infidelity in marriages is his escalating neglect of land which, as a result, leads him nowhere in his search for a better place. Hannah says that her son "no

longer fits the place [Port William]....” and “doesn’t see where he is” (123-24). His connection with his hometown, the place of his childhood, was first weakened after his departure. His two broken marriages further make him feel no need to settle firmly on a certain place where he will build home for his wife and family. When his relationships with the wives fade away, his attachment with land is gone. He only perceives places of his visits as only temporary shelters without seeing other values of a place, based on a strong bond with it. He has no wife and family as an inspiration to have such a relationship and although he can earn a lot of money, it does not guarantee whether he already arrives at a better place since he has never experienced happiness through his love and connectedness with land. Mattie knows where he is going to in order to make his business deals but hardly he knows the special and happy feelings of making a place home for himself, his wife and his family.

A path toward a better place of Mattie’s elder sister, Margaret, similarly ends in sadness. Margaret who chooses to live a modern lifestyle in Louisville, the largest city in Kentucky, also sees her marriage and family collapse. Unlike her parents whose relationship is strong under their family farming, city jobs, which earn Margaret’s family more income, keep Margaret and her husband, Marcus Settemeyer, apart. The couple worked as teachers, but they “were working in different places, going off every morning in opposite directions. They worked apart, worked with different people, made friends with different people” (139). Their relationship grew weaker and their family bond came to an end when Marcus began to make friends with a young woman, a teacher at his school, and he eventually decided to live with the new lady and asked Margaret for a divorce (139). One reason behind Margaret’s broken marriage is that their city jobs never give importance to joint working among family members, which is a key characteristic of traditional farming.

In his discussion of the old way of farming in *The Spirit of the Soil: Agriculture and Environmental Ethics*, Paul B. Thompson explains that since each family member is given farm and house jobs and their survival depends on each other's commitment to the work, the collaborative working of the family is considered a core of their living. As a result, they have to stick together and help each other. However, in cities, family members leave houses every morning for their workplace without working together anymore. Their survival thus depends on "cash that must be earned outside the homes," not on the family which is, under the old way of living, "the production unit that sustains and nurtures each individual member" (Thompson, 81). For Margaret, city jobs do not lead her to happiness and Louisville, according to her experience, is not a better place than Port William which she left.

Contrary to her children's unsuccessful search for a better place through their city jobs, Hannah who abandons her secretarial skills and chooses to live a simpler life as a farmer experiences opposite outcomes: healthier marriage and stronger love for land. Berry suggests that a choice of career is not only the issues of money and amenities but it also concerns a choice of certain way of living. In the novel, farming binds Hannah to work with her husband on a same place where they build a home and family together. Hannah's marriage under this lifestyle is strong because she and her husband rarely separate. Only the death of Virgil, Hannah's first husband, who was killed during the Second World War, causes Hannah to re-marry. However, both marriages share the same functions to make Hannah value the place she and her husbands live on and develop her love for it, and eventually Hannah even views it as her life. In *Hannah Coulter*, Not only does Berry suggest traditional farming as a way to help render Hannah's marriages successful but he also argues that marriage in turn serves as a springboard that helps reinforce bond with land.

A place, as Hannah realizes, not only shelters farmers but it also preserves a story, or daily living and working that makes up farming knowledge and local wisdom, which has been passed on to Hannah's family and her children. The marriage with Virgil gives Hannah an understanding of a new dimension of land which is not just an area with space and soil to serve people: "...Virgil's and my marriage was going to have to be more than that. It was going to have to be part of a place already decided for it, and part of a story begun long ago and going on" (33). A "story" that Hannah is here referring to is the story of the living and farming of Virgil's family on the "Feltner place" which "had been in that family a long time – since the first white people settled here" (33). That the story, of which she and Virgil were going to be part, has still continued reflects a good care of the place given by Virgil's ancestors. Once it is well taken care of by generations of family members, it will allow the story of their pastoral living to go on. To explain the importance of stories on land, Greg Garrard quotes Berry in his book *Ecocriticism* when Berry compares the accumulation of events in stories with that of leaves in his book *A Part* and contends: "A human community, too, must collect leaves and stories, and turn them to account. It must build soil, and build that memory of itself...that will be its culture" (qtd. in Garrard 115). In Berry's view, everyday working and living will become a routine, stories and eventually culture for being passed on from one generation to another. However, stories, or culture, as Berry calls them, will hardly continue if there is no land for the stories to take pace. The writer, stressing a need to preserve land in *The Gift of Good Land*, points out:

[T]he community is understood to exist not just in space, but also in time. One lives in the neighborhood, not just of those who now live "next door,"

but of the dead who have bequeathed the land to the living, and of the unborn to whom the living will in turn bequeath it. (272)

The inherited land, together with stories it holds, connects people of different generations together. Hannah and Virgil were given the Feltner place and they were going to follow ancestors in their mission to take good care of it, build their own story and merge them with the continuity of this inheritance. Their intention, which is similar to Andy's recall of a need to preserve traditional farming legacy in *Remembering*, reflects again part of Berry's agricultural ethics that emphasises the importance of land protection for present and future generations of farmers.

Hannah's intention to protect the land is further strengthened in her second marriage when she learns that the couple's love is important in laying a basis for growing love for the land. Hannah learns of this fact from her strong, unbroken relationship with Nathan:

[T]wo people could love each other for a long time, until death and beyond, and could make a place for each other that would be a part of their love, as their love for each other would be a way of loving their place. (68-69)

The love between Hannah and Nathan can lead to the love for land because in order to maintain the couple's love, and also to ensure the good living of their family, the place must be treated well. That they "make a place for each other" is a way to express their care toward each other. "The making of the place was the thing that ruled over everything else for we were living from the place" (106). Hannah's tone of voice in this quotation reflects her profound gratitude to the place which is her and Nathan's home, their major food source and an environment in which their intimate relationship develops. The more they care for the living of each other, the more they

realize the value of the place where they live from. Thus, they work hard to protect and maintain the land on which their lives and love depend. This connection between the couple's love and love for the land can be viewed as another aspect of Berry's agrarian ethics. Thompson, who explores Berry's agrarianism in his book *The Spirit of the Soil: Agriculture and Environmental Ethics*, presents this connection as part of Berry's unique idea of "ecology of virtues" (82). Thompson notes that "the elements – stewardship, family, community, industry – in Berry's constellation of values reinforce and validate one another. No single virtue can be isolated from the others" (81). In case of Hannah and Nathan, the love between themselves, the family's love, urges them to work hard on their farmland, along with helping other neighbors farm and take care of land, in their move to fulfill the roles of the stewards of the place which will, in return, ensure them of good living.

The connection of the couple's love and land is apparent in Berry's works which always support farmers' strong commitment to taking care of land. In his view, a husband and a wife have a duty to give good treatment to land in the same way that they love and are faithful to their partners. The use of marriage in his argument for land stewardship makes Berry different from other American nature writers, including Henry David Thoreau¹. Herman Nibbelink states in *Thoreau and Wendell Berry: Bachelor and Husband of Nature* that though the two writers share the same footing in their opposition to industrial farming, which is developed uncontrollably at a cost of healthy environment, Thoreau disagrees with farmers' total dedication to tending to land through relentless working (139). Explaining Thoreau's reason, Nibblelink states that such jobs as tilling land as well as growing and harvesting crops can keep farmers busy all year round and leave little time for themselves and these jobs will, as a result, exhaust farmers' body and mind and this condition "enslaves and ultimately

extinguishes the spirit.” What most worries Thoreau is that the continual commitment to farm chores will eventually deprive farmers of “individual freedom” (139). Therefore, as Nibbelink refers to Thoreau’s friend and American essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson’s observation, to avoid this situation, Thoreau supports a role of the “naturalist [who] has a bachelor’s relation to nature” without a need to shoulder heavy workloads by marrying, or committing, oneself strictly to the demanding farm jobs (139). In contrast, however, Berry prefers marriage and the idea of a couple working together to take care of their farmland. In *Hannah Coulter*, Nathan not only has Hannah as his inspiration to acquire land but he also needs her help because the work and care for land cannot be finished by one person. As commented by Port William people on Nathan’s bachelor status: “It ain’t good for a man to be alone....How long do you reckon a family can run on bachelors?” (69). In return for love and help from Hannah, Nathan is not only assigned with jobs to continuously take care of his wife but he also needs to protect the land on which his family lives. By connecting his marriage with these commitments, he, like Hannah who learns to be a good wife and a good land caretaker, will be also a good husband as well as a land steward, a role that is a basis for the virtue of husbandry.

The love of Hannah and Nathan for their land is so strong that they regard it as their lives and, consequently, the couple contributes efforts to keep their place, which is their lives, healthy rather than looking elsewhere for a better place. This view is common among farmers who are loyal to the traditional way of farming. In Port William, Hannah observes, these farmers “aren’t trying to ‘get someplace.’ They think they *are* someplace” (67). This attitude results from farmers’ regard for land as a source of their lives because it is crucial to almost all aspects of their living. Hannah emphasizes that farmers and land are so closely related that it seems as if they had the

same body. If the land is under good care, the farmers will be happy, but if the land is poorly treated, the farmers cannot sustain good living. As Hannah points out, “it is hard to mark the difference between our life and our place, our place and ourselves” (106). Because their homeland *is* already their lives, this group of farmers sees no reason to look for other places. In other words, they have no idea why they have to abandon their lives in Port William and go to a new, unfamiliar place which will never replace their lives that are rooted in this place. The only commitment of these farmers is to keep on working on their place to make it good in order to live well.

To make a good place requires actions that can serve this purpose. Members of Port William generation after generation have adopted traditional farming as the way to express their love for the land and work for it which then awards them with good living in return. One example can be seen in the Cuthbert place, a place belonging to Hannah and Nathan who have turned it from an abandoned area into well-treated farmland. The place is, in fact, not totally a crop field as it is a mix of the natural zone of woods on the steepest ground and a crop field on the low-lying farmed area. The couple does not want to farm on slopes where soil is prone to wash, so trees will be left to protect it and they only turn the lower area to their working and living place where “the signs of careful use” are easily noticeable:

Nathan’s rules from the start were never to plow too much in any year, never to grow more grain than we needed to feed our own livestock, and never to have too much livestock. We didn’t overgraze the pastures, and we sowed the cropground to wheat or rye in the fall. So what you see now on these fields is mostly grass and clover, more than enough in any but the driest years, and the trees left here and there for shade and of course for prettiness. (84)

Berry's detailed description of Hannah's and Nathan's work on their farm here sounds as if he were introducing readers to environmentally-friendly agrarian practices which are a core of traditional farming. The couple's traditional farming is close to subsistence agriculture in a way that both Hannah and Nathan do not primarily plant crops for sale but they farm to sustain their living. Their practices are contrary to late US Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz who urged American farmers to plant "from fencerow to fencerow," the controversial idea that I have discussed in chapter 3 of the thesis. Hannah and Nathan see no need to make full use of their land, which can lead them to the level of exploitation, so they stop expanding the crop field once they, together with farm animals, are satisfied with enough food and turn their focus to the esthetical aspect of the place by planting trees to create the shady atmosphere pleasant to the eyes and mind. Their traditional farming is the concrete example of Berry's agricultural ethics because it is made of love and work done for their long-term good living. They do not view their place only as a plot of land, which is bought by Nathan and covers a plot of about 150 acres. The couple treats it with love and they work to serve their place which, as commented by Hannah, "always around us with its needs and demands" and by "our work we kept and improved our place and in return for our work the place gave us back our life" (89, 134). Both Hannah and Nathan know that their love for land and continual working for it will eventually reward them with good living which will never be short-lived like that occurring to farmers who only drain all the benefits from farmland. This good living will be sustainable as long as their love and work for their land exist.

The good living in this sense is a reason why the Coulters and the Branches do not follow the trend of a search for a "better place." They already live in the better place made out of their love and work. This notion of the better place is further

elaborated by Berry who links it with the Christian concept of the earth and heaven. The religious explanation of a better place is seen in Hannah' comment on the farm-raised people who are relentlessly searching new land in a hope for better, more convenient living:

Most people are now looking for “a better place,” which means that a lot of them will end up in a worse one.... There is no “better place” than this, not in *this* world. And it is by the place we've got, and our love for it and our keeping of it, that this world is joined to Heaven. (83)

Basing her reason on Christian teaching, Hannah believes that “this world” is the place that “we've got” from God as a gift. God, not humans, is the true owner of land. The Hebrew Bible (Deuteronomy 10:14), quoted by Berry in *A Gift of Good Land*, says “the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is” (271). This teaching reminds humans of their duty to God's land. They cannot exploit or do everything on land at their own will but they need to limit their role to only that of a land caretaker. Hannah is wondering why the new generation of people in Port William keeps on seeking for better place in this world, because, in her view, a good place does not depend on their search but it comes out of humans' good care of the gift they receive from God. Therefore, Hannah suggests, instead of searching wastefully for a better place in this world, it is better to be the stewards of God's land. “And stewardship is hopeless and meaningless unless it involves long-term courage, perseverance, devotion and skill,” explains Berry in *The Gift of Good Land*, and because of these practices, farmers can eventually live what he calls the “right livelihood²” (267,275). Hannah and Nathan's family is a model of farmers who adopt traditional farming as a guide for the right or appropriate living. The old way of farming corresponds with the role of land stewards who dare

challenge hard jobs in order to keep on running and taking good care of their farmland. With these practices, Hannah believes, this world, or the place they are living on, can become a part of heaven. In other words, the place can be made a “better place” once it is occupied by work as well as love for land, along with love for neighbors. These are the virtues that will allow people to enjoy the blessing of heaven now without waiting for the next life.

Hannah’s ethical and religious argument for the traditional and pastoral living in the debate on a “better place” represents Berry’s attempt to shore up the declining traditional farming, which, in the twenty-first century, even more succumbs to new lifestyles. Farmers’ total dependence on such machines as tractors and the departures of their children from farmland for opportunities in big cities are now a common picture in the United States. Hannah’s criticism of a better place perceived by new generations of farmers serves Berry’s purpose to remind farmers and his readers of the forgotten values of traditional farming which puts love for land and neighbors as part of their work. Helps given to farmers living in the same community, loyalty to one’s spouse and family, and the faithful love for the land are the major aspects of agricultural ethics that Berry uses to support his attempt to bring back the old way of family farming. Not only do these virtues lead to husbandry and a good farming community but they also make farmland a better place for farmers without the need to adopt the more costly way of modern living.

Notes

1 It is important to note that Berry's and Thoreau's intimate relationships with nature originate from different motives. Berry develops close ties with land, plants and animals because he believes that the harmonious relationship between human and non-human beings is crucial for ethical farming in everyday life. However, Thoreau, in his 1854 book *Walden*, saw his communion with nature and simple living at the Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts, as an experiment to explore the philosophical and spiritual aspects of human life. His aim is similar to, and influenced by, that of his friend, Ralph Waldo Emerson, who considers wilderness as a place conducive for spiritual transcendence.

2 "right livelihood" is the Buddhist concept referring to "right occupation," one of the eight practices in the Noble Eightfold Path, which is the Buddhist way toward nirvana. In *Buddha Tham*, the Thai revered monk P.A. Payutto (Phra Phrom Khunaphon) explains right occupation as a practice to keep away persons from all kinds of dishonest jobs and to devote themselves relentlessly to work that is morally acceptable (769). Berry's mention of right livelihood matches his support of work and love for land as it makes people refrain from damaging land and, at the same time, urges them to act friendly to non-human beings. In the context of a better place, such practices as perseverance is important to maintain land stewardship which will in turn lead farmers to a better place in the same way that right occupation serves as one of the factors that lead Buddhists to nirvana.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In *A Place on Earth* (1967), *Remembering* (1988) and *Hannah Coulter* (2004), Wendell Berry presents four aspects of agricultural ethics as key characteristics of traditional farming in a move to bring back farmers, currently under the influence of industrial farming, to the old way of farming which is more environmentally friendly to the earth. The four aspects of Berry's agrarianism are husbandry under the reciprocal relationship between farmers and land, helps among neighbors, careful use of land for future generations and the interrelationship of virtues adopted among farmers as well as in their interactions with land. Berry's agricultural ethics shares a goal to protect environment with land ethic, a non-anthropocentric act introduced by Aldo Leopold to put ecology, not humans, as the center of care and attention, even though part of Berry's ethics is criticized of being motivated by farmers' self-interest. However, the thesis has found that Berry's version of agricultural ethics can fulfill the need of the world in utilizing land, which is the human major source of food, more carefully as the ethics keeps farmers from the exploitation of land on their way to satisfy their wants. The three novels serve as "spokespersons" for Berry to trumpet his campaign for better treatment of land at a time that land stewardship is weakened and the number of farmers is decreasing due to more use of technologies to replace human labor under the influence of money-based farming and especially their shift of attention to better-paid jobs outside the agricultural field. Though Berry's fiction, which aims at encouraging people to love land and localities, often draws criticism for his too-ideal-to-be-practical narrative and his agrarian ethics has still hardly replaced the obsession with high crop yields and profits in farming, parts of his agricultural

ethics in the three novels have appeared to reflect the daily lifestyle of many farmers both in the United States and such agricultural-cum-industrial countries as Thailand. Regardless of whether these farmers directly know Berry, amid the increasing demands for better environmental protection and food security, they have begun to apply the good and careful treatment of land by, for example, keeping it away from agricultural inventions like hazardous pesticides in a hope that their inclination toward the ethics will, in the long term, benefit the health of the land and eventually themselves.

The analysis of *A Place on Earth*, *Remembering* and *Hannah Coulter* has found a common literary technique Berry uses to present his agricultural ethics. In the three novels, Berry places his concerns over the living of farmers and the health of environment into three different settings and suggests his agrarianism as solutions in these contexts. In *A Place on Earth*, the reciprocal relationship between farmers and land is introduced in the fictional town of Port William when it is gripped with grief and fear of the Second World War. Help among farmers and strong bonds along the line of their descendents are presented in both *Remembering*, with the setting of darkness of San Francisco during the growth of industrial farming in the 1970s when Andy Catlett struggled against the negative impact of a corn-picking machine, and *Hannah Coulter* with a picture of Port William in the twenty-first century when farmers' children leave their hometown for a better place. This atmosphere in *Hannah Coulter* is also used as a setting for the introduction of the interrelationship of hard work, love for family, neighbors and land. The three settings help Berry create a need for solutions to the problems encountered by the characters and highlight his ethics, both directly and implicitly, as an alternative to take them out of the troubles.

A main problem of Port William residents in *A Place on Earth* is their haunting agony due to the death of their loved ones during the Second World War. Berry suggests agricultural ethics in a way that daily good treatment of land can help farmers cope with their grief. In *A Place on Earth*, Berry depicts traditional farming as a picture of farmers working and taking care of their land for mental, rather than physical, rewards in return. They include self-esteem, happiness, peace and mental strength. The rewards are their inspiration to maintain their ethical treatment of land in their daily routines. One important outcome of their actions is that such characters as Hannah Coulter, whose husband is killed in the war, and her father-in-law, Mat Feltner, are relieved of their sadness as well-treated farmland brings them happiness, cheerfulness and the spiritual lesson of the cycle of births and deaths, that pluck them off the mental pain.

Another mental impact, caused by the loss of Andy's right hand, is also described as a major problem in *Remembering*, along with the damaged land and the decreased abundance of natural resources as a result of industrial farming. In the novel, the role of agricultural ethics – especially the protection of land for the future generation of farmers – not only aims at solving a person's mental wound, as in the cases of characters in *A Place on Earth*, but it also reminds Andy of his commitment to protecting land against industrial farming. The corn picker, which severs Andy's hand, paints a negative picture of industrial farming which promotes more uses of new technologies for more convenient work and higher crop yields without caring that, by following the new way of farming, farmers are losing their love and bonds among themselves and with land, which was once maintained by traditional farming. In the novel, Andy's remembering of his bonds with land and the generations of family members reminds him that, though he has only one hand, he has to get

stronger, carry on his duty to protect traditional farming and pass on the well-taken care land to his children to maintain the old but more environmentally friendly farming which is his source of happiness. The thought of his duty as a land steward boosts his morale, urging him to stand again against threats by lucrative but unfriendly industrial farming.

In *Hannah Coulter*, Berry suggests his ethics – love for neighbors and couple’s love as love for land – as an argument against the decision of Hannah’s children and other young Port William residents to leave farmland for places which promise them well-paid jobs. The novel’s setting is Port William 55 years after the end of the Second World War. The town has undergone the decrease in the number of farmers by the replacement of tractors for human labor and especially the belief that there is a better place than Port William. Berry challenges such belief by contending that there is no better place than farmers’ hometown where, under the old way of farming, their care for husbands and wives urge them to take care of land and hard jobs cause each family in the community to help each other farm. In Berry’s view, preserving this place of love should be a path toward a real “better place” rather than simply seeking places which promise only more earnings and new economic opportunities.

Berry’s support of agrarianism as an attempt to shore up disappearing traditional farming and better protect land for present and future uses is apparently part of bioregionalism. In “Literature and Environment,” the article which traces the development of environmental criticism, Lawrence Buell, Ursula K. Heise and Karen Thornber define bioregionalism as the movement of environmental advocates and such nature writers as Gary Snyder during the first wave of ecocriticism in the 1990s to promote a strong sense of the affection of persons for their local communities and

land (420). Berry's imagination of the fictional town of Port William in Kentucky as a setting of his three novels indicates his close ties with the state which is both his homeland and workplace where he farms. However, his concerns over such an unpleasant impact on traditional farming as the decreasing number of family farms in the United States, which seem at first only as a local issue, are also a reflection of similar problems facing farmers in other parts of the world. In other words, what seems to be a local issue has become a global one. In the United States, the number of farmers, including those who earned their living on family farms, decreased dramatically from 30.8 millions in 1940 to 2.9 millions in 1990 ("Historical Time Line"). Likewise, such countries as Thailand also face a similar problem as, according to a study on Thai food security by environmental group BioThai Foundation, the number of Thai farmers dropped from 67% in 1989 to less than 40% in the period of 20 years (qtd. in "Special Report"). As Buell, Heise and Thornber point out in "Literature and Environment," which also examines a shift from concerns over local environmental problems to the global ones during the second wave of ecocriticism in the 2010s, the study of problems in certain localities or countries can be "a point of departure for understanding and emotionally relating to global ecological processes" (421). As mentioned by Berry in *Remembering*, the decrease in the number of farmers causes large tracts of land to be in the hands of a few wealthy farmers who use machines to work in place of people. A scene of farmers adopting agricultural ethics of a good care for land is being replaced by the noise of machines and agribusinessmen who enjoy making money from a large number of harvests. This problem can be used as the groundwork for a comparative study on countries with the decreasing number of farmers to examine whether it is a result of industrial farming and whether it will add a new ecological worry to exploited farmland worldwide.

People of different professions in many countries have also become more aware of a need to adopt environmentally friendly farming and they, like Berry, often blame industrial farming for destroying the centuries-old practices of good farming. Their response to industrial farming ranges from reducing dependence on technologies to relentlessly protesting against giant agri-business firms which take advantage of farmers. Among those who share a similar environmental view with Berry's are Canadian physician Art Wiebe and Indian physicist Vandana Shiva. Wiebe has developed an interest in organic farming and decided to be a farmer working on the land near Lake Huron in Ontario, Canada. Relating his experience of keeping his farm free from chemical fertilizers and oil fuel-based machines in his 2010 article "Thought for Food: Organic Farming is Good for You and the Planet," Wiebe encourages farmers to follow him in adopting organic farming, which is good to both the environment and farmers. He views organic farming as an "ecological approach" to keep soil healthy by "treating it as organism rather than a medium." Soil is made up of a variety of living things such as fungi and bacteria that can turn minerals into nutrients for plants. To take care of the soil well is thus a way to help farmers feed plants and avoid using costly chemicals which will disturb natural processes in the environment.

While Wiebe joins efforts to awaken farmers to this alternative farming, Vandana Shiva fights on another frontline to campaign against the exploitation of natural resources by transnational agri-business firms. Shiva has devoted her life as a writer and environmental advocate to urge Indian people to protect traditional farming knowledge which is threatened by the companies' act to limit farmers' use of local plants and seeds. In her 2007 article "Vandana Shiva: Controversy over Biopiracy in India and Developing World," Shiva denounces giant agricultural firms which

commit biopiracy by unfairly claiming their ownership of local plants and seeds after their use of them for developing and inventing new crop strains with desired qualities. She calls on people, especially the Indian government, to play a stronger role in better protecting biological resources of local farmers because these companies “make it illegal for farmers to save and exchange seeds” and their patents on local plants are “the theft of our indigenous knowledge.” Like Berry, Shiva has a strong determination to protect traditional knowledge which has been passed on along generations of farmers. If farmers are not allowed to freely make use of plants and seeds as a result of those patents, it will be hard for them to continue their farming legacy.

The efforts of Shiva and Art to protect traditional farming knowledge and environment demonstrate that Berry is not alone in his cause to fight for good farming. However, though Berry’s agricultural ethics intends to have farmers and land live harmoniously and his concerns over careless farming which threatens the health of land is a global environmental issue, he himself does not think that his efforts to awaken people to the affection for land are completely successful. He admits that agrarianism-based traditional farming is still struggling to secure its place as a mainstream choice in today society. After more than 40 years of introducing his agricultural ethics through a series of fiction and non-fiction, Berry assesses the efforts of agrarians, who campaign against intensive, industrial farming with little care for impacts on land, in his 2002 essay “The Agrarian Standard” that “we are so far, and by a considerable margin, the losers” to the industrial agriculture which promises large-scale farming with high crop yields. The perception of farmland as a lifeless, crops-producing machine has been still apparent in the mind of many farm businessmen. Contrary to Berry’s metaphorical view of a farmer and land as a couple loyal and taking care of each other, “Industrialists and industrial economists have

assumed, with permission from the rest of us, that land and people can be divorced without harm,” said Berry in “It All Turns on Affection,” the 2012 Jefferson Lecture that marked the US government’s recognition of his outstanding successes in humanities. These industrialists believe that, according to Berry, if they encounter the unpleasant situation of high farming costs, they can reduce their care for land so that they will have more time to deal with money issues and that farmers can simply abandon their farmland for better careers. This is the view that Berry and other agrarians want to eradicate and replace it with agricultural ethics, but, under the current situation in which money is a major concern in agriculture, they have to work harder to awaken agri-businessmen to the importance of the good treatment of land.

Berry’s mention of agrarians’ status as “losers” not only points out a need for stronger environmental campaigns against bad land use but his presentation of agricultural ethics through fiction cannot avoid questions of whether his writings can prompt readers to seriously care about land. There are at least two hindrances in his introduction of agricultural ethics through his novels. One is a doubt that a strong desire to farm with husbandry and least concern over money may be an ideal attitude only appearing in Berry’s fiction and hardly practical in real life. However, the analysis of the three novels finds that most parts of his narrative demonstrate what farmers, in the real world, really think and act. Berry’s characters are mainly based on true stories of real farmers and he does not exaggerate their denial of excessive care for money and profits-based commercial farming as the acts can be really seen in real life. In *Remembering*, the character of Andy is built on part of Berry’s own experience. Andy, an agricultural journalist, quits his job at *Scientific Farming*, following a quarrel over his opposition to writing a story about a farmer who adopts industrial farming, which only keeps the farmer rich but makes his environment poor

in quality. Andy dares ignore job security for another career path, family farming, that seems more appropriate. In real life, Berry also once worked as a journalist for Rodale Press after leaving a university lecturer job, but the press “fired me pretty soon – in 1980, if I remember right. I think this was because I was more for small farmers than I was for organic farmers,” Berry told Jim Leach, chairman of the US-based National Endowment for the Humanities in his 2012 interview. Berry’s act is similar to Andy in a way that both support family farming, a small-scale, less commercial farming, compared with lucrative agribusiness, which includes some market-driven organic farming. Meanwhile, Andy’s father Wheeler, who appears in *A Place on Earth* and *Remembering*, is also characterized by part of Berry’s father life. Wheeler, a lawyer, denies an offer of a high-paid job in Chicago by a politician and instead runs only a small lawyer’s office, not far from his farmland so that he can keep on working and taking care of it. His decision to live a simple life on a pasture rather than enjoy living comfortably in a big city comes from Berry’s remembrance of his father’s decision when he denies a job introduced by US Senator Virgil Chapman. In his father’s thought, he asked himself: “Do I want to spend my life looking out at tar roofs? Or do I want to look at bluegrass pastures?” and his father chose the latter, said Berry as he was recalling his father’s words in the interview. Well-paid jobs and money are never regarded by the two fathers as more important things than daily working and taking care of land. The examples point out that, amid the influence of industrial farming that urges farmers to think of their jobs in terms of costs and revenues, there are farmers who still want to preserve family farming and adopt husbandry as a core of their work. Berry’s agricultural ethics does not thus only appear in the novels. Though his characters are fictionalized, their acts are not.

Another reason that makes the return to the ethics-embedded, traditional farming hardly practical is Berry's tendency to go back to certain farming practices that are criticized as outdated and unfit for modern agriculture. His constant support of, for example, plowing farmland with horses or mules near a green pasture and a forest, which is often seen in his novels, seems to be most prone to negative comments by some critics who view this depiction of farming as part of Berry's too romantic and nostalgic works. Their comments, however, draw a counter-comment that questions the merit of the technology-enhanced farming, which is today's mainstream agriculture, as, in many cases, it only brings tonnes of crops to wealthy farmers at a cost of disappearing farming communities and degraded land. Examining the narrative in the three novels which may have been criticized as too romantic and nostalgic, the thesis finds that this presentation is in fact helpful because it gives a clear picture of the harmonious living between farmers, animals, crops and land, which is a shelter against environmental problems. In *A Place on Earth*, farmers feed horses and mulls with such crops as ears of corn and treating them as friends while the animals, recognizing their good treatment, help farmers do the tough job of plowing in return. Berry depicts in great detail the relationship between farmers and horses while they are at work on land which also receives good care as it is regarded as a major source of food for farmers and farm animals. This picture is hardly found on crop fields now, but Berry tries to bring it back not only because he has a passion for the old way of plowing but he also wants to call back love that is behind the reciprocal relationship between human and non-human beings. It is the love for animals and land that is needed to curb currently growing environmental problems that he has mentioned on many occasions, including the conference scene in *Remembering* and, early 2012, in his Jefferson lecture when he made a long list of

problems that have still continuously harmed the earth: “eroded, wasted, or degraded soils; damaged or destroyed ecosystems; extinction of species; whole landscapes defaced, gouged, flooded, or blown up;...” The three novels leave readers with a question of whether it is better to come back to the good old days when people and nature had lived more harmoniously. The romantic and nostalgic narrative in Berry’s works is used to stimulate their desire for restoring their love for nature, which has much given up its place to the appreciation of industrial farming and technologies.

Yet, Berry’s agricultural ethics cannot avoid a further question on a motive behind farmers’ protection of land. Some critics view land stewardship as a result of farmers’ self-interest. Paul B. Thompson writes in *The Spirit of the Soil: Agriculture and Environmental Ethics* that “[a]gricultural stewardship was introduced as a purely prudential or self-regarding norm, and contrasted with preservationism which, in its commitment to nature, is other-regarding and more clearly moral” (87). Based on the self-interest assumption, farmers are perceived as working and taking good care of land for their own interest as they need to grow and harvest crops in order to support their living. Even the reciprocal relationship between farmers and land and helps among farmers may be under criticism if the acts are interpreted under the self-interest concept which questions whether farmers still work and take care of land if they do not get mental rewards or helps from other neighbors in return.

However, though farmers’ role is not like that of ecologists and environmentalists who aim at only studying and protecting the ecosystem for its sake, farmers who follow traditional farming prove that their need to satisfy their demands for crops does not cause severe damages to land. According to the three novels, farmers’ needs for physical and mental outcomes in return for their hard farming work can co-exist with land conservation. This thesis finds that Berry’s agricultural ethics

aims at promoting the wise and careful use of land rather than preserving it in its natural state. It is thus not surprising to see such characters as Andy and Nathan turn abandoned and wild land into crop fields. Berry's agricultural ethics is based on an idea that humans cannot avoid using natural resources and how to use them with care is a core issue of his discussion of ethical treatment of land. The land stewardship mentioned in *A Place on Earth*, *Remembering* and *Hannah Coulter* demonstrates that humans and land can live in harmony. While farming, farmers can fulfill their needs for physical and mental rewards, or what are called by critics as self-interest, but, at the same time, land is given love and care by farmers. It is the self-interest on the careful use of natural resources. Through this way, Berry's agricultural ethics shares with the concept of the good treatment of land in Leopold's land ethics though the latter inclines towards a nature-centered concept, which gives weight to an ecosystem rather than certain individual members.

Taking a close look into Berry's characters who care for the act of passing on good land to their children, the thesis also argues that Berry's agricultural ethics has an element of the other-regarding concept, too. That Andy and Hannah insist on the importance of maintaining the continuity of traditional farming inheritance keeps them in line with what Joseph R. Desjardins calls "an ethics of care," an act done out of love, benevolence and friendship to help other people and treat them well without necessarily wanting them to help or reward them in return (78, 83-84). It can be said that the goal of the ethics of care is to do things for the interest of others, which is the other-regarding act. In *Environmental Ethics: An Introduction to Environmental Philosophy*, Desjardins explains:

If we find that someone cares for us only because doing so is in that person's self-interest, we are justified in denying that any caring actually exists.

Caring for others seems to exclude, rather than to be a form of, self-interest. Care requires that we take, as much as possible, the point of view of the other. (85)

In Desjardins' view, a care for other people is free from self-interest because a care giver will treat people from the point of view of those whom she or he helps, thinking only what they need and what will be good for them. Andy and Hannah's care for the farming legacy reflects their desires to protect it for their children because it will be good for them to work on the well-treated farmland. What they do can be viewed as an act of other-regarding because they do it for the future generations of Port William people without wanting and knowing what they will get in return. In contrast, as mentioned in *Remembering*, many farmers who adopt industrial farming hardly avoid an impact on environment. They farm and gain money for their own purposes with little or no care whether the land is still in a good condition for uses by the farmers of next generations. Their actions always draw opposition from Berry and it is thus a reason why he has to put the care for children in the future as part of his agrarian ethics.

The care for the future generation of farmers in Berry's agricultural ethics also shares to a certain degree with the concept of sustainable development which is, according to the United Nations, defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Rio+20). In the three novels, Andy, Hannah and other good farmers enjoy working and living at present and, at the same time, the land which is under their good care can still serve their children as their workplace and home. Sustainability-based farming, which promotes the careful use of natural resources by, for example, avoiding using chemicals to pollute them, so that there will be enough healthy soil and clean water for future uses, has been increasingly adopted in Thailand, though

reasons to carry out this environmentally friendly practice do not necessarily originate from farmers. Adam Janofsky, a staff writer for the *Bangkok Post*, reported on June 26, 2012, that more organic produce is currently sold in Bangkok with at least three major organic markets in Sukhumvit and Ratchadamri areas. However, a reason to adopt sustainable farming or in Adam's words "ethically produced food," does not directly originate from farmers themselves. It is consumers' demand that pushes farmers toward this agricultural ethics. In Janofsky's report, a small organic farm operator, Lalana Srikrum, said that organic crops have become increasingly popular because more Thai consumers concern over health risks if they are still exposed to contaminated produce (16). As for farmers, in addition to the currently better prospect of the organic market, sustainable farming also gives them an opportunity to restore their tie with land, which has disappeared since they shifted to using pesticides and chemical fertilizers on their farms. In the *Bangkok Post's* news report on December 6, 2012, Walailak Keeratipipatpong interviewed a senior agricultural official in the Rice Department, Ladda Viriyangkura, who insisted that sustainable farming "requires farmers to take great care with harvest sites, from planting to reaping paddy." Usually farmers who rely on modern farming will leave farmland to find jobs in cities after planting rice seeds and will return three months later for harvesting them "no matter the quality" (B2). Their new decision to ignore city jobs and stay with their paddy fields reflects that these farmers can earn enough income from sustainable farming. This new, environmentally friendly farming can, as a result, even replace the old image of Thai farming career which, according to the *New York Times* reporter Thomas Fuller, is "poor, stupid and unhealthy." In his news report on the decreasing number of young Thai farmers, Fuller said that poverty and a huge volume of debts, caused especially by surging prices of fertilizers, are among reasons that cause many

Thai farmers to leave farmland for better jobs. However, the growth of sustainable farming can bring them back and change their lives due to better economic status and especially closer ties with land, which is continuously promoted by Berry. Though their agricultural ethics does not result directly from traditional farming as mentioned in Berry's three novels, the practice is at least a good step toward the ethical treatment of land. Amid the growing environmental pressure from consumers on farmers to replace chemicals with care in treating crops and land, agrarians, including Berry, can find ways to completely change their status of what Berry call "losers" into winners in promoting agricultural ethics that is good to both farmers and land.

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