

Charting The Development and Intersection of Agrarianism, Transcendentalism and Ecocriticism

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Abstract

This paper charts the emergence of agrarianism as a philosophical thought, situates its development within other ideas such as Romanticism and Transcendentalism, and how agrarian thought intertwined with ecocritical literary analysis. The premise of this study is that within the current state of environmental crisis and degradation, the insight from agrarianism can provide an alternative environmental imagination to reconsider the position of humanity in the wider world. This study applies intellectual history as the framework on how the concepts and theories interacted and influenced other social/cultural/intellectual developments. Agrarianism celebrates rural life and agriculture as a response to industrialization, championed by thinkers like Emerson and Thoreau, who see it as a path to a more meaningful existence. It then examines how agrarianism intersects with ecocriticism, an environmental literary perspective that emerged in the 1960s. Agrarianism contributes significantly to ecocriticism, particularly in its critique of industrialization, exemplified by Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring." Both perspectives emphasize a holistic approach to the environment, emphasizing the interconnectedness of humans and nature. Wendell Berry's ecological agrarianism embodies these principles, stressing sustainable agriculture and environmental care. In conclusion, this paper highlights agrarianism's historical significance and contemporary relevance, illustrating its convergence with ecocriticism in their shared commitment to environmental ethics and preserving the natural world.

Keywords: Agrarianism, ecocriticism, environmental philosophy, transcendentalism

Abstrak

Tulisan ini memetakan kemunculan agrarianisme sebagai sebuah pemikiran filosofis, menempatkan perkembangannya dalam gagasan lain seperti Romantisisme dan Transendentalisme, dan mengkonstruksikan korelasi pemikiran agrarian dengan analisis sastra ekokritik. Premis penelitian ini adalah dalam kondisi krisis dan degradasi lingkungan yang dihadapi masyarakat secara global, wawasan agrarianisme dapat memberikan alternatif imajinasi lingkungan untuk mempertimbangkan kembali posisi umat manusia di dunia yang lebih luas. Penelitian ini mengadopsi sejarah intelektual sebagai kerangka kerja untuk memahami bagaimana konsep dan teori-teori tersebut saling berinteraksi dan memengaruhi perkembangan sosial, budaya, dan intelektual lainnya. Agrarianisme merayakan kehidupan pedesaan dan pertanian sebagai respons terhadap industrialisasi, dipromosikan oleh pemikir seperti Emerson dan Thoreau yang melihatnya sebagai jalan menuju keberadaan yang lebih bermakna. Kemudian, makalah ini mencermati bagaimana agrarianisme mempunyai kesamaan perspektif dengan ekokritik,

perspektif sastra lingkungan yang muncul pada tahun 1960-an. Agrarianisme memberikan kontribusi besar bagi ekokritik, terutama dalam kritiknya terhadap industrialisasi, yang diwakili oleh "Silent Spring" karya Rachel Carson. Keduanya menekankan pendekatan holistik terhadap lingkungan, menekankan keterkaitan antara manusia dan alam. Agrarianisme ekologis Wendell Berry mewujudkan prinsip-prinsip ini, menekankan pertanian berkelanjutan dan perawatan lingkungan. Sebagai kesimpulan, makalah ini menyoroti signifikansi historis agrarianisme dan relevansinya dalam konteks kontemporer, menggambarkan konvergensinya dengan ekokritik dalam komitmen bersama terhadap etika lingkungan dan pelestarian dunia alam.

Kata kunci : agrarianism, filosofi lingkungan, transcendentalisme, ekokritik

I. INTRODUCTION

Today, problems related to environmental degradation are one of the most pivotal issues the world has to mitigate. The current state of ecological devastation leads some to assume that humanity has entered the epoch of the Anthropocene era, in which the current geological period is characterized by the destructive scale of humanity's impact on the planet. (Caracciolo, 2023, p. 542) Some forms of natural degradation that can be observed include air pollution, excessive use of natural resources, and the extinction of various plant and animal species. These problems turned out to have a connecting thread, where the environmental damage was caused by modernity and the underlying anthropocentric views. This anthropocentric mindset legitimizes nature as something to be conquered, an understanding that leads to environmental degradation due to overexploitation. The search for alternative "environmental imagination," as Buell (1995, p. 4) proposes, considers the perspective of agrarianism as one of the possible solutions to overcome today's environmental crisis. As Buell articulated, this idea expands upon the humanities' capability to contemplate a more ethical outlook of perceiving nature. (2020b, p. 29) The basic premise of agrarian thought is inviting humans to return to rural areas by cultivating nature carefully and living in harmony. To further contextualize how agrarianism is one alternative solution to the current state of the environmental crisis, this paper charts the development of agrarianism from three main aspects: (1) its definition, (2) the development of agrarianism and its

relationship with other American philosophical thought and (3) the relationship between agrarianism and ecocriticism as one defining critical theory in humanities. This argumentation echoes Thompson's thinking that our perspective of environmentalism might be improved by revitalizing some agrarian ideas extinguished from our moral repertoire during the twentieth century. (2012, p. 555)

There have been some debates and discussions considering what constitutes agrarian thought or agrarianism, and this paper tries to chart some of them. Indeed, agrarianism is interpreted differently by some theorists, but it can be observed it can be observed that there exists a defining theme or similar conception concerning this thought. When viewed etymologically, the word agrarian comes from the Latin word *agrarius*, interpreted by Freyfogle (2001, p. xiv) as "about land/ and it is the land—as place, home, and living community." Agrarianism focuses on the importance of land as a place to live and cultivate. Still, agrarianism focuses more on the countryside's rural environment with the surrounding agricultural cultivation. This perspective can be observed from Danbom's view that "agrarianism is the celebration of agriculture and rural life for the positive impact thereof on the individual and society." (1991, p. 1) His assertion implores two central tenets in agrarianism, mainly agriculture or cultivating land and rural life. Agrarianism especially observes the intertwined nature between people living in rural areas and their surrounding environment, as they depend on the ground they cultivate. Similarly, Freyfogle proposes how "in the agrarian mind, the health of humans is dependent in the long run on the well-being of the larger land community" (2001, p. xix). The concept of land community and land ethics (1950, pp. 4–5), theorized by Aldo Leopold, underlines that agrarianism is based on a biocentric perspective; humans are seen no longer as the exploiter of nature, which is detached from the natural order as a whole, but only part of a biotic community. This view is mainly reflected in Freyfogle's exposure,

"for agrarians, the land is an organic whole, teeming, when well-tended, with abundant plant and animal members. Humans are special members of that living community, but they are members nonetheless, not onlookers from afar: They are as linked and embedded as the land's many other creatures." (2001: xviii)

Another definition of agrarianism pays more attention to the critical role of agriculture in society. Agriculture and the peasants who worked the soil are regarded as noble, highly regarded occupations and professions and a valuable element of society. (Montmarquet, 1989) In addition to how agriculture is indeed a crucial sector considering that it functions as a food producer, agriculture also performs a philosophical function, as cultivating the land seeks the farmer to consider the nature of humanity's relationship to the broader environment. Agrarianism designates special attention to farms and farming, stimulating and developing a value-relation between society, humans, environments, and the essence of humanity. This perspective can be seen in the following excerpt, "the practice of agriculture and farming establishes a privileged outlook upon fundamental questions of human conduct, and, sometimes, the nature of reality itself." (Hilde, 2003, p. 335) Agriculture is also a means of reflection, how humans reassess their relationship with the nature they cultivate. Summarizing these two views on agriculture, Thompson offers his definition of agrarianism based on the romantic and pragmatic notion of agriculture. Agrarianism, as Thompson interprets it, "designates different moral, social, political, and even metaphysical philosophies that accord special roles to farms and the practice of farming." (2010, p. 1) Agrarianism contemplates agriculture as a regular occupation and a noble job with its associated moral, social, political, and metaphysical functions.

The reassessment of humanity's relationship with nature is the subject of thought offered by Freyfogle. He observed how agrarianism makes humans rethink the presupposition that considers humans superior to nature, as seen in anthropocentrism. As proposed by Marland, this view refers to "a system of beliefs that places the interest of humans over those of non-humans" (2013, p. 860). Anthropocentrism is problematic because humanity's five senses and sensory abilities cannot fully grasp and comprehend the vastness of the more-than-human world. The realization of this inability, in turn, compels humanity to rethink their position as the seemingly suzerain of the Earth and instead proposes an equal relationship among entities. This becomes the founding tenets of the agrarian perspective, as Freyfogle suggests:

"at the base of agrarian thought about land use is the fundamental recognition that nature is far bigger than humans, bigger than they know or even can know. Human knowledge of nature is limited, encased within layers of mystery. "Mystery helps us orient ourselves to the world by requiring a certain respect and "humility" (2007, p. xxiii)

Through this reassessment of man's relationship with nature, agrarianism emphasizes human humility's importance and necessity. Based upon this realization, humanity should no longer consider themselves as the master of nature, but on the contrary, nature is reoriented as active subjects with their agency. The presupposition that humanity has an inherent value to rule their supposed inferiors is challenged from the perspective that considers nature far more prominent than human comprehension, and human knowledge is limited to understanding nature. In short, agrarianism can be interpreted as a philosophical view of human culture and practice as they relate to the broader environment, focusing on the role of material practices in forming values, norms, and social institutions. (Thompson, 2008, p. 528)

From the brief discussion of agrarianism, this paper positions agrarianism as one alternative environmental imagination that seeks to reorient humans and the more-than-human world relationship. Agrarian thought, with its emphasis on rural living, sustainable lifestyle, and the glorification of agriculture, is positioned as a critique of modernity, especially the overreliance on technology, which detrimentally impacts the biosphere. Agrarianism is not a novel concept in Western philosophical thought but has been a central tenet in Ancient Greek philosophical thought. This paper contextualizes a brief overview of its origin and how it further developed as a core principle in American environmentalism, primarily related to Romanticism and Transcendentalism. Moreover, this paper illustrates how agrarianism influences one critical theory in literature, ecocriticism, through similar concerns and emphasis on the environment. These three aspects are further explored in the analysis.

Several previous studies have been conducted on agrarianism, its application, and its implication on contemporary environmental outlook. One survey by Robertson analyzes William Gay's fiction, *The Long Home*, *Provinces of Night*, and *Twilight*, to underline the interplay between economics and economy, especially the

impact of colonialism in Appalachia. He argues for the inability to reconcile between the character Bender's agrarian ideal and the force of modern economics as he tries to keep his family's ancestral land. (2015, p. 365) Differently, Horrocks explores the application of transcendentalist philosophical vision on nineteenth-century New England through the reading of Hawthorne's *Blithedale Romance*. He argues that agrarian engagement consists of mental and physical acts upon the intersection of nature and culture. His paper's central premise is that agrarianism's social application should focus more on performing responsible labor within the existing eco-social network. (2016, p. 45) Unlike prior studies, this study's emphasis is foregrounding the origin and development of agrarianism and how it influences American philosophical outlook and literary criticism in the form of ecocriticism.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research approach centered on the intellectual history of agrarianism. Qualitative research prioritizes the depth, quality, and content of data and evidence over quantitative calculations. It aims to explore and understand individuals or groups ascribed to a social or human problem (Indriyanto, 2020a, p. 25). The methodology employed is analytical and descriptive, with a primary focus on defining agrarianism—its origins, definitions, and its influence on other American philosophical ideologies and literary criticism. This approach involves presenting factual information from the sources followed by in-depth analysis. The analysis framework is intellectual history, on how the concepts and theories interacted and influenced other social/cultural/intellectual developments. (Hollinger & Capper, 2015) This field explores the history of human thought and the intellectuals who shape it, focusing on individuals who conceptualize, discuss, write about, and influence ideas throughout history. Their methods often involve critical analysis of historical sources, shedding light on how intellectual movements have evolved over time.

In this study, primary sources encompass critical reviews, articles, essays, and books related to agrarianism. Some of the primary sources are Thompson's

2010 books, *The Agrarian Vision: Sustainability and Environmental Ethics*, Freyfogle's *The New Agrarianism: Land, Culture, and the Community of Life* (2001) and Montmarquet's *He Idea of Agrarianism: From Hunter-Gatherer to Agrarian Radical in Western Culture* (1989). The research primarily delves into three key aspects: (1) Mapping the trajectory of agrarianism, (2) Examining agrarianism during the Romantic period, and (3) Investigating the intersection of agrarianism and ecocriticism. These aspects are explored through the lens of intellectual history, revealing how these concepts and theories interacted and influenced broader social, cultural, and intellectual developments.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section traces the evolutionary trajectory of agrarianism as a philosophical concept, beginning with its roots in ancient Greek society. Secondly, the present study explores how agrarianism resurfaced and gained prominence in Europe and America, particularly during the Romantic era of the 18th and 19th centuries. The discussion then delves into the American context, highlighting how agrarianism intersected with other significant philosophical currents, including pragmatism and transcendentalism. Lastly, this paper investigates the continued development of agrarianism in contemporary times, with a specific focus on its convergence with ecocriticism, a prominent literary theory concerned with environmental issues.

Charting Agrarianism

As mentioned earlier, ancient Greek society originated and pioneered this agrarian perspective or glorification of agriculture and manual labor. Freyfogle argues that "as a collection of practices and principles, agrarianism has enjoyed a long and curious history in recorded Western life, from ancient Greece to the present" (2001, p. xiv). From a philosophical view, the perspective of agrarian thought persists as one defining trait of Western societies since civilization in ancient Greece, especially the tradition of glorifying agriculture. Agriculture was considered the most noble occupation and was blessed by the old Greek gods. This perspective can be observed from Fite's assertion as follows, "agriculture, it was said, was the

most noble of all employments; it was useful, enjoyable, righteous, healthful, and even blessed of God (1968, p. 294)."

Hanson exemplified this agrarian view of ancient Greek society in his book *The Other Greeks: the Family Farm and the Agrarian Roots of Western Civilization* (1996). Hanson observed how the development of agriculture in Greece later gave birth to an ideal agricultural archetype, rural and pastoral, a view idealized by Western society in the modern era. This conception of agrarianism in ancient Greek society is mainly depicted in lyrical agrarianism featuring pastoral elegy and praise for a simple life. This view is reflected in the poem *Hesiod, Works and Days*. This poem glorifies farmers who cultivate land with depictions of fertile land, which in turn produces a plentiful harvest for the community.

"Neither famine nor disaster ever haunts men who do true justice, but light-heartedly they tend the fields which are all their care. The Earth bears them victual in plenty, and on the mountains, the oak bears acorns upon the top and bees in the midst (Hanson, 1995, p. 69)."

Hanson further scrutinizes this representation of agriculture and farmers by Hesiod. In his belief, the view of agrarianism embodied by Ancient Greek society later underlies modern agrarianism, especially the romantic idea of an independent, self-sufficient rural community. Hanson explores how

"with Hesiod's world begins the entire notion of agrarianism that was soon to become the foundation of the Greek city-state, and later to be enshrined in the West as the exemplar of a democratic society: a culture of small, independent yeomen on the land, who make their laws, fight their own battles, and create a community of tough like-minded individuals" (Hanson, 1996, p. x)

Although the concept described by Hesiod leads to modern agrarianism in the West, primarily the United States, there are also differences between these two perspectives. According to Hanson, the primary distinguished factor is the contrasting geographical conditions in Greece compared to America. The rocky soil of Greece and the Mediterranean climate cause the primary vegetation in this region to be trees, especially fruits and olive trees. This circumstance makes the concept of agrarianism in Greece different from that in America, considering that trees take years to grow, so Greek farmers have to stay in a place for an extended period. In

other words, agrarianism in Ancient Greece resulted in the creation of a permanent (fixed) society in which the farmers stayed on their plots for the entirety of their lives. As Hanson summarizes, "Any farmer who plants trees and vines, unlike the pastoralist or even the grain grower, invests his labor and capital in a particular locale for the duration of his life (1996, p. 42)."

Agrarianism of the Romantic Period

Moving on to the discussion of agrarianism in the modern era, this agrarian perspective was rediscovered during the Romantic period in the late 18th-early 19th century in the United States and Britain. Agrarianism is an understanding that opposes technological and industrial advances during the Industrial Revolution, which rapidly altered society and transformed the environment. Nostalgia for the bygone era, predating the Industrial Revolution, where people lived more in the countryside as farmers by cultivating land to sustain themselves, became the primary tenet offered by agrarianism during this period. As summarized by Thompson,

"agrarianism has been articulated, although not exclusively, as a romantic approach to nature and a romantic reaction to our modern techno-scientific era. It may arrive precariously close to political manifestations of the relation to the land as sacred: our land, the exclusive motherland of a nostalgic people; the particular and unique parochial land" (2010, p. 2)

Furthermore, it has been argued that this romantic nostalgia for pastoral ideas "incorporates (indeed, presupposes) agrarian ideas consistent with those attributed to the Greeks" as the underlying principle. In other words, agrarianism in this Romantic era is a continuation of a perspective from which ancient Greek society originated. Ancient Greek civilization was used as a role model of an ideal idyllic community, the conception of a population living in the countryside with land as a source of income rather than living in an urban area.

In its development within this period, agrarianism began to be distinguished into two groups. Through his book *The Idea of Agrarianism* (1989), Montmarquet argues that while there are indeed premises agreed upon by agrarians as a whole, such as living in the countryside better than in the urban, there are also notable

differences so that it is more appropriate that they be categorized as two different schools. Montmarquet theorized two distinctive branches of agrarianism: rational agrarianism and romantic agrarianism.

“Rational agrarians, operating in the tradition of the Physiocrats and Jefferson, stress the tangible contributions agriculture and rural people make to a nation's economic and political well-being. Romantic agrarians, following the path trod by Thoreau, emphasize the moral, emotional, and spiritual benefits agriculture and rural life convey to the individual” (Montmarquet, 1989, p. 5)

The two branches of agrarianism have differences in interpreting how agriculture and life in the countryside should be treated. Rational agrarianism emphasizes economic factors and how agriculture, although it remains a noble occupation, must still positively impact the country economically and politically. This understanding is primarily based on Jefferson's perspective against industrialization, "America should remain a predominantly agricultural economy and society. Domestic manufacturing was permissible, but large factories should be resisted" (Ellis, 1998, p. 258). The opposite position is held by romantic agrarianists, and they underscore the influence of this rural life on the emotional side and spirituality of the human being. The foundation of romantic agrarianism is in line with the principle of Romanticism advocated through the work of Thoreau and Emerson as the foundation.

The development of romantic agrarianism borrows heavily from the seminal work of the ancient Greeks, an idea cultivated since the beginning of American independence. The result of romantic agrarianism in America can be seen from the first-hand account of Crèvecoeur, a French-born immigrant from England. Through his letters to Jefferson entitled “Letters from an American Farmer” (1782), Crèvecoeur exemplifies the importance of agriculture, not focusing on its material merits or economic benefit but instead emphasizing its role in establishing American morality as a newly independent state. He states how:

“some few towns excepted, we are all tillers of the Earth, from Nova Scotia to West Florida. We are a people of cultivators, scattered over an immense territory communicating with each other utilizing good roads and navigable rivers, united by the silken bands of mild government, all respecting the laws, without dreading their power, because they are equitable” (1782, p. 56)

Reading this quote from Crevecoeur, Hilde argues how "Crevecoeur's idyllic praise of farming represents an agrarianism that prefigures romantic philosophy and the nature aesthetics of the nineteenth century." (2003, p. 334) To concur, as proposed by Crevecoeur, agrarianism underlines the romantic notion of cultivating the land and the resulting process of good governance and respecting the laws. His seminal view of agrarianism and the foundation of American culture focuses upon individual morality and spirituality, which then influenced transcendentalist thinkers in the 19th century. Hence, it can be stated how agrarianism contextualizes the importance and interwoven nature of land, agriculture, and farmers. This perspective of Crevecoeur's agrarianism is summarized in detail by Wojcik:

"The farm in the right place is Crèvecoeur's metaphor for a moral life. The mind of a good farmer is a kind of genius loci, a spirit of a good place, properly distanced from court and wilderness, near others of its kind, and within driving distance of good markets and honest civilization". (1984, p. 32)

As aforementioned, the romantic school of agrarianism is interwoven with the philosophical views underlining this paradigm. The romantic agrarianism was heavily influenced by the transcendental American perspectives presented by Emerson and Thoreau. In its development, this transcendental view contradicts the philosophy of pragmatism as described by Charles S. Pierce, which is itself based upon the work of William James in the late 19th century. Emerson's view is mainly reflected in his writing *Nature* (1836), in which Immanuel Kant's philosophy heavily influenced Emerson. Kant criticized a philosophy based on rationalism and empiricism that focused only on reason, logic, and the five senses. According to Kant, there is a transcendental philosophy, beyond reason and the ability of the five senses, through intuition, man can perceive a spiritual world (Wilson, 2000, p. 89). It can be seen how this transcendentalism is a rejection of intellectual views and reason, considering that adherents of this school assume that the real world, the spiritual world is beyond the capacity of human common sense. Humans should not look outside but look inside themselves (inward looking), as seen the following statement:

“To recover one’s spiritual being, one must practice self-reliance, that is, one has to renounce the ordinary beliefs and customs that most people readily accept and look for the truth within the self” (Phillips et al., 2006, p. 10)

In his magnum opus, *Nature*, Emerson underscores the importance of rural life, agriculture, and the peasantry. Emerson's vision of America is an agrarian country where the landscape contains farmers who live in peace with the surrounding environment and wild animals in the forests around the village. Fiskio identifies how “the idea of America as a democracy constituted by independent small farmers has had a compelling hold on the national imagination.”(2012, p. 301) Emerson criticized urban life and the growing technological advances in America during the industrial Revolution. According to Emerson, urban life undermines human relationships with the surrounding nature, and resulting in the alienation of humanity with the natural environment in their proximity,

“we are as much strangers in nature as we are aliens from God. We do not understand the notes of birds. . . . We do not understand the uses of more than a few plants. . . . Is not the landscape, every glimpse of which hath a grandeur, a face of him?” (1849, p. 54)

This alienation between man and nature underlines Emerson’s emphasis of agricultural lifestyle. Rural areas, surrounded with the natural world are considered as a place to rejuvenate and restore the detached interaction subjected by citizens of urban places. As summarized by Montmarquet,

“farm, thus, is also a kind of healing place—to which the tired or the failed urban dweller’s children may repair, to be “cured by that which should have been [their] nursery, and now shall be their hospital” (749). The farm had this healing power through its connection to the highest good of Emersonian philosophy: nature” (1989, p. 52)

Another Romantic-era writer who influenced the agrarian perspective was Thoreau which enriched the views that Emerson had begun as the seminal author. As early as 1854, he illustrates an ideal living condition by renouncing modernity and renewing the self by retreating into nature. The conflict between urban and rural life remains a recurring issue underlined by Thoreau and his lingering thoughts on how to solve this divide. Thoreau preferred to live in the wilderness by building

a cabin at Walden, Concord, Massachusetts. According to Phillips and Ladd, Thoreau's decision to leave the city and live in the woods is symbolic of

“the growing ideological clash between the American Romantics and economics of the day. To Thoreau’s mind, the ‘progress’ of civilization was ruining the frontier spirit, which led him to utter, famously, that majority of humankind ‘lives of quiet desperation.’ Romantic such as Thoreau, believed that humanity could find truth and happiness in nature. The economists of the day disagreed, believing that, rather than preserving nature, it was more important for people and government to advance human commerce” (2006, p. 18)

Thoreau explains how humans were then in a silent despair, the desperation thought to be caused "from a desperate city." The city is considered an uncondusive environment with detrimental impact on human development due to easy access to amenities and resources. Thoreau especially observes how technological advances causes decadence and hedonistic lifestyles. Thoreau invited Americans to live in the countryside, in the wild, sustaining themselves with nature, through first-hand example of his residence in Walden.

Regarding his agrarian view, Thoreau considers agriculture from the perspective of romantic agrarianism than rational agrarianism. Thoreau believed agriculture not based on economic aspects, considering that a farmer only needs to be self-sufficient, he believes farmers from a poetic angle, where the farmer

“does nothing with haste and drudgery, but everything as if he loved it” and who looked forward not to the income his crops will bring, nor to any particular future satisfaction, so much as the enjoyment he receives in the present from labor. “He is never in a hurry to get his garden planted, and yet it is always planted soon enough.” (Thoreau, 2009, p. 86)

Thoreau sees agriculture as having more value than just physical work. Resembling the ideas held by the ancient Romans and Greeks, Thoreau considered that agriculture is associated with the values of chastity (sacredness), these ancient peoples celebrated agriculture and harvest with various festivals and celebrations. (Gatta, 2004, pp. 8–9) Considering that agriculture is considered sacred, Thoreau emphasized the importance of preserving agricultural land, not necessarily

cultivating the land without ecological considerations. McKusick concludes that Thoreau was a "pioneer of a sustainable agrarian lifestyle". (2010, p. 89)

Emerson and Thoreau's view of transcendentalism underlying romantic agrarianism is opposed by the perspective of pragmatism, especially according to the theories of Charles Peirce. If transcendentalism underscores the importance of the spiritual world and self-reliance, pragmatism asserts that knowledge results from observation and reason. In other words, the focus of transcendentalism is idealism in how to interpret an event spiritually. In contrast, pragmatism interprets events as they are (as it is) by prioritizing reason and logic. Within this philosophy, pragmatism does not analyze agriculture and farmers specifically from a romantic angle and nostalgia of pre-modern era but instead upon their existence in the modern era. Examining the positions of Emerson and Thoreau, these two figures underscore the importance of agriculture, not from an economic point of view but how this work can lead humans to a better life. Life in the city that Thoreau interprets as causing "quiet desperation" will be treatable by living in the countryside and the wild. In contrast, Peirce "did not celebrate rural life, nor did he accord any special significance to farmers in any of his surviving writings". (Love, 1992, p. 5) Agrarianism, based on a pragmatic perspective, was called rational agrarianism. They view agriculture from the economic as well as the cynical political lens. Rational agrarianism considers how these poorly educated farmers need to gain extensive knowledge and awareness of other topics beside cultivating the land, so there is little chance of rebellion.

Agrarianism and Ecocriticism

The last section of this paper summarizes the intersection between agrarianism and ecocriticism as one literary criticism exploring human and non-human conduct. The meeting between these two views has been initiated since the beginning of the emergence of ecocriticism. Ecocriticism which critiques the state of American environmental crisis started in the 1960s through the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) underlines the reading of literary works, focusing on the representation of the natural world. Some phenomena observed include life in the countryside and wilderness through Emerson and Thoreau's

reading of Romantic literature. The interwoven nature between agrarianism and ecocriticism can be observed through Bennett's statement,

"ecocriticism has developed with growing academic interest in nature writing, American pastoralism, and literary ecology. The resulting body of critical work claims rural environment and wild nature as its domain, meaning that most ecocriticism in the United States have focused their attention on America's rural past or the remaining wide open spaces of the Wild West. (2001, p. 31)

Significant further discusses this intersection between agrarianism and ecocriticism in his article, "the Agrarian Vision and Ecocriticism" (2007). Major underscored how the ecological consciousness raised by ecocriticism stems from a agriculture-related problem. The publication of *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson (1962) which is often used as a benchmark for the early development of environmental awareness and ecological thought, illustrates the adverse influence of technology on agriculture. Understanding of the detrimental impact of pesticides led Americans in general and farmers in particular to prefer organic methods for farming, as Thompson summarized:

"Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* launched the environmental movement in North America with her expose of pesticide in 1962. Since that time, awareness of the health and environmental consequences of industrial methods has increased steadily. Organic foods became the alternative, and costumer groups committed to reducing chemical use have gained power steadily." (2010, p. 52)

Major argues that agrarianism, mainly as Freyfogle defines it has many similar views to ecocriticism. These views of agrarians on land and how it should adequately cultivate nature reflect also an ecological perspective. An example is how agrarianism affirms farming with, "respect of the land's long-term fertility". (Goodyear-ka, 2009, p. 54) . Land is seen as an inheritance that will be passed on to generations after us, therefore cultivating the land must also pay attention to how much land the future can still inherit and the necessity of sustainability.". An ecocentric perspective can also be observed through how agrarianism adheres to the notion of "a holistic orientation of the world, based upon the premise that we cannot separate one aspect of our lives from any other" (Moore et al., 2008, p. 18) To rephrase, it can be understood how agrarianism is a comprehensive world view

that appreciates the intimate and practical connection that exists between human and the Earth, a perspective shared by ecocriticism through their emphasis of the natural world, as it is represented in literature.

Summarizing the theories mentioned above, it can be concluded that agrarianism is similar to ecocriticism, especially about environmental ethics, which both adhere to. These two perspectives affirm the importance of preserving nature considering that humans are only one part of the biotic community, so their value is not higher than other elements or living things. Considering that the focus of agrarianism is more on agriculture itself, agrarianism emphasizes how to cultivate land based on an environmental ethic. This agrarian view can be observed from one of the seminal authors of contemporary agrarianism, Wendell Berry. Berry's agrarianism can be stated as ecological agrarianism, given that "protecting the environment must take priority over other policy goals." (2002, pp. 70–71) This quote assumes the position of romantic agrarianism, considering that Berry does not consider the economic aspects of the land used as agriculture but rather the sustainability aspect for future generations.

Berry emphasizes the importance of ethics of care in agriculture, which is a core thought in both agrarianism and ecocriticism. This view primarily concerns with how humans cannot be separated from tillage both in the form of agriculture and plantations. Still, conservation of agricultural land is needed to ensure sustainability. The structure of affection attributed to the environment is since the land now possesses the same intrinsic value as humans. Once land had the equal moral status with humanity, it is morally not permissible to treat land arbitrarily with overexploitation. As summarized by Major,

"the concept of care enacts the right type of use of the world by putting the environment within moral scope of the self. The point of agrarianism, therefore, is to highlight the connections between self and other so that we understand that what we do in one inevitably affects the other" (2007, p. 64)

Through an environmental ethic, agrarianism tries to reinvent how humans interact with nature, primarily focusing on agriculture. Their preoccupation of agriculture is sustainable agriculture, where the purpose of tillage is to be able to pass on this

land to the next generation. In line with Major's assertion, "agrarians hope to subvert the short-term material demands of mechanistic rationality and its destructive effects on land, health, and community." (2007, p. 67) To concur, glorifying rural living, idyllic countryside and sustainable agriculture as the basic premises of agrarianism offers an alternative environmental imagination toward the commodification of the Earth.

IV. CONCLUSION

In summary, this paper has explored agrarianism from three critical perspectives: its historical origins and definitions, its relationships with other American philosophical thought, and its intertextuality with ecocriticism. Despite some variations in interpretation among scholars, a consensus emerges highlighting the significance of agrarianism's emphasis on rural life and agriculture. Danbom's perspective, which celebrates the role of agriculture and rural living, encapsulates this overarching theme. Agrarianism has evolved from its ancient Greek roots, with its romanticized portrayal of pre-modern life finding resonance during the Anglo-American Romantic period. It offers a contrasting viewpoint in the face of technological advancements brought about by the industrial revolution, where these developments have often had detrimental effects on both humanity and the natural world. American Romantic-era thinkers like Emerson and Thoreau, in particular, beckon readers to transcend the constraints of modernity and urbanization, advocating for a return to rural, sustainable living in harmony with nature.

Furthermore, the paper highlights the intersection between agrarianism and ecocriticism, revealing numerous shared premises. Ecocriticism, which emerged during the 1960s environmental crisis, was significantly influenced by agrarian thought. Agrarianism's ecocentric ethics, valuing humans alongside other living and non-living entities, is exemplified in the advocacy of modern agrarian figure Wendell Berry for sustainable agriculture that considers future generations. As a suggestion, further research could delve into agrarianism's position in contemporary society, exploring how it can inform and shape our response to present-day environmental challenges. Understanding how agrarianism can be integrated into modern life while

addressing issues such as urbanization and technological advancements would be a valuable direction for future inquiry.

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