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# NARRATIVE MAPPINGS OF THE LAND AS SPACE AND PLACE IN WILLA CATHER'S O PIONEERS!

KAREN E. RAMIREZ

*The land belongs to the future, Carl; that's the way it seems to me. How many of the names on the county clerk's plat will be there in fifty years? I might as well try to will the sunset over there to my brothers' children. We come and go, but the land is always here. And the people who love it and understand it are the people who own it—for a little while.*<sup>1</sup>

At the conclusion of Willa Cather's 1913 novel *O Pioneers!*, Alexandra Bergson muses about landownership, and more broadly about the human-land relationship, by reflecting on the transience of the county plat map, one of the most popular forms of mapping rural America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These maps were not

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only housed at the county clerk's office; by the 1880s and 1890s, while Cather was living in Nebraska, commercialized survey maps periodically were collected and published in large, colorful county atlases, also called plat books, becoming among the most widely circulated maps of rural areas throughout the Midwest and Plains states.<sup>2</sup> This utilitarian form of mapping reflects a nationalistic spatial understanding of western geography as empty space, and it is one form of mapping that Cather draws on and responds to in *O Pioneers!*—a novel centrally concerned with how to map out the land, or as Alexandra says, how to “understand it” (273).

With *O Pioneers!* Cather “hit the home pasture” by fictionalizing Webster County, Nebraska, where she grew up between 1883 and 1890, first on the high land known as the Divide and then in the town of Red Cloud.<sup>3</sup> In this novel, which Cather considered her first, she developed what Guy Reynolds terms

her “organic modernism,” in which “the environment of Nebraska is used as an analog for novelistic form” to the point that “landscape might even *create* form.”<sup>4</sup> For Reynolds, this resonance between the novel’s form and the land depicted is visible in the novel’s “soft” or “formless” shape, which mimics the “‘all soft’ landscape of the prairies.”<sup>5</sup> As I will explore, another type of relationship between the novel’s form and the land it reflects lies in the recurrent narration pattern of traveling over the landscape and orienting the reader via movement past human and ecological markers on the land. This narration pattern both textually recreates the experience of looking at a map, by prompting the mind’s eye to follow along paths or roads, and contextually raises the question of how people understand the land.

In his study of how people “attach meaning” to their surroundings, cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan usefully distinguishes between the terms “space” and “place” to indicate separate, complex human experiences of our physical and imagined environments.<sup>6</sup> As Tuan explains, space is abstract and uncharted; it “has no fixed pattern of established human meaning; it is like a blank sheet on which meaning may be imposed.”<sup>7</sup> Place, on the other hand is particularized and circumscribed; it is “enclosed and humanized space.”<sup>8</sup> Using rhetoric resonating with frontier imagery, Tuan writes:

Space is a common symbol of freedom in the Western world. Space lies open; it suggests the future and invites action. . . . Open space has no trodden paths and signposts. . . . Compared to space, place is a calm center of established values. Human beings require both space and place. Human lives are a dialectical movement between shelter and venture, attachment and freedom.<sup>9</sup>

For Tuan, and (as we shall see) for Cather, space and place coexist in human experience, and frequently “what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value.”<sup>10</sup>

The central differentiation between these two responses to the environment lies in how it is endowed with “value.” Approaching the land as space implies a need to “establish human meaning” upon the land, and as such, when approached as space, humanizing the land is not necessarily integral to the physical environment itself. The land remains imagined as a blank canvas alienated from the human markings imposed upon it. In contrast, conceiving of the land as place implies a view of the land as itself inherently endowed with meaning, and humanizing the land becomes a process of getting to know the physical environment and connecting it to human situations and stories. In sum, a space-oriented perspective assumes that meaning must be imposed upon the land, whereas a place-oriented perspective envisions meaning already present in the land.

In its narrative mapping of the Great Plains, *O Pioneers!* opens with and repeatedly returns to a plat map view of the western landscape as undefined space subsequently imposed upon with markings or boundary definitions (such as survey lines, property markers, railroad tracks, homesteads, roads, paths, and even telephone lines) that make sense of land approached as inherently empty.<sup>11</sup> As I will discuss, this space-oriented mapping, and its implied assumptions about western land as frontier, informs and sometimes directs the narration as well as characters’ experiences with the land. However, Cather contrasts a space-oriented mapping with what Susan J. Rosowski describes as Cather’s “ecology of place”—textual moments that map the land “by principles of community,” or by calling attention to the local plants, land formations, ancient history, and even the personal stories associated with the land.<sup>12</sup> This place-oriented mapping reflects a spatial view of western geography as inherently worthy (prior to human intervention) and the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century preservationist movement’s appeal to appreciate the land as noncommercially valuable.<sup>13</sup>

Reading Cather’s narrative mappings of the land in light of contemporary plat maps of Nebraska (the one form of mapping that Cather

specifically references in *O Pioneers!*) extends the ongoing scholarly discussion of Cather's multidimensional treatment of land and its ecology, or what Patrick K. Dooley refers to as Cather's "divided alliance" between "homocentric versus biocentric world-views" and what Cliff Boyer calls the "ecological paradox" of desiring an intimate relationship with the land while exhibiting behavior that "directly contradicts this desire or connection."<sup>14</sup> Volume 5 of *Cather Studies*, devoted to discussion of Cather's ecological imagination, collectively speaks to Cather's inconsistent handling of the "interconnections between human culture and the material world, between the human and the nonhuman."<sup>15</sup> For instance, while Glotfelty discusses how ecocritics have collected "what might be called a 'canon' of environmental scenes" in Cather's work, Joseph W. Meeker states that "it is unlikely that Willa Cather will find a place among the great literary examples of the environmental imagination" and that "there is no environmental ethic that emerges from her work, but rather an ethic of development that supposes that land fulfills its destiny when it is successfully farmed."<sup>16</sup>

My own reading of *O Pioneers!* attends to how Cather juxtaposes a space-oriented "ethic of development" and a place-oriented "environmental ethic." Critical attention to one or the other of these land ethics in Cather's work overlooks the extent to which *O Pioneers!*, her first landscape-centered novel, mediates between contrasting mappings of the land and produces a dialogue between them. *O Pioneers!* offers a mediatory ethic that invites conversation and negotiation across diverging approaches to the land in two main ways. First, the novel's narration pointedly presents contradictory descriptions of the land without resolving the conflicts these descriptions raise. Secondly, the novel's protagonist, Alexandra, herself problematically espouses both a hierarchical, space-based relationship to the land and a more communitarian, place-based connection to the same land. By overlaying alternative mappings in these ways, *O Pioneers!* opens up discussion about how to interpret the western

geography. Cather exposes the then-dominant and nationalistic understanding of the West as a frontier of "empty" space to be filled with Anglo-American expansion and progress as only one possible interpretation of the land. Instead of criticizing or denying this mapping, though, the novel redirects the reader toward an awareness of the permeability inherent in any interpretative categories created to understand the land, including our present-day ecocritical categories within which scholars have struggled to read Cather's work.

#### THE COUNTY PLAT: MAPPING SPACE

Well before the 1880s, when Cather moved to Nebraska, the frontier West (west of the Missouri, primarily) had become for Anglo-Americans a metaphor for space. Not surprisingly, Cather herself experienced migration to Nebraska in these terms, as is evident from her comments that Nebraska appeared "as bare as a piece of sheet iron" or as "naked as the back of your hand."<sup>17</sup> By negating the Native inhabitants and overlooking local topographies, Anglo-Americans uniformly viewed the West as a wide expanse of empty, unsettled, unknown territory. As Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis elucidated, nationalistic American ideals—of a land of freedom and opportunity, a nation of immigrants, a melting pot, or a new frontier—*required* a view of the land as open space available for an incoming population.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Joseph R. Urgo's suggestive rewriting of the Turner thesis into the "Cather thesis" of an "American empire of migration," which posits American migration or mobility (not the frontier) as "a great fact of its national existence, a cornerstone to its ideology," also assumes western land as open space to be crossed over or temporarily inhabited as people move back and forth from the east.<sup>19</sup> This dominant understanding of western lands as space influenced how Anglo-Americans moving west and living in the West created a sense of place. Approaching the land as a blank surface meant that a sense of place was shaped by signs of Anglo-American migration over the

land and by signs of human development or “progress” imposed upon the land.

During Cather’s time, the popular plat map cartography of the Great Plains also reinforced a geography of space. County atlases, produced primarily for the local residents of the county, represented the land according to its perceived material use-value, marking the location of houses, farms, schools, railroads, springs, and rivers against an otherwise empty canvas. Furthermore, the practice of selling county atlases by subscription to the local residents (with the option of buying additional advertisement space for a portrait, a biography, or a picture of the family farm, home, and livestock), supported an understanding of the land as a reflection of individual material success.

Atlases from the prairie and plains states particularly promoted a space-oriented view of the land since they cartographically depict the grid survey system established by the Land Ordinance of 1785. Unlike the European metes and bounds system of surveying land by measuring straight lines between distinctive landmarks such as trees, rocks or streams, the American grid survey system arbitrarily imposed geometric boundaries across land assumed to be empty. Grid surveys divided the lands west of the original thirteen states into “townships” measuring six miles square, which were numbered off of a series of principal meridians and base lines. Each township was divided into thirty-six “sections,” which measured one square mile, or 640 acres. The sections were then subdivided by forty-acre plots.<sup>20</sup> This geometric cartography is clearly visible in the “Outline Map of Webster County” from Northwest Publishing Company’s 1900 *Platbook of Webster County, Nebraska*, which is one representative atlas of Webster County housed in the Library of Congress’s collection of county atlases published between 1860 and the early 1920s (Fig. 1).<sup>21</sup>

Apart from providing a convenient system of surveying and partitioning the public domain, the grid system was also a visual representation of a national ideology that privileged agrarian “civilization” through private property, family

farms, and communities organized around churches, schools, and other civic organizations. As Kent C. Ryden aptly points out,

the grid established by the 1785 Land Ordinance epitomizes the view of geography as space; ignoring the texture of the terrain over which it passes and the exigencies of the lives that people live on the land, it covers the country with a uniform blanket of identical squares and evenly spaced intersections. Space is geography viewed from a distance, coolly pondered and figured out, calmly waiting to have meaning assigned to it.<sup>22</sup>

However, as Conzen suggests, grid survey maps have a different “texture” from maps of eastern seaboard regions surveyed using the metes and bounds method—a difference that, in part, reflects a distinction between a space-oriented cartography and a place-oriented cartography.<sup>23</sup> As Conzen explains by pointing to an 1858 map of Adams County, Pennsylvania (now available online through the Library of Congress’s *American Memory* collection; see Fig. 2), typically maps of areas surveyed by metes and bounds “highlight the house locations of all resident rural families in relation to topography, roads, and towns. . . . Given the convoluted property history of the eastern seaboard by the mid-nineteenth century, no attempt could be made to show actual property boundaries.”<sup>24</sup> Zooming in on the Library of Congress’s digital image of this 1858 map shows property ownership marked by small dots representing individual farms or houses (Fig. 3). Instead of indicating all the property boundaries, landownership is shown in relation to surrounding hills (denoted by radiating lines), streams, and roads—cartographically suggesting how owned property fits into a topographical sense of place.

In contrast, grid survey maps concentrate on indicating precise boundary lines of each quarter-section of land with little attention to physical terrain and no attention to the lived history on the land (a project inherently more possible in the grasslands of Nebraska

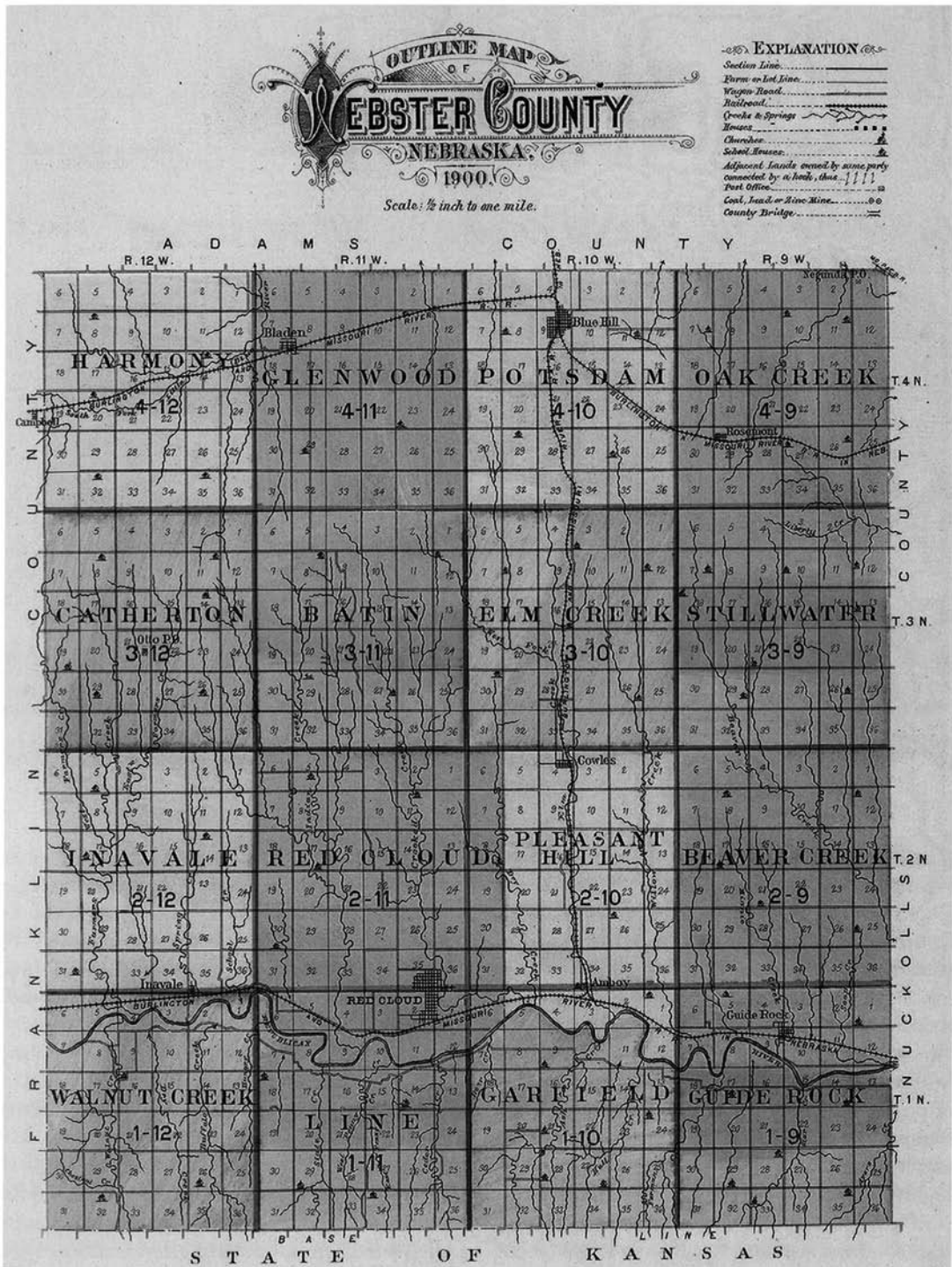


FIG. 1. "Outline Map of Webster County," Platbook of Webster County, Nebraska, Compiled from County Records and Actual Surveys (Philadelphia: Northwest, 1900), 2.



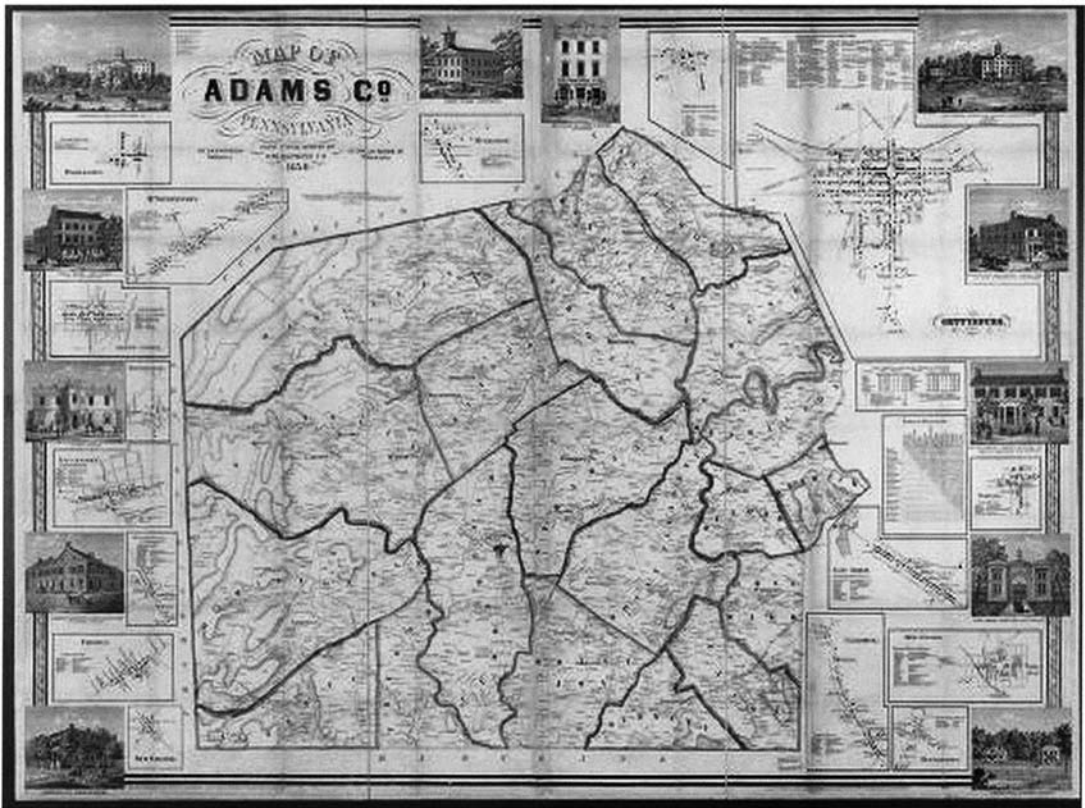


FIG. 2. Griffith Morgan Hopkins, "Map of Adams County, Pennsylvania, from actual survey by G. M. Hopkins, C. E." (Philadelphia: Converse, 1858). American Memory: Maps and Cartographic Items, 1500-Present: Cultural Landscapes, Library of Congress [online].

than in forested eastern states). For instance, Figure 4 shows a section of the "Plat of Red Cloud Township" from the *Platbook of Webster County*, which prominently delineates the section boundaries within the township and notes the number of acres individual property holders own within the section. Additionally, almost everything else marked on the map is humanly imposed on the land, such as names of property owners (including the Cathers', as highlighted), houses, lines of commerce (roads and railroad lines), and civic sites (such as the highlighted city pump, school, cemetery, brickyard, and fairgrounds). The physiographical features drawn indicate usable resources (such as rivers, springs, dry creeks, ponds, mines) that were considered material resources and therefore part of the landowners' holdings.

Additionally, county atlases such as Northwest's *Platbook of Webster County* further portray western lands as undefined space by homogenizing the local into the national. By the late nineteenth century most county atlases were published by large publishing houses that canvassed county after county throughout the prairie and plains states.<sup>25</sup> Along with specific names, pictures, and advertisements for each individual county, the atlases include extensive boilerplate information. For instance, Northwest's atlases include maps of the individual state, the United States, and the world along with information on the system of government surveying, the location of the principal meridians and baselines across the county, standard time belts, and road laws.<sup>26</sup> In the process of individualizing a county with





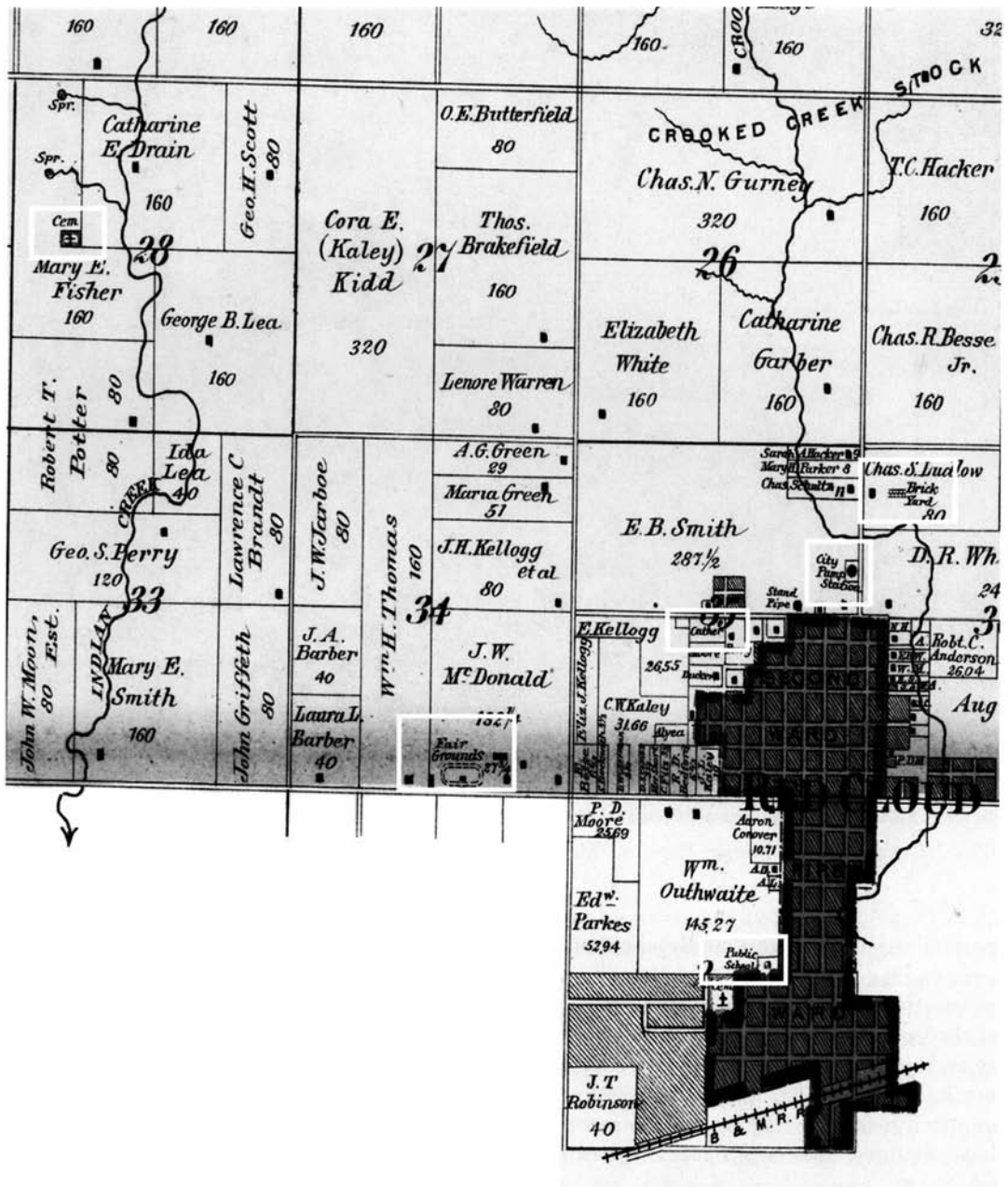


FIG. 4. Detail of "Plat of Red Cloud Township," Platbook of Webster County, Nebraska, 12.

danger and difficulty of cultivating the "wild land." Chapters 1 and 2 begin by traveling over the landscape and orienting the reader via human-imposed landmarks that are set up in opposition to the threatening expanse

of the land itself—the very same landmarks indicated on the survey maps. The first chapter opens on the "little town" of Hanover and leads us past "haphazard" houses, to the "deeply rutted" main street, past signs of agricultural

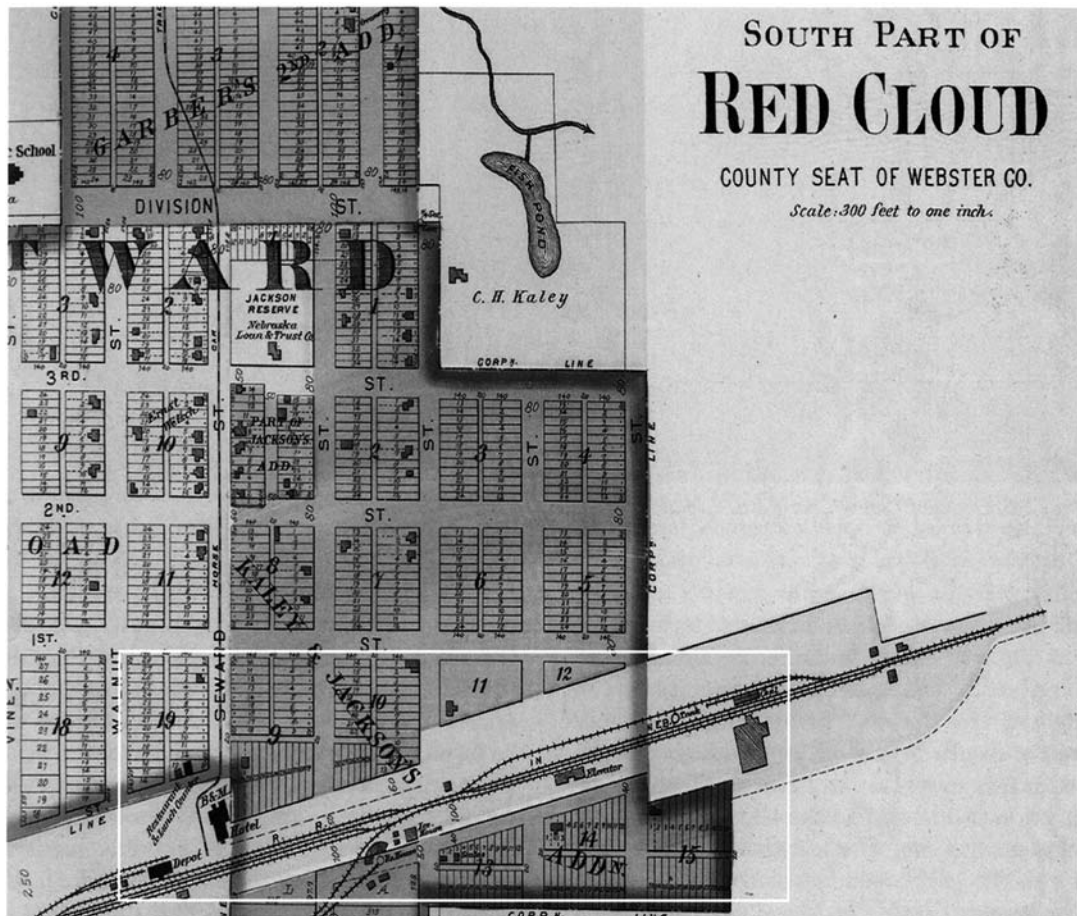


FIG. 5. "South Part of Red Cloud," Platbook of Webster County, Nebraska, 14.

productivity (the railway station, the grain elevator, the lumberyard, and the horse pond), and finally to signs of commercial organization (the merchandise stores, banks, drugstore, feed store, saloon, post office) (11-12). The 1900 Northwest plat map of the town of Red Cloud (Figs. 5 and 6) notes some of the same features, such as the railroad depot, the grain elevator, and the Loan and Trust, as well as additional signs of human impact, including the school, icehouse, a "Restaurant and Lunch Counter," a hotel, and a water tank.

The second chapter in *O Pioneers!* similarly orients the reader to the farmland outside town by traveling the eye past small houses "tucked away in low places," over the roads

that "were but faint tracks in the grass," and then by widening the lens to survey the few "scarcely noticeable" plowed fields (25). Both chapters present the land in terms of human impositions (town, buildings, roads, plowed fields) that struggle against the land itself. As the narrator comments toward the end of the first chapter, "the great fact was the land itself, which seemed to overwhelm the little beginnings of human society that struggled in its sombre wastes" (21).

John Bergson, the dying patriarch of the Bergson homestead, epitomizes this view of the land as space. Assuming a (gendered) relationship of dominance over a subordinate land, Bergson bemoans that he "had made

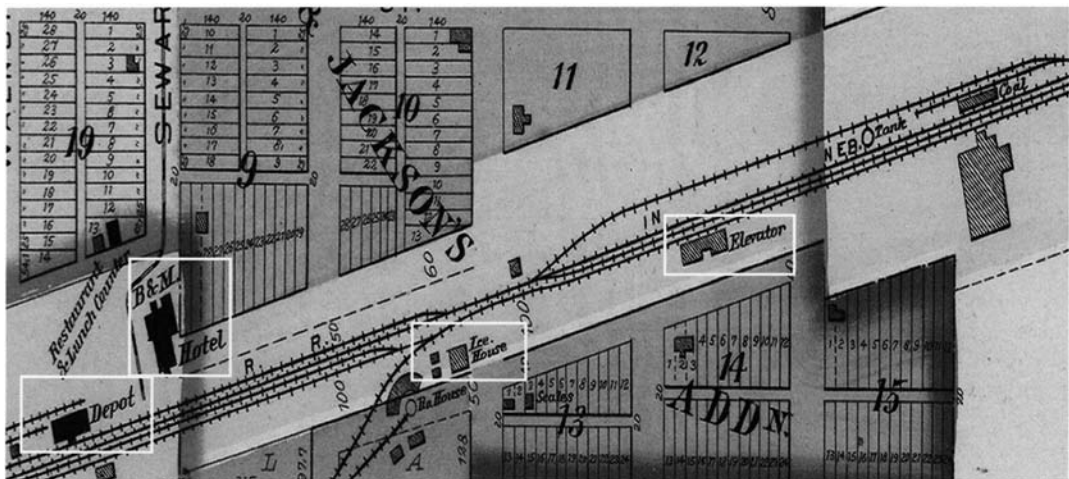


FIG. 6. Detail of "South Part of Red Cloud," Platbook of Webster County, Nebraska, 14.

but little impression upon the wild land he had come to tame" and therefore feels that "Its Genius was unfriendly to man" (26). Although he claims to know "every ridge and draw and gully between him and the horizon," his mind's eye sees only the markers of his effort on the land: "To the south, his plowed fields; to the east, the sod stables, the cattle corral, the pond,—and then the grass" (26). His mental map of "his" land ends with "the grass," the wild land that he understands as empty, indistinguishable space. Bergson so thoroughly maps his land by his self-imposed human markers that he is unable to impart meaning to the land that doesn't reflect those marks of progress and so-called improvement. Like the plat maps, with their attention to property boundaries and signs of agricultural prosperity, Bergson's supposedly intimate "knowledge" of his land actually reflects his intimate knowledge of his own labor on the land he envisions as unmarked territory.

Even while the novel opens with this widely understood mapping of western land, from the outset we are encouraged to interpret this mapping as only one perspective. As the text follows Alexandra, Carl, and Emil from Hanover onto the open homestead lands, we learn that it is only Carl, whose "sombre eyes . . . seemed

already to be looking into the past," who in this scene responds to the land as a combatant "because he felt that men were too weak to make any mark here, that the land wanted to be let alone, to preserve its own fierce strength, its peculiar, savage kind of beauty, its uninterrupted mournfulness" (21). Without offering Alexandra's perspective, Cather notes that it is the backward-looking Carl who views the land as "savage," "fierce," and therefore unable to be "marked."

The initial portrayal of the Bergson homestead in the second chapter begins to highlight contrasting perspectives of the land. Unlike earlier descriptions of the land in relation to human, material markers and Carl's initial idea of the land as "savage," the homestead is described reverently in relation to the natural geographic marker of Norway Creek:

The Bergson homestead was easier to find than many another, because it overlooked Norway Creek, a shallow, muddy stream that sometimes flowed, and sometimes stood still, at the bottom of a winding ravine with steep, shelving sides overgrown with brush and cottonwoods and dwarf ash. This creek gave a sort of identity to the farms that bordered upon it. Of all the bewildering things



about a new country, the absence of human landmarks is one of the most depressing and disheartening. (25)

Norway Creek provides a sense of “identity” for the farms around it, not only because it is visible but also because it embodies cyclical activity. The creek is described with a life of its own; it alternately flows or stands still and supports the “overgrown” brush along its banks. Here nature is not a setting for human activity; it is itself active and interactive. The land dramatizes sustained life through cycles of abundance and stagnation.<sup>27</sup> Notably, this is a suitable “sort of identity” to impart to the Bergson homestead, which is introduced as where “John Bergson was dying” and yet contains the seeds of Alexandra’s future abundance (25).

Calling attention to the particularities of the natural terrain and its plant ecology, as in the passage above, suggests a place-oriented perspective of the surroundings. Being attuned to the landscape’s inherent characteristics allows one to use these features to create a sense of place, or as Tuan writes, to “endow it with value.”<sup>28</sup> Of course, both the human-created markers of houses, fields, and roads, and the markers of creeks, vegetation, and seasonal changes, require human demarcation, what Tuan terms “experience,” or the “various modes through which a person knows and constructs a reality.”<sup>29</sup> Experience is the process of endowing something with value through the recognition of borders, markers, smells, feelings, or any other way of understanding, circumscribing, and naming the surroundings. While a sense of place always is human-mediated because it involves assigning meaning, attention to local ecology as itself embodying a life cycle and community validates the land as intrinsically place, and thereby initiates the possibility of experiencing it as place prior to the introduction of human-manufactured markers.

In Cather’s novel, even while the description of the homestead suggests a localized place-oriented understanding of the land, the space-oriented perspective does not disappear. In fact, in the passage quoted above the

place-focused descriptions are contrasted with the comment that the “absence of human landmarks” is not only “bewildering” but even “depressing and disheartening.” Such melancholy about the lack of “human landmarks” jars with the preceding description of the “identity” that Norway Creek provides. Although “human landmarks” are not the only landmarks (and not the only ones demarcated in the text), for those trained to recognize only “human landmarks” (houses, roads, and plowed fields), the absence of these markers results in feeling “bewildered,” or lost and without a sense of place.

In contrast to other passages in which a space-oriented perspective is attributed to a particular character (such as John Bergson or Carl, as we have seen thus far), here the feeling of bewilderment is not specifically connected to any character. This is one of many moments in the text in which the narrator voices a space-oriented view of the land seemingly as if this perspective were a given. The narrator thus presents a space-oriented metanarrative that, when viewed collectively with other similar narratorial comments, presents itself, to use Urgo’s terminology, as a “primary meaning in Catherian terms of the United States’ frontier heritage;” it is so internalized that it seemingly seeps out of the text as a universally held truth.<sup>30</sup> In the passage about Norway Creek, however, this metanarrative is inconsistent with the concurrent landscape descriptions emphasizing an ecologically grounded sense of place. In juxtaposing these two mappings of the Bergson homestead, Cather invites a dialectical movement between them by sanctioning both the appreciation of the natural source of “identity” and the bewilderment from a lack of “human” identifiers.

This unresolved collision between a frontier-focused metanarrative and an ecological experience of place similarly arises in the description of Ivar’s homestead. Once again, the text orients us to the surroundings by traveling the mind’s eye over the land as we follow along with Alexandra, Carl, Emil, Lou and Oscar on their way to Ivar’s country:



The road to Ivar's homestead was a very poor one. He had settled in the rough country across the county line where no one lived but some Russians,—half a dozen families who dwelt together in one long house, divided off like barracks. . . . The Bergson wagon lurched along over the rough hummocks and grass banks, followed the bottom of winding draws, or skirted the margin of wide lagoons, where the golden coreopsis grew up out of the clear water and the wild ducks rose with a whirr of wings. (38)

This passage shifts in focus from the human-created markers (the county line, the road, the settlements) to natural markers. The description begins by detailing the difficulty of human life in Ivar's country; the road is "poor," the country is "rough," and the wagon "lurch(es)" over the "rough hummocks." But the passage moves from struggle to playfulness and hope, as suggested by the sequence of verbs: lurched, followed, skirted, grew up, rose. Additionally, the passage progresses from generality towards specificity in mapping out the country. As the children's traveling experience changes from lurching over the ground to skirting around lagoons, the landscape comes into closer focus by moving from a distant recognition of the rough hummocks and grass banks to a precise awareness of the "golden coreopsis," the "clear water," and the whirring noise of wild ducks in flight.

Here, and even more so in the description of entering Ivar's country, the narrator shifts away from a sense of bewilderment by reflecting an intimate, and even scientific, knowledge of the local plant ecology:

In Crazy Ivar's country the grass was short and gray, the draws deeper than they were in the Bergsons' neighborhood, and the land was all broken up into hillocks and clay ridges. The wild flowers disappeared, and only in the bottom of the draws and gullies grew a few of the very toughest and hardiest: shoestring, and ironweed, and snow-on-the-mountain. (39)

The simultaneous attention in these passages to the "country" as an ecological community of landscape-appropriate flora and fauna, and to the human categorization and naming of that flora, reflects what Cheryl C. Swift and John N. Swift discuss as Cather's mixed response to botanist Frederic Clements's place-centered "community theory" of plant ecology, which focused on the holistic interrelation of species within specific locales and the process of species adapting to one another in order to move towards a "climax," or "a condition of 'stabilization.'"<sup>31</sup> As Swift and Swift explain, Clements's "conceptualization of the plant 'formation' or community as a single organic entity" became the "dominant American ecological paradigm" of the early 1900s, replacing a more human-centered "'taxonomic' botanical perspective" of nature as "a phenomena in need of sorting and naming" based on an external system of families, or genera.<sup>32</sup>

Swift and Swift see *O Pioneers!* as an example of Cather favoring Clements's side of this debate by presenting the biological world holistically, and they suggest that "*O Pioneers!* deals much less with the names of organisms than with their functions and interactions as *members of communities*."<sup>33</sup> However, the description of traveling to Ivar's country, with its attention to the names of the various plants, including the scientific reference to "golden coreopsis" (also called tickseed), suggests that Cather instead juxtaposes the organic, ecological principle of nature as community and the imposed, "taxonomic" principle of sorting nature. At the very least, Cather fits the taxonomic principle into a communitarian experience of place; the reference to golden coreopsis implies a taxonomic chain of relations and yet it is presented as one part of the local ecology, where it grows "up out of the clear water" and under the whirr of the wild ducks' wings. Admittedly, Swift and Swift temper their reading of *O Pioneers!* as a reflection of Clementsian ecology with the following aside:

(This is not to say that plant names are non-existent or even unimportant in *O Pioneers!*)

They are, however, localized in predictable settings: gardens, orchards, areas of disturbance. Plants are also frequently catalogued for their uses, as in Mrs. Bergson's canning operations [29]. Latin names do not occur, nor is there any ambivalence or vagueness in the use of common names).<sup>34</sup>

But the attention to plant names in the passages quoted above does not occur in a "predictable setting" such as a garden or orchard, nor in an "area of disturbance." Furthermore, in writing that Cather does not use Latin names in *O Pioneers!*, they seemingly overlook the reference to "coreopsis," which as David Stouck's explanatory notes indicate, is the first half of the flower's Latin name, *Coreopsis tinctoria*.<sup>35</sup> The flower's common name, "tickseed," is the "name for various plants having seeds resembling ticks, as the castor-oil plant and the genera *Coreopsis*."<sup>36</sup> Thus, Swift and Swift's conclusion that in Cather's *larger body of writing* (my emphasis) the "ecological" and the "taxonomical" perspectives "co-exist dialectically or symbiotically" also fits *O Pioneers!*<sup>37</sup> Ecological attentiveness, as in the description of Ivar's homestead, offers a communitarian perspective of the land that coexists with a more human-centered approach to the land.

The subsequent description of Ivar's homestead, which presents the homestead in terms of human-manufactured markers, further highlights the instability of the ecological perspective:

At one end of the pond was an earthen dam, planted with green willow bushes, and above it a door and a single window were set into the hillside. You would not have seen them at all but for the reflection of the sunlight upon the four panes of window-glass. And that was all you saw. Not a shed, not a corral, not a well, not even a path broken in the curly grass. But for the piece of rusty stovepipe sticking up through the sod, you could have walked over the roof of Ivar's dwelling without dreaming that you were near a human habitation. (39)

After the extensive detail of the plants and land formation around Ivar's dwelling, the narrator's comment that the dam, planted bushes, a door, a window, and a stovepipe were "all you saw" is disorienting, and it raises the question of whom the second person, "you," refers to. Considering the previous ecological detail, these features are not all that we, the readers, have seen of Ivar's homestead. Here again the narrator reveals a frontier-focused metanarrative; there is a presumption that the reader, like the narrator, interprets the land as open space and therefore looks only for human-created markers on the land—all the things that are *not* visible on Ivar's homestead: "Not a shed, not a corral, not a well, not even a path broken in the curly grass." While it is generally true (in Cather's day and today) that the reader, the assumed "you," unconsciously brings this framework to the novel, the text makes us aware of, and even uncomfortable with, "our" presumed framework by first showing us so much more of Ivar's country than the reflection of sunlight in a windowpane and a piece of stovepipe.

Although the description of Ivar's place embraces a view of the land as intrinsically valuable, a perspective advocated by preservationists contemporary to Cather such as John Muir, the novel never relinquishes the utilitarian model of land use, as advocated by early conservationists such as Gifford Pinchot, who claimed "the first principle of conservation is development."<sup>38</sup> Ultimately, in surrendering to the land around him and thereby living "without defiling the face of nature any more than the coyote that had lived there before him had done" (40), Ivar loses his land just like the coyotes before him and the notably unmentioned Native Americans, discussed further below. However, as the narrative mappings of the Bergson homestead and Ivar's homestead demonstrate, Cather goes further in inviting recognition of the intrinsic value of place than including Ivar only as "a minority dissenting view."<sup>39</sup>

ALEXANDRA'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE LAND  
AS PLACE AND SPACE

Cather blends place- and space-oriented approaches to the land farthest through Alexandra and her gradual awareness of both an intimate closeness to the land and an agricultural productivity drawn from the land. Alexandra's awakening to "a new relation" to the land around her stems from her awareness of a close relation to her specific locale, the Divide, and a celebration of the local ecology of this particular place (69). Following her trip to the river farms, Alexandra not only sees the land as "rich and strong and glorious" (64), suggesting that she can envision the growth and fertility that it eventually sustains; she also discovers her own investment in this place. She reflects that "she had never known before how much the country meant to her"—a recognition of the land's importance to her both for its future profit potential and for the love and attachment she feels for the land (69).

Alexandra's recognition of her own love of the land comes from a heightened consciousness of the local rhythms within the land itself; it is an experience of the land as inherently place. Reflecting back on the moment of epiphany she felt when driving back to the Divide from the river farms, she recalls that "the chirping of the insects down in the long grass had been like the sweetest music. She had felt as if her heart were hiding down there, somewhere, with the quail and the plover and all the little wild things that crooned or buzzed in the sun" (69). Unlike other moments in the text that focus on what humans impart upon the land, here Alexandra inserts herself into the preexisting colonization of the land that the insects, quail, and plover represent. This local ecological community exists "down in the long grass"—inside the endless grass that others (particularly the Bergson men) can only conceive of as worthless emptiness to be written on with signs of human progress. Alexandra's communion with the land as place reflects the early twentieth-century "movement among naturalists to redefine the American's

sense of the land, away from profit making and toward spirit making."<sup>40</sup> In this way, the passage suggests an early manifestation of Aldo Leopold's call for a "land ethic" or Charles Wilkinson's more recent appeal for an "ethic of place," which he describes as a shared community value manifested in "a dogged determination to treat the environment and its people as equals, to recognize both as sacred."<sup>41</sup>

Alexandra's agricultural success can be read as a material ramification of, and therefore a celebration of, her feminized, ethical approach to the land as place that challenges a paternalistic ideology of domination over the land.<sup>42</sup> However, it is not clear that Alexandra's passion for the land and her place-centered awareness of the land form the motivating factors behind her agricultural success. As a woman who takes on the typically male role of making and pursuing decisions (even against the will of the men around her), and as one who cultivates for material gain the land she passionately loves and understands, Alexandra exhibits a dialectical movement between communion and domination. In discussing Cather's famous comment that Alexandra's love of the land was "the first time, perhaps, since that land emerged from the waters of geologic ages, [that] a human face was set toward it with love and yearning" (64), Howard Horowitz notes that this "very passage about her love for the land inaugurates her first speculative venture, mortgaging the family's 640 acres, buying farms surrendered during the drought and panic of 1885-86."<sup>43</sup> Horowitz aptly describes Alexandra's conception of the land as neither one of appropriative "patriarchal agrarianism" nor the alternative of "feminine agrarianism."<sup>44</sup> For Alexandra, neither impulse overrides the other.

In fact, the novel repeatedly shows Alexandra's greatest causes for success to be her willingness to learn from a range of others (including Ivar, the real estate agent Charley Fuller, and the university student who introduces her to alfalfa), to discern monetarily profitable ideas and to take calculated risks. Whether it is keeping her hogs clean, staying put on the Divide during the years of drought,

planting alfalfa and wheat against popular opinion, or erecting a silo, Alexandra consistently and successfully assesses advice and dares to impose innovations that, in increasing the agricultural profitability of her land, suggest an entrepreneurial attitude toward the land that contrasts with the love and respect she also voices and demonstrates. Because agricultural productivity implies imposing human will on the land for human gain or profit, it is not necessarily the manifestation of a love and respect for the land's intrinsic worth. Thus, through Alexandra, the novel questions a strict division between agricultural domestication of the land and preservation of the land as wild.<sup>45</sup>

Furthermore, as a result of Alexandra's dual relationship of communion with and domination over the land, Alexandra challenges gender categorization as well as the categorizations of land either as a dangerous (masculinized) wilderness to be combated or as a willing (feminized) terrain to be cultivated.<sup>46</sup> For instance, while Alexandra suggests that her agricultural productivity results from communing with or responding to the land, and that the land only "pretended to be poor because nobody knew how to work it right; and then, all at once it worked itself," her willingness to learn about and test scientific, agricultural innovations (such as planting alfalfa and constructing a silo) suggests that learning "how to work it right" involves scientifically imposing dominion over the land (108). In imposing these scientific innovations Alexandra disrupts gender assumptions (of women as nonrational and therefore unscientific) and the myth of independent agrarianism, not imitation, on the frontier. While Alexandra is not a shallow, materialistic imitator like her brothers Lou and Oscar, she does imitate others' innovations for personal, financial success. Alexandra repeatedly challenges and destabilizes rigid categorization—as a woman, as a pioneer, and as a farmer who communes with the land she loves and cultivates.

While the novel unsettles many assumed categories, its erasure of the American Indian presence nevertheless indicates a tacit accep-

tance of the nationalized belief that Anglo-American agricultural productivity reflects progress. Indeed, this erasure suggests an assumption that the place-centered interaction with the land that Alexandra at times reflects would necessarily manifest itself as the type of agricultural fruitfulness that could be mapped by the successful farm owners whose names are on the county plat. Not unlike Frederic Clements's theory of plant succession, with its continual movement toward "climax" or the "condition of stabilization," and his ensuing theory that the land itself reacted to favorable inhabitants through the "physical alteration of the landscape to create conditions favorable to its invaders," Alexandra's agricultural success on the land potentially justifies her position as the first to approach the land with "love and yearning" (64).<sup>47</sup> Alexandra's claim that once they knew how to work the land, it "woke up out of its sleep and stretched itself, and it was so big, so rich, that we suddenly found we were rich, just from sitting still" (108), reads as an example of the "physical alteration" Clements theorized for plant ecology, applied to human ecology. While Cather does not overtly position herself with or against this natural selection line of reasoning, the novel's language theoretically can be used to justify the removal of the American Indians as a group of people who did not reach the "optimal" relationship that Alexandra's relationship manifests.

However, in light of the contrasting mappings of the land as space and place seen throughout *O Pioneers!*, the denial of any American Indian experience on the land also presents a moment of recognition that potentially destabilizes the dominant ideology of progress through agricultural productivity. Considering that American Indian cultures have long epitomized a place-oriented relationship to the land akin to the "new relation" Alexandra experiences on her visit to the river farms (69), the absence of American Indians becomes conspicuous. The narrational presentation of Alexandra's close interrelationship with the land as "the first time" that "a human face was set toward it with love and yearning" (64) seems incongruous, espe-



cially considering that Cather's own formative 1912 trip to Arizona and New Mexico initiated an interest in southwestern American Indian history and lifeways and, as David Stouck suggests, offered her "the intellectual excitement of discovering a completely different kind of existence—a way of life lived in intimate harmony with nature."<sup>48</sup> As Melissa Ryan demonstrates through her analysis of the motif of confinement in *O Pioneers!*, Cather has "tried to erase the Indian from the text, but we may find that the vanished Indian returns as an unconscious element of her text."<sup>49</sup> Ryan suggests that the American Indian absence can be read as a subtext of anxiety that corresponds to wider ambivalences or contradictions in Cather's text. For Ryan the "shadow text" of Indian removal only further contributes to the "latent ambivalence toward the pioneering enterprise" that manifests itself through Cather's responses to confinement and enclosure.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, the shadows of forgotten place-centered American Indian peoples contribute to the wider discussion engaged throughout the novel about how people relate to this land. In a novel that recognizes place-centered mappings, the noticeable erasure of an Indian past both reflects and creates a sense of anxiety that itself contributes to the novel's repeated questioning of the dominant understanding of the human-land relationship.

Alexandra's place-oriented relationship with the land also stands in uneasy contrast to the frontier-focused metanarrative, which continues in the second part of the novel (after the land has "yielded" itself to the plow and become profitable farmland) with the presumption of the land as open space desirous for cultivation (74). The opening description of the Divide in "Neighboring Fields" follows a reverse movement across the land from the one in the opening chapter of "The Wild Land." In traveling across the Divide this time, everything visible is contained, useful, and colorfully marked (green, brown, and yellow fields, white roads, gaily painted farmhouses, red barns). While this is a different image from that of a "wild" land, it is similarly a space-oriented view of the land that, like the contemporary county

atlases with their colorful maps marking the placement of farmhouses and civic structures, calls attention only to human-created markers and human endeavors on land conceptualized as space.

This picture of contained space initially is described through detached description of the way the landscape looks, but the narrator soon steps in with the opinionated comment that "there are few scenes more gratifying than a spring plowing in that country, where the furrows of a single field often lie a mile in length, and the brown earth, with such a strong, clean smell, and such a power of growth and fertility in it, yields itself eagerly to the plow" (74). With its Whitman-like celebration of the earth's fertility and the sexual imagery of impregnating the (presumably) willing, grateful land with the plow, this passage mandates a masculine, hegemonic view of the land that is startling coming on the heels of Alexandra's realization of a "new consciousness of the country" at the conclusion of "The Wild Land" section (69). Because this hegemonic perspective is not challenged and is presented as a universal opinion, the reader is left experiencing the contradiction without any sense of resolve.

This lack of resolve is drawn out again later in the "Neighboring Fields" section, when winter is described both as a season of healthy recuperation when Nature "sinks to sleep between the fruitfulness of autumn and the passion of spring" and as an oppressive, melancholy season when "one could easily believe that in the dead landscape the germs of life and fruitfulness were extinct forever" (169-70). These two perspectives—of winter as a deep sleep between periods of life, or of winter as the extinction of all life—contradict one another, and the latter view is not scientifically true (as is noted by the qualification, "one could easily believe"). But the contradiction does not negate the honest experience of both perspectives, or the possibility of shifting between perspectives depending on one's frame of mind and the fluctuating severity of winter. Both views are a part of the story of living on this land.

## CONCLUSION

Cather's remarks that writing *O Pioneers!* "was like taking a ride through a familiar country on a horse that knew the way" and that in *O Pioneers!* she "let the country be the hero," suggest both the narrative structure of repeated travel over the "country" and the novel's deep concern with how people relate to, or map out, the land.<sup>51</sup> Reading for Cather's narrative mappings in this land-centered novel illuminates the complex interrelationship between stories and maps. Maps tell stories and stories reveal maps. Like the plat maps that Cather refers to, the novel's narrated maps of traveling across the "country" proffer stories—they reveal orientations, interests, and values. Additionally, the stories of people's experiences in a particular place provide maps of the place, and Cather's "country" becomes understood through the layers of human stories attached to it.

In fact, the novel concludes by reinforcing the idea of mapping the land through the various and contradictory stories of lives lived on the land. In the final chapter, as Alexandra and Carl walk from Mrs. Hiller's to Alexandra's farm, the narration travels over the Divide a final time, as the couple's conversation repeatedly gets interspersed with now-familiar landmarks. The couple begin at Mrs. Hiller's (267), pass the Shabata farm with its "empty house now" (268), take the path that "led over by the pasture pond" (269) in order to avoid the orchard path, and finally pause "on the last ridge of the pasture, overlooking the house and windmill and the stables that marked the site of John Bergson's homestead" (272) before reaching and entering Alexandra's house together (274). Their passage over the terrain provides the reader a simultaneous passage over the individual stories embedded in these places—stories of Alexandra's lonely success as reflected in the pastures and haystacks, of Emil and Marie's youthful vigor and love which Carl sensed as he watched them shoot ducks near the pond one morning, of their tragic death in the orchard (a place that Carl nurtured, that Marie relished, and that Emil both dreaded

and treasured), of John Bergson's struggle to tame the land that he originally homesteaded. This final chapter maps the land through these multiple associations that the characters, and the readers, bring to it.

Alexandra's concluding comment, that those "who love [the land] and understand it are the people who own it—for a little while" (272-73), likewise reflects an attentiveness to the permeability of boundaries and the impermanence of all mappings imposed on the land, and as Dooley notes, it reflects Cather's attention to temporality, or how "the future delimits the present and defines the past."<sup>52</sup> By ending with the idea that each successive generation will write its own stories onto the land and "own" it only through the intimate experiences of "love and understanding," the novel reasserts a mediatory ethic that honors multiple experiences over time rather than singularly privileging one over another. The passage does not specify how those future land "owners" will "understand" the land, but rather emphasizes the need for the land to become one's "own," presumably through relationship—through the stories, however varied and contradictory, lived with and on the land.

While *O Pioneers!* exposes the constructedness of a nationalistic, frontier-focused mapping of western land and invites an ethic of place, it does not entirely forgo the dominant, space-oriented mapping or a utilitarian approach to land use. Like a mediator, the text opens up discussion of differing viewpoints, and it is in this capacity that we should view *O Pioneers!* as a part of the literary heritage of American environmentalist texts. Cather's juxtaposition of narrative mappings of space and place creates opportunities for what Greg Garrard calls "alterations of perspective"—moments of recognition of one's presumed orientation toward land and thus the starting point to potentially altering that orientation.<sup>53</sup> Certainly, in our own day, as people with conflicting stories of living on the land negotiate conservation easements or work to set aside ironically named "open space" lands within urban corridors, a Catherian conversation between contradictory

land orientations remains as vital as it was in her time.

#### NOTES

1. Willa Cather, *O Pioneers!*, ed. Susan J. Rosowski and Charles W. Mignon with Kathleen Danker, Willa Cather Scholarly Edition (1913; reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 272-73. Further citations to *O Pioneers!* are given in parentheses in the text.

2. On the popularity and coverage of county map making in the United States between 1850 and 1925, see Michael P. Conzen, "North American County Maps and Atlases," in *From Sea Charts to Satellite Images: Interpreting North American History through Maps*, ed. David Buisseret (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 186-212, in particular pp. 186-89. On the history of sales and marketing of county atlases, see Walter W. Ristow, *American Maps and Mapmakers: Commercial Cartography in the Nineteenth Century* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1985), in particular chapter 24. For a discussion of the popularity and history of county atlases in relation to other, contemporary map types such as railroad maps, bird's-eye-view maps, illustrated state atlases, fire insurance maps, and statistical atlases, see Seymour I. Schwartz and Ralph E. Ehrenberg, *The Mapping of America* (New York: Abrams, 1980), in particular chapter 9.

3. James Woodress, *Willa Cather: A Literary Life* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 240.

4. Guy Reynolds, "Modernist Space: Willa Cather's Environmental Imagination," in *Cather Studies: Willa Cather's Ecological Imagination*, ed. Susan J. Rosowski (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 5:173-89, quote on p. 180.

5. *Ibid.*, 179.

6. Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977).

7. *Ibid.*, 54.

8. *Ibid.*, 54.

9. *Ibid.*, 54.

10. *Ibid.*, 6.

11. Several critics focus on this grid-oriented mapping in the novel. Reynolds discusses this mapping as part of Cather's modernism, noting that in "reading Cather's descriptions of landscape one constantly senses this interest in lines, grids, boundaries: lines inherent in the land or imposed by man, but all tending towards abstract geometry" ("Modernist Space," 182). See also Melissa Ryan, "The Enclosure of America: Civilization and Confinement in Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!*," *American Literature* 75, no. 2 (2003): 275-303. Ryan

discusses Cather's "crisis of space" by attending to the ambivalence in *O Pioneers!* between valuing the open, untamed Great Plains and the pioneering enterprise that encloses and binds the original "vastness" (276). In my reading, both sides of this ambiguity (the "vastness" of the plains and its subsequent enclosure) reflect approaching the land as space.

12. Susan J. Rosowski, "Willa Cather's Ecology of Place," *Western American Literature* 30, no. 1 (1995): 37-51, quote on p. 45.

13. For a discussion of Cather's relationship to the early twentieth-century preservationist movement, see Joseph R. Urgo, "My *Ántonia* and the National Parks Movement," in *Cather Studies: Willa Cather's Ecological Imagination*, 5:44-63, in particular pp. 44-48.

14. Patrick K. Dooley, "Biocentric, Homocentric, and Theocentric Environmentalism in *O Pioneers!*, *My Ántonia*, and *Death Comes for the Archbishop*," in *Cather Studies: Willa Cather's Ecological Imagination*, 5:64-76, quote on p. 65; Cliff Boyer, "'The Happiness and the Curse': Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!* and the Ecological Paradox," *Mowers' Tree: The Newsletter of the Cather Colloquium*, Winter/Spring 2006, Willa Cather Archive, <http://cather.unl.edu/mt.spr06.11.html> (accessed March 3, 2010).

15. Cheryl Glotfelty, "A Guided Tour of Eco-criticism, with Excursions to Catherland," in *Cather Studies: Willa Cather's Ecological Imagination*, 5:28-43, quote on p. 28.

16. Glotfelty, "A Guided Tour," 33; Joseph W. Meeker, "Willa Cather: The Plow and the Pen," in *Cather Studies: Willa Cather's Ecological Imagination*, 5:77-88, quote on pp. 87-88.

17. Woodress, *Willa Cather*, 36.

18. Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (1893; reprint, Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994).

19. Joseph R. Urgo, "The Cather Thesis: The American Empire of Migration," in *The Cambridge Companion to Willa Cather*, ed. Marilee Lindemann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 35-50, quote on p. 49.

20. Ronald E. Grim, "Maps of the Township and Range System," in *From Sea Charts to Satellite Images: Interpreting North American History through Maps*, ed. David Buisseret (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 89-95.

21. *Platbook of Webster County, Nebraska Compiled from County Records and Actual Surveys* (Philadelphia: Northwest, 1900). Northwest Publishing Company was one of the most prolific publishers of midwestern county atlases between the late 1800s and the early 1900s. Northwest published over 120 plat books of Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, and Wisconsin between

1892 and 1910 (Ristow, *American Maps and Mapmakers*, 423-24). The Library of Congress's microform collection of county landownership atlases houses seventy atlases of Nebraska printed between 1889 and 1917; of those seventy, thirteen were produced by Northwest.

22. Kent C. Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape: Folklore, Writing, and the Sense of Place* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993), 37.

23. Conzen, "North American County Maps and Atlases," 193.

24. Conzen, "North American County Maps and Atlases," 193; Griffith Morgan Hopkins, "Map of Adams County, Pennsylvania, from actual survey by G. M. Hopkins, C. E." (Philadelphia: Converse, 1858), *American Memory: Maps and Cartographic Items, 1500-Present: Cultural Landscapes*, Library of Congress, <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g3823a.la000697> (accessed July 11, 2006).

25. Ristow, *American Maps and Mapmakers*, 423.

26. These items are listed in the table of contents for the Northwest *Platbook of Webster County* as well as in other atlases published by Northwest housed in the Library of Congress's collection of county landownership atlases.

27. Rosowski, in "Willia Cather's Ecology of Place," similarly notes that in Cather's 1896 story "On the Divide," Cather was "reading drama into the vegetation about her" (39).

28. Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place*, 6.

29. *Ibid.*, 8.

30. Joseph R. Urgo, *Willia Cather and the Myth of American Migration* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 51.

31. Cheryl C. Swift and John N. Swift, "Willia Cather and American Plant Ecology," *ISLE* 8 (2001): 1-12, quote on p. 5.

32. Swift and Swift, "Willia Cather and American Plant Ecology," 4, 7, and Rosowski, "Willia Cather's Ecology of Place," both attest to Cather's connections to the pioneering botanists Frederic Clements and Charles Bessey, indicating that she was aware of and influenced by the botanists' development of place-centered ecology. Swift and Swift discuss Frederic Clements's "community theory." Rosowski discusses Charles Bessey's participatory ecology and Cather's evocation of this "ecology of place" in her short stories and in *O Pioneers!*

33. Swift and Swift, "Willia Cather and American Plant Ecology," 3. Italics original to quote.

34. *Ibid.*, 6.

35. David Stouck, explanatory notes to *O Pioneers!*, Willia Cather Scholarly Edition, 334.

36. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

37. Swift and Swift, "Willia Cather and American Plant Ecology," 9.

38. Gifford Pinchot, *The Fight for Conservation* (1910; reprint, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967), 43.

39. Dooley, "Biocentric," 69.

40. Urgo, "My *Ántonia* and the National Parks Movement," 49.

41. Aldo Leopold, *Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There* (1949; reprint, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968); Charles Wilkinson, "Toward and Ethic of Place," in *The Eagle Bird: Mapping a New West* (Boulder: Johnson Books, 1999), 133.

42. For an example of this reading, see Sharon O'Brien, *Willia Cather: The Emerging Voice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 428-51.

43. Howard Horowitz, "O *Pioneers!* and the Paradox of Property: Cather's Aesthetics of Divestment," *Prospects: An Annual of American Cultural Studies* 13 (1988): 61-93, quote on p. 64.

44. *Ibid.*

45. This is a division that continues to impact environmental and conservation debates today. For further discussion of the division in American literary history between the wild and the domestic, and the historical tendency to privilege the wild over the domestic, see Barney Nelson, *The Wild and the Domestic: Animal Representation, Ecocriticism, and Western American Literature* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000).

46. For a discussion of Cather's destabilization of land-based gender assumptions, see Boyer, "The Happiness and the Curse."

47. Swift and Swift, "Willia Cather and American Plant Ecology," 5.

48. David Stouck, "Willia Cather and the Indian Heritage," *Twentieth Century Literature: A Scholarly and Critical Journal* 22, no. 4 (1976): 433-43, quote on p. 434. For discussions of how Cather's interest in indigenous lifeways manifests itself in her later fiction, see also Ann Moseley, "The Creative Ecology of Walnut Canyon: From Sinagua to Thea Kronborg," in *Cather Studies: Willia Cather's Ecological Imagination*, 5:216-36; and Caroline M. Woidat, "The Indian-Detour in Willia Cather's Southwestern Novels," *Twentieth-Century Literature* 48, no. 1 (2002): 22-49.

49. Ryan, "Enclosure of America," 286.

50. *Ibid.*, 296, 286.

51. Willia Cather, "My First Novels [There Were Two]," in *Willia Cather on Writing: Critical Studies on Writing as an Art* (New York: Knopf, 1949), 91-97; Woodress, *Willia Cather*, 237.

52. Dooley, "Biocentric," 74.

53. Greg Garrard, "Ecocriticism and Education for Sustainability," *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture* 7, no. 3 (2007): 359-83.