

THE *ETHOS* OF *SHERIDAN'S DAYBREAK(S)*: HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTIONS  
OF SPACE, PLACE, AND RURAL IDENTITY IN  
SHERIDAN COUNTY, MONTANA

by

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## ABSTRACT

Following from the fact that the concept of *ethos* carries connotations that imply spatiality, it can be said that *ethos* is determined in relation to the spatial inhabitants of any given place. In trying to understand a spatially determined *ethos*, this thesis studies the construction and reproduction of *The Sheridan's Daybreak(s)* series from Sheridan County, Montana. Produced throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, these local histories lend themselves to a study of the characteristic qualities of place negotiated by the presence of matter together in space. The study of the *Daybreak(s)* reveals an anthropocentric presentation of *ethos* in the "pioneer" figure that inevitably understands itself in relation to the context of "nature" which it shares the spaces of Sheridan County with. It also reveals a nostalgic and romanticized type of memory in regards to both spaces and the past families of this place that does not critically engage with the events of those families lives. And it reveals the persistent presence of the global within the local spaces of its inhabitants through presentations of the Rural Idyll and modern day, mechanized agricultural production. Each of these, in part, make up the *ethos* of the spaces of Sheridan County represented in the *Daybreak(s)*. In interpreting the representations of space and place, this thesis argues for continually ongoing re-readings of our local histories in order to better understand the *ethos* of the past that contributes to the socially and materially constructed present. In doing so, scholars can give more attention to issues of rurality and local history while giving credit to the material contexts from which these local histories arise.

## INTRODUCTION

Growing up, I had always been concerned with the stories of my relatives and ancestors. I have vivid memories of following my paternal grandmother, Jean West, around her kitchen as she was preparing a meal and asking her questions about my great grandparents, their family, and how ‘we’ came to live and own land in Outlook, Montana. It has always been a concern of mine as I might inherit some of the land that various West families have managed for crop production and animal husbandry. I figure in order to responsibly approach a sense of ‘ownership’ of land that I need to be aware of the historical and environmental makeup of my own identifications and relations within spaces/places that I would have ‘control’ over.

As I have continued to develop within my convictions and studies, I have become a believer of the idea that recognizing agential control over environments with a singular entity is a misappropriation of what happens in ‘reality’. Intentional choices and constructions are not so easily assigned. Instead, this project sets out to show that what happens in the *Sheridan’s Daybreak(s)* is more along the lines of collective re-imaginings and re-negotiations that are continually co-constitutive of historicity and the environments through which we “intra-act”. At times, that agency can be located within an individualized action, like a farmer planting a seed. In other or similar instances, agency can be attributed to more peripheral circumstances. For example, when the seed being planted by that same farmer is chosen because it is one of a handful of species and varieties that grows and produces well in that climate. The environment and its relations are in constant ecologically negotiative flux with both social and material sources. And

these sources come together to form ethical natures of collective *ethos*. The same can be shown to exist in our writings, in our stories, and in our histories.

As I have continued through life, I have not lost my curiosity and concern for genealogical information. A majority of both my maternal and paternal families have recognized some sort of ‘origination’ and habitual dwelling within Sheridan County, Montana. Their lives and actions map onto and act through me as I continue to consider what it means to be a resident from a very specific place. Therefore, the locus of my study of *ethos* and spatial rhetoric positions itself within a series of three local histories produced within and for my home county throughout the course of the 20th century. The first text is *Sheridan’s Daybreak*, which was produced in 1970 by the Sheridan County Historical Society with the direction of Magnus Aasheim, a citizen of Antelope, MT, and the head of the society at that time. This first of three existing histories focuses on the biographical mapping of the so-called ‘pioneers’ of Sheridan County, Montana. It focuses on the struggles of emigration, claiming land, and the ‘origination’ of mass amounts of settlers and the communities that they constructed in this area. The large majority of this initial history is biographical retellings of the people who inhabited what eventually became Sheridan County from periods ranging from the 1890s up until the production of the text in 1970.

The second of my three texts, *Sheridan’s Daybreak II*, was produced in 1984 and gives emphasis to “the sons and daughters” of the initial pioneers (*Sheridan’s Daybreak II*, 3). The efforts in this volume are similar in part to those of the previous volume. With new emphases on families moving to, from, and existing within the county, this second installment effectively re-tracks and retraces the ever-changing landscapes of populations

within the communities of the county. Moreover, there is no particular time frame as guide other than up to the moment of production in 1984. At the time of the production, Magnus Aasheim was still the head of the Sheridan County Historical Society, but his role (other than that as “compiler and collator”) in both is minimal due to the polyphony of voices in the auto/biographies that make up each individual excerpt for each recognized community.

The third and most recent installment is *Sheridan’s Daybreak III*, which was produced in 2005 by editors May Budke, Pamla Hendrickson, and the Sheridan County Daybreakers Genealogy Society. This third anthology presents itself as continuing the “ongoing history of residents past and present,” (*Sheridan’s Daybreak III*, 4). This third iteration not only includes biographical collections from the individuals and community organizations, but also includes a chapter on the “Cemeteries of Sheridan County” as well as one titled simply “Memories”.

In choosing these texts, I decided not to focus on just one because I believe that such focused analysis is spatiotemporally limited to the ways in which rhetorical situations compound upon each other; thus, they transform through time and within spaces. Understanding the fallacies of diachronicity does not completely deem it invalid, but rather suggests a greater demonstration of *breadth* to complement the profound *depth* that synchronicity has to offer. By letting the breadth of these texts drive my analysis I demonstrate that the co-determinative *ethos* that we possess comes into existence through our historical constructions of ourselves and through how we position our understanding of our worlds in relation to those historical constructions.

Within these texts are versions of me and who I have become. I will continue to negotiate just what that means, and I pursue it at length with an in depth analysis of these textual demonstrations of collective convergence on the *ethos* of a particular place. An *ethos* that I would argue is determined by social, material, and individual negotiations within porous sets of unique coordinates that are continually realized in the flux of actionable environments. In considering positions, space/place, landscape, environment, and other geocritical factors, I wish to pursue and suggest advanced methods of analysis that decenter the human world from dominant epistemologies and re-situate our “efforts after meaning” within our relationships to those places that mean the most to us all.

#### A Place for *Ethos*

“The authorial ethos that makes this space valuable, then, dwells in the space itself rather than in any physical or corporate body or any name attached to it. And while named individuals participate in the production and distribution of knowledge in this space, it is the location that invests those names with authority.” -Erin Frost and Kellie Sharp-Hoskins

The concept of *ethos* can be traced back to Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, where he discussed, in detail, the art of persuasion and laid out his model of the *pisteis* which consists of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. *Pathos* and *logos* are constructed, respectively, as appeals to an audience’s emotion and to their sense of logical reasoning, while *ethos* makes a persuasive appeal using the orator’s demonstrated character and credibility. These definitions are modern interpretations of this terminology that are widely spread within introductory explanations of classical rhetoric. Yet many scholars in rhetoric within the 20th century, and continuing into the 21st, have challenged these simple delineations of what constitutes rhetoric, what it can do pedagogically, and how scholars

can use it as a methodology for interpreting texts and symbolic linguistic exchanges.

From what I have read, *ethos* is a central concept to understanding credibility, character, values, and habits, and that *ethos* is also understood through spatially distributed and negotiated qualities.

My review of *ethos* starts with Arthur B. Miller, who etymologically analyzed the Greek words for *habit* ( $\epsilon\theta\omicron\varsigma$ ) and *character* ( $\eta\theta\omicron\varsigma$ ). The spelling of these words in Greek differs only in the first character; an epsilon versus an eta. Miller's stated thesis in this review and analysis is "[To] *understand what Aristotle means by character  $\eta\theta\omicron\varsigma$  (eethos) by understanding what Aristotle means by habit  $\epsilon\theta\omicron\varsigma$  (ethos)*" (emphasis in original, 309). Of course as many within fields that study language know, words carry multitudinous meanings that can both connote and denote many complex usages and understandings. Thus, this is the reason for the etymological breakdown of *ethos* by Miller. He uses these contrasting translations and meanings to show how Aristotle within *The Rhetoric* and the *Nichomachean Ethics* uses, and places great emphasis on *ethos* as character to be demonstrated through continual virtuous and habitual acts within the political sphere. He furthermore carries out a rather thorough discussion of the various strands of meaning within the Greek word "*ethos*" (habit) to include, "'to be accustomed; to be wont,'" and "*eethos*" (character) to include, "'an accustomed place' and in the plural [it] may refer to the 'haunts or abodes of animals [and] men'" (emphasis in original, 309-310). Using these various definitions and "familial" similarities to the Greek translations of "habit" and "character," Miller asserts "that when Aristotle used "*eethos*" to designate the character of a speaker as revealed in a speech, he was thinking of the speaker's habits, customs, traditions, or manner of life" (310). For this project, I am approaching *ethos* in

relation to matters of space and time. If we, as humans, are complex intersections of subjective positionalities, is it not prudent for us to understand that our reflectively developing character, or *ethos*, is something that is developed through the habit of interacting with our environments, and thus, our broader communities? If we look closely, we can determine the *ethos* that individuals, communities, and societies possess and how that *ethos* shifts through our various iterations of our selves in place.

In “Aristotle’s Concept of Ethos, or if not His Somebody Else’s,” Michael Halloran demonstrates largely the political, and thus the communal, nature of the term *ethos*. Halloran writes, “To have *ethos* is to manifest the virtues most valued by the culture to and for which one speaks.” (60) The virtues that make a credible *ethos* are determined by the “habitual gathering place” where an orator can express character that reflects and constitutes that which the communal and larger culture values most. The “habitual gathering place” is where the *polis* convenes, determines, and negotiates collectively an *ethos* that can then be used to make appropriate progress. Halloran writes, “The word *ethos* has both an individual and a collective meaning. It makes sense to speak of the *ethos* of this or that person, but it makes equally good sense to speak of the *ethos* of a particular type of person, of a professional group, or a culture, or an era in history” (62). My project elaborates on this idea that *ethos* is a concept that can be used to understand the various parts of public communities (individual and collective) in textual representations and how that *ethos* is mediated through historical texts.

Beyond the *Daybreak(s)* themselves though is a demonstrative understanding of physical landscapes that contribute to an *ethos* that shapes consciously and unconsciously its various and shifting residents. The constant references to the cold winters and the harsh

conditions of living in Sheridan County are just one of the many ways in which the collaborators of each edition are demonstrating how their spatial environment is influential to their communal understandings of themselves. In my following chapters, and partially in this introduction, I will be analyzing and discussing some of the further ways that this is happening within the *Daybreak(s)*, but for now I wish to look at the inherent qualities of the spatial in the concept of *ethos*.

One of the more influential sources in my reading of *ethos* has been Nedra Reynolds and her article “*Ethos as Location: New Sites for Understanding Discursive Authority*” (1993). Largely driven by feminist composition theory, Reynolds draws from Miller and Halloran to explicitly discuss and emphasize the invoked references to the spatial in interpretations of *ethos* and how that influences who speaks/writes with authority/credibility and how. Furthermore, she uses a critique of communal discourses to emphasize difference, discusses marginalized discursual methods of developing *ethos*, and draws from Karen Burke Lafevre and Kate Ronald’s works to establish *ethos* construction as happening in “the between’s”. Reynolds writes:

By emphasizing where and how texts and their writers are located--their intersections with others and the places they diverge, how they occupy positions and move in the between's--we can retain the spatial metaphors of *ethos* without limiting it to arenas of spoken discourse and without assuming that those gathering places are harmonious or conflict-free. (334)

In Reynolds view these arenas would extend to writing, and studies on *ethos* would take into account the various, often conflicting, positionalities/identities of writers and their habitually positioned and developed *ethos*. Also, that these studied *ethos* would take a great deal into account for the spatial influences on our social and individual demonstrations of ethical authority.

I mean for this project to establish an *ethos* of my own in two ways. First, that as a “habitual gathering place,” Sheridan County (and subsequently Outlook), Montana, and the people who have lived there have made significant contributions that cannot help but have rhetorical influences on my own habits, customs, and character. My entire life has carried with it a history of my families, of which many members have lived a majority of their lives in Sheridan County, Montana. That historical burden and influence has not gone unnoticed by me or many others of my home. There have been several genealogical efforts within my family, most notably by my great uncle Fr. Robert West, a priest and abbot of Richardton, ND. While my efforts are not completely genealogical in nature, there is a certain amount of what I am doing embedded in personal familial reflection, mixed with my propensity for academic and intellectually challenging endeavors. I continue to view myself as a citizen of NE Montana, and, in some ways, I see this project that I have entered into as an ethically appropriate homage to many of the people and places that have made my life what it is today. And second, that a well theorized understanding of *ethos* as spatially co-constituted character and habits determined through interactions with many different entities and a personal application of it, taking into account the spatial influences of our pasts, can further demonstrate the overlap between philosophical studies of place and the rhetorical delineation of *ethos*. What contemporary interpretations of *ethos* afford me are richly complex viewpoints and weavings that emanate not just from classical and modern sources in rhetoric, but my own existential sources. Although I am using the *Sheridan’s Daybreak(s)* as a case study to explore my understanding of *ethos* as place, my study acts as a microcosm for a larger

understanding of *ethos* as something that we dwell within and create the boundaries for characteristically defined places.

*The Ethos of Rhetoric*, holds an underlying principle to develop a reading of *ethos* that embraces the interpretation of “dwelling place”. In the introduction to this book, “Rhetorically, We Dwell,” Michael J. Hyde states that “the *ethos* of rhetoric” refers to “the way discourse is used to transform space and time into ‘dwelling places’” (xiii). The complex weavings of our experiences and actions in space and through time help develop our habitual practices, which in turn create a sort of house in which we stake our ground. Hyde’s introduction stresses the importance of viewing the concept of *ethos* in this way because it can illuminate resounding questions on the ontological make-up of our discourses. For instance, why, in the *Sheridan’s Daybreak(s)* do they place so much emphasis on the “pioneer”? Or, in what ways does this regulatory discursive concept continue to persist into the present historical concepts of the location of Sheridan County and its people?

Furthermore, in Craig R. Smith’s contribution to *The Ethos of Rhetoric*, “*Ethos Dwells Pervasively*,” he argues for an interpretation of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* and surrounding *corpus* that uses a “hermeneutic praxis” to take on the “linguistic realm of possibilities” in order to further and more thoroughly present *ethos* as a habitus or dwelling place. Smith also delineates that the moral virtue and character of speakers and their interlocutors “dwells pervasively” within the rhetorical situation. Smith’s theoretical reworking and reimagining, which includes the same various strains of meaning within the word *ethos*, also points toward ontological underpinnings for the nature of human existence and the need for symbolic linguistic exchanges in determining ethical

progressions of meaning. He writes, “Before one even speaks, that *ethos* has an ontological dimension because it emerges from the way one makes decisions, the way one lives on a day-to-day basis, the way one dwells” (2). He uses this argument to reinforce the message that “*ethos* dwells pervasively.” Our customs, habits, and mundane “day-to-day” actions each contributes to our representative and interpretive characters. Ultimately, this ontological quality, combined with the spatial from Reynold’s argument and Hyd’s discussion of “dwelling”, forms a unique conversational implication in that our seemingly inconsequential everyday actions in time and space, like walking down the street on the same sidewalks or continually farming the same plot of land for generations, exhibit vastly significant rhetorical meanings. As Smith states, “We demonstrate that the ‘universe’ of language that history ‘projects’ on human beings is the ontological basis for understanding meaning” (4). It is my belief that the *Sheridan’s Daybreak(s)* can be interpreted in some ways as “project[ion]s” from my material/familial histories that in some ways constitute mine and others’ habitual and located *ethe*.

### Theories of Place and Space

“Place is how we make the world meaningful and the way we experience the world. Place, at a basic level, is space invested with meaning in the context of power.” - Tim Cresswell

“Perhaps we could imagine space as the simultaneity of stories-so-far.”  
- Doreen Massey

If I am to discuss *ethos* with regards to its ontological and *spatial* qualities, then I also need to discuss the varying definitions of methodological inquiries that pertain to the concepts of *space* and *place*. These terms enjoy continued and wide ranging attention in

many disciplines, but most notably by certain disciplines of philosophy and cultural geography. However, there has been a growing number of scholars in a wide ranging number of fields that have begun to embrace and make meaningful inquiries into the “spatial turn” in the humanities and social sciences. It is worth noting that any concept that draws such continued and wide-ranging attention amongst interdisciplinary circles must, in many ways, reveal much about either the power of that concept and the sway that it holds over efforts of inquiry or about some of the anxieties and pressures that the social fabric of experiential reality possesses. As Jeff Malpas writes in the introduction to *The Intelligence of Place*, “Perhaps because it is so ‘seemingly’ evasive a concept, as well as so ‘ubiquitous’ and fundamental, place belongs to no single discipline or mode of inquiry” (5). This observation is partly what draws me to place-based studies in that the ways in which we understand the meaning(s) of place can continually be re-interpreted from new and different perspectives that may inform any shifts we need to make in practice and meaning making. The shifts that I propose for Sheridan County’s residents is to reevaluate the “pioneer,” nostalgic memories, and the Rural Idyll *ethos* present within the *Daybreak(s)* in order approach the meanings of their histories with an eye towards recognizing difference, struggle, and the contributions of the material world in contributing to the defining characteristics of their spaces and places.

So, what is the difference between *space* and *place*? In many ways the concepts are inseparable. Yi-Fu Tuan states, “Place is security, space is freedom” (Tuan, 3). Space in this view is that of a vast endless field of coordinates that invite continued movement while place is what we experience, record, and order when we pause from movement and choose to dwell. Space is boundless while place is boundedness. Space is unrepresentable

while place is epitomized through representation. But these concepts are more complex than a reductive binary that only serves to limit their interpretative capabilities, and for Tuan, they depend on each other for any sort of concrete meaning (6). As Malpas says of the difference and relatedness of these two critical concepts, “The difference between place and space is perhaps most succinctly expressed in terms of the idea of place as that which, through the boundary or limit that belongs to it, also opens up a space – place is thus tied to boundary. . . and space to the openness within the boundary” (3). Malpas would argue that it is only through the experience of boundaries within places, material or otherwise, that we understand the field through which boundless space is created and felt.

Other scholars like Charles W.J. Withers seem to assess that the terms have no well-defined parameters that would distinctly separate them as two different concepts (657). Meanwhile, others still wish to dedicate themselves to the study of one concept over the other (Jeff Malpas, *The Intelligence of Place*; Doreen Massey, *For Space*). However, I posit that both space and place inevitably work on some level in describing *spatial* (and, by association, temporal) qualities of experience, existence, and the processes and products that spring from those dynamic interrelations and that develop through time to continually reproduce artifacts that lead us to some epistemological basis for understanding space/place. The knowledge base that I am working from for this project exists in two places: the histories of *The Sheridan Daybreak(s)* and the articles and books of academic critical inquiry in the humanities that pay particular attention to the so-called “spatial turn”. These are the artifacts and produced material that serve to represent the place that I have come to understand as ‘home,’ and that inevitably have an

influence on *how* I perceive *who* and *what* I am in relation to the coordinates that make up the place defining boundaries (and open spaces within those boundaries) of Sheridan County.

The approaches that I apply to the study of place in the *Sheridan's Daybreak(s)* are threefold: 1) Place as material construct, 2) Place as memory, and 3) Place as both singular and multiple (i.e. global and local). This threefold approach allows me develop an understanding of *ethos* as place from different viewpoints that study three ways in which the place of Sheridan County can be read. These concepts are the organizing ideas for each of the subsequent chapters. These are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive of the various ways in which place can be used as a methodological form of inquiry. Furthermore, each chapter for these concepts develops on the theme of *ethos* as possessing distributed qualities through spatial interactions. It is through wide ranging organizing principles making relations and forging what Laurie Gries would call “assemblages” that landscapes-as-community would contribute to the constitution of the *ethos* of place.

The organizing principle for Chapter 2, Mapping the Visual (Place as material construct), is discussed at length by many scholars. In this chapter, I use the *Daybreak(s)* as a way to disrupt the pioneer ethos that the contributors felt the need to honor. First, I start with a discussion of place as material construct in Kathleen Stewart's contribution to *The Intelligence of Place*. In a paper called, “Place and Sensory Composition,” Stewart writes:

Place takes place on the edge of the actual and the potential. Its composition is enacted by and through bodies steeped in an energetic field. The compositional assemblage of bits and pieces, the throwing of things into

scenes, generates an expressive consistency. Place is an experiment to make some things in the world more tangible and palpable. And in so doing it creates lines of potential, excess, failure, wandering and display. (219)

Places in Stewart's argument are made up of a wide variety of material lives (animate and inanimate) that in being together contribute to what she calls a "sensory composition" that embraces an expressivity somewhere between the "actual" and "potential". The actual-potential material reality of a place is always-already shifting and being interpreted in some way by the various inhabitants that take up the spaces that the place composes, thus, "[Place gives] spatiotemporality a body" (208). The body of spatiotemporality for the boundaries of a composed place is located in the *Sheridan's Daybreak(s)*. They show the broad expressivity of a community of people, towns, and landscapes as they lived in *and* through their time. However, fully studying the material reality of a place like Sheridan County is an expansive impossibility that would only lead, I believe, to what Malpas calls "topological vertigo," where fully delineating the compositional elements of a place (in a present moment or historically) leads to an uncertainty in definition and character. Instead, what I do in Chapter 2 by studying the use of pictures and images, is try to understand the ways in which the *representation* of nature and its various material constructs in the *Daybreak(s)* contribute in part to an *ethos* that is co-constitutive. Specifically, the use of images provides a window into the material reality that contributed to the character development that can be seen in the *Daybreak(s)*. This view disrupts that the place originated from a "pioneer" *ethos* that the dedication of the first text honors and that seems to significantly influence the ways in which the entirety of the *Daybreak(s)* imagine themselves.

For Chapter 3, The Historicity of Locality, I use this discussion on the interconnectedness of place and memory to illuminate how through the social processes of creating a series of local histories, the contributors constructed a nostalgic view that downplays difference and inscribes struggles that many people experience living in the area as that which is fondly looked upon as something that ‘we’ as a community could overcome. That influence holds throughout the entirety of all three Sheridan’s *Daybreak(s)* and has a significant impact on the *spatially* influenced *ethos* that can be read into the texts. Furthermore, I put this idea into conversation with discussions on rhetorical history as well as ideas on what local history is (or isn’t) to show how the construction of these so-called local histories and the *ethos* they exude is “returned through *place to memory*” (my emphasis, Trigg, xvii).

I explore my own memories of both immediate and distant family that are present within the *Daybreak(s)*. This is where my project turns semi-genealogic in nature in order to reveal the rhetorical nature of place-memories both for collective experiences and for how memory often comes to us through the places we find ourselves in. As Tim Cresswell writes, “Place and memory are, it seems, inevitably intertwined” (85). I have a distinct memory from when I was four years old, looking at my feet as I was running from my grandmother’s house to the trailer house my family lived in at the time. I had gone over there for cookies, and I vividly remember the pedaling of my feet as they crossed over the contours of ground and grass that make up the farmyard that my parents currently occupy. I would not be able to recall this if we had lived there for only a short time, or if I had not had multiple other experiences in that *place* that feed the thoughts that give rise to that memory. Experiences like playing basketball in the yard as a

teenager with the basketball hoop that I purchased from a fellow farmer; or picking up a baby rabbit from the grass and putting it into bed with my sleeping sister as a prank; or hosting a family reunion with two-hundred plus relatives in my parent's farmyard. All of those *memories* took *place* in that same yard, and all of those memories illuminate how we *remember* and *think* through the influences of space and place. This is what Cresswell means when he says that memory and place are "intertwined". It is through the habitus of remembering *and* place that we effectively construct a "habitual dwelling place." I use Cresswell's concept to demonstrate that the nostalgically constructed memories of the *Daybreak(s)* act as a connecting line to a past that is no longer and that must be critically engaged.

For chapter 4, Geocritically Rural, I engage the distinctions between place as bounded and space as boundless, or, as I write above place as singular and multiple. First, despite our desires to create boundaries (materially, socially, politically, intellectually, etc.), we are never completely hermetically sealed within those boundaries. Our skin possesses pores that allow sweat out just as our individual cell membranes possess boundaries that allow *some* material through the membrane lipid. Second, our places as well as our spaces, just like our bodies, are never completely bound, and as Massimo Cacciari writes, "[P]lace is defined at the *limit* of contact between bodies, where each is both the container and contained, the limiting and the limited. *Topos*, then, appears as another name for the extreme limit of the entity, the point or the line where it enters into contact with what is other to it" (15). What this quotation means is that places can only ever be understood in relation to other places. As much as we would like to call a place our own and that no one else has access to that space opened by its limits, we always put

our ideas of place in relation with other places. As Malpas says, “Every place is thus a place of shelter and of setting out, a place of enclosure and of openness, a home and also a foreign land” (84). This reiterates how I view place as singular and multiple. In other words, singular in the sense that we feel the need to create the boundaries inevitably implies that those places outside of *negotiated* limits also make it multiple. Therefore, in attempting to understand what is local, we must also understand what is global within the local places we study.

In Chapter 4, I explore further the relationship of understanding *ethos* through the lens of globalization and broad social structures that affect what the people of Sheridan County were able to create in the *Daybreak(s)* specifically in regards to concepts of rurality and neoliberal integrated farming practices. Places, practices, and habits are always in flux and invite the outside moving in which effectively (re)creates the limits that open up to character (*ethos*). As many have noted, the recent turn towards spatial influences in representational inquiry in some ways seems to spring from a general concern over the tensions and impacts of what is believed to be increased globalization. Thus, globalization is purported to mix cultures and social belief systems to the point where people tend to lose a sense of connection to identity in place (Albrow and King, 1990). What this view believes we as a global community are promoting is a continually fracturing political world economy that normalizes differences that governments create. This may to some extent be true, but the fact of the matter is that even though globalization seems to encourage a disassociation with *place* for continued experience in the freedom of *space*, we still forge a relationship with the places that we inhabit. An easy example of this would be how we come to know how to get around in places. We

must become familiar with the roadways, pathways, and hallways as well as the locations of rooms, buildings, and destinations that significantly contribute to how we interpret the places where we reside. That does not change simply because we can move more quickly from place to place and exchange more values through the exchange of goods and services. As Doreen Massey critiques of this viewpoint, “There is an imagination of globalization which pictures it as a totally integrated world” (77). And while most theorists would agree that increased globalization has significant *effects* on place/space experience, it does not and will never be able to completely annihilate our capabilities of forging relationships (and subsequently boundaries) and understanding who we are and our positions in the world based on the places that we inhabit frequently. For Malpas, “Place shows remarkable resistance to being overlooked, forgotten, or ignored” (3). So, globalization, a homogenizing force that serves to downplay difference, ultimately only ever serves to reinforce those differences and to make us continually turn towards the staying immediacy of place in order to see it as a singular unit *in relation* to the multiple other places that can be compared to it.

What I find interesting about these distinctions, and where I see an overlap in thinking as I develop above with my review of *ethos*, is that in discussing space/place theorists are constantly attempting to understand *places* through their demonstrated “character.” Places, because of their topographical boundedness, are made up of contingent elements that interact and serve to continually develop and redefine their ever shifting *ethos*. When people, animals, plants, rocks, or buildings inhabit a space, I would argue that they write themselves and their “character,” read *ethos*, into existence by not only being there in any given moment, but by being there through time so that they might

create a *habitus*. Space/place, then, are integral concepts to understand in order to make an attempt at understanding the ontological qualities of *ethos* and how we read the various representational productions that emerge from any given *place*.

For the people (and animals, and landscapes) who contributed to constructing the *Daybreak(s)*, the “encounter” with space/place is what allows them to possess qualities that can be determined as their unique *ethos*. This implies an ontology, and, as Malpas writes, “[O]ne might even say that the place brings forth the encounter, and the encounter, the place” (4). In encountering, or, coming into contact with, the *Daybreak(s)* I “bring forth” the place just as the writings of the various community members is another contact with the actual-potential reality of the place. It is the “throwtogetherness” of these thoughts, pictures, details, images, inscriptions, experiences, books, memories, material, and overall composition that allows us to see what Doreen Massey calls, “[T]he simultaneity of stories-so-far” (9), in space/place.

In continuing this complex dynamic continuity and reciprocation of matter and meaning, I would like to use one more quote from the obscure but still relevant Frederic Bartlett in saying that my own engagement and creation of this thesis along with the creation of the *Daybreak(s)* engage with our continued “efforts after meaning”. This term serves dual meanings for me in that I feel like much of epistemic discourse chases and tries to corner the meaning of something, but inevitably, in chasing meaning, our efforts happen *after* the meaning took *place*. Our efforts at understanding ontology, *ethos*, place, space, and the truly important concepts that drive sense, meaning, and epistemology then are inevitably always already chasing what exists. In this way what I grasp for here in this thesis is limited to yet another “effort after meaning,” and I embrace that as the nature of

creating something meaningful to myself, the communities that I come from, and the communicative traces that reveal *ethos*. In tying the concepts of space and place to *ethos* and applying them to a series of historical texts like the *Sheridan's Daybreak(s)*, this methodology allows me to broaden and reinvigorate the purposes of history-making in communities. It also allows me to re-read the *ethos* of these texts (and their *contexts*) for what is unethically missing and to critically engage the missing or downplayed contributions to the overall value systems present in the *Daybreak(s)*. In doing this I encourage everyone to turn towards their own local histories and to read with an eye towards how the act of history making inscribes the *ethos* of places in their representational contexts.

MAPPING THE VISUAL: SEEING, PERCEIVING, AND WRITING COMMUNITIES  
IN LANDSCAPE



Figure 1. Sunset at West Farm—Taken from my cell phone in May 2014.

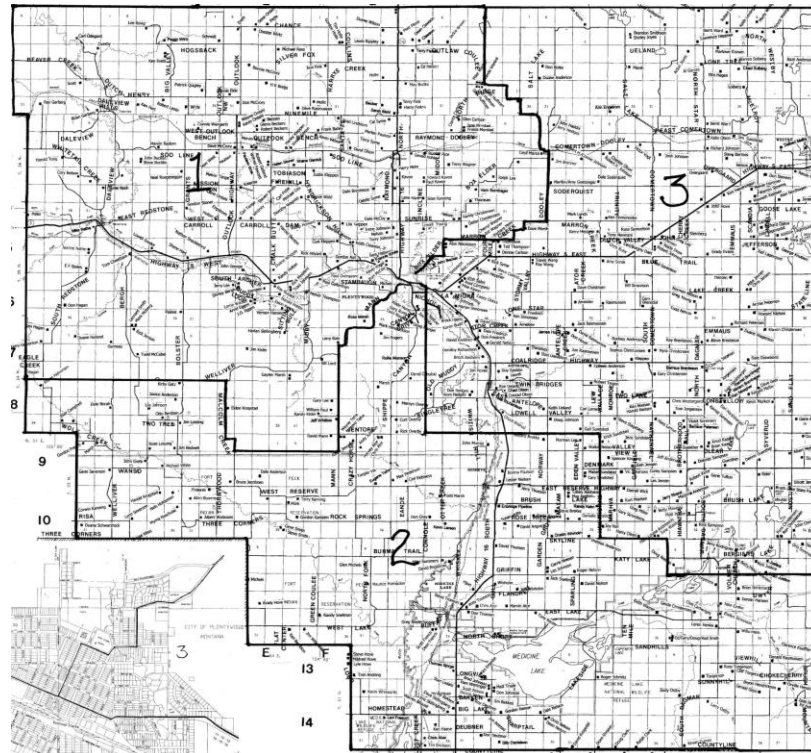


Figure 2. Sheridan County Map—Depicts the county commissioner districts.

The images in figure 1 were selected for their portrayal of spaces/places that contribute to the *ethos* of Sheridan County and for my own *ethos*. I took the first picture from my cell phone in May 2014. Sunrises and sunsets in Sheridan County typically hold sway over me because they display the awesome ‘natural’ images that almost seem to require a sort of reverence for the moment. I took that picture with my cell phone in my family’s farmyard while I was mowing grass. I have many pictures like this one, and I could even say that I have made a habit of taking pictures of the visual landscapes that are present within Sheridan County demonstrating some of the larger values that I hold over my connection with this place. I am not alone in this either. As I will discuss, many Sheridan County residents, past and present, spend much time recording and composing images of places as well as depicting themselves *in action* within those places. These images, both from the Sheridan’s *Daybreak(s)* and my own collection, contribute to the ongoing composition and production of a collective *ethos* and, as I argue, they have rhetorically shifting and complex influences on the historicity of the *Daybreak(s)* and subsequently for the various trajectories of matter, meaning, and lives.

The second image (see figure 2) is a detailed county map from 2011. What this map was meant to portray are the boundaries that make up the districts for the seats of the County Commissioners. Furthermore, what this map depicts are the locations and pathways of county roads, bodies of water, towns, and the names of individuals and families who live outside of the towns. As far as maps go, it is a classic example of the boundedness through which we prefer to view, or *know*, places and the political implications of designating certain locations as one representational group or individual. As a further classic example of a map, it is also contradictory in that in its boundedness it

suppresses the constant movement of not only the prominently privileged human agents and systems that move inward and outward, but also those entities that are not presented, such as various species of animals, birds, grasses, rocks, buildings, and other material *things* that, from a New Materialist perspective, possess considerable contributions to the character of the places that we envision, past or present. Therefore the map is a somewhat inconsistent representation of this imaginarily bounded place.

Yet I do not mean to suggest that those imaginary lines should be ignored and discarded for a view of space as free to be composed of by whatever movements, positions, and materials can be summoned to mind. This imagination would effectively ignore the very real and very powerful consequences that the production of just such a map provides. Instead, what I wish to envision is a way to understand and view maps like these as partial contributors to the making of the reality of places that continually reassemble themselves to become embodied in images.

Individually, then, these images present their own separate and unique visions of what constitutes a place or places at different scales. The first one is of my own making and therefore is partial to my own viewings and understandings of Sheridan County. The second one is the making of what would normally be referred to as the County itself, but what I would prefer to recognize as the political human interests of a select number of actors. Together, however, these images influence each other's continually shifting meanings. If we were to place the first image within the map it would be very near to the upper right hand side of the handwritten number one. A tiny dot that designates Jean West, my grandmother (who no longer lives on the farm), as the sole inhabitant of the place that the map and this image only partially are capable of presenting within the

purview of their composition, presentation, and production. And yet, that picture still gives an idea of some of the ‘natural’ imagery that can be viewed from living in that specific point and the various spaces of the map. Tall grasses, old buildings, and unimpeded skies all contribute to some of the visions that inhabitants are capable of viewing and contribute to the development of a collective authorial *ethos* that seeps its way into individuals mapping themselves onto landscapes.

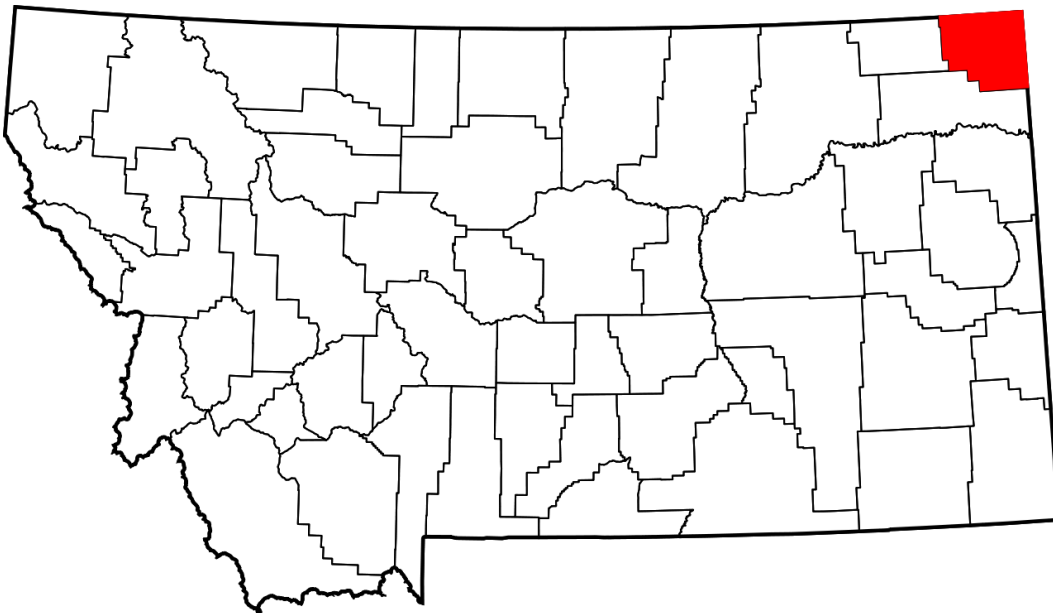


Figure 3. Sheridan County in Montana—Map of Sheridan County in relation to the rest of Montana.

That authorial *ethos* in the *Daybreak(s)* prefaces the human and influences various social organizations as central to a sense of community; its towns, schools, churches, immigrant nationalities, cemeteries, and a continued historical homage to the “pioneer,” all figure predominantly and still seem to linger in the imaginings of the *Daybreak(s)*. But those social organizations and the *ethos* they present are also located

within, often preceded by, and are intimately related with a larger ecosystem of influences. The effects and representation the environment has plays a role in shaping the authorial *ethos* that the *Daybreak(s)* and its contributors are capable of presenting, and the image of the “pioneer,” the farmer, the pastor, the schoolteacher historically in Sheridan County will always be figured in relation to where they were and how they acted in their environment.

What these two images offer by their limits is an understanding of the fluctuation of the epistemological and ontological (re)presentation of bounded space and perception. It is, in part, through the perception of sight that we can interpret place as materially constructed and to create some a fluctuating definition. However, neither of these images are present within any of the *Daybreak(s)* and yet they are still versions of visions that can be found within those texts. Just as these two images influence each other’s meanings (especially when so conveniently placed together), so too do the images within the *Daybreak(s)* influence each other’s meanings and those of the previous two images. Every time a new image is assembled to represent a portion of the collective identity of Sheridan County residents it reassembles and rematters the *ethos* of its space.

### Maps and Images

“Maps, measurements, descriptions, statements, declarations, and images clear the way for actual physical things such as walls, fences, and districts. Add to this the sets of practices and rituals that are conducted at borders, and it becomes obvious how deeply the virtual and the actual, the metaphoric and the literal, converge, and are translated into one another, at the borderlines we inhabit.” WJT Mitchell - *Image Science*

Visual perception and visual culture have long been recognized as influential factors in sensory and cultural interpretation. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries alone saw a massive increase in technological capability with capturing and presenting the visual throughout a variety of mediums and platforms. This can, of course, be tracked to some extent in the *Daybreak(s)*, particularly in regards to the presence of their pictographic elements along with their textual organization that, by all accounts, seems to have been a bit of an undertaking to reach out to the community at large (on three separate occasions) in order to gather and compose the pictures in relation to the text of the personal narratives that largely make up the *Daybreak(s)*.

In spite of this inevitable use of pictures to present a synchronic reality, the academic humanities have long seemed to display a distrust of visuality and its representation of the figurative and the real (Jay). However, in the past twenty to thirty years rhetoric, as well as an increasing number of other humanities-based disciplines, has begun to study the nuanced contrast that visual culture provides to linguistic methods of interpretation. Amongst an onslaught of various academic “turns,” visual culture has increasingly come to be recognized as a useful avenue for the study and interpretation of epistemological frameworks that attempt an understanding of how we communicate and organize with visual media. If we are looking to the *ethos* of individuals *and* of places, visual media then becomes a prime area of production that reveals the various qualities that make up the *ethos* and *places* that we construct and distribute amongst ourselves. Because of this, it becomes pertinent to look into the pictures present in the *Daybreak(s)* to see what they reveal about the characteristic qualities of *place* represented and how images act as an avenue through which I can study *ethos*. In this chapter, I study the use

of visual representation in the *Daybreak(s)* to consider visual elements contribute to an *ethos* that preferences human actions. Much like the map discussed above, the images present in the *Daybreak(s)* serve to organize humans into various social, geographical, and familial groups. The message that seems to be conveyed through the images in the *Daybreak(s)* is that the “pioneers” who came to inhabit Sheridan County are the agents of origin who forged a culture and society out of untapped natural resources. The “pioneer” *ethos* starts with the influence of *Sheridan’s Daybreak I*, in which the “Dedication” reads, “SHERIDAN’S DAYBREAK is dedicated to the pioneer men and women of Sheridan County whose courage and determination brought civilization to the virgin prairies. May it perpetuate their memory and their achievements” (ii). This motivation to preserve, honor, and commemorate the stories of those who “brought civilization” to a so-called previously unsettled area jumpstarts the need for the history making and endures throughout the *Daybreak(s)*.

I wish to critically disrupt this notion of history making with an analysis that figures the importance of the environment in shaping human actions. Before I enter into that analysis, however, I must define some terminology. The first distinction I wish to make is that between “picture” and “image”. As WJT Mitchell quotes (with no source) in his book *Image Science*, ““You can hang a picture, but you can’t hang an image”” (Mitchell, 16). The way Mitchell uses this quotation is to define a picture as being the physical artifact (or, “thing” as Laurie Gries would have it) that appears with material support. For the *Daybreak(s)*, the support is located within the physical texts whose pages I turn through and ruminate over the many lives that I am viewing and discussing. The earlier existence of this support would be the individual families’ photographs which

were copied in order to be used in the printing of these texts. Therefore, if I align with Mitchell's quotation, the physical reality of pictures and the act of viewing them are what allow us to enter into approaching understanding their various meanings. I can put these local histories back on the shelves that I found them in and the pictures will continue to exist within their pages.

Meanwhile, Mitchell defines the word image as the ideological content that is conveyed within pictures and that survives beyond its physical representation. Images, then, within this definition have influence beyond their material boundaries and take on lives of their own that can, for example, influence a community attempting to envision their own history. The troubled image of the "pioneer" serves as a stabilizing historical force for a struggling community of people looking for an origin and a praiseworthy way of painting a picture (or making meaning) of their parents' generation of homesteaders. I start with the image of the 'pioneer' because of its recurrent frequency of portrayal in all three *Daybreak(s)*. Despite the fact that the subsequent two *Daybreak(s)* were based on following generations, that image lingers throughout all three *Daybreak(s)* as the impulse of looking backwards in time in a localized place appears to be limited to looking to the people that were best known, families.

And yet the "pioneer" is not the only consistent image portrayed through pictures in the *Daybreak(s)*. The pioneer as an idea for the homesteader is always situated within a physical and social landscape of various "collective lives," Laurie Gries' terminology for "public life". A collective in her New Materialist envisioning includes a numerous amount of animate and inanimate "things" that assemble to have a wide variety of rhetorical influences on the social groupings that take place throughout time. I use her

theory to point towards the various environmental factors that had massive impacts on the lives of the “pioneers,” farms, towns, and churches that make up the communities of Sheridan County, Montana. In fact, that list should include a semi-arid climate, grass, valleys, deer, and geographic formations amongst many other ‘things’ that influence collective life, its continually shifting subjectivities, and the histories that we tell.

For the Sheridan’s *Daybreak(s)*, it is not too hard to read these bioregional factors into a definitive *ethos* that has been constructed from the image of the pioneer, because they are often depicted within their environment along with additions of images of the environment alone. I would say that complementary to the ‘pioneer’ image, the following most frequent and influential images are ‘natural’ landscapes and families. The family as the most basic unit of human social organization is how these people approached telling the stories of their lives, and I will discuss the workings of this more in my next chapter. For this chapter, because I am trying to disrupt the anthropocentric image of the human agent who exerts control over their environment, I start from the outside looking in, meaning, I start with the image of nature and how the material reality of that image and the specific *place* of Sheridan County largely shapes the *ethos* of the ‘pioneer’ and the *Daybreak(s)*.

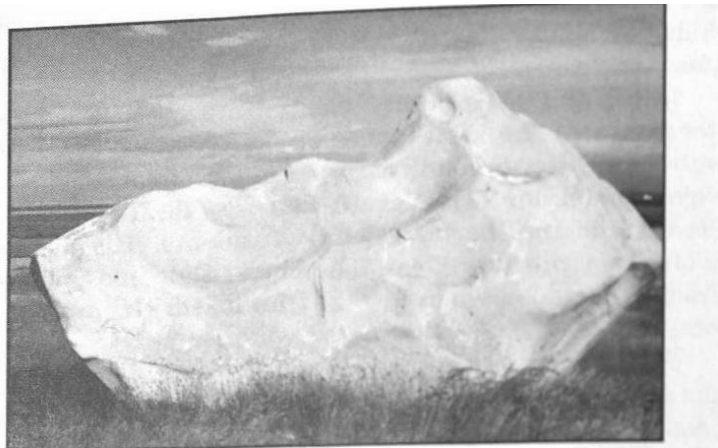
Before I enter into that discussion however, there is one more perspective on visual rhetorics that I wish to discuss: mapping. As a form of visual production, maps often portray the deeply seated political understandings and selective presentations of place and space. The act of mapping, whether physical or conceptual, creates a rhetorical fluctuation between the real and imagined spaces/places that we inhabit. As Nedra Reynolds states in *Geographies of Writing*, “Maps are colorful, often portable,

collectible, or valuable, but their value comes from the culture's demand for positivist, precise, measurable, and reproducible forms of 'reality' and representations of regions that are meaningful to people" (81). Maps like the one included in the beginning of this chapter then allow publics to view regions in ways that assist them to easily digest and understand their spatial reality, despite their limited representational power.

What maps and the act of mapping affords then is a materially and rhetorically significant envisioning of place. As Doreen Massey says of maps, "They [are] attempts to grasp, to invent, a vision of the whole; to tame confusion and complexity" (Massey, 109). If *ethos* dwells in habitual gathering places, then maps like the ones above (see figures 2 or 3) are rich interpretive models for a way into understanding how the *ethos* of particular places gets negotiated and determined. Also, in my view, maps and images are not just those separate pictographic elements within the *Daybreak(s)*, and, as Reynolds would say, "mapping takes many different forms" (82). In a way the entire text of each edition could be seen as its own spatiotemporal representational map. Each image, poem, biography, town history, and graveyard index in these texts is an aspect of the dynamically fluctuating spatial valuations of meaning and matter. In other words, envisioned mapping then is the dominant metaphor for what these texts attempt to accomplish in measuring, enclosing, and sealing the spatiotemporal histories of its people. In closing meaning off with the use of family narratives and embracing the 'pioneer' *ethos*, the contributors constructed a representational map of the narrative human experience in the spaces of Sheridan County that can come to be viewed as the defining characteristics of that *place*.

What follows is split into three sections where I work from the outside in. The first section, The “Natural” World, focuses on the depiction of nature, the second section, Inhabiting “Nature,” focuses on the images of human influences within the natural, and the final section, Families and “Pioneers,” looks to the image of the “pioneer” as portrayed in the *Daybreak(s)*. What I mean by working from the outside in is that by starting with “nature,” I engage with interpreting the broader ecological context that inevitably contributes and disrupts the *ethos* that the “pioneers” created.

### The “Natural” World



*Fossil rock on the C.A. Olson Farm*

A large fossil rock on the C.A. Olson land still draws students from throughout the county that come on field trips to see the fossils, make rubbings, take pictures and culminate a science or history learning activity. During the field trips they usually view fossils at the Ramona Parpart home, agates and rocks at the home of Rose Torgerson, and have a picture taken in the local jail that is now owned by Ron and Ann Ueland.

Figure 4. Fossil Rock—A rock as depicted and described in *Sheridan’s Daybreak III*.

Despite the description of who owns the land and what uses the rock in figure 4 is put to by the community, this rock is not bound to the people who surround it or who

own that land that it rests on. Its usefulness for lessons in natural history and science hurl it into human subjective epistemological bases of science and history. Its presence in the world is not predicated by the use that humans put it to, despite the fact that its image has made its way into a text precisely for the use of a community of people. While it is good to understand where this rock came from and how envisioning it in the way that *Sheridan's Daybreak III* does is co-constitutive of a collective *ethos*, part of what I wish to suggest is that in the composition of a place, however broadly or narrowly one wishes to define it, the ontological make-up of the objects presented in images and imaginings is always-already based within an ongoing ecological process of interrelations. As an example of this I provide the image of this rock to show one small way in which the contributors present how people interact with their environment and to launch my discussion of the image of 'nature' and how the complex interaction of the ambivalent and diverse 'natural' world (humans included) contributes to the character of a place.

'Nature' in this view is not the antithesis to 'culture,' as if the two were eternally separated by some great divide of essential human thought and non-human material soullessness. Nathaniel Rivers in his article "Deep Ambivalence and Wild Objects," illustrates and uses a combination of Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO) and New Materialism (both philosophical strains of speculative realism) to suggest that environmental rhetoric and rhetorical theory should be aware of the rhetorical actions of objects whose ontological make-up is actually on an equal footing with that of human subjects. Drawing from a variety of environmentalists and philosophers, Rivers demonstrates that objects (including humans) possess qualities of being that are

continually drawing away from each other while simultaneously forging new, strange, and unknown relations with other objects. Rivers writes:

Individual objects, which I read broadly to include both the animate and inanimate, and the animal, vegetable, and mineral, perpetually withdraw from us and each other—they remain wild in never being fully known or controlled by us. And those wild objects relate with one another in ways unknown to us (as wild objects ourselves) and produce effects we cannot codify (424).

His emphasis lies in readjusting environmentalist rhetoric that attempts to decry human involvement in nature and reinforce the dualistic notion of human “culture” and pristine “nature.” Instead, what he suggests environmentalists do is approach the environment, and our relationship with it, in terms of ontological “deep ambivalence.” Rivers co-opts this term from William Cronon, an environmentalist, who recognizes the existence of this ambivalence in nature and a need for a shift in approach that values the same deep ambivalence. In my estimation, this fossil rock, its image (here and in its material support in the text), and the people who interact with and construct epistemologies around it, all possess, as objects, the same “deep ambivalence” that Rivers illuminates here. Rivers further states, “Deep ambivalence is thus an ontologically flavored rhetoric predicated on a kind of being in the world: being across a flat ontology in which all beings are equally emplaced” (431). That equal footing allows for a view that speculatively regards the other objects, and their condition of being in the world as “strange.”

The image of this rock in *Sheridan’s Daybreak III* serves to illuminate a part of the community of Antelope and to discuss the importance of rocks historically to the carrying of mail and to field trips for gradeschoolers. However, I can say with no amount

of certainty that this rock, like many others in the County, was probably found while a farmer was operating some sort of machinery. The rock was then, and remains to be now, deeply ambivalent to the needs of the human agent. What matters, however, is that we continually reevaluate how objects, and images as objects, act as disrupting strangeness to the dwellings we present to ourselves as well as acknowledging that we are forging relations with objects that should be viewed on an equally ontological basis. We share this world with the material objects (however broadly or narrowly imagined) that surround us and those materials are continually co-contributing to a collective experience that constitutes the character of place.

I mean for the image of this rock to demonstrate how in our constructions of meanings around the objects we interact with, we often fail to recognize those objects' own quality of existence which is often predicated upon something outside of our own perceptual capabilities. What is 'natural' then is not a completely graspable concept except through those perceptual lenses that allow us to come into contact with the world outside of our interior experiential selves. However, we use these interactions with deeply ambivalent objects to make meaning and to grasp for an understanding that lends itself to our own self composition. Fossil rock was a marker for which mail was carried to the "pioneers" in the community of Antelope. Its material reality then is co-opted as a tool that lends itself to the meaning that the "pioneers" were able to construct around themselves. Therefore, the 'natural' world and material reality is always already a part of our self-fashionings that must constantly spring from the spaces we occupy. In this way the mail carriers made a habit of interacting with the Fossil rock which, in part, contributes to the "pioneer" *ethos* that can be read into the *Daybreak(s)*.

For the most part, the representation of nature in the *Daybreak(s)* falls within two different categories of viewings that people apply to nature. The first and most dominant of these typified images is that of the idyllic landscape (discussed further in Chapter 4 as the rural idyll). The second is what I call the image of unwieldy nature where various atmospheric elements create conditions that make any life there difficult. Figure 4 depicts the Big Muddy River valley which winds from the Northwest of Sheridan County in Saskatchewan down through the southern part of the county eventually leading to the Missouri River. This image epitomizes a typical viewing of pastureland that embodies flat grassland landscape that eventually meets the skies that give the state of Montana its nickname, the Big Sky state. As I argue, the natural environment is inevitably prefigured in the *ethos* of the *Daybreak(s)* and possesses Rivers' "deep ambivalence" consistent with a range of objects variously organized. The habits and customs of this environment begin with the climate (semi-arid) and the soils, which influences the plant life (mostly grasses), which influences the animal life (deer, antelope, rabbits, coyotes, cows, birds, etc.), which all intersect and interconnect to influence the human life and its various envisionings and productions, like that of the *Daybreak(s)*. This environment, although not always the same, has been in existence for far longer than the current human inhabitants have been living there.



Figure 5. The Big Muddy River Valley—Depicts the valley in its “natural” state.

This image of the environment, while not the primary focus in the *Daybreak(s)*, is prevalent in the imaginings of its people. For many, myself included, it is sights like these that inspire a sense of connection with the landscape and the surrounding environment; that feeling is part of what contributes to a ‘pioneer’ *ethos* that needs reconsidering and careful attention in order to more fully understand how our relationship with place gets played out in texts and how those dynamic and shifting relationships give way to developed habits and demonstrated values, thus making up the spatially distributed *ethos* that I am advocating for. Nature and environment are continually present and are influenced by our ideological values and vice versa; for me, as a student of language in all its regards, this implies a dialectic relationship where meaning is constructed between the many different exchanges that literally and figuratively *take* place. This is why the idyllic landscape is so very powerful for so many people, and why I continue to feel a deep connection to pictures *and* images like the one shown above.

As I will discuss further in Chapter 4, the Rural Idyll image springs not only from the natural environment as it is, but is carried through the textual representation of pictographic elements that allow for people to connect to a pastoral image of rural landscape that is largely influenced by broader social understandings of rurality. Yet the image of nature in the *Daybreak(s)* is not always a calm and peaceful image. The antithesis to this image is that of unwieldy weather and harsh conditions. Almost as consistently portrayed as the rural idyll is this image of nature as unfriendly and uncaring. The pictures in figures 6 and 7 present the natural world and the potentially harmful effects that it can bear on human life. Dust storms, tornadoes, and cold, harsh winters are contributing factors to the ability of people to live in this place. These difficult conditions can be viewed and understood from the standpoint of contributing to the deep ambivalence of so-called wild objects. Nature is dangerous, yet we still forge deep seated connections with it that assist in constructing our love and fear of it.



*Dust storm near Raymond on August 13, 1937*

Figure 6. Raymond Duststorm—Combinations of leaving land fallow and drought led to many duststorms.



Figure 7. Medicine Lake Waterspout—Unwieldy “nature” often includes tornadoes in Sheridan County.

The rural idyll and the unwieldy weather pictures and images of the *Daybreak(s)* present polemic roles of the image of nature. Its processes are continually coming together and withdrawing from one another forming assemblages that sometimes include humans and their actions and sometimes give way to a ‘pioneer’ *ethos* that strongly connected to both a pastoral landscape and an untrustworthy and potentially disastrous set of weather phenomena. The image of the natural world is continually prefigured in our imaginations and inevitably makes up the background context of how we view ourselves in place. The same is demonstrated in the views of nature present in *Sheridan’s Daybreak(s)*.

The next section covers the image of human traces in the environment where for the people who read the *Daybreak(s)* the ‘subject’ of the image is either the people portrayed or the structures in place that contribute to the well-being of the human actants. For my purposes, the following analysis of images focus on the inevitable assemblages of images that portray people in a constant set of relationships with their environment: from

the strips of farmland and gardens that allow people to profit from natural resources, to the machinery that became a dominant way of harnessing those resources, and from the shacks of homesteaders to the towns that sprung into existence.

### Inhabiting “Nature”

Before the advent of the Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909, the majority of inhabitants in Sheridan County were largely either cattle or ranchers (from an admittedly Eurocentric viewpoint). Afterwards there was a large influx of mainly Scandinavian people who came to this area to claim a homestead of their own and to begin building a life on their 320 acre plot. Before this influx of people, there were and remain to be traces of Native American inhabitation in teepee rings spread throughout the County, and there is little to no representation in any of the three *Daybreak(s)* of Native Americans and their inhabitation and influence of the land. That brand of colonialist revision has not gone unnoticed by me, and the traces of the effective erasure of the groups of indigenous peoples that used this place previous to the ‘pioneers’ is deeply concerning and saddening. The land through teepee rings, and subsequently the place, remembers their presence and they deserve recognition for their inhabitation.

The absence of the narratives of the Natives (particularly the Assiniboine) greatly colors any sort of *ethos* that I may wish to analyze and is one of my biggest critiques of the idea of a ‘pioneer’ *ethos* that bases its origin on a group of people who were awarded land that never should have been theirs in the first place. The current section discusses, portrays, and traces how the image of people *inhabiting* deeply ambivalent, object-oriented nature is presented in the *Daybreak(s)*, and if the dominant Native ways of

envisioning the environment in this place were present in the *Daybreak(s)*, I would be more than willing to include it and make it a contributing factor in how it interrelates with the dominant envisioning that takes place within these texts. Unfortunately, like much Native American influence, it remains to be largely absent. With that said, what follows will be a breakdown of the portrayal of some of the representations of the human presence in the pictures and images of *Sheridan's Daybreak(s)* to show that people and their characteristic qualities are always determined through their interactions with their environments..

Figure 8 depicts what the caption inside the image calls the Lone Tree Community. The picture comes from the section on Comertown in *Sheridan's Daybreak III*, a town that is now considered to be an unincorporated community according to the U.S. Geological Survey as well as being listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This picture here ties between my previous section on the imaging of the natural world *as* the natural world alone and the construction of people inhabiting that supposed binary of nature. Depicted in it is a tree, a body of water, and a horse and carriage, all set against a backdrop of hills.



Figure 8. Lone Tree Community—Depiction of a horse and buggy near the site of this early Sheridan County community.

Normally, this picture might be described in largely reductive ways as the image of people enjoying some time at this pond, but in my sequencing of working from images of “nature” to images of people, it functions at a level that shows that people are all part of a larger community of ontologically equal entities that all contribute to the fabric of reality and the context of their images and histories. The ‘subject’ of this picture should not only be described through the lens of what the people in it were doing or what community of people they were a part of, but also in terms of the forging of relationships within this place between the presence of the tree and the formation of the pond. This Lone Tree picture allows an access point into how those relationships are envisioned in the *Daybreak(s)*. My reason for including it in this section is that if the people were removed from this picture, it would be a fairly nondescript image of nature. As I argue, reading people into landscape means that we must study the various relationships that they build with the land that they are given ownership over. And because ownership is a tricky concept if agency is a distributed force, then I must try to understand how actions become habits become values which then become *ethos*. An *ethos* that can be read through places must be co-constituted between the various entities in that place together. It is not that hard of a shift to make to consider the dynamic interrelations of the surroundings that people find themselves in, and, we are making that shift quite frequently in our consideration of our place in the world. However, what I argue for is a decentering and a reconsideration that includes re-imagining our histories so that we are not the solely centered ‘subjects’ in them. Such a task is monumentally important as we as a culture have moved into an era in which the efficacy of the influence we *should* have

on environmental factors is continually being brought to question with the advent of human driven climate change.

As stated at the beginning of this section, the reason for the influx of people in the 1910s to as many as 14,000 people (U.S. Census) by the beginning of the 1920s was in part because of the extension and expansion of the Homestead Act. Claiming a homestead meant that the people who came to set up their homes were going to try to become farmers. These people were untrained and led to believe that they could become rich very quickly off of the fertility of that land. However, becoming a farmer in a new land was not something so easily accomplished as droughts are and continue to be frequent in the area. In fact, droughts figure largely in the self-fashioning narratives of the pioneer and they are reflected in the pictures and images that they present in the *Daybreak(s)*.

What inhabiting nature entails is the creation and building of processes that allow for the production of resources and the movement between places, especially if viewed from an anthropocentric perspective. The *ethos* of inhabiting nature in the *Daybreak(s)* throughout can directly be seen in the prevalence of pictures that show the human influence on the environment and the infrastructure that allows for the people of Sheridan County to adapt to the environment of the bioregion. This is why so many of the pictures of people in the *Daybreak(s)* portray their material effects. Things like vehicles, homestead shacks, gardens, railroads, towns, churches, and schools all in some way display an influx of people forging relationships with the larger ecosystem. The characteristic qualities of humans inhabiting nature in the *Daybreak(s)* have much to do with these forging of relationships. The variety of these relationships with nature are

mixed in the *Daybreak(s)*, but can be separated into four categories: 1) Agricultural landscapes (pasture, fields, and gardens), 2) Homestead shacks/houses 3) Vehicles (tractors, threshers, trains, pickup trucks, and cars), and 4) Infrastructure (schools, churches, towns, roads, and dams). These four categories round out how the *Daybreak(s)* represent what Magnus Aasheim calls “civilization.” Aasheim wants to honor all the people who settled there between the years 1890-1920. For my purposes, I only analyze one of these intersections of people inhabiting ‘nature.’ Specifically, to demonstrate the centrality of agriculture to inhabiting ‘nature’ looking at an image that portrays popular agricultural practices viewed through landscapes.

As I argue in the previous section, many times the objects that help to make up a place are not always concerned with nor do their ontologies necessarily contribute to the human centric narratives that co-opt them and their affective relationship with the other entities in their vicinity. This does not mean that the various and distributed objects (however organized) can never enter into mutual relationships with the other entities they find themselves in contact with. This would be to continue to embrace the static ways in which nature is portrayed in the *Daybreak(s)* and beyond. What is required is a view of things that embrace the vibrancy and dynamism that is present in all becomings, including “things.” In “Place and Sensory Composition,” Kathleen Stewart writes, “A place . . . is not an inert landscape made of dead matter but a composting of bodies, affects and forests, of persons, socialities, and existential ecologies of being in a world” (213). One of the easiest areas to point to for “existential ecologies of being” in the *Daybreak(s)* would be to the “pioneers” relationship with the soil.

An image particularly prevalent in the *Daybreak(s)* is that of miles of farmed land. Figure 9 gives a view of how people have practiced relationships with the soil by sowing and harvesting from the land for financial security. Particularly, this image depicts what is called strip farming where strips of land are left to fallow while adjacent strips are harvested. The reasons for this type of practice have somewhat to do with the dust storm depicted in figure 6. Previous to the practice of strip farming, farmers would leave ground fallow which led to significant erosion of topsoil. This gave rise to the dust storms and much economic insecurity for the so-called “pioneers” who came to make a “civilization.” And so, in response to the ecosystem’s inability to handle the fallowing practices of the human agents, the people shifted their practices to allow for less erosion and better environmental quality. This practice is further discussed in a section from *Sheridan’s Daybreak I* called “Sheridan County Soil and Water Conservation District,” which was developed in response to the soil degradation brought on by block farming practices that left soil fallow for long periods of time. The quality of the human life is dependent on the quality and continued presence of organic material that allows nutrients to develop in the soil and for the farmed plants to produce harvestable grains. Even though this is not readily apparent in figure 9 without knowledge of local historical farming practices, it is a part of the series of community habits that give way to being able to read that image in that way.



Figure 9. Strip Farming—Image of miles of strip farming agriculture in *Sheridan's Daybreak II*.

Viewing the practice of strip farming from above in figure 9 gives a unique look into the ways in which the people of Sheridan County have entered into negotiations with ‘nature’ that give rise to the various ways in which a collective *ethos* is co-constituted in *place*. It’s a view that reveals the tensions between various entities with different intentions. And while I do not mean to suggest that soil possesses the capabilities of intending anything in particular, it is worth noting that ecosystemic processes have a way of knowing and working out what is right and good for the health of the soil and the health of the system. That is why it is important to read people as “inhabiting” nature in the *Daybreak(s)*. Once we make that switch, the question of what makes places and what contributes to the composition of those places (which lends itself to its *ethos*) becomes a much broader effort that prefaces the collections of dynamic simultaneities. All of the pictures in the *Daybreak(s)* that depict people inhabiting nature can be read with a mind

towards understanding the various habits formed and relationships built on being able to act within that environment. The images of towns, roads, houses, agricultural landscapes, and many other signs that leave traces of their human inhabitants all crop up in ways that show that the contexts we find ourselves in always are dependent on the relationships we make with the environment.

Recognizing these dependent relationships allows me and my interpretive work in analyzing these texts to re-engage with the image (and the mapping sensibilities that come from imaging our places) of the “pioneer” *ethos*. As I work from the view of nature alone to the view of humans inhabiting nature in the *Daybreak(s)*, I come to the most dominant vision in the *Daybreak(s)*. This vision honors some sort of original anthropocentric influence that ignores the hundreds of years of history that can be seen in the actualization of the material and ecosystems already there *and* in the relationships that the “pioneers” had with their environments. I do not mean to demean the narratives of the people who called themselves and were written as “pioneers” in these texts. Many of them had recourse to name themselves in that way for starting a new life in a new land. As the project of this chapter, I simply wish to expand the notion of human as the only agent of change that can be read in the historical texts that we construct around ourselves. As is reflected in the example above, we are always using various envisionings of ourselves *in relation* with our surrounding contexts to shape the habits that allow us to concretely call ourselves (and our ancestors) by the names of “pioneers.” In doing this though the contributors to the *Daybreak(s)* and the photographs that they composed and sent in to be included in the pages of these texts revealed much about how they preferred to view their parent’s generation and the values that they represented. In the creation of

places, the representative character of its historical texts has much power over how that *ethos* can be read and re-read by its future generations like myself.

In my next section I give a brief review of the “pioneer” *ethos* and its commanding prevalence throughout the *Daybreak(s)* as a centrally organizing ideal through which the editors and collaborators preferred to understand themselves and through which in each subsequent installment the collaborators continue to turn to in order to recreate a past that justifies their presence in that place. The pioneer and the family unit are what occur most frequently. In conjunction with the narratives written throughout by the various inhabitants, these pictures present a centrally influential reality of family life.

### Families and “Pioneers”

Two pictures specifically that I would like to focus on that epitomize the “pioneer” *ethos* in *Sheridan’s Daybreak(s)*. Both come from the first edition of these texts. Both, also place their figures in a “natural” context. I mention this to note that the “pioneer” figure in the *Daybreak(s)* is always figured in relation to their environment. First, figure 10 is a drawing of a man named Bill Hass by James Tower for an article that Mr. Hass wrote for the magazine *Farms Illustrated* in 1946. The drawing depicts Bill Hass in overalls with his thumbs tucked into his clothing pensively looking upward into the sky. As a “pioneer” of Sheridan County, Hass was one of many people who emigrated to the county and made a life there. What this drawing is particularly good at bringing to the forefront are the various obstacles like fire and grasshoppers that these “pioneers” faced in their day. But what is most prominently figured in this image is the

drawing of Hass. From the way that I read it, his stance suggests dominion and control over his environment. The “pioneer” *ethos* in the *Daybreak(s)* is all about the control and dominion over nature by the human agents. This *ethos* controls the narrative for the people and the place in a way that demonstrates dominion over all of the various places and all of the various material processes that exist within Sheridan County, including being able to overcome fires, grasshoppers, and drought. “Civilization,” to use Aasheim’s terminology, was what needed to be brought to the area. The people who brought it, from the view of the *Daybreak(s)*, must be honored and continue to be seen through the eyes of commemoration. By painting their image, literally and figuratively, commemoration of the civilization bringers serves the double function of observing their exerted control over their environment and how that control contributes to the character of the materially constituted *place*.

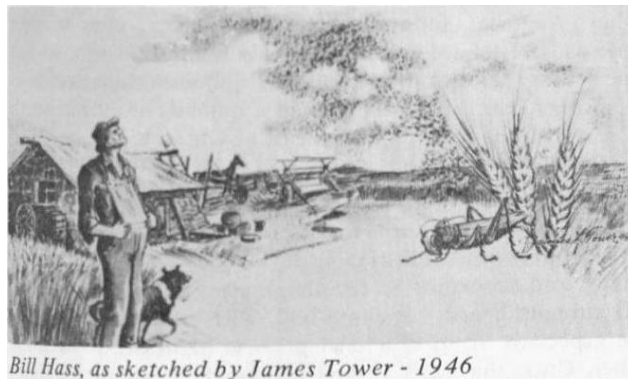


Figure 10. Bill Hass—“Pioneer” depiction from *Sheridan’s Daybreak I*.

As a form of identification predicated upon an anthropocentric viewpoint, the “pioneer” figure in the *Daybreak(s)* serves as a regulatory force of origin that gives credence to the people who came to this area and began making significant changes to the

characteristic qualities that make the place what it is. When I entered into this project, I was rather surprised by how often this image of the pioneer was invoked. I expected there to be some sort of other historical narrative by the third edition that moved away from this idea of the “pioneer” and for that to be more central to the ways in which the contributors wished to view their historical selves. In some ways, that is the case, because much of the focus with many of the narrative is that of presenting the family. But I believe the use of the family narrative in the *Daybreak(s)* works in conjunction with the “pioneer” *ethos*. Even in the third edition, produced in 2004, the narrative and vision of looking back and imagining the “pioneer” ancestor is driven by attempting to continue to memorialize their lives because these “pioneers” are family. The family construct then works with the “pioneer” *ethos* to form this continued historical viewpoint that often times ignores the specifics of the material reality of the past in favor of the actions of the people alone.

In figure 11, the second of the two pictures that I wish to look at to understand the “pioneer” figure in the *Daybreak(s)*, Bert and Lina Selvig are depicted in a wheat field looking at a head of wheat. The title of this picture is “The Rewards of Toil.” What this picture depicts is familiar to me despite the fact that I never knew these two people. I’m familiar with their relatives, but more importantly I’m familiar with the act that they are doing in this picture. As a child I have very strong memories of going out to the field with my father to check on the wheat. This action serves multiple functions: How we used it was to try to predict the yield, but it further allows the farmer to connect with the product that s/he is growing. The reason why this picture won the contest discussed in the caption in *Sheridan Daybreak I* is because its *ethos* captured a way to make many people

who view it reflect back on similar experiences. The habit of checking the fields on a consistent basis is relatable to the habits of many others in the area who have experienced similar things.

*Bert and Lina Selvig - 1952 -- This picture took 1st place in the Camera Club, Billings. Titled, "The Rewards of Toil", taken by Eustace Hill, the husband of Margaret Selvig.*



Figure 11. “The Rewards of Toil”—“Pioneers” checking the status of their wheat crop.

In holding to the “pioneer” *ethos*, the historical makeup of these texts is greatly influenced by that figure of ontological origin which allows subsequent generations to possess the vision of knowledge that maps its way onto our identifying practices. But that image and narrative vision comes at a consequence of ignoring the other compositional qualities that we must interact with in order to form an *ethos* at all. Qualities that must include interaction with the environment and the various entities that we find ourselves in the presence of at any given moment or time period.

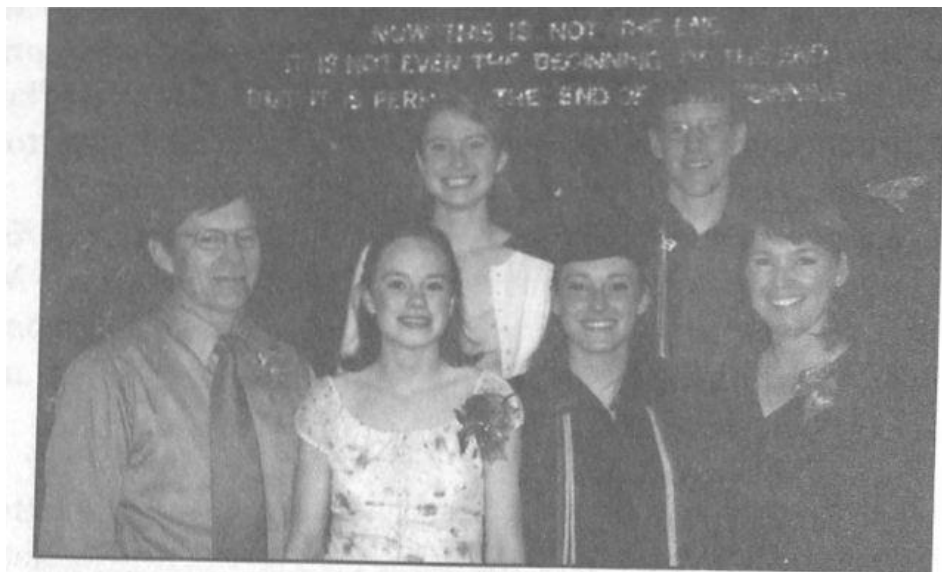
What I find most interesting about the recurrence of the image of the “pioneer” in the *Daybreak(s)* is how much it erroneously privileges the agency of the human. Our

choices and intentions, while important to consider, never amount to the full reason why things happen in the ways that they do. In attempting to understand the *ethos* of a *place* through its peoples' historical texts, I've shown in this chapter that giving recognition and agency to the environment is integral to ethically sound interpretations of our selves. If we as a society choose to ignore its role in the construction of our *places* and the identities we form in those *places*, then we choose to ignore the very processes that make us what and who we are.

REMEMBERING NOSTALGIA: DISRUPTING FAMILIAL  
CONSTRUCTIONS OF IDENTITY

“History-making, then, is a creative enterprise, by means of which we fashion out of fragments of human memory and selected evidence of the past a mental construct of a coherent past world that makes sense to the present.” - Gerda Lerner

“Tantalizingly close yet indeterminate, visible yet finally opaque, it is place itself that blasts open the time that history conceals, laying bare its impasses and absences and, with this, our inability ever to assume our historical condition” - Jessica Dubow



*Doug, Michelle, Kristin, Stephanie, Craig and Jackie West*

Figure 12. West Family—My immediate family in 2002 as depicted in *Sheridan's Daybreak III*.

Figure 12 makes sense to my present as it is a part of my own history and a part of the lived reality of my past. Yet, as Gerda Lerner states in the epigraph I have included from *Why History Matters*, it is also a “creative enterprise” and a “fragment of human memory” (117). This image bridges my previous chapter on images and the

visual/mapping nature of the *Daybreak(s)* to this current chapter on the personal historical impulse that drives the *Daybreak(s)* by paying attention to and discussing the presence of the images of my immediate and distant family and how the memory presented in these images maps on to and contradicts some of my own self constructions. When I view this image I am reminded that that was the year that my sister Stephanie graduated from Outlook High School, which subsequently reminds me that the picture had been taken a little short of a year since we had moved to our house on the farm in 2001.

Despite the fact that we only moved a mile West outside of Outlook, where our previous home still stands, that move was a significant marker in the history of my immediate family. It brought together the nexus of the nearly complete isolation that living on a farm affords with the demanding nature of my father's dual professions of teacher/farmer. That period of time also acted as a transition for my family. My oldest sisters would be gone for college in the following years, taking part in and pursuing that passage from adolescence to adulthood. In the near future my youngest sister Michelle and I would begin attending high school in Plentywood (as Outlook continued to only get smaller as a community and a school), a near twenty mile daily commute. My mother would leave her job as a Radiology Technician at Sheridan Memorial Hospital to work as a Mammographer at Mercy Medical Center in Williston, North Dakota. My father would eventually quit his fifteen year tenure as History/PE teacher at Outlook Public Schools to pursue farming full time. I can recall and recreate these influential events on my life from just viewing that image, and that reaction is a deeply significant part of the memory inducing, culture building, and identity formation that the *Daybreak(s)* represent. This is

why, in some ways, I can see some of what I might call my own *ethos* as character in the pages and images of the *Daybreak(s)*.

The desire to reflect, recollect, and record moments of the past is both the impulse for the creation of the *Daybreak(s)* and the intended affective reaction of the various people who may view it. This notion intimately ties with the idea that in creating and remembering places we are constantly engaging with “efforts after meaning” (Bartlett). In this chapter I engage the important discussion of the *Daybreak(s)* most prominent role as enacted and embodied local histories that spring from *place* to *memory* and what those collections of auto/biographical history afford the creation of a collective *ethos* in its habitual place through time. I find that *ethos* constructed in place with a variety of interlocutors is continually shifted and shifting through the nostalgic memories that we encounter and confront. Specifically, I find that entering into nostalgic memories drives me to react in a way that immediately questions the reason for nostalgia. This is also the chapter in which I will engage most with my genealogical history and the materially rhetorical implications that has on my *ethos* and my life, which further demonstrates the centrality that my role has on the creation of this entire interpretive view of the *Daybreak(s)*. As my history is different from those of other inhabitants who might view these texts, this is where I may diverge somewhat from how other inhabitants of Sheridan County might interpret them. I offer my reaction/interaction with these memory driven historical interpretations through *place* as one of many possible. The value of my reaction lies not only in the fact that Sheridan County is the place that I have called home for much of my life, but also in the fact that it is in the reengaging with the content of memory (individual or social) that I bring into existence the very *place* that I study while

also creating it anew from the specifics of my own subjectivity. As Dylan Trigg writes, “From memory to place, we are returned through place to memory” (xvii). I bring Lerner’s discussion of history as collective memory and a source of identity together with Trigg’s notion that memory always possesses a spatial dimension with designated characteristics of place in order to explore the collective memories of families represented in the *Daybreak(s)* and how those memories constitute a centralized location through which a family/community can remember and construct itself.

In terms of *ethos* as a spatial value system in which we construct a home, house, or whatever other structural metaphor one wishes to use to represent a system of values, memory assists in creating the boundaries of the house that one occupies in terms of *how* we value *what* we value. If we wish to interpret *ethos* as a dwelling place, then the memories that we dwell on are often good indicators of the characteristically inscribed practices and events that make the structures of history part of how we build meaning into our lives. By remembering our pasts we construct or inscribe a set of boundaries, a characteristically defined *place*, to explore our sensory experiences within the *spaces* that allow to negotiate with other (human, non-human; animate, inanimate). In this way *ethos* takes *place* through memory and history.

Finally, through the course of writing this chapter I have had the supreme difficulty of trying to come to terms with a sense of home. Returning home, whether in our thoughts or by physically being there always entails a sense of displacement of the qualities that made that place meaningful to start with. This is why I engage with the how memory is brought to us through place and often with the lens of nostalgia. What I attempt in this chapter is to re-engage with that continual displacement and to read the

places of the past with an eye towards ethically reimagining the lenses that lend themselves to nostalgia and downplaying difference.

### Rhetorical History, Memory, and Place

When I use the term rhetorical history, what I mean to suggest is that the stuff of history and history making (i.e. historiography) is always rhetorical. This point can most easily be seen in that the historian, in confronting the stuff of history, begins to form an interpretation and relationship with the material that s/he is confronted with. Then, when they compose the history, the historian inscribes it with meaning that always negotiates between what actually happened and how they read what happened. I am implicated in the rhetorical project of reading the *Daybreak(s)* and re-reading their historical construction because a representation of me is literally in the texts and because this project demonstrates that I have viewpoints that differ from what is presented in those texts. Therefore, my project is rhetorical in the sense that it focuses on the study of rhetorical concepts (*ethos*) and in that I wish to persuade others of the ways in which histories, especially those closest to us, can be reread.

Furthermore, in reading these (rhetorical) histories that operate on the level of collective history, myself and others are implicated remembering the past. Memory in this light is social, personal, and material. The history in the *Daybreak(s)* centers around a collective envisioning of the past. This collective history making is exactly how a culture's values take on definitive characteristics. In remembering, and then composing our collective memories, the past contributors and I enter into a redefinition of not only the memories that we possess but where those memories took *place*.

One of the problems with talking about the *Sheridan's Daybreak(s)* lies in my efforts to define exactly what it is that they do or are. Any attempts that I have made to categorize it in my mind have only raised more questions as to how the form of these texts looks like other texts. That's one of the many reasons why I find them so interesting. Are they histories? Do I need the term 'local' before that to show what kind of history they are? And what about the content? They don't really even look like history (if 'history' has a specific 'look') except for some parts where they talk about churches, schools, and organizations that have helped to make the county what it is. In many ways, as much as I like to talk about *place* and *ethos* and the impacts material reality plays on shaping the histories that we make, the majority of the content in the *Daybreak(s)* is made up of people who share their own (brief) stories, the stories of their families, and the stories of their friends and neighbors. These stories situate the *Daybreak(s)* in a distinctly memory based realm; residents look back to the content of their lives to reconstruct a continuity in present. One example of the reliance on memory is in *Sheridan's Daybreak III* where, towards the end of the book, is included an entire section titled simply "Memories." That section reads as a hodgepodge of people's written accounts of family, weather, pioneer days, as well as an academic style paper about the Farmer Labor Party's (communist) role in the county in the late 1920s to mid-1930s.

What is consistent in this "Memories" section (and throughout the entire series of books) is a nostalgia for the past and the place of the past. One poem, by Betty Ann (Lund) Stensrud, reads like an homage to the landscapes present in the imaginative reality of its residents and how they tend to view their history. The poem can be found in Appendix B. In this poem Stensrud continually re-uses the phrase, "I see it in my mind"

(1015), in order to remind us that what she sees in her mind are memories of a place. What she describes in the poem are things that characteristically describe the spaces and places that can be encountered in Sheridan County, like “endless plains,” “alkali flats,” and “golden waving wheat” (1015). These are topographical features of Sheridan County that, depending on the time of year, anyone would encounter. The nostalgia and memory of this poem lies in that continually insistent line, “I see it in my mind” (1015). By repeating this line, Stensrud reminds herself and her readers that she continues to remember these spaces well after she leaves the physical presence of those qualities that make up that place. As Tim Cresswell writes, “One of the primary ways in which memory is constituted is through the production of places” (85). Stensrud’s poem enters into this project of remembering the place of her old home. It is in these nostalgic memories that we reconstruct the places we inhabit.

In the preface to this poem Stensrud tells of how she wrote it after attending a class reunion (1015). By attending her class reunion back in Plentywood, Stensrud was returned through place to her nostalgic memories of that place. Memory serves the function and creation of a poem like this in order to memorialize and create an interaction with the history remembered through personal experience that might be used in order to make a more permanently realized connection to the place, its memories, and its *ethos*. For my purposes, I think it captures quite well how texts like the *Daybreak(s)* demonstrate and are used in a way that gives people the ability to look through rose-colored glasses that frame memory and history in terms of romantic grandeur of things accomplished and times remembered for their goodness.

But the return home through memory shaped by these romantically tinted glasses should be questioned and looked at in terms of revisionist disruptions to allow for a more nuanced and complicated view that recognizes struggle. I mean to recognize struggle no longer in terms of something that was overcome and accomplished (as the “pioneer” *ethos* wishes to), but also in terms of parsing out the answers to why people struggle in the places that they do and to remember it in a way that responsibly reacts to what nostalgia affords our memories and our constructions of *who* we are *where* we are. As Doreen Massey writes, “[P]laces change; they go on without you. Mother invents new recipes. A nostalgia that denies that is in need of reworking” (124). I look to this *ethos* of romanticized memories more with a sense of displacing what is comfortable or heartfelt in order to take up Massey’s recognition that places, their histories, and the memories that those histories are constructed from are never closed to re-interpretations and re-definitions. That is why in this chapter I turn towards the issue of memory and how my memory impacts the *ethos* that I am capable of reading in these local histories. To restate Jeff Malpas’ assertion, “The place brings forth the encounter, and the encounter, the place” (3). My encounter and return home to either the memories or the physical reality of the place is an event that takes place and redefines that place in a way that radically displaces the reality and representation of the romanticized local history of my parents and grandparents histories.

#### My Family (Memories) and a Break from Nostalgia

“[A] personal heritage normally includes one’s family and sense of continuity through ancestry, via one’s birthright as a member of a kinship network, ethnic group, socio-economic class, and citizenry. Ancestral pasts

thus live very much in the present for individuals” - Jeanne Guelke and Dallen Timothy

If, as I claim, memories recall not only the content of the memory as it exists socially and in the mind of the individual, but also the physical constructs of the surroundings, then it should prove a useful enterprise to engage with some of my own memories (both family and individually based). I do this in order to engage in a conversation these ideas that memories (and the histories they are represented in) bring forth the place in which they happened and how that happens socially through discursive acts and the mind of the individual encountering those discursive acts.

In encountering the *Sheridan's Daybreak(s)*, I am continually being brought through place to memory, and back through memory to place (Trigg). As a social process then the historicizing of memory through the collection and presentation of the texts provides unique opportunities for inhabitants of any length of time to engage with the pasts of their memories and places, where their memories enplace themselves in their material surroundings. These continually ongoing processes happen with or without a designated text for someone to engage with, but in my case the memories of my familial past (*and* the larger material and social constructs that they were/are embedded in) have been gathered into these aggregate collections. That allows a physical construct (the texts) that echoes the places of the past to act as a memorializing history for people like me to come into contact with the diffuse influences that have contributed to the *ethos* that I can construct through the history of my family. In *Geography and Genealogy*, editors Jeanne Guelke and Timothy Dallen write:

[T]he self cannot be constrained to its embodied, presentist space-time paths, framed by dates of the individual's birth and death but is a dynamic

and complex continuum that originates at some unknowable date in the past before one's birth, and that will continue dynamically through descendents or influences upon others after one's death. (10)

The *ethos* that we construct in *place* is deeply tied to these dynamically shifting selves operating in Guelke and Dallen's "complex continuum" between and within the echoes of the influential memories of the past and continuing outward into the future from their present moments. In many ways, the echoes of the past haunt the present moment. The word haunt, as another interpretation of *ethos*, implies both some sort of past that was once known and a place that one continually visits. History takes *place* somewhere, and in having the capacity for memories we open ourselves to the past haunting our present and for that present moment to be influenced by the material reality of its current presence and the continued haunting material reality of the past.

What haunts us though usually comes from a sense of identification. It is because we identify with the past that it haunts us and holds sway over our beliefs about history.

On one of her definitive functions of history Gerda Lerner writes:

*History [acts] as memory and as a source of personal identity. As memory, it keeps alive the experiences, deeds, and ideas of people of the past. By locating each individual life as a link between generations and by allowing us to transform the dead into heroes and role models for emulation, history connects past and future and becomes a source of personal identity. (117)*

The locating of each individual life enacts an interaction with the past and its material constructs, and, as the *Daybreak(s)* are continually interacting with the past, the act of remembering each individual life in its designated geographical place collectively creates identity and a particular *ethos* that privileges the memory of those people in Homestead, Redstone, Dagmar or Raymond. My own identity is wrapped up within the memories of family members. Our connection to the land, other than the piece of paper

that names my father the owner of it, is further exemplified by the fact that we remember its contours, what we grow on it, and how our relatives past and present have emplaced themselves within the contexts that now I look back to in order to understand my own place within that structure of land, family, memory, and history. In doing this I engage the memory of history as a continued source for my own personal identity.

The first of my families that I will focus on are my great great grandparents Charles and Ella West who moved to the Outlook area in 1904. Ella, out of all of my family members, is the one who is most associated with the image of the ‘pioneer’. My grandfather Richard “Dick” West in *Sheridan’s Daybreak I* describes her best, “Ella West was a pioneer of the old school. She rode horses, chased coyotes, shot at rustlers, helped deliver babies, painted pictures and wrote poetry” (573). It is this type of ‘pioneer’ *ethos* that I combatted in Chapter 2. What I wish to combat in this chapter is the nostalgic tone that my grandfather constructs her memory with. Ella was further known for hosting an infamous outlaw in the county known as Dutch Henry. He was a horse thief, and, according to my family, the friendship was harmless. However, I question my great great grandmother’s involvement with him. Not that I don’t trust my grandfather’s depictions of her, but that I know there must have been much more to the narrative than that she just hosted him for dinner from time to time. I can only speculate about the different reasons why my ‘pioneer’ grandmother would be involved with someone later convicted and hung as a horse thief, but it is noteworthy how my grandfather found it a particular memory that could be mentioned but only briefly glossed over in a piece that very much wishes to remember her as a fun and tough person. Through remembering her in this way he contributes to constructing the ‘pioneer’ *ethos* that conveniently ignores some of the

influential factors (like the massive role of the land and atmosphere) that make up our identities. In many ways the *ethos* of *Sheridan's Daybreak(s)* is less about constructing a complete picture of its people than it is about mentioning their presence and providing a brief glimpse of how those lives happened. This greatly limits how those represented lives can be remembered without the aid of knowing or interacting with them. Thus, because Ella was not a relative that I was ever able to meet since she died thirty to forty years before my birth, the emplaced *ethos* of her memory comes to me through her composed presentation (by my grandfather) within *Sheridan's Daybreak I* and from family members like my father discussing her as a homesteader. That distance and removal makes her life a strange remembrance for me. I never knew her and I never knew what she was like. But her memory, the impact she had in creating the place of her homestead, and the influence of her vitality of in her time, all provide material for understanding her nostalgically constructed *ethos* and the role that this plays as I attempt to understand and re-envision the place of nostalgia in my family memories.

Despite a sort of fondness that I have for the memory and narrative of Ella, she represents a virtual stranger whose only connection I truly feel lies in the name she passed down to me, the proximity of place that she occupied near where I grew up, and my family's continued insistence that she was a noteworthy relative of ours. Her memory for me personally lingers not through the nostalgia driven connection of warmth and hugs and visiting her house, but because she can be *remembered* as a relative of mine who lived over a hundred years ago in the same place I consider to be home.



Figure 13. Espeland Family—Mabel (Espeland) Stoner (third from right) and children.



Figure 14. Earlier Generation of West Family—The Jean and Dick West family.

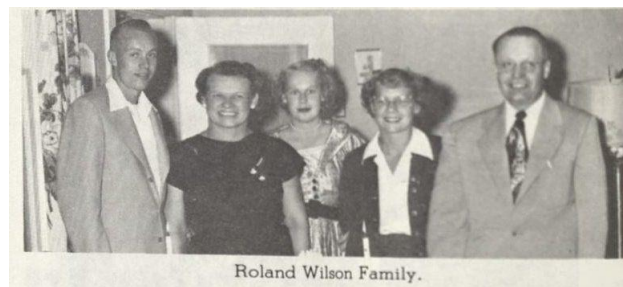


Figure 15. Wilson Family—The Roland and Gertrude Wilson family.

Figures 13, 14, and 15 present several images of the generations of my families, both maternal and paternal. When I look to these images and their subsequent textual explanations and reports on the family, what I know and remember is in contrast to those

memories memorialized in the history that *Sheridan's Daybreak(s)* presents. By entering into this interaction that remembers separately from what the *Daybreak(s)* present I complicate the historical memory that they present and reread the *ethos* that is composed within those pages. Some of my great grandparents on both sides of my families, Grace and Robert West (ascribed pioneers in *Sheridan's Daybreak I*), Selmer and Mabel Espeland, and Roland and Gertrude Wilson, are present in the *Daybreak(s)*. As a child I knew Roland, Gertrude, and Mabel. Mabel (figure 13) had been remarried well before my birth to a man named Ray Stoner after Selmer died in the 1960s. What I remember from her was that she made buns that everybody in my immediate family loved and that when she was going through dementia before she passed away, and we visited her in the hospital she adamantly called me *her boy*. These of course are not the extent of my memories of Mabel, but they are the two memories that stick out the most. These memories are simple but they forge a connection to how I understand the past that my family represents and for me that connection is often nostalgic in nature.

I can also remember Roland and Gertrude (figure 15). I can remember attending their seventy-fifth wedding anniversary and that Gertrude was eventually placed in the nursing home. After when we visited her there, she seemed to only speak gibberish. Furthermore, I particularly remember Roland through the various material effects that were handed down to me. We share the same initials. His full name was Clarence Roland Wilson while my full name is Craig Roland West. Because of this, after his death I received some ties, cognac glasses, and a wallet clip that has my own initials, CRW, on them. Other than these few material *things*, the only ways I remember Clarence is through visiting him at the retirement facility that he lived at in Plentywood, MT. In

*Sheridan's Daybreak II* his life is described by the fact that he owned the Ford dealership for many years in Plentywood (710). The memory of that ownership is one that only comes to me through the texts and what my family tells me. But Roland and Gertrude had an impact on the way that I experience the *place* of home even if I only knew them in their advanced years. As part of my family and in sharing a name with Roland, my life echoes the character of their lives. Their presence haunts my present and contributes to an *ethos* that when engaging with the content of the *Daybreak(s)* cannot help but re-engage their meaning and bring new life to envisioning their narrative lives within that place.

The remainder of my great grandparents, Grace and Robert, are nearly virtual strangers because they died well before my parents were even together. But their stories and their memories as my family relays them to me exhibit a rhetorically influential residue through making the agential choice of continuing to live in this place and assisting in constructing the collectively organized historical memories that are present in the *Daybreak(s)*. This residue is brought to my family through remembering their physical bodies in the presence of the same physical spaces that some of my family members continue to occupy. Even though the place on the map has not changed, what has is the persistent trudge of time that brings about becoming. When encountering Grace and Robert West in these texts, even though I have no firm personal memories of them, I bring their narratives, *ethos*, places, and identities back into existence. I redefine their existence through remembering them at all.

Extending from these distant pasts of relatives, I enter into my grandparent's generations. On my mother's side my grandmother Marilyn (Espeland) Adkins is the surviving connection (along with my mother) that I have to a family that lived in

Sheridan County previously. My grandfather is from Illinois and became a part of our social fabric only through his marriage to my grandmother Marilyn. But my maternal grandmother does not have much of a presence in the *Daybreak(s)* because much of her life has been lived outside of Sheridan County. Mainly in towns not too far from Sheridan County as both of my grandparents were teachers who taught in a number of different schools south of Sheridan County before they eventually moved to North Dakota where they still reside in retirement. Along with my grandmother comes memories of more family members, her sisters and brothers and their families whose main connection to Sheridan County had been growing up outside of Westby. I can remember a multitude of birthday parties, family reunions, and funerals that reunited us. What I often remember from these events are non-descript events of me playing with distant cousins or hugging my mother's cousins who she felt particularly close to. What is unique about these memories is that even though virtually all of the Espeland family has moved away from Sheridan County, many of them still understand themselves through terms of their connection with Selmer and Mabel's homestead outside of Westby and their identities, understood through these familiarly spatial memories, continue to be very much wrapped up in the place where they grew up. That *place* and the *ethos* inscribed and subsequently remembered and historicized acts as a firm grounding point for their identity. And my mother's distant relatives prefer to remember their identity in this county with a nostalgia that still impacts my life but that I engage with in different more critical ways.

My paternal grandparents, Dick and Jean West, are present in all three *Daybreak(s)*, either through written works of their own or as having been written about. My grandma Jean is one of my most memorable family members. In a way, she is the

matriarch of my father's family and how I like to remember her is by recalling the numerous times she hosted me (and our entire family) and through the endless conversations we would have about anything and everything. She moved to Plentywood in 2000, opening up the farmhouse for my family, and her home there naturally became my second home as I spent my high school years in Plentywood. She turns 90 this year and for me her continued vital, living presence in my life represents a direct connection with the distant past that the *Daybreak(s)* can only reflect and refract. I read her memory as one that will always incite a sense of nostalgia for all of the habitual practices of sitting down for coffee or breakfast or diner and for all of the various places that the memories of those conversations take me.

My grandfather, Dick West, is a bit of an enigma for me. Nearly every one of my cousins and my sisters seem to be able to remember him and how playful he was with us as children. That narrative seems to be overbearing in how my family prefers to remember him; he was a happy person who loved to tell stories and had a robust laugh that was infectious. I think this is where nostalgia overrules any other sort of reaction that might be critical. To be critical of a person's memory and narrative does not mean that taking a critical stance dishonors them, and I most definitely do not mean to dishonor his memory. In fact, most of what I think is missing from the *Daybreak(s)* is a healthy dose of being critical of our self-narratives traded out for giving a brief glimpse of the lives lived in the spaces of Sheridan County. The presentation of his life in these texts (and through the stories traded by my family members) though is one that remembers events through those same rose-colored glasses that he himself wished to view my great great grandmother Ella. Often the way the lives of my relatives are constructed by themselves

and others in these texts is through a simple expository report-like style. In *Sheridan's Daybreak II*, Dick and Jean's lives are narrated:

In 1973 Jean and Dick bought the former Maurice West (my great uncle) home and moved 1 mile west of Outlook where they still live and farm. They attend St. Boniface Church in Outlook, where Jean still plays the organ; Dick served on the school board, the Farmers Oil Board and has always been a staunch supporter of the Outlook Bluejay basketball teams. (511)

This narrative memory is steeped in not only the lives of my grandparents, but the *places* that they lived those lives. Dick and Jean in having their lives recorded and remembered in *Sheridan's Daybreak II* offer up a great example of the “complex continuum” (Guelke and Dallen, 10) that genealogical identity presents by being remembered in *place*. My parents now live at the house that was formerly Maurice's and for many years we too attended St. Boniface Church (before it closed) and Outlook Bluejay basketball games (before the school also closed). I also ended up working many summers for the Farmers Oil Company of Outlook. Despite the experience of reading this excerpt as being expository or informative of the events that happened in my grandparent's lives, many of my own family would read these words and *nostalgically* remember a grandfather who adamantly loved watching high school basketball. In many ways, this is my own reaction to these words. The experiences of my life are wrapped up in my memories that have for so long been further wrapped up with the experiences that I make in the *places* that I find myself in. And that is further reflected in the narratives of my family members that I encounter in these texts. This is how genealogy contributes to the subjectivity of my life.

What this account of my grandparent's life ignores however is the various struggles that they had throughout their lives. I know from my grandmother Jean telling me that my grandpa Dick struggled with alcohol and from various other family members as well as my own memories that he eventually struggled with Alzheimer's in his later years. Furthermore, I know from my father that because he often did business with my great uncles, often times the land that we have owned for nearly five generations was mismanaged to the point where we as a family lost much of what we used to own. Many of the auto/biographical narratives tell of people losing land to various levels of mismanagement, but rarely any of them mention people struggling with drugs or alcohol. As critical components to the events and characteristics of my grandparent's lives, our collective historical memories (while still being a source for my present identity), are often whitewashed for the narratives that we most wish to see, hear, and associate with. This reaction is not unique to my own memories and the memories of my family. Yes, many of the narratives are expository, but even the ones present in sections that act as reporting information can be viewed and understood through how it attempts to construct a past that was more pleasant than it really was. As I stated in my second chapter, the memories of families in the *Daybreak(s)* act in conjunction with the construction of a 'pioneer' *ethos* that wishes to nostalgically construct a past that ignores or downplays the influence of the material characteristics that shape the lives we are capable of living. This connection is further expounded in my next chapter by exploring the influence of the Rural Idyll that presents images of an earthy, pleasant, and *rural* landscape.

One final component that is integral to understanding the presentation of families in the *Daybreak(s)* that my own families represent is the amount of children that my

grandparents and great grandparents had. My father was one of nine, his father was one of seven, meanwhile my mother was one of five and her mother was one of seven. The truism that is passed around about why farming families had so many children back then was because they needed more help on the farm. But in the 1930s and 1940s this was becoming less and less the case because of continued mechanization of agricultural operations discussed further in chapter 4. Nevertheless, my families in having so many children spread and began to become a unit that could no longer be kept track of with any degree of certainty. People left, fleeing the law, pursuing jobs, joining the clergy, amongst all the various other things that draw people from the places they call home. Much of this movement is tracked for my families in regards to people leaving and doing a wide variety of things. In fact, it is too much to relay in these pages. What is noteworthy however is the continued insistence on a remembrance that effectively closes that family in its time to those spaces that helped to define the character that they most identify with. An *ethos* that privileges ‘pioneers’ and focuses mainly on the influence of the family presents a closed off unity and a whole. Collectively, there is much that nostalgia forgets. Thus, memory serves as a regulatory force to remind us of the past that we wish to see and not the past that often needs to be seen. The presentations of the families as whole units works to influence the interlocutors who contribute to the *ethos* that defines that family, but their memories extend much further into the material present that effectively creates a place marker for that memory to be returned to and (re)created again. This is why the *Sheridan’s Daybreak(s)* are so important while at the same time so problematic. They close off meaning that a family like my own could continue to

redefine by reinterpreting the past and coming to new understandings of what family memories mean in their place and time.

In the sheer amount of family, that is where a continued sense of identification for me gets lost. I can recognize the important names and the directly related ancestors, but for me, my family dispersed amongst my great aunt's and uncle's families loses coherence as a stabilizing and nostalgic point of return in order to remember and construct a coherent memorializing whole that resonates with me and how I view and understand myself. The same is true of places. In the *Daybreak(s)* a *place* is carved out for many families and those families carry with them all of the various effects of those *places* that they called home. But what their representations often miss are the disconnections and displacement that comes with the progression of time. Time in no way negates the effects of history in *place*. But it definitely puts a damper on how those places, the families that can be found in them, and the collective historical memories that they surround themselves with can create a damper for the nature of meaning and identity. Nostalgia, in this way of remembering, then becomes something that I enter into mostly with those people that I am closest with rather than with those people who I can demonstrate having a common ancestor with.

What I push up against then in encountering these memories in their place within the *Daybreak(s)*, is the notion that the right or appropriate reaction would be to immediately experience that nostalgia which only allows for what I would view as a break from the reality that we try to construct with the staying power of identification within a place spread amongst a constellation of connections with people. Place as memory then acts as a site of both recreation and radical displacement of the spaces that

we used to (and might still) call home. This allows for the (re)reading of memories and their textual representations to include a sense of critical engagement that encounters difference, separate viewpoints, and a recognition that humans experience struggle and hardship.

GEOCRITICALLY RURAL: *SHERIDAN'S DAYBREAK(S)* GLOBAL RURAL *ETHOS*

In the *Daybreak(s)*, it is not hard to find the global influence. With my idea of place as singular and multiple I wish to portray how globalization and neoliberal farming practices have contributed to how the people of Sheridan County have understood their place in the world and have negotiated with these changing powers. I call places multiple in the sense that all places carry traces of influence from entities and other places, and it is in part understanding how people think through the experience and event of other places that we can begin to approach problems that arise from broad social structures that affect the collective lives that possess and develop the habits and characteristics that make up their *ethos*. As in previous chapters, I turn towards pictures and images and what they do to represent the influences of globalization in Sheridan County that have had major impacts on farming practices, extraction of natural resources (oil and agricultural products), and on how individuals and communities are constantly negotiating concepts of what it means to live in a rural area. What is the image of rural? How is rurality enacted, felt, lived? Why do we pit understandings of rurality in opposition to understandings of urban life if we know that the two ways of life are constantly exchanging goods, services, and culturally reappropriating products? From reading the *Daybreak(s)*, these are not questions that immediately arise because the texts are far too locally situated within their contexts. But a major part of that context is that Sheridan County and the *Daybreak(s)* are unmistakably rural. Rurality is a concept that people have used to understand certain social spaces for hundreds if not thousands of years. Typically it is associated with agriculture and being sparsely populated by people.

What these simple definitions of rurality afford is a way of associating values and making judgements (many times wrongly so) about not only the people who live there, but also the environment, the products, and the overall viability that spaces designated as rural provide for the broader bioregional, state, national, and global economic and social order. But as Michael Woods has stated in his book *Rural*, “[T]he rural [is] an elusive concept, a term that does not describe a hard, fast and indisputable material object, but rather refers to a loose set of ideas and associations that have developed over time and which are debated and contested” (16). Any monolithic concept with simple definitions that allow for such easy judgements needs to be questioned, reworked, and applied in order to test the limits of that concept’s viability as a form through which we can identify, understand, and negotiate the social spaces we occupy. I do not wish to take on that project. Instead, I use studies that Michael Woods and others have used to tease out the different meanings that the social space of rurality has in specific contexts within the *Daybreak(s)*. It is my belief that as a way of knowing and understanding social spaces (and subsequently creating a set of boundaries that would define one’s place), rurality in relation to Sheridan County and its representations in the *Daybreak(s)* reveals a continued and complex negotiation with outside world forces as they exploit natural resources in order to establish economic security and to meet the demands of the growing world. In possessing such a controlling stake over the habits and customs of the lives of its inhabitants, rurality then contributes to the *ethos* that can be interpreted from these texts.

In figure 11 below from *Sheridan’s Daybreak II*, a portion of Sheridan County is depicted in what could only be described as a rural landscape. As I argued in Chapter 2, this image (and all of the images in the *Daybreak(s)*) help us to understand the ways in

which our material reality shapes the way we view ourselves in places we inhabit. And as I argued in Chapter 3, this image provides a romanticized memory through which we view the history of our spaces in that our memories return us to the places we inhabit and that in the process we (re)create both the memory and the place. Both of those approaches can be used to understand how one of Sheridan County's residents would view this painting, but it can also be understood in a way that attempts to look past the local meaning this image has into how its composition appeals to a broader sense of global structure within the local. Singular but also multiple. Specifically, with the text that accompanies figure 11, the view of Sheridan County is placed in a larger economic situation that would imply that, as a rural space, what the place provides for the surrounding world is a series of natural resources that the people work in conjunction to extract and profit from.



Figure 16. Rural Industries—Depiction of Sheridan County rurality.

The model that use to approach understand the rural in relation to the *Daybreak(s)* is one that I encountered in Woods' book. In it he draws from Keith Halfacree's (who draws from Henri Lefebvre) threefold model for approaching and understanding (from a cultural geographic standpoint) rural places and spaces. The model works on these three facets: Rural Locality, Formal Representations, and Everyday Lives. In many ways I've already attempted to understand the *Daybreak(s)* from this model and have, in my own way, presented a model of my own for approaching understanding a community *ethos* developed through and with the concept of *place*. What is different about this approach and how Woods' and Halfacree use it is that it attempts to understand some of the economic, social, and ultimately global tensions that rural spaces are negotiating between that always produce dynamic realities that are evident within any place in any time. Narrowing in on the tensions that define a place is always difficult and is something that this model attempts and that I myself attempt with this thesis.

What makes the *Daybreak(s)* and their imaginative power in creating a place and putting forth a unique *ethos* is not restricted to the pages of the *Daybreak(s)* alone or the closed in spaces and boundaries of Sheridan County itself. As communities, we are always working within a larger web of influences that we negotiate with in order to create definitions and inscriptions of culture and identity. For this chapter I use Halfacree's threefold model to not only show how rural spaces are negotiated but also to further complicate where we draw the lines of community and how those lines come to define more about us than we wish to often recognize. This chapter then is split into three sections that explore the Lived, Locality, and Representational qualities of the *Daybreak(s)* in relation to how concepts of rurality assist in determining an *ethos*

composed in conjunction with global social forces. In the Locality section I explore farming practices that are unique to Sheridan County and how those practices have been shaped by the continued industrialization of neoliberal farming integration. In the Lived section I return to the individual narratives to explore people moving in and out of the county and how their lives despite not being permanent fixtures contributed to the lived reality and how those narratively constructed lives inevitably intersect with and begin to identify a space that is called rural. In the Representational section I demonstrate how the *Daybreak(s)* work in conjunction to present the Rural Idyll, a space that evokes images of “peace, tranquility, and simple virtue” (Woods 21). This constructed image is central to working in conjunction with how socially constructed spaces like the *Daybreak(s)* look like those that would attract others. Before I enter into those three sections I discuss the narrative of Hominy Thompson attempting to block the building of the Sooline Railroad. His example provides a mixture of Lived, Locality, and Representational in trying to understand rural spaces and their *ethos* as singular and multiple.

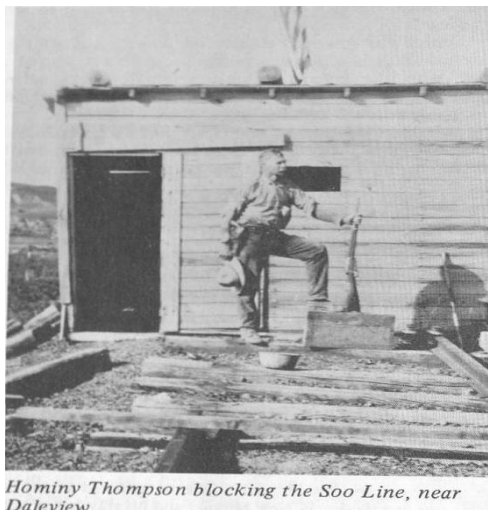


Figure 17. Hominy Thompson—Blocking the influx of global industrial influence.

In the previous two chapters I opened with images either of my own or that meant something to my familiarly constructed memories. In chapter 2 those images were not located within the *Daybreak(s)* while chapter 3 provided an image of my family that can be found in *Sheridan's Daybreak III*. Furthermore, those chapters focused on an *ethos* construction based on my study of 1) Place as material construct, and 2) Place as memory. Those chapters inevitably are geared towards issues that are close to home (my body, subjectivity, etc.) and how my constructed 'home' within the discourses of material and (re)membering influences serve to define the limits of the place I construct through *ethos*, and the *ethos* I construct as place. Those chapters serve to help me clear a space to speak, but they do not exclude the idea of outside influences being central to a collectively constructed *ethos*.

I open this chapter with an image of Hominy Thompson, someone who lived close to the physical location of my home in Daleview, which is just a few miles west of Outlook; he is someone within these texts whose story is temporally rather than spatially distant that provides a unique example of the conflicting ideas of places as singular entities. In this image Thompson is protesting the building of the Soo Line Railroad over 'his' land. Included in *Sheridan's Daybreak I* in conjunction with the picture is an article written for the *Billings Gazette* in 1962 in honor of Thompson's narrative. In the article Thompson is ascribed with being the "first settler" (484) in 1894 despite the fact that within the very same article Dorothy Rustebakke, the author of the article, relays the narrative of how he acquired his settlement from someone else who had lived on and used the land previous to Thompson's occupation. These sorts of contradictions are rife

within the presentation of ‘pioneers’ and first settlers as discussed in chapter 2 and reveal quite nicely the paradox of creating narratives of origin.

But what I wish to focus on is that in his efforts to create a space for himself where Hominy could construct boundaries and grow within his spatially influential practices of farming and ranching he inevitably came into contact with the invading outside world. Someone (or something) encroached on his ‘settlement’ (read space). That outside force in this image is the railroad. Thompson’s issue with the construction of the railroad in 1923 was that the building of this railroad line was going to interfere with his irrigation system and that they were not offering a “fair settlement” for building through and on top of the land that he had for so long laid claim to. What he conveniently ignored in the spaces of the land that he presided over for so long was that movement from the outside in had been integral to him being able to create what he had created by 1923. His *ethos* in relation to all of the other elements of that space was well established because he had dwelled within what he created. The same article discusses how he himself moved all over the West in trying to settle into an occupation and to make his way in the world. Furthermore, he moved into this land just thirty years earlier and ‘sowed’ crops of wheat and flax (484). Those plants and seeds are not ‘native’ to the area, but they were essential to him making a living in that landscape. Movement of materials and entities and the varying levels of ‘control’ that they exert immediately contradict the idea that places are grounded, static, *a priori* cohesions that can be fully claimed by one person or another.

For my purposes, Thompson (his narrative/image) epitomizes the example of larger global forces *politically* influencing the closed in personal spaces that we construct for ourselves. Doreen Massey makes the case for attempting to understand our

geographical imaginations in terms of all of the continued negotiations that take place through locally and globally based influences. She argues that we are continually forging new relationships from the statically created boundaries of place *and* the abstract flows of space. On the inevitability of the penetration of the outside looking in, Massey writes:

This is the event of place in part in the simple sense of the coming together of the previously unrelated, a constellation of processes rather than a thing. This is place as open and as internally multiple. Not capturable as a slice through time in the sense of an essential section. Not intrinsically coherent. (141)

Thompson as a long time inhabitant of his settlement was very ingrained in his personally created boundaries that lent itself to him buying into the illusion that *his* space is “intrinsically coherent”; he cleared a space for his own *ethos* to develop but failed to recognize the fact that its “internally multiple” constructions also invite the flows of globalization and industrialization.

The railroad to him represents the invasion of his property that never could have been completely his own because of the amalgamation of entities entering into ambivalently strange relations with one another. His example allows me to state the thesis of this chapter, that in creating *ethos* within place we are constantly defining it in terms of trying to create the boundaries by which we live by, and that our boundaries are constantly being shaped by outside influences including ones that we may not wish to have or to be influenced by. What this means is that places and their collectively constructed *ethos* are influenced by broader social and global structures, what Massey has called ‘abstract flows’. It is in the creation of the confines of boundaries within the house of values that we construct within our communities that we invite the influence of the other, the thing that inevitably affects how we view what we view as being central to our

existence within that place. This is why I say that places are singular and multiple. They present the static representations of groundedness that allow our interpretations to engage with the illusion that it could always have been a singular concept with little to no difference for an extended period of time. Places are singular in that they do create boundaries that define their characteristics, but they are also multiple in that those boundaries, by definition, are permeable and invite movement for the conflicts that give people like Hominy Thompson the motive to protest and negotiate with those influences in attempting to coexist with ‘outside’ influences like the building of the railroad over his irrigation system.

Hominy, unfortunately, lost this fight and was jailed and fined for the obstruction of the building of the railroad and for “interfering with United States mail service” (484). While serving time he lost the land because, “The railroad company managed to purchase a mortgage held by a loan company. The railroad foreclosed” (484). While losing land in the mid-1920s in the area was not an unfamiliar phenomena of many settlers (contributing to many of the peripatetic narratives that can be read in the *Daybreak(s)*), the way in which Thompson lost his land is notable in the fact that it came at the hands of the railroad company pursuing his assets. The railroad represents the inevitable global and outside influence that always already occupies the spaces that we inhabit. Capitalism and industrializing forces are connected to those movements that have helped to define modernism; these are decidedly “abstract forms” that many have spent much mental effort trying to wrap their heads around and make connections to our daily lives. As Massey writes, “The argument about openness/closure should not be posed in terms of abstract spatial forms but in terms of the social relations through which the spaces, and

that openness and closure, are constructed; the ever mobile power-geometries of space-time” (166). Despite the fact that Hominy was able to clear a space for himself for a period of 30 years, time proved to bring in the “power-geometries” of the railroad as an industrializing force and the need for him to reconcile and forge a relationship with that influence. That did not happen, but Thompson’s example provides a good instance where the spatially “abstract forms” of the multitudinous influences of the global world come into contact and ultimately assist in defining and *changing* the trajectory of his life. The choice to protest and the subsequent loss of land not only changed *where* he lived, but also the *ethos* of the space that he had cleared for himself in conjunction with collective life (soil, grasses, animals, and other people).

Hominy’s example is a perfect place to look to in trying to understand how the *ethos* of rural places is more than pastoral landscapes and ease of existence. Also, neither is it closed off from the rest of the world surrounding it. No matter how isolated one might feel in a rural space, the outside world is always there and always shaping what that place can become, which of course shifts its characteristic qualities. For Hominy, the influence of the outside world was not a reality that he was willing to negotiate and make peace with and the place that he inhabited will never be the same, not only because of that choice, but also because that place, and its *ethos*, dynamically grows with the various materials and bodies that come and go.

#### Locality and Agricultural Practice in Sheridan County

In *Sheridan’s Daybreak II*, in some of the prefatory remarks there’s a section titled “Sheridan County Agriculture”. Terry Angvick writes, “There have been many

changes in the agricultural situation in Sheridan County over the past few years” (11).

The fact that he starts with this sentence is largely indicative of how agriculture as a practice is always changing, but especially with how much it changed in the 20th century.

Agriculture was what drew so many people to the region in the first place, but those people found themselves to be a part of a massive movement that began to introduce mechanical practices for planting and harvesting crops. As Angvick notes, primarily what is grown in Sheridan County is a couple of varieties of spring wheat, a plant native to the Middle East (Colledge and Conolly, 2007), as well as several species of cattle.

Specifically, durum, used for making pastas, is what most farmers grow in the area in conjunction with raising cows on rangeland. While there are and continue to be many more varieties and species of crops grown in the county the majority still relies on the monocultures of growing wheat year after year. The reason for this has somewhat to do with market prices for wheat, which, as Angvick notes, were around five to six dollars a bushel at the time that *Sheridan's Daybreak II* was produced. Knowing that wheat grows so well in the area, farmers would enter into practices called continuous cropping where in replacement of fallowing land every other year to kill weeds and allow the soil to regenerate some of its nutrients, farmers were planting the same crop every year in order to capitalize on the higher wheat prices and to avoid the dangers of soil erosion.

This put farmers in the county in a unique position of trying to combat environmental degradation by practicing less tillage or fallowing and entering into the continuous cropping of wheat year after year which in some ways places just as much strain on the soils ability to keep up with the production that the market and the farmer relies on. But they went into this practice (somewhat) blindly because the market, which

was paying them for what they were growing, was pushing them into practices that forced them to turn to artificial fertilizers and chemical pesticides to protect their monoculture crops. Because wheat farmers were a part of a larger economic system they produced for the demands of the market, not the demands of the environment or the plants that they cultivated. What the market does not account for is that ecosystems need an even hand that promote biodiversity as well as providing food for the world.

As Angvick notes, “From 1969 to 1983, cropland acreage increased 705,000 to 729,000 acres. . . The harvested cropland acreage increased dramatically during this period from 333,000 to 401,000 acres” (11). What this shows, and as Angvick argues, is that more farmers were turning to these grain markets to supplement their ability to make a living from the asset of the land. As I showed in Chapter 2, the land has a materially significant role to play in (re)constructing and disrupting the *ethos* of the ‘pioneer’ as well as any other human actant who wishes to forge a relationship with the larger ecosystem. This includes the people presented in different time periods who would not consider themselves to be ‘pioneers,’ but rather would view themselves as descendants of the pioneers. Through time the land, and its various processes, continues to make those rhetorically significant contributions to identity and meaning. The land seems to react to what the human and other entities try to take from its ‘natural’ (and manipulated) products. The management of this rural space of agricultural production makes for unique tensions that relate similarly to Hominy Thompson’s narrative where the broader global order was invading his carefully constructed space.

The relationship that Angvick lays out in *Sheridan’s Daybreak II* as a report on the condition of agriculture in the county is one that reveals tensions between

environment, human ‘landowners,’ and global grain trade policies controlled in part by various governmental state interests. As Michael Woods notes on the role of the state in defining rurality:

The state has the capacity to influence the appearance of the rural landscape, the structure of the rural economy, the pattern of rural settlement, the character of the rural population, the nature of rural education and health care, the presence of fauna and flora, the commodification of the countryside for tourism, and the standard of living of rural people” (emphasis added 232).

The amount of influence that state structures and regulations have are enormous, and, as Woods discusses at length, many efforts have been made to understand the role the state plays in defining the rural. On this relationship between state and local reactions to environment and market regulations in Sheridan County, Angvick writes:

Due to larger carryover of wheat stocks, record wheat production and low commodity prices, the USDA initiated acreage reduction programs in 1982, ‘83 and ‘84. Producers reduced wheat acreage in order to comply and be eligible for government price support programs and grain storage loans for their commodities. In addition, a Payment-In-Kind (PIK) program was offered in 1983 and 1984. This program allowed farmers to further reduce their wheat acreage and production. In return for not producing, farmers were forgiven outstanding commodity loans. (11)

The language used here makes everything from the view of the farmer operating a business and using government programs to influence how they operate that business. But farmers are never *just* operating a business, and governments do play a role in regulating what can be produced and when. The economics of producing grains for worldwide consumption puts farmers, the ecosystem of Sheridan County, and the continually shifting *ethos* presented in the *Daybreak(s)* all into terms of global and local forces that sometimes conflict and do not align. What Angvick discusses in this paragraph are programs put in place by the USDA that were probably not built for

benefiting the farmers of Sheridan County alone, but also farmers across the nation. However, bioregional factors, despite needing to respond to global influences, do not allow for a monolithic practice of farming where all farmers or the environment would rightfully benefit from reduced acreage operations or the PIK program of the 1980s. The market alone forced those changes and, in the instance of Sheridan County and its subsequently created local histories, the event was recorded by Angvick as an issue that farmers needed to deal with and in the process the *ethos* of agriculture presented in *Sheridan's Daybreak II* was shaped by the excess of environment producing extra wheat and global forces shifting to learn how to deal with the excess of production.

The second issue that greatly shaped the farmers of Sheridan County was that of increased mechanization. With the introduction of mechanical vehicles, many wished to use those vehicles to replace manpower. In *Sheridan's Daybreak I*, specifically, this movement is depicted in pictures that portray the introduction of threshers versus those that depict teams of men and women manually cutting wheat, flax, and hay. Because machines (an outside force) were reducing the number of people that were needed to plant, raise, and harvest crops, farmers in Sheridan County could essentially expand their operations. As hundreds of people influxed to post a claim on a homestead of 320 acres and subsequently left because it proved to be too difficult to manage because of unfriendly climate conditions, those who were able to make it were aided by the fact that they now had more technologically advanced tools to help in the process of farming. What followed were less people farming more land. A simple demonstration of this can be seen in the population numbers in the county *which have significantly decreased* since the 1920s with very few instances of increased population.

The only two instances of increased population in the late 1970s and late 2000s were in conjunction with increased activity with oil production that brought in more people to help with that industry. Fitting in with common narratives of rurality Sheridan County, the *Daybreak(s)* represent tensions and excesses that relate to the exploitation of natural resources for the good of the economic and global order. As Woods notes, “Throughout history the primary function of rural space has consistently been understood as the supply of food and natural resources, including minerals, fuel and building materials” (50). The *Daybreak(s)* inevitably forward this value system that negotiates fitting in with these constructions. That is driven in part by the fact that they were able to more effectively exploit the natural resources that the unique bioregional factors provided for them with the continued technological development of oil extraction and mechanized agricultural operation. The fact that the population decrease and increase reflects this exploitation is evident of how rural spaces (and the *places* that are created within them) negotiate with a variety of *local* and *global* factors in producing the meaning that would allow them to be recognized and understood as rural.

#### The Lived Space of Wildlife

Lived space in Halfacree’s model is much harder to measure in regards to the model he puts forward because it attempts to take into account the everyday practices that collective life enacts. But every day, the various entities in existence in a place interact in ways meaningful to how it can be interpreted, (re)produced, and reflected upon by the various actants that engage in these interactions. For this section I continue the discussion of outside influences in the construction of an *ethos* in its place within the *Daybreak(s)*,

particularly in regards to how our everyday lived space in conjunction with all of the entities (animate or inanimate) that we come into contact with create a “throwntogetherness” of the “simultaneity of stories-so-far” (Massey, 9). The contestation of everyday lived space is evident in Hominy Thompson’s story, and, I would argue, is evident in every representation that one can find of a place. One only needs to look into the machinations of some text for it to reveal its contradictions and how representations (read containers) of space and time are inevitably doomed to eventual misrepresentation. This is why many theorists are pushing discussions of relationality. On this issue in regards to rurality Woods writes, “[V]iewed from a relational perspective, the rural comprises millions of dynamic meeting-points, where different networks, and flows and processes are knotted together in the everyday lives of rural people (and, indeed, the lives of non-human rural residents), and they are given meaning by the application of particular ideas of rurality” (291). We can only ever understand something in parts; a whole is unreachable despite how clever representations may *seem* to be at showing completeness. Studying the lived space of rurality reveals the nature of the plurality with which we negotiate to determine some sort of multiplicitous *ethos* predicated on, “A politics of outwardlookingness, from place beyond place” (Massey, 192). In this section I use the example of the establishment and continued management of the Medicine Lake Wildlife Refuge (MLWR) to reveal the contestation of lived rural space for migratory birds.

As written about in *Sheridan’s Daybreak I* by Donald N. White, “The [MLWR] was established on August 19, 1935 by Executive order 7148, over the signature of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. It set apart 23,700 acres in Sheridan and Roosevelt

Counties as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife” (20). The formation of this refuge was in response to the depletion of several species of not only migratory birds, but also native birds and land animals. The creation of this space for these animals by the US government was in conjunction with many other conservation efforts that came out of the Great Depression era politics. The narrative of this special set-aside-space for species is in conjunction and response to the narrative of ‘pioneer’ control and exploitation of natural resources that still seems to be a part of the *ethos* of rural spaces. But we share our spaces with a vast wider set of ecological forces that work in conjunction to make up the compositional effects that we are capable of viewing and interpreting, whether inside the *Daybreak(s)* or if we visited MLWR itself. As I view it, the migration of millions of people to the Great Plains of Canada and the US forced the forging of a new equilibrium with these spaces that were previously viewed by the bioregional moniker of the Great American Desert. In reaction to this massive change brought on by a great influx of previously mostly absent and non-influential human presence, the environment revolted and suffered which was further spurred on by the droughts of the 1920s and 1930s. This brought with it significant changes for both the flora and fauna of the region, including the loss of habitat for various migratory birds.

As White notes in the same section, “Canada Geese were completely gone from Sheridan County by the early twenties” (20). The massive privatization of these previously public lands forced hundreds of thousands of various species to become displaced from the areas that they had previously negotiated and found a space to call home. Once people began to realize the impacts that their practices, like increased tillage and fallowing of land that lead to environmental degradation of soil, was doing they tried

to recover some of what had been lost, and the MLWR is a space that was meant to do just that. As White further writes:

Refuge management is directed toward providing adequate nesting and rearing habitat for Canada geese, ducks and coots, and food and protected resting area for both fall and spring concentrations of migrant waterfowl. Secondary management objectives include providing production and rearing habitat, together with adequate wintering facilities for year-round resident wildlife, the opportunity for wildlife viewing in its natural environment, public opportunities to hunt waterfowl and big game animals, and a public use area where outdoor recreation may be enjoyed without causing undue disturbance to wildlife (20).

In the start of this paragraph he recognizes that this Refuge is mainly for the protection and use of the migratory birds who nest in that area, but towards the end of the paragraph he switches back to the human interests that still have significant effects on the negotiation of this space. In reality, even though people greatly interrupted the negotiation and production of this rural space as it existed previous to massive European in-migration, those birds who lived there still needed to negotiate for that lived space and its representation. This construction, I believe, still overvalues the human agent and the recreational treatment of rural spaces.

Michael Woods categorizes recreational use of rural spaces as a part of how societies “consume the rural” (92). The rural space is a space to be taken in and experienced which further complicates how the lived reality of a space like the MLWR, which was a space, thankfully, carved out for some of our avian neighbors, can be experienced and interpreted. It is in these continued interactions between recreationalists, farmers, conservationists, birds, land animals, grasses, soil, and atmosphere that the lived space of MLWR is negotiated, and, because of their proximity or “throwntogetherness” that they contribute to the construction and representation of a place that is by all means

under the surface contested by flows as simple and beautiful as Canadian Geese migrating North and South and needing a place to stay in order to breed.

### Representations of the Rural Idyll

In Halfacree's model, representations refers to the "formal" ways of presenting a rural space in regards to capitalist models (Woods, 10). Specifically, Woods (and Halfacree) discusses the productivist model of agriculture in which the main purpose of rural areas is to make as many commodity products as possible for the broader consuming public. But I take representations of rural to be broader than just terms of capitalist models of presentations. To return to images, what I focus on in this section is the presence of what Woods (and others) call the Rural Idyll. It is a concept that I briefly discussed in Chapter 2, but that I will now discuss in more depth as the Rural Idyll is one of the most popular lenses through which people tend to view rural spaces in contrast to a lens which views them as contested spaces that must be negotiated. The Rural Idyll serves to regulate and force people to make "representations" of their space that tend to overlook and gloss over understanding something with a critical stance. Also, the Rural Idyll as a force for painting rural spaces in certain ways influences how people within rural spaces understand their place and for how people outside of that context use and understand those spaces. One example of this happening is the sheer number of people writing in to the *Daybreak(s)* well after they called Sheridan County their home, and remembering with the rose-colored nostalgia discussed in Chapter 3. The nostalgic response troubled in Chapter 3 is, in part, an aftereffect of the Rural Idyll swaying people to see the past with a fondness that ignores real strife and struggle.

So what is the Rural Idyll? I believe it is best epitomized in the image in Figure 13 below. As Michael Woods states, “This imagines the rural to be a place of peace, tranquility and simple virtue, contrasted with the bustle and brashness of the city” (19). The rainbow depicted in the picture below finds itself in the *Sheridan’s Daybreak II* and the picture of it seems fairly harmless and possibly even commonplace. Any thing that seems commonplace should be breathed with new life that asks questions and (re)matters to its materially shifting meaning, as I discussed in Chapter 2. Possibly even more so than or complementary to the image of the ‘pioneer’ and the nostalgic rose-colored lenses through which we remember our families, the Rural Idyll and agrarian simplicity seems to be the main contributing factor to what drives the unintentionally constructed *ethos* present in the *Daybreak(s)*. Measuring its influence in the texts to fruition would probably be a book length project much longer than the efforts that I’ve made here so far. I also know many people who live in Sheridan County who are not so completely controlled by the representational and regulating narratives that the Idyllic spaces of rurality would like us to believe in, but, in recognizing the need to track and trace past events in order to memorialize and create a sense of community identity, I believe the contributors to the *Daybreak(s)* were simply using the discourses available to them; one of which was the Rural Idyll and the endless need of wanting to feel connected to the people and places of our pasts.



Figure 18. Double Rainbow—The Rural Idyll in *Sheridan's Daybreak II*.

As a discourse that did not originate with the *Daybreak(s)* the Rural Idyll is a system of thought that many times continues to control how we understand our place within our spaces. I start with that notion with images that I have been able to capture from the place that I call home. The reason why I approach the *Daybreak(s)* and their Rurally Idyllic representation with skepticism is the same reason why I question my own representation of Rural Idylls; I distrust anything that closes meaning and downplays difference. The narratives of these people's lives possess plenty of diffuse qualities that present the very difference that I say is not more evident than dates, coordinates, and minor actions. But, as I have argued, difference includes a radically different basis for existence and a different approach for interacting with our surroundings which have been continually proven to be integral to how we understand and construct what we can later

call our *ethos*. People from rural places have begun to break from the controlling narratives of peace, tranquility, groundedness, and all the various other qualities that would contribute to a false *ethos* of Idyllic landscapes and salt of the earth farmers and “pioneers”. They know that it takes forging relationships with the soil, the atmosphere, the flora, and the fauna in order to admit the problems of a community and to begin to address some of the tensions that these co-constitutive entities always already possess and negotiate from within (and without) of the spaces that they inhabit. As an outside force the Rural Idyll blindly covers up these tensions and allows people to further misuse the moniker of globalism to mistrust anything that comes from outside and to therefore dismiss it as not a part of the already closed meaning loop created within the spaces of home. It is the reason why Thompson moved the barn on top of the ensuing railroad and that farmers mumble and complain about the shifts in grain market prices or USDA programs. Many mistrust the outside more than they wish to better understand the space within whose very limits are defined by those influences outside.

But as a County they have built spaces like the MLWR in reaction to the reaction from the migratory birds no longer nesting and mating. And they have begun practicing less high tillage and fallowing operations that greatly increase the erosion and degradation of soil quality for continuous cropping operations that incorporate a variety of plants thus promoting biodiversity. These two choices were not just made from within the spaces of Sheridan County, nor are they plainly evident in the pages of the *Sheridan's Daybreak(s)*, but they present a rural *ethos* that recognizes the contested nature of all spaces and places and weighs its actions with an eye toward the betterment of all entities

(animate and inanimate). This is why Woods and Massey call for a relational politics of space. As Woods writes:

The rural is not a pre-determined and discrete geographical territory, and neither is it a fantasy of the imagination. Rather, viewed from a relational perspective, the rural comprises millions of dynamic meeting-points, where different networks, and flows and processes are knotted together in the everyday lives of rural people (and, indeed, the lives of non-human rural residents), and they are given meaning by the application of particular ideas of rurality. (291)

As much as the *ethos* of the *Sheridan's Daybreak(s)* are flawed by Rural Idylls, 'pioneers', and nostalgic memories, they still enter into the honoring and recognition of the past and its influence on the present and represented qualities that brought us to our 'here' and 'now'. My feelings towards this project are complicated because I do wish to honor these people who haunt the nooks and crannies of my mind and whose spatial practices contribute to my own habits and customs while also questioning the underpinnings of what exactly brought those into existence. As long as rural *ethos* (inside of and outside of these texts) are shifting with a mind towards co-constituting an ethics of mutual and human quality of life, then I believe the places of our future will still have their own problems but will also have the capability of relationally approaching those issues appropriately.

The *ethos* of *Sheridan's Daybreak(s)* is one filled with narratives from the past meant to position its contributors and its readers in ways that would allow them to identify and recognize the spaces and places being represented within its pages. That accomplishment is something that the *Daybreak(s)* most definitely achieved. What they rarely achieve in their pages though, is a critical stance towards their own history; one

that adequately takes into question those things that make up the most about our identities. They do not engage with the lives of their “pioneer” parents well enough to be able to see that the “pioneer” *ethos* at best is a misnomer. They do not engage with the importance of recognizing nostalgia and the return home as a radical displacement of the home that exists now compared to the home that existed then. They do not engage with the ever present Rural Idyll through which they believe in the possibility for a static pastoral landscape that continually refuses to change to the forces of globalization. But the spatiotemporal fabric of our reality marches on and allows us to see these holes in the constructions of our historical texts. What understanding a rural and local *ethos* based within Sheridan County, Montana affords is a localized account of the power of texts and places in measuring the meaning of our lives in relation to the contexts from which we come. Local history for an engaged, collective populous will continue to be important for the very same reasons that the concepts of *ethos* and place will continue to be important for a wide variety of disciplines. They are ubiquitous and essential to understanding why our presence matters.

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