Roots: Agrarian Movements and the Importance of Ground within the Philosophy of Communication (A Synecdoche)

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ROOTS: AGRARIAN MOVEMENTS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF GROUND
WITHIN THE PHILOSOPHY OF COMMUNICATION (A SYNECDOCHE)

A Dissertation
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the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By
Maryl Roberts McGinley

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“ROOTS: AGRARIAN MOVEMENTS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF GROUND WITHIN THE PHILOSOPHY OF COMMUNICATION (A SYNECDOCHE)”

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Approved October 18, 2010.
ABSTRACT

Roots: Agrarian Movements and the Importance of Ground within the Philosophy of Communication
(A Synecdoche)

By Maryl Roberts McGinley

Dissertation supervised by Ronald C. Arnett

This work looks at the way in which an agrarian philosophy communicates the meaningful connection between cultivating land and being attentive to the philosophical notion of ground. It tells the story of agrarian movements from the last century with special attention to what about the philosophy has durability. This work outlines the possibility of an agrarian framework as a potential alternative to modernity. Each chapter is attentive to a different voice in the movement, exploring his engagement with an agrarian philosophy and connection to the philosophy of communication.
DEDICATION

For Kerrin and O
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to Dr. Arnett, Dr. Fritz, Dr. Troup, Dean Duncan, and Mrs. McCaffrey.

Thank you to my family.

Thank you, Dan.
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Chapter 1: Introduction – The Lay of the Land

"Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country and wedded to its liberty and interests by the most lasting bonds."
-Thomas Jefferson, August 23, 1785

I. Significance

For much of recorded history, agriculture has been central to the livelihood of societies around the globe. With an emphasis on farming, agrarian societies turn to the land for nourishment, for substance. This dissertation will explore the way in which an agrarian philosophy communicates the meaningful connection between cultivating land and being attentive to the philosophical notion of ground. It will tell the story of agrarian movements from the last century with special attention to what about the philosophy has durability. It will look at specific authors, movements, and moments. This work attempts to outline the possibility of an agrarian framework as a potential alternative to modernity. Each chapter will look at a different voice in the movement, providing a starting point to explore his or her engagement with an agrarian philosophy in connection to the philosophy of communication.

The exploration of an agrarian framework is significant in the communication discipline connected to what Alexis de Tocqueville refers to as ground – or being grounded. In Democracy in America, de Tocqueville outlines being grounded well as behaviors matching beliefs. This exploration hopes to connect
clearly tilling the land to tilling our intellectual soil. In terms of the study of the philosophy of communication, one can see the ways in which a conversation centered around roots, around the ground beneath our feet, can contribute to a communication ethic that is attentive to standpoint and an awareness of narrative structure. Both the philosophy of communication and an agrarian paradigm ask us to consider the ground on which we stand.

Since Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, those reflecting on the philosophy of communication have asked questions about existence. Aristotle insists that “to be” is said in many ways. The agrarian paradigm may be able to give us insight into existence, into what it means “to be”. The agrarian paradigm reveals the possibility of existence connected to land, of existence being anchored in an awareness of our roots. What came before; what informed where we stand? In this light, one can see that the significance of this work tied to the philosophy of communication within the spheres of provinciality and cosmopolitanism as well. In order to be attentive to a global existence and perspectives, local roots must be planted and attended to. Ronald C. Arnett’s work defining philosophy of communication “frames philosophy of communication as understanding situated within limits which give it identity” (3). Arnett’s work celebrates limits; this dissertation looks at how limits can be connected to a notion of rootedness central to agrarian philosophy. This dissertation looks at ways in which those roots (specifically agrarian roots) can allow us more freedom to move and communicate deliberately and meaningfully.

II. Scope and Hope of this Dissertation
With employment of farmers and ranchers on the decline, a drop that will continue by about 8% over the next 8 years\(^1\), and social media exploding across the globe\(^2\), this work turns back to the land at a strange time in the world; we are moving fast and furiously into cyberspace away from literal and figurative ground. Why now? One entrance into the conversation is the complicated nature of communication mediated by technology. Spending time on social networking sites is shifting the way we communicate in general\(^3\).

This dissertation will turn to the agrarian philosophy as one that can inform the way in which we communicate in the world. How can we communicate amidst this shift? This work will look at the Southern Agrarians, in particular Allen Tate and Richard Weaver, but it is not limited to those who were connected to Vanderbilt in the 1930’s. It will also look at Wendell Barry voice that emerged decades later in the movement. To begin, I turn to the calm and quiet Richard Weaver. Although he was not part of the illustrious twelve who came together in *I’ll Take My Stand*, he stood where they stood, figuratively and often literally. He was distrustful of technology and had an affinity for the land; he lived a modest life and valued 

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\(^2\) According to the 2009 Nielsin Report on social networking’s global footprint, social networking has become a global consumer phenomenon: “Two-thirds of the world’s Internet population visit a social network or blogging site and the sector now accounts for almost 10% of all internet time.” Social networking and blogging, both known as “member communities” have surpassed e-mail to become the world’s fourth most popular online sector after search, portals and PC software applications. Neilson’s findings support that this phenomenon is consistent across the globe. “Global Faces and Networked Places: A Nielsen report on Social Networking’s New Global Footprint”: [http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/wpcontent/uploads/2009/03/nielsen_globalfaces_mar09.pdf](http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/wpcontent/uploads/2009/03/nielsen_globalfaces_mar09.pdf)

routine. These latter elements in particular come together to influence and inform his rhetorical theory. While Weaver and the other Southern Agrarians drive much of this exploration, the conversation allows for threads of great literature: Flannery O'Connor and William Faulkner. Faulkner’s fictional county Yoknapatawpha was the setting for so many of his novels. O’Connor’s stories of Southern values and families, exposed their flawed and revealed fighting characters struggling with industry, with progress – struggling to make sense of the human condition. John Steinbeck and Allen Tate (Tate was among the twelve essayists who took part in *I’ll Take My Stand*) have told stories in which an agrarian framework nuances the human condition.

Cultivation of and connection to land is absolutely essential, as it is for all agrarian movements and paradigms. The first line of the *Preamble of the Declaration of Independence*, the way our forefathers tied the conception of property to the pursuit of happiness; Weaver and the Agrarians saw a connection as well. It is part of *Everything that Rises Must Converge*, it is part of Weaver’s *Defense of Tradition*. Steinbeck illuminates it in *East of Eden*, and Tate weaves the themes of the agrarians throughout his poetry.

This dissertation explores agrarian movements, especially those that have unfolded in the last century in the United States. My hope is to get to know some of the key players, some of their literature and the principles that informed their work. I hope to illuminate how Industrialism, modernity, technology lead to their formation and their resistance against what Kenneth Burke referred to as the god-term of modernity: progress.
Kenneth Burke outlines the concept of god-terms in *Rhetoric of Motives*, and Richard Johannesen believes Richard Weaver took up Burke’s treatment of god-terms in his own *Ethics of Rhetoric*. Essentially, both scholars argue that god-terms connect to ultimate terms in contemporary language/communication/rhetoric. For Weaver, god-terms are absolutes to which all other expressions are placed in and rated in relation. I would like to strengthen the argument that agrarianism is also in large part rhetorical; I see a return to the land as both metaphor and synecdoche for the necessity of ground beneath our feet. This investigation centers around how the philosophy of communication can engage an agrarian framework. Through a celebration and investigation of voices, from Allen Tate to Wendell Berry, the narrative of the agrarians will unfold.

Arnett points to difference and identity as dimensions integral to shaping and understanding the philosophy of communication. For Arnett, the notion of particulars grounds the philosophy of communication: “philosophy of communication engages particulars situated within public opinion...we must offer a philosophy of communication road map that details what particulars we understood and the temporal suggestions we have for engaging such particulars” (5). The question the dissertation hopes to explore is the way in which these agrarian voices can speak to and enhance the philosophy of communication connected to issues of alterity and understanding.

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4 Burke’s section on god-terms is titled “Rhetorical Names for God.”
III. On Modernity and Postmodernity

This work examines agrarian movements and thought as recalcitrance to modernity. Marshall Berman, in All That Is Solid Melts into Air, writes of modernity as the triumph of Enlightenment Reason over Medieval ignorance. (9) Recognized as the historical period from the 16th century through the 20th century, modernity is marked by development of technologies and a desire for objective knowledge. According to Bryan Taylor, modernity is responsible for the demographic upheaval, “the urban migration that disrupted rural, agrarian, and communal traditions” (115). In place of those traditions came big business, progress and mass media (systems Taylor believes brought both totalitarian control of publics and their fragmentation into markets and audiences). Modernity strips away value and elevates science as the only discourse that can lead one to truth. It was John Locke, Francis Bacon, Renee Descartes who laid the foundation for a turn to mathematic reason, rationality tied to form, not content. Descartes removes experience and privileges technique. Such a comparison is the top metaphor John Maynard Keynes used in describing the conflict surrounding World War I. He saw Germany as a machine that was “like a top which to maintain its equilibrium must spin faster and faster” (13). The world began to spin out of control.

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5 Husserl reacted to this mathematic reason in The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology. Husserl wants to stress through his phenomenological epoch the notion of perceptual possibilities, the variations on meanings.

6 Richard Weaver illuminates the danger in technique over content in In Defense of Tradition.
This turn toward the “machine” that characterized modernity is in opposition to an agrarian framework. Machines were replacing human labor. Donald Davidson and others among the agrarian movements saw modernity and industrialism as “inimical to religion, the arts, and the elements of a good life – leisure, conversation, hospitality”. Hannah Arendt wrote about the evils of modernity; she critiques modernity’s demand for thoughtless progress. Modernity gave the illusion that one could stand above history, that one can see everything. Metaphors that drive modernity are those of efficiency and autonomy; yet there is danger in too much clarity. Maurice Telleen speaks of changing social and economic landscape, “eventually the ideas of endless progress and endless growth (also a disease known as cancer) elbowed out the older notions of stability, maintainability, and continuity” (55).

The Southern Agrarians, according to Murphy, sought to protect and preserve the values and structure of a pre-industrial society. Murphy nuances the movement: “The Agrarians did not preach a blanket resistance to modernity...they did not simply retreat into a disengaged advocacy of the Great Books and moral absolutes...Instead, they rejected industrial capitalism and the culture it created” (5). Their opposition to modernity was one concerned with a

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7 From Paul Murphy’s Introduction to his work on The Rebuke of History. Murphy also included a quote from Stark Young in the introduction that critiques the modern booster: “In our town we’ve got twenty thousand miles of concrete walls.” Young asked: “And where do they lead?”

8 Arendt explores the banality of evil in her work on the Eichmann trial.

9 See Ronald C. Arnett’s examination of modernity.

10 This quote comes from Telleen’s contribution to The Essential Agrarian Reader.

11 In the chapter of this dissertation that deals with Richard Weaver, I will explore the Great Books initiative in more detail.
return to the economy of rural America. For the agrarians, industrialization threatened that culture, a culture connected, in their opinion to values and tradition.

The shifting landscape of Western Civilization came to be referred to as postmodernity, which is connected to Lyotard’s work discussed below and the belief in metanarrative structures. Charles Taylor tackles this changing tide in his text *A Secular Age*. In it, Taylor sets out to tell the story of how civilization has changed, how paradigms have shifted, focusing on our move from an enchanted world to a secular one. There was a time in Western society when there were no alternatives to the “fullness” of God’s presence. According to Taylor, three features of the world made belief in God necessary and unquestionable: 1) The natural world and events within the world were recognized as acts of God; 2) God was part of society – life in society was tied to worship; 3) The world was an “enchanted” one. As we moved away from these features, we moved into a historical moment marked by a sense of individual moral ordering. Modernity is marked by deterioration of tradition; postmodernity rejected tradition all together.

Postmodernity was born in/around the 1950’s and relied heavily on the French philosophers Derrida and Foucault; both favored textualism, “seeing the world as a text and/or the privileging of multiple sites of power” (Cole 166). Pairing textualism (which inevitably leads to deconstruction) with Jean-Francois Lyotard’s work brings a clearer sense of the postmodern movement or the postmodern mindset. Lyotard set forth a major coordinate of postmodernity in his book, *The Postmodern Condition* (about two decades after the concept was born). He identified the defining character of postmodernity to be that of rejecting a
metanarrative structure. The characteristic remains central today. There is a shift in the conception of and belief in Truth and narrative. Some postmodern writers highlight what they see as two different approaches or directions to postmodernity – a reactionary approach and a progressive approach\textsuperscript{12}. The former encompasses a cynicism connected to meaninglessness. The latter is anti-hierarchical but encourages multiple perspectives. Some argue that this progressive approach brings about a “celebration of voices” (Lather 112). Narratives of diversity emerge.

A potential danger in this movement is a privileging or encouraging of emotivism (as defined by MacIntyre\textsuperscript{13}) and celebrating relativism (again, in reference to Taylor’s thesis: if God is no longer in charge of the universe, then who is?). The split between reactionary and progressive positions nuances postmodernity, but for the purposes of this dissertation, I am going to privilege Lyotard’s more straightforward and comprehensive characteristic of postmodernity: a rejection of metanarrative structures. We become suspicious of dominant narratives in postmodernity. Postmodernity says there is no Truth, only truths. How does this rejection of metanarrative lend itself to a fragmented construction of identity? What are the implications in terms of the philosophy of communication in returning to an agrarian framework, especially when considering Taylor’s thesis on the state of the world?

\textsuperscript{12} This split is nuanced in Lather’s work on Postmodernity and Lyotard.

\textsuperscript{13} MacIntyre defines emotivism as decision making by personal preference; For more see Alasdair MacIntyre After Virtue.
It is significant to pause at the impact of the Industrial turn on education; there was a shift in focus from quality to quantity. For the agrarians coming out of Nashville especially, education should encourage human beings to explore and reflect upon who they are. By 1950, the goal became about teaching technique and trade, about graduating men, not educating men. Education was too big, disconnected, and inconsistent. In the humanities classroom, subjects rely on one another, connect to one another. Students are taught how to think, not what to think about. This is a major distinction between the technique driven and humanities driven classroom – between the tenets of modernity and the tenets of an agrarian paradigm. Richard Weaver would argue that the disconnected, vast education born out of some conception of progress leads not to superior men, but unreflective ones. The humanities driven classroom is upheld and maintained through a commitment to privileging content and substance over purely efficient technique. The land, the Agrarians argue, we need to tend to is as important as the metaphorical ground beneath our feet, the ground that informs our arguments and standpoint.

Could the agrarian philosophy and framework be an alternative to modernity, to an industrial, machine, progress driven paradigm? One needs to be careful not to reduce agrarianism to a romantic, antiquated ideal. Norman Wirzba gives texture to the agrarian paradigm, when he says:

Authentic agrarianism, which should not be confused with farming per se (since severe economic pressure and the dash for quick profits have often left farmers to compromise agrarian ideals), represents the sustained attempt to

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14 Fletcher makes this claim in his work on agrarian movements.
live faithfully and responsibly in a world of limits and possibilities. As such it takes seriously what we know (and still need to learn) about the earth – the scientific ecological principles that govern all life forms – and what we know about each other – the social scientific and humanistic disciplines that enrich human self-understanding. (4)\(^{15}\)

This notion of limits proves to be central to the agrarian philosophy. The Southern Agrarians “believed the Agrarian economy – bound as it was by limits, modest expectations, and tradition – promised the widest range of opportunity for the development of individual character” (Murphy 30). In “The Mind-Set of Agrarianism...New and Old,” Maurice Telleen\(^{16}\) speaks to limits. Telleen outlines a “commandment” of agrarianism, saying, “Accept limits with grace. Limits are not shackles; in fact, many of them are liberating. We are not meant to be “gods” or “Masters of the Universe” (60).\(^{17}\) The metaphor of consequences is also central to the paradigm. Telleen says, “For agrarianism does have a strong emphasis on personal behavior and its consequences – both long- and short- terms – and even eventual eternal life. Agrarians subscribe to that first law of ecology: We can never do just one thing” (53). Telleen goes on to insist that both action and inaction have consequences.

The metaphor of consequence drove Richard Weaver as well. For Weaver, ideas have consequences, a sentiment after which he titled one of his classic texts on

\(^{15}\) This definition is taken from Wirzba’s Introduction to *The Essential Agrarian Reader*.

\(^{16}\) This essay is part of *The Essential Agrarian Reader*.

\(^{17}\) Again, we see how Taylor’s work fits into the equation here.
rhetorical theory. In the Foreword to Ideas Have Consequences, Richard Weaver writes about the catalyst that propelled him to write the book. Published in 1948, right after World War II, the work was absolutely a reaction to the war – “to the destructiveness, to the strain it placed upon ethical principles, and to the tensions it left in place of peace and order that were professedly sought” (v). For Weaver and others mentioned below, Jacques Ellul, Kenneth Burke, the worship of “progress”\textsuperscript{18} was leading to an erosion or lowering of the quality of life. For Weaver, the agrarian framework could lead us back to reflection on the foundations of civilization.

When one reflects upon some of the issues of modernity and postmodernity discussed above, one can see the ways in which the agrarians might assist. Modernity, marked by Arendt’s notion of thoughtless progress, lacked reflection on movement. The coming chapters demonstrate how the agrarians disagreed with the growing insistence to look only to the future; progress had fixed its gaze firmly forward. The agrarian philosophy insists that we need not only to go toward something, but also to be attentive to the fact that we are building from something. Industrialism and progress neglect to acknowledge a history. The guiding metaphor is the idea of returning to the land; although these men did not all plow their own fields or milk their own cows,\textsuperscript{19} the return to the land encourages an education of the individual that is tied to society and civic duty and education in a bigger sense than technique, trade, or technology. The agrarian framework may texture our

\textsuperscript{18} Ellul explores this notion in The Humiliation of the Word; Burke in A Rhetoric of Motives
\textsuperscript{19} Although Ted J. Smith III, in his introduction to Richard Weaver’s In Defense of Tradition, says there are accounts of Weaver plowing fields with a horse; none of his family members can confirm such activities.
postmodern historical moment in a way in which diversity of narratives is celebrated, but at the same time grounded in elements of tradition, limits, and consequences. Part of the hope of this work is to see how the agrarian framework can speak to modernity as well as to this historical moment. The focus is the implications tied to the philosophy of communication.

IV. An Agrarian Necessity: This Historical Moment

In the Preface to the 1962 edition of *I’ll Take My Stand*, written 32 years after the twelve prophets (as Murphy refers to them), the major thinkers responsible for the Southern Agrarian movement (and most of them part of the Fugitives as well) first released their work, Louis D. Rubin Jr. writes, “As a human document *I’ll Take My Stand* is still very much alive; the concerns of 1930 are the concerns of 1962, and will very likely be the concerns in the year 2000” (xviii). He goes on to say that only a major shift in the human condition could lead us elsewhere, offer an alternative. Yet the Agrarians taught us that human nature does not and will not change, not due to the passage of time or an adjustment in our geographical location – a truth we should get used to. *Time* magazine in 1980, nearly five decades after *I’ll Take My Stand* was published, asked what about the Agrarian movement was so powerful, so timeless that it still resonated clearly and loudly (Murphy). The question remains, and we find that the concerns that drove these men to write and react almost eighty years ago are still major concerns today.

In the midst of a global economic crisis and the largest recession since the Great Depression, we come again to ask questions of what is good, what is lasting,
what is meaningful. For some agrarians, the philosophy is a metaphor for the 
simple life. A glance at contemporary literature, both fiction and nonfiction, shows 
authors exploring questions of Industry and agriculture, of modernity and progress, 
of alienation and cultivation, of the human condition. Joe Eck and Wayne 
Winterrowd chronicle thirty years of farming a 23-acre plot in Vermont, the soil 
and the seeds providing lessons into life and illuminating “things rendered even 
more sweet by their brevity”. In Farm City, Novella Carpenter writes about her turn 
to agriculture as she raises livestock and grows produce in her inner-city Oakland 
home. It isn’t easy, as it turns out, to be “farmer” in the city. Robert Progue 
Harrison explores the gardening metaphor as a kind of pedagogical foundation 
and metaphor for the classroom in Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition. His 
work is meaningful; he returns to Plato, among many others, to acknowledge the 
way in which life and death and growth and decay come to us most powerfully when 
we tend to the earth.

The farm-to-table trend in restaurants all over the country is an indication of 
people hungry (again literally and figuratively) for a connection to the land. I know 
an entrepreneur and restaurateur from New Jersey who just bought 80 acres of land 
on which to grow the majority of the food served at his restaurants. Gourmet 
Magazine recognized Bona Terra as one of the most successful restaurants in 
Pittsburgh. It is always present on Pittsburgh Magazine’s list of 25 Best Restaurants, 
because of Chef Douglass Dick’s commitment to serving only what he can find in his 
own backyard. As one of “America’s Best Farm-To-Table Restaurants,” Bona Terra

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20 See Paul Murphy’s work in The Rebuke of History.
illuminates the growing importance of provincially, of the local. This awareness of and attention to where food comes from is helpful.

Agriculture is not a popular topic in communication literature\textsuperscript{21}, but I argue that it must be. On a fundamental level, there are things we can eliminate from our lives; food is not one of them. Tying agriculture to identity makes sense. Harrison puts us on the right track. By attending to the cycles of life, through vegetable gardens and flower gardens, we gain and cultivate a sense of awareness about our selves – about being in the world (think again of Taylor's concern about our disenchanted world; agrarians are connected to the earth in a different way). The importance of the agrarian philosophy is tied to participation in production.

Barbara Kingsolver\textsuperscript{22} says it well: “It's too easy to ignore the damage you don't see and to undervalue things you haven't made yourself” (xiii). An agrarian awareness connects us to the universe. And this dissertation will argue that that is exactly what we need in this historical moment; that connection completes us. Kingsolver points to our market-driven economics as a point of concern – we are as a country favoring “immediate corporate gratification over long-term responsibility” (xvi).

For Kingsolver the conversation involves big questions of money and morality in the United States. Moving us back to and beginning with the spiritual, Kingsolver says,

The decision to attend to the health of one's habitat and food chain is a spiritual choice. It's also a political one, a scientific one, a personal and a convivial one. It's not a choice between living in the country or

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\textsuperscript{21} A review of the literature shows attention to some of the writers associated with the agrarian movement: Richard Weaver, Allen Tate, etc., but the agrarian framework is downplayed if mentioned at all.

\textsuperscript{22} The material quoted from Kingsolver is from her Introduction to \textit{The Essential Agrarian Reader}.
the town; it is about the understanding that every one of us, at the level of our cells and respiration, lives in the country and is thus obliged to be mindful of the distance between ourselves and our sustenance. (xvii)

Kingsolver, like other agrarians looked at in pages to come, stress the importance of an awareness of mindful consumption.

Beyond the topic of agriculture, technology, greed, and speed, all forces in opposition to much of the agrarian philosophy and pervasive in this historical moment, are being explored in literature and popular culture in general. It is not a new reflection; in the wake of the world wars, Kenneth Burke and Jacques Ellul explored the consequences of unreflective progress. Richard Weaver's work, Ideas Have Consequences, takes very seriously the notion of reflective practice in communication (the metaphor of the farmer tilling his land follows logically for me). While books like House of Cards: A Tale of Hubris and Wretched Excess on Wall Street and Susie Orbach's Bodies take a hard look at the implications of living in this historical moment; we also see every day the ways in which technologies are being used unreflectively. Students are bullied literally to death on MySpace; little girls are saving money for breast implants – at 14. It has not led us completely into the darkness, some social networking sites are raising awareness and money for great causes, encouraging conversations about ideas, encouraging positive social change.

23 In 2007, a 13 year old girl was driven to suicide after being harassed by a mother hiding behind a young boy’s fictitious MySpace page: http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,312018,00.html

in general. The fear of the agrarians, as well as other authors discussed above, is that of being unreflective in our practices. For someone like Richard Weaver, the intention that one must take to the soil is the same intention one must take to ideas. So, yes, new technologies have improved our lives. It would be foolish to say otherwise. The agrarian philosophy pushes us to ask what some of those technologies, improvements and all, have displaced in terms of community and tradition.

The agrarian paradigm is textured. Paul Murphy looks at the ways in which the philosophy has been unpacked over the years,

In 1930, I'll Take my Stand was an indictment of industrial capitalism and a warning of its potential to destroy what the Agrarians considered a more humane and leisurely social order. For some, it later came to be a statement of Christian humanism. For others, it was a rousing defense of the southern heritage and southern culture, which, in turn, meant a defense of the Western tradition. For others, Agrarianism was merely a metaphor for the simple life – one not consumed with materialism. (3)

Central to these definitions, one sees constant attention to the notion of tradition, the confrontation and critique of technology, and the necessity of reflection and acknowledgement of limits. The agrarian framework is a necessity.

V. Methodology: Narrative Argument

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25 See sites like www.change.org or www.freecycle.org
As traditional narratives and identities continue to erode, agrarianism appears as a potential point of stability. The exploration of the ground on which agrarianism stands comes from the notion that perhaps it is easier to think too little of things that man has not had a hand in making himself. Could this neglected philosophy be a force to be taken seriously, an alternative to the modern understanding of the human condition? From a constructive hermeneutic, one may be attentive to enduring and significant elements of human communication and the human condition. We live in a time of fragmented information, of biases, of difference, a time of virtue contention. In order to grow in and understand a philosophy, we need to combine and cultivate a sense of work and wisdom (two elements I believe will we find at the core of agrarian thought). Constructive hermeneutics is about active learning, engaging ideas through experience. It really is about what Gadamer, in *Truth and Method*, would call a fusion of horizons. Gadamer states, “the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the horizon of the past...understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves” (305). A hermeneutic approach allows us to move past simple reflection to active engagement. So I come to this dissertation as a young woman who grew up with a farm on either side of her house, ducks in the pond, and a vegetable garden that could feed the town. In a lot of ways I lived an agrarian childhood.

Paired with my hermeneutic entrance, I also come to this work believing as Walter Fisher does In *Human Communication as Narration* in an understanding of the world driven by narratives. We can “try” a story on, find truth, see possible
ends. Stories shape us, our own ethos, our own response to a crisis. At the core of Fisher’s exploration is a question of how stories can guide our behavior. What is interesting is that the “same” story told at different points throughout history resonates in different ways. The same story illuminates different truths, truths differently. Fisher places all discourse within the human story. He says:

The narrative paradigm sees people as storytellers, as authors and co-authors who creatively read and evaluate the texts of life and literature. A narrative perspective focuses on existing institutions as providing ‘plots’ that are always in the process of re-creation rather than existing as settled scripts. Viewing human communication narratively stresses that people are full participants in the making of messages, whether they are agents (authors) or audience members (co-authors). (18)

As valuing and reasoning animals, we can discover truth not only through some form of an argument, but through narratives as well (Fisher 57). As storytelling animals we react to truths explored through narrative; we come to decisions based on the coherence and fidelity of a story. Narrative rationality is about building on and identifying with another’s story; there is a sense of using the materials of the paradigm to construct a narrative. Through narrative we can explore reason, value, and action; and for the purposes of this dissertation we will explore each through the narrative framework of the agrarian paradigm with careful application and attention to implications for the philosophy of human communication.
Like Fisher, I love Burke’s parlor metaphor\textsuperscript{26}; we are part of an unending conversation. This dissertation looks at the narratives of the agrarian movement in the hope of finding new value and validity in what others may see as an old story. Both Immanuel Kant and Hannah Arendt talk about the notion of an enlarged mentality. The aim of this dissertation is to continue the conversation, to push off ideas in order to make this space larger.

According to Eric Freyfogle in \textit{The New Agrarianism}, the 20\textsuperscript{th} century in the United States was marked by two major agrarian movements: the Southern Agrarians and the New Agrarians. For this dissertation, I have selected two voices from the Southern Agrarian movement: Richard Weaver, known for his contribution to rhetorical theory, and Allen Tate, former poet laureate of the United States. From the New Agrarians, I have chosen Wendell Barry, who is considered the preeminent voice in the movement\textsuperscript{27}. This dissertation hopes to illuminate, through diversity of voices, the potential impact of the agrarians on the philosophy of communication. What can we learn from a framework that is undergirded by metaphors like limits, tradition, and ground?

VI. Chapter Overview

\textsuperscript{26} In \textit{Philosophy of Literary Forms}, Burke writes, “From the “unending conversation” that is going on in history when we are born. Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got here, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally’s assistance. However the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress” (64-7).

\textsuperscript{27} As stated in \textit{The Essential Agrarian Reader}
Chapter Two: Communication Journals and Encyclopedic Work

As mentioned above, the communication journals have not paid much attention to the agrarian framework. The first chapter examines the few articles that have been written about scholars connected to the agrarian movement in the communication journals. The chapter identifies who is referred to in the journals and who are the major authors past and present in conversation. The chapter serves as an overview of the literature and connection to the philosophy of communication specifically.

The chapter concludes by looking at the encyclopedic work central to agrarian thought: *I’ll Take My Stand; The New Agrarianism: Land, Culture, and the Community of Life*, fifteen essays arguing for a paradigm shift and cultural reform; *The Essential Agrarian Reader*, referenced above; as well as the essays from William Vitek and Wes Jackson's *Rooted in the Land: Essays on Community and Place*. Finally, the chapter looks to *The Agrarian Roots of Pragmatism* as a philosophical treatment of the agrarian position. The next four chapters will focus on specific authors within the agrarian movement. The chapters will look at specific texts and theories as well as how each author communicated the movement.

Chapter Three: Richard Weaver

Chapter Three explores the work of Richard Weaver, whose contribution to rhetorical theory is significant and often overlooked today. It examines specifically his works *Language is Sermonic, Ideas Have Consequences*, and *In Defense of Tradition*. This chapter focuses on Weaver's rhetorical theory in connection to the
philosophy of communication. Arnett’s words at the conclusion of his essay on the philosophy of communication appear to be significant, “Philosophy of communication works for the understanding and illuminates temporal meaning with a warning offered to the Other and oneself – think, question, and talk about the conceptual map or blueprint with full knowledge it will and should change” (14). Weaver’s work connects to this notion of the power of language and ideas and the necessity of articulating one’s standpoint, one’s bias, and one’s blueprint.

Chapter Four: Allen Tate

Chapter Four focuses on Allen Tate’s work, attentive to the way he communicated the movement, his contribution to *I’ll Take My Stand*, as well as his essays and poetry. Tate served as Poet Laureate of the United States in the 1940’s. Through Tate’s work this chapter explores ways in which agrarian poetry and literature can be looked at from a philosophy of communication perspective, particularly the ways in which stories can enhance our understanding of the human condition and human communication. As Arnett states, “understanding philosophy of communication is story-laden… it is the story that moves information into the realm of meaning” (9). This chapter attends to the ways in which Tate’s stories moved readers from the realm of information to the realm of meaning.

Chapter Five: Wendell Barry

The fifth chapter examines Wendell Barry’s work. His book, *The Unsettling of America*, is recognized as the definitive statement of contemporary agrarian
principles and priorities. Berry situates agrarianism as a viable alternative to our current technological culture. *The Unsettling of American* gives great insight into how the agrarian movement communicates in this historical moment, especially in light of technological advances and interests. Barry’s work gives insight into the way in which alterity and identity are communicated through the agrarian movement.

Chapter Six: Philosophy of Communication and Agrarian Roots

In the final chapter, I will examine what the agrarian movement says about and to modernity, what the movement says about identity and narrative. The question is seemingly simple: what does an agrarian philosophy communicate and how can we apply it in the study of the philosophy of communication. How can driving metaphors of agrarian framework inform the philosophy of communication and the way in which we understand and communicate about existence? This chapter strengthens the connection between the agrarian philosophy and the philosophy of communication.

VII. Conclusion

This dissertation illuminates ways in which the agrarian movement is more than simply a commentary on the modern marketplace, more than a defense of the South, more than just Agrarian versus Industrial. It is about the human condition and human communication. I believe, like Arnett, that the “from a philosophy of communication perspective, the goal is understanding, not the accumulation of unassailable truth” (12). The work of the Agrarians is tied to responsibility through
land – which in the study of communication we can see as responsibility connected to articulating and recognizing the ground on which we stand philosophically. Agrarian Robert Penn Warren’s poem “Tell Me a Story” comes to mind; it communicates so much of the Agrarian movement. It is a poem of tradition, of time. He writes, “Tell me a story./In this century, and moment, of mania,/Tell me a story./Make it a story of great distances, and starlight./The name of the story will be Time,/But you must not pronounce its name./Tell me a story of deep delight.”

This dissertation hopes to connect the philosophy of communication and the agrarian movement in order to ask questions about the ground beneath our feet, about principles that guide our discourse, about elements that inform our approach to communication. There is power in the particulars of the stories we tell, in the way we absorb them, reflect upon them, allow them to inform the ground from which we build both the public and the private. The agrarians encourage us to listen to those stories, to be attentive to our land, to take responsibility for our ground.
Chapter 2 -- Communication Journals and Encyclopedic Work: Searching for Seeds

“For nothing we had,
Nothing we were,
Is lost.
All is redeemed,
In knowledge.”

-Robert Penn Warren
Brother to Dragons

“For nitrates are not the land, nor phosphates; and the length of fiber in the cotton is not the land. Carbon is not the man, nor salt nor water nor calcium. He is all there, but he is more, much more; and the land is much more than its analysis.”

-John Steinbeck

The purpose of this chapter is two fold. It is first to look at the scholarly journals that have been published on the agrarian paradigm. The hope is to gain a sense of what work has been done in the past on the movement, the writers, and the philosophy. The goal is to offer a summary piece, to identify themes across disciplines, shifts in patterns. The significance of this chapter is offering a public road map. One can look to Ronald C. Arnett’s essay defining the philosophy of communication (a piece I will return to throughout this dissertation). Arnett speaks to the importance of “philosophy of communication in action as scholarly story” (7). This chapter will begin to lay out details of the story as it has been told in the past. This chapter will look at the main characters, the drama, and the emplotment of the narrative in order to put it into conversation with the current historical moment.

Historicity, as explored by Arnett, is key to the movement and management of this research. Historicity as a metaphor guided the agrarians. Historicity assumes an awareness of the way in which the past is in present. This is not a linear story, but a
story that is attentive to an emerging question. What can the agrarian movement and those associated with the philosophy tell us about the philosophy of communication? This movement or scholarly story continues throughout not only this chapter but also the entire dissertation. Throughout, one must note the ideas and themes, as well as the authors who frame the time period. For Arnett, “Philosophies of communication change, multiply, atrophy, and die when main characters no longer believe a given philosophy of communication can offer an emplotment that makes sense for a given drama. Philosophies of communication live by those who believe in the ideas…” (8). I believe in the ideas that follow.

My second goal within this chapter is to look at agrarian encyclopedic work from the last century, beginning with I’ll Take My Stand and moving through more contemporary work including The New Agrarianism: Land, Culture, and the Community of Life and The Essential Agrarian Reader. The hope of this chapter is to put in conversation agrarian ideas and emergent questions of this communicative moment. I see metaphors of stewardship and tradition arising in this exploration. How does the ground give us responsibility? What does it mean to take responsibility for one’s ground?

In Encyclopedic Discourse, H.A. Clark talks about encyclopedic texts as those that encompass a total body of vision. She says, “it is the nature of the encyclopedic enterprise itself – the audacious project of encompassing all that can be known within the covers of a book or books” (95). Clark goes on to suggest that the encyclopedic project is a totalizing one, a “continuous, unified form summing of a body of knowledge of a culture at a particular point in history” (95). The three encyclopedic texts
mentioned above attempt to express through multiple essays in multiple voices the culture, the landscape, and the philosophy of the agrarian movements in the United States at different moments since 1930.

I. Communication Journals

As I enter into this conversation, I turn first to the communication journals to see in what ways scholars in the field have explored an agrarian framework. While Richard Weaver’s rhetorical theory, which is informed by an agrarian framework, is often referred to, the agrarian philosophy itself is rarely a topic of discussion. As a comprehensive online search engine, I looked first to Periodicals Archive Online. The archive is known to house hundreds of journals in the arts, humanities and social sciences. The archive focuses almost exclusively on peer-reviewed work. A search on Periodicals Archive Online lists over 1,000 published essays with agrarian in the title; the same online archive lists almost 22,000 essays with agrarian in the text. These articles are found in agriculture journals, economic journals, history journals, English journals, anthropology journals, Asian studies journals, sociology journals, cultural studies journals, and on and on; but not one listing led me to a communication journal. After digging up nothing in the communication literature from this search, I looked to The Contemporary Review. The Contemporary Review has a general humanities focus, so is a related journal in terms of connected disciplines and spheres of study. In that journal I found that of the 618 articles with agrarian in the text or title, all but four had

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28 I will look at many of these articles in my chapter on Richard Weaver; for the purpose of this chapter, I will focus on work published with an agrarian concentration as central to the argument.
been published before 1970. With the key word agrarian, one sees that the number of articles has steadily declined in the last forty years.

II. Within the Discipline: Communication Journals

As mentioned elsewhere, the communication literature does address and attend to the writing of Richard Weaver, focusing on rhetorical contribution and insight. His agrarian foundation, however, is not addressed or attended to in the same way in that literature. Since this chapter is looking at the way in which the discipline and other disciplines have explored and applied the agrarian paradigm specifically, I will wait until Weaver’s chapter to look at the majority of the journal articles focuses on his theory and contribution. However, I have included one essay here in order to give an idea of what that scholarship tends to look like, in order to identify some common threads within the literature. As I continued to comb the communication journals through vehicles other than Periodicals Archive Online for work with the lens of an agrarian paradigm as central only a few articles emerged. In addition to one essay on Weaver, I will look briefly at each of the three articles below before moving to some of the literature outside of communication discipline.

Thomas Burkholder wrote the piece “Kansas populism, woman suffrage, and the Agrarian myth: A case study in the limits of mythic transcendence.” It was published in Communication Studies in 1989. Burkholder’s emphasis is on the Populist movement of the 1890’s. His work, “Describes the success of the Populist movement in the 1890s, arguing that it provides a case study of the power and limitations of mythic appeals to transcend diverse political ideologies. Burkholder argues that Populist extensions of the
agrarian myth to encompass industrial laborers, suffragists, and prohibitionists were motivated by political expediency” (1). Burkholder looks at ways in which the agrarian myth was manipulated for political purposes – the myth was used to unite people and to move people. More recently, Lynn Harter wrote “Masculinity(s), the agrarian frontier myth, and cooperative ways of organizing: Contradictions and tensions in the experience and enactment of democracy.” Published in the Journal of Applied Communication in 2004, Harter uses a case study involving the Nebraska Cooperative Council members and constituents. Her focus is on emerging tensions – and how those contradictions are experienced. She says of her work:

The Council serves as a particularly rich context in which to explore traditionally feminine ways of organizing (i.e., cooperative enactment) in a historically male-dominated arena (i.e., agriculture). The dialectic of independence and solidarity became a revealing prism through which to make sense of how members enact cooperative life. This dialectic manifests itself in the discourse of cooperative life as members struggle to manage tensions between efficiency and participation, equality and equity, and the paradox of agency. Communication theorizing about gendered organizing and the history of American agrarianism is used to explore intersections between the social construction of masculinity(s), the agrarian frontier myth, and tensions embedded in the discourse of cooperative organizing. (89)

Both Burkholder and Harter look at the myth of the agrarian as well as the tensions created by the movement. Their work addresses the dialectic tensions created within the agrarian paradigm –both highlighting the struggle between the individual and the
community within the framework of agriculture. This dialectic is a major metaphor within the agrarian paradigm. Burkholder and Harter do not necessarily offer a best practice for framing the dialectic, but look at ways in which that dialectic has played out across historical moments.

Brant Short wrote an essay for *Southern Communication Journal* titled “Reconstructed but unregenerate: *I'll Take My Stand*’s rhetorical vision of progress.” Obviously, from the title, one can tell that Short’s focus is the text *I'll Take My Stand*. I will look in depth at this text in my next chapter. For the purposes of this chapter, I will look briefly at his major metaphors and insights into the movement. In his essay on the work, Short argues that *I'll Take My Stand* remains one of the most important works in the history of American social criticism. Short argues that while *I'll Take My Stand* was controversial when it was published – and critiqued by most – the text has since gained a diverse audience. Short admits that while the impact of the book is puzzling in many regards, he recognizes the themes as enduring and important. Through his analysis Short “offers a worthwhile means of explaining and reconciling the book’s apparent persuasive failure in the 1930’s with its near mythic status for later generations” (112). For Short, *I'll Take My Stand* didn’t resonate with depression-era audiences because of the book’s rhetorical dynamics. The essays in the book recognize progress as the primary value guiding American society. Their hope was to incite change in the rhetorical frame of progress. According to Short this is problematic: “But the concepts of material growth, economic expansion, technological innovation, and the frontier myth, were not easily displaced by the agrarian ideal of conversation, art, manners,

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29 Again, I will look at *I'll Take My Stand* in depth in the next chapter on encyclopedic works connected to agrarian thinkers and writers.
religion, oratory, and contemplations. In rejecting the prevailing view of progress, the Agrarians sought to overturn a deeply-held conviction that was over a century old” (116). Ultimately Short argues that *I’ll Take My Stand*’s “rhetorical vision of progress failed to shape the terms of political debate in the 1930’s” (116).

“Richard Weaver and the Rhetoric of a Lost Cause” is one of the many articles attentive to Weaver’s contribution to rhetorical theory (as referenced above); as usual, the work focuses only briefly on how an agrarian framework informs Weaver’s theory. The mention of the agrarians and their philosophy is framed through the power of the poetic. John Bliese begins his essay with the assertion, “Rhetorical theories, from classical to contemporary, are based on the proposition that a rhetor obtains leverage for persuasion by establishing and building on some common ground with the audience” (313). From this assertion one can see the ways in which an agrarian philosophy is akin to rhetorical thought. Ground is central. Bliese positions Weaver as one of the leaders of the post-war conservative movements in the US. Building from the concept of enthymeme, Bliese’s dilemma and exploration centers around what a rhetor is to do not simply when an audience dislikes a speaker’s proposals, but when “the audience rejects the rhetor’s value system” (313). The brief illusion to agrarians comes midway through the argument, pointing to the importance of the poetic as persuasive. Weaver believed the success of *I’ll Take My Stand* was tied to their aesthetic and ethical appeal conveyed by a poetic stance. While the rest of the country was caught up in what Bliese calls materialism and liberalism, the poets of the south were upholding the quality of the South. For Weaver an appeal that is in part ethical and in part aesthetic is more difficult to challenge. At the risk of being too repetitive, it is necessary to
comment again: Weaver's rhetorical contribution has indeed been explored in the communication literature, and this dissertation gives it more time in Weaver's chapter.

III. Outside the Discipline: Other Scholarly Journals

Moving away from the communication discipline, I turn to a sampling of essays written on the agrarian paradigm in order to understand the conversation on a larger scale. I have randomly selected half a dozen essays to look at to gain a sense of patterns and shifts outside the communication journals on the topic. While the scholarship on agrarians is declining, this section will look at essays written as early as 1936 and as recently as 2006. These essays are found in English journals and history journals. I will look at B. A. Botkin's piece “Regionalism: Cult or Culture;” Ellen Caldwell’s essay on Ellen Glasgow and the Southern Agrarians; Edward Shapiro’s work on the quest for Southern identity; Wade Newhouse’s review of Southern literature; and Joyce Appleby’s essays “Commercial Farming and the “Agrarian Myth” in the Early Republic.” Again, the significance of this section is to listen to the voices in the conversation coming from outside the communication discipline. Commonalities, shifts, and patterns appear as the agrarian paradigm is engaged and explored. This random sampling of essays pulls pieces from the last 75 years from numerous perspectives housed in different spaces across the humanities.

Regionalism is a theme woven throughout the essays. B. A. Botkin addresses it head on in her essay from 1936: “Regionalism: Cult or Culture?” Published in the *English Journal*, Botkin begins by defining region and moves us through the evolution of
natural region to the ways in which we conceive of cultural landscape and regionalism. Regionalism is a controversial concept, and one Allen Tate, Richard Weaver, and Wendell Barry struggle with in their own agrarian philosophies. Botkin recognizes the dangerous territory within separating a private tradition in opposition to a public tradition. She sees the ways in which the individual rather than the community can become the focus. For someone like Allen Tate, as we will see in a following chapter, this attention to one’s particular social background is necessary and inescapable. He sees regionalism as part of what we call embedded agency or standpoint. Botkin recognizes this as well. She says, “Certain cultural and aesthetic values emerge from the smoke of the regionalist conflict. The first and chief of these is the sense of a native tradition growing by folk accretions out of local cultures” (184). Botkin continues by addressing the ways in which regionalism can contribute to literature a sense of subject matter (citing “the physical and cultural landscape, local customs, character, speech, etc” (184)). Botkin goes on to insist regionalism can also offer “a technique (folk and native modes of expression, style, rhythm, imagery, symbolism), a point of view (the social ideal of a planned society and cultural vales derived from tradition as the liberator, not confiner)” (184).

With this entrance into the conversation, Botkin sees value in the regionalism as something that works for literature and ethnography. The regionalism that Botkin values is one that recognizes the individual as embedded in a social structure; therefore, you cannot separate the two, but instead allow them to inform one another, to allow the relationship to complete the picture of culture.

Edward Shapiro also explores the theme of regionalism as one of the prominent
characteristics of Southern identity, looking specifically at the 1920’s and 1930’s.

Shapiro notes that writers and economists alike were attentive to the theme and the quest to define Southern identity. His essay, “The Southern Agrarians, H. L. Mencken, and the Quest for Southern Identity,” situates the quest as one propelled as much by the Southern scholars, thinkers, and writers as by the Northern scholars, thinkers, and writers. The Northern journalists were defining the Southern identity as one driven by slavery and bigotry. The Southern people, according to Shapiro, wanted to focus on their intellectual and social progress since the Civil War. H. L. Mencken became one of the major voices mocking and defining Southern identity, and the Agrarians specifically.

After Mencken wrote scathing pieces in the little magazines of the time, calling the Agrarians essentially poor farmers, “yokel” and “plainly incompatible with civilized progress,” Shapiro notes, “The Agrarians were amazed and horrified by these bitter attacks on the South by Mencken and his imitators. Even more shocking was their acceptance by much of the country as an authentic picture of the South” (77). Mencken portrayed Southern man as the laughing stock of the civilized world. The Agrarians began to see themselves as “a scorned minority and that their own lives and careers were ineluctably enmeshed with the history and future of their region” (77). This attack on identity sparked a newfound interest in the South and Southern history, especially for Allen Tate, who in response went on to write biographies of Stonewall Jackson and Jefferson Davis. In the end it was *I’ll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition* that would “vindicate the unique character of the South” (78). The

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text was a direct response to Mercken’s picture of the South as a figuratively barren, wasted culture:

The Agrarians, in fact, turned his argument on its head by contending that it was precisely the religious and rural character of the South, which was responsible for the South’s cultural excellences: her emphasis on leisure and the enjoyment of life, her code of manners, her folklore and arts and crafts, her delight in conversation and good food. According to the Agrarians, it was the industrial and urban Northing, with her spirit of mechanistic progress, material aggrandizement, and secularism, which was the cultural aberration and in need of the type of criticism which up to then had been mistakenly directed at the South. (79)

The following chapters examine these claims in depth, through the work of Allen Tate in chapter 4 as well as through an exploration of *I’ll Take My Stand* in chapter 3. What we see from this small sampling of the struggle for identity and understanding during the 1920’s and 1930's is the sense of urgency for identity and connection to culture and region from both the North and the South. This quest permeates the study of the philosophy of communication as well. This quest is what informs standpoint, worldview, bias, and what eventually allows us to enter into a conversation and be attentive hermeneutically to a moment, a text, an(Other).

IV. Significance of Search: Journals

What we see in our almost futile attempt to find agrarian exploration in Communication literature is simply a space in the ongoing conversation surrounding
the Philosophy of Communication. My hope is that this dissertation will begin to fill that void. Throughout my journey, I will continue to be attentive to the pillars of the philosophy of communication as outlined by Ronald C. Arnett in his essay defining the philosophy of communication. This dissertation aims to tend to the questions of this historical moment through the lens of the agrarian philosophy. Arnett asserts that the “philosophy of communication includes a public opinion of community of scholars aimed at understanding the particulars of a given communicative moment” (7). The next section will look at encyclopedic work done on the agrarian paradigm in the last century. The hope is to put this communicative moment in conversation with the agrarian framework in order to construct a story. I build from Paul Ricoeur’s work and Ronald Arnett’s work; this story is not a linear one, but one that believes in attention to the emergent questions of a historical moment, questions that demand a response.

V. Encyclopedic Work: *I'll Take My Stand*

As mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation, when the 1962 edition of *I'll Take My Stand* was published, more than three decades after the Vanderbilt agrarians first released their work, Louis D. Rubin Jr. asserted in the preface, “As a human document [*I’ll Take My Stand*] is still very much alive; the concerns of 1930 are the concerns of 1962, and will very likely be the concerns in the year 2000” (xviii). The question remains, and we find that the concerns that drove these men to write and react almost eighty years ago are still major concerns today.

First, the twelve authors who contributed to the work are: John Crowe Ransom, Donald Davidson, Frank Lawrence Owsley, John Gould Fletcher, Lyle H.
Lanier, Allen Tate, Herman Clarence Nixon, Andrew Nelox Lytle, Robert Penn Warren, John Donald Wade, Henry Blue Kline, and Stark Young. The agrarian movement was mainly attributed to/led by John Crowe Ransom, Donald Davidson, and Allen Tate, all coming out of Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. Tate was a former student of both Ransom and Davidson (Murphy). The book was in many ways an analysis and condemnation of modern American civilization driven by industry. These men were both writers and critics. A fair share of them had spent the early 1900's writing for *The Fugitive*, a small Southern journal with a focus on poetry (Conkin). These men, who included but weren't limited to the twelve contributors of *I'll Take My Stand*, spent over twenty years in intense discussion over poetry, philosophy, economy, religion. Paul Conkin, an agrarian scholar, is careful to differentiate between the two groups. Not all those men who joined in dialogue about literature and world culture were guided by agrarian principles. For both groups, their work was a response to a historical moment of science at odds with technology, (remember, the Scopes Trial comes out of Tennessee in the late 1920's), a historical moment obsessed with “progress.”

The Southern Agrarian movement is said to simultaneously contribute to the emergence of conservatism in the 1950's as well as highlight elements commonly associated with the current left – the decline of community, dissatisfaction with modern society (Murphy). Their principles are somehow at the same time reactionary and grounded in tradition. These men were not necessarily all farmers; they were intellectuals. They were men who “were tired of progress, of go-getting, of

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31 We'll look at this term in more detail through Weaver's work. He refers to “progress” as the god term of the 20th century.
bigness, of mechanization, and nostalgically sought a return to the “antique conservatism” of the South” (Govan 43). Govan may be a bit unfair in this critique. The agrarians disagreed with the growing insistence to look only to the future. The men hoped to encourage a sense of reflection as we moved forward. Through their work they hoped to encourage attention to looking toward something while being aware of also building from something. There is a history that must move with us. Their work is bigger than the “nostalgia” Govan focuses upon. Their work is about ground.

While Nashville was their home base in many ways, the agrarians ended up all over the country. Donald Davidson ended up teaching English at Breadloaf School in Vermont (Rock). Allen Tate spent some time in New York City (Watson). Stark Young would spend the majority of his life in New York City as well (Rock). Richard Weaver taught most of his life in Chicago (Smith). And they enjoyed varying degrees of success. John Donald Wade established the literary magazine The Georgia Review. Stark Young became well known as a dramatic critic. Robert Penn Warren went on to win the Pulitzer Price for All the Kings Men. Davidson’s poetry seemed to be constantly overshadowed by his social criticism (Rock). Allen Tate’s work was considered the most brilliant by many of his contemporaries (Rock), “his poetry has been called “seminal,” its impact far-reaching” (I’ll Take My Stand 379).

I’ll Take My Stand is as creative as it is critical. In the introduction, which serves as a “statement of principles,” the twelve come together to identify the common ground on which they stand. They recognize Industrialism’s obsession

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32 Virginia Rock wrote a small biography of all twelve southerners that is included in the 1962 version of I’ll Take My Stand.
with science and how it has changed labor, “the act of labor as one of the happy functions of human life has been in effect abandoned, and is practiced solely for its rewards” (xxiii). As the rate of consumption quickened, the cultivation of the humanities and the arts suffered; religion, value, tradition were cast aside for what Thorstein Veblen saw at the turn of the century as a trend toward gratification of higher or spiritual needs through goods, also known as conspicuous consumption. The agrarians argue that the evils of the world cannot and should not be battled with bigger machines (as modernity set out to do). By industrialism’s code, we can always be bigger, stronger, faster. The agrarians saw culture as moving in an unreflective direction. A course, I would argue, we have yet to turn from. In I'll Take My Stand, the agrarians end their introduction with a battle cry:

For, in conclusion, this much is clear: If a community, or a section, or a race, or an age, is groaning under industrialism, and well aware that it is an evil dispensation, it must find the way to throw it off. To think that this cannot be done is pusillanimous. And if the whole community, section, race, or age thinks it cannot be done, then it has simply lost its political genius and doomed itself for impotence. (xxx)

The text is seen by many as only the beginning of the agrarian movement in the South (Conkin, Karanikas, Murphy), and is criticized by some for a disconnect between the principles outlined as central in the introduction and the themes of the twelve essays. The nature of the book seems to be one that lends itself toward a kind of general understanding, broad strokes. The introduction serves as a statement of purpose of sorts, of which the agrarian writers all agreed to; yet their
work does not highlight all those fundamentals in the same way. While the essays can feel disconnected at times, the threads of history and tradition prove to be strong throughout.

Ransom’s essay, the lead essay, begins with a portrait, a personification of the South, tradition. Ransom describes the “unreconstructed Southerner, who persists in his regard for a certain terrain, a certain history, and a certain inherited way of living” (1). Ransom wants those around this Southern man not to dismiss him or believe his cause is lost, but to rally behind him, behind his devotion to tradition and attention to history. Nature emerges as a dominant metaphor in this essay, and revisited throughout I’ll Take My Stand. “The gospel of Progress” essentially encourages man to “wage war on nature” (7). The goal is to conquer nature, not live within it, not to cultivate or incorporate. Progress fights against nature, science allows for us to believe we can overcome nature. Progress encourages an aggression toward nature that Ransom and the other agrarians see as diminishing to the human condition. Ransom wants us to, in a very literal sense, “respect the physical earth;” from this we can find joy, return to religion and arts. Lyle H. Lanier, in his work in I’ll Take My Stand, an essay entitled “A Critique of the Philosophy of Progress,” points to Francis Bacon, Hegel, and John Dewey as major players in the push for Progress.

Again, the reader sees a sense of self connected to land that comes out in agrarian thought, and Ransom brings it to the surface, in plain and honest language:

He [the farmer] identifies himself with a spot of ground and this ground carries a good deal of meaning; it defines itself for him as nature. He would
till it not too hurriedly and not too mechanical to observe in it the contingency and the infinitude of nature; and so his life acquires its philosophical and even its cosmic consciousness. A man can contemplate and explore, respect and love, an object as substantial as a farm or a native province. But he cannot contemplate nor explore, respect nor love, a mere turnover...a pile of money...a market. It is into precisely these intangibles that industrialism would translate the farmer's farm. It means the dehumanization of his life. (20)

Ransom identifies the farmer as the man in this passage. For Ransom, the farmer is a synecdoche for the kind of humanity we will forfeit if we move unreflectively into industrialism.

Donald Davidson’s essay “A Mirror for Artists,” examines in detail the danger industrialism can cause to the arts. Nature’s central position in meaning and living continues to weave itself into the work of Davidson. Davidson identifies industrialism as the driving force behind removing men from nature, ultimately causing men to forget nature. He argues that nature is central to understanding the arts. Paired with that forceful displacement, Davidson blames the death of the arts on a different sense of leisure brought on by industrialism. Davidson argues that only by way of an agrarian restoration can we return nature to its fundamental position, can we re-establish the essential relationship. The utility of science is dehumanizing, and industry has turned art into a luxury. Davidson calls for a return first to a careful reflection and attentiveness to the human condition, only from that can art flourish. Human first. Artist second. For Davidson, there is not room for the
machine. Over and over again, in Davidson and Ransom’s work, we hear the danger of industrialism, the danger of progress as tied to its inability or refusal to define a goal.

John Gould Fletcher explores in his essay the purpose of education – its contemporary conception and its history also. As Ransom stresses as well, an awareness of history, a backward glance, is important. Again we hear the thread that Industrialism's only concern is looking forward.\(^{33}\) The ancient influence on the agrarian thought comes through quite strongly, as much of what they are reacting to is an increasing presence and privileging of relativism. Returning to and recognizing the importance of a sense of foundation is key in engaging and living an agrarian life. In many ways, they are fighting a similar battle to that of Plato and Aristotle against the cultural relativism of the itinerant sophists in Ancient Greece (which we see in *The Gorgias*). Fletcher frames education, the purpose of education, as teaching human beings to make good use of what they are, who they are.

Education after the Civil War shifted from a focus on quality to quantity, according to Fletcher.\(^{34}\) The goal became about graduating men, not educating men. Weaver's work, which I will look at in detail, examines the shifting tides of education in light of progress and industrialism. Fletcher paints a picture of the state of modern education as too big, disconnected, and inconsistent. Subjects should rely on one

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\(^{33}\) Again, the agrarians want to remind us that progress must be from something as well as toward something.

\(^{34}\) Many of the agrarians point to the Civil War as the turning point, toward Progress and away from Southern Value. It is a difficult element to ignore or explore – and one that is embedded in their theory. Gadamer or Husserl would encourage me to bracket by bias. *To the things themselves!* I offer little exploration of the Civil War in this chapter, due in large part to time/research constraints.
another, students should be taught how to think, not what to think about. This disconnected, vast education leads not to superior mean, but unreflective ones.

Race is an additional issue. While race is referenced in the *I'll Take My Stand*, Robert Penn Warren’s essay “The Briar Patch” is the only essay that really confronts race head on. Warren argues for equal rights for African Americans in terms of economic rights in general, specifically land ownership. Conkin notes that other essays, even in skirting the subject, “clearly suggested Negro subordination” (80).

As Tate is distinguished as one of the three major forces in the Agrarian movement, it would be shortsighted not to examine his essay. Analysis of Tate’s life and work appear in a later chapter herein. In his essay in *I'll Take My Stand*, Tate first calls attention to his dissonance with the title of the text. He sees it as misleading or disconnected from its aims. “It emphasizes the fact of exclusiveness rather than its benefits; it points to a particular house but omits to say that it was the home of a spirit that may have lived elsewhere and that this mansion, in short, was incidentally made with hands” (155). Tate’s insight of the movement is helpful in understanding the movement as connected not to the South in particular, but to the traditions that happened to be born out of that part of our country in general. His disagreement with the title of *I'll Take My Stand* further illustrates some of the conflict within the text. The writers of the text had varying conceptions of what should drive the movement, what was central to the movement. Tate’s way of looking at agrarianism can distance the movement from the Civil War and issues in the South at the turn of the century that were complicated and tainted. The tainted ground of the South is not necessarily the same ground from which the agrarians
want us to build. Tate is giving us the ability to decipher between the two. The most important element is that we are building this structure with our hands. That simple metaphor, that simple image is absolutely central to what the movement is all about.

Tate’s writing is powerful; it is complex, steeped in beautiful language and metaphor. His entrance into religion is not an easy one – but it is beautiful, “my private fable was once more public and general...our public have fallen away from it on to evil days. I must proceed at once to dress my fable in First Principles” (156). His language is lovely and fluid, yet carries with it a tone that is absolutely disillusioned, dismayed. He admits the story cannot remain in the simple form of “fairy story” or myth as he holds it in his own mind. The modern mind is at odds with such imagery. “There will be a few metaphors, but no pretty stories in this essay” (156).35

Tate admits that it is difficult to talk about religion, as if even by talking about it we are “doing violence to it,” betraying its essence. Still, he continues, as he sees the way the public has fallen away from religion as dangerous, evil. We need to attend to it; it is broken. He begins with a horse. A horse as his central metaphor: in modernity, we only have half a horse (half a religion), which really is no horse at all. The horse doesn’t “work.” Religion has turned into something that is no longer deeply rooted in beliefs; instead it is about profiting from it. In Virginia Rock’s short biography of the twelve southerners, she says it is fitting Tate chooses to write about religion. “Tate’s choice of religion as the subject of his agrarian essay is

35 Only pretty language.
meaningful. He had come to represent the sickness of the modern world not only as a “dissociation of sensibility” but also as a lack of faith, which he later described as a battle between the dehumanized secularism...the eternal society of the communion of the human spirit" (379). For Tate, a search for faith was the most important and lacking element in society.

*I'll Take My Stand* remains one of the defining pieces of the agrarian paradigm. Most of the essays reflect on the necessity of the land, as well as the way in which tradition and religion can move us toward a more intentional way of being in the world. The depth of the text parallels the positioning of the philosophy; rootage in the land comes from this depth in thought and exploration of the societal landscape as well. Their contribution as cultural critics, folklorists, scholars, teachers, and writers continued and continues, but their formation was short-lived. As the 1930’s marched on, the Agrarian movement began to fall apart. The men dispersed both geographically and philosophically. “From [1937] on even the three who remained most loyal to at least some version of Agrarianism (Davidson, Lytle, Owsley) talked in the past tense, about what had been (Conkin 127).

VI. Encyclopedic Work: *The New Agrarianism: Land, Culture, and the Community of Life*

*The New Agrarianism* is a collection of contemporary essays exploring the ways in which agrarian traditions have provided tools and influenced and
strengthened communities across the country in the two and a half decades (the writings date from 1986 and later). The introduction claims that as of 2001, agrarianism is quietly on the rise, albeit with little “public notice.” Noted also in the introduction is the similarity in the New Agrarianism and the Southern Agrarianism.

To give us our footing Eric Freyfogle writes, “Agrarianism, broadly conceived, reaches beyond food production and rural living to include a wide constellation of ideas, loyalties, sentiments, and hopes...all arising out of the insistent truth that people everywhere are part of the land community, just as dependent as other life on land’s fertility and just as shaped by its mysteries and possibilities” (xiii). The essays contained in the book look at different ways in which one can frame a life grounded in agrarian principles. Freyfogle asserts, “Agrarian comes from the Latin word agrarius, “pertaining to the land,” and it is the land – as place, home, and living community – that anchors the agrarian scale of values” (xiii). The writings are anchored by the metaphors of roots, of provinciality, of family, of history. While the majority of the stories told in the text use the term agrarian, some do not overtly give a name to their way of life. The writers enter into the conversation in different ways: some focus on the possibilities of an agrarian lifestyle; others focus on the dangers of the dominant American mindset of consumption and progress. The New Agrarianism presented in the text has retained key elements of an older agrarian paradigm while also leaving other elements behind. Gone from the New Agrarian movement:

The old slave-based, plantation strand of agrarianism...still around but much cut back are the once powerful assumptions about gender
roles within the family and larger household economy...And yet, even with its new shapes and manifestations, agrarianism today remains as centered as ever on its core concerns: the land, natural fertility, healthy families, and the maintenance of durable links between people and place. (xvii)

The center of the paradigm is an interconnectedness between the health of the land and the health of a community.

The aim of the text is an attentiveness to this narrative of agrarianism, a narrative that needs to be woven together. Because, as Freyfogle notes, so many agrarians would rather live the philosophy than write about it, the text was born out of the necessity to bring the stories together. The organic whole that informs the agrarian lifestyle is reflected in this need to bring stories together to illustrate the gestalt notion that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Throughout the introduction to these essays, metaphors of responsibility and harmony emerge, as well as a sense that human beings are embedded and linked to the earth in the same way other members of the living community are. As Wendell Berry says, “To speak of the health of an isolate individual is a contradiction in terms.”36 There is an understanding of the individual highlighted that is born not out of a modern notion of relativity, but of “a responsible form of individualism, what social critic Richard Weaver years ago termed social-bond individualism, as opposed to the anarchic individualism (Weaver’s term) or the bogus individualism (Leopold’s term) that calls for maximum freedom and minimal responsibility” (xxi). From this

36 From Berry’s A Continuous Harmony: Essays on Culture and Agriculture, page 164.
understanding of the individual, one can see how community emerges as a central tenet. Berry defines community as “the commonwealth and common interests, commonly understood, of people living in a place and wishing to continue to do so. To put it another way, community is a locally understood interdependence of local people, local culture, local economy, and local nature.” Community and a sense of history develop dignity, grace, and self-discipline. Freyfogle points to an Aristotelian notion of humanity, one in which our sense of individual responsibility is strengthened through commitment to community structures. Out of this sense of community, informed by responsibility of the individual, comes a relationship between work and leisure, “work is worship.” Weaver looks at this notion of good work in *Ideas Have Consequences*:

> Pride in craftsmanship is well explained by saying that to labor is to pray, for conscientious effort to realize an ideal is a kind of fidelity. The craftsman of old did not hurry, because the perfect takes no account of time and shoddy work is a reproach to character. But character itself is an expression of self-control, which does not come of taking the easiest way. Where character forbids, self-indulgence, transcendence still hovers around. (73)

Weaver is pointing to the significance of life and the ways in which the pieces of an agrarian framework can come together to create the “good life.” As one would imagine, the agrarians move from generalizations to particulars when they speak of the good life, a move that is significant in the conversation about provinciality. There is something valuable in the local, in the particular, in the specific.
The text also sets out to address some of the misconceptions about agrarianism in the 21st century. First, the philosophy is not one that makes claims about those attentive to the land as better than those people who are not. The New Agrarians are not living in the past, in “a golden age of any sort, for a golden age never existed” (xxxv). The paradigm is not anti-science either. For agrarians, science is a tool, but science is a tool that needs to be well directed or else it will be destructive.

Evoking the work of the Southern Agrarians, the text gives the reader some contrasting worldviews between modernity/industrialism/capitalism and agrarian thought. Here are a few:

- Mastery over nature versus harmonious living within it; nature as a collection of resources versus nature as organic whole; place as incidental versus place as essential; knowledge as sufficient versus knowledge as radically incomplete; value largely in exchange versus value largely in use; unlimited wants versus manageable needs; labor as means to consumption versus labor as integral to the good life; morals as largely self-selected versus moral as cultural inheritance; the household as a place of consumption versus the household as center of life; life as fragmented versus life as a unified whole. (xl)

In the essays that follow, Scott Russel Sanders, Alan Thein Durning, Wendell Berry, David Orr, among others look at these tensions through many different stories, entering into the conversation through narratives of consumption, of boundaries, of prairies, of cobbler's.
Scott Russel Sanders looks specifically at ways the reader can learn from the land in order to be more “sensitive to nature’s limits and more respectful of its processes and mysteries” (3). Sanders tells the story of The Land Institute in Salina Kansas where a group of researchers lead by Dr. Wes Jackson are studying the prairie to “gain insights on developing sustainable farming methods tailored to local conditions” (3). Sanders’s puts us in conversation with some of the founding elements of agrarianism: a dedication to place to enhances the way in which human beings can contribute and connect to that place. The focus of this piece is the importance of understanding the natural world, not conquering or altering it. Dan Imhoff looks at community-supported agriculture or CSA, an arrangement that allows individual community members relationships with local famers to provide produce in exchange for a small fee. Imhoff believes that through such partnerships, even with their obstacles, nonfarm families have the opportunity to connect with the soil, to connect with the life cycle. Alan Thein Durning looks at the ways in which repairing and reusing our goods is part of an agrarian framework. Durning offers a picture of an urban agrarian, one who recognizes “that conservation has a lot to do with how one lives, alone and with others, and with the choices one makes every moment of every day” (29). Durning’s work connects to the brief look at Berry below. This is about connecting people to the histories of the products they use. Durning looks at the significance of lending libraries, of cobblers, and of products built to last.

Wendell Berry has two essays in the text, both of which will be discussed in depth in the chapter devoted to Berry’s contribution to the New Agrarian
movement. I want to mention one insight from Berry that guides his exploration of the importance of an agrarian philosophy informing our philosophical ground. The metaphor of history emerges as major in these pieces. This metaphor proves to be a common theme for so many of the agrarian stories in the text. As Berry articulates, a major flaw in modernity is the separation of people and places and products from their histories. Berry observes:

To the extent that we participate in the industrial economy, we do not know the histories of our families or of our habitats or of our meals. This is an economy, and in fact a culture, of the one-night stand. “I had a good time,” says the industrial lover, ‘but don’t ask me my last name.” Just so, the industrial eater says to the svelte industrial hog, “We’ll be together at breakfast, I don’t want to see you before then, and I won’t care to remember you afterwards. (64)

We are not connected directly to ourselves, to each other, or to the things we eat and use.

VII: Encyclopedic Work: *The Essential Agrarian Reader*

Barbara Kingsolver, in the Foreword of this book of essays, speaks first to the current historical moment. Writing in 2003, Kingsolver recognizes that popular opinion would lead one “out of agriculture” not toward it. Yet, as she reflects on the human condition she sees this agrarian conversation as one that needs to happen. Critics have met her interest in the land with claims of irrelevance. She answers them simply, “I’ll go a week without attending a movie or a concert, you go a week
without eating food, and at the end of it we’ll sit down together and renegotiate “quaintly irrelevant” (xi). Kingsolver’s emphasis, the battle cry of so many agrarians, is connected to the fact that it is harder to undervalue those things you have made yourself. Self-restraint, satisfaction, and appreciation come from the simple pleasure of having your first tomato since November when the summer crop is finally ripe for eating. In these seemingly small moments we are “safely connected to the things that help make a person whole” (xvii).

The text consists of three parts. The first section, with writings from Wendell Berry, Brian Donahue, Maurice Telleen, all speak to the agrarian principles and priorities. Standards of agrarianism are explored, as well as definitions and principles and policies. The second part focuses on the present state of the agrarian movement. Writers like Frederick Kirchenmann and Wes Jackson look at the future of agrarianism. The final section looks at the application of the philosophy to everyday life. How can one live these principles? How can these beliefs guide and match our behavior?

In one of his pieces featured in The Essential Agrarian Reader, Norman Wirzba addresses the question of “Why Agrarianism Matters – Even to Urbanities.” (The title of the piece.) Wirzba’s case for an agrarian lifestyle allows room for technological developments to unfold as potentially helpful – to lump them together as uniformly bad would be irresponsible. Wirzba warns: “in our haste to embrace

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37 I can almost hear the Cheshire Cat and Alice talking in Wonderland. She asks, “Which way ought I go from here?” And his response: “That depends a great deal on where you want to get to.”

38 Again, we see themes from Tocqueville coming out in agrarian thought. Being grounded for Tocqueville in Democracy in America is all about behaviors matching beliefs.
technological improvements we must be careful not to overlook or degrade those elements of life – such as communal support, traditional wisdom, clean water, and nutritious food – that are fundamental” (3). For Wirzba, agrarianism is a necessity: Agrarianism is this compelling and coherent alternative to the modern industrial/technological/economic paradigm. It is not a throwback to a never-realized pastoral arcadia, nor is it a caricatured, Luddite-inspired refusal to face the future. It is, rather, a deliberate and intentional way of living and thinking that takes seriously the failures and the successes of the past as they have been realized in our engagement with the earth and with each other. (4)

Agrarianism is not just farming in Wirzba’s view; it is a way of living in the world that takes seriously what we can know about nature and each other. For Wirzba, agrarianism is about the health of the land, the health of society, and the health of culture. He, like those in the text on the New Agrarianism, talks of useable waste, responsibility, and respectful maintenance. He too makes a case for urban agrarian culture. His proposal is grounded in the care of all living spaces, urban and rural. Farming is obviously central to the paradigm, but so is permanence and change, preservation, creation, integrity. “The reach of agrarian responsibilities is all-inclusive because all our activities, whether they occur in a steel and concrete office building, a commuter train, or a backyard garden, are informed and possible by natural cycles of life and death...The urbanite no less than the farmer is implicated in this web and so must appreciate the requirements and the costs for living things” (7). He points to the “quiet revolution” of urban agriculture as proof that this
historical moment is calling for this conversation. Community gardens, window boxes, rooftop gardens all point toward the possibility that this is about more than food for consumption, but a way of life.

Other essays in the text analyze these major themes. Maurice Tellen pushes the reader to see agrarianism as more than a movement. For Tellen, the paradigm is a value system, a sentiment echoed from the Southern Agrarians as well. This value system has the potential to bring order to our lives. Brian Donahue works from Wendell Berry’s assertion that we are doing damage by “unsettling America.” Fred Kirschenmann presents the ways in which small farms have been taken over by megafarms in the last 40 plus years. *The New Agrarianism* and *The Essential Agrarian Reader* both look at CSA programs and urban possibilities for an agrarian informed lifestyle. Wendell Berry is featured in both texts, as is Eric Freyfogle, David Orr, and Gene Logsdon. The major thread woven throughout these two contemporary encyclopedic texts as well as *I’ll Take My Stand* is the agrarian paradigm as more than farming. Woven throughout this exploration are agrarian principles which can order our value systems, inform our communication, and create connections to history, family, and community.

VIII. Significance of Search: Encyclopedic Work

The exploration of agrarian encyclopedic work provides the reader with an overview, a foundation of some of the common themes in agrarian work. The encyclopedic work allows one to see identity and the local connected to the land, throughout different agrarian writer’s work throughout the century. Beginning with *I’ll*
Take My Stand and moving through more contemporary work including The New Agrarianism: Land, Culture, and the Community of Life and The Essential Agrarian Reader, one can see metaphors endure due to the attention to memory and the importance of history. The authors in the encyclopedic work move past a sense of the perpetual present and into a deeper understanding of how we understand time and story. The past informs the present.

The hope of this exploration is to put in conversation agrarian ideas and emergent questions of this communicative moment. Metaphors of stewardship and tradition arise. One can begin to answer questions of how the ground gives us a sense of responsibility? As well as the question of what it means to take responsibility for one’s ground. The agrarians in the encyclopedic works looked at above recognize the necessary movement from literal ground to figurative ground. Then one begins to see how ground, place come together to inform communicative identity; one must first know where she is from in order to understand who she is. The three encyclopedic texts looked at above do indeed express through multiple essays in multiple voices the culture, the landscape, and the philosophy of the agrarian movements in the United States at different moments since 1930.

Specific voices from the agrarian movements of the last century appear in analysis in the next three chapters of this dissertation. The aim of these chapters will be to connect the agrarian principles with the philosophy of communication, focusing on alterity and identity as well as limits, standpoint, and communication as story-laden. This dissertation turns first to the voice of Allen Tate, then Richard Weaver, and Wendell Berry.
Chapter 3 -- Allen Tate: Sower of the South

“There is no way to separate feeling from knowledge. There is no way to separate object from subject. There is no good way and no good reason to separate mind or body from its ecological and emotional context.”

-David Orr

A poem may be an instance of morality, of social conditions, of psychological history; it may instance all its qualities, but never one of them alone, nor any two or three; never less than all.

-Allen Tate

Allen Tate is largely credited with starting the Southern Agrarian movement in Nashville in the late 1920’s. As a critic, a poet, an essayist, and novelist, Tate expresses the movement through his work. His life’s work proves to be a journey to understand his own history and origin, to come to understand the construction of his identity, a journey born out of a rootless childhood. As the agrarian movement unfolds and gains momentum, Tate realizes that he needs to move from a regional search to one in which the human condition at large is taken into account. It is within that shift that Tate finishes the novel *The Fathers* and accepts his own history. The implications for the study of the philosophy of communication are most salient when exploring the ways in which the past is in the present, a philosophy Tate (who may have borrowed it from T.S. Elliot) articulated often in the wake of Industry and progress. For Tate, our identity is shaped and understood through our history, through a sense of origin. For Ronald C. Arnett in his article “Defining Philosophy of Communication: Difference and Identity,” identity is
highlighted as central to the understanding of and public definition of philosophy of communication. The essay also discusses the importance of the modern notion of limits, a notion Allen Tate was very attentive to. It is within limits that we can situate and understand identity. As one journeys with Tate on his quest to come to understanding of identity, one can see the ways in which he used limits, pushed off limits even, in order to shape his identity.

I. Uprooted

Allen Tate was a poet, a fugitive, an agrarian, and an intellectual. He was a man at odds with his historical moment, a man at odds with his own history and identity. Tate became a voice for the agrarian movement coming out of Nashville in the 1930’s. He is responsible for lighting the philosophical fire that turned into the blazing *I’ll Take My Stand*. One can see the ways in which his journey enhances the understanding of the philosophy of communication as a discipline connected and committed to questions of identity. For Tate, connecting to a sense of the local, connecting to the land helped him find meaning during a time of immense transformation in regard to the American landscape – figuratively and literally. His search for meaning was born out of an itinerant childhood, marked curiously by a mother who lied to him about his ancestry and a father who was mostly absent. His search for meaning led him from Vanderbilt to New York City and back again. What he found in the land was bigger than an economic commentary or a technological argument; he found faith in the land as well.
Once hailed by T.S. Elliot as the best poet writing in America, Tate’s journey to greatness was a strange one. His mother moved him around a great deal, and he was sick often as a little boy. According to biographer Thomas A. Underwood, Tate was lied to about his birthplace; an untruth he didn’t uncover (although he had his suspicions) until he was thirty. His relationship with his mother was a troubled one. The fabrication and eventual outing of his birthplace led Tate to long for roots, for a connection to place. This search came out in his writing as well as in his approval of agrarian ideals. It is noted that as his mother moved Tate around the country during his childhood, his disdain for industrialism grew. When Tate got to Nashville he saw a city being consumed by uncontrolled development and commercialism, a fate shared by many cities in the United States as the 20th century unfolded. Tate has said of his childhood, “What I remember most about my boyhood was being moved around”. Until Tate got to Vanderbilt, it was rare that he would spend more than a couple years in any one place. Underwood notes:

Though most of those places were Midwestern or Northern rather than Southern, the urban growth he observed during his brief residence in cities in the Ohio Valley simulated his interest in Southern Agrarians, his hatred of Northern industrialism, and his firm belief that America was permanently and negatively transformed by World War I. (21)

Because Allen Tate was moved around so much it was difficult to create lasting bonds with schoolmates or to create a cohesive sense of a subject (as he shifted mid-year from school to school). One can begin to see the ways this uprootedness created a desire for stability, for sustainability.
II. Major Metaphors

Guiding metaphors appear in Allen Tate’s work. These metaphors of communion, the whole, experience, and place permeate Tate’s writing. Allen Tate worked from ground that was attentive to the ways in which these metaphors enriched daily life. I move through guiding metaphors by exploring both Tate’s life and his work. The metaphors prove to guide Tate’s behaviors and beliefs.

A. Communion

“Men in a dehumanized society may communicate, but they cannot live in full communion.”

(“The Man of Letters in the Modern World” 4)

As Tate recounted years later in a speech at Vanderbilt, the university itself provided him with the childhood he didn’t receive in the care of his mother. Vanderbilt helped Tate construct a sense of family and allowed him to continue to explore and shape his identity. Vanderbilt helped Tate move past communication and toward a place of communion or community. Tate saw a deterioration of a sense of community in his historical moment. In Tate’s journey from Nashville to New York and back again, we see the ways in which his search for something beyond mere communication leads him back to a community of writers and thinkers who share a sense of common ground.

According to Underwood’s biography, Tate’s time at Vanderbilt was marked by uneven grades in his courses, tumultuous relationships with the faculty, and the
formation of the influential literary group eventually known as the Fugitives. Tate had a particularly difficult relationship with his freshman English teacher Professor Edwin Mims, who believed science and technology could save mankind (Underwood 34). But it was a professor by the name of John Crowe Ransom who would prove to be the greatest influence in Tate’s life. John Crowe Ransom was the leader of a poetry circle that became known as the Fugitives. Donald Davidson, a master’s student at Vanderbilt who along with Ransom would contribute to *I’ll Take My Stand*, invited Tate to join the poetry gathering. In the early 1920’s the group of intellectuals who contemplated the meaning of life as well as the meaning of great poetry, shared their own work with one another. By Underwood’s account, Tate’s poetry became the vocal point of the discussions. In his work, “Amicitia,” Crowe Ransom noted that it was during these early Fugitive meetings that Tate began to develop a distinct poetic voice and identity. The group went on to publish a little magazine bearing the name: “The Fugitive.”

Allen Tate’s experience at Vanderbilt and his time with the Fugitives, paired with his next move to New York City, moved him farther and farther away from the industrial direction the rest of the country traveled. While New York City was rich in its intellectual connections for Tate – he ran in the same circle as Hart Crane, Kenneth Burke, ee cummings, Gorham Munson – the bigness of the city and the pace of life highlighted his growing distaste for industrial progress. He returned once again to contemplating his regional identity. Tate wrote to Donald Davidson, upon his arrival in New York City, that it is a place where “nobody is his brother’s keeper” (Underwood 90).
Tate simultaneously downplayed his southernness while also rejecting the notion of becoming a New Yorker:

By 1925, he was devoting more and more time to reexamining the conflicted identity given to him by his parents. As a Southerner in New York he tried to embrace Modernist artistic values without renouncing his affiliation with the Fugitives...As a result...he had become a Modernist poet repressing his Southern identity...he was divided against himself. (Underwood 111)

That winter he moved to a farmhouse in the sweet, small town of Patterson, New York. Tate and his wife Carolyn Gordon responded positively to the rustic setting. He outlined his routine to Davidson, which consisted of writing, hunting, and chopping wood. He also disclosed in a letter to his dear friend, “I was never made for the town” (Underwood 100). The time spent in Patterson surely tugged at his agrarian roots, not yet firmly planted.

At the same time, Tate was struggling with themes of form and substance in poetry. Many modernists believed that form was more important than content. In his own early writing, Tate agreed. His admiration for Elliot and Pound played a role in his initial privileging of form over content. Again, one can see the theme of fragmentation taking a central place in Tate’s life. In 1926, Underwood claims that this emotional fragmentation started taking a toll on Tate, and although Tate had not been a religious man in his youth, he began to feel both a need for religion and a need for a hero of the south.
It was during this disjointed and uneven period that Tate wrote one of his most famous poems, *Ode to the Confederate Dead*. The poem opens:

> Row after row with strict impunity
> The headstones yield their names to the element,
> The wind whirrs without recollection;
> In the riven troughs the splayed leaves
> Pile up, of nature the casual sacrament
> To the seasonal eternity of death;
> Then driven by the fierce scrutiny
> Of heaven to their election in the vast breath,
> They sough the rumour of mortality. (*Collected Poems* 20)

In an essay titled “Narcissus As Narcissus” for the Virginia Quarterly Review, Tate discusses the poem: “Figure to yourself a man stopping at the gate of a Confederate graveyard on a late autumn afternoon. The leaves are falling; his first impressions bring him the “rumor of mortality” (4). Tate goes on to discuss the poem as more than a search for meaning, a return to tradition; the poem is “about solipsism or Narcissism, or any other ism that denotes the failure of the human personality to function properly in nature and society” (4). For Tate the theme of the poem was tied to the way the intellectual man was cut off from modern society. Tate saw this figure as a man who was in conflict between needing faith and being part of the “fragmentary cosmos surrounding him” (5). What is interesting too, in terms of the way in which this conflict would inform Tate’s work with the Southern Agrarians, is the way in which Tate began to articulate a place for a past and a present. He
believed that one needed to be aware of the past in the present. Modernity was taking great strides to live only in the present and the future, to cut ties with a past, with history and tradition. That is what progress is.\textsuperscript{39} Tate would wrestle with this conflict for years, a conflict that would eventually lead him back to the South, a conflict that would inspire the work of the Southern Agrarians.

To offer some texture to the historical moment, it is significant to recognize that Scopes Trial captivated the nation in 1925.\textsuperscript{40} The trial reinforced for Tate, as he confided in his good friend Andrew Lytle, that “the failure of belief was a critical problem for all people” (Underwood 125). Also, Allen Tate was continuing to grow in his friendships with Lyle Lainer, Red Warren, and Andrew Lytle; all men would come together to contribute to \textit{I’ll Take My Stand}. Underwood notes of this time in Tate’s life, “As Tate poured over his genealogy, he began feeling a deep need to cull from the history of his Southern ancestors some explanation for the nomadic, rootless lives he and his parents had come to lead” (126). Tate decided to begin his search for lost family and lost roots. In his travels he met John Gould Fletcher, another member of the twelve contributors to \textit{I’ll Take My Stand}. One sees through Tate and John Gould Fletcher’s letters to one another their bond over an interest in regionalism.\textsuperscript{41}

According to Underwood, Tate spent the next two years doing research. His first project was a biography of Thomas Stonewall Jackson. He followed this project

\textsuperscript{39} Merriam Webster defines progress as forward movement.

\textsuperscript{40} The trial called into question Christian values.

\textsuperscript{41} Tate to Fletcher, December 24, 1927 as noted by Underwood.
with a biography of Jefferson Davis and a trip to Europe funded by a Guggenheim Foundation grant. In his year abroad he met Robert Frost and Earnest Hemmingway, and his affinity for the South grew. He studied farming towns in France and began to revere the agrarian communities that made up so much of the South (especially pre-Civil War). “Having the opportunity to see the stable agrarian communities in Europe helped convince Tate that his own family had dispersed as a direct result of industrialism” (Underwood 153).

Tate also returned to the form/content debate of great poetry. The claim, remember, issued by Modernists was that the emphasis of a great poet should be on the form, not the content of a poem. In a letter to fellow poet Yvor Winters Tate realized his initial agreement with the Modernists was tied to the fact that he had nothing to write about. With his new interest in Southern history and regionalism, Tate found content to be increasingly important. Themes of tradition arise once more for Tate, as he commits himself as a poet “to see the present from the past, yet remain immersed in the present and committed to it,” a notion he actually developed from Modernist T.S. Eliot, who believed the in using the past as a frame for examining the present (120). This paradigm shift for Tate was marked by the poem originally titled “Causerie,” which was eventually renamed “Retroduktion to American History.” The poem examined Tate’s view of the human condition and cultural situation of the Industrial age. The poem “demonstrated that climaxes in experience are dead, killed off by the thing variously called science, naturalism, industrialism, cosmopolitanism” (Underwood 136). Tate’s increasing interest in

42 Published in the Hart Crane Collection from February 5 1927.
farming communities paired with his belief that industrialism was the force that uprooted his family and set him drifting through life planted the seeds that would eventually produce the principal text on agrarianism and against modernity in the twentieth century.

B. The Whole

“The religious mind, on the other hand, has this respect; it wants the whole horse, and it will be satisfied with nothing less.” (I’ll Take My Stand 157)

The agrarians were responding to what they felt was a breakdown to a sense of wholeness in society. Louise Cowan asserts of their work, “For the agrarians, culture was a pattern of ideas and conduct imbedded in a homogeneous society, and to lose the land meant the loss of belief in the supernatural in religion and myth” (Essays of Four Decades xiv). Tate saw in the agrarian movement, in the soil, the potential for meaning. The movement became his religion in a sense. Tate found a farm and began organizing some of the best writers, thinkers, and teachers of the time; his goal was to put together a text critiquing industrialism, materialism. Important to Tate was the idea that all contributors must write up a constitution of sorts for the movement – the groundwork. In 1930, Tate was in the proper place to lead the anti-industrial movement. The Vanderbilt Agrarians, as the group became known, spent much time on the farming compound Ben Tate purchased for his brother Allen. The common ground of the Vanderbilt group was to reframe Southern culture as an alternative to modernity – Southern culture was a prototype for the good life. Underwood paints Tate “not so much a farmer, but as a cultivated
country squire” and quotes Tate as saying “The South is not a section of geography, it is an economy setting forth a certain kind of life” (160). Tate always saw the movement a bit more abstract than the other members of the Vanderbilt group. For Tate, the commentary was not so much focused on agriculture as it was focused on defending a certain tradition, a certain philosophical understanding of being in the world. Underwood explains, “Tate was especially perturbed by the title they selected for the anthology. Uncomfortable with the term “Agrarian,” he suggested a variety of titles that omitted the word, such as Articles of an Economic Reform of the Spirit and The Irrepressible Conflict” (162). Tate was unhappy with the title *I’ll Take My Stand*, which he expresses in his essay in the text. Tate writes,

> The writer is constrained to point out (with the permission of the other contributors) that in his opinion the general title of this book is not quite true to its aims. It emphasizes the fact of exclusiveness rather than its benefits; it points to a particular house but omits to say that it was the home of a spirit that may also have lived elsewhere and that his mansion, in short, was incidentally made with hands. (*I’ll Take My Stand* 155)

For Tate, the title did not illuminate the movement as a philosophical one; instead it painted the cause as emotional.

As mentioned in the previous chapter of this dissertation, *I’ll Take My Stand* begins with a manifesto, “a statement of principles,” stressing the hope and scope of the text. The men began by outlining their fear that mechanization was suffocating the arts and religion. The agrarians did not believe that the industrial age was nurturing the appreciation of art and religion. The men also state:
The amenities of life also suffer under the curse of a strictly-business or industrial civilization. They consist in such practices as manners, conversation, hospitality, sympathy, family life, romantic love – and in social exchanges which reveal and develop sensibility in human affairs. If religion and the arts are founded on right relations of man-to-nature, these are founded on right relations of man-to-man. (xxv)

They continue to reveal the theory as dependant on the metaphor of soil, “The theory of agrarianism is that the culture of the soil is the best and most sensitive of vocations, and that therefore it should have the economic preference and enlist the maximum numbers of workers.” This tenet of their theory is tied to the way in which the thinkers saw modernity as a deteriorating force in the appreciation of vocation. The introduction, in discussing the dangers of modern labor, insists, “The first principle of good labor is that it must be effective, but the second principle is that it must be enjoyed” (xxii). Their fear was that labor was being practiced not as a happy function of a good life, but for its rewards. The agrarians saw industrialization as bringing about “overproduction, unemployment, and a growing inequality in the distribution of wealth” (xxiii). The men talk about the quickening pace of life, the increasing rate of consumption, instability. The men call other human beings to see their responsibility as one to themselves as well as to their neighbor. They nuance their agrarianism, “An agrarian society is hardly one that has no use at all for industries, for professional vocations, for scholars and artists, and for the life of cities” (xxix). For the Fugitives, the culture of the soil was the most worthy vocation, but not the only one necessary.
As noted in an earlier chapter, critics saw a disconnect between the statement that opens the text and the essays that followed. The criticism is warranted, but not as relevant for this piece. The big themes of ground and limits permeate each essay. These metaphors are most important for an application to the philosophy of communication. Putting the current historical moment in conversation with the one in which the Fugitives were writing illuminates these themes as significant and central to communication.

Tate’s essay “Remarks on the Southern Religion” is a complicated one, and perhaps aided in confusing the mission of the text. He deals with issues of religion and history. Tate pins the issues of the South on the lack of religious tradition. Tate looks to the way in which Northern States held true to their religious history, a commitment Tate sees as important to the health of a community of individuals. Tate’s contribution tied religion to agrarianism. A task he handled deftly. For Tate, the agrarian movement was indeed more about religion than politics. He admits his topic is a difficult one to explore in a time when religion had fallen out of favor.

Tate’s treatment of time is equally as compelling. He distinguishes between what he terms the Long View and the Short View. The former is an abstraction, the latter is concrete. The Short View is “a specific account of the doings of specific men” (161). We remember events, people, outcomes in the Short View. It leads to a concrete kind of understanding, an understanding of First Principles. It is The Long View, through its abstraction of history and time, that has destroyed tradition. The goal for Tate is to give us a way to reconstruct tradition, to rescue it from abstraction. His answer is complex and reactionary. “Since he cannot bore
within, he has left the sole alternative of boring from without. This method is political, active, and in the nature of the case, violent and revolutionary” (175). This radicalism will return man to faith and tradition, the absence of both led to its destruction. This radical move will return the Southern man to his roots.

As Underwood notes, “The attention Agrarianism received from the media was predictable given the social and political climate of the early 1930’s. It was not only a time of agricultural crisis, but a period burdened by one of the greatest economic upheavals in American history, the Depression” (165). The historical moment mirrors our own, with a stock market crash and unemployment on the rise. Tate was certain the agrarians would be misunderstood, and they were indeed. Critics focused on the uneven nature of the work, the disconnect from the statement of principles to each individual essay, as well as the repetition and romanticism of a past some claim never was. T.S. Eliot recognized both the flaws and the significance of the central question of the text. As Elliot sees it, the agrarians are exploring an important question: “how far it is possible for mankind to accept industrialization without spiritual harm.”

Elliot saw there was more than romanticism to the philosophy. The text was misunderstood as romantic, nostalgic. Even “the Brethren” (as the men referred to themselves) disagreed about the purpose of the movement, “Ransom, Lytle, and Tate seemed to form one faction – a faction with more philosophical purposes in mind – while Davidson and Owlsey were united by their need to view Agrarianism in terms of practical politics” (Underwood 171).

43 As expressed in his review “A Commentary” in Criterion in April 1931.
C. Experience and Place

“Perhaps it is not too grandiose a conception to suggest that works of literature, from the short lyric to the long epic, are the recurrent discovery of the human communion as experience, in a definite place and at a definite time.” ("The Man of Letters in the Modern World" 11)

In the above quote from “The Man of Letters in the Modern World,” communion as a metaphor resurfaces as well as the notion of place. What struck a chord with Tate, and the elements of his work that translate powerfully into understanding and situating agrarianism into the philosophy of communication, are issues of identity tied to lived experience place, and history. We are embedded agents. For Tate, family and history shape identity; he embraced agrarianism because the philosophy allowed for such a conclusion to be drawn. In much of Tate’s poetry the reader sees agrarian themes revolving around this exploration of ancestry and the ways in which the past is in the present. Agrarianism (Tate’s agrarianism, for sure) is grounded in a sense of family – a structure through which Tate believed we defined the self.

Also prominent in his work, especially during the early 1930’s when his allegiance to agrarianism was newest, was a continued focus on the decline of religion in the wake of industrialization. For Tate, man was in the midst of a spiritual crisis. As mentioned above, *Ode to Confederate Dead* was absolutely an exploration into this spiritual loss. Also dealing with this division: *Last Day of Alice*, “a poem Yvor Winters heralded as possibly the best he had ever written. In the poem, Tate used the mirror in Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass* as a
metaphor for the division between the spiritual world and the material world” (Underwood 178). The poem begins, “Alice grown lazy, mammoth but not fat, / Declines upon her lost and twilight age; / Above in the dozing leaves the grinning cat / Quivers forever with his abstract rage: / Whatever light swayed on the perilous gate / Forever sways, nor will the arching grass, / Caught when the world clattered, undulate / In the deep suspension of the looking-glass” (Quoted in Underwood 178). Tate continues to explore the ways in which the material world, a world of form and measure has taken the spiritual world from man. Quantity is stressed in the material world, and that was troublesome to Tate.

This tension is complicated, particularly for a man like Tate. His brother, Ben Tate, the man responsible for buying Benfolly, the farm on which Allen lived, was successful as an industrialist. Ben’s success allowed Allen to continue to write. Often in their lives, Ben would pay Allen’s way out of debt. This arrangement is more of a reflection on Allen’s poor relationship with money than anything, but it is worth noting. Allen recognized, as the agrarians did in their statement of purpose in *I’ll Take My Stand*, that there was room for industry; however, industrialization was the same force tearing modern man from his ancestors and sense of family and ground.

A second trip to France, to the port of Cassis specifically, would plant Tate even more firmly in the agrarian ground. The trip would also break open the themes of local and global, universal and provincial. The experience at Cassis proved to Tate that France was the ideal agrarian model. The experience inspired Tate to reread the Aeneid and to write the poem the Mediterranean. With an
epigraph taken from Book I of the Aeneid, the poem begins: "Quen das finem, rex magne, dolorum?" Which translates into "Great king, what finish to their troubles will you give?" The poem continues to paint a picture in which by boat travelers embark on a journey and feast on a meal provided by their own hands and the land:

Where we went in the boat was a long bay
a slingshot wide, walled in by towering stone—
Peaked margin of antiquity's delay,
And we went there out of time’s monotone:...
Where we went in the small ship the seaweed
Parted and gave to us the murmuring shore
And we made feast and in our secret need
Devoured the very plates Aeneas bore:...
Drop sail, and hastening to drink all night
Eat dish and bowl--to take that sweet land in!...
We for that time might taste the famous age
Eternal here yet hidden from our eyes
When lust of power undid its stuffless rage;
They, in a wineskin, bore earth's paradise. (Collected Poems 66)

In his analysis of the poem, R. K. Meiners brings the theme of roots to the forefront: "The implication is that "we" though citizen of a different age, are also in search of a place where we may find roots, a land that will be friendly to our endeavors, where we can establish a living tradition as Aeneas" (Meiners 155). The poem is about bridging the past and the present. The poem is about that search and possibility for
As Tate’s life progressed, he continued to live agrarian moments, visiting France, living on both Benfology and Caroline’s family’s farm. His obsession with origin grew after the death of his father. In Underwood's biography, he notes that another theme emerging from this fascination with origins was the idea that “family stability is ruined when one generation is no longer able to pass land on to the next” (198). The death of his father also pushed Tate toward a second phase of the agrarian movement in the South, in which the men would publicly debate those in support of the New Deal. During this time, we see Tate emerge as a believer in the movement philosophically, but also hopeful about its political implications (this marriage of poetry and politics will be brief for Tate). Tate was, after all, a man of poetry, not politics. Tate wrote often for the American Review, editing it on occasion as well. His first piece for the little magazine was an essay modeled after the satire “A Modest Proposal.” Tate’s essay, “The Problem of the Unemployed: A Modest Proposal,” in response to unemployment and the Depression mockingly suggested exterminating poor families in America. The theme of the essay is clear: modernity was killing off the nuclear family. Some critiqued the movement as pitting industrialism versus agrarianism in a way that did not allow possibility for both. These same critiques saw the movement as nothing more than a romanticism of Southern history (see Couch, Murphy).

Allen Tate’s affinity for William Faulkner grew as Faulkner published The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying. Both writers saw great possibility in illuminating the human condition as a whole through a commentary on Southern
Culture. There was a sense of movement from the local to the global, a movement from Southern problems to human problems. Tate began to recognize the need to “cast the widest net possible” and “set forth universal implications of Agrarianism” (Underwood 228). Tate and the agrarians were working on another anthology of essays, a sequel to *I'll Take My Stand*. For this book, however, Tate hoped to broaden the appeal, nationally, internationally, and wanted to include writers who were neither Southerners nor agrarians. It was at this point that Tate expressed to Herbert Agar, a journalist, the mission of the agrarian movement. “The agrarians wanted to answer the silly charges of romantic past-worship (as mentioned above). We have, I think, only one dogma against the pseudo-metaphysical dogma of capitalist-communist philosophy: that men can still make the kind of society morally that they want, and that machine-technology has not changed the political nature man” (Underwood 230). The plans for the sequel continued, the work would be titled "Who Owns America? A New Declaration of Independence." Tate became increasingly exasperated by the childish dynamics of the Vanderbilt group. Tate’s hope for the movement to grow grew stronger. His interest in finding his own roots grew as well. In this movement from the local to the global, Tate realized it was increasingly more important to mute the Southern theme in agrarianism. Tate wanted to move the focus to one in which the American dream was central not a regionalized identity. The introduction of the text states, “There are Protestants, agnostics, Catholics, Southerners, Northerners, men of cities and men who live on the land. There are professional men, editors, teachers, men of affairs, and men of letters (*Who Owns America* iv). Agar goes on to mention that there are also two
Englishmen (and one woman). He always notes that while the details of the suggestions to follow may not be “necessarily right,” the principles are sound. The principles at their core hope to aid in creating a better America.

The text fell to some of the same critiques of *I’ll Take My Stand* with reviewers and readers noting a disconnected feeling. Other critics, including historian Broadus Mitchell recognized the book’s good intentions, but critiqued the author’s utopian tone, writing some of their essays off as wishful thinking. Edward Shapiro notes that while the text is fairly unknown, it is “one of the most significant conservation books published in the United States during the 1930’s” (*Who Own America*, ix). At the time it was published, Seward Collins, of *The American Review*\(^{44}\), said the book was “the most significant book produced by the depression. It contains more sanity and penetration, more sense of American realities and American history, and more grasp of economic fundamentals, more enlightened moral passion, more insight...than the whole monstrous spate of depression books put together” (xxv).

After *Who Owns America* was published, Tate continued to distance himself from the Southern Agrarians. The complexities of publishing what some saw as a sequel to *I’ll Take My Stand* with a much larger poll of contributors; omitting some of the original Fugitives proved to be hard on Tate. He saw the politics of the movement getting in the way of expressing the hope of the movement. Underwood notes, “By late 1936 and early 1937, he was granting newspaper interviews in which

\(^{44}\) It is important to note that Collins and *The American Review* developed a fascist reputation. The agrarians initially published work in the review only to later renounce the views held by the magazine. Tate even wrote a rebuttal to fascism published in another journal.
he even embraced a limited form of industrialism for the South” (250). Tate
distanced himself from the movement and from politics, in order to push his writing.

In a letter to Davidson, Tate writes:

I must become a creative writer once more, a mere man of letters. I
thought of writing something to this effect, but not in rejection of our
principles. I would reaffirm them, and go on to say that I have no
political talent and prefer to write as an imaginative artist. In order to
read that position it is not necessary to repudiate agrarianism. It is a
question of function and talent, of what one can do best, not of
principle. The principles remain the same, the approach different.
Apart from this, I am simply tired of attending conferences and
pseudo-political meetings. (Quoted in Underwood 251)

His distance from the politics of the movement finally allowed Tate to focus on his
novel, The Fathers. During this time Tate also took the poet Robert Lowell under his
wing. Tate would prove to be a great influence on Lowell’s life and work. Tate also
articulated an appreciation for a hermeneutic reading (akin to Gadamer in Truth and
Method) of poetry. He saw the potential for a configuration of meanings, a fusion of
horizons. The Fathers is an exploration of Lacy Buchan’s family tree. The novel was
cathartic for Tate. As Buchan journeyed, Tate did as well. Both were in search of
origin. Tate relied on Southern history in both fiction and his own life to construct
the story of Buchan and to help complete Tate’s own narrative. The novel centers
on themes Tate had been drawn to his entire life – the industrialization of the South,
the spiritual decay – modern man’s battles as seen through Tate’s eyes. The novel
also looks at issues of public and private tensions. Arthur Mizener, in the introduction to the 1984 reprint, calls the novel one of the most remarkable novels of our time. In telling Buchan’s story, Tate was able to look at his own. In writing *The Father’s*, Tate addressed his own childhood. Through Buchan’s roots, Tate accepted his own.

III. Implications for Communication Philosophy of Communication from the bias of an Agrarian Perspective

For Allen Tate, the Agrarian movement eventually symbolized more than a defense of the South. His agrarian philosophy moved the paradigm into how one ought to live a life. He stresses the importance of identity and history; an acknowledgement that who we are in the present is textured by the past.

With Tate’s agrarianism, we see a movement to construct personal identities while constructing a comprehensive narrative for the country. The return to agrarianism is also an invention of identity. It is not the agrarianism of the 1800’s, necessarily, grounded in individualism or literal soil. There is identification with a movement, with a community that lends itself to an understanding of self and society. In an historical moment that wanted to deny limits, the Southern Agrarians wished to return to them. When one thinks through a cosmopolitan framework metaphors of border crossing arise and globalism arise, while agrarian is local, provincial, and values borders. In Allen Tate’s movement from the local to the global, he recognized the importance of borders while exploring the implications of crossing them. In muting his own Southern identity, Tate finally came to a place
where he could understand his identity. It is as if only when he took that element off the table could he meaningfully attend to it.

The rhetoric of agrarianism is a tool in constructing and understanding identity, origin, and ground. Again, one returns to the importance of limits as outlined at the beginning of this chapter. Through Tate’s exploration of the agrarian paradigm, he became more aware of who he was and how he functioned in the world. His journey began with the local and grew to encompass much more. He worked and searched with politics and poetics to construct and understand his historical moment and the way in which he was embedded in that moment. He embraced the revelatory nature of limits in illuminating identity. Only from first recognizing limits could his worldview grow.
Chapter 4 -- Richard Weaver: Rooted in Rhetoric

“What the agrarians, along with people of their philosophical conviction everywhere, were saying is that there are some things which do not have their subsistence in time, and that certain virtues should be cultivated regardless of the era in which one finds oneself born. It is the most arrant presentism to say that a philosophy cannot be practiced because that philosophy is found in the past and the past is now gone. The whole value of philosophy lies in its detachment from accidental conditions of this kind and its adherence to the essential.”

-Richard Weaver

Richard Weaver was a calm and quiet man who lived a modest life and valued routine. He was distrustful of technology and had an affinity for the land. These latter elements in particular come together to influence and inform his rhetorical theory. Cultivation of and connection to the land is absolutely essential – as it is for all agrarians. Weaver as a cultural critic has informed some scholarship in the past five or so decades, but attention to his work is waning (Smith xx). The work of Weaver connects to Allen Tate’s and the philosophy of communication in that identity emerges as a key metaphor connected to attention to place and the particular. Place, tradition, and form drove much of Weaver’s work, these metaphors are woven throughout many other agrarian works as well.

Weaver’s connection to the Southern Agrarians, who came out of Vanderbilt in the 1920’s, can occasionally feel distant. He was not part of the illustrious twelve

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45 As we’ll see in great detail through the exploration that follows of Ideas Have Consequences, The Ethics of Rhetoric, and Visions of Order.
who came together to write *I'll Take My Stand*, but he studied with the group at Vanderbilt and felt connected to the land and to the tradition the men defended. While he is one of the few who taught at a Northern University (the University of Chicago), Weaver considered himself an agrarian. His move from the South where he grew up gave Weaver what he saw as necessary distance (see *Visions of Order* discussion below) that enabled him to understand the culture and climate of the historical moment with greater clarity.

Weaver’s life and work connects to Arnett’s notions of identity, as well as the way in which philosophy of communication needs to be attentive to the elements of standpoint, bias, and blueprint. Arnett begins his essay on defining the philosophy of communication by stating, “this essay frames philosophy of communication as understanding situated within limits which give it identity” (3). Weaver saw the human condition and human communication similarly; it is within limits that one defines and understands oneself and the connection to the world around him. Limits give the philosophy of communication identity and limits give us our communicative ground. For Weaver history and memory of place help create structure. Without attention to history, one has no ground on which to stand. For Weaver it was a very literal return to ground that informs philosophical ground.

This chapter of the dissertation is important in that it further connects an agrarian philosophy and emphasis on place and the provincial with identity and philosophical and communicative ground. This connection is important in that it allows us to further think about ways in which tradition, story, and memory create meaning and convey meaning. This chapter also examines the way in which both
Tate and Weaver as exiles from culture can use that distance to be reflective within
and about a culture that they are not necessarily a part.

The following will briefly look at Richard Weaver's early years, his
interaction with the Southern Agrarians, and his move to the University of Chicago.
Within the exploration of the literal places he inhabited, I will also look at the
philosophical places he inhabited through his work. I will look at essays from
*Defense of Tradition, Ideas Have Consequences, The Ethics of Rhetoric*, and *Visions of
Order*.

I. Roots: Early Influence and the Southern Agrarians

Richard Weaver, a student of Allen Tate and Donald Davidson, kept himself
removed a bit from the work in the South due in large part to the fact he spent the
majority of his career working and teaching in the North. Yet, Weaver wrote from
the agrarian perspective – one that privileges much of what was outlined in the
introduction of *I'll Take My Stand*. His work lends itself to an examination of
rhetoric and language amidst the push for progress and industrialism. Weaver saw
these elements of modernity as toxic to rhetoric and its responsibility.

As with other agrarian thinkers examined in this dissertation, place and
origin have a large influence on Weaver’s work. Weaver spent much of his life in
Weaverville, North Carolina, a small town he and other family members would
return for reunions each year (see Young). Weaver eventually purchased a home
there for his mother while he was in Chicago. For Weaver, place and family were
essential in defining and understanding identity. Fred Douglas Young notes that
while Weaver was in Chicago he would go by train to visit his mother in Weaverville. His mother would have his garden plowed and ready to plant upon his arrival. Those summer months away from Chicago offered nourishment to the land and nourishment to Weaver’s spirit.

Weaver was born in nearby Ashville, North Carolina. Young’s account of his childhood tells us that Weaver was quiet and reflective, the first of four children. When Weaver was just five years old his father died. The family moved to Weaverville and then to Lexington. The family continued to nourish its ties to family in Weaverville, spending summers there. The metaphor frame of reference emerges in Weaver’s work; for Weaver this frame of reference gives one ground, allows one to come to define and understand oneself and the world. His frame of reference was born out of his time and tie to Weaverville and the strong sense of family built in that space. While some scholars (see Hamlin’s work) characterize the death of Weaver’s father as a turning point, others (see Young’s work) believe the event was not a turning as much as a defining point. Weaver’s disciplined and reflective intentionality in word and deed seem to have been enhanced after the death of his father.

Excelling in speech and debate, Weaver studied ancient rhetoric. He represented Kentucky in a national oratorical contest in 1929 (Young). That same year he published his first essay. Weaver majored in English at the University of Kentucky and wrote for the newspaper. It was his move to graduate school at Vanderbilt that proved to be most influential in his rhetorical theory. He began

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46 Weaver even wrote a review of *I’ll Take My Stand* for the paper.
graduate school in 1933. In the years that followed, the Southern Agrarians would help cultivate Weaver’s philosophical ground. Ground he managed to take with him everywhere he went.

Weaver admired the agrarians. He wrote of his admiration,

What the agrarians, along with people of their philosophic conviction everywhere, were saying is that there are some things which do not have their subsistence in time, and that certain virtues should be cultivated regardless of the era in which one finds oneself born. It is the most arrant presentism to say that a philosophy cannot be practiced because that philosophy is round in the past and the past is now gone. The whole value of philosophy lies in its detachment from accidental conditions of this kind and its adherence to the essential.

(“The Tennessee Agrarians” 11)

Weaver’s decision to pursue a master’s degree at Vanderbilt gave him the opportunity to observe and join the community of intellectuals that became known as the Southern Agrarians. The Southern Agrarians saw poetry as key to an agrarian paradigm. This connection is worth noting, as it was important to Weaver. Weaver saw a close connection to poetry and religion – which informs tradition and form. In Young’s intellectual biography of Richard Weaver, he recounts Weaver’s interaction with I’ll Take My Stand, saying of Weaver “it is significant that he twice referred to it as a great work of American social criticism” (46). Young goes on to highlight the way in which Weaver’s last essay published during his lifetime proved the influence of the text on Weaver’s work. Young continues, ““The Southern
Phoenix” underlined his belief in the work’s endurance and continuing relevance. Those who cavalierly tried to dismiss it as merely controversial were only admitting, he believed, that a nerve had been touch: this book dealt with values, a realm reviewers more often than not preferred to ignore” (46).

According to Young, three things gave the book endurance for Weaver. Firstly, there is a gestalt notion – these men had spent so much time talking and writing and thinking about ideas that their work came together to be much greater than the sum of its parts (or individuals). Secondly, since the men came from the same place, there was not issue of ground that needed to be addressed or overtly defined. These men knew where they stood, there were fundamentals that were agreed upon by those roots alone. Finally, they truly believed they could come together to defend a tradition under attack.

Donald Davidson and John Crowe Ransom emerge as two major agrarian influencers. Ransom directed Weaver’s dissertation. Davidson and Weaver exchanged letters throughout their entire lives. Davidson’s essay in I’ll Take My Stand was one Weaver was drawn to (Young). Davidson outlines in the essay that all great works of art are essentially provincial. There is an anchoring of art to time and to place that gives it voice and meaning. Weaver would return to this idea of art as rooted in place in his own work in the decades to come. It can be argued that the work in I’ll Take My Stand encouraged Weaver’s theory that ideas have consequences (a sentiment that would become the title of his first book of essays). The men who came together to write I’ll Take My Stand saw language as powerful and the use of it as something to be taken seriously. Charles K. Follette notes that
Weaver greatly admired Ransom especially. In his review of Ransom’s book *God Without Thunder*, Weaver praised Ransom even more than the text. After a brief teaching gig at Texas A&M, Weaver enrolled in Louisiana State University for his Ph.D.

II. Guiding Metaphors

Guiding metaphors appear in Richard Weaver’s work. These metaphors of distance, form, role, private property, craftsmanship, education and the humanities also encompass metaphors of history, memory, substance, identity. Richard Weaver worked within a framework that acknowledged the interconnectedness of these metaphors as key in guiding an agrarian philosophy and a humanities education.

A. Distance

“There is another type of outsider...he is a member of the culture who has to some degree estranged himself from it through study and reflection. He is like a savant in society; though in it, he is not wholly of it; he has acquired knowledge and developed habits of thought which enable him to see it in perspective to gauge it” (Visions of Order 7).

In 1944, Weaver joined the faculty at the University of Chicago. His commitment to form and tradition were strengthened through his time with the agrarians. Amidst a time of immense propaganda and the abuse of language emerging from advertisements and government alike, Weaver was cautious to differentiate between responsible rhetoric and propaganda; and he believed a simple understanding of the basic principles of rhetoric allows not only for the
ability to make good arguments but also for the ability to recognize and criticize them. Weaver is careful to note that not all rhetoric based on emotional appeal is propaganda. The human spirit and condition are in crisis, “eloquence has fallen into disfavor” (“The Cultural Role of Rhetoric” 336). Attention must be paid to the human condition.

Weaver sees his life in Chicago as one of an agrarian in exile (the topic of his similarly titled “Agrarianism in Exile” essay he penned later in life as well). Distance, however, could be important, as one outside of a culture may make one more reflective of it. In “The Image of Culture,” Weaver looks in depth at this idea of distance or estrangement as necessary in times of cultural crisis. In the lead essay from Visions of Order, Weaver talks about the decline of Western culture. He insists this decaying of culture is not tied to some sense of nostalgia, but instead is marked by a deteriorating being in the world. The constant change and push for progress brought on by modernity, relativism, and bigness brings with it also chaos, disorder. Central to Weaver’s work is a notion of order, often tied to a sense of ordering human values (“The Image of Culture” 4).

The distinction between ways in which one can “be outside a culture” are important in light of the exiled agrarianism about which Weaver wrote. Weaver believes, “One can be outside culture simply in the sense of having been born outside its pale...People in this position constitute the kind of foreigners...those speaking a different language” (“The Image of Culture” 7). There is a difference between being a foreigner and being estranged is important. The exile estranges himself through “study and reflection” and “he has acquired knowledge and
developed habits of thought which enable him to see it in perspective and to gauge it. He has not lost the intuitive understanding that belongs to him as a member, but he has added something to that” (7). The idea of distance or alienation, something Allen Tate felt while in New York, gives the exiled a different, heightened sense of reflection. Weaver goes as far as to say those estranged can become doctors of cultures. Weaver continues, “Thus it is not the person who has contributed most to a culture who will necessarily have the most useful things to say when the culture shows signs of dissolution. Dissolution and disintegration as metaphors drove Weaver’s critique of modernity and the West.

B. Form and Role

“Just as the skin of a sound of fruit protects it from dispersion or evaporation, so the form of culture keeps it from ceasing to exist” (Visions of Order 12).

“A just man finds satisfaction in the knowledge that society has various roles for various kinds of people and that they in the performance of these roles create a kind of symphony of labor, play, and social life” (Visions of Order 16).

Weaver’s work takes the idea of form very seriously, without discounting substance. For Weaver, form and role go hand and hand. Weaver finds balance between the two, as he does with permanence and change. His issue with form, however, is that it is all but being ignored in the quest for bigness, newness, nowness. The sense of the perpetual present left little room for a history where memory and form create ground and meaning. Form to culture is skin to fruit – it keeps it from rotting; it protects.
Within the defense of form, also comes the defense of role, the importance of difference. Weaver says, “Differences do not create resentment unless the seed of resentment has been otherwise planted. A just man finds satisfaction in the knowledge that society has various roles for various kinds of people and that they in performance of these roles create a kind of symphony of labor, play, and social life” (Visions of Order 16). Weaver’s pull toward poetry makes sense in light of this emphasis on form; there is something about the marriage of form and substance in poetry that is beautiful. An affinity and appreciation for the gestalt comes through in Weaver’s attention to difference. Difference is not about fragmentation for Weaver, but about parts coming together, informing one another, all with a common center. Arnett echoes this sentiment in his essay. He writes, “we must pause first to reflect upon the importance of difference and identity in the study of communication...we are characterized by difference (3). Both men see the importance of difference in understanding communication and community. It is in contrasting roles and methods that one explores and defines.

There is a certain form to the nature of culture for Weaver. In “Status and Function,” Weaver looks at the way in which inattentiveness to form can lead to a decline in satisfaction. There are certain natural laws that bind a culture, and while substance can change, those laws remain and continue to give form, status, or a sense of permanence. Again, balance is central between what Weaver calls status (permanence) and function (change): “too much status will obstruct function, and too much function will disrupt and destroy status” (26). In a culture of excess, the balance is becoming elusive. The connection to the land and cultivating crops
moves on a parallel, here, balance is the key to thriving. There is a sense of responsibility and intentionality tied to tending to our plants, and a sense of responsibility tied to tending to our status and function.

Interestingly, Weaver looks at the South and the North in the same essay, asserting that perhaps the South has attached too much weight to status and the North has attached too much weight to function. He notes, however, that the stability of the South offers more positive than the constant chaos and progress of too much function. Weaver says,

Status contributed the valuable element of stability, without which happiness is but doubtfully secured. It contributed much to freedom and independence of the individual, because the man who knows where he stands is always more confident in approaching others and in declaring his opinions than the man who neither knows who he is nor where he is from. (Visions of Order 31)

C. Language

“Language...appears as a great storehouse of universal memory, or it may be said to serve as a net, no imprisoning us but supporting us and aiding us to get at a meaning beyond present meaning though the very fact that it embodies others’ experiences” (Language is Sermonic 44).

“...Language, once created, is a great indicator and conservator of value” (Visions of Order 36).

Language emerges as a beacon of hope in a country increasingly obsessed with function. Weaver characterizes this function by “the view that it is the duty of
man to carry on an unceasing work of exploitation, which is variously denominated “business,” development,” and “progress” ... The winning of the West was largely a northern enterprise” (32). The decay of language and of myth lead to this unending development.

*The Ethics of Rhetoric* examines in depth the qualities of the noble speaker. This attention to both ethical and unethical rhetoric moves us beyond technique (while recognizing the value of form, which we see above is crucial to substance) and into the importance of language and the effects of the way we use language in both public and private life. Modernity was so focused on technique, on efficiency. Weaver wanted to encourage reflection again. In *The Ethics*, Weaver says, “it is impossible to talk about rhetoric as effective expression without having as a term giving intelligibility to the whole discourse, the good” (*Ethics* 23). There is absolutely for Weaver movement from individual discourse to the shaping of society and culture. Weaver would insist that our values come through in our speech, in our words; therefore, we must be careful and intentional in our language. Weaver means it when he says that language is sermonic.

It is also in *The Ethics of Rhetoric* that Weaver explores the concept of “god terms.”47 God terms are as the chapter is named that is devoted to it “ultimate terms in contemporary rhetoric.” God terms have force, power; they are ranked above all other terms. Weaver identifies “progress” as the term that carries the most power with it. “Fact,” “science,” “modern,” “efficient” also make the list. These latter terms

47 Richard Johannesen, in his work on Weaver, recognizes that Kenneth Burke, while never explicitly named or credited could have influenced Weaver through his similar work on god terms in *A Rhetoric of Motives*. 90
are necessary elements of progress. These terms direct discourse and decisions, and I submit that they are the same god terms that drive society today. Devil terms are “terms of repulsion” (222). “Un-American,” “Communist,” and “prejudice” top the list of god term counterparts. For Weaver, simply by identifying god terms, we illuminate the values of a given historical moment.

D. Myths

“The decline of myth in modern societies and the ensuing decay of status are related also to the disappearance of ‘place.’” (Visions of Order 37).

“Myths have always developed among a people occupying one region for a long period of time and developing a strong provincial consciousness” (Visions of Order 37).

Myths can hold the world together for human beings. Weaver defines myth as “great symbolic structures which hold together the imaginations of a people and provide bases of harmonious thought and action” (Visions of Order 34). Myths provide a sense of meaning, value: “They posit a supersensible world of meaning and value from which the least member of a culture can borrow something to dignify and give coherence to his life” (34). Weaver goes on to talk of myths as allowing, insisting that the past stays in the present: “the past has never passed away” (34). Myth and language are connected for Weaver in that they both allow us to define and identify experience and perceptions. For Weaver, this connection allows man to move from a modern perspective of being a prisoner to language and into a perspective that language can indicate and preserve value. In plain terms Weaver posits:
The decline of myth in modern societies and the ensuing decay of status are related to the disappearance of “place.” ... Modern man has acquired an excessive mobility, so that it means nothing, as compared with yesterday, for him to be in one place or to go to another...There is something protective about “place”; it means isolation, privacy, and finally identity. We cannot rationally wish to be nowhere or everywhere at once. To be somewhere is necessary to our standing – to our status. (Visions of Order 37)

He goes on to remind us that myths develop among people who inhabit a place for a long time. This inhabiting of place develops what he calls strong “provincial consciousness.” For Weaver, recovering place will allow us to recover myth and language and the value of the ground on which we stand. His call to action can be heard in a communication classroom if one begins a communicative exploration with an exploration of place and narrative. When students think about dominant narratives and the ways in which their own stories flow with or against those narratives, there is opportunity for a very intentional examination of the ground on which one stands.

E. Private Property and the Craftsmanship

“Private property, in the sense we have defined it, is substance; in fact it is something very much like the philosophic concept of substance” (Ideas Have Consequences 146).

“If one surveys the economic history of the West for the past several centuries, he discovers...a
In “The Last Metaphysical Right,” an essay in *Ideas Have Consequences*, Weaver frames the ownership of private property as the last metaphysical right remaining to man. He builds from a sense of the agrarian provincial or local, seeing a solution to the moral dilemma of modernity as “the distributive ownership of small properties. These take the form of independent farms, of local business, of homes owned by the occupants, where individual responsibility gives significance to prerogative over property” (133). Through this ownership and attentiveness to property, land, place, man becomes a complete person; place makes us whole. Part of that “completion” for Weaver comes through in his connection of responsibility to the ownership of land. There is this idea innately in the tending of land, sowing of crops, etc., that one can reap reward from past actions or impact the future with what one does today.

Within Weaver’s agrarian philosophy, the metaphor of a craftsman emerges. A craftsman takes ownership of his work. There is an honor to the work of craftsman that comes with putting ones name on a product. Weaver says, “In former times, when the honor of work had some hold upon us, it was the practice of a maker to give his name to the product, and the pride of family was linked up with maintenance of quality. There, again, is a sense of connectedness and responsibility. Weaver goes on to say the craftsmanship and the naming of products has moved into “General,” “Standard,” “International.” There is no single person responsible for the product – no one needs to take responsibility for the quality or the work. Weaver sees danger in this detachment from land, from names, and from identity.
Weaver sees a decline of craftsmanship connected to the presentism of modernity. Modernity disconnects man from examination and reflection of life. So for Weaver, private property is substance beyond the literal:

Private property, in the sense we have defined it, is substance; in fact, it is something very much like the philosophic concept of substance. Now when we envision a society of responsible persons, we see them enjoying a range of free choice which is always expressed in relation to substance ... the relationship between spirit and matter is one of the great mysteries, but I do not think that the mystery calls for the annihilation of matter. It is, on the contrary important to keep substance in life, for a man's character emerges in the building and ordering of his house” (*Ideas Have Consequences* 146).

This notion of substance gives man a place from which to move and speak in the modern world.

F. The Humanities, History

“Every individual's desire is that he will be seen for what he is, and what he is depends upon some present knowledge of his past. That same principle holds for societies and nations. They are their history” (*Visions of Order* 40).

One cannot ignore the ways in which Weaver's work also illuminates the effect of modernity on education48. In “Education: Reflections On,” Weaver looks at

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48 Weaver’s rhetorical theory connected to education is also discussed briefly above. While this dissertation is not one that is outwardly exploring pedagogy, it is hard to do this research without thinking about the ways in which the work and the insights of great men and women are applicable to the classroom.
the shift from a liberal arts education to one that focuses on practicality – training the hand as opposed to engaging the mind. Weaver recognizes a reluctance to emphasize ethical content in schools. Since ethics is often tied to religion, the separation of church and state and the difficulty (impossibility?) of finding religious common ground have made the very thought of ethics in the classroom difficult. For Weaver, however, the answer is simple; the answer is in studying the humanities. By reemphasizing the humanities, as opposed to the technical training that became so popular because of the nature of the modern marketplace, we can study “the best that man has been and the best that he can be” (174). He continues this awareness of a sense of “ought” learned through literature and attention to the humanities. Weaver was fearful of progress defeating the humanities. For Weaver, the world was becoming more and more political, and the “satisfied consumer” was the lowest common denominator to which educators catered. Weaver was afraid teachers of the humanities would go the way of teachers of Latin and Greek.49

The attention to the humanities also comes through also in Weaver's commitment to history and memory. In “The Attack Upon Memory,” another essay in his slim volume Visions of Order,50 one hears the agrarian influence as Weaver writes, “Every individual’s desire is that he will be seen for what he is, and what he

Weaver illuminates numerous ways in which we can carry his work into the classroom in order to uncover ground for students. The exploration of myth from Visions of Order, as well as the balance of form and structure throughout his body of work, gives us great insight into the ways in which a humanities rich education can enhance the postmodern classroom.

49 We’ve seen this dangerous trend continue in postmodernity. The death of values, the death of the cannon, the death of the human subject. I bet technique and technology could be god terms today.

50 Visions of Order was Weaver’s last book in the what he conceived of as a three-part work: Ideas Have Consequences, The Ethics of Rhetoric, and Visions of Order. Sadly, Visions of Order was not yet published at the time of Weaver’s death, leading some early critics to dismiss it as unfinished. Due to this, it was initially ignored. Young reports that Weaver had indeed finished and revised the manuscript – as well as conceptualized it as the final piece in this “trilogy” before he passed away.
is depends upon some present knowledge of his past. That same principle holds for societies and nations. They are their history” (40). There is a meaningful connection between memory, tradition, place, and identity for Weaver. For Weaver, there is something about that sense of shared values – a remembrance of principles and structures acknowledged in culture – that allows it to flourish. Weaver acknowledged that the past was increasingly being looked on as a burden. Modern man wanted to just kind of keep moving – a mantra of progress in some ways – “don’t look back.” Those individuals who helped us conserve the past are fading away (along with the myths and “provincial consciousness” looked at above) or are simply not listened to anymore. Weaver reminds us of those characters, those preservers of culture, of the past: “the grandmother preserving the history and traditions of the family by the fireside, the veteran relating the story of his battles in the shaded courthouse square, even the public orator recalling the spirit of 1776 on commemorative days” (41). Modern man has no time to listen to them anymore.

Memory makes us whole. Memory makes us human. Memory gives us a point of view. Memory gives us ground. Ground gives us memory.

Form. Role. Craftsmanship. Language. Education. History informing the present. These are the important elements that one sees as part of Allen Tate, Richard Weaver, and agrarian thought in general. These men, and we will see Wendell Berry continue on with these themes in his own work in the following chapter, are asking a historical moment to pause, reflect, wonder. In the Foreword to Ideas Have Consequences, Weaver begins by writing, “This book was written in the period immediately following the second World War, it was in a way a reaction to
that war – to its immense destructiveness, to the strain it placed upon ethical principles, and to the tension it left in place of peace and order that were professedly sought” (v). Weaver goes on to explain that the book was written in the hopes that it could counter or challenge some of the forces that threaten to destroy the foundation of culture. The aim of his work was to confront that rotting foundation in order to ensure a world capable of rebuilding a culture in which memory, form, and responsibility are part.

V. Implications for Communication Philosophy of Communication from the bias of an Agrarian Perspective

Weaver’s work is grounded in metaphors of tradition, the responsibility of language, values, and civic duty. His guiding principles and foundations speak to theory informed practice, ethics, substance, truth, and responsibility. In Ideas Have Consequences, Weaver points to William of Occam as the starting point of nominalism. Nominalism carried us away from universal truths; nominalism encourages a denial of anything and everything that transcends experience. Essentially, William of Occam gives an entire historical moment, an entire culture permission to rely on senses alone, and from that, according to Weaver, we have never really recovered.

It is apparent in Ideas Have Consequences the foundation of Weaver’s theory: knowledge is based on first principles and universals. This foundation is textured by the metaphor of value. Both value (there is a brief exploration of value in Weaver’s god terms looked at below) and ethics take a central place in Weaver’s rhetorical
theory. There is danger in man as the measure of all things. Weaver writes in the introduction of *Ideas Have Consequences*, “The denial of universals carries with it the denial of everything transcending experience. The denial of everything transcending experience means inevitably – though ways are found to hedge on this – the denial of truth” (4). Once man eliminates or denies the notion of an objective truth, he marches into relative territory in which the good is only what he claims it to be.

The Agrarian movement is absolutely more than a commentary on the modern marketplace, more than a defense of the South, more than just agrarian versus Industrial. It is about the human condition, about how one ought to live a life. The work of the Agrarians is tied to responsibility through land – which is a responsibility connected to articulating and recognizing the ground on which we stand. That ground is textured by the past. The insistence of progress to only look forward compromises the strength of our stance. A poem by Robert Penn Warren embodies the Agrarian movement. It is a poem of tradition, of time: “Tell Me a Story.” “Tell me a story. /In this century, and moment, of mania,/Tell me a story./Make it a story of great distances, and starlight./The name of the story will be Time,/But you must not pronounce its name./Tell me a story of deep delight” (*The Collected Poems of Robert Penn Warren* 266).

As memory and history continue to become obsolete, it is imperative that we return to attentiveness to land, to tradition, to a sense of ground beneath our feet. On what do we stand? What principles guide our discourse? What informs the marketplace, our approach to communication, to rhetoric? There is power in the
particulars of the stories we tell, in the way we absorb them, reflect upon them, and allow them to inform the ground from which we build both the public and the private. The agrarians encourage us to listen to those stories, to be attentive to our land, to take responsibility for our ground. Through this attention, one can claim and define a communicative identity.

Communicative identity is history for Weaver. This identity is about carrying our past into the present. According to Weaver, we chose not to remember not only to ensure some sense of traveling “light” but also in order to feel more satisfied with ourselves. Amnesia (Weaver’s term) gives us no conscience, no judgment, and therefore no responsibility. Weaver talks of the importance of responsibility and the importance of widened associations. He talks about “an offender” put on probation, “he is expected to show that he has learned from his misdeeds and that he is consciously framing his life so as not to “forget them” but to be guided away from them” (44). One learns from his past and creates character from remembering it.

Again, this chapter is important to the philosophy of communication in that it further articulates the theory posited in Arnett’s work on defining the philosophy of communication. Arnett asks us to “pause first to reflect upon the importance of difference and identity in the study of communication. We live within a wonderful discipline; we are characterized by difference” (3). That multiplicity is key in understanding identity and communication. Weaver illuminates this key to understanding in his work on the importance of role, of particulars, of difference, of the gestalt.
The next chapter examines Wendell Berry’s work within the agrarian paradigm, his roots, and guiding metaphors.
Chapter 5 – Wendell Berry: Landscape

“One of the primary results – and one of the primary needs – of industrialism is the separation of people and places and products from their histories. To the extent that we participate in the industrial economy, we do not know the histories of our families or of our habitats or of our meals.”

-Wendell Berry

Wendell Berry’s place within the agrarian tradition and agrarian paradigm is explored in this dissertation. Berry’s work offers a more contemporary entrance into an agrarian philosophy. Berry’s work informs this dissertation in that it offers commentary on identity, tradition, and form. Berry is a farmer and a writer, and is known as an advocate for agriculture, tradition, and stewardship. His work speaks, as Tate and Weaver’s does, to the ways in which identity is connected and cultivated through place and through difference. His work contributes to this dissertation by lending a contemporary voice to the conversation.

I. Introduction:

This chapter discusses Berry’s life and influences, his book *Unsettling America*, as well as some of his fiction and shorter essays. Wendell Berry is known as the preeminent contemporary agrarian thinker and writer. As agrarian scholar Eric T. Freyfogle says in his introduction to Berry’s piece in *The New Agrarianism*:\(^{51}\), “For more than a third of a century, the leading agrarian voice in America has been

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\(^{51}\) Berry’s essay “The Whole Horse” is looked at in depth below.

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Kentucky farmer and writer Wendell Berry” (63). Berry’s work pulls from ground familiar to Allen Tate and Richard Weaver; they all called the South home for some part of their lives. Freyfogle goes on to say, “From his small, hilly farm in northern Kentucky, his native home and home to generations of his ancestors, Berry has commented on what he perceives as the moral, social, and ecological decline of his country” (63).

This chapter reveals Berry’s roots as a key element of analysis. Berry is significant in the study of the philosophy of communication in that Berry’s voice echoes those voices that came before in the agrarian tradition, only his voice comes decades later. He shows us the ways in which the questions Allen Tate and Richard Weaver asked in the wake of the World Wars and the pursuit of technology are still relevant and significant; and that answers can be informed by an agrarian tradition. Berry, who continues to write into the 21st century, pulls from the work of the Southern Agrarians52. His essays and texts look at ways in which the dissociation of ourselves from our histories creates dissatisfaction and a fractured sense of self. Industry, according to Berry, has separated people from their histories. One can place Berry into the work on identity looked at in Chapter 4, in that in order to communicate ethically, we must be attentive to our communicative ground. In order to tend to this ground, a connection between history and people must be forged again. Metaphors of character, form, wholeness, fragmentation, local and limits emerge as significant in the conversation and offer texture in answering the troubling questions of loss of ground in modernity.

52 We’ll look one of Berry’s essays below in which he begins by quoting Allen Tate’s essay from I’ll Take My Stand.
I. Roots

The notion of roots is central to Berry. This section examines the follow elements of roots: his influences, his retreat and return to the land.

A. Influences

In Kimberly K Smith’s biography of Berry’s work, Smith situates him as a central figure and advocate for small farming and traditional values. His work is central in illuminating our existence as fragile in light of industrial cultural perils. Smith begins by tying Berry’s work to classical philosophers, writing: “Humans have always faced danger and uncertainty, and human action has always had unpredictable and often deadly consequences” (ix). Berry’s teachings are grounded in the notion that we are indeed less than gods. He points to the cultivation of certain virtues, “moderation, prudence, propriety, fidelity – as well as the deep understanding of our dependence on one another and on the natural world” (ix). Add something here in my own words.

Berry was born in rural Kentucky in 1934; he grew up in the world Allen Tate and Richard Weaver were responding to in their work and their development of agrarianism as a response to industrialism. Berry has been a central figure in American agrarianism since 1960. Smith is attentive to Berry’s intellectual tradition; she says, “We can trace Berry’s intellectual descent from Jefferson (whom he quotes frequently) through the Populists and their political successors (including Berry’s father)” (9). Berry’s father, John, provided much of the philosophical ground from which Berry worked and wrote. From a young age, John Berry encouraged his
son to pursue and defend an agrarian vision. Wendell Berry inherited his father’s “quest for agrarian justice” (Smith 11). Because memories and stories are central to this dissertation, the inclusion of a story Berry recounts is important. He speaks of his father’s influence and devotion to agrarian justice:

The first time he [Berry’s father] remembers waking up late in the night was when he was seven years old. His daddy sent the crop ... to Louisville. Then the night before it was going to sell, they sat up talking about what they were going to do when they got the money, and it was kind of a happy, optimistic evening. Then my father heard his daddy get up, at probably two o’clock in the morning to get on his horse to go to the train and go to Louisville, to see his crop sold. And he got back without a dime. They took it all. My father saw men leave the warehouse crying and he said, when he was a little boy, “If ever I can do anything about this, I’m going to.” (11)

Wendell Berry inherited his father’s mission. John Berry was a farmer and a lawyer and raised Wendell and his family in a small farming community in Kentucky. The farming community was hit by the Depression, and Wendell saw first hand the way in which industry and modernity changed the small, independently owned farms around him. White quotes Berry as saying he was “born with an aptitude for a way of life that doomed” (12). The rest of the world was changing rapidly in the push for urbanization.

It is worth noting here also that Thomas Jefferson’s agrarianism as well as the Southern Agrarians influenced Berry’s work and return to the land. All men
believed that “The farmer’s labor not only creates material wealth, but cultivates virtues necessary to the nation’s welfare” (Smith 20). At the foundation of agrarian thought understood in this way, one finds civic virtue and responsibility as emergent. The Southern Agrarian movement was an important influence on Wendell Berry as well. White notes, however, that the perception that the Southern Agrarians viewed agrarianism as a tradition tied to social hierarchy was not shared by Berry. What was shared by Berry was the “claim industrialism destabilizes community, undermines tradition, and cultivates a hostile, combative stance toward nature” (White 30). Berry works from these claims in his writing. He articulates a necessary connection between tradition, community and nature.

Harlan Hubbard comes forward as another significant influence in Berry’s intellectual development. Hubbard was a writer and an artist from rural Kentucky and one of Berry’s role models. Hubbard spent over forty years on a riverboat on the Mississippi in a lifestyle choice largely influenced by his affinity for Thoreau. The influence and connection is complicated. Hubbard’s lifestyle is grounded in what Berry calls a “Jeffersonian Ideal – a strand of Americanism almost lost” (White 32); yet at the same time this kind of freedom of floating contrasted some of the tenets of an agrarian tradition. There are many ways to come to live out a simple life, Berry’s simple life was anchored in a way that Hubbard’s was not. Still, the man provided inspiration and encouraged Berry to continue to explore the virtues of simple living. In thinking through the agrarian tradition, men like Tate and Weaver were in the position to defend the simple life; Wendell Berry understood a mission
of defending an agrarian tradition he turned to teaching as the manner in which that could occur.

B. Teaching, Leaving and Returning

White's biography follows Berry as his path diverges from his agrarian pursuits; as he pursued English at University of Kentucky in the late 1950’s. He went on to get his master’s degree and eventually took a teaching position at New York University. The parallels to Allen Tate are remarkable. After moving to New York and then traveling around Europe on a Guggenheim Fellowship, he found himself out of place and feeling hopeless. Both men momentarily flocked to this kind of cosmopolitan way of life only to find it missing something. According to White, Berry gave up his position at NYU and decided to return to Kentucky to become a farmer. For Berry, NYU did not provide the richness of life that he found on the farm. The city felt disconnected and too fast. He longed for connection to the land and connection to community. He longed for a sense of home.

Berry speaks about the idea of not being able to go home again. He said at the time, “home – the place, the countryside – was still there, pretty much as I left it, and there was no reason I could not go back to it if I wanted” (White 13). He saw that home, Kentucky, to be part of his destiny. He speaks of his connection to his home as something he could never leave behind, even by going to another place. His sense of identity was tied to the Kentucky landscape, tied to those Kentucky farms.
and stories and traditions. His sense of home was something he carried with him – and returned to when he realized how important those roots and the defense of an agrarian way of life were.

II. Guiding Metaphors

He carried with him a commitment and framed his decision to leave academia through the guiding metaphors examined below. Wendell Berry's essays and fiction focus on these major metaphors. I will look to many chapters from *The Unsettling of America*, a text written between the years of 1974 and 1977. I will look to shorter pieces found in encyclopedic work as well – both fiction and nonfiction.

This approach to looking at large bodies of work is helpful in that it almost lends itself to a type of coding. One begins to see the ways in which metaphors surface and evolve for scholars. Most of the metaphors looked at in this chapter overlap in some ways – character is part of form, fragmentation is the other side of wholeness, and so on.

A. Character

“The disease of the modern character is specialization...We then begin to see the grotesquery – indeed the impossibility – of a community wholeness that divorces itself from any idea of personal wholeness”

*(The Unsettling of America 19)*
In the second chapter of *The Unsettling of America*, titled “The Ecological Crisis as a Crisis of Character,” Berry begins by quoting Confucius. He quotes “wanting good government in their states, they first established order in their own families; wanting order in the home, they first disciplined themselves” (16). One can see the way Berry is building from the notion that order in one area permeates and creates order in other spheres. It is from small order that we can create a larger sense of order. For Berry, this ordering is a way to show that behaviors match beliefs. In allowing for beliefs to inform our behaviors, we build and show character. This ordering of oneself provides wholeness. He goes on to state that without personal wholeness we can never have community wholeness.

Berry outlines the dangers of specialization in an industrial age. He says,

> What happens under the rule of specialization is that, though society becomes more and more intricate, it has less and less structure. It becomes more and more organized, but less and less orderly. The community disintegrates because it loses the necessary understandings, forms, and enactments of the relations among materials and processes, principles and actions, ideals and realities, past and present, present and future, men and women, body and spirit, city and country, civilization and wilderness, growth and decay, life and death – just as the individual character loses the sense of a

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53 This is a sentiment echoed by Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America* and mentioned in the opening chapter of this dissertation. For de Tocqueville, behaviors matching beliefs indicated a grounded person and good character.
responsible involvement in the relations. (The Unsettling of America 21)

From Berry's perspective, man is no longer reflective on his foundational sources, but is instead in a state of disorder likened to reckless urban sprawl that destroys fields and replaces them with pavement. The specialization of modernity disconnects man and lends itself to a fragmentation of more than work – it leads to a fragmentation of character as well.

This metaphor is carried another essay, “The Ecological Crisis as a Crisis of Agriculture.” In this chapter, Berry moves the metaphor of character into one that deals with the metaphor of consumer. If one can build from a place where connections and responsibility are central and understood, one can become responsible and connected in her consumption. Berry speaks of needing “intimate knowledge, the most sensitive responsiveness and responsibility” that does not assume any generalizations in our treatment of people or places (31). He believes, “as knowledge is generalized, essential values are destroyed” (31). The first step in Berry’s agrarian paradigm, the first way to address our crisis of culture, our sick culture, is to stress the importance of individual ordering, which will lead to developing character and a responsiveness to and in the world that could create a deeper connection and appreciation of states, families, homes.

Character comes from order and from wholeness. I look at the metaphor of wholeness within the conversation of fragmentation and gestalt in the section that follows. It is easy to see now the ways in which these metaphors inform one another, build from and connect to one another. Character and wholeness cannot be
discussed without an understanding of the dangers of fragmentation and the power of gestalt.

B. Fragmentation and Gestalt

“The agrarian mind is, at bottom, a religious mind... It prefers the Creation itself to the powers and quantities to which it can be reduced”

(The New Agrarianism 70)

In his essay in The New Agrarianism, Berry begins by quoting Allen Tate. The quote is taken from Tate’s contribution to I’ll Take My Stand. In fact, the title of Berry’s piece is taken from Tate’s essay. “The Whole Horse” begins with Allen Tate’s observation on the danger of the modern mind, a mind that does not see “the whole horse” but instead half a horse. The half that is perceived is then thought of in terms of horsepower, machinery, not as the full-dimensioned, grass eating horse. This “half of a horse” fragmentation created by industry leads to the separation of people and places from their histories.

Berry addresses this dissociation of ourselves from what we use,

To the extent that we participate in the industrial economy, we do not know the histories of our families or of our habitats or of our meals.

This is an economy, and in fact a culture of the one-night stand. “I had a good time,” says the industrial lover, “but don’t ask me my last name.” Just so, the industrial eater says to the svelte industrial hog.

54 Since connectivity became such an important metaphor in studying the agrarians, I loved the moments when the three central thinkers explored in this dissertation connected somehow.
“We’ll be together at breakfast, I don’t want to see you before then, and I won’t care to remember you afterwards. (64)

This fragmentation and dissociation, according to Berry, leaves little room for satisfaction. This lack of satisfaction feeds our desire to consume more and more – we are not connected to our goods, so the false promise of satisfaction from a “newer commodity” propels us to consume without reflection, and to never address what it is we really need.

This unending search for satisfaction is the monster of modernity, “If things do not last, are not made to last, they can have no histories, and we who use these things can have no memories” (“The Whole Horse” 65). Think of a dining room table – one that has been in a family for years. Those who gather around it are told stories of who came before, what came before – conversations, food, celebrations. Contrast that with the trend of transitory tables, built poorly, bought with the purpose of being able to buy a new one when the mood strikes or when the décor changes.

Berry’s “countervailing idea by which we might correct the industrial idea” is stated clearly in this essay (“The Whole Horse 66). He says, “We will not have to look hard to find it, for there is only one, and that is agrarianism” (“The Whole Horse” 67). For Berry, agrarianism is more than an idea, it is a practice, a set of beliefs set into motion, a culture in its own right.

On the other end of the fragmentation metaphor is the notion of gestalt. It was noted in Richard Weaver’s chapter the gestalt informed his work as well. For Berry, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts – and reducing a whole to parts
is not helpful in appreciation and satisfaction. The household centers everything in Berry’s agrarian paradigm and within this center and from this center the family functions within roles and with the landscape to create something more meaningful than any one of those elements alone. Berry says of the agrarian mind, “It prefers the Creation itself to the powers and quantities to which it can be reduced” (“The Whole Horse” 70).

The idea that man comes together in the spirit of gestalt carries into Berry’s piece “The Agricultural Crisis as a Crisis of Culture.” Berry says in that essay, “A healthy culture is a communal order of memory, insight, value, work, conviviality, reverence, aspiration” (43). These elements come together, inform one another, work together to make one whole. Viewing or attempting to understand any one element in isolation takes away from the fullness of the ways in which elements inform and enhance one another. Berry goes on to speak of this healthy gestalt culture and highlights limits, another key metaphor in agrarian writing and one explored below, as central to understanding and participating in the world. The acknowledgement of connectivity and history “reveals the human necessities and the human limits. It clarifies our inescapable bonds to the earth and to each other” (43). It ensures that when work is done, it is done well.

The element of interconnectivity is present in so much of Berry’s work, and agrarian writings from Tate and Weaver as well. The idea that you cannot do just one thing: one thing affects everything. Berry believes that “the definitive

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55 Note that when Berry talks of being in the world, he is talking about a very local place in which we are connected to and responsible for. It is only from our local worlds that we can live responsibly in the world at large.
relationships in the universe are thus not competitive but interdependent” (47). Berry ends his chapter on the crisis of agriculture: “And it is within unity that we see the hideousness and destructiveness of the fragmentary – the kind of mind, for example, that can introduce a production machine “efficiency” without troubling about its effect on workers, on the product, and on consumers” (48). The cooperation and integration that Berry sees as fundamental to human flourishing has been replaced by industry's insistence on progress, fragmentation, and specialization.

In *The Body and the Earth*, Berry looks to tradition to save us, to strengthen identity. Fragmentation is a disease. Health is rooted in wholeness. Berry writes, “The world health belongs to a family of words, a listing of which will suggest how far the consideration of health must carry us: heal, whole, wholesome, hale, hallow, holy” (103). Berry employs strong diction in his discussion of fragmentation and wholeness throughout this piece. Fragmentation is connected to disorder, disease, loneliness, confusion. Wholeness is health, interdependent, healing.

Isolation surfaces as a metaphor. The isolation of the body is problematic for Berry, isolation created by modernity’s fragmentation. The body and the soul need to be connected – the isolation of the body runs parallel to the isolation of the land. Both are disconnected from spirit. Berry uses the word confluence in this essay – a meeting place, the flowing together of man and nature, body and spirit is vital to an agrarian way of life.

It is important to see the texture of being distinct while remaining interdependent. Berry acknowledges, “I do not want to speak of unity misleadingly
or too simply. Obvious distinctions can be made between body and soul, one body and other bodies, body and world, etc. But these things that appear to be distinct are nevertheless caught in a network of mutual dependence and influence that is the substantiation of their unity” (110). Man is part of a network, part of a community in which his actions and reactions have consequences to those around him.

Berry even attributes the rising identity crises of the late twentieth century to the disease of fragmentation and disconnection. The disconnection between mind and body is also a disconnection between people and place. Within the fissure, identity is lost. For Berry, restoration of these connection will lead to a restoration of identity. Man does indeed define himself based on the ground on which he stands—literally and figuratively. That which is divided (as in body and mind as separate, not interdependent) cannot have durability. It is in unity that man has durability.

The treatment of the isolation of the body and dissatisfaction of the body is interesting. Berry ties our dissatisfaction to isolation, insisting that “For the appropriate standard for the body— that is, health— has been replaced, not even by another standard, but by very exclusive physical models...it is an exclusive, narrowly defined ideal which affects destructively whatever it does not include” (112). Not only does progress divide the body and spirit, progress also divides the sexes and dismembers the household. Berry talks of this dismemberment, acknowledging that a man connected to the earth is all at once a husband, a farmer, a midwife, a nurturer of life. A man connected thusly is domestic and bound to the household. Progress, however, “transforms him into a technologies of production” severing his tie to the household (116).
Berry writes of the chapter *The Body and the Earth*, "What I have been trying to do is to define a pattern of disintegration that is at once cultural and agricultural" (123). This pattern of fragmentation in his historical moment, the push for progress, is a disease of people and the land. Richard Weaver addresses this fragmentation in much of his body of work with attention to the issue of specialization or technical knowledge. Knowledge in modernity was not connection in the way a humanities education would encourage. Each man could learn to do one thing well without having to work at a well-rounded sense of being or learning.

Berry enters into the conversation the metaphor of fidelity as an element necessary in healing the disease of fragmentation. His treatment of the issue begins with the topic of marriage but is an issue significant and applicable to all relationships. Fidelity is a virtue and a practice, and an element essential in a marriage to another or a marriage to a community (as Berry ends up framing it in the chapter). He insists, “There is an uncanny resemblance between our behavior toward each other and behavior toward the earth” (124). This relationship to a home is central to the agrarian paradigm and addressed in more depth in the next section.

C. The Local

“Places differ from one another, the local economists say, and therefore we must behave with unique consideration in each one” (*The New Agrarianism* 73)

“The agrarian mind...depends on and insists on knowing very
The metaphor of the local rests securely in the center of many agrarian documents. Berry examines the implications of the local in his essay “Living in the Future: The ”Modern” Agricultural Ideal” in *The Unsettling of America*. The local lends itself to definition, identity, and rootedness. Modernity, as Berry sees it, redefines geography, dismisses the local in order to create the sense that man could be anywhere. For Berry, moving away from local, from somewhere, has implication beyond geography, “This generalized sense of worldly whereabouts is a reflection of another kind of bewilderment: this modern person does not know where he is morally either” (52). One can hear the importance of recognizing a particular place. It is from identifying with a particular place that one gains and defines ground on which to stand morally.

In “The Whole Horse,” Berry talks about what propels modernity, highlight words like globalization, global economy and contrasts these key ideas with agrarian ideals and metaphors: community, place, family, etc. For Berry, the latter list allows one to see the uniqueness of every place. He says in the essay, “Places differ from one another...therefore we must behave with unique consideration in each one; the ability to tender an appropriate practical regard and respect to each place in its difference is a kind of freedom”(73). Within this appreciation of the local, Berry is careful to texture his stance, it is not that everyone needs to become a farmer, or that cities do not have a place in our country; his work points instead to the idea of having agrarian responsibilities and knowledge. Berry writes, “Between particular local histories and biographies”
(*The New Agrarianism* 68)
these two programs – the industrial and the agrarian, the global and the local – the most critical difference is that of knowledge” (74). Berry recognizes that the global and the local create difference ways of the being in the world.

The global economy encourages a kind of ignorance in which consumers not only have no connection to the histories of their products, they have no connection to the producers. Without a sense of the history, of the “where,” Berry argues we stop caring about products, people, and places. The local economy, on the other hand, has at the center of its model producers and consumer as neighbors. This local sense gives consumers an invested interest in products, in community, in place. The local gives consumer and producers a relationship beyond the product and fosters responsibility and trustworthiness. In addition to a sense of responsibility, the local is also vital to value.

Berry begins his seventh chapter in “The Body and the Earth” by asking a series of questions about connectivity, and frames them first by remaindering us of limits, place, and order. Again, one can see the way each one of these metaphors is part of the other. This discussion of limits from “The Body and the Earth” also relates to and develops the conversation of fragmentation and gestalt discussed above.

Our understanding of the world hinges upon our awareness of human limits and our relationship toward the earth. He asks, “What connections or responsibilities do we maintain between our bodies and the earth?” (97). In the pages that follow, Berry looks at the ways in which man attempts to conquer nature, coming to the ultimate conclusion that not only can man not control or conquer
nature, it is dangerous to try. Man is not the master. Berry’s stance moves us toward balance within understanding human limits; man is part of nature.

Berry also uses this chapter to address the growing topic of globalization. Moving through treatment of the importance of unity, of community, of fidelity, Berry anchors his chapter “The Body and the Earth” in the homeland and the household. He says,

One cannot live in the world; that is one cannot become, in the easy, generalizing sense with which the phrase is commonly use, a “world citizen.” There can be no such thing as a “global village.” No matter how much one may love the world as a whole, one can live fully in it only by living responsibly in some small part of it. (123)

This stance is controversial, but for Berry this understanding and nurturing of the local gives man his identity. He goes on “Where we live and who we live there with define the terms of our relationship to the world and to humanity. We thus come again to the paradox that one can become whole only by the responsible acceptance of one’s partiality” (123). This piece of the agrarian philosophy is complicated, especially in a historical moment where the issue of globalization is a growing and significant topic in scholarship (see Appiah, Nussbaum, Roberts). For many of the agrarians, man must first be a responsible citizen of a particular place in order to be a responsible citizen in relation to other places. There is movement from recognition and appreciation of the particular to something larger. It is in the particular that identity can be clear and defined. For Berry, there is something powerful in moving from the particular to the general. We live at home and in the
world. One must be rooted first in order to grow, and in some sense in order to move. Berry believes it is impossible for man “to love his own place in the world and yet deal destructively with other places” (“The Body and the Earth” 123). We are responsible in our partiality, and that responsibility carries us out into the world.

The way in which we care for place is reflective on the way in which we care for one another. Berry sees it as impossible (a word he uses also in reference to loving the particular as lending itself to loving in general) “to care for each other more or differently than we care for the earth” (123). In Berry’s work, one hears this parallel over and over between relationship to one another and relationship to the earth. The implication within the field of the philosophy of communication is connected to standpoint and bias, developed through understanding the local and limits. In order to communicate with another, we must first understand the ground on which we stand. In order to understand that ground, we must connect to the landscape around us, it influences our entrance into the conversation, our engagement with the historical moment. The fact that Berry grew up in Kentucky has as much of an impact on his philosophy as the family who raised him, the books he read, the work he did.

The relationship to one’s work is significant to Berry’s development of the agrarian paradigm as well. In “Going to Work,” an essay in The Essential Agrarian Reader, Berry begins by stating simply: “To live, one must go to work” (259). He moves on (numbering his insights as he goes) to assert that in order to work, we must work in a place. And that work will have an influence first on that place and
then on all the other places where its products are used. This influence means (should mean) that we must take responsibility for our work. In order to further establish a connection between work and place, Berry asks three questions: 1) Who are we? 2) Where are we? 3) What do we have, in this place and in ourselves, that is good? In the first question, Berry is digging for answers to where we came from, what we learned there, why we left, why we stayed. In addressing what Berry sees as the crisis of modernity – confusing needs and wants, he looks to history and the preservation of the past to heal the unreflective. An awareness of the past connects man to the future. He begins to ask himself how his actions, how his work will affect the community.

III. Implications for Communication Philosophy of Communication from the bias of an Agrarian Perspective

In Berry’s short story “The Boundary,” he follows a recurring character from his fiction, Mat Feltner, as he walks the boundary of his family farm. Mat is old, his son died in World War II, and most of his friends are gone. The story of Mat walking along his farm illuminates the agrarian tradition with great clarity. By being rooted in place, Mat can recall deeply his bonds to people both living and dead linked to the farm. His familiarity of the place, the landscape, every inch is recounted: “It has been years since he has walked that fence himself, and he can see in his mind, as clearly as if he were there perhaps five place where the winter spates of Shade
Branch might have torn out the wire” (241). As he walks along the boundary, he feels the history of the place, he feels his father and his son walk along with him. Berry writes so beautiful, “His father and Virgil are with him, moving along up the opposite side of the branch as he moves up his side. He cannot always see them, but he knows they are there” (254). They are present in the trees, in the path, in the grass.

In a lot of ways, within the agrarian paradigm you are never alone. You carry the past into the present and think about the ways in which the present will impact the future. Mat in his journey along the fence is “thinking of Margaret and of all that his plighting with her has led to. He is thinking of the membership of the fields that he has belong to all his life, and will belong to while he breathes, and afterward. He is thinking of the living ones of that membership – at work today in the field that the dead were at work in before them” (260). In this moment, Mat realizes he is blessed. The awareness of the interconnectedness of time, of work, of place contributes to an intentionality in living and communicating.

This dissertation chapter is significant in the study of the philosophy of communication in that it asks questions of identity, place, and communication from those spheres. For me, this chapter brings to light Appiah’s notion that differences situate us. For Berry, those differences are illuminated in the awareness and acceptance of local roots. Appiah’s notion of cosmopolitanism is rooted in the notion that we must take seriously particular human lives and stories, value those differences, and learn from them.
The local may have some negative connotations in the postmodern historical moment (see Roberts), but the agrarian paradigm offers texture to the idea of moving from the local to difference and understanding within that difference. Berry’s work sets limits that allow us to acknowledge both our own ground as well as the ground of another. Berry’s agrarianism gives us hope in the strength of ground. Berry’s ground, while even more literal than Tate’s or Weaver’s, is still ground that can be carried figuratively once it is known.

The next chapter connects the idea of identity to agrarianism by examining scholarship’s connection to provinciality and identity.
Chapter 6 – Conclusion: Ground upon which to Stand

“Find the shortest, simplest way between the earth, the hands and the mouth.”

- Lanza Del Vasto

“But if we make a career of being unaccountable, we have lost something essential to our humanity, and we may well become a burden or a threat to those around us. A community can support a number of people who are just passing through, or who care about no one's needs but their own; the greater the proportion of such people, however, the move vulnerable the community, until eventually it breaks down. That is true on any scale, from a household to a planet.”

- Scott Russel Sanders

In The Human Condition, Hannah Arendt comments on the limitless character of the modern age. She writes, "Speed has conquered space; and though this conquering process finds its limit at the unconquerable boundary of the simultaneous presence of one body at two different places, it has made distance meaningless" (25). Further classifying modernity, Ronald C. Arnett contends that modernity lives by the metaphor of expansion without limits ("Defining a Philosophy of Communication" 1). An agrarian philosophy stresses the importance of being situated within limits in order to understand the self and the relationship of
the self to the community and land around her. An understanding of the significance of provinciality situates an agrarian paradigm and the way in which human beings dwell in the world. Arnett writes, “It is the alterity (difference) of what we do not do that assists in shaping the understanding (identity) of the practices of philosophy of communication” (“Defining Philosophy of Communication” 4). The agrarian paradigm as explored in this dissertation takes seriously both the local and the global and the way in which those forces can inform identity and community.

What does the agrarian movement say about and in relation to narrative and identity? Definitions of the philosophy of communication must be explored in order to illuminate the interplay between philosophy of communication and the agrarian paradigm. Metaphors of narrative, alterity, provinciality, and cosmopolitanism must be included. After taking seriously the agrarian paradigm, this conversation continues to communicate how can one can apply and connect it to the study of the philosophy of communication. The driving metaphors of agrarian framework paired with common metaphors in communication scholarship come together to texture the philosophy of communication and the way in which we understand and communicate about existence and identity.

The agrarian movement moves beyond a commentary on the modern marketplace, is much more than a defense of the South, and cannot be limited to a debate of Agrarian versus Industrial. Allen Tate, Richard Weaver, and Wendell Berry show us how an agrarian paradigm is connected and essential to the human condition and human communication. It remains important that “from a philosophy of communication perspective, the goal is understanding, not the accumulation of
unassailable truth” (“Defining a Philosophy of Communication” 12). Central to the
agrarian paradigms is the idea of understanding responsibility through cultivation
of the land. The parallel to communication is the idea of understanding
responsibility through the articulation and recognition of the particular
philosophical ground on which we stand.

The metaphors of narrative and identity come together in the work of Paul
Ricoeur. Ricoeur writes, “The narrative constructs the identity of the character,
what can be called his or her narrative identity, in constructing that of the story told.
It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character” (Oneself as
Another 147). For Ricoeur, we explore and understand our personal identities in the
same way we explore and understand identities in stories. In After Virtue, Alasdair
MacIntyre positions narrative as the framework from which we make decisions.
MacIntyre states, “I can only answer the question, ‘What am I to do?’ if I can answer
the prior question, ‘Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?’” (216). Quite
simply, the way in which we are embedded in a narrative moves us to action.

I. Narrative, Language, Agrarianism

Narrative, language, and agrarianism inform the notion of ground and the
notion of articulation and understanding of our ground as communicated through
petite narrative structures. I am looking at the interplay between narrative and the
agrarian paradigm. Within this exploration we see the power and importance of
language in shaping ourselves, communicating identity, and understanding the
world around us. Exploring the interplay between narrative and the agrarian

One can see the way in which narrative and language are tied together; in understanding the power of story, we see the power of language as well. The narrative paradigm relies on active participants in order for stories to move us to action. The narrative paradigm rests on the notion that we can find value in stories. The agrarian paradigm as presented in this dissertation also relies heavily on story and stresses the importance of telling stories about place – which we will see in the section on provinciality and identity – can lend itself to a better understanding of one’s role and responsibility in the world at large. Beginning with a stress on narrative, and the power of language, the section moves into an exploration of difference and an awareness of the importance of the movement of part to whole.

A. On Narrative and Language

Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* and Walter Fisher's *Human Communication as Narration* recognize us as storytellers; Fisher calls us “homo-narans” in his narrative paradigm. Arthur Bochner and Carolyn Ellis’s essay “Which Way to Turn,” also highlights our storytelling nature. In stories we can connect, we can find truth, and we can move people into action. Within the walls of stories, we are asked to participate, to submerge ourselves in a narrative, into a life, and become part of another perspective. Bochner and Ellis see this as an absolutely ethical experience, in that experiencing another we are asking questions about what is good, what is true, what can be constant (“Which Way to Turn”). Our personal
narratives are grounded in our experiences, our beliefs, our behaviors; as Clifford Geertz sees it, these things come together to form our “webs of significance” (see extended discussion on webs of significance in *The Interpretation of Culture*).

Stories guide our behavior (see Fisher’s work in *Human Communication As Narration*) and the same story told at different points throughout history will resonate in different ways. That is why it is essential to return to the story of the agrarians. What do these stories say to modernity? Fisher believes that knowledge is constructed through stories. He writes, “knowledge...is configured narratively, as a component in a larger story implying the being of a certain kind of person, a person with a particular worldview, with a specific self-concept, and with characteristic ways of relating to others” (17). We find and communicate our truths and our identity through stories. The narrative paradigm allows us to illuminate our own (and in some sense “try on” other’s) philosophical presuppositions that give us ground. According to Fisher, we find value in stories.

By entering into this dissertation through the narrative paradigm, I invite a symbolic, rhetorical experience with the texts, the subject matter, the authors that encourages a kind of co-authorship of this particular story. Fisher thinks of this perspective as “providing plots that are always in the process of re-creation rather than existing as settled scripts” (18). Narrative can enhance our understanding of the human story with attention to individual stories.

There is a strong connection in the agrarian paradigm to storytelling, to that kind of oral testimony that seems to be vanishing in our historical moment, especially in the Western world. The agrarians relied on word of mouth to pass
down traditions, to strengthen a sense of family and a connection to the land. John Duffy makes a case for the richness of orality in understanding culture. He sees oral testimony linked deeply to values and attitudes that are linked deeply to a disclosure of a “full range of human experience, rational, and emotional (84). For Duffy, orality invites collaboration between the listener and the speaker in a different way than the written word does. Duffy’s case for orality fits loosely; here I want to stress the importance of that collaboration, which I believe can happen in literacy as well. Moving Duffy’s insights into a Gadamerian fusion of horizons helps.

Duffy’s hermeneutic connects to Gadamer’s fusion of horizon’s outlined in *Truth and Method*, and we see the potential for a text, a story to be understood and opened in a different and powerful way. That is what hermeneutics is about -- understanding texts. Gadamer and Duffy both argue for a fusion of perspectives in order to illuminate understanding. Meaning can emerge in the “between” of dialogue. (*Between Man and Man*). For Duffy, that dialogue is literal; it is “co-operative undertaking … in the construction of the past” (87). For Gadamer, that fusion can happen even between an author no longer living and a contemporary reader.

Krista Radcliffe would call this fusion of horizons *rhetorical listening* (for extended discussion see *Rhetorical Listening*) which allows a person to attend to a text, to a historical moment or another person in order to open the text, to encourage the text and the ideas within to speak, to offer a particular truth. This fusion of horizons allows a *listening to* not a *listening for* that can lend itself to revelatory moments. In listening to the stories of the agrarians, I did not impose
metaphors upon a text, I allowed the metaphors to reveal themselves. Again, while I understand Duffy's claims on orality and find them helpful as the agrarian tradition was grounded in orality, I am highlighting the benefit of rhetorically listening to those stories. There what Martin Buber calls genuine dialogue in “the between” of those moments, when one is listening to a particular being with the intention of understanding (*I and Thou*).

For Radcliffe and Buber, there is a meeting place of sorts, a way in which a person can engage an idea, an event, or another person that encourages an experience primarily in meeting the other. Buber believes that without the thou or you, the I cannot exist (*I and Thou*). The I develops in relation to a link with the thou.

The elements of narrative and language are important to the philosophy of communication in that both aid in development of meaning, value, and reason. Through narrative and language one can begin to understand community and situatedness. The importance of situatedness within a community, within place is central for the agrarian philosophy.

**B. Interplay between Narrative and Agrarianism**

The agrarian paradigm encourages finding ground in lived experiences, in sharing those experiences, and in meeting the other on her ground. The agrarian paradigm is about listening to the story of the past as told by the land and by those who inhabit that land. Allen Tate, Richard Weaver, and Wendell Barry provide a link from the I to thou that gives us a larger landscape of ideas and philosophies. The
relationship between agrarianism and narrative is one rooted in the notion of ground.

My hope is that by working with the agrarian writers in this dissertation specifically, I am collecting their stories in order to gain understanding into what propelled them and what they were reacting to in their historical moments. Without this kind of attention to history, I fear their traditions could be otherwise lost. The previous chapters gave glimpses into Allen Tate’s story of finding identity through his travels away from and back to home. Richard Weaver told stories of exile at the University of Chicago in order to enhance his social commentary as well as his connection to the land. Wendell Berry gave up the Kentucky landscape only to return again, more tied to the place he called home – his story: you can go home again.

The agrarian paradigm seems to be most effective in communicating its truths and ideals when paired with the narrative paradigm. Through stories we begin to understand what concurrently centers and propels the agrarian philosophy. In the Contemporary Agrarian Reader, leading agrarian Scott Russel Sanders contends that the agrarian paradigm is in many ways a simple challenge: live responsibly at home. Russel Sanders simultaneously explores this challenge and offers us testimony for the rhetorical power of narrative in the agrarian paradigm. He takes this notion of living responsibility head on in his essay on baking bread with his daughter and two neighborhood girls. The essay is a glimpse into the simple moments, the small moments that make us bigger, that help us make the world around us better.
The essay takes us through a reflection of the importance of a sense of being in place, the strength of feeling connection to memories of times past as well as connection to the present. He talks about his connection to the neighbor girls – he knows their parents, parts of their story, which enhance the experience they are sharing in his country kitchen. An experience “common because it is ordinary, because we make it together, because it binds us through time to the rest of humanity and through our bodies to the rest of nature” (“The Common Life” 222). It is a paradoxical moment – simple, but not.

At the heart of this story about making bread lie questions of self and society. Part of the dominant narrative of modernity is a privileging of the individual as savior (231). Through his story, Sanders nuances the complexity of an individual within a community. According to Sanders, modern literature and film have turned the community into the villain and celebrated the individual who rebels against that community. What this separation causes in Sanders story is a neglect of the common good. There is hope, of course, in that there has been a tradition of care in communities around the world for centuries. As Sanders notes, “The words community, communion, and communicate all derive from common, and the two syllables of common grow from separate roots, the first meaning “together” or “next to,” the second having to do with barter or exchange” (231). Sanders tells stories, and we all have our own stories, of communities pulling together in times of tragedy and triumph – communities coming together to put out fires, rebuild homes, comfort and cook for a widow, share tomatoes from their vegetable garden.

As initial quotation of this chapter suggests, “find the shortest,
simplest way between the earth, the hands and the mouth.” Not only does this philosophy apply to our food production, but also it runs parallel to the notion of the importance of behaviors matching beliefs. The intentionality with which we approach and explore our philosophical ground is exhibited in our words and deeds. What we say must match what we do, and that marriage can come out of a relationship to and understanding of the ground beneath us.

For agrarian thinkers Allen Tate, Richard Weaver, and Wendell Berry, the land grounded their narratives as well as the way they talked about and perceived the narratives around them. The dominant narrative of modernity is one of progress, industry, the machine. This dissertation takes seriously the elements that shaped the ground from which Allen Tate, Richard Weaver, and Wendell Berry spoke and wrote. I explored their writings and see the agrarian paradigm as a metaphor that can move us from the literal land to figurative ground.

Tate, Weaver, and Berry understood the power of words, and the ways in which the stories we tell and lives we live can move people into and through times of great and important social change. What these men affirm is that language is powerful. One can turn to a leading authority on hermeneutics to offer illumination on this perspective. In his work on hermeneutics and interpretation, Richard Palmer speaks to the influence of language. He says:

Language shapes man’s seeing and his thought – both his conception of himself and his world (the two are not so separate as they may seem). His very vision of reality is shaped by language. Far more than man realizes, he channels through language the various facets of his
living – his worshipping, loving, social behavior, abstract thought;
even the shape of his feelings is conformed to language. If the matter
is considered deeply, it becomes apparent that language is the
"medium" in which we live, and move, and have our being. (9)

Language shapes our seeing, language shapes the world in which we move. Human
beings live through language. Language shapes our behaviors and beliefs. Allen
Tate, Richard Weaver, Wendell Berry, through their language, through their
determination to speak against the dominant narrative of modernity, shaped and
changed the world around them.

The goal of putting the philosophy of communication and the agrarian
movement in conversation is to ask questions about the ground beneath our feet,
about principles that guide our discourse, about elements that inform our approach
to communication. I believe strength lies in the particulars of the stories we tell and
in difference. By listening and attending to narrative and identity, by taking those
particulars seriously, they can inform the ground from which we build both the
public and the private, the ground from which we communicate standpoint and bias.

The agrarians encourage us to listen to stories, to be attentive to our land, to
take responsibility for our ground. This focus of attention incorporates the notion of
a dialogic ethic akin to Pat Arneson’s interpretive understanding. For Arneson, the
interaction between a person and particular subject matter rests in an
understanding of three elements. She includes in her work on a dialogic ethic an
awareness of historical contexts, “an awareness of the significance of lived-
experience, hermeneutical reflection, critical questions, and dialogue between
different horizons and world views,” and an awareness of language (“A Dialogic
Ethic” 145). This allows for recognition of particulars within commonalities informs
the relationship between the text and the interpreter. There are indeed
commonalities with the human condition that are appreciated and communicated
more accurately when we allow for these elements to be uniquely situated. There is
beauty in difference.

Not only is the concept of storytelling important, but also it is the difference
illuminated and communicated through those stories that help us understand our
ground and our selves. The following section will add texture to the idea of story by
attending to the particulars within the walls of stories that make them so powerful.

II. Alterity, Provinciality, and Agrarianism

The relationship between alterity, provinciality, and the agrarian paradigm
requires attention. Provinciality and alterity appear together because the terms
come to define one another, be part of one another in this discussion. It is through
provinciality that we come to understand alterity and because of alterity that we can
value provinciality. One can also move from the valuing of provinciality to a greater
valuing of cosmopolitanism (as seen in Appiah and Nussbaum’s work below).

The work on alterity and provinciality is fluid with narrative and language. It
is through narrative that one begins to articulate ties to and situatedness within the
local. Within the walls of stories, we begin to understand the value of alterity in
identity. The agrarian paradigm encourages us to look first to the local and be
aware of our responsibility to that particular community. From that particular, we
can understand and value difference – and take our sense of responsibility out into
the world.

A. On Alterity and Provinciality

Alterity and provinciality contribute to the way in which we understand the
role of limits and particulars in constructing identity. The attention to the
construction of identity is important in a historical moment that wants to cast away
the provincial, which wants to disconnect us from stories, traditions and narrative.
This dissertation asks that we take the question of identity in postmodernity
seriously and offers the agrarian paradigm as a place to start in response to our
fragmentation.

For Kathleen Glenister Roberts in *Alterity and Narrative*, alterity is a
necessary element in coming into or defining identity. That alterity is recognized
and perhaps even appreciated within and through stories. As noted throughout this
dissertation, the agrarian tradition is rich in storytelling and in being rooted in those
stories. The recovery of identity, according to Roberts, rests upon the recovery of
alterity; alterity is kept in stories and particulars. Agrarians see alterity in the local.

Levinas fits in a strange way, the earth as the other, calling us into
responsibility. The Other calls us into existence and within that role, that
responsibility, we must think also of the land. Ronald C. Arnett deepens this
connection in his piece “Provinciality and the Face of the Other,” addressing the
negative connotation the provincial carries with it in modernity. Arnett speaks to
the Levinasian ethic of proper names – the search for which can only begin with
proper coordinates. Arnett writes, “First a proper name has limits and begins in the local...proper names begin with attentiveness to “saying” in the local” (73).

Agrarianism, the local, the provincial give us standpoint and allow difference to illuminate ground and therefore structure to identity, to call out identity.

The debate and questions surrounding a global sense of community and identity versus a provincial one is quite complicated. Walter Fisher, Clifford G. Christians, Seyla Benhabib, Martha Nussbaum, Alasdair MacIntyre, Kathleen Gleinister Roberts, and on and on have explored communication ethics and communicative implications from within these concepts. The roots of the term cosmopolitanism can be traced back to Immanuel Kant. In *Perpetual Peace*, Kant outlines his doctrine of cosmopolitanism – one that includes the duty of hospitality. Kant’s notion of hospitality encourages welcoming an other (a stranger) onto our land. Hospitality is innately part of the agrarian paradigm. Agrarians tend to their land for many reasons, and the idea of providing for a community and beyond is built into their dedication and cultivation. Providing for one’s family may be the starting point of the agrarian farm, but the intention is for growth.

The agrarian paradigm recognizes that attention to the local can grow outward. Michael W. McConnell’s work insists, “Human affections begin close to home; wider circles of affection grow out of, and are dependent upon, the closer and more natural ties” (*For Love of Country* 79). He goes on to argue that true “citizens of the world” are born in a strong local tradition that encourages acceptance of parallel cultures in which flaws are celebrated and acknowledged. For Arnett this notion of examining parallel cultures through definition of one’s own textures the
way in which we think about the philosophy of communication and communicative ground. Arnett writes “The philosophy of communication takes us to judgment of the particular and the necessity of offering a public accounting of what we understand” (“Defining a Philosophy of Communication” 5). In this view, we constantly are offering a road map of particulars – both our own and the particulars we observe and engage in meeting the other. The agrarian paradigm holds centrally the notion of particulars. Particulars are roots for agrarian writers; we come to definitions based on those roots.

B. On Agrarianism

The world, for the scholars mentioned above and for the agrarians looked at in this dissertation, is rooted in particulars. I have thought often of Alexander Pope's “An Essay on Man” (which Sissela Bok also quotes in her essay “From Part to Whole); Pope writes,

\[
\begin{align*}
\textit{God loves from Whole to Parts: but human soul} \\
\textit{Must rise from Individual to the Whole.} \\
\textit{Self-love but serves the virtuous mind to wake,} \\
\textit{As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake;} \\
\textit{The centre mov'd, a circle strait succeeds,} \\
\textit{Another still, and still another spreads,} \\
\textit{Friend, parent, neighbour, first it will embrace,} \\
\textit{His country next, and next all human race. (The Major Works 308 )}
\end{align*}
\]

It feels paradoxical to think of needing roots in order to move, but it is the notion of
needing roots in order to grow that resonates. There is a bond forged in the local that encourages, allows for bonds in the global. Appiah examines this rooted cosmopolitanism – insisting that one can still be attached to a place, can come to another situated and aware of the local while loving the difference the other brings.

I am not arguing through the agrarian paradigm that the local is somehow “better” than the global; instead, I simply see attention to the local as a focus that can be used in conjunction with the global to enlarge our viewing of and being in the world. In Kwame Anthony Appiah’s book *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, Appiah recognizes that a cosmopolitan approach to the world can be enhanced by attention to the local. Appiah writes of our responsibility to one another. He says, “that [must] we take seriously the value not just of human life but of particular human lives, which means taking an interest in the practices and beliefs that lend them significance” (xv). Appiah situates his cosmopolitanism within a strong understanding of the local. He goes on, “People are different, the cosmopolitan knows, and there is much to learn from our difference” (xv). Again, this dissertation argues only for that attention to the local, without it, we cannot truly know ourselves or one another.

If one returns to any one of the agrarians looked at in this dissertation, each moved from part to whole. Their responsibility and identity was tied to a particular place, but their contribution and attention went beyond that place. Weaver spent much of his life contributing to the community of the University of Chicago; he was part of the Great Books initiative. His commitment to a liberal arts education was born out of his understanding of the ground beneath his feet. The connection
between agrarianism and identity is born out of attention to the local and can move to an appreciation of the global. The next section of this dissertation moves this conversation back into the realm of implications for the philosophy of communication. What does the agrarian paradigm offer in this communicative moment?

III. Agrarianism and the Philosophy of Communication

At this point, let us return to an exploration of the philosophy of communication in order to strengthen the connection to the agrarian paradigm discussed in the dissertation. The philosophy of communication can be informed by many of the driving metaphors of the agrarian paradigm. In order to understand the power of those particulars as applied to the philosophy of communication, we must define and explore the pillars of scholarship in the communication discipline.

Communication is a defining characteristic of the twentieth century (Peters 1). It can anchor our identity, our families, and our communities. How can one come to define something that is so large, layered, and complicated? An attempt at a definition of the philosophy of communication begins with attention to scholarship in the field. I turn to Annette Holba, Melissa Cook, Ronald C. Arnett, Pat Arneson, for support as I dive into the wreck.

In Annette Holba and Melissa Cook’s book on the philosophy of communication, the authors begin by looking at each word individually: defining philosophy and communication separately in the hope of gaining understanding in the way in which they come together. In simple, widely accepted terms, philosophy
is the search for truth (Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy 667). Holba and Cook nuance this understanding with the definition of philosophy stemming from Greek philosophy: “a love of knowledge.” Philosophy is a journey for truth born out of a love of wisdom, of knowledge, of learning. Philosophy is about thinking and questioning and searching for answers. Philosophy is about exploring worldview while articulating your own.

In plain and simple terms: communication is understood as the transfer of information (Holba xiv). But, of course, communication is that and it is more than that. Communication is understood narratively (as we see in the work of Walter Fisher looked at above). Communication is a fusion of horizons (Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method). Communication is something that happens in “the between” (Martin Buber, I – Thou). Communication hinges upon listening. For both Gadamer and Buber, there is attention to listening to the other, listening to a text, and being open to the way in which the other can question back.

Communication, in being characterized as having a purpose of getting a message across, becomes for many about dialogue (Anderson, Baxter, Cissna; Dialogue: Theorizing Difference). Cliff Christian contends, “Dialogue has emerged as a centerpiece of contemporary communication theory” (Foreward in Ronald C. Arnett’s Dialogic Confession: Bonheoffer’s Rhetoric of Responsibility). Through this lens, communication grows even more complicated, “dialogue implies more than a simple back-and-forthness of messages in interaction; it points to a particular process and quality of communication in which participants “meet,” which allows for changing and being changed” (Cissna and Anderson 10). Communication is not
just the transfer of information (although as noted above it can be part of the process). Communication is about an openness to the other, about an acknowledgement that only in relation to the other, in listening to the other can the I exist. For Arneson, “communication is a complex and multi-faceted act requiring thoughtful reflection to sustain and enhance one’s relationship with others” ("Introduction" *Exploring Communication Ethics*, xv). There is an element of “oughtness” to our communication. (Arnett, Arneson, Bell “Communication Ethics: The Dialogic Turn”). We navigate through both responsibilities and rights in our ethical communication.

The philosophy of communication is enriched by an agrarian tradition in that it can contribute to the pillars of what defines and textures philosophy and communication. As we see in Richard Weaver’s work, for example, an agrarian paradigm is grounded in responsibility. This sense of responsibility is echoed in Arnett and Arneson’s work on communication ethics looked at above. Agrarianism brings to the table a way to take the purposeful from word and translate that philosophic standpoint to deed. We negotiate that sense of freedom and our call to responsibility through the land.

Christopher Lyle Johnstone helps make the connection between ethos as a dwelling place to the agrarian sense of character built through a connection to a home (see “A Conversation about Communication Ethics” with Christopher Lyle Johnstone in *Exploring Communication Ethics*). Johnstone connects communication ethics to our obligation to other human beings as well as our obligation to our planet. Pat Arneson begins her book on different perspectives on the philosophy of
communication by saying,

The virtue of reading the work of philosophers of communication is that they teach us to think about how we are communicatively situated in the world. The capacity to think critically and consistently, and to understand various points of view, is necessary for negotiating one’s experience in a postmodern world. (“Perspectives on Philosophy of Communication” 1)

This insight translates into the scope and hope of an agrarian paradigm as well. The hope of reading their work and understanding their perspective is that in thinking about how we are situated in the world, we also are contemplating on our situatedness. This contemplation, as Arneson contends, encourages contemplation on different points of view. There is an openness inherent in this negotiation and understanding.

Agrarian writers see the agrarian paradigm as a place to heal the damaged landscape of our country and the damaged relationships we have with ourselves and one another (Berry; Mills; Kingsolver; Freyfogle). For these writers, strengthening our physical connection to the land gives us strength in our public and private lives. The metaphor of restoration arises; we can restore our communities, our prairies, and our traditions. This sense of restoration aligns with Robert Bellah’s understanding of story within a tradition, an understanding of how a story can bring us from the past to present. In *Habits of the Heart*, Bellah reminds us to be attentive to the ways in which community and language and values bring people together. Duty is central to the agrarians; duty is central to Bellah’s
communication ethic.

The agrarian paradigm calls us to ask questions about the implications of feeling an obligation to the land and community around us. What comes from relationship and how ought we communicate about it? The agrarian paradigm when put in conversation with the philosophy of communication encourages attention to the way in which language and story can influence a sense of community. The challenge of the agrarian paradigm in this conversation is to move from word to deed. In exploring tradition, community, ground, the agrarians ask us also to enrich that tradition by planting seeds to feed a community, by rebuilding a broken covenant to the land.

The conversation between agrarianism and the philosophy of communication is rooted in the following:

1. The agrarian paradigm calls us to attend to the ground beneath our feet.
2. The notion of literal ground in the agrarian paradigm translates into philosophical or communicative ground within the realm of the philosophy of communication.
3. An agrarian philosophy embraces tradition, cultivates a sense of community, and encourages relationships rooted in responsibility.
4. The agrarian paradigm lives in the past, present, and future; understanding that ideas and actions have consequences, that people and places have histories, and that historical moments call out for us to listen and attend.

An agrarian philosophy is a reminder that we situated within a set of particulars
that shape the way in which we communicate and live in the world. The agrarian paradigm encourages connection to family, tradition, and attention to the interconnectivity of stories that guide our behaviors and shape our beliefs.

The story of Mary Fortune in "A View of the Woods" in Everything that Rises Must Converge explains that the lawn is more to Mary Fortune than her grandfather sees. Meaning and relationships are born and cultivated in Mary's sense of ground as well as the literal land. Flannery O'Connor, writing in her twenties in the 1950’s in a time of incredible social change, looked to the South as the setting for her character’s struggles between good and evil. In A View of the Woods, Grandpa Fortune is selling a portion of untouched land to make way for a filling station, which will in turn bring "houses and stores and parking places" (O'Connor 65); he dreams of the "credit" for building up this "nothingness" going to him (65). To each one of his family members, the lot, which he sees as weeds and waste of potential, is 'the lawn' -- a place where the children play, where the calves graze. The phrase the lawn is repeated over and over; Grandpa Fortune’s selling of the land is a symbol of the death of a way of life, a symbol of what we have come to refer to as "progress."

As Arnett says in his essay defining the philosophy of communication, “philosophy of communication engages particulars situated within public opinion...this view is contingent upon the particular situation, a particular moment, and a particular public” (4). This work continues to be important in the field of communication and rhetorical studies connected to what Tocqueville refers to as ground. Can a conversation centered around roots move us toward an awareness of standpoint and the ground on which we stand? I think so. Working from Ronald C.
Arnett’s essay defining the philosophy of communication my starting point was clear – the philosophy of communication is about understanding situated within limits. Without limits there would not be identity. Limits in the communication discipline are connected to rootedness for the agrarians.

I come to this conversation from the standpoint of constructive hermeneutics in order to be attentive to enduring and significant elements of human communication and the human condition. This approach, building from the work of Walter Fisher and Kenneth Burke, speaks to the importance of human beings as storytellers. This approach allows for two-way communication as we construct our own stories and place them within a larger narrative. In reconstructing the stories of Allen Tate, Richard Weaver and Wendell Berry, we are constructing our own stories as well. This attention, exploration and articulation of worldview calls for examining where we have been and where we are going.

We live in a historical moment of virtue contention, fragmented information, of biases, and the celebration of difference. A hermeneutic entrance lends itself to a sense of opening the world, that sense of listening I mentioned above (to one another, to a text, to a moment). A hermeneutic entrance lends itself to a fusion of horizons (as Gadamer discusses in *Truth and Method*). Working from this ground allows us to view the world as a conversation in which we take part.

As mentioned in the first chapter, the agrarian paradigm is not a popular topic in communication literature, but I contend that it must be. Tying agriculture to identity through the metaphor of ground makes sense. By attending to the physical world around us, we attend to our own sense of being in the world. In the Personae
Learning Community in the McAnulty College of Liberal Arts at Duquesne University, we ask students questions about the self in community, understanding roles and responsibility. The semester is centered around questions of attitudes, beliefs, values, how they are formed in the self and in others, questions of difference and bridging that difference, as well as questions of identity, role, family and community. The agrarian paradigm is a place to begin reflection on the complexities of lived, human experience. Students move from the particular to see links in their experience through the examination of others. This exposure encourages contemplation and deeper connections across many borders.

An agrarian paradigm encourages us to match behaviors and beliefs. It is the same praxis approach that informs a liberal arts education in a way that acknowledges the interconnectedness of disciplines. This final chapter of this dissertation explores the ways in which the agrarian paradigm relies on the narrative paradigm in order to communicate about the link between provinciality and identity. The hope of this dissertation is one of potential dialogue. It is within dialogue that we open ourselves and the text at hand to revelatory moments; and the invitation for dialogue proves to be a feat of balance between being open to ideas while remaining rooted, planted in our ground.

IV. Postscript/Closing Thoughts: Tending to the Cycle of Writing and Ideas

I read somewhere once about the painting of the Golden Gate Bridge. As soon as they have finished, they must go back and start from the beginning again. That is how I feel, at the “conclusion” of this work. I will return to the beginning,
carrying with me the stories I have read and retold to write these pages. I will return in the hope that I can listen even more attentively than my first journey through.

Adrienne Rich’s poem comes to mind (which I think of so often in research):

\[
I \text{ came to explore the wreck.} \\
\text{The words are purposes,} \\
\text{The words are maps.} \\
\text{I came to see the damage that was done} \\
\text{and the treasures that prevail.} \quad (\text{Diving into the Wreck 22})
\]

In my exploration I see there is hope in taking ideas seriously, in articulating a bias, an entrance; I see there are treasures in the agrarian paradigm, hope in a current historical moment characterized by loss of faith and marked by great destruction.

This dissertation contends that the connection between an agrarian philosophy, cultivating the literal land and being attentive to the philosophical notion of ground allows for communication about identity that begins with the particular. This dissertation is born out Richard Weaver’s rhetorical theory – and the notion that ideas have consequences – and the question of whether we are losing a sense of self in our pursuit of progress.

It is during this time of year, mid-summer, that my father begins to bring home tomatoes, zucchini, cucumbers, and corn from his garden. There is a sweet buzz around our house when the first tomato comes through the door. Most of my family has been waiting since the last tomato was picked to have another. And if you have ever tasted a tomato from the grocery store in January, you know why.
There is nothing like a garden tomato. The first one is even better; because you know what is coming and more than that, you know from where the tomato came. This particular tomato comes from one of three gardens: each measuring 150 feet by 32 feet, cared for in an old mining town now known as Robertsville.

The three men that care for the garden my father, his first cousin Tom, and my brother Zach, allow the winter to cover the gardens with snow, plowing in April, retilling in the Spring to soften the soil (I love this image of breaking up the soil again, a revisiting, a challenging, a reflection on the ground each year). Each man has a specialty – peppers, corn, potatoes. The garden produces hundreds of tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, cucumbers every year. These vegetables feed a community. My father sends boxes to my brother in Pittsburgh; he drops off freshly picked corn to his widowed sister every day; he brings home beets for me and my mother to can.

When I ask my father about the garden, on a warm July evening, he talks about it with caution and thoughtfulness – the way you talk about those things you care about most, the way you talk about the past. You can see that when he thinks about the garden he is thinking about it throughout time. He is seeing his own hands in the soil, his son’s hands in the soil and his own grandfather tilling the soil by hand. My father admits that he, Tom, and Zach have a different kind of relationship than someone not part of the garden. Although they have never articulated the importance of sharing ground to share a sense of being in the world, when I ask my father about it, he shakes his head – small, constant up and down. “Yes, yes, I would say our relationship is somehow both based on and bigger than
the garden.” He smiles.

My dad must tend to that garden every day, often more than once. Think about that: he examines that ground in the morning and in the evening. He pays attention to what is growing, what needs work. He thinks about who needs tomatoes, who could use some peppers. With each step through and around those gardens, he sees what is there – absolutely – but he also sees what will be and what came before; the tradition he is preserving, the call he has answered. In a time when it is easy to take for granted the ground beneath our feet, my father moves my family closer to the earth and closer to feeling a responsibility to it and to one another – in word and deed.
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