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The Art Of Loading Brush: New Agrarian Writings



Synopsis

"Berry's essays, continuing arguments begun in *The Unsettling of America* 40 years ago, will be familiar to longtime readers, blending his farm work with his interests in literature old and new . . . Vintage Berry sure to please and instruct his many admirers." —Kirkus Reviews (starred review)

Wendell Berry's profound critique of American culture has entered its sixth decade, and in this new gathering he reaches with deep devotion toward a long view of Agrarian philosophy. Mr. Berry believes that American cultural problems are nearly always aligned with their agricultural problems, and recent events have shone a terrible spotlight on the divides between our urban and rural citizens. Our communities are as endangered as our landscapes. There is, as Berry outlines, still much work to do, and our daily lives—in hope and affection—must triumph over despair. Mr. Berry moves deftly between the real and the imagined. *The Art of Loading Brush* is an energetic mix of essays and stories, including "The Thought of Limits in a Prodigal Age," which explores Agrarian ideals as they present themselves historically and as they might apply to our work today. "The Presence of Nature in the Natural World" is added here as the bookend of this developing New Agrarianism. Four stories from an as-yet-unfinished novel, better described as "an essay in imagination," extend the Port William story as it follows Andy Catlett throughout his life to this present moment. Andy works alongside his grandson in "The Art of Loading Brush," one of the most moving and tender stories of the entire Port William cycle. Filled with insights and new revelations from a mind thorough in its considerations and careful in its presentations, *The Art of Loading Brush* is a necessary and timely collection.

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Customer Reviews

Praise for *The Art of Loading Brush* "Berry's essays, continuing arguments begun in *The Unsettling of America* 40 years ago, will be familiar to longtime readers, blending his farm work with his interests in literature old and new . . . Vintage Berry sure to please and instruct his many admirers." â•Kirkus Reviews (starred review) Praise for *A Small Porch* "[Berry's] essays, poetry and fiction have fertilized a crop of great solace in my life, and helped to breed a healthy flock of good manners, to boot. As I travel this unlikely road of opportunity, as a woodworker and writer, sure, but most often as a jackass, I have his writings upon which to fix my mind and my heart, to keep my life's errant wagon between the ditches, as it were. Mr. Berry's sentences and stories deliver a great payload of edifying entertainment, which I hungrily consume, but it is the bass note of morality thumping through his musical phrases that guides me with the most constant of hands upon my plow." â•Nick Offerman, New York Times bestselling author of *Paddle Your Own Canoe* "Berry's craftsmanship remains impeccable. Few other poets have such chaste and precise diction or manage line and stanza with such unaffected serenity." â•Booklist "Thoreau would be gratified . . . Here are Sabbath Poems that praise the given life." â•Lexington Herald-Leader "[Berry's poems] shine with a gentle wisdom of a craftsman who has thought deeply about the paradoxical strangeness and wonder of life." â•The Christian Science Monitor "Wendell Berry is one of those rare individuals who speaks to us always of responsibility, of the individual cultivation of an active and aware participation in the arts of life, be they those of composing a poem, preparing a hill for planting, raising a family, working for the good of oneself and one's neighbors, loving." â•The Bloomsbury Review Praise for *Life is Miracle: An Essay Against Modern Superstitions* "[A] scathing assessmentâ |Berry shows that Wilson's much-celebrated, controversial pleas in *Consilience* to unify all branches of knowledge is nothing more than a fatuous subordination of religion, art, and everything else that is good to scienceâ |Berry is one of the most perceptive critics of American society writing today." â•Washington Post Book World "I am tempted to say he understands [Consilience] better than Wilson himselfâ |A new emancipation proclamation in which he speaks again and again about how to defy the tyranny of scientific materialism." â•Christian Science Monitor "Berry takes a wrecking ball to E. O. Wilson's *Consilience*, reducing its smug assumptions regarding the fusion of science, art, and religion to so much rubble." â•Kirkus Praise for *It All Turns on Affection* "These powerful, challenging essays show why Berry's vision of a sustainable, human-scaled society has proven so influential." â•Publishers Weekly Praise for

Imagination in Place "Berry's latest collection of essays is the reminiscence of a literary life. It is a book that acknowledges a lifetime of intellectual influences, and in doing so, positions Berry more squarely as a cornerstone of American literature | a necessary book. Here, Berry's place as the "grandfather of slow food" or the "prophet of rural living" is not questioned. This book ensures we understand the depth and breadth of Berry's art." •San Francisco Chronicle "[A] stellar collection | Berry turns over well-tilled, ever-fertile ground in Imagination in Place. His ideas flow beyond the channels of agrarian enthusiasm. Foodies, architects, transportation engineers, and other writers are adopting and adapting his concepts, perhaps leading to what he envisions will one day be "an authentic settlement of our country." •The Oregonian "For those who've already come to admire Berry's moral clarity and closely argued critiques of contemporary society, Imagination in Place is a welcome chance to continue the conversation." •Christian Science Monitor

Praise for Home Economics: Fourteen Essays "Wherever we live, however we do so, we desperately need a prophet of responsibility; and although the days of the prophets seem past to many of us, Berry may be the closest to one we have. But, fortunately, he is also a poet of responsibility. He makes one believe that the good life may not only be harder than what we're used to but sweeter as well." •New York Review of Books

Praise for The Hidden Wound "A profound, passionate, crucial piece of writing | Few readers, and I think, no writers will be able to read it without a small pulse of triumph at the temples: the strange, almost communal sense of triumph one feels when someone has written truly well | The statement it makes is intricate and beautiful, sad but strong." •Washington Post "The brunt of the book is to wake us up, page after page, from stupidity. "It is a kind of death," Montaigne said, "to avoid the pain of well doing, or trouble of well living." Wendell Berry makes that observation rip the air like an alarm clock." •Guy Davenport, author of The Death of Picasso "Berry has produced one of the most humane, honest, liberating works of our time. It is a beautiful book. More than that, it has become at one stroke an essential book. Every American who can read at all should read it." •Village Voice "One of the most impressive aspects of Berry's book is the authentic simplicity of his style, the directness with which that style can accommodate Tolstoy, Malcolm X, work songs, anecdotes, speculation, and polemic indignation | The strength of this book is its connecting America's two major problems: the exploiting of men and land; it deserves as wide an audience as possible." •Louisville Courier-Journal "One of the most touching and true personal testaments concerned with our country's racial dilemma." •Publishers Weekly

Praise for The Gift of Good Land: Further Essays Cultural and Agricultural "These books [Recollected Essays and The Gift of Good Land] are the kind that you spend months with, hate to give up, and plan to return to soon and often.

There is much pure pleasure in them, both in the spare and crafted eloquence of their prose, and in the breadth and depth of their content. Theyâ™re reference works of the body and soulâ™

â•Washington Post Book World "These pieces are angry, urgent, courageous, joyous and reaffirming."

â•Philadelphia Inquirer Praise for *Distant Neighbors: The Selected Letters of Wendell Berry and Gary Snyder* "Candid, introspective and often deeply philosophical, these letters offer intimate glimpses into the lives and minds of two influential contemporary writers."

â•Kirkus "[â™]distills the decades-long flourishing of a remarkable friendship and documents the careers of two important living American writers, natural philosophers, and conservationists."

â•Publishers Weekly Starred Review "[T]he letters are packed with gemsâ™ Theyâ™re valuable for ecologists, students and teachers of contemporary American literature and for those of us eager to know how these two distant neighbors networked, negotiated and remained friends."

â•San Francisco Chronicle "In *Distant Neighbors*, both Berry and Snyder come across as honest and open-hearted explorers. There is an overall sense that they possess a deep and questing wisdom, hard earned through land work, travel, writing, and spiritual exploration. There is no rushing, no hectoring, and no grand gestures between these two, just an ever-deepening inquiry into what makes a good life and how to live it, even in the depths of the machine age."

â•Orion Magazine "Over and over in these pages the authors rise up to the big, mythical arenas of human existence, then float back down to the simple comforts of the mundane. Such is the feast that feeds them. And as a reader of these letters, itâ™s hard not to feel terribly fortunate to be seated at the table."

â•Los Angeles Review of Books "The sense of generosity and gratitude that pervades these letters is another shared commitment, and it is a particularly important place where their religious sensibilities overlap. As poets and essayistsâ™ both writers have advocated a stance of gratitude toward the world, a way of seeing it as a gift."

â•Commonweal "*Distant Neighbors* showcases these two great American poet-philosophers at most thoughtful and least guarded. Decades of correspondence drill down through the layers of their concernsâ™ land use, economics, farming, wild nature, the life of the spirit, modernity itselfâ™ as they struggle to live within a culture tearing itself up by its roots."

â•The New Statesman "This selection of letters offers an unforgettable glimpse of the difficulties and fulfillment of such work, and of a most remarkable friendship."

â•Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment "Berry and Snyder offer us a model of convivial masculinity, an exemplary relationship between two men who are grounded in their own practical lives and enjoy reaching out in friendship while being willing to disagree heartily."

â•Resurgence & Ecologist Praise for *A Continuous Harmony* "This book is broad and leisurely and important. Something like the river itself on which Wendell Berry lives. It is full of wide and flowing thoughts and one thing leads to another in the

manner that nature intendedâ•or used to. The language ranges from the grave and beautiful to the sharp and specific, depending on the need to express the vast variety of subjects he presents."

â•The Nation Praise for Citizenship Papers "Berry says that these recent essays mostly say again what he has said before. His faithful readers may think he hasnâ™t, however, said any of it better before."

â•Booklist Starred Review "His refusal to abandon the local for the global, to sacrifice neighborliness, community integrity, and economic diversity for access to Wal-Mart, has never seemed more appealing, nor his questions of personal accountability more powerful."

â•Kirkus "The courage of a book, it has been said, is that it looks away from nothing. Here is a brave book."

â•Charlotte Observer Praise for Blessed Are the Peacemakers "Berry restates an old message as beautifully as he has stated anything in his long, distinguished career."

â•Booklist Praise for The Art of the Commonplace "Wendell Berry speaks as well as anyone of what is genuine, what is creative, what is ennobling."

â•Washington Post "[Berryâ™s words] shine with the gentle wisdom of a craftsman who has thought deeply about the paradoxical strangeness and wonders of life."

â•Christian Science Monitor Praise for Another Turn of the Crank: Essays "Berry is a philosopher, poet, novelist and an essayist in the tradition of Emerson and Thoreau . . . like Thoreau, he marches to a different drummer, a drummer we would do well to be aware of, if not to march to."

â•San Francisco Chronicle "The best serious essayist now at work in the United States."

â•Edward Abbey, author of Hayduke Lives "Berry is a philosopher, poet, novelist, and an essayist in the tradition of Emerson and Thoreauâ | like Thoreau, he marches to a different drummer, a drummer we would do well to be aware of."

â•San Francisco Chronicle "Read [Berry] with pencil in hand, make notes and hope that somehow our country and the world will soon come to see the truth that is told here."

â•New York Times "The rarest (and highest) of literary classes consist of that small group of authors who are absolutely inimitableâ | One of the half-dozen living American authors who belongs in this class is Wendell Berry."

â•Los Angeles Times "Berry is the prophetic American voice of our day."

â•Christian Science Monitor "A Kentucky farmer and writer, and perhaps the great moral essayist of our day, Berry has produced one of his shortest but also most powerful volumes."

â•New York Review of Books

Wendell Berry, an essayist, novelist, and poet, has been honored with the T.S. Eliot Award, the Aiken Taylor Award for poetry, the John Hay Award of the Orion Society, and the Richard C. Holbrooke Distinguished Achievement Award of the Dayton Literary Peace Prize, among others. In 2010, he was awarded the National Humanities Medal by Barack Obama, and in 2016, he was the recipient of the Ivan Sandrof Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Book Critics Circle. He

is also a fellow of the Academy of Arts and Sciences. Wendell lives with his wife, Tanya Berry, on their farm in Henry County, Kentucky.

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