I am not in the habit of replying to articles in magazines, but Mr. Berry’s essay struck such a resounding chord I felt compelled to add my voice to the chaos that is sure to follow it.

As Mr. Berry describes his writing process, I picture an early afternoon in his home: He, hunched over his writing desk, busily finishing his next essay while the chattering of keys provides background music. His wife types away, humming happily as she works, stopping occasionally to frown at an unclear idea or a careless spelling error. Perhaps after the sun goes down, when the electric lights are off and the typewriter and his horses are bedded down for the night, Mr. and Mrs. Berry enjoy the candle lit dinner he prepared and chat cozily about new ideas for future compositions.

I envy the serene and peaceful life I imagine he and his wife enjoy. As I sometimes feel hounded by the easy availability to everyone in my life via either computer or cell phone, I wonder if there is value in escaping from the modern world and going back to simpler times and simpler ways.

Although he may think I am in complete agreement, however, I would like to add a small concern: Every “old” invention was once considered a thing of the “future.” Even his aged and beloved typewriter was cutting edge in 1956. He should also expect to be called a bit hypocritical, as the typewriter is neither smaller nor cheaper than a pencil, has more parts, and is probably no longer available close to home (I haven’t seen one in a store in years). Arguably, the typewriter greatly improves performance, but it too increases dependences on the evil companies who pollute and brainwash (ribbon, paper, ink, metal, plastic). And, the clacking of the keys, a sound unpleasant to other members of the family, disturbs something already good – silence.

So, he might say, if I am going to nit-pick, no invention would ever totally fit his criteria. I would be interested to hear how any invention could! I think of the advances of science and medicine, the trade offs of the conveniences and the problems they create. Perhaps that is the key – can they balance? Does the huge contribution penicillin made to human health make up for the pharmaceutical industry it created? Can running water, central air conditioning, washing machines, cars, or Facebook ever be worth their long range cost? Or is it up to us, as rational human beings, to decide just how to maximize the positive possibilities and minimize the negative consequences of progress? The computer is not inherently evil; it has endless possible benefits for mankind; the typewriter is not without flaws – I hope never again to be forced to use one! The problem is not with the machine, but with the people. Therefore it is up to us to continue to strive for balance – and solutions.