WENDELL BERRY AND THE PHYSICAL SELF

by

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(Under the Direction of Douglas Anderson)

ABSTRACT

Wendell Berry's fiction focuses primarily on a fictional town in rural Kentucky called Port William. The "Port William Membership," as he calls it, has a rich genealogy and shared history that can be traced through several generations of the various intertwined families in the community. Two of the Port William novels, in particular, tell moving, yet deceptively simple stories of love, sacrifice, loss, and redemption: The Memory of Old Jack and Remembering. What is unique about these two novels is their significant lack of dialogue. In most novels, the primary method of communication between characters is spoken dialogue. However, in these two novels, Berry emphasizes physical contact as a more meaningful communicative tool between characters. The characters in these novels also concentrate more on their physical selves during periods of introspection and self-examination. In this thesis I will examine Berry's use of physical communication in his characters' internal and external lives.

INDEX WORDS: Berry, Remembering, The Memory of Old Jack, physical memory, physical self, community, family, rural, touch

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family, without whom I would not have had the resilience to complete it.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

SECTION 1

WENDELL BERRY AND THE MEMORY OF OLD JACK

Wendell Berry is primarily known as a poet and an essayist drawn to explore the current state of agricultural and environmental issues in the United States. His dual life as both a farmer and a writer, his outspoken criticism of contemporary attitudes toward farming and agrarian communities, and his convictions concerning humanity's relationship with the environment surface frequently in all of his writing. Together these have given him an acute appreciation for the significance of the physical self. In the context of Berry's writing, we may define the "physical self" as the acknowledgement of one's own physical state and the awareness and recognition of physical communication between people.

Berry's exploration of the "physical self" is complex and multifaceted, and it emerges most significantly in two of the novels of his "Port William Cycle:" The Memory of Old Jack (1974) and Remembering (1988). Berry's entire body of fiction takes place in a fictional town in rural Kentucky named Port William. The people of Port William have a rich history and an intricate genealogy; the connections among the three main families of Berry's fiction can be traced back to the middle of the nineteenth century, before the Civil War. Berry has labeled the community of Port William as the "Port William Membership;" the term "membership" denotes the incredibly strong and resilient bond among the families within the community. "Membership," however, has a compound meaning in the framework of the Port William novels, especially The Memory of Old Jack and Remembering. If we examine the root of the word "membership," we see the word "member," which has special significance to both of the aforementioned novels. "Member" has multiple connotations in the context of these works; primarily, the word implies that the characters in the Port William Membership are all integral

parts of the community, like limbs of the body. This association exemplifies Berry's repeated exploration of the "physical self" in The Memory of Old Jack and Remembering. Additionally, the word evokes images of memory, which are consistently used throughout both novels as a vehicle for introspection and acknowledgement of the characters' bodies and physical memories. The term "membership" also suggests that the community of Port William may be viewed as an order, or caste; Berry's continual use of the community's shared physical memory and the importance attached to their physical selves signifies their "membership" in the collective consciousness.

Critical discussion of Berry has been primarily limited to his outspoken criticism of industrialization and technology[i]. Janet Goodrich's The Unforseen Self in the Works of Wendell Berry poses the theory that his works, most notably The Memory of Old Jack, are essentially autobiographical[ii]. Mindy Weinreb's extended interview with Wendell Berry finds Berry's predominant concern with the dissolution of communities and families[iii]. Berry's notion of "husbandry" receives considerable attention in relation to the character of Jack Beechum[iv]; Berry repeatedly refers to Jack's "marriage" to the land. Remarkably absent from criticism of Berry's work, however, especially that of The Memory of Old Jack and Remembering, is an examination of the techniques Berry employs to communicate his Port William Membership characters' tangible connection to each other. The Memory of Old Jack and Remembering use physical contact between characters to demonstrate intimacy, emotional detachment, and ultimately, their own perceptions of themselves. Rather than using dialogue to reveal the essential connections between characters, Berry presents the reader with repeated examples of the significance of both physical contact and the main characters' recognition of their "physical selves."

Wendell Berry's 1974 novel, The Memory of Old Jack, tells the story of Jack Beechum, a retired farmer and patriarch in the small town of Port William, Kentucky. On the last day of his life, the ninety-two year old Beechum relives the events of his life, reflecting on his triumphs, failures, and frustrations. Old Jack Beechum is the oldest surviving member of what Berry has named, "The Port William Membership." The Port William Membership is a tightly connected group of extended family and friends that can trace its connection back to the time preceding the Civil War. The Memory of Old Jack is the third novel of the Port William Membership, coming after Nathan Coulter, Berry's first novel, and A Place on Earth. Set in September 1952, The Memory of Old Jack not only presents the reader with a lucid, coherent narrative, but also serves as further evidence of Wendell Berry's omnipresent philosophy concerning the current state of agrarian communities in the United States and his concept of the "physical self."

Early in the novel, Berry directs the reader's attention towards the characters' use of physical contact, rather than language, to convey feelings of intimacy. Upon Mat Feltner's first appearance in the story, we see him approach his grandson, Andy Catlett. Andy, whose life Berry explores in much greater detail in Remembering, is preparing to leave Port William to begin college. Berry illustrates the moment Mat and his grandson share while they perform the daily duties of the farm on the day before his departure. "And then, remembering that this is Andy's last day to be there—tomorrow he will be going away to school—Mat reaches his arm around the boy's shoulders and hugs him" (8). Right away, Berry establishes that his characters are people bound by touch, that words are merely tangential to their interactions with each other. Mat Feltner's first encounter with Old Jack in the novel displays a similar, but more extensive, illustration of the muted intimacy shared between these two men. Mat is Old Jack's nephew, and they have been close friends since Mat was a child. The touch of Mat Feltner's hand evokes the

image of Mat's father, Ben Feltner; Ben Feltner was the husband of Jack's older sister Nancy, and a paternal figure for Jack. Jack was the youngest child in a family ravaged by the Civil War; after the deaths of his brothers, Jack's relationship with his father was distant, and Ben Feltner provided paternal guidance for Jack during his formative years. Although Jack was a grown man by the time that Mat was born, they have shared a unique friendship through the years that could only be characterized as a form of brotherhood. Though few words are exchanged in their friendly conversation, Mat and Old Jack are bound by a shared history that can only be wholly felt through physical contact:

> A hand has gently grasped his shoulder. It seems to him that it must be Ben Feltner's hand. In the touch of it there is a sort of clarity, a sort of declaration. Not many men Old Jack has known could offer themselves so openly in the touch of a hand. He looks up at Mat, who stands leaning between him and the light. His eyes dazzle.
>
> "Is it Ben?"
>
> "No, Uncle Jack. It's Mat. How are you?"
>
> "I'm all right."
>
> "You feeling all right?"
>
> "*Yes*sir!"
>
> "Well, Margaret said tell you to come to dinner."
>
> "I will that," Old Jack says. He smiles, pleased with the invitation, and with Margaret, whose goodness he trusts but never takes for granted.
>
> And then he reaches out and grips Mat's forearm in an unsteady rough caress. Though Mat's hair is as white as his own, it is very much the gesture of an older

> man toward a younger one. It is an uncle's gesture, a statement of deeply interested kinship.
>
> [. . .] But on his shoulder, like an insignia of the companionship of men, is the live print, both memory and feeling, of Mat's hand, that is like Ben's, or is Ben's; or the touch of it is Ben's, for what it signifies has shed men's hands like leaves, and lived on. It is Ben's kindness, his sweetness of spirit, that has survived in Mat. (14-15)

Through a gesture as seemingly trivial as the placement of a hand on the shoulder, Berry depicts decades of friendship and familiarity that could never be completely articulated through language. Berry uses the laying of the hand on the shoulder repeatedly throughout the novel to further illustrate the deep affection between Mat and Old Jack. During a scene in Old Jack's past, we see another instance of the transmission of "membership" by touch. In 1912, three years after the death of Mat's father, Ben Feltner, Jack and Mat are walking on the Feltner farm and contemplating both the loss of Ben and Mat's future as the caretaker of his father's land. Jack displays his paternal love for Mat through a physical connection:

> It was only to Mat, after Mat had reached his manhood, after he had received the inheritance of Ben's land and proved worthy of it, that Jack began to speak out of the exultant knowledge that had come to him. Then, fearing that Mat would look away from what he had undertaken or attempt in too much pride to go beyond it, Jack would gesture with his hand to the ridges and hollows that bore indelibly for them both the memory and the mark of Ben, and he would say: "That's all you've got, Mat. It's your only choice. It's all you have; whatever you try to gain somewhere else, you'll lose here." And then, taking hold of Mat's

> shoulder, letting him see in his eyes with what fear and joy he meant it, he would say: "And it's enough. It's more than enough." (124)

Here we see Jack's emotional investment in both Mat's future and the proper continuation of Ben Feltner's legacy transmitted through his touching of Mat's shoulder. Through this gesture, both paternal and fraternal, Jack demonstrates his love for Mat and his faith in Mat's ability to carry on the work begun by his father. Jack communicates with Mat through touch later in the story, as well. Clara, Jack and Ruth's only daughter, visits the farm with her husband, Glad Pettit. Jack's relationship with Clara is as strained as his relationship with his wife, Ruth. After the death of their newborn son, Jack and Ruth are able to conceive one more child, a daughter whom they named Clara. Clara, unresponsive to Jack's initial attempts to include her in his work on the farm, is much more like her mother; she displays the same awareness and concern for the trappings of upward mobility and material wealth that we see in Ruth. After college, Clara marries Glad Pettit, a banker from Louisville, Kentucky. Glad is the complete antithesis of Jack; he is urbane, highly educated, and completely disinterested in working with his hands on a farm, which he views as an archaic way of life. After Glad Pettit's dismissive rejection of Jack's fatherly offer to sell Glad and Clara the farm, Jack recounts the story only once; Mat Feltner is Jack's confidante:

> "I dislike to talk against my own. I tell you to show you the kind of man you're not, and to give you some idea what it's worth to me that you're the man you are."
>
> Jack touched Mat then, to give his words the direct weight and warmth of his hand. They were sitting, talking, on the bed of a wagon in Mat's barn lot, looking out over the ridges to where the river valley opened. And Mat understood

> that what Jack had said was both a confession of great failure and an affirmation of what had not failed, meant to clarify their kinship in its final terms.
>
> [. . .] And then, after a long silence, looking away, he let it go. He grinned. His big hand came down heavy on Mat's shoulder. (139)

Ultimately, Mat Feltner has an opportunity to return the physical affection to Old Jack upon his discovery of Jack's dead body in the hotel. After Jack sells the farm to Elton Penn, he lives in a hotel in Port William. We may infer from Berry's language throughout the book that Jack knows that his time on Earth is coming to an end. After a large and joyful family dinner at the Feltner's, Jack retires to his hotel room and dies in his sleep amid the memories of his past and Port William's past. As we see Mat enter Jack's hotel room on the morning after the death of his oldest friend, his hand on Jack's shoulder signifies a passage into the next phase of their lives as members of Berry's Port William Membership:

> For a while he let Old Jack's body be safe and secret there with him. And then he got up and laid his open hand briefly on the dead man's shoulder—that touch of the hand, that welcome or farewell, by which Ben Feltner was bound to Jack, and Jack to Mat, and Mat to his dead son and to his living grandsons—he touched him with that casual and forever binding salute. (148)

As Jack Beechum passes from life, Mat Feltner, his nephew and friend, is reminded of his own mortality and the end of an era in Port William. With Jack's death, Mat Feltner is now the oldest of the Port William Membership, and their way of life is threatened by the invasion of technology and industry. The men of Port William experience a nearly biological harmony with their land; it is a covenant between humans and nature. These men, who are not educated in the

formal or traditional sense, impart an intimacy beyond words in the form of laying their hands, their tools with which they work their land, in a familial gesture of "membership."

Berry's depictions of the intensity of physical experience are not limited to blissful interactions between characters. The way in which Berry chooses to represent rifts in the characters' relationships indicates that the significance of the physical connection can illustrate emotional distance between characters. Particularly, the physical interactions between Jack and his wife, Ruth, exemplify the pervasive remoteness and disconnection that the couple suffers throughout their marriage. Jack's relationship with Ruth was flawed from its beginning; Ruth, coming from a family whose livelihood depended on business ventures rather than farming, had little understanding of a man like Jack Beechum. From the very beginning of their marriage, their physical interactions exemplified this divergence of philosophies:

> He knew that the touch of his hands had become repugnant to her, and he knew why. His hands were not fastidious, and she had learned their ways, their willingness to do whatever was necessary, to grasp whatever hold was offered, to castrate and slaughter animals, to compel obedience from horse or mule, to cover themselves with whatever filth or dirt or blood his life required. His hands did not hesitate and they did not coax. They did willingly and even eagerly what, before, she had seen only black hands do reluctantly. He had chosen necessities that she had believed a man could only come to by compulsion. That he should touch her, that he should lay his hands on her, as flatly, as openly, with as eager delight, as he laid them on whatever else it delighted him to touch, she could not bear. Under his hand her flesh contracted. He could feel it, her flesh drawing away beneath his hand. (44)

This passage is the first of many that Berry employs to convey Ruth's intolerance of Jack and her failure to reconcile her dreams of social mobility and gentility with Jack's satisfaction in his current position. From Berry's language in this passage, we see ample evidence of Jack and Ruth's incompatibility; Jack's physical resilience and enthusiasm for working on the farm is in direct contrast to Ruth's upbringing in town as the daughter of a businessman. This chasm between Ruth and Jack is exacerbated by the passage of time and their mutual unwillingness to compromise. Their emotional detachment is further illustrated through Berry's portrayal of their sexual interactions:

> It was not so much that he violated her as that he asked her to violate herself: his rough hand reaching into her bodice, or insinuating itself upon the inside of her thigh, his eye that watched, first gaily and then fearfully, for her response to his hand—they asked her to be broken, to desire what she could not provide, to open herself to a completion of which she would be ever afterward a fragment. And so, though his hand went its way, though he sought the clefts and shelters of her flesh, though he entered her with the awe of a pilgrim, though he drove into her like the taker of a city, though the storm of his desire cast him ashore upon her at last, as meek and strengthless as a child asleep, yet there remained some prize, some vital gift that she withheld. She hid her eyes from him. As much as before their marriage, she remained to him an unknown continent. She offered him no welcome, afforded him no prepared ways. Each time he made his way to her, he came upon her as if by chance, a newcomer, blundering in the dark. He returned each time more fearfully, and at greater expense. (45)

Although Ruth consented to marry Jack despite her concerns about his ambition, Berry's descriptions of the physical consummation of their relationship give us more of a savage picture of Jack. His actions, in Ruth's estimation, are those of an animal. Throughout the remainder of the novel, Jack's physical relationship with Ruth is nonexistent. Their marriage is not a living entity; rather, it is artifice and strained tolerance. After Jack's final acknowledgement of the irreparable rift in his marriage, he resigns himself to the fact that he will never again know the joys of physical contact with a woman. However, he soon meets a woman named Rose McInnis, the young wife of the town's doctor. After the death of Rose's husband, Jack begins an affair with Rose that rejuvenates him and provides him with a physical fulfillment long absent in his marriage to Ruth. Jack's distant, frigid relationship with Ruth is sharply contrasted with Jack's relationship with Rose. Where Ruth is aloof and unyielding, Rose personifies the fertility and intimacy of femininity. We can see this contrast most notably in their first encounter as Jack approaches her house after sustaining a leg injury in the field:

> And then this woman, instead of doing any of the several things that he would have expected—instead of calling the doctor, or inviting him to come in, or telling him to wait—this woman steps out of her own light and bends down and opens the cut in his pantleg and looks briefly, knowingly, at the wound. Her hands go to him unhesitatingly, without apology. (96)

Berry's description of Rose is a direct contrast of his description of Ruth. Unlike Ruth, Rose's physical self is teeming with vitality. Like Jack, Rose is unafraid to use her hands as tools for necessary work. In his description of Rose's cottage, Berry writes, "Whatever this woman touched flowered and bore" (95). A long and subtle flirtation between Jack and Rose culminates late one night in the physical consummation of their relationship. Berry continues the contrast

between the Puritan demeanor of Ruth and the lush femininity of Rose when Jack finally submits to his desire for Rose:

> He feels her hand light upon his face.
>
> "I know you, Jack Beechum."
>
> She knew him as he was, and loved him. He was naked before her and was not ashamed. Into the good darkness she offered him he went again and again. (100)

Again, Berry uses the physical connection between Jack and Rose to illustrate the contrast between Jack's relationship with Rose and his relationship with Ruth; Jack's "nakedness" demonstrates an intimacy and vulnerability completely absent in his marriage. Although Jack initially gains a sense of fulfillment through his affair with Rose, he eventually comes to the conclusion that their love cannot truly come to fruition; Jack's feelings of obligation to both his wife and daughter force him to reevaluate his affair. When Jack realizes the ultimate futility of his relationship with Rose, he uses words to convey his emotions, which contradicts his usual disdain for unnecessary speaking. The encounter is their last:

> She is standing beside him, her back to the fire, looking down at him. They are self-consciously not touching, the inevitable parting before them, sorrow between them.
>
> "Don't you know you deserve better?"
>
> And then she does touch him. She touches her fingers to the side of his face, though she does not bend. "I'm getting what I've *asked* for," she says. "I have this because I don't want anything else, that I can have." (103)

The conversation between Jack and Rose indicates the inadequacy of language in their relationship; theirs was a connection built upon visceral emotion and a physical union. Their purposeful avoidance of touch in the beginning of this final encounter reveals an irreparable division that remains unresolved until Rose's death by fire soon afterward. Additionally, Berry's use of the physical communion between characters extends to their working relationships. Berry uses descriptions of physical experience to convey emotional disconnection in Jack's relationship with Will Wells. Initially, Jack shares a kind of corporeal symbiosis with Will Wells:

> They teamed together as if they had been born twins. Both were big men, both strong, both liked the work. And in the time they were together they did an amount of it that amazed both themselves and the men who knew them. They acquired a local fame as a team among the farmers who worked with them in the tobacco setting and in the harvest. When the two of them stepped up, other men stood back.
>
> Little idle talk ever passed between them. They might work closely together for half a day without speaking, cooperating like the two hands of a single body, anticipating each other's moves like partners in a dance. They did not speak of their lives. They met and did their work and parted and went their ways. They met in Port William as awkwardly as strangers. It was in the work itself, not in anything that the work came from or led to, that they made the terms and comfort of their comradeship. At times in the heat and striving of some hard day their eyes would meet and acknowledge the strange grace of their labor. (59)

These men are bound to each other by the unity of their physical selves. Berry's description of their connection through physical labor is almost sexual; it communicates an intimacy that is more intense than Jack's relationship with Ruth. Berry illustrates the deterioration of Jack's association with Will Wells using the same techniques that he uses to illustrate the tension between Jack and Ruth; their dissatisfaction emerges through the physical symptoms of their disconnection. Berry describes their "disharmony" and "[. . .] a roughening, an imprecision, in their teamwork that made them conscious and resentful of their dependence on each other" (61). The inner conflict between Will and Jack climaxes with Berry's portrayal of the two men fighting:

> For a moment the two of them stand braced against each other's weight, like two men poised at the top of a steeple, holding on. And then they are at each other. Neither makes any motion to evade or fend off. They meet in the open embrace of their fury, eager to damage each other, not minding the cost. It is a strange dance they do now, locked in each other's arms, each striving to stand against the other's determination that he will fall. They stagger and grunt with their effort, tramping and stamping to keep their feet under them, leaving their tracks in the soft ground.
>
> And then Jack suddenly feels a change in himself. It is the irresistible change of revelation—unexpected, to the end of his life never quite accountable. Locked in that desperate double embrace, he has come aware as never before of the man he is fighting. He feels in his hands the heat and sweat and anguish of the man, Will Wells. He feels the presence of the man, the desire and energy and frustration never contained in the narrow order of their workdays (63).

Again, Berry articulates the unspoken strife between characters through a physical interaction. Jack's awareness and understanding of Will comes not through a verbal altercation, but through the intimacy that two men engaged in a physical confrontation share. Berry's use of the physical, rather than the verbal, exchanges between characters not only enriches the narrative, but is indicative of Berry's contention that the physical self is integral to all experience and to the land itself. The physical experiences that these characters engage in are their most tangible modes of expression that connect them to the natural world; for the people of Port William, the "physical self" is most closely tied to the land.

The indivisibility of the people of Port William and their collective consciousness is noticeably illustrated through Berry's depiction of the characters' physical memories. Rather than recalling conversations, the most significant and memorable aspects of their pasts are grounded in the physical attributes held by characters and situations. Berry introduces us to Old Jack's physical memory near the beginning of the story. Following Mat's first encounter with Jack in the novel, Jack becomes lost in his past. Berry writes, "Upon the touch of Mat's hand that bears in it so accurately the touch of Ben's, Old Jack has turned, as on a pivot, back deep into his memory" (17). The magnitude of the physical memory is illustrated further as Jack recalls his somewhat distant relationship with his father:

> Sitting at the table after a meal or in the front room before bedtime, he would pull the boy up into his lap to pat him and hug him. But for all that, it was a strangely silent relationship that the two of them had. [. . .] Jack can still remember, can still feel, his father's hand and forearm crooked around his waist—and they would never say a word. (20-21)

Again, the passage indicates the true extent of the permanence of physical experience. Berry further conveys the importance of physical memory through Jack's persistent reminiscence of people and events in a physical context. Jack's memories are firmly grounded in the sensations of physical expression, "He can remember the way men looked and the way they moved and how they worked and what they did" (25). Near the end of his last day, Jack reflects on the character of his somewhat adopted son, Elton Penn, whom Jack has chosen to inherit the Beechum farm. Jack's assessment of Elton imparts additional evidence of the importance of physical experience and memory:

> In the rhythms of that difficult work Elton moves like a dancer, seemingly without effort, lightly. Old Jack can see him. In his mind he can see him very well indeed: swaying, bending and rising in the ripe row in the rich evening light—that unsparing man, so careful in his ways—his blade striking lightly as he bends, the golden plants turning to rest upon the stick, the row lengthening rapidly behind him, shortening ahead of him. (117).

Berry's descriptions of Jack's evaluation of Elton are distinctly similar to his descriptions of the graceful labor executed by Jack and Will Wells years earlier. Consequently, Jack's admiration and affection for Elton stems from his appreciation of Elton's recognition of his own connection to the land; it is a virtue which has proven Elton to be Jack's proper, if not biological, heir. Throughout the novel, Berry illustrates the hardship of Jack's life on the farm by detailing his perpetual cycle of debt and repayment as he strives to expand and develop his land. The continual stress and worry over his debts emerge as one of Jack's primary struggles as his story unfolds. Perhaps Berry's most notable portrayal of the importance of Jack's physical memory emerges in the passage describing Jack's final payment of his long standing debt:

> He touches the folded mortgage in his pocket; his fingertips press upon the crisp edges of that paper that had pledged him to the loss of everything and bound so many years of his labor to the fear of ruin; with his thumb he feels the flatness and smoothness of the paper, affirming the reality of that death pledge, now broken. After so long a time he is free. And the farm is free. (121)

After years of working his land just to fulfill his financial obligations, the definitive liberation of Jack's farm and his own personal liberation from a duty disconnected from land and family is represented by a small bank note. Berry relates Jack Beechum's final success not in the context of emotions, or empty rhetoric, but in the simplicity and magnificence of Jack's physical memory; the "smoothness of the paper" from the bank provides a stark contrast to the rough, unforgiving work that is both Jack's central function and greatest joy.

Elaborating his exploration of characters' physical experience, Berry introduces an essential association with the land in his descriptions of characters as trees, which is repeated during several noteworthy incidents in the novel. In conjunction with Berry's recurring attachment of significance to physical memory, we can infer that the association with trees is an expansion of the correlation between humans and their tangible experiences. Clearly, Berry's recurring employment of the tree image is a direct parallel to Berry's continued attentiveness to the characters' "physical selves." On the night that the Beechums' barn is burned, Jack's stoic countenance is related by Ruth:

> She sees how he stands there. Even now he keeps the easy straightness of a horseman that she has never seen bend in any weariness, that even in his old age will not bend. His hat tilted backward off his forehead, his coat unbuttoned, he stands with his feet a little apart, his hands hanging at his sides. He seems to her

> to stand as completely and finally where he is as a tree. His attitude reveals no surprise or shock or misery, and no pity for himself. (69)

Berry's representation of Jack Beechum as a tree is multifaceted. On the surface, Berry uses the symbol of the tree to illustrate Jack's inner strength and tenacity. However, the symbol of the tree is more significantly bound to Berry's portrayal of his characters as extensions of the land; the association with trees lends tangibility to Berry's representation. Berry employs the symbol of the tree again in his depiction of Jack's silent "courtship" of Rose after the death of her husband:

> Were they slowly approaching each other by some deep-held intention? Or were they drawing together unintentionally, as two trees will lean toward each other and finally touch, reaching toward the same opening? Only that there was great need there is no doubt. (98)

In contrast to Berry's use of the tree symbol to exemplify Jack's rigidity and resiliency, his use of the tree in this passage indicates an association with the innate organic movement and vitality present in Jack's relationship with Rose. Their mutual acknowledgement of their connection to the natural world catalyzes their instinctive magnetism. Berry extends the association between people and the land further, emphasizing the very soil upon which characters live their lives. During Jack's failed attempt to assimilate his son-in-law into life on the farm, Jack reflects upon Glad's remoteness from the land:

> He disliked the idea of a man *retiring* to a farm. He disliked the idea of a man living on land that he thought himself too good to dirty his hands in. So far as he was concerned, a man who thought he was better than such dirt as he and Glad had underneath their feet that Sunday was a good deal worse. (138)

Clearly, this passage echoes sentiments expressed earlier in the narrative by Ruth concerning Jack's "willingness [. . .] to cover themselves with whatever filth or dirt or blood his life required." Reasonably, Jack's distaste for Glad Pettit arrives as a result of their irreconcilable divergence in the context of a tangible connection with the earth. The only appropriate resolution of Jack's connection to the land comes during Mat Feltner's reflection on how Jack would want to be buried:

> They would dig a grave there and lay him in. They would say such words as might come to them, or say nothing. They would cover him and leave him there where he had belonged from birth. They would leave no stone or marker. They would level the grave with the ground. When the last of them who knew its place had died, Old Jack's return would be complete. He would be lost to memory in that field, silently possessed by the earth on which he once established the work of his hands. (157)

It is evident through Mat's consideration of a fitting end for Jack Beechum that an actual, physical return to the earth could be the one genuine vehicle for the man to truly pass from this world into the next. There would be no coffin, no speeches, and no indication of the burial; Jack Beechum would exist only as a corporeal contributor to the land to which he devoted his life, even at the expense of his marriage and children.

The title of <u>The Memory of Old Jack</u> suggests a duality in our interpretation of the novel: we must examine both Jack Beechum's recollection of his life and the communal memory shared by the Port William Membership. Through Berry's treatment of the individual and collective memories and attached significance of physical experience, he demonstrates the essential functions of communal and familial intimacy on a local level. Fundamentally, the characters'

perceptions of their "physical selves" are integral to the united consciousness of the community. Berry's own preoccupation with the importance of community is exemplified in his essay, "Standing by Words." He declares, "Two epidemic illnesses of our time—upon both of which virtual industries of cures have been founded—are the disintegration of communities and the disintegration of persons" (24). Clearly, *The Memory of Old Jack* is representative of Berry's desire to suppress the disappearance of communities and the "dispersal of families;" our empathy and compassion for these characters materializes as a reaction to their simplicity and sincerity.

SECTION 2

REMEMBERING

Remembering, published in 1988, is the fourth novel of Wendell Berry's Port William Cycle. Remembering tells the story of Andy Catlett, who is Mat Feltner's grandson and Jack Beechum's great-grand nephew. We are first introduced to Andy as a secondary character in The Memory of Old Jack, and he emerges in Remembering as the sole perspective through which the story develops. Throughout the course of the novel, we learn that Andy, after leaving Port William for college, had a lucrative career as an agricultural writer before returning to Port William with his wife and children to live and work on a farm. Andy's life is changed forever after his right hand is destroyed by a corn-picking machine during harvest time sometime before the action of the novel begins; his disfigurement has an immeasurably destructive effect on his relationship with his family and his perceptions of his own identity. While Remembering is a story of Port William and the people of the community, the primary setting of the novel is San Francisco, where we see Andy Catlett wandering on an introspective journey, reflecting on his past, his family's past, and his overwhelming sense of shame and regret at the loss of his hand. Berry's technique in illustrating Andy's frustration and eventual redemption parallels that which he uses in The Memory of Old Jack. Remembering unfolds through Andy's repeated flashbacks of his own life and the lives of his forbears, most notably his grandfather, Mat Feltner, and his father, Wheeler Catlett. Through this acknowledgement of his own memory and the shared history of the Port William community, Andy achieves a sense of closure and tranquility by the time he returns to Port William. Remembering, while a very different novel than The Memory of Old Jack, exhibits Berry's continued exploration of the significance of his characters' physical

selves. Andy's internal journey progresses through the framework of his physical self; his memories, interactions, and perceptions are all grounded in physical experience.

Much like The Memory of Old Jack, Remembering contains numerous examples of Berry's use of physical contact between characters to convey intimacy; we may consider these instances of contact to be signals of "membership" between members of the Port William community. Several months after Andy's hand is destroyed by the corn-picking machine, the other men of Port William come to Andy's farm to help him harvest his alfalfa crop for the season. Although Andy feels completely useless without the use of his right hand, Nathan Coulter offers him a reassuring gesture after the day's work is finished:

> When they were finished, Andy, speaking as he knew out of the worst of his character, said, "I don't know how to thank you. I don't know how I can ever repay you."
>
> And speaking out of the best of his, Nathan said, "Help *us*." So saying, he looked straight at Andy, grinned, took hold of his right forearm, and gave just a little tug. (38-39)

In this passage, we see Nathan, Andy's third cousin and close friend, communicating an intense and insoluble bond with a gesture as ostensibly negligible as a brief touch of the arm. For the people of Port William, the articulation of closeness manifests more powerfully through the use of physical contact. For Andy, however, the loss of his right hand has displaced him from the ability to convey meaning through touch; his right hand was his tangible connection to his world. He contemplates Nathan's touch later in the passage: "The clamp of Nathan's hand, by which Nathan had meant to include him, excluded him. Because he could not answer it, it lived upon his flesh like a burn, the brand of his exile" (39-40). Without the ability to participate in the Port

William "ritual" of communication through touch, Andy perceives himself as an outsider; the loss of his hand makes him feel irrelevant in his own community. In Remembering, Berry provides us with a multitude of instances of the Port William community's "ritual" of touch; he illustrates the communion of membership by contact in many points in Andy's family history. As in The Memory of Old Jack, Andy's grandfather, Mat Feltner, is one of the principal performers in Berry's demonstration of the use of touch to convey intimacy. In one of the flashbacks of Andy's family history, Berry depicts a scene between Mat Feltner and his father, Ben Feltner, as Mat prepares to leave Port William for boarding school:

> Ben drove him to the landing and put him on the boat with a small trunk, and shook his hand and gripped his shoulder and said nothing and left him. They raised the gangplank, the little steamboat backed into the channel, and Mat watched the green water widen between him and his life as he knew it.
>
> After three weeks Ben came to see him. Mat, summoned, found him sitting on the stile block where he had hitched his horse. He was smiling. He shook Mat's hand, and Mat sat down beside him. (61)

In this scene, which is reminiscent of the scene in The Memory of Old Jack that depicts Mat's embrace of Andy under similar circumstances, Berry again illustrates the significance of touch in the Port William Membership. Ben Feltner's handshakes with his son suggest an unspoken transmission of membership into the adult world of the Port William community; with that simple gesture, Mat Feltner becomes a man in his father's eyes. Later in Remembering, Berry presents a comparable scene in which Andy and his father, Wheeler Catlett, look out over the cattle grazing on the Catlett family farm:

> Andy is old enough to be told that loving a place is like loving a woman, but Wheeler does not trust him yet to know what he is seeing. He trusts it to come to him later, if he can get it into his mind.
>
> "Look," he says. And as if to summon Andy's mind back from wherever it may be wandering, Wheeler takes hold of his shoulder and grips it hard. "Look. See what it is, and you'll always remember it."
>
> *What manner of wonder is this flesh that can carry in it for thirty years a vision that other flesh has carried, oh, forever, and handed down by touch?*
>
> Andy would like to know, for he is walking up Powell Street alone with the print of his father's hard-fingered, urgent hand as palpably on his shoulder as if the hand itself were still there. (69-70)

While Wheeler Catlett does communicate with his son using words in this passage, Berry's language suggests that Wheeler's gripping of Andy's shoulder conveyed more than his words ever could. The people of the Port William Membership are not unintelligent by any means, but neither are they erudite or incredibly adept with language. Nonetheless, the members of this community display the capacity for immense and passionate expression of their perceptions of themselves and each other through the use of physical contact. This passage, however, evokes another important quality shared between the characters in both Remembering and The Memory of Old Jack; Andy's perceived sensation of his father's hand on his shoulder suggests Berry's omnipresent fascination with the significance of physical memory.

In Remembering, Berry's treatment of Andy's physical memory takes on an additional meaning than it did in The Memory of Old Jack; while Andy's memories are firmly grounded in the physical sensations he experienced during them, he also struggles under the burden of the

memory of his missing hand. Berry reveals Andy's inability to liberate himself from the memory of his right hand early in the novel; his description of Andy's handwriting articulates Andy's considerable exasperation:

> After months of enforced practice, his left hand was finally learning to write at a moderate speed a script that was moderately legible. But it was still a child's script that he wrote, bearing not much resemblance to the work of his late right hand. That had flowed like flight almost, looping and turning without his consciousness, as if by intelligence innate in itself. This goes by rude twists and angles, with unexpected jerks, the hand responding grudgingly to his orders, seized with little fits of reluctance. (10-11)

For Andy, the act of writing is as much of a physical expression as his work on the farm; using his left hand to clumsily perform such a seemingly simple task serves as a constant reminder of his previous life, his life as a whole physical being. Berry's language in this passage illustrates Andy's persistent memories of physical sensation; his description of the gracefulness and agility of Andy's former handwriting parallels his description of Jack Beechum's fluid movements working in the field. Andy, unable to recover the sense of wholeness he once had before his accident, is haunted by the memory of his hand. Berry utilizes descriptions of Andy's physical memory throughout Remembering, as the memory of his missing hand is the primary obstruction preventing him from moving forward with both his work and family life:

> He raises his right forearm, its lightness still residing in it as if by permanent surprise. The memory comes to him, rising out of the flesh of his arm, of how it felt to flex and then extend the fingers of his right hand. He longs for

> the release of that movement. As sometimes happens, his hand seems now not to be gone, but caught, unable to move, as if inside an iron glove. (13)

Berry's language in this passage suggests that Andy is trapped inside of his physical memory; he is confined by the absence of his body's most able and tangible connection to his community and surroundings. Andy's self-imposed incarceration inside of his own physical memory is strikingly articulated in an extended passage in which Berry depicts the deterioration of Andy's relationship with his wife, Flora:

> His right hand had been the one with which he reached out to the world and attached himself to it. When he lost his hand he lost his hold. It was though his hand still clutched all that was dear to him—and was gone. 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.
>
> When he did reach out with his clumsy, hesitant, uneducated left hand, he would be maddened by its ineptitude. It went out as if fearful that it would displease him, and it did displease him. As he watched it groping at his buttons or trying to drive a nail or fumbling by itself with one of the two-handed tools that he now hated to use but would not give up, he could have torn it off and beaten it on the ground.
>
> He remembered with longing the events of his body's wholeness, grieving over them, as Adam remembered Paradise. He remembered how his body had dressed itself, while his mind thought of something else; how he had shifted burdens from hand to hand; how his right hand had danced with its awkward partner and made it graceful; how his right hand had been as deft and nervous as a

> bird. 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. (28)

Again, Berry's language in his description of Andy's dexterity with his right hand is reminiscent of his descriptions of Jack Beechum's field labor movements in The Memory of Old Jack; however, Andy is imprisoned by his memories of his former grace and nimbleness with his right hand. Berry's imagery in this passage is especially vital to our examination of Andy's physical memory; his allusion to Adam's expulsion from the Garden of Eden gives us the impression of Andy's feeling of exile from the world. Without the use of his right hand, Andy perceives himself as forever separated from his previous joy of physical expression and sensation, and he is essentially powerless to release himself from the restrictions of his physical memory. However, as Remembering progresses, Andy's recollection of physical memories develops into a vehicle for him to conquer his self-inflicted torment as he explores critical moments in his past in which physical sensations guided him towards enlightenment, rather than anguish. As Andy wanders aimlessly through the streets of San Francisco, he ponders the circumstances which led to his decision to return to Port William after spending many years in Chicago writing for an agricultural magazine called *Scientific Farming*. After a fateful encounter with an Amish farmer while on a work assignment, Andy longs for a return to a simpler, more fulfilling way of life. He drives to Port William and visits an abandoned farm where he had worked and played in his youth; Berry's description of this event incorporates substantial details of Andy's physical experience on the farm:

> He walked through the shadow of the tree and up onto the porch. The door, when he pressed it, did not resist at all, the latch broken. He went in, shut the door, and walked, feeling his way through the dark, damp, mouse-smelling air, to the back door and came out again. It was sound, he knew then; after all the years of use and misuse and abandonment, not a board had creaked.
>
> He went and looked at the barn, which had swayed off its footings along one side, but was still roofed and probably salvageable. He walked into the driveway, smelling the must of old hay and manure, old use. He stood in the barn in the dark, looking out into the bright night through fallen-open doors at each end. Many had worked there, some he knew, some he had heard of, some he would never hear of. He had worked there himself—work that he had thought he had left behind him forever, and now saw ahead of him again.
>
> [. . .] Again feeling his way, he went into the shadow and up into the notch. When the shadow seemed to hover and close around him, he felt with his hands for the cleft in the rock, and found it, and felt the cold water flowing out and the flat stone edging the water. He knelt and drank. (91-92)

From Berry's descriptions of Andy's exploration of the old farm, we can infer that Andy's physical memories of that night on the farm indicate that for him, it was a transcendent experience. Additionally, the summoning of these memories during his contemplative walk around San Francisco catalyze his ability to liberate himself from the encumbrance of the memory of his right hand; soon after his consideration of that night on the farm, we see that he has come to terms with his physical memories, and is prepared to return to Port William to resume his life. As Andy arrives at his home in Port William, his physical memories and those

shared by his ancestors and the community converge as he seeks to restore what he has lost, and to remember all that have come before him, to mold him into his present self:

> Now they are coming to him again, those who have brought him here and who remain—not in memory, but near to memory, in the place itself and in his flesh, ready always to be remembered—so that the place, the present life of it, resonates within time and within times, as it could not do if time were all that it is living in.
>
> Now Mat runs up the bank toward Margaret, who is running to meet him with her arms open; they meet and hold each other at last.
>
> Wheeler, standing on the bottom step of the coach as it sways and slows finally to a standstill at the station at Goforth, puts his hand into his father's hand and steps down. (117-18)

This passage clearly communicates the resilience of the bonds between the people of Port William and their collective consciousness; as Berry evokes images of the physical communion between the people of the Port William Membership, we see Andy beginning to rediscover his place within the membership. Through his recollection of his own memories of physical experience, as well as those of his family and friends in the community, Andy regains the perception of his own physical wholeness; through his acknowledgment of his new physical self, he achieves an internal sense of redemption, allowing him to begin the restoration of his identity.

Perhaps the most unique aspect of Berry's exploration of the physical self in Remembering is his notion of "dismemberment" that occurs repeatedly in the novel. As a result of his accident, Andy consistently refers to his feeling of disembodiment; he is a stranger in his own body. The constant reminder of Andy's missing right hand creates a sense of disassociation

within himself; his former life as a whole physical being is a distant and disjointed memory when we meet him at the beginning of the novel. The first indication of Andy's perpetual state of dissonance occurs as we see him waking in his hotel room in San Francisco:

> He himself was disformed and naked, a mere physical quantity, its existence verifiable by an ache. That is what woke him.
>
> As he lies in bed in the dark room, only his mind is awake, his body feelingless and still. Leaving the dream, as a place to which it may return again, his mind resumes a thoughtless, exhausted wakefulness, dumbly pained. The unhanded, healed stump of his right wrist lies in the dark beside him. For the time, he is refusing to think about it, though that refusal costs him all thought.
>
> But thought comes. His body twitches and stirs on its own, alerts itself to the strangeness of bed and room, and absence lives again at the end of his arm. (5)

Berry's first description of Andy in Remembering clearly imparts an impression of Andy's acute awareness of his physical deficiency; the incompleteness of his body is the prevailing sensation of his consciousness. From Berry's language in this passage, we get the sense of Andy's continual dreamlike state; he is neither fully present or fully absent within his own body, and his mind exists in an uninterrupted state of chaos. To fully understand Andy's perception of his own relationship with his physical self, we must examine Berry's repeated use of the word "absence." Berry uses "absence" in several passages throughout the novel in reference to Andy's feeling of disembodiment; the word "absence," coupled with Berry's descriptions of Andy's emotional distance from himself and his family, suggest that he is merely observing his life from an outside perspective rather than participating in it as a part of the Port William Membership:

> That absence is with him now, but only as a weary fact, known but no longer felt, as if by some displacement of mind he is growing absent from it.
>
> It is the absence of everything he knows, and is known by, that surrounds him now.
>
> He is absent himself, perfectly absent. Only he knows where he is, and he is no place that he knows. His flesh feels its removal from other flesh that would recognize it or respond to its touch; it is numb with exile. He is present in his body, but his body is absent. (21)

Here Berry illustrates a crucial component of our understanding of Andy's segregation from his physical self; the notion of "absence" signifies the fact that Andy, perceiving himself as no longer a whole physical entity, simply ceases to be a whole emotional entity as well. His sense of "absence" is pervasive, and it infiltrates not only his own self-awareness, but also his relationships with the outside world. We see evidence of Andy's "absence" again as he recalls his arrival in San Francisco for a conference on the industrialization of agriculture. Upon his arrival at the airport, a young woman from the conference approaches him and asks, "Pardon me. Are you Andrew Catlett?" (6) He replies negatively, and recalling this event later, he describes his reasons for doing so:

> He stands, looking at himself in the mirror as though he is his own disembodied soul. When he'd answered, "No mam," to the young woman waiting to meet him at the airport gate, he had felt the sudden swing and stagger of disembodiment, as though a profound divorce had occurred, casting his body off to do what it would on its own, to be watched as from a distance, without premonition of what it might do. (27)

Again, we see Berry demonstrating Andy's "disembodiment" in this passage; while Andy is imprisoned by the memory of his missing hand, he is simultaneously separated from his physical self. Berry's language in his depiction of Andy's sense of "disembodiment" evokes an image of Andy as a wandering apparition, forever doomed to be completely detached from both his physical self and his family and community. However, as Andy summons the images of his own physical memories and those of his forbears, we see a gradual change in his sense of "disembodiment" and "absence" as he begins to reclaim his place inside of his own body:

> 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. The pattern limits and complicates him, singling him out in his own flesh. Out of the multitude of possible lives that have surrounded and beckoned to him like a crowd around a star, he returns now to himself, a mere meteorite, scorched, small, and fallen. 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. (57-58)

Just as Andy liberates himself from the confines of his physical memory by evoking the shared memories of those who came before him, he concurrently attains a newfound harmony with his physical self by coming to terms with the fact that he will be "partial." Berry's use of the words "meteorite" and "scorched" suggest the image of the phoenix in relation to Andy's newfound

acceptance of his place within his body; he rises from the ashes of his disembodied self to emerge as an entirely new being with his body, mind, and spirit in perfect accord. Berry's description of Andy's return to his home after his cathartic spiritual journey through San Francisco reaffirms Andy's reconnection with his physical self:

> And Andy's body begins to live again in the familiar sways and pressures of his approach to home. His own place becomes palpable to him. Those he loves, living and dead, are no longer mere thoughts or memories, but presences, approachable and near.
>
> [. . .] With [Flora's] note in his hand, standing in her place, in her absence, he feels the strong quietness with which she has cared for him and waited for him all through his grief and his anger. He feels her justice, her great dignity in her suffering of him. He feels around him a blessedness that he has lived in, in his anger, and did not know. He is walking now, from room to room, breathing in the smell of the life that the two of them have made, and that she has kept. He walks from room to room, entering each as for the first time, leaving it as if forever. And he is saying over and over to himself, "I am blessed. I am blessed." (117-19)

As Andy returns home, we see the ultimate convergence of his liberation from the memories of his missing hand, his contemplation of his personal history and the shared history of Port William, and his transcendence of his state of "disembodiment." Berry's language in this passage indicates a complete contrast from the language he uses in the beginning of the novel. Throughout the novel, Berry's language suggests Andy's inability to feel anything besides persistent "absence;" his awareness exists solely to remind him of what is gone. However, upon

Andy's arrival at home in Port William, Berry repeatedly uses the word "feels" to illustrate Andy's desire to reclaim what he has lost both within himself and with his family. We may infer that a parallel exists between Andy's return to Port William and his symbolic return to feeling at home within his own body; he returns to Port William not only as a purely corporeal entity or as an emotionally distant apparition, but as a complete, dynamic, and vibrant man.

Much like The Memory of Old Jack, the title of Remembering also requires our acknowledgment of a duality in the interpretation of the novel; we must examine both Andy's physical memory and the significance of the "physical self" in the context of the Port William community as a whole. Berry's employment of images of physical communion between characters and the importance of Andy's physical memory demonstrate the inseparability of his characters from their "physical selves." Additionally, we may conclude that Andy's "remembering" is multifaceted; primarily, the action of the novel is punctuated by Andy's departure into his own past and the history of the Port William Membership as he recalls key moments of physical communion between its members. However, we must also acknowledge Berry's continued allusion to the word "membership;" as Andy navigates through the shared memories of the Port William Membership, those memories begin to develop into the vehicle through which he finally achieves a sense of closure about the loss of his hand. Therefore, we may infer that as Andy "remembers," he simultaneously re-"members;" Andy's tremendous contemplation of his physical memories and the acceptance of his "dismemberment" guide him through his state of chaos to a position where he may begin to reclaim his place among the Port William Membership and reconstruct his life.

SECTION 3

CONCLUSION

Wendell Berry's exploration of the "physical self" is integral to our analysis and understanding of his fiction, and the most glaring examples of this exploration appear in The Memory of Old Jack and Remembering. On the surface, the two novels seem to be only tangentially related due to their shared setting of Port William, Kentucky. The Memory of Old Jack is the story of an elderly man's recollection of his life through a series of extended flashbacks on the last day of his life, while Remembering is the story of a middle-aged man's coming to terms with a horrible disfigurement and its effect on his life. However, we must examine these novels together if we are truly to grasp the richness and complexity of Berry's writing. In both The Memory of Old Jack and Remembering, we see Berry employing very similar techniques to convey meaning; in both novels, Berry consistently and repeatedly evokes striking images of physical contact between characters as the most significant method of communication. Also, both The Memory of Old Jack and Remembering exemplify Berry's fascination with his characters' physical memories; all of Jack Beechum's and Andy Catlett's memories are firmly grounded in their physical experiences. Under close scrutiny, we see that these two novels are thematically very similar, as well. While the principal action and characters may be different, both novels place a remarkable emphasis on the importance of family and community; Berry conspicuously uses the same tactics frequently in both novels to communicate this philosophy, and therefore, we must conclude that any analysis of one of the novels would be incomplete without the inclusion of the other.

Examination of both of these meticulously constructed and flawlessly executed novels leads us to consider Berry's place among the community of Southern authors. Perhaps Berry's

most significant contribution as a writer of fiction is his incisive and poignant view into the emotional frameworks that comprise the center of the small community; Berry's writing, both fiction and nonfiction, repeatedly returns to the notion that the "community" is disappearing in the United States as a result of industrialization and the dissolution of agrarian culture. Arguably, Berry's emphasis on physical communion between the people of the Port William Membership is intended provide his readers with a more tangible grasp of the importance of maintaining community and to directly parallel the literal tangibility of the connections between the Port William Membership.

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[i] Andrew J. Angyal's *Wendell Berry* contains an entire chapter devoted to Berry's agrarian politics, entitled, "An Agricultural Critic." Angyal writes, ". . . contempt for our world has reached its climax in our time, for with the power of modern technology, humans have the ability utterly to destroy the natural world, so great is the discrepancy between our power and our needs. No other creature has fouled its environment so thoroughly as to make it unfit for other forms of life" (51).

[ii] Goodrich claims, "It is as if Berry is reliving his own younger life in writing with all the advantages of matured knowledge as he recalls not only the agriculture of an earlier era, but also his own younger consciousness in all its freedom to choose" (62).

[iii] Paul Merchant's *Wendell Berry* contains Weinreb's "A Question a Day: A Written Conversation with Wendell Berry." The interview was conducted over an extended period of time through written correspondence between Weinreb and Berry. Berry remarks, "It is not printing that has made the old inessential to the young—or that has made it possible for the young to think so. That has been caused by the dispersal of families and communities, and the consequent destruction of local cultures and economies" (31).

[iv] Both Jack Hicks' "Wendell Berry's Husband to the World: *A Place on Earth*" and Herman Nibbelink's "Thoreau and Wendell Berry: Bachelor and Husband of Nature" acknowledge Berry's notion of a "marriage" to the land, as alluded to in *The Memory of Old Jack*.

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