INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

Bell & Howell Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA

UMI®
800-521-0600

Downloaded from SHAREOK. Persistent Handle URL: https://hdl.handle.net/11244/5879

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

"OUR OBLIGATION TO MEMORY": HOME ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC SERVICE AND FEMINISM IN THE WORKS OF JANE ADDAMS, CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN, AND WILLA CATHER

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

MARGARET PAYNE

Norman, Oklahoma

1999

UMI Number: 9949705



UMI Microform 9949705
Copyright 2000 by Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company.
All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

© Copyright by MARGARET PAYNE 1997
All Rights Reserved.

"OUR OBLIGATION TO MEMORY": HOME ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC SERVICE, AND FEMINISM IN THE WORKS OF JANE ADDAMS, CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN, AND WILLA CATHER

A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

BY

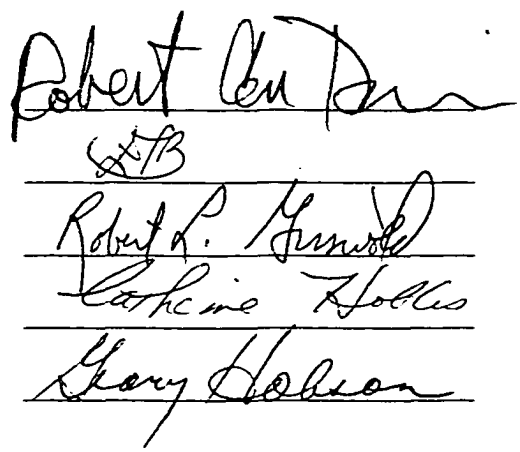


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: Looking for Sarah . . . Maybe Mary, Finding Florence.....1

PART I—MEMORY: THE THREAD OF CONSERVATISM?

Chapter One: The Radical in Turn-of-the-Century Conservative Feminism.....16

Chapter Two: Memory—The Thread of Conservatism?.....43

PART II—ARCHITECTURE OF HOMES AND SOCIETY: GILMAN'S ARCHITECTURE, CATHER'S ARTISTS, AND ADDAMS'S REVISION OF THE DOMESTIC SPHERE

Chapter Three: Homes and Memory, Change, and Creative Expression.....89

Chapter Four: Cather's Artists and Memory Problems—Crossing Boundaries of Home, Identity, and Expression.....126

Chapter Five: Municipal Housekeeping—Gilman's Architechture of Domestic Space and Addams's Revision of the Domestic Sphere.....180

Conclusion: Feminist Memory Work for the Future.....225

Introduction: Looking for Sarah . . . Maybe Mary, Finding Florence

This piece of feminist "memory work" started long ago when American men set off across the prairie and wilderness and took with them their wives and families. It continued as these and other men recorded the history of that movement westward as an American phenomenon and as an American male tradition. Simultaneously, this piece of "memory work" continued when women recorded their own family stories and traditions in diaries, journals, and bundles of letters tied neatly with ribbons to be discovered by future generations, along with quilts in attics and old trunks. When I started researching nineteenth-century women's lives, I read published letters, dairies, and journals with a great sense of envy. I had been in just about every inch of my grandparent's sandstone house. There were boxes of photographs, and if you were patient and caught Grandma on a good day, she would tell you who the people were, but these were all taken on special days when the family had gotten together in their "Sunday best" to pose. There were no snapshots of our pioneer relatives homesteading or fighting battles, or making peach preserves. There were no home videos to chronicle the events, and to my knowledge, there were no letters or diaries left by some female ancestor preserved in the attic and bound by a delicate ribbon.

I had always considered literary and feminist theory as a series of exercises that I applied to whatever I was reading at the time, but it was always difficult for me to see much connection to my own life. I had read the words of "radical women of color" who wrote in *This Bridge Called My Back* of "a theory in the flesh." I could see how these theories in "the flesh" seemed to work in their lives, but these feminist connections continued to be academic exercises rather than something that I could apply to my own life or history. Was there some way that I could ever have a "theory in the flesh" of my own? Having been raised in the 1980's when Conservatism and Reaganism reigned, we were told that

"feminism was dead" and women had really already gained equal status with men anyway. We saw women in the workplace and in places of power there, and we even saw a woman nominated for vice president of the United States. On a more "liberal" front, Roe *v.* Wade was just a vague memory to my generation. Even though the issue of abortion continued to be hotly debated, this issue seemed to be decided in a legal sense. There didn't seem to be any "feminist battles" left to fight. Still I considered myself a feminist, even if it were not a popular position and even if I wasn't sure what it meant. It continued to be academic for me. Was there some way that I, with my tradition of religiously and politically conservative pioneers, really could be a feminist with a "theory in the flesh"?

In *Keeping Slug Woman Alive*, Greg Sarris, writing of Native American literature in general and Native American autobiography in particular, argues that one should always come to literary criticism with his or her own historical tradition and background in hand. He believes that you should use your own worldview formed by your own family's traditions to inform your reading of literature. Having studied Native American women's contemporary literature a great deal, it was easy for me to see how Native women could use this theory to make their own identifications with the literature that they read and wrote. I began to feel guilty that I, rather than bringing my own sense of tradition to each work of literature that I read, had developed an academic persona so that I could role-play the various academic voices that I was required to take on each time I approached a different work. Ironically, it was in Native women's literature that I was able to identify most personally with the roles that I was playing. Was it because they were women and had a sense of the tradition of the westward movement of American "civilization" in the United States? That was probably some of it, but even more profound was my own identification with their various traditions of woman-centered identities.

Most Native American cultures have traditions of strong positions with which women can identify. These positions are religious as they are connected to figures from creation stories and other traditional myths, but they are also cultural in that most tribes have separate traditions for women and men. Unlike the gender roles of many Western cultures, Indian women's traditions rarely have been seen as less important than or secondary to those of the men but as having important cultural and societal use and significance.

While it might seem that a woman raised in a religiously and politically conservative environment would not have any grounds on which to identify with women speaking from these Native American traditions, it was with these women's traditions that I began to form my own "theory in the flesh." To find this "theory" I knew it would be necessary for me to come to terms with the slippery ideas of "conservatism" and "radicalism." While I had always considered myself a feminist, I had also associated feminism with radicalism. My own feminism seemed to be diametrically opposed to what I envisioned when I thought of "feminism." Feminists were, after all, those women who wanted to be just like men and who renounced all ideas of femininity as patriarchal constructs used by men to keep women in their places. In my heart, I saw the conflicts between what I thought of as "feminism" and my own "conservative" worldview. How could women never have really had anything to do with what it means to be a woman in our culture? Couldn't there be a tradition of femininity in "mainstream" American culture that wasn't weak and ignorant of what it was doing? Was it possible to combine conservative values or some acceptance of the system into which we're born and feminist inclinations? To answer this question, I began to look for women writers who seemed conservative, but who must, because of their agendas, really be feminists. Initially, I assumed that I would locate this search in Southern women's culture and writing, but the result has been

located on much less geographical lines. In this study, I have brought together both Jane Addams, a woman who identified with a female and male tradition of the American North, and Willa Cather, a woman who identified with both the female and male traditions of the American South and West. What both of these women have in common is the use of language that identifies a female tradition through a female "memory." Alongside these two seemingly conservative women, I have placed Charlotte Perkins Gilman, an undisputed "radical" of first-wave feminism. [1] Each of these three women has a different sense of how "memory" works in the culture, but Addams and Cather locate their feminist theories within women's collective memory as a tradition through which women can gain access to agency and power within the culture.

While, as a radical feminist, Gilman uses images of cultural memory to show how male "memory" represents patriarchal control in American culture, she points out that male memory has obstructed our view as a culture of any women's tradition. Addams and Cather both embrace women's "memory" as a way to affirm and reclaim women's traditions for twentieth-century women and

---

[1] By first-wave feminism, I mean the generation of women who flourished in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (although earlier feminists would be placed into this "wave" as well). These women are most generally known for calling for women's suffrage and access to education, but as I discuss in this dissertation, many of them were concerned with all other issues confronting women in society including child labor laws, labor issues, poverty, the living conditions of women, and women's roles in society in and out of the home. Second wave feminism includes the feminist movement of the 1960's and 1970's in which women were concerned with consciousness-raising, helping women ovecome what Betty Friedan called "the Problem with No Name," allowing women access to the workplace and education, and many other issues. Third-wave feminism includes women who reached adulthood in the 1990's. As a group, they have been accused by second-wave feminists of not maintaining the unity that they should as a group and not being grateful to the progress made during second-wave.feminism. While third-wave feminists seem to be less united, they are less concerned with issues of gender but more concerned with larger, global and societal issues as a rule.

feminists. For Cather, a female "memory" encapsulates a feminine artistic tradition that is not always gendered. It includes the cultural traditions of artistic expression. But it suggests that women could be artists as well as men, and it overlaps with a particularly feminine tradition of "art" that Ann Romines has called "domestic ritual"—the art of homemaking and of the arts that are included in it. In this sense, Cather's feminist theory of memory becomes particularly radical because she elevates domestic ritual to an art form. At the same time, in demanding that women be allowed to be "artists," Cather envisions spaces in which women can be artistic.

Addams also embraces female tradition as "The Long Road of Woman's Memory" which is a biological, innate, almost instinctual sense that Addams argues many women have because of their social evolution as mothers. Because of this evolution, their "memories" of primitive motherhood, Addams believes that women are better equipped to make the world a better place than men are in general. As a result, she uses language of memory and domesticity to call for revisions of the domestic sphere. While her message sounds conservative, with its celebrations of motherhood and women's nurturing instincts, her argument becomes radical in that she uses those same conservative (traditional nineteenth-century tenets of womanhood) to promote "municipal housekeeping," or the movement of women's skills out of the home and into the community.

A Tradition of Memory Work: Looking for Mary...Maybe Sarah, Finding Florence

In examining these three turn-of-the-century women writers, I have located three separate feminist theories of memory that affect women's positions within American culture. Interestingly, I can identify them in my own family

history as well. Gilman's ideas of memory's cultural role can be linked to the traditions that I have received from my paternal grandfather, Philip White, whose influence is the most visible and tangible in my own sense of family history. He seems to have the type of memory that Gilman claims needs to be "forgotten" because it disallows women healthy participation in the culture. My feminist "memory work" begins with him.

Philip's family were pioneers who went to Texas after the Revolution. As a sixth-generation Texan, I grew up hearing stories about Thomas Jefferson Thompson, my ancestor who went to Texas to fight the war against Santa Anna and his Mexican army. T. J. Thompson fought under Sam Houston at the Battle of San Jacinto, and his name is permanently preserved in our memories in the San Jacinto monument on the Texas coast. In return for fighting in the war, T. J. Thompson, along with other brave men, received a section of land in Northeast Texas in the middle of what is now the Dallas/Ft. Worth metroplex. Not far from this land, his gravestone preserves him in my memory as one of only two Texas Revolutionary veterans buried in Tarrant County. Philip purchased this land from a cousin and raised my father and his siblings there. Several of my cousins, my own siblings, and I all grew up on this piece of land. As a result, a sense of the importance of that land and where it came from was a constant reminder of the male tradition of conquest, ownership, and power in our family.

My grandfather, Philip, has always had an excellent memory, and even in his 80's he can still rattle off the names, birth dates, dates of death, and interesting facts about every man in our family's history all the way back past the Texas Revolution. With a quick glance at a reference, he could do the same all the way back to the American Revolution. Recently, I asked him to tell me about family history so I could write some of it down. As I jotted down names and dates, I noticed a pattern. All of these men had wives, thus their large families, but at

each branch of the family tree I had to ask, "And what was his wife's name? Did he have any *daughters*?" The reply continued to be the same each time. "I think his wife's name was Mary ...maybe Sarah." Either my distant relatives all had an affinity for women with the names Mary and Sarah, or my grandfather's perfect memory was flawed. He refused to accept any female tradition in our family unless it was necessary to account for the change in surname. This memory problem is similar to that identified by Gilman as a cultural one: men do not recognize any tradition of women's strength in our culture, and therefore, the culture does not recognize that women can be strong, independent members of society.

Our family was recently honored at the dedication of the new Florence Elementary School's library. This school, the first additional elementary built in the ever-growing Keller Independent School District, was brand-new when I attended it in the third through fifth grades. The school was named after an earlier community school, which had existed near the same location when my grandfather was in school. He and his brothers and sisters attended the original Florence School in the 1920's. When the school district recently added a new library, someone spread the word that the original school had been named for Florence White, my great-grandmother. As a result, it was decided that the library would be dedicated to Florence White and that Philip, her son, should say a few words at the dedication ceremony. What is interesting about this family story is that Philip does not believe that the story about the origin of the school's name is really true. One of his sisters, though, donated her piece of the family property to be used to start a small country church. It was to be named Florence church after her mother whom, she believed, had been the namesake of the earlier school as well. Which story about the source of the name for Florence school is historically correct? We will probably never know for sure, but the important

aspect of this family myth is the masculine tendency to "forget" and silence a female history of agency and participation in the cultural processes of our immediate family history.

As Gilman seems to argue in her fiction and nonfiction alike, the male "memory" of our culture excludes a female tradition to the extent that if one does exist, it is so far buried that women do not have healthy access to it. In this dissertation, then, I am trying to find Florence—the silent, denied tradition of women's agency in American society. Where is that hidden women's tradition or "memory" in American culture? By embracing Cather's and Addams's theories of women's memory, I come much closer to finding that tradition that I ever will with the dominant myth of masculinity in my own family. Instead, I turn to my grandmothers who never seemed to me to be as much a personal influence on my life as Philip, but who, like the wallpaper in Gilman's famous short story, constantly recall themselves to my own memory and sense of self-identity.

My maternal grandmother, Margaret, has given me a less profound but stronger sense of a female tradition in family history. I have learned about her and her mother and grandmothers from my own mother who always had a story to tell about the particular type of woman she was and the particular type of woman she had been taught to be. Margaret went to college, took painting lessons, and took the art of homemaking to an art form as she raised her children in the 1950's. She knew that it was important for women to have access to education and art. As a grandparent, she was a constant source of books on history, art, and culture. She was a strong woman who had high standards for herself and for the people around her. It was often quite difficult to live up to those standards. She learned to have those high standards from her mother who had grown up with nineteenth-century ideas of womanhood. For many women in the South, this meant that you were morally superior to men and therefore, inherently different from them. Even

though women knew best in this system of gender differences, their feminine natures did not allow them to tell their husbands when they were wrong. As a result, a woman had to learn to make him think that *he* had come up with *her* idea. While Margaret seems to have kept to her "place" as a women in an era of overt conservatism and family values, she stressed to my mother, and, through her, to me that women can have artistic or intellectual lives so long as they maintain their proper place within the family and domestic structure. While Margaret exemplifies Cather's artistic ideals for women both in the tradition of art and the artist traditions of women's work—quilting, gardening, cooking, preserving—she didn't go so far as Cather in demanding a culturally, even publicly respected place for women to be and become artists within American public society.

My paternal grandmother, Rilla, gave me a living example of what Jane Addams calls *The Long Road of Woman's Memory*. This female collective memory is an almost mystical replication of women's traditions. This memory is genetic, biological, almost innate in the way that Addams describes it. Rilla only went to school until the sixth grade. She thought education was a waste of time, and asked me if I had my "old maid's degree" when I received my bachelor's degree. Despite her lack of training, she knew how to do many things well that she could never *tell* me *how* to do. These things—yodeling, playing the piano, cooking—seemed to just exude from her body. I remember watching all ten of her fingers fly over the keys of her piano even though she had never had a lesson and couldn't read music. I had had hours and hours of practice and still had trouble using both hands. When she cooked, she never used a recipe. If you asked for one, you got vague estimations—"a little bit of salt," "just enough flour", "some water." These estimations were alien to my mind steeped in the American educational system of exact measurements and numbers. Her actual cooking process was indeed mystical to me. Flour, sugar, salt, powder would fly from her

hands, and, somehow, they turned into biscuits, cakes, cornbread, and other delicious things. As I grew up, I mostly dismissed her talents as unlearned and unimpressive. However, after reading Addams's theories of women's collective memory, I have a sense that her life was a model to me of women's hidden, even latent power in the form of memory. In the course of raising seven children in a house that didn't have running water for many years, isolated in the country from any neighbors when her children were young, my grandmother still maintained a memory of talents that she had learned perhaps unconsciously as a child. Now, I'm ashamed that through all my years of education, I cannot remember how to yodel as I did when I was eight standing in the good living room with grandma. I have, like my grandfather, Philip, "forgotten" that "Long Road of Woman's Memory" that grandma tried to pass along to me unconsciously.

Whose House Is This Anyway?—Feminist Uses of "The Master's Tools" and "The Master's House"

In Audre Lorde's now famous essay "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," she coined what has now become an important mantra in African-American feminist theory and thought. She means by this that we cannot use the same power structure or the components of that structure to change that structure. Inherent to this statement is the assumption that any power structure that exists builds into it ways of maintaining the structure itself. As a result, any attempt to "dismantle" or change that system would have to involve a complete restructuring of that system. This statement seems particularly intriguing to me as a woman located in this time of "third-wave" feminism in which young feminists are reevaluating the feminist work and memory work that has gone on before us. As feminists at this point in history, we can recognize a "tradition" of feminist movement. While second-wave feminists were looking for a tradition of women's activities in history, they also seem to have desired the

right to call what they were doing and thinking "new." There was the sense that, for the first time, women were breaking free of and seeing beyond patriarchy's bonds. While I do not wish to take away from that heritage of second-wave feminism to which women of my generation are so indebted, I do think that it is time that women look past the mystification of that earlier movement as well in order to reclaim a long-standing, albeit quiet, tradition of women's strength, participation, and agency in American culture. It is this tradition that Addams and Cather identify through women's "memory." It is also through this use of memory that Addams and Cather seem conservative, as if they make use of "the master's tools" by preserving some elements of women's past in their visions for change.

While women have never enjoyed the same positions of power in American culture that white men have, as a third wave-feminist, I cannot accept the second-wave argument that women have been victims throughout all of history or even all of American history. What later feminists can learn from these groundbreakers is that women must stop trying to reinvent the wheel in every generation. By recovering a "forgotten" tradition of women's history and activity, second-wave feminists have given us a "tradition" to claim and call our own. As a result, women can use this tradition, even though some of women's tradition involves the use of what may seem to be "the master's tools." Those tools can include appropriating women's skills such as mothering, nurturing, and homemaking that second-wave feminists often discounted as "feminine" qualities prescribed to women by a patriarchal culture. My focus in this dissertation is on three first wave feminists who were dealing with the very issue of the master's tools in building the master's literal and symbolic house.

Cather and Addams, in realizing that the master's house was indeed their own house, take a particularly radical stance. They appropriate the master's tools

to make changes to it. While doing so, of course, they also throw out or "forget" some of the master's tools as well. Nineteenth-century white women could claim their own participation in the building of the master's houses. In being very closely related to these very houses, nineteenth-century women had particular insights into American houses and homes, and they knew what was wrong with them better than anyone. As a result, while disavowing her participation in the master's house and in calling for forgetting, Charlotte Perkins Gilman is able to identify part of what Julia Kristeva calls the abject in American homes that men cannot seem to recognize consciously. In "the Yellow Wallpaper," she sees this abject in the very walls, simultaneously attached to and torn away in grotesque fashion in the wallpaper. Cather sees the American home as a stifling environment for artists, and Addams sees homes as a point from which to expand the limited domestic sphere.

In Chapter One, I turn to the ever-changing ideas of "conservatism" and "radicalism" in feminist thought in order to set the stage for the theoretical framework of turn-of-the-century feminists. While Addams, Gilman, and Cather were all three working from their upbringing in the nineteenth-century Cult of True Womanhood, in which religion and submisiveness were central, they also followed a generation of women who dared to take radically their culture's ideas of femininity to the public arena. In Chapter Two, "Memory—The Thread of Conservatism," I explore ideas of memory in these three writers as well as those of their contemporaries. While it would seem that memory, as a way of preserving the past, is conservative by nature, Addams and Cather use memory in radical ways by appropriating and naming a strength for women's agency through their use of images of women's collective memories.

In Part II, I deal first with the problems with American homes as they are described by Gilman and Cather. Chapter Three is a discussion of Gilman's call

for changes in American homes in order to allow women economic independence, to utilize all of their resources, and to give society access to the talents that it is missing by confining women to the home. In Chapter Four, I discuss Cather's description of the problems for women in relation to American homes. Like Gilman, she sees homes as usually confining to women, most importantly as stifling to the artistic spirit. In struggling against the confines of femininity and domesticity, artistic women found domestic spaces impossible to live in but home life a necessity. Cather solves this problem for artistic women by creating "new" space for women beyond the boundary of the frontier in the American West. In so doing, she provides an ungendered and undefined space for female characters in which to define their own identities and self-definitions. In chapter 4, I also discuss ways that Cather's artists negotiate their conflicts between the need for comfortable, expressive homes and their need to leave the stifling atmosphere that permeated their childhood homes. Cather's female artists are constantly plagued by the conflict between their alternating need for and responsibility to home and their artistic impulses, which are often nurtured outside of their childhood homes. Both of these conflicts and the ways that Cather and Gilman resolve them for their artistic and creative characters will serve as models for visions of homes that differ from the traditional, nineteenth-century setup. In chapter 5, I return to Addams and ways that she envisioned change in the outside culture by taking home ideas and domestic talents into the public sphere.

In Chapter Five, "Municipal Housekeeping: Gilman's Architecture of Domestic Space and Addams's Revision of the Domestic Sphere," I trace Gilman's and Addams's solutions for American homes and American woman's "place." Gilman radically calls for a redistribution of domestic spaces in American culture. She suggests that "women's work"—housecleaning, cooking, and childcare—be professionalized so that those people, male or female, who

have these professions would be trained, professional, well-paid, and respected. With this change in domestic duties, she calls for a redesign of American homes. They should be kitchenless, with private space for each individual. In turn, there should be more shared community space for dining, socializing, reading, working, and playing. In these descriptions, Gilman is essentially reducing the physical size of the "domestic sphere." Jane Addams, on the other hand, wants to enlarge the physical size of the "domestic sphere." By allowing women to use their "natural" abilities in the community, they will make the world more "homelike" and pleasant for men, women, and children. In order to make this argument in *The Long Road of Woman's Memory*, she must side step the anti-feminist rhetoric of men's movements of the time that sought to take service, "church work," and benevolence, back from the domestic sphere. Addams, using the language of domesticity and images of memory, reaffirms that these areas, by nature, belong to women and mothers.

While Addams and Cather both present radical arguments couched in conservative language that was, undoubtedly, more palatable to their readers, their lives were overtly more radical than Gilman's. Neither Cather nor Addams ever married or had children. Both worked in the public sphere and had careers in which they were required to participate in the masculine realm of business. Gilman, although divorced, remarried and remained happily married until the death of her second husband, Houghton. Gilman was a mother, and even though her daughter often lived with Gilman's ex-husband, Gilman's central concern was that her daughter be cared for in the best way possible. Interestingly, neither Gilman's overtly radical message nor her mothering decisions was ever well received by the public. Addams and Cather, however, with their radical messages couched in conservative language and simple narrative were well liked by the public for most of their lives. This memory lesson in women's history might be

one of compromise and rhetorical skill. Seemingly, feminist messages are able to command more favorably public attention and effect when they are "conservative."

Part I: Memory: The Thread of Conservatism?

Chapter One: The Radical in Turn-of-the Century Conservative Feminism

In her autobiographical book *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, Jane Addams describes the work and activities of her dream come true, the Hull House settlement on Halstead and Polk Streets in Chicago's tenement-filled Nineteenth Ward. In Chapter 9 entitled "A Decade of Economic Discussion," she tells of the varied ideas that were brought to the people of the community around Hull House by speakers who presented economic and political ideas there. The settlement's proximity to and associations with the University of Chicago's Department of Sociology and the Hull-House Social Science Club were the main contributors to the colorful variety of those who spoke on the controversial issues of labor, economics, and problems of capitalism. Addams writes that "it was doubtless owing largely to this club that Hull-House contracted its early reputation for radicalism" (137). This mention of "radicalism" would seemingly come as a source of pride to any self-respecting feminist, then or now, but Addams immediately qualifies this portrayal of Hull House's aims. She writes that "visitors refused to distinguish between the sentiments expressed by its members in the heat of discussion and the opinions held by the residents themselves. At that moment in Chicago the radical of every shade of opinion was vigorous and dogmatic; of the sort that could not resign himself to the slow march of human improvement" (137). This qualification as well as her telling statement that the reputation for radicalism was "contracted," as if it were some disease, shows Addams's desire to distance herself and her own politics from the "radical." This rhetorical move toward the conservative by this progressive era "mover and shaker" is not isolated, and I will later show that she uses this tactic in other

writings as well.[2]

Is this rhetorical evasion of an alignment of those who would call for social change, evidence that Addams and her Hull House friends were not willing to practice what they preached? Did they really strive for the progressive goals for humanity that they seemed? It will be one of my main goals here to show that just the opposite was the case, that Addams saw a distinct need for patience in those who would bring about change. She would not align herself politically, if intellectually, with those who "could not resign [themselves] to the *slow march* of human improvement" (emphasis mine). Addams knew that social change takes time and patience as well as careful, strategic positioning.

A more general question that might be asked by the contemporary feminist is how can the categories of feminists who existed at the beginning of the twentieth century inform the feminist movements of today? Are Addams and others like her who make use of conservative political posturing feminists, or just well meaning opportunists? Can feminists align themselves with conservatism in any way? Are those who do the "sell-outs" of the movement? Does political and/or social posturing negate the ultimate radical end of feminism's goals? In late twentieth-century discussions of the many definitions of feminism, this question has had much attention, and some feminist literary scholars have been

---

[2] In another chapter of *Twenty Years*, Addams frankly states concern for association with radicalism where the public's eye is involved. In a discussion on the politics involved in a school board dispute, she refers to a college professor whose words had been twisted by the press and "so connected with a fake newspaper report of a trial marriage address delivered, not by himself, but by a colleague, that a leading clergyman of the city, having read the newspaper account, felt compelled to preach a sermon, calling upon all decent people to rally against the doctrines which were being taught to the children by an immoral School Board." Addams's quest for the truth in this case led only to the elusive answer that "the public expect[s] a good story" and the notion that "any man who even momentarily allied himself with a radical must expect to be ridiculed by those papers" (*Twenty Years* 236).

rereading women writers from earlier eras to locate some of this "conservative" feminism in literary texts not formerly read as "feminist." [3] I will argue that Addams and her agenda are indeed feminist in nature and that despite conservative language and schedule, she brought about, or at least began, radical change for women's place in American culture and in American women's lives.

It is important that, at the outset of this study, I define the terms that I use here. Feminism is a subject that almost defies definition, and some feminists are reluctant to set down definitions of that sprawling, ever-changing subject. It seems, though, that in order to understand how early twentieth-century feminists worked and how their activities and theories inform ours, we should describe the differences between them especially in relation to modern feminisms. Toril Moi in her article "Feminist, Female, Feminine," writes that the feminist should always equate her goals to politics. She makes a point to differentiate between the politics of "feminism" and other concepts often conflated with it. She writes that we should "distinguish between 'feminism' as a political position, 'femaleness' as a matter of biology, and 'femininity' as a set of culturally defined characteristics" (Moi 115). This distinction is especially important and difficult when we are dealing with women who formed their ideas about womanhood in the nineteenth century when these ideas were very much conflated within American culture at large even if these women had a sense of their distinctions.

---

[3] See especially Nina Baym's *Feminism and American Literary History* and Jane Tompkins's "Sentimental Power: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Politics of Literary History" in *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860*. In these and other works, feminist literary scholars have read women's writing, such as sentimental novels, for example, through a very careful critical and cultural lens. On the one hand, these women can be read as extolling nineteenth century ideas of the "feminine." On the other hand, Baym, Tompkins, and others maintain that women writers of sentimental and gothic fiction use the feminine as a trope to empower their female characters and/or their female readers.

We do often associate feminism with politics, and it is easy to name the activities of social activists such as Jane Addams and radical feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman as political. Addams made particular unfavorable conditions and practices known to those in power (in politics and business) and caused change concerning those conditions. Gilman was in constant communication with others through public speeches and the publications of books, stories, and articles about the dynamics of the power relations that exist between men and women in families and the workplace, how those relations are reproduced, and the means by which those conditions could be changed. When public notice of her divorce, and later, her giving up of her daughter brought criticism upon not only Gilman's personal life, but on people's response to all of her ideas, the personal became the publicly political in her own life.

Can we at the same time call "literary" women—women writers, who openly do not have the same social agendas—feminists, especially when what they write doesn't seem particularly feminist in nature? While Gilman wrote literature—short stories, poetry, and novels—and Addams integrated personal narrative into her non-fictional, expository texts, Willa Cather's writings are almost exclusively confined to fiction. What connections are there between the work of social activities of turn-of-the-century American women and the works of women writers of fiction of the time? This was a time of quite a flourishing of the "first-wave" feminist movement, and public and private discussion of the issues it evinced and backlash against it in the press, in church pulpits, and in private conversations were a part of daily life. Few women and no writers who kept up with the social discussions could have remained immune to issues of feminism. Even Cather who "gained the reputation of being reclusive" did not detach herself from the intellectual discussions of the day (Bohlke xxvi). I will argue that Cather has a particularly feminist agenda even when she, like Addams,

couches radical ideas about gender and gender roles in conservative language.

Even though some feminists are skeptical about theory, and Audre Lorde tells us that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (98), Moi expresses the need for feminists to avail themselves of theoretical and ideological tools wherever they may be found. "What is important," she writes, "is whether we can produce a recognizable feminist impact through our specific use (appropriation) of available material" (Moi 119). Even though some turn-of-the-century feminists worked against the structures of patriarchy by appropriating or compromising, they were still feminists working for the same or similar goals of their more "radical" sisters. Addams and Cather, unlike Gilman, may seem conservative in their feminisms in that they appropriate "the master's tools" at times. Even though there are major differences in the feminist strategies of each of these turn-of-the-century women writers, I still call each of them feminists in that they each looked for ways to change society for the best interests and freedom of women and for all people.

Categories of Modern Feminism and How to "Define" Turn-of-the-Century Feminists

In her book *Women In Modern America: A Brief History*, historian Lois W. Banner defines feminism in her Preface as, generally, "the advocacy of the rights of women" (viii). But this general definition leaves many issues within feminism untouched. Some feminist writers and historians define feminism through categories of difference. I will use the definitions of three writers to discuss the complicated array of categories of feminisms in order to place turn-of-the-century feminism into contemporary perspective. Banner continues to describe "kinds" of feminism as "social," domestic," and "radical." Poststructuralist Chris Weedon puts feminism into three categories—liberal,

radical, and socialist. Robin Morgan sets out to describe *radical feminism* by using "deduction as a method of defining," by first giving what "radical feminism is not." She writes that it is not socialist (or Marxist feminism), liberal (or reformist feminism), nor cultural feminism (187).

Banner's first two categories of "social" and "domestic" feminism both seem to apply to the aims of Addams and Gilman. She writes that "*Social feminist* (a term first coined by historian William O'Neill) applies to activists for whom working for social reforms (generally involving women) takes priority over such strictly women's causes as suffrage or the Equal Rights Amendment" (vii). This does seem to describe the activities of both Gilman (who was concerned with healthier living conditions for working women and the establishment of kindergartens and better means of childcare) and Addams (who worked for workers' rights, clean neighborhoods, the establishment of kindergartens, and better living conditions for working women as well as world peace). While neither of these feminists would have worked against suffrage, neither held it as the key to women's equality. In her autobiography, *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, Gilman writes about her involvement with the suffrage movement: "I worked for Equal Suffrage when opportunity offered, believing it to be reasonable and necessary, though by no means as important as some of its protagonists held" (186-87). [4] Addams refers to the "efforts made in Chicago to secure the municipal franchise for women" (*Twenty Years* 236). She also calls

---

[4] While not her first concern, Gilman gives this, as any effort, her full attention and energy while engaged with it, even at the peril of her own health. She goes on to describe attending a suffrage convention in Washington, D. C. This was during the time that she had come to stay at Hull House and had been asked by Addams to be "head of another settlement, on the North Side, in a place called 'Little Hell'" (184). While she didn't manage the settlement "for health reasons," she did live there, and it was to this temporary home that she returned from this suffrage convention with the mumps.

this effort "reasonable" as it will help working women "secure for their workshops the most rudimentary sanitation and the consideration which the vote alone obtains for working-men" (*Twenty Years* 237). Both of these feminists see the vote as "reasonable" and even important, but neither devotes very much energy in writing or activity to the issue.

In addition to social feminists, Addams and particularly Gilman seem to be representative of Banner's second category of feminists as well. Banner writes that "the *domestic feminists* are those who argue that a fundamental solution to women's problems lies in raising the status of homemaking and ending the common deprecation of domesticity and motherhood within American culture" (Banner vii). While Addams's concerns for women are focused more around their access to public places—the workplace and the community—Gilman focuses almost exclusively on the fact that women are tied to children and homes, that homes are inefficiently run, and that these two factors keep women from being able to become economically independent of men. This category—Banner's "domestic feminist" which describes Gilman—is closely related to Weedon's category of "liberal feminist." Here, Weedon seems to combine Banner's first two categories and includes a theoretical discussion of the conditions of this kind of feminism. Weedon writes that liberal feminists

> stress women's rights as individuals to choice and self-determination, irrespective of biological sex, and their key political objectives are to create the material conditions necessary to ensure woman's self-determination, given her role as mother and primary childcarer. Yet while families may be natural, the sexual division of labour is not. Liberal feminists argue that domestic labour and childcare offer little scope for self-development and self-realization. This

> is due to the nature of domestic labour, women's economic dependency and their lack of choice in the sexual division of labour. The answer to these problems is seen to lie in the professionalization of domestic labour and childcare on a commercial basis (Weedon 16).

This "answer," the "professionalization of domestic labour," is a central tenet in Gilman's writing as well as a central problem in her own life.

Another of Weedon's categories, socialist feminism, describes these two first-wave feminists. She writes that socialist feminism assumes that "human nature is not essential, but socially produced and changing." This category differs from the first two in that it does "not see patriarchy as monolithic, but as forms of expression which vary historically" (Weedon 17). Although their theorization of essentialism may not have been as sophisticated as that described by Weedon, Addams and Gilman both describe human (and female) development as progressive and evolutionary.

Radical feminism is described by being based on biology, by the scope of social change envisioned, or by the level of commitment to feminism's causes. As I will explain in the following section of this chapter, ideas of female essentialism are central to turn-of-the-century feminism in ways that contemporary theorists often overlook. Suffice to say here that ideas of women's essential difference from men are usually based in biology. In her third category, Weedon contrasts liberal feminism to radical feminism by way of biology. Radical feminism, she writes,

> tend[s] to see the root of women's oppression in either women's biological capacity for motherhood or innate, biologically determined male aggression . . . which makes men dangerously different from women . . . Radical-

> feminist celebrations of women's capacity for motherhood stress its special life-giving qualities which men are said to lack and link women's procreative abilities to psychological qualities which are seen as universally female rather than specific to contemporary patriarchal society. (17)

This description of radical feminism based on biological difference seems to describe the feminist theories of Addams and Gilman who both focus on the importance of women's difference as mothers in their feminist theories and in their discussions of ways to conceive of social change.

Social change is central to Banner's and Morgan's ideas of radical feminism. Banner writes that "r*adical feminist* refers to those who envision a fundamental reordering of society and/or gender relationships as necessary to achieve equality (Banner vii). In her visions of a collective society where childcare and domestic labor is relegated to the commercial realm and in which women are no longer tied to babies, childbearing, and the drudgery of housework, Gilman certainly sees a "fundamental reordering of society" which Banner equates with radicalism. Gilman's utopian novel *Herland* is the extreme of this vision because in the society she creates in the novel, there are no men to get in the way of this harmonious, collective society. Addams, in many ways, lived out Gilman's visions at Hull House on a much smaller scale. While her social activities had widespread impact within Chicago's Nineteenth Ward and in Chicago, Addams's collective was mostly confined to Hull House and its neighbors. Addams's work and ideas did have a greater impact because her effort to move more women into the ranks of the work done in the public sphere spread to other parts of the nation. In this sense, the society that Addams worked to produce was very different from the separate-spheres culture in which she was

raised in the late nineteenth century.

This social change to which Banner refers and of which Addams and Gilman both seem to have been a part is precipitated by an attitude of feminism which Morgan equates with the radical. What radical feminists "have in common," she writes, " includes a stubborn commitment to the people of women, the courage to dare question anything and dare redefine everything, a dedication to making the connections between issues . . . *an audacious understanding of this politics' centrality to the continuation of sentient life itself on this planet*" (188) (emphasis author's). Both of these early feminists show this radical feminist attitude, and both write in autobiographical works of their early feelings of some responsibility for the plight of humanity. In her *Living* Gilman writes that "from sixteen I had not wavered from that desire to help humanity which underlay all my studies. Here was the world, visibly unhappy and as visibly unnecessarily so; surely it called for the best efforts of all who could in the least understand what was the matter, and had any rational improvements to purpose" (*Living* 70). Addams tells us that her early sense of responsibility grew out of her first sight of poverty in a nearby town when she was six. After hearing her father's response for why some people live "in such horrid little houses so close together," she replied that "when [she] grew up [she] should, of course, have a large house, but it would not be built among the other large houses, but right in the midst of horrid little houses like these" (*Twenty Years* 21). Following this incident, she writes that she "dreamed night after night that everyone in the world was dead excepting [her]self, and that upon [her] rested the responsibility" of the world (*Twenty Years* 22). Of course, we have to take these two accounts of Addams's and Gilman's early feminist, humanitarian impulses on their own words as they were written many years later after they had done many things to help poverty and other human problems. Gilman went on to give a good part of her life selflessly traveling a

lecture circuit telling people about what she thought were better ways for people to live together in society. Addams, aside from the work she did for the poor and working women in her Hull House neighborhood and in Chicago's streets, become a major advocate for world peace. *The Long Road of Woman's Memory* was written after the onset on World War I in Europe, and many of the women's stories that she tells in the book are those of mothers whose sons died fighting. She was active in the peace movement and attended conventions as early as 1904 (*Twenty Years* 217). Despite sharing qualities of modern feminist categories of social, domestic, and liberal feminist, Addams and Gilman both seem to share the attitude and spirit of the radical feminist.

At the outset, these categories are problematic in describing Addams and Gilman because these women seem to step over too many of the boundaries set by these categories, and because of the cultural and scientific assumptions undergirding the theories of these two women. On the one hand, Gilman sounds like Banner's "radical" because she saw a complete reordering of society both physically and relationally in order to end the oppression of women. On the other hand, Gilman's central demands of society sound very like Weedon's description of the liberal feminist. Her concerns were in freeing women's time and choices so that they are not tied to childbearing and childrearing. She was one of the first to write about the professionalization of child care and housekeeping on a wide scale.

Addams sounds like Weedon's radical feminist in that she seems to suggest that biological differences account for women's oppression *and* for women's salvation. At the same time, Addams's concerns for women specifically and humanity in general sound like Banner's description of the "social feminists" who were focused not on suffrage and equal rights, but on reform for working women. How then can we use these definitions to discuss the feminism of these

three writers? How can we account for the seeming conservatism of Addams and Cather alongside Gilman's radicalism. I will argue that Addams and Cather both hide the radical nature of their feminist agenda through the use of the conservative language of a cultural essentialism that directly filters through their ideas of memory throughout their works.

The Essentialist/Constructionist Binary as Central to Turn-of-the-Century Feminism

Moi provides ways for us to discuss the differences between the ways that women have theorized the problems involved in defining feminism's methods. In discussing Julia Kristeva's "Women's Time," Moi summarizes Kristeva's approach to sexual difference. Moi writes that Kristeva argues that "the feminist struggle. . . must be seen historically and politically as a three-tiered one":

> (1) Women demand equal access to the symbolic order. Liberal feminism. Equality.
>
> (2) Women reject the male symbolic order in the name of difference. Radical feminism. Femininity extolled.
>
> (3) Women reject the dichotomy between masculine and feminine as metaphysical. (This is Kristeva's own position.) (128).

This three-tiered structure represents three layers of feminism which Moi and Kristeva trace as historical, but which a closer look at American feminism proves to be much more complicated and overlapping than this structure suggests. The structure sets out three kinds of feminism temporally and resolves feminism's conflicts in the third that combines the first two.

In the first stage of this schema, women said "We can do anything that

men can do." In this period, women demanded equal access to the symbolic order by way of education mostly, but also, by extension to all modes of power economically and politically. Moi associates this stage with issues of equality and what we think of as the equal rights movement—suffrage, equal pay for equal work, equal access to education. This stage of feminism is based on the idea that men and women are made up of the same material but that women never had access to any of the institutions of cultural power which would allow them to show themselves equal to men in intellect and physical control.

In their deconstructive approach, Kristeva and Moi call this area of access to power the "symbolic order"—the psychoanalytic theoretical term for male power through language and knowledge.[5] While it is not my goal to make use of a full scale examination of Freudian or Lacanian theory, there is an interesting connection between psychoanalytic theory's symbolic order and the term that Kathryn Kish Sklar uses to discuss the publicity that turn-of-the-century feminists sought. Sklar relies on "Thomas Bender's definition of 'public culture' as a forum where power in its various forms, including meaning and aesthetics, is elaborated and made authoritative" (Sklar xii). Women, including Addams and other women activists of their time, demanded, and took, access to this "public culture" by being the "first generation of college women" (Sklar 50), and later, by making use of those educations in settlement houses, as public sanitation inspectors, on the public lecture circuit, and elsewhere in "public" places in which earlier women did not usually enter.

---

[5] Psychoanalytic theory and, by extension, deconstruction read access to power through the symbolic order. Psychoanalytic theory claims that through the phallus and its association with the father and his power, the male child gains access to language and this symbolic order of power. The female child, conversely, because of her lack of the phallus and disassociation with the father's power as a result, does not gain access to the symbolic order of power within the culture.

Kristeva's second tier in her representation of feminism's progress locates the radical in difference (biological and other) as does Weedon, but nineteenth-century ideas of womanhood would not find the notion that women and men are biologically—and, therefore, intellectually, emotionally, and morally—different from men a radical idea. In fact, conservative Protestant ideology of the time assumed an innate, God-given, natural difference between the sexes which accounted for their social difference. What makes turn-of-the-century feminism intriguing, as well as confusing, conflicted, and even repellent to some modern feminists is what is seen to be a reliance on an essential difference which divides the natures, and therefore the roles of the genders.

The three categories of feminism that Kristeva separates into stages and which Moi insists must be conflated, or at least considered altogether in any discussion of feminism, describe the categorical and strategic differences between feminists of the early twentieth century as well as those which plague and drive contemporary feminists—becoming equal to (or the same as) men, celebrating women's differences from men, and finding some balance between the two. On the one hand, first-wave feminists such as Gilman seemed to land somewhere between the first two of Kristeva's tiers. They saw the inequity of society, as it existed, unreachable for women. In order for women to be equal to men in society, they must have access to the "symbolic order" that was found in the male realm of power at the time. This means that women could only become equal to men economically or politically by becoming like men in their ways of thinking. Or the social structure would have to change to accommodate the differences of women in the public parts of society. Women would have to understand the world in the way that the men did, or the whole world would have to change drastically and radically. One the other hand, some first-wave feminists such as Addams and Cather, sought to create places within society in which women

would not have to change their way of thinking and doing things while allowing some women into public domains. These women who found their way into public offices could then make gradual changes within the culture to help to accommodate women there. That is to say that they would change some of the meanings within the symbolic order to include the ways that women have traditionally thought and seen the world. This larger order would allow for both men's and women's ways of thought and practice.[6] More "radical" feminists, such as Gilman, wanted to change the whole structure overnight to accommodate for women's physical and emotional presence in the public sphere.

The idea that women have a different way of thinking has been seen as a component of essentialism (as a result of their biological difference) or as a component of constructionist ideas (as a result of women's different cultural conditioning and socialization). Another way of describing these two theories of how women think is that women are "naturally" one way because nature, or even God, made them that way. Diana Fuss describes these two theoretical ideas as a binary in which "the essentialist [feminist] holds that the natural is *repressed* by the social," and "the constructionist maintains that the natural is *produced* by the social" (Fuss 3). In this second sense, the society decides what is "natural."

Contemporary feminism is in the middle of discussions and debates over the issue of essentialism, the idea that there is a natural meaning or essence

---

[6] This more inclusive theory of how society should work to accommodate women in the public sphere shared by Addams and other first-wave feminists is similar to the ideas of Carol Gilligan whose psychological study of the differences between girls and boys has suggested an integrated society in which traditionally male and female ways of thinking should both be brought to the negotiation table in all parts of the culture. Gilligan writes that as a society, we have missed out on an important part of our humanity by suppressing the feminine within culture. By integrating women into the public sphere in business and politics, Gilligan argues that the culture will ultimately benefit from the masculine and feminine influences in the culture at large.

behind our social structures and physical existence. In feminism, essentialism, then, focuses around questions of whether or not there is an essential or natural "womanness" that sets women apart as a class from the rest of society (namely the men of society). Constructionists, conversely, argue that categories such as "woman" or even "women" have been historically and socially constructed. This debate is spawned by and takes on a more theoretical turn in light of post-structuralism and deconstruction which promote the idea that no meaning is natural or given, but arbitrary and socially made.

In *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature, and Difference*, Diana Fuss writes of recent theoretical trends that privilege constructionist thought over essentialism. She speaks in her introduction of the fact that "essentialism [has] received a bad rap" (xi) and of the current "presumed conservatism of essentialism" (xiii). Fuss argues that the binary has been detrimental to theory because of its rigidity. She argues that anti-essentialism is grounded in an essentialist base. This debate, she argues, has caused an "impasse" in feminism which is "predicated on the difficulty of theorizing the social in relation to the natural, or the theoretical in relation to the political" (1). In this impasse, we ask ourselves "Is it legitimate to call oneself an anti-essentialist feminist, when feminism seems to take for granted among its members a shared identity, some essential point of commonality?" (24). Rather than continuing in an argument of opposites in which two sides line up on either side, Fuss advocates a second look at essentialism to examine how it is "deployed" in a text. In explanation of this enterprise, she writes:

> "Deploying" or "activating" . . . implies that essentialism may have some strategic or interventionary value. What I am saying is that the political investments of the sign "essence" are predicated on the subject's complex

> positioning in a particular social field, and that the appraisal of this investment depends not on any interior values intrinsic to the sign itself but rather on the shifting and determinative discursive relations which produced it . . . the radicality or conservatism of essentialism depends, to a significant degree, on *who* is utilizing it, *how* it is deployed, and *where* its effects are concentrated (20).

While it is not my goal to recount this debate in its entirety, some of its components are important, even central to, turn-of-the-century feminism. Central to my discussion, then, will be *how* we might see the essential as being "deployed" by Addams and Gilman and *where* the effects of this deployment are concentrated.

Addams and Gilman both equated "femininity" and "femaleness" with motherhood. In their understanding of the idea of womanhood, all women have the sensibility of mothers, even those women, such as Addams, who cannot or choose not to have children. Both of these women seemed to want to avoid the essentialist argument that continues today. For both of these women, it is "natural" for women to be mothers in and out of biological motherhood because of biological and social evolution and not necessarily because of "God-given" female qualities. Gilman described the spirit that women could use to change the world as "mother love" [7] and Addams located that spirit in "the long road of woman's memory." Both of these women's ideas of femininity were formed out of nineteenth-century ideology of separate spheres for men and women. These spheres were based on the assumption of the "natural," God-given roles for

---

[7] Gilman uses this expression in many places in her writing, but we also find it used by earlier "Christian feminists" especially Frances Willard who said that "Mother-love works magic for the race. . .Mother-hearted women are called to be the saviors of the race" (qtd. in Haynes 97).

women, but Gilman, Addams, and others mixed these ideas with those of Social Darwinism to form a new feminist sense of the differences between men and women and how those differences could be used for the betterment of the human race as a whole. It will be my goal in later chapters to examine how Gilman, Addams, and Cather "deploy" the feminine as essential or constructed, and I will argue that Addams and Cather locate women's powerful source of difference in types of memory that they make use of in their works.

Progressive Era Reform's Roots in Nineteenth-Century Femininity

It is important to point out that feminist activism and social reform carried out by turn-of-the-century women such as those at Hull House were direct social progressions from nineteenth-century ideas of femininity. This generation of women activists and their brand of feminism were influenced by several major forces: separate-spheres ideology of nineteenth-century culture and what Barbara Welter has identified as the Cult of True Womanhood, what Carolyn Haynes calls the "Christian feminists," the rise of capitalist corporate economy, and advancing ideas of social Darwinism which flourished after the publication of *The Origin of Species* in 1859.[8]

In the past twenty years, a rich body of historical scholarship has grown into a well-established field of American women's history. The historians and scholars in this field have had much to say about the changing definitions of American femininity especially significant through the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. Anne Firor Scott has been a pioneer in breaking ground and

[8] This publication, of course, had widespread cultural, religious, and scientific effects. Significantly, it came about only one year before the births of Gilman and Addams who were both born in 1860. By the time these women and others of their generation had come of age, the ideas put forth by Darwinism had had time to take root within the culture.

uncovering this history, and she has been instrumental along with others in establishing an active, participatory, and invested lineage of American women who were upholding, perpetuating, and creating American cultural norms of identity.[9] Besides identifying women's active roles in the progress of American culture, many historians of American women's history also have in common the identification of the placement of this activity and investment in service-oriented activities—social service clubs, temperance societies, abolitionist groups, and, by the 1880's, settlement houses in urban immigrant neighborhoods. These kinds of organizations have been vital to women in American history because service and benevolence had been (at least by the nineteenth century) gendered as feminine. This gendering comes directly as a part of the separate-spheres ideology of the nineteenth century.[10] According to Ginzberg, the realm of benevolence and service was important for nineteenth-century women because of the social "conflation of femaleness and morality in nineteenth-century ideology" (8). In this nineteenth-century ideology—that to which Barbara Welter refers as the "Cult of True Womanhood"—serving others was *a part of* female identity. *Active participation* is the location of difference between the work of historians like Scott and the Cult of True Womanhood as described by Welter.

The Cult of True Womanhood plays an unmitigated role in my examination of Addams's and Gilman's use of memory in their writing and in the theories

---

[9] Scott is followed by a long line of scholars such as Karen J. Blair, Theodora Penny Martin, Lori D. Ginzberg, Marsha Weed, and others who all acknowledge an indebtedness to her work.

[10] By "separate-spheres ideology," I am referring to a well-established term historians of this period use to describe the conceived social structure of the time. In this case, "ideology" is used as a "body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class" which is one of Terry Eagleton's sixteen initial definitions in his chapter "What is Ideology?" This particular "body of ideas" could also be seen as a "socially necessary illusion" or instrumental to the "identity thinking" of the social class involved (1-2). I will discuss ideology in more depth in Chapter Two.

behind Addams's settlement work because although the Cult contradicts the very idea of participation, it locates women's authority to act in their virtue. More specifically, nineteenth-century women were to characterize what Welter calls the four "cardinal virtues"—piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. A central contradiction results from these two versions of American femininity. On the one hand, True Womanhood dictated that middle-class women remain within the domestic sphere which included the home, the church, and those places where a woman might carry out church or charitable work. Their functions were to bear children and to keep pleasant homes for their husbands to return to after working in the public sphere. Women were to be moral and religious teachers of the wayward (especially men who were less moral and religious than women), but this education was to come through their example and "influence" as mothers and servants. On the other hand, female "influence" and the duty to serve those who were morally and physically poor propelled some women beyond acceptable boundaries of the domestic sphere. If one was really to do anything to stop or change large social problems such as public alcoholism, slavery, prostitution, or poverty, she would have to speak in a voice that was loud and public enough to be heard over the male driven wheels of industrialization and capitalism.

In Victorian American middle-class society then, a convenient "division of labor" existed in which the "feminine," domestic sphere included charity, service, benevolence, and church work while the "masculine," public sphere involved everything associated with business, industry, capitalism, and politics outside the intimate sphere of the home (Bederman 435-6). Gender changes in this ideology resulted from economic changes within the culture—namely the profound move from the idea that America was made up of rural, agrarian communities to the modern reality of urban industrialization and corporate economics. Carolyn Haynes describes the gender changes that resulted during this period as the

emergence of "a new notion of manhood, which maintained men's superior position over women yet was more congruent with the changing economy." Men, who were "no longer able to be the heroes on the battlefield defending their family honor. . . instead became the economic warriors, in a business world. . ." (Haynes 83). Women, in compensation for "being excised from the world of work and politics, the home and women's influential role within it were glorified in hyperbolic terms" (Haynes 83). This hyperbole extended to most aspects of True Womanhood ideology, and these permeated into the ideas of turn-of-the-century feminism.

This separate-spheres ideology has been complicated by many contemporary writers who want to identify the cultural location of femininity for this generation of women. Above, I have borrowed the term "intimate sphere" from Marie Fleming who, in her critique of Habermas's discussion of the private and public spheres of modern societies, finds it necessary to designate this third sphere which makes room for many of the activities and discourses carried on by women. She claims that these activities and discourses cannot be analyzed fully through Habermas's too narrow view of a two-sphere society. This third sphere will become particularly important to my discussion because Progressive-Era women were considered to be conspicuously public in their endeavors and goals. I would like to extend Fleming's term for the situation for nineteenth-century women. The boundaries of this sphere were much more fluid than those of the more conspicuous and precise private sphere.

Sklar's description of these "always porous" realms is particularly useful as well. In her autobiography of Florence Kelley, a Hull House resident, Sklar calls the realm of women's activity during the time of the work of Addams, Gilman, and Kelley "women's public culture or women's political culture." By this term she "mean[s] women's participation in public culture and the separate

institutions women built to facilitate their participation. . . As a category of historical analysis, women's public culture rests on the assumption that women's experience was by no means exclusively private" (Sklar xiii). It is because of this assumption that a discussion of Addams's and Gilman's own ideas is essential to understanding their feminist theories.

Even though Sklar writes that "the equation of women with private and men with public life was an ideological construct that lost much of its power during the 1870's, when [this] generation came of age" (Sklar xiii) the questions facing Progressive-Era feminists such as Jane Addams at the time of the writing of *The Long Road* and *Twenty Years* were over the boundaries of this women's sphere. It is probably safe to say that there were varying degrees of acceptance of women's "place" within society rather than some uniform idea of the idea of a monolithic "sphere." Exactly where did this sphere exist for women in the culture? Of course, it was in the home where men still had authority (even though women knew how homes worked through experiences as mothers and through their female "influence"). It could extend into the church, a place where men could be also and where they continued to have authority (even though women were more religiously virtuous by nineteenth-century standards). As I have said, it also extended to church work, but men and women both still questioned the boundaries between the domestic duties of church work and the public and therefore unfeminine public sphere. Women who questioned and pushed the boundaries of this sphere also questioned women's personal identity located in a place of autonomy, authority, and even (at times) subversion.

The location of the "boundary" of the women's sphere in church and benevolence work extended for Addams to her own work in the settlement movement. Along with the separate-spheres ideology of the nineteenth century, her ideas of this new sphere of woman's work came in a direct progression from

what Carolyn Haynes calls the "Christian feminists" of the generation before who found root in Conservative religion but were, in their own right, subversive, and therefore, radical. In previous sections, I have discussed various notions of the conservative and the radical in terms of feminist politics, but here I turn to these terms—conservative and radical—in the ways they were seen in terms of nineteenth-century religion. Carolyn Haynes identifies one of the main features of conservative religion of early and mid-nineteenth century America as a strong adherence to the separate-spheres ideology, that "woman should remain in the private realm of the home and be pious, pure, submissive, and domestic" (79). She writes that "like the conservatives, the Christian feminists glorified woman's influential social role" (Haynes 94). These women took ideas of the glorification of women as mothers to an extreme, even a radical obedience" (78).

Haynes argues that these Christian feminists used ideas behind separate-spheres ideology to carry a strong feminist message based on the "selective miming" of conservative feminine gender roles. In this miming, women made use "of a variety of Christian and critical discursive practices—evangelicalism, historical criticism, and liberal individualism" in order to forward "a unique women's rights message of their own. While their message may not have been revolutionary in the sense that it overturned major systems of thought, it was radically obedient. As a result, the adherents of this strategy were able to reach a large audience of Christian women that the secular feminists could not" (Haynes 93). Haynes writes that some scholars such as Lori D. Ginzberg and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell have argued that these performances only worked to further conservative values within the culture and cite them as the moving force behind such conservative legislation as the "1873 Comstock law, Sunday blue laws, censorship regulations, prohibition, and increased punishment of prostitutes" (Haynes 96). While this may be true of these early feminists, their performances

gave example to later feminists who felt no compulsion to follow Christianity as a lump doctrine, but who felt the responsibility of service in favor of humanity's fate in similar ways. Later feminists such as Addams, Gilman, Florence Kelley, and others would in fact work to "overturn major systems of thought."

It is their conservative rhetoric that interests me and that seems to be the Christian feminists' most profound legacy for Addams. Her work follows a direct trajectory of women such as Elizabeth Oakes Smith, Amanda Berry Smith, Hannah Whitall Smith, and Sojourner Truth who "as lay preachers and lecturers, often spoke to enthusiastic crowds numbering in the thousands" and who "represented some of the most skilled and successful public speakers of the nineteenth century" (Haynes 95). Although Addams did not generally work in the name of Christianity, in "The Subjective Necessity For Social Settlements," a speech which she later incorporated into *Twenty Years*, Addams writes that one of the "motives" of the settlement movement is the "renaissance going forward in Christianity. The impulse to share the lives of the poor, the desire to make social service, irrespective of propaganda, express the spirit of Christ" (95). Whatever real, immediate feminist outcome these early Christian feminists had, Haynes questions when she writes "although their use of conservative rhetoric and physical appearance may have served to increase their public following, the question remains as to whether their conservative trappings ultimately undermined their concern for women's rights" (Haynes 95). Where their feminist influence is quite evident is in their educated daughters and granddaughters who, a generation later, would use their courage and their conservative techniques to further a more radical feminist agenda.

Along with the technique of using conservative rhetoric to embed a feminist message, Addams borrowed from the Christian feminists the ideas of the role of "Mother-love" and "Municipal Housekeeping." These were two important

remnants of the separate-spheres ideology that Gilman and Addams both carried into their turn-of-the-century feminisms which were a strong mixture of principles and strategies of the Christian feminists and the intellectual thought that had been developed since the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Sklar describes this new feminist morality: "Only a generation removed from the transformative power of Evangelical religion, Florence Kelley's contemporaries answered many . . . questions with what we might call moral materialism—values that accepted the materialism of the post-Darwin world but imbued it with meanings carried forward from an earlier era" (Sklar xii).

Addams and Gilman were both familiar with social evolution and incorporated it into their own feminist theories, but Gilman's use of it is more prominent. In *Women and Economics* she devotes a good portion of the text to an explanation of how the human species developed into its current state. She explains the development of sex differences in this way:

> Very early in the development of species it was ascertained by nature's slow but sure experiments that the establishment of two sexes in separate organisms, and their differentiation, was to the advantage of the species. . . Developed and increased by use, the distinction increased, the attraction increased, until we have in all the higher races two markedly different sexes, strongly drawn together by the attraction of sex, and fulfilling their use in the reproduction of species. These are the natural features of sex distinction and sex-union, and they are found in human species as in others. (29-30)

So some differences that exist between the sexes, she writes, are natural, in that the species developed the distinction for its own advantage. Where we, as a

species, have gone wrong is in "the unnatural feature by which our race holds an unenviable distinction" which "consists mainly in this,— a morbid excess in the exercise of this function" (30). This is to say that culturally, or, more accurately, as a species, we have placed an "unnatural" emphasis on these differences so that the original distinction is no longer working to our advantage. Gilman later writes that "the human female was cut off from the direct action of natural selection, that mighty force which heretofore had acted on male and female alike with inexorable and beneficial effect, developing strength, developing skill, developing endurance, developing courage,—in a word, developing species" (62). This suspension of female development, she writes is the result of the economic dependence of the human female—a state which came about because of humanity's "morbid excess." I will later show that Gilman argues the method for placing humanity back on its natural course is to "forget" this unnatural and "morbid excess" of sex distinction by creating a world in which women will no longer have to be dependent on men and can develop naturally as men have been doing for generations (54). Remembering and forgetting will become closely linked, for Gilman as well as for Addams and Cather, with feminist theories of change.

If we look closely at how each of these three women uses language to discuss her ideas about memory, a formula for her feminism emerges. Memory becomes a thread of conservatism throughout the works of Cather and in Addams's *The Long Road of Woman's Memory*, while Gilman disparages memory as the conservative thread in turn-of-the-century American culture that keeps women dependent on men economically and the entire culture from making the appropriate progress. Addams and Cather, unlike Gilman, may seem conservative in their feminisms in that they appropriate "the master's tools" through their *use* of memory and their ideas of the home to make change in

society (Addams) and in women's identities (Cather).

Chapter Two: Memory—The Thread of Conservatism?

Memory is a central motif in the writings of American women, and that is especially true of the women of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries—the period from 1880 to 1930. There is a great body of work produced during this time in the areas of psychology, sociology, history, philosophy, and literary criticism that deals with the scientific bases of how memory works. Some thinkers focused on how individual, personal, autobiographical memory works within the brain in its physical and social functions. Others dealt with emerging notions of collective or social memories that would explain how social groups work together, preserve the continuity of the past, or make change within the group. A third group, perhaps a part of collective memory, deals with memory as an institution of the history and literature of a cultural group. This third category of memory is a physical, tangible manifestation of a group's collective memory. In the rest of this chapter, I will discuss and classify some of the different ideas about memory that were being developed by Gilman, Addams, and Cather within the discussions about memory by their contemporaries.

The ideas that Gilman, Addams, and Cather focus on memory define the nature of their feminist theories. A theory of memory is used by women writers such as Gilman, Cather, Addams, and others of the period to describe ties to the past and a knowledge base that women draw from in their daily lives and in forming their gendered identities. We often think of these ties to the past driving everyday life as if they are in direct opposition to ideas of change and radicalism. This was certainly Gilman's idea, but Addams and Cather complicate this notion by making critical use of the past. Memory is an important theme that runs through these writers in important and similar ways. I will use the works and lives of these three writers as well as some of their contemporaries to discuss each woman's concept of "woman's memory."

Gilman and Memory as Unmovable Tradition: "The woman-soul is rising" to Forgive and Forget

> "Have you no respect for the past? For what was thought and believed by your foremothers?"
>
> "Why, no," she said. "Why should we? They are all gone. They knew less than we do. If we are not beyond them, we are unworthy of them—and unworthy of the children who must go beyond us."
>
> This set me to thinking in good earnest. I had always imagined—simply from hearing it said, I suppose—that women were by nature conservative. Yet these women, quite unassisted by any masculine spirit of enterprise, had ignored their past and built daringly for the future.
>
> —Gilman, *Herland* (112)

This excerpt from Gilman's utopian novel, *Herland*, exemplifies Gilman's concerns about memory's conservative strain on society. Radical change and progress are contrary to Gilman's idea of memory, but central to her ideas about how we should approach the problems of society. In this utopian vision of a society with no men and in which our problems as a society have been worked out, the past, theoretically, holds no control on the actions and decisions of the people. The outsiders learn that to rely on the past is to deny the progress of the future that is necessary for the culture to grow and to reach its full potential.

Throughout her other writings, Gilman calls for change in institutions and in the relations between the sexes. For Gilman, in *Women and Economics* (1898) and *The Home* (1910), there are two approaches to memory. Gilman's first use of memory concerns her idea of women's particular contribution to modern society, and it is in this first approach that she comes close to Addams in theory. Here we

see the two theories converge and then separate drastically. (These extremes are the very point of Gilman's "radicalness" and Addams's seeming thread of "conservatism"). Women's roles as homemakers and as caregivers, Gilman writes, are the result of the earliest of female, human instincts. Those are the instincts that women developed because they were mothers and were required by nature to care for the young of the species before and after birth (*Women and Economics* 41; 220-1).

In her early and most important work, *Women and Economics*, Gilman begins with a Proem in which she uses images of memory to describe women's history and then to lead to her discussion of needed change. She begins the introductory poem by describing "dark and early ages, through the primal forests faring," a time that is only on the edge of human memory. During this time woman became "the crown of all delight" and man's "forever" (ix). As a result he loved her, but "Close, close he bound her, that she should leave him never; / Weak still he kept her, lest she be strong to flee" (x). Woman has, throughout history, gone "From the freedom of the forests to the prisons of to-day!" (x). In this long span of time, men have forgotten what women are really like, what they can really do: "Gone the friend and comrade of the day when life was younger," "And he never once hath seen her since the prehistoric time" (x). Despite men's forgetfulness, women are still able to regain their position as equal partners in the world because "Nature" and "God" have not forgotten her. Gilman writes of the upcoming stage in human evolution:

Nature hath reclaimed thee, forgiving dispossession!

God hath not forgotten, though man doth still forget!

The woman-soul is rising, in despite of thy transgression—

Loose her now and trust her! She will love thee yet! (xi)

Gilman ends the poetic preface with the guarantee that this transition will be an easy one because women have not forgotten themselves completely despite the ages of enforced submission: "The ages of her sorrow have but taught her to forgive!" (xi) Here, Gilman alludes to a collective memory of womanhood that she believes, women will remember when they are allowed economic independence. Women will be able to make this remembrance and thus, the needed changes will occur, only when women participate in the race activities and not simply sex activities. For Gilman, economic independence must come first as a part of women's participation in the progress of the race. Addams and Cather, we will see, argue that this collective memory has been within women's lives all along and women can use it to obtain economic independence.

Gilman believes these are vestal memories that women seem to have forgotten in the submissive and dependent state, but that they will easily remember when they are allowed economic independence. This collective memory will be a great aid to human society since women, as equal participators in the workings of society will bring this memory to their decisions and improvements of a new vision of society. During this long period of women's submission and economic dependence, society has retained a number of conventions that keep women in this state of dependence. This is the part of the past that Gilman believes we have a certain nostalgia about, but that we would be

better to forget.

Unlike Gilman's first approach to memory which involves women's ties to the past after a long period of bondage and forgetfulness of their race responsibilities, Gilman's second use of memory deals with vestiges of the past that need to be forgotten in order for the human race to continue in its biological and social evolution. These residual strains take the form of traditions in religion, law, and social custom. As a result, Gilman writes that our evolution has been retarded, or even for a time stopped, because of the oppression of women, one half of the human race. This "hidden cause has operated continuously against the true course of social evolution, to pervert the natural trend toward a higher and more advantageous sex-relation" (28). Because women are weakened, so is the whole human race: "This excessive modification she transmits to her children; and so is [it] steadily implanted in the human constitution" (38).

This problem has come about because of our failure to distinguish between "race-distinctions" and "sex-distinctions." She writes that with other animals, humans share certain conditions such as "the environment of the material universe" which includes "climate and locality . . . physical, chemical, electrical forces." With other species "we further share the effect of our own activity, the reactionary force of exercise" (*Women and Economics* 2). Race distinctions are where we differ from other animals in a "set of conditions peculiar to our human status; namely, social conditions" (2). An important social condition that controls the lives of all humans is the economic, and this condition is developed most through the most use (5). Drawing on the importance of this condition to

humanity, Gilman calls attention

> to a certain marked and peculiar economic condition effecting the human race, and unparalleled in the organic world. We are the only animal species in which the female depends on the male for food, the only animal species in which the sex-relation is also an economic relation. With us an entire sex lives in a relation of economic dependence upon the other sex, and the economic relation is combined with the sex-relation. The economic status of the human female is relative to the sex-relation (5).

Gilman writes that sex-distinctions are "certain psychic attributes" which are manifested by either sex" (41). Some of these she describes as follows:

> The intensity of the maternal passion is a sex-distinction as much as the lion's mane or the stag's horns. The belligerence and dominance of the male is a sex-distinction: the modesty and timidity of the female is a sex-distinction. The tendency to "sit" is a sex-distinction of the hen; the tendency to strut is a sex-distinction of the cock. The tendency to fight is a sex-distinction of males in general; the tendency to protect and provide for, is a sex-distinction of females in general. (41)

As a result of this race-distinction that has become confused with sex-distinction, the sexuality of the human female has been overdeveloped and her race-distinctions have been retarded.

As Gilman's introductory poem implies, women's (and by extension, all of humanity's) collective memory has been clouded by this over emphasis on her

sex-distinctions, on femininity. All of woman's energy and identity has been focused around her sexuality, and it "is in woman that we find most fully expressed the excessive sex-distinction of the human species,— physical, psychical, social" (43). She defines what she means by her term "over-sexed" in the following way: "To be over-feminine is to be over-sexed. To manifest in excess any of the distinctions of sex, primary or secondary, is to be over-sexed" (40). This condition is manifest in every aspect of the human female's life. One manifestation is in dress. Girls "must be dressed differently, not on account of their personal needs . . . but so that neither they, nor anyone beholding them, may for a moment *forget* the distinction of sex" (54) (emphasis mine).

In all of this emphasis on femininity, Gilman writes that women have *forgotten* how to be human. The over-feminine female has led to the women's movement: "So utterly has the status of woman been accepted as a sexual one that it has remained for the woman's movement of the nineteenth century to devote much contention to the claim that women are persons!" (49). Women of the nineteenth century, Gilman writes were concerned with the *humanity* of women. She points to a now-common feminist contention: "In our steady insistence on proclaiming sex-distinction we have grown to consider most human attributes as masculine attributes, for the simple reason that they were allowed to men and forbidden women" (51). Gilman's argument here is that as a society, we have forced women to forget how to be human.

This memory problem is inherently bad for women as well as the whole species. She writes that in "every way the over-sexed condition of the human female reacts unfavorably upon herself, her husband, her children, and the race" (47). This process clouds and stagnates the whole of human memory. Since "this feeling [has] become so intense as to override all other human faculties" it makes "a mock of the accumulated wisdom of the ages, the stores power of the will"

(48). Because of over-emphasis on femininity and the division of labor and social interaction that results from it, the species is losing the benefit of half of its resources as well as the accumulation of understanding.

This exaggerated femininity is held in check by many conventions. Gilman mentions dress as one of many of those conventions, but she believes that there are a lot of these vestiges of the past that we need to leave behind even though we hold them affectionately in our collective memory. One of these is our affectionate relationship with food and the woman's role of preparing it; one is the father's role as protector and provider; but these can be summed up in what Gilman calls the "sanctity of the home" and which she attributes to the leftover vestiges of ancestor worship. She writes that the "influence of our ancestors has dominated the home more than any other human institution, and the influence of our ancestors is necessarily retroactive" (*The Home* 25). In her sense of human development, these were necessary in the earlier times of our collective evolution, but are now outdated and should be forgotten rather than remembered and cherished as central to our societal order. The changes that she proposes, however, are not to do away with families altogether, but to alter the way that they function and their purposes. These changes, she writes, will not "in any way militate against the true relations of the family, marriage, and parentage, but only against those sub-relations belonging to an earlier period and now in process of extinction. The family as an entity, an economic and social unit, does not hold as it did" (*Women and Economics* 156). Essential to these changes is the economic and political independence of women who could remain wives and mothers, when they want, but those roles would look quite different after Gilman's proposals would be integrated into society.

In order to make these changes, the ideology of the family within the culture would have to be altered. In "What is Ideology?" Terry Eagleton

discusses the many conflicting ideas that people have associated with the term "ideology." One way of defining it is in terms of the "natural," the sense of referring to those things within the culture that are so ingrained in the mindset that they are taken for granted. At the same time, the ideology of a particular group often works to "legitimate the interests of a ruling group or class specifically by distortion" (30). Gilman refers to this idea in *Women and Economics* and equates the ideology of the patriarchal family with tradition and memory. Ideology was described by "Friedrich Engels . . . as a 'false consciousness,'" and others have "consider[ed] it to be constituted largely by unconscious prepossessions that are illusory" (Abrams 242). The "false consciousness" to which Gilman refers is the idea that women are by nature economically dependent on men. Naturalizing ideas about the world around us "takes place through. . . uncritically habitual processes," and when this has taken place, "not only is the world an illusion but the world itself is held to be . . . constituted by the cultural conventions, codes, and *ideology* that happen to be shared by members of a cultural community" (Abrams 285). It is this uncritical association of women's economic dependence as a natural state that Gilman abhors.

Gilman describes women's dependent state within the culture in these same terms—as ingrained, as natural, and as ideology. At the beginning of *Women and Economics*, she writes of western society's tendency to think of women's economic dependency on men as "our loose generalization that it was 'natural'" and that we even naturalize the idea further by forming the notion that "other animals" function this way too (6). Later, she writes that the driving force behind mothers' concerns for their daughters is that "marriage is the woman's proper sphere, her divinely ordered place, her natural end" (87). She argues that this is indeed not a "natural" state for women, but that it is "most evil" (86). This "evil" has retarded women's evolution because it is "not owing to lack of

essential human faculties necessary to such achievements, nor to any inherent disability of sex, but to the present condition of women, forbidding the development of this degree of economic ability. The male human is thousands of years in advance of the female in economic status" (9).

But just because society has been set up this way for "thousands of years" does not mean that it is the best way for society to be. In order to identify what is wrong with society, Gilman asserts, we must look at it critically—to step outside of our ideology of gender differences. She realizes that this will be a difficult task because of familiarity and comfort with the system that she wants to change, and it will require a critical examination of the situation or "a further brain development" than we apply to everyday situations (82). This comfort she associates with the comfort of home. She writes that "social conditions, like individual conditions, become familiar by use, and cease to be observed. This is why it is so much easier to criticize the customs of other persons or other nations than our own" (79). We "balance" what we see as the odd practices of others by our own "memories of home" (79).

To the disadvantage of needed social change, "what we are used to we do not notice. This rests on the law of adaptation, the steady, ceaseless pressure that tends to fit the organism to the environment" (76). This happens even when the environment is not to the advantage of the organism adapting to it: "It is equally possible for a race, a nation, a class, to become accustomed to most disadvantageous conditions, and fail to notice them. Take, as an individual instance, the wearing of corsets by women" (77). She goes on to illustrate her point by explaining that the corset is not really good for a woman's anatomy, but that when she is used to wearing one, when it is removed, not only is it uncomfortable, it is difficult for her misshapen organs to function. Because of society's grossly misshapen state where women are concerned, change is

necessary, even if that change will be a "slow and painful process" (80).

It is my argument that when Gilman calls for change, she is asking for society to forget these unnecessary strains from the past and to remember a more constructive role for women. Even though she does not use memory images as much as Addams and Cather do, the images are there in key points in her writings, most notably in the introductory Proem to *Women and Economics*. The strong ideological ideas about gender and femininity in the nineteenth century are what Gilman asks us to forget. These ideas keep us from remembering women's potential and contribution to the human species. In this sense, Gilman's idea of collective memory is that of a conservative strain on society. She does seem to believe, however, that somewhere, deep inside our collective psyche is the memory of women who are a "tall, vigorous, beautiful animal species, capable of great and varied exertion" (*Women and Economics* 44).

Gilman's connection between memory and conservatism, between memory and the hindrance to feminist and social progress continues to be at issue in modern discussions of feminist practices and theories. Doane and Hodges in *Nostalgia and Sexual Difference* discuss this very issue by writing about the backlash against second-wave feminism's entrance into literary criticism as well as into the everyday vernacular. They write that this backlash is insidious in that it both disparages and makes use of feminist theories and practices to look back to a "golden" pre-feminist time when gender roles were understood and seen as "natural." In their discussion, they include male writers of fiction and social and literary comment as well as feminist writers who seem to be nostalgic about women's past. The argument between essentialism and gender as a cultural construct, they write, continues to war in our contemporary discussions, and these discussions are couched around connections to, or breaks with, the past.

There is a distinction here between Doane's and Hodges's terminology

and mine. Rather than locating their discussion around the idea of memory, Doane and Hodges are concerned with "nostalgia" as a detriment to feminism's purposes as is Gilman. In Gayle Greene's idea, nostalgia keeps women and society from accepting any change that feminism asks for. Greene refers to Doane's and Hodges's work in her article "Feminist Fiction and the Uses of Memory" in which she describes a nostalgic impulse in some women's writing:

> . . .nostalgia has different meanings for men and women. Though from one perspective, women might have more incentives than men to be nostalgic—deprived of outlets in the present, they live more in the past, which is why they are the keepers of diaries, journals, family records, and photograph albums—from another perspective, women have little to be nostalgic about, for the good old days when the grass was greener and young people knew their places was also the time when women knew their place, and it is not a place to which most women want to return. (296)

Nostalgia is the impulse to deny that anything is wrong with the way things are because of a "romantic" or "rose-colored" view of them. It romanticizes traditional roles in ways counter to feminist agendas.

Greene's major goals in her article are in pointing out ways that memory is a useful and constructive tool for feminist thought and in "suggest[ing] distinctions between memory and nostalgia" (293). Greene, like Doane and Hodges, sees nostalgia as counteractive to feminists' goals. Doane and Hodges write that it is a "frightening antifeminist impulse" in modern discussions (xiii). Nostalgic writers, they say, use it as both a "rhetorical practice" and a "sentiment" (3) and that nostalgic writers "have a tremendous desire for a 'natural' grounding principle, that is, a stable referent" (8). This nostalgia is for a past in which

gender differences were defined and stable. Greene writes that "nostalgia is an uncritical acceptance of this rewriting, a view of the past as a foreign country" (297). "Memory," on the other hand is "to bring to mind" or "think of again." For Greene, these are particularly constructive mechanisms in that "both 're-membering' and 're-collecting' suggest a connecting, assembling, a bringing together of things in relation to one another" (297). So nostalgia, then, in this sense is what Gilman refers to most of the time when she uses the term "memory," whereas Addams uses memory to more constructive, feminist ends. Gilman's feminism asks that we severe ties to the immediate past, while Addams's asks that we make use of the past in constructive ways. Gilman asks that we reach deep within our "memory" to retrieve a female memory, while Addams argues that woman's memory and power have always been within our grasp.

Addams's Uses of Personal and Collective Memory: Memory's "Gentle Coercion"

While Gilman treats memory as nostalgia most of the time, Addams's use of memory is constructive. She is certainly critical of her own use of the past as well as the memories of other women that she records in *The Long Road*. She spends the Introduction questioning the nature of memory, trying to decide how it can be useful in informing her and her readers about the present and how to make change for a better future. Because of this questioning use of memory, in Greene's sense, Addams brings together things that are "in relation to one another" through a constructive use of both collective and autobiographical memory (Greene 297). She goes through the critical process of finding those relationships when they are not readily apparent on the conscious level which is a central part of the process of critical examination of any subject. According to Addams, memory has two functions: "first, its important role in interpreting and

appeasing life for the individual"—autobiographical, or personal, memory—, "and second its activity as a selective agency in social reorganization"—collective, or social, memory (xiii). In the next section, I will discuss Addams's use of autobiographical memory in light of William James's (1842-1910) and John Dewey's (1859-1952) psychological assertions about how memory works in the individual mind. Then, in the following section, I will focus on what Addams designates as memory's activity in "social reorganization" in relation to Maurice Halbwachs's (1877-1945) ideas of collective memory.

The entire Introduction to *The Long Road* is a critical questioning of memory's role in social change which Addams writes is a "gradual process" in which the "converts" are "unconsciously" brought under "Memory's gentle coercion" (xiii).[11] The other function, that of "interpreting and appeasing life for the individual" really works on both an individual and collective manner in Addams's understanding of how memory works constructively to bring things together. Her assertion that these two functions—autobiographical and collective memory—are not "mutually exclusive" but "support each other" (xiii) is in line with Halbwach's theory of collective memory. He puts forth the idea that individuals do have personal memory, but that those individual memories are always shaped by the individual's role in and interaction with the larger society.

A major part of the function of autobiographical memory is in the comfort that it can often bring us in filtered ways. Greene writes that ". . . there is something about memory that edits unpleasant details—the anxiety, irritation, fatigue, boredom, impatience, and pain of daily existence—in favor of the big

---

[11] This function of memory will be the main subject of discussion in Chapter Five where I will discuss Addams's advocacy of feminist ideas in light of contemporary men's religious movements to suppress feminism in religion and in other parts of the public. She uses "woman's" collective memory as a central element to her argument.

picture, which is always done over with a flattering brush" (297). In Addams's discussions of memory in her Introduction to *The Long Road*, she acknowledges the very nature of our memories to which Greene refers. In this Introduction, Addams writes:

> It was gradually forced upon my attention that these reminiscences of the aged, even while softening the harsh realities of the past, exercise a vital power of selection which often necessitates an onset against the very traditions and conventions commonly believed to find their stronghold in the minds of elderly people. Such reminiscences suggested an analogy to the dreams of youth which, while covering the future with a shifting rose-colored mist, contain within themselves the inchoate substance from which the tough-fibred forces of coming social struggles are composed. (xi-xii)

While this "shifting rose-colored mist" sounds rather nostalgic, Addams claims that it enables the elderly to pass on the important accomplishments and good ideas from the past rather than the bad ones so that the next generation can dream of change. This "rose-colored mist" also describes the memories of the past that Cather's characters carry with them from generation to generation.[12]

Personal and Autobiographical Memory

---

[12] Here, selective autobiographical memory becomes a central element in how collective memory works. Halbwachs later shows these two kinds of memory becoming inseparable in the way that he thought society causes the selective functions of memory: "Society from time to time obligates people not just to reproduce in thought previous events of their lives, but also to touch them up, to shorten them, or to complete them so that , however convinced we are that our memories are exact, we give them a prestige that reality did not possess" (Halbwachs 51).

In 1890, only one year after Jane Addams's Hull House was founded, William James published his first major text, *The Principles of Psychology*, in which he discusses his current ideas on the way that memory physically works in the brain as it was understood at that time. While he makes mention of the subject in various spots throughout the two-volume work, he devotes an entire chapter to memory at the end of Volume One. He explains memory as a process by which things are stored in our minds through paths of associations. We remember things because of their associations with other things. The more we encounter or experience the thing remembered, the more associations it has, and therefore, the more likely we are to remember it. Very different from mere habit, "Memory proper . . . is the knowledge of a former state of mind after it has already once dropped from consciousness; or rather it is *the knowledge of an event, or fact*, of which meantime we have not been thinking, *with the additional consciousness that we have thought or experienced it before*" (648) (emphasis James's). Memory is a "very complex representation, that of the fact to be recalled *plus* its associates, the whole forming one 'object' . . . known in one integral pulse of consciousness . . . and demanding probably a vastly more intricate brain-process than that on which any simple sensorial image depends" (651). In James's idea of how memory works, this conscious process is not to be confused with habit which is involuntary and part of an unconscious process which he differentiates from memory proper. He explains this distinction in an earlier chapter on association:

> Hitherto we have assumed the process of suggestion of one object by another to be spontaneous. The train of imagery wanders at its own sweet will, now trudging in sober grooves of habit, now with a hop, skip, and jump darting across the whole field of time and space. This is revery, or

> musing; but great segments of the flux of our ideas consist of something very different from this. They are guided by a distinct purpose or conscious interest. . . we . . . think towards a certain end. (583)

This description is in line with what Addams and others have said about selective memory. Not only does it function as a censor, but as a meaning maker as well. In James's sense, our memories work together through associations to make some sense and to form narratives so that they can be of use to us in our daily lives.

He writes that "it is a matter of popular knowledge that an impression is remembered the better in proportion as it is 1) More recent; 2) More attended to; and 3) More often repeated" (669). This kind of information that tells how people remember things, but even more importantly, how to help people learn things that could be important to them were of preeminent use to Addams in her activities at Hull House. As a coordinator and a mediator, she was also an educator. In the field of educational theory, there was no more noted person at the time than John Dewey, who was influenced by and carried on the work of William James.

It is likely that Addams and perhaps Gilman both were familiar with James's ideas about the physical nature of memory. In *Twenty Years*, Addams mentions having come into contact with him in 1904 at a peace convention (217), but his widespread influence in American thought would suggest that he influenced the well-read Addams's thinking as well. Further evidence that Addams was at least aware of ideas of memory put forward by James is her contact with John Dewey who carried on James's pragmatism at the University of Chicago. In the area of psychology in particular Dewey practiced and taught the functionalist approach for which James was a major proponent. Dewey's long tenure at the University of Chicago, put him in close physical and intellectual proximity with Addams and the other Hull House residents (one of whom was

Gilman for a period of time). Addams mentions the fact that Dewey gave a series of lectures on "Social Psychology" for Miss Lathrop's Plato club (*Twenty Years* 299) and that she had "many talks with Dr. Dewey and with one of the teachers in his school who was a resident at Hull-House" (173).

In fact, Addams collaborated with Dewey in her formation and conception of the Hull House Labor Museum which was designed to help immigrants bridge the wide gap between the way of life from which they came in Southern Europe (as was the case with the majority of Hull House neighborhood immigrants) and the very different life to which they came in Chicago. Addams saw old immigrant women using the crude technologies that they had used in their homelands for generations but which seemed out of place and useless in the American communities where their children where trying to learn American ways of industry and production in order to survive and prosper. The Labor Museum was to "build a bridge between European and American experiences in such wise as to give them both meaning and a sense of relation" (172). These "bridges" would work socially in the same way that James shows that paths of association work in the individual's memory.

Addams uses this same idea to describe a practical use for an immigrant collective memory. In order for the old ways to make sense to young immigrants, and in order to give new ways of producing things new, more complex meaning to them, Addams would forge another collective path of association between their parents' old-world sensibilities and their new, lived experiences in American industry. In explaining her pedagogical theory behind the Labor Museum, she asks:

> Could we not interest the young people working in the neighborhood factories in these older forms of industry, so that, through their own parents and grandparents, they

> would find a dramatic representation of the inherited resources of their daily occupation. If these young people could actually see that the complicated machinery of the factory had been evolved from simple tools, they might at least make a beginning toward that education which Dr. Dewey defines as 'a continuing reconstruction of experience.' They might also lay a foundation for reverence of the past which Goethe declares to be the basis of all sound progress. (172)

Here, Addams directly makes a link between an informed use of social memory and progress. While she relies on the much older ideas of a major thinker of an earlier era to give her *idea* credibility, her *practice* is backed by the most recent scientific and intellectual thought of her own time. Although Addams makes mention of Goethe's romantic ideas about the past, Jamesian ideas of progress and education were behind Addams's formation of the museum.

While Addams's ideas for her practices at Hull House developed along with James's and Dewey's, and while she relies on their very American ideas of Pragmatism, she seems to move toward less American ideas in her sense of collective memory. Even though James describes personal memory proper as working on the conscious level in order to distinguish it from habits, collective memory seems to work at a deeper, less conscious level. In the above example, for instance, Addams sees the value in allowing individual immigrants to make practical use of their memories. At the same time, the younger immigrants will make practical use because of the associations they will later draw between their experiences in the American workplace and their grandparents' memories. This process will, in turn however, reinforce the immigrants' collective memory, and the old and the new will become melded into a collective memory of their

American immigrant experience. While Addams seems to value the individual in a profoundly American way, she focuses more heavily on using a number of personal memories—her own as well as those of women with whom she had contact at Hull House and around the world—to point to a collective memory of womanhood, or what she calls *The Long Road of Woman's Memory*.

Social or Collective Memory

Unlike Addams's relationships with Dewey and, by extension, James, no actual physical connections between the French sociologist, Maurice Halbwachs, and Jane Addams, an American social activist, seem to exist, but their temporal contemporaneity and similarities in their ideas are striking. Although it might be a stretch to make any direct intellectual connections between Jane Addams's ideas on woman's collective memory and those put forth by Halbwachs, there are some similarities between their ideas on social or collective memory. Halbwachs's *The Social Frameworks of Memory*, which was first published in 1925 in French, was not published in English translation until after both Halbwachs and Addams were dead. Halbwachs had been a student of Bergson and then Durkheim, but later became more independent of these influences when he became a member of the faculty at the University of Strasbourg which Lewis A. Coser writes "proved to be an ideal place for a young innovator in the social sciences" such as Halbwachs (9). With Addams, Halbwachs shared an "interest and passion for social reform" (Coser 8). He was at Strasbourg from 1922 until 1935, and it was during this time that he began to form his ideas on collective memory and wrote *The Social Frameworks of Memory*. It was also during his Strasbourg years that Halbwachs was a visiting professor at the University of Chicago in 1930.

Halbwachs is important to the history of Sociology and ideas about memory because he was the first to discuss ideas of collective memory in a scientific and methodological way. Coser calls his work on collective memory

"pathbreaking" (21), and his real influence in the area was not seen until much later in the century. This and the fact that his written work on collective memory and his visit to the University of Chicago occurred after Addams had written both *Twenty Years at Hull-House* and *The Long Road of Woman's Memory* make his *influence* on Addams questionable. One way in which his ideas about collective memory might help us to understand Addams's ideas of woman's collective memory as she describes it in *The Long Road* is in his demystfication of a "socially constructed notion" rather than what might have been thought of as "some mystical group mind" (Coser 22) or, what I would call an essentialism of memory.

Halbwachs's ideas were to place memory in a social context rather than an isolated individual one, since people do not form any of their ideas about the world around them in a completely subjective, individual way. He "believe[d] that the mind reconstructs its memories under the pressure of society" rather than in some psychic vacuum (Halbwachs 51) and that "[w]e cannot property [sic] understand their relative strength and the ways in which they combine within individual thought unless we connect the individual to the various groups of which he is simultaneously a member" (53). This doesn't mean that all members of the group have all of the same individual memories or that they can sense the individual memories of each other. He writes that

> the framework of collective memory confines and binds our most intimate remembrances to each other. It is not necessary that the group be familiar with them. It suffices that we cannot consider them except from the outside—that is by putting ourselves in the position of others—and that in order to retrieve these remembrances we must tread the same path that others would have followed had they been in

our position. (Halbwachs 53)

Collective memory, then, causes people within a group to understand each other and each other's reaction because of shared group and intimate experiences.

Halbwachs explains memory's process in ways similar to James's ideas of association, but for Halbwachs, these associations are always rooted in the social context rather than a temporal one. He writes that "What makes recent memories hang together is not that they are contiguous in time: it is rather that they are part of a totality of thought common to a group, the group of people with whom we have had a relation on the preceding day or days. To recall them it is hence sufficient that we place ourselves in the perspective of this group, that we adopt its interests and follow the slant of its reflections" (Halbwachs 52). So when a member of the group has an experience that becomes a memory, even though the group doesn't share that experience, and therefore that particular memory, the individual's perception of the memory and its meaning are formed because of associations with the group and its shared memories. The memory becomes colored by the group's shared memory of experience.

Can Halbwachs's ideas on collective memory be used to understand Addams's ideas of women's collective memory—what she calls the "long road of woman's memory"? Can his sense of a collective memory help to illustrate her feminist theory? In our current sense of feminism, we have come a long way in pointing out that we cannot lump all people who happen to be born physically female into one homogenous group, but in linking women through memory, Addams seems to be doing just that. Does she simply fall back into nineteenth-century ideas of essentialism? Or is she more scientifically sophisticated in her conception of collective memory?

The idea that all women are not alike just because they have a shared female biology is not so modern as we might think. This has been a heated topic

of feminist discussion especially since the mid-nineteen eighties when women of color, minority women, and working-class women made claims that mainstream feminism was a white, middle-class, privileged movement that did not account for or even try to understand the needs, feelings, or experiences of those who were not white and middle class.[13] Although this issue of race and class has become a major area of discussion in theory and feminism, early feminists were aware of this problem even though they might not have been as theoretically sophisticated as the current discussions.

Virginia Woolf expresses this same idea in her Introductory Letter to *Life as We Have Known It*, an anthology of writings by working women of co-operative guilds in early twentieth-century England. She describes her attendance at a political Congress at which working women expressed their needs and concerns. The letter describes her own concerns about having an active participation in the movement that brought about the Congress. She and her fellow attendees were filled with "disillusionment" and humiliation at their failure to make any real connections to the women who spoke on the need for "baths" and "money." The problem was that the middle-class women at the congress had no shared experience with the working women. Woolf writes:

> To expect us, whose minds, such as they are, fly free at the end of a short length of capital to tie ourselves down again to that narrow plot of acquisitiveness and desires is impossible. We have baths and we have money. Therefore, however much we sympathised our sympathy was largely fictitious . . . not of the heart and of the nerves; and such sympathy is always physically uncomfortable.

---

[13] See especially *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings of Radical Women of Color*, 1985 and other essays and anthologies of this nature.

(xxv-xxvi)

In this physical discomfort, Woolf has identified a middle-class snobbery in her friends. In order to help in this cause, she and her friends must find a way to overcome their distance from the working women's experiences. She proposes that the words of the women featured in the anthology will be a start to this end. They must find a way to "meet" working class women "not as masters and mistresses or customers with a counter between . . . but over the wash-tub or in the parlour casually and congenially as fellow-beings." In order to find "friendship," sympathy," and "liberation," they would have to listen to the "words," "scenes," and "proverbial sayings" of the women whose stories contribute to the book (xxvi).

Although Addams, like Woolf, was a privileged, white middle-class woman, she was aware of the need to know people and their experiences in order to make any real social change in their lives. This is the principle idea behind the settlement movement—that the social servants would live and work among the people who would benefit from and participate in the services rendered. She writes that the problem with people with good intentions to help the poor in most cases is that "they have been shut off from the common labor by which they live" (*Twenty Years* 91) and "that it is difficult to see how the notion of a higher civic life can be fostered save through common intercourse" (92). She is not the only one who was aware of the need for a shared experience in social service because she writes that "our young people feel nervously the need of putting theory into practice" (95). Although Addams doesn't seem to address issues of race, her theories about the motives behind settlement work show that she was aware of differences between women of different classes. Her concerns about how to help bridge the gap between young and old immigrants' experiences in order to make their lives in America more meaningful is also evidence of this.

How then do we account for Addams's notion of woman's collective memory? Like Halbwachs, Addams bases collective memory on experience through evolution rather than biology. Halbwachs writes that "if one posits that recollections pass from parents to their children through heredity, their hereditary experiences cannot spread in the course of time beyond the moment when they had been conceived, since from this moment on there is no longer an organic continuity between their parents and themselves" (Halbwachs 80). Here, he makes a complete separation between memory and biology, and the collective memory extends only to the experiences of the current generation and the past only as it has been conveyed to them by older members of the group. "That is why," he writes, "in contrast to biological processes that would continue with great certainty up to an adult age because they would be guided by ancestral experiences, human beings would be subject to the contingencies of their own experiences from the moment they are of an age to procreate" (Halbwachs 80).

Addams does seems to differ from Halbwachs on this point in that she, like Gilman, uses ideas of social evolution to point to a shared human and female experience. Again, in her discussion about the motives behind the settlement movement, she refers to a "sentiment of universal brotherhood" (*Twenty Years* 91) about which there is "something primordial." (92). She continues this idea of evolutionary connections between people when she writes that "we all bear traces of the starvation struggle which for so long made up the life of the race. Our very organism holds memories and glimpses of that long life of our ancestors which still goes on among so many of our contemporaries." Like Gilman, Addams makes a distinction between nineteenth-century ideas of natural womanhood and what has she believes developed because of our experiences along our

evolutionary road as a "race." [14]

In this same spirit, in *The Long Road*, she writes about an old Irish woman who joined in the labor movement. Addams attributed her willingness to help at the age of seventy to "some dim memory of Irish ancestors, always found on the side of the weak in the unending struggle with the oppressions of the strong" (91). She writes that the woman "may have been dominated by a subconscious suggestion 'from the dust that sleeps,' a suggestion so simple, so insistent and monotonous that it had victoriously survived its original sphere of conduct" (91-2).

We can take some of the mysterious nature out of Addams's notions of woman's collective memory if we consider it in light of Halbwachs's description of how collective memory is formed around class or work. He explains that within certain classes or among the members of groups who perform the same types of jobs there exist shared collective memories. He explains how memory based on occupational experience is developed through the example of the peasantry—people who share in class as well as the types of work they perform:

> One might indeed believe that, because [the peasant's] work is done within the family framework, work and the family are not distinguished in his mind; yet this is not at all the case. Whether he pushes his plow all by himself, mows at the same time as his parents, threshed his wheat with them or keeps busy in the chicken coop, he is in reality linked—and cannot help being linked in his thought—to the peasant collectivity of the village and the region, which engages in the same gestures and performs

[14] Gilman uses the word "species" in most cases rather than "race," but most writers of the time use "race" in this sense of the human race.

> the same operations as he himself does. The members of that collectivity, even if they were not related, could help him or replace him. It matters little when it comes to the results of his work whether it is done by associated kin or by peasants who are not kinsmen. The fact is that work, as well as the soil, is not associated with a specific family, but with peasant activity in general (Halbwachs 66-67).

Here, again, Halbwachs uses the language that James does to talk about the way memory works through "association." In Halbwachs's collective memory, though, these associations are not forged through paths in individuals' minds, but in the minds of the group. In this case, the peasants associate their work with the particular activities that they do in it. As a result, they make associations with others in the community who do the same kind of work. The work ties them to the family only in the same ways that it ties them to the other members of the community.

In the same way, Addams links women because they have performed similar activities historically. They perform the same kinds of domestic activity in raising children and in keeping houses, but at the same time their work in caring for children or keeping the larger "house" of the community does not have to be inextricably linked to the family.[15] Women should use these inherited skills, Addams believes, in more public ways such as in making communities safer and

---

[15] Interestingly, this also seems to support Gilman's argument for the professionalization of housekeeping and child care. Gilman argues that not all women are good at mothering and caring for children. This doesn't mean, she believes that they should not be able to be mothers, but that the culture should allow for those women to be mothers within it. By allowing those women who *have* inherited good mothering to take care of the children, those who have not would be free to do other work, and at the same time, their children will be cared for in a much better way.

more comfortable (more homelike) and in making the world safer (more homelike) by stopping war. She includes excerpts from her conversations with women all over the world who share experiences even when they do not share politics during a time of the upheaval of the first world war. In conclusion to these conversations, she decides that women have a keen insight into the need to protect the world from more wars because of their shared experience and evolution of motherhood. These "suffering mothers" will "defend those at the bottom of society" because of their "haunting memories instinctively challeng[ing] war as the implacable enemy of their age-long undertaking" (140). This "age-long undertaking" is the work of motherhood—protection and caring.

In contrast, she writes about girls who work in factories who perform monotonous activity which shows a "marked contrast in both its origin and motives to the traditional type of endurance exercised by [their] mothers and grandmothers . . . or by their acquaintances among domestic women living in the same crowded tenements" (*The Long Road* 97). She describes the "strength" and "endurance" of mothers caring for "a sick child for days and nights without relief." Through this work, unlike that of the factory workers, "her strength is constantly renewed from the vast reservoirs of maternal love whenever she touches the soft flesh or hears the plaintive voice." The factory girls don't have associations to this "vast reservoir" in their own work as they "are steadily bending their energies to loveless and mechanical labor, and are obliged to go on without this direct and personal renewal of their powers of resistance." Addams writes that even though some women "have not only made a remarkable adaptation but have so ably equipped themselves with a new set of motives" (98), others "are never able to achieve this and can keep on with the factory work only when they persuade themselves that they are getting ready [for] a real living [which] for them must include a home of their own and children to 'do for'" (97-

98).

Addams, rather than seeing these girls as reverting to the conservatism of female stereotypes, believes that their economic condition requires them to misuse their "energies" and their evolutionary memory. Of the situation that is forced on these young women, Addams writes: "Such unutilized dynamic power illustrates the stupid waste of those impulses and affections, registered in the very bodily structure itself, which are ruthlessly pushed aside and considered of no moment to the work in which so many women are now engaged" (98). So Addams's use of the memory or "reservoir" that women use in their work is indeed "registered in the very bodily structure" which sounds like a memory of essentialism, but Addams has deployed this language in a very skillful manner. On the one hand, her religiously and politically conservative readers would agree that mothering is "registered in the very bodily structures." On the other hand, her feminist and politically more radical readers would appreciate the scientific complexity of her argument for women's place in the workplace. She is certainly not saying that women should not be allowed there, especially since there are many who do make a "remarkable adaptation" to factory work, but those whose memory of women's traditional work is so strong as to keep them from adapting should be channeled into different public work in which they could utilize these inherited instincts. Their work could include work similar to that of Addams, that of seeing to the needs of others in a number of service-oriented activities. Many modern feminists would fault Addams for keeping women in service-oriented activities in which they have traditionally remained since Addams's time. These are occupations which do not enjoy societal respect or high pay, but Addams and Gilman both would see the fault in our inability as a culture to bring those jobs and activities to the respect that they deserve. Although some women would adapt to factory work, the culture would not adapt to giving women respect and

economic equality after so many generations of what Gilman calls woman's "dispossession" and "the prison's of today" that represent her estimation of women's economic, emotional, and political dependence on men (*Women and Economics* xi).

Halbwachs was aware of the seeming conservatism of collective memory's influence on the younger generations as they come to their own identities. He describes this process in relation to how young couples go about creating their own new families out of the older existing family groups from which they came. A young person, as well as a young family "feels above all the need to adapt itself to the social milieu in which it must live [and] turns its back on the traditions of the parental groups from which it has just been emancipated" (Halbwachs 83). Rather than an exact reiteration of the older family, though, the young family is a new entity with reminiscences of the old one. Although they look similar to the older family, "these traditions are nevertheless distinct because they are little by little pervaded by the [new] family's particular experiences and because their role is increasingly to insure the family's cohesion and to guarantee its continuity" within the new set of experiences, not the those of the old family (Halbwachs 83). Although the young have to make use of the ways of the older generation to start out, as they participate in their own experiences, distinct from those of the older generation, the younger generation makes changes in the society and its own sense of self.

In *How Societies Remember*, contemporary sociologist Paul Connerton, also associates collective memory's function with societal change rather than conservatism. He even describes collective or social memory as a particular avenue of radical change within societies. He points to the French Revolution which seems to be the cultural event of interest to others who write on the subject of collective memory. He confesses that this is a "paradoxical case because if

there was anywhere you would not expect to find social memory at work it must surely be in times of great revolutions. But the one thing that tends to get forgotten about the French Revolution is that like all beginnings it involved recollection" (4). Social memory, he writes tends "to be seen as the recollection of a cultural tradition; and such a tradition, in turn, has tended to be thought of as something that is inscribed" (4). But Social memory has a profound importance in social change as well in that "all beginnings contain an element of recollection. This is particularly so when a social group makes a concerted effort to begin with a wholly new start" because "the absolutely new is inconceivable," and "in all modes of experience we always base our particular experiences on a prior context in order to ensure that they are intelligible at all" (6). Connerton's description of social memory is reminiscent of Halbwachs's conception of collective memory and its role in social change. Both know that it is an element of conservatism, but Connerton ascribes social memory with an even more radical role.

Patrick Hutton in *History as an Art of Memory* also points to the French Revolution and its later commemorative rituals in his discussion of how history functions as what he calls the "art of memory." Hutton sets out to describe social memory in the form of history as a manifestation of memory as an institution. This idea will become important in my examination of Cather's use of memory. Like both Gilman and Addams, Cather sees problems in the structure of society, in the way that families and homes are set up, and in the relationships between women and homes and women and their work. Unlike Gilman and Addams, Cather seems to be concerned almost exclusively with "artists" and the need for those people who embody an artistic spirit to be accommodated in these relationships. Although gender is an issue for Cather and her characters, it takes a back seat to her concerns for artists. These artists, who are mostly women (especially the successful ones), exist in a continuous flux between their need for

tradition and the richness of the art and beauty of the past and their need to create something new and refreshing. Cather's artists, if they are to become successful, always realize on some level the importance of an artistic tradition.

Cather and Memory as Cultural History: Artistic "Echoes" and "Ripples"

Gilman's and Addams's ideas of memory are shaped in great part by their ideas of evolution and humanity's history. In most part, Gilman sees memory as a force which holds the progress of humanity back, while Addams and Cather both use memory as an important tie that women of their time could and should use to aid progress. While Gilman and Addams are both clearly concerned with and in favor of the progress of society, each woman sees the changes that must take place to cause progress as coming from different sources. On the one hand, Gilman sees change only occurring as the result of complete breaks with the past; the past, to her, holds no value for the progressive citizens of the twentieth century. Addams, on the other hand, sees inherent value in the "long road of woman's memory" through which women have maintained the development of their most important qualities and skills.

Gilman disparages memory, or in Greene's and Doane's and Hodges's terms, nostalgia, while Addams constructively uses ideas of collective and autobiographical memory to describe means of social change. Cather seems to work both within and against these two frameworks in her use of what I will call literary (or cultural) memory, collective (or social), and autobiographical (or personal) memory. While she seems to become nostalgic in her novels and short stories by looking to the past, she also draws constructively on those images of the past to create individual identities for her characters and to describe the roles that memory plays in intergenerational change.

At the same time, Cather relies on an institution of literary, artistic, and cultural memory on which she as well as her artistic characters draw a sense of art

and an ability to see the world through art. In a 1924 interview with Rose Feld, Cather discussed the importance of tradition for true art and the institutions that uphold that tradition. She sets up a comparison between the Americans and the French, who possess a "good sense of discrimination" that "we [Americans] haven't yet acquired." We are not like the French in that we do not "have a great purity of tradition" (qtd in Feld 70). In her estimation, the tradition of French art is restrictive (inscribed and conservative) but appreciative of true artistic innovation when it has stood the test of the tradition that it is measured against:

> [The French] all but murder originality, and yet they worship it. The taste of the nation is represented by the Academy; it is a corrective rod which the young artist ever dreads. He revolts against it, but he cannot free himself from it. He cannot pull the wool over the eyes of the academy by saying his is a new movement, an original movement, a breaking away from the old. His work is judged on its merits, and if it isn't good, he gets spanked. (70)

In contrast, Cather has a lower opinion of what she sees as American's less artistic sensibilities which have no traditional yardstick. As a result, we accept anything "new" as art. She tells Feld that "here in America, on the other hand, every little glimmer of color calls itself art; every youth that misuses a brush calls himself an artist, and an adoring group of admirers flatter and gush over him. It's rather pathetic" (qtd by Feld 70).

In this interview, Cather shares T. S. Eliot's views in "Tradition and the Individual Talent." Eliot spent most of his adult life in Europe, and saw the importance of a rich tradition, an institution even, of artistic standards. He writes that "no poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His

significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead" (Eliot 29). This does not mean that Eliot and Cather did not see the importance of the newness brought to that tradition by each generation. A few lines after his expression of the importance of the past, Eliot writes that "the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past. And the poet who is aware of this will be aware of great difficulties and responsibilities" (29). The artist has the responsibility to uphold a quality of tradition, but at the same time that artist has a responsibility to build into that tradition and not simply mimic the art that has already been produced.

While Cather, like Addams, sees value in the retained memories of the past, her goals and agendas in her use of the idea of memory are quite different from those of Gilman and Addams. Cather uses memory in a less gendered way to discuss the knowledge base that humans have that allows them to be creative, artistic, and to develop ingenuity. Most of Cather's artists, though, who draw from racial memories of the past in order to develop their artistic skills, are women—Àntonia Shimerda, Alexandra Bergson, Thea Kronborg, and others.

Cather seems to see a place in societies for different types of people divided between those who are "movers and shakers" in her stories and those who remain stationary. I call these movers her "artists" even though they have different callings. Some have artistic talent in the literal, traditional sense (Thea Kronborg's musical abilities); some use their artistic spirit for other goals (Bartley Alexander's bridge designing or Alexandra Bergson's and Ántonia Shimerda's use of the land). There is perhaps an intermediary position which includes those people who can really see and understand the "artists" but who realize (either from the beginning or by the end of the story) that they will never really be a part of the "artist's" art. Somehow, it is enough to stand in that person's "echo" or

"ripples," as is the case with Bartley Alexander's wife, mistress, and old childhood friend ("Alexander's Bridge" 552).

In *The Song of the Lark*, Thea Kronborg represents "refreshments" and "dreams" to her home townspeople (*Song* 488) or at least to those who really understand her greatness. She is a true artist surrounded by a group of people who recognize her artistic talent. These people include her mother, Dr. Archie, the people of "Mexican Town," the old Kohlers, and her piano teacher, Professor Wunsch. The teacher has failed on his own art, but he tries to encourage and participate in Thea's art through memory. The old professor constantly tells Thea to "remember" during her lessons, but after she leaves, he is always left in a reverie of memories of his own brush with greatness, now long past. A line of music she had played one day awakes "many memories. He was thinking of youth; of his own, so long gone by, and of his pupil's, just beginning. He would even have cherished hopes for her, except that he had become superstitious" (170). He feels "alarmed" that he is "tempted to hope for another" after all of the poverty and bad luck of his own life. Still he can sense something special in Thea:

> It was his pupil's power of application, her rugged will, that interested him. He had lived for so long among people whose sole ambition was to get something for nothing that he had learned not to look for seriousness in anyone. Now that he by chance encountered it, it recalled standards, ambitions, a society long forgot. What was it she reminded him of? A yellow flower full of sunlight, perhaps. No; a thin glass full of sweet-smelling, sparkling Moselle wine. (170)

Professor Wunsch's reverie is just one of many examples of the definite ties

between ideas of memory and the artistic spirit and identity in Cather's fiction.

His memory is also an example of the way that Cather layers different types of memory to create her own art. Here, Thea is getting some of her first exposure to the tradition of musical greatness that has been established before her. Throughout the rest of the novel, we see her continued exposure to this tradition as she develops her own artistic ability and places her own particular addition to that tradition. In this early memory lesson, however, her teacher, the old professor, makes his own associations between the particular piece that Thea is practicing in the lesson and his own autobiographical memories. He connects Thea's zeal for the music to his own youth and new excitement for the beauty and complexity of it. Thea's newness has brought the old, drunken music teacher back into the tradition of the art from which he had been alienated by the "pathetic" "misuse" of art that Cather refers to in her interview with Feld. In this example, Cather layers the institution and the tradition of cultural memory over daily memory lessons and personal associative memory. In this layering, she shows that these kinds of memory often work together to strengthen and enrich each other.

Where Cather seems to limit this access to greatness through memory is in its selective character. It seems that, in Cather's fictional universe, some people are just born that way; some are not. Some are so far away from it that they can't even understand it as is the case with the mothers in Moonstone who think that talent "mean[s] that a child must have her hair curled every day and must play in public" (*Song* 166). Thea Kronborg's mother knows that talent doesn't come to everyone and that when it comes, it must be nurtured. Unlike those other mothers in town, she knows that talent "mean[s] that Thea must practise four hours a day. A child with talent must be kept at the piano, just as a child with the measles must be kept under the blankets" (166). A mother's nurturing home will become

central to Cather's as well as Gilman's and Addams's sense of memory and feminist change.

Memory is a central and prolific motif in many of Cather's works. Some, such as *The Song of the Lark*, make use of the word or some derivation, synonym, or antonym of it on every few pages. Her fiction often begins and ends with the idea of memory or *either* begins *or* ends with the motif as can be seen in *My Ántonia, O Pioneers!, The Song of the Lark*, and "Alexander's Bridge" to name a few.

My Ántonia begins with the meeting of two friends from the same small, prairie town. They meet on a train and remember times and people from back home. On the first page of the Introduction, the two men discuss the tie that binds them through the memories of the harsh environment that they grew up in—their home: "The dust and the heat, burning wind, reminded us of many things. We were talking of what it is like to spend one's childhood in little towns like these . . . We agreed that no one who had not grown up in a little prairie town could know anything about it" (Introduction n.p.) After telling the story of Ántonia Shimerda, whose life story through the eyes of the narrator makes up the novel, the narrator comes back to end the manuscript with the importance of memory on his relationship with his beloved Ántonia. The last line of the novel tells us that he "understood that the same road was to bring us together again. What ever we had missed, we possessed together the precious, the incommunicable past" (372). Cather, through Jim's memories of home and Àntonia, tries to make his readers understand something about life in a small, midwestern town, but throughout, she also shows us Àntonia as an artist of the land.

In this scene, Cather presents us with one her faithful followers of the artist. Jim, the narrator, knows the importance of Ántonia's spirit from their shared experiences of childhood. In remembering her and their hometown, the

two men meeting on a train are discussing the shared collective memory that is only accessible to the group that is made up of the people of their own small, midwestern town. They understand that no one outside of that small group can see the world exactly as they have because of their shared experience. At the same time, no one can understand Ántonia as they do. In writing the story of her life (or at least his access to it) Jim is asserting that he shares a collective memory with Ántonia that no one else has. As a result, he has a special version of the story that he writes down and calls "*My* Ántonia."

O Pioneers! also begins and ends with the memory motif. It begins with a literary recollection in the first line: "One January day, thirty years ago. . ." (7). When the thirty years are completed, a lot of memories have been made between the main characters of the story. As is the case in *My Ántonia*, the two main characters are reunited in the end. This time, Alexandra and Carl have decided to get married, despite what everyone else in their family and community thinks. The book ends with the two walking together and contemplating the past and the future. Their conversation and the narrator's comments on it at the end of the story make up the last two pages. Carl says to Alexandra: "You belong to the land . . . as you have always said. Now more than ever." She replies, "Yes, now more than ever. You remember what you once said about the graveyard, and the old story writing itself over? Only it is we who wrote it, with the best we have." Alexandra and Carl understand the land as the important medium of Alexandra's art—her productive use and understanding of the land. Since the cultivation of the land is a community effort, this community has had a close view of Alexandra's artistic efforts. The graves represent the tradition to which Alexandra has added her part. But throughout her life, the same community has seen her make profound detours from the way that farming had always been done by the people there.

Alexandra and Carl continue to discuss memories of their past discussions and their feelings of safety in their decision to marry. Alexandra describes memories of her lifetime and those of her ancestors' lives as a story that is told over and over as we keep reliving it. The narrator then carries the memories into the future to "remember" the importance of Alexandra's life: "They went on into the house together, leaving the divide behind them, under the evening star. Fortunate country, that is one day to receive hearts like Alexandra's into its bosom, to give them out again in the yellow wheat, in the rustling corn, in the shining eyes of youth!" (141). The land/home and the past of their ancestors are tied together in the graveyard, and the land/home and the future are tied together through Cather's figurative connections between the "yellow wheat" and the "shining eyes of youth." "This "yellow wheat," "rustling corn," and "shining eyes of youth" are the hope for future generations of artists who will hear the "story" and continue to write it. These future artists, like Alexandra, must combine a use of a collective memory with a new and individual sensibility to renew the "story." Those who are like Alexandra and Cather's other "artists" will continue to "tell" it; the rest of us will "hear" it, if we are lucky.

The Song of the Lark likewise ends with the idea that memory ties the generations together. In this case, it is the end of the life story of Thea Kronborg—Moonstone's artist who rose above her small-town beginnings to make it as a famous opera singer. It is important that the small town exists to spawn her artistic ability, and she is important in that she gives hope to the small town, the residents of which can never really understand her or her talent. Once again, Cather ends the novel with connections between these small people and the memories of the artists that they have sent into the world. The last line of the novel reads: "So, into all the little settlements of quiet people, tidings of what their boys and girls are doing in the world bring refreshments; bring to the old,

memories, and to the young, dreams" (488). Things must have a certain continuity (even a certain conservatism or sameness) in order to change. Artistic individuals must remember the past and home even though they often must leave their homes and communities in order to produce their art or to reach their full potential as artists.

Cather's short story, "Alexander's Bridge," continues in this style of beginning and ending with the memory motif. This occurs as early as the third page when Mrs. Alexander and Wilson, an old friend of her husband's, are discussing the absent man's past. Mrs. Alexander explains her own feelings about her artist-husband's memory:

> it must have been a flash of distrust I have come to feel whenever I meet any of the people who knew Bartley when he was a boy. It is always as if they were talking of someone I had never met. Really, Professor Wilson, it would seem that he grew up among the strangest people. They usually say that he has turned out very well, or remark that he always was a fine fellow. I never know what to reply. (493)

Then, a little later, she tells Wilson that she "should like to know what [Mr. Alexander] was really like when he was a boy. I don't believe he remembers" (494). Bartley Alexander has no ties to the past, no continuity through autobiographical or collective memory. It is seemingly this *lack of memory* that is his downfall in his life, figuratively when he can no longer balance his American wife in Boston and his English mistress in London. The lack of memory also leads to the literal falling of the bridge that he has designed when it loses balance, and he is killed in the collapse. The conversation between Bartley's friend and wife continues as Wilson agrees to help Mrs. Alexander "remember" her

husband's childhood for him: "You want to look down through my memory?" he asks her. "There he is. Away with perspective! No past, no future for Bartley; just the fiery moment. The only moment that ever was or will be in the world!" (494). Here, we see that Bartley Alexander is quite different from Alexandra Bergson who knows the importance of what she has done to the land, but she also is aware of her reliance on those in the graveyard and the "shining eyes of youth" in her community.

The difference between Alexander in "Alexander's Bridge" and Thea in *The Song of the Lark* is in their endings and in their relationships to their memories.[16] Thea, after much work and hardship, becomes a successful artist. Throughout her life, however, she never forgets where she came from. Her friends in poor "Mexican Town" have influenced her art as much as the beautiful colors of the sun on the sand in the desert, as much as her small-town Moonstone, and as much as her Scandinavian ancestors. In this sense, despite her constant physical distance, Thea always has a connection between her art and her home. Bartley, in contrast, ultimately fails. His life falls apart, and his bridge falls down. He has never been able to "remember" as we learn at the beginning of the story. This lack of memory becomes vitally important throughout the story because even though all of her artists need someone who can help them remember the past, home, and ancestors—where they have come from—to sustain the development of their artistic spirit, that other person cannot do the "remembering" for them, as Mrs. Alexander tries to do. This "memory" must be incorporated into the art somehow.

The end of Alexander's story is a reverie about the now-dead Bartley

---

[16] In Chapter Four, I will also show that their differences are in the relationships between the ways that these two characters make connections between these memories and their homes.

Alexander. He is an artist (albeit a failed artist) who strikes the hearts and emotions of everyone whose life he touches. These are the support group of the artist who can see his greatness yet never really be a part of it. For Alexander, they include Wilson, his old friend; Hilda, his mistress; and Winifred, his wife. After he is gone, all they can do is remember him. Wilson describes this condition to the understanding Hilda: "Wilson nodded. 'Oh, yes! He left an echo. The ripples go on in all of us. He belonged to the people who make the play, and most of us are only onlookers at best. We should n't wonder too much at Mrs. Alexander. She must feel how useless it would be to stir about, that she may as well sit still; that nothing can happen to her after Bartley'" (552).

Ironically, it would seem almost that Mrs. Alexander is an artist, of sorts, herself. Perhaps her art is Bartley. When he fails, both as a husband and as an architect, she fails as well. Wilson describes her as "cold for everything but him" after her husband's death. When he visits her for the last time, he thinks "'Forget thyself to marble' . . . her happiness was a happiness *a deux*, not apart from the world, but actually against it" (551). She could not do Bartley's "remembering" for him in life, and in death she has no purpose because she cannot forget him.

Questions to be addressed here deal with Cather's literary conservatism with regard to her use of ideas of memory. Is she simply "nostalgic" about the past, conserving old ways? Do her characters represent means for social change, radical or otherwise? Do their memories, which play so prominently in each work, construct or progress? Or do they hold the artists and other characters back in ways similar to what Gilman sees as antiquated ideas of homes and families, holding back society in general and women in particular? Cather's use of memory becomes quite complicated in that we see it working on several literary levels. Cather makes use of a combination of autobiographical, collective and

literary/cultural memory in each of her characters.[17] It is my argument that ultimately, her use of the past, and memories of it are the stuff that enables her "artists" to excel or to find their callings—to find their creative, expressive, and artistic identities.

These identities are in direct opposition to traditional ones—especially for women. It doesn't seem to be an accident that most of her artists are women. By the end of their stories, we see them as success stories, even if they are not seen as such by their communities. It seems that it is important that at least one person understand their greatness to carry it on to the next generation. Each of these artists draw from the past and memories of it by way of their own experiences or the telling of memories by parents or older people in the community. Since many of the artists are immigrants, or at least live in immigrant communities, these memories often go back to the Old World.[18] In contrast to these women characters, Bartley Alexander can not even remember his own past, much less make connections to a further past; his life and art are, as a result, a failure. Those who are closest to him speak of him quietly amongst themselves, but don't seem to pass his art along to any future. Even his wife seems to die along with him.[19]

---

[17] As an example of this, we have seen Thea Kronberg drawing from a collective memory through her exposure to various elements of her community as she grows up in Moonstone, an autobiographical memory that we trace through the novel from her early childhood through her adulthood, and the institutions of artistic memory that she begins to learn through her exposure to German music with Professor Munch and continues after she leaves Moonstone to study music in Chicago and later, Germany.

[18] This important resource of old-world memories and stories will become important when I compare Cather's artists to the real women that Addams describes in her narratives of women's memories.

[19] Interestingly, other failed artists are also male. In Cather's short story, "Paul's Case," a young boy's artistic sensibilities are stifled by an insensitive home and school. Like, Alexander, Paul never seems to have a sense of the need to identify with the past or a tradition. Paul, like Ántonia's father, commits suicide as a result. Ántonia's father is also an artist who passes the spirit of his old-world ties on to his daughter. He has a strong remembrance of the past and its tradition.

The use of collective memory to construct identity and character in Cather's works takes on a particularly gendered nature. We see this gender paradigm in which women artists move in and out of the expectations that their communities have for them, in which memory shapes their artistic identities, and in which the women artists have a conflicted relationship to homes throughout their lives. They have a need to leave the homes of their birth or youth because of these very gender expectations, while they still need to draw from the comfort of home life and memory.

Perhaps this paradigm is most acutely evident in the case of Ántonia Shimerda who not only holds to her European heritage, but actually remembers the Old Country, unlike many of her younger contemporaries. This gender and ethnic identity is a constant struggle within her family because of her father's wishes to retain the family's ties to the Old World (especially through the music that he has brought with him). Her brother tries to hide their old-world connections and works to eke out a living on their American farm. This gender identity is also complicated because Ántonia's story is told to us through the eyes of Jim, who is a man and romanticizes her identity. These two characters, I will argue in Chapter Four, take opposing gender roles and then switch those by the end of the story. This switch is directly related to their memories of their ancestors and to their complicated connections with the town and home. Both Jim, the character, and Jim, the narrator, struggle with acceptance of both of the "genders" that Ántonia embodies. His lack of acceptance is colored by his

---

Why then does he fail? Perhaps it is a matter of age—he would have to make radical changes to see his rich tradition thrive in the harsh struggle in the New World. Perhaps it is because of his inability to change at all. Remember that the real artist, as described by both Cather and Eliot, must bring something new to the tradition as well as carry the weight of the bulk of that tradition. Perhaps it is because his *is* a male character in which case Cather's work follows the theories of women's collective memory that Addams presents.

knowledge of the town's perceptions of Ántonia. They always think that she is a little strange, and when she is growing up, all of the women in the town try to make her into a "proper lady." Despite all of their well-intentioned interference, Jim knows that they can never understand Ántonia in the way that he does. Finally, as an adult, his memories of her compel him to tell "her" story so that he can make the world understand her correctly. We know that this can not be completely "hers," however, because after giving the manuscript entitled "Ántonia" to his friend from the train, Jim thoughtfully hand writes "My" before the name (Introduction n. p.). Just as Mrs. Alexander must revolve around Bartley to really live, Jim must own "his Ántonia" in his memories. In these two examples, memory works in stifling, "nostalgic" ways for these two friends of artists because rather than allowing their artists to realize their own artistic identities, they both try to hold their artists to conventional gender roles.

All of Cather's women artists flourish because of the artistic identities that they create through a combination of their memories of the past and their own abilities, but each one struggles in the search for these identities because of the stifling expectations and gender conventions of the communities from which they come. Jim and the rest of the community try to make Ántonia into their own ideas of what a woman should be. Thea's Moonstone neighbors expect her to "curl her hair" and "perform" for them on social occasions rather than running off to foreign places to study music and sitting for hours at her piano practicing. Alexandra Bergson's neighbors are baffled by her drive to run the family farm rather than marrying and raising a family. Then, when they have accepted her spinsterhood and strong business sense, they cannot account for her desire to marry at such a late age. Even Bartley, Cather's failed artist experiences a similar clash with community expectations. Mrs. Alexander, while providing a comfortable home, expects Bartley to be content with a simple home life and one

lover, as all good husbands should. Unlike Bartley, the women artists realize that they both need and are repelled by the dual nature of the communities. They also realize that they must use their memories in constructive ways rather than in nostalgic ones.[20]

*****

In her radical picture of the American society's future, and as that picture is drawn in both her literary works and her social texts, Gilman deals with the major concerns of both Willa Cather and Jane Addams. These two contemporaries had very different projects from each other in their works and lives but seem to have centered in on either of Gilman's two main issues. Both of these deal with the need for society to change in order to allow women more freedom and more equitable conditions within society. First, Cather is concerned with this change for artistic, literary, and expressive reasons; she saw the need for change exemplified by the artistic life. Gilman deals with this issue in *Women and Economics*, especially in Chapter IV. Addams was concerned in her writings and social activities with this need for change based on scientific, evolutionary reasons for women to have more prominently public places within society. Addams's and Cather's sense of the need for change, then, is not "conservative" even if not "radical" in the most extreme sense. We will see from Gilman's ideas that in order for women to enjoy the changes in society that Cather and Addams see, society must change in the ways that Gilman does.

Gilman spells out evolutionary justifications for her call for change. (She would perhaps instead call it an announcement of the change that was already

---

[20] In Chapter Four, I will discuss this need for home life experienced by these female artists and how Gilman's vision of a different society would make their lives more productive and their identities less conflicted. I will also discuss the relationship between the idea of home and memory in these and other feminist writers.

occurring.) She deals with this theory of change throughout *Women and Economics*, but especially in Chapter VII. To Gilman these issues point to the two things that make up the essence of human-ess—to create and express and to care for others to perpetuate the race. Cather and Addams maintain that this "essence" comes through women's collective and artistic memory that allows for a creative use of ideas from the past to evoke change. Feminist expressions of Cather and Addams fall neatly into these two elements of human life—art and service. These expressions are located in their discussions and portrayals of homes both as cultural ideals and as physical places.

PART II—ARCHITECTURE OF HOMES AND SOCIETY: GILMAN'S ARCHITECTURE, CATHER'S ARTISTS, AND ADDAMS'S REVISION OF THE WOMAN'S SPHERE

Chapter Three: Homes and Memory, Change, and Creative Expression

> The old-fashioned housewife exclaims at the lack of storage in the house of to-day, and we are eliminating still more. A twentieth-century axiom is, "Throw or give away everything you have not immediate or prospective use for.
> —Ellen H. Richards, *The Cost of Shelter* (115)

> The home is an incarnate past to us.
> —Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Home* (29)

Ellen H. Richards, a leading turn-of-the-century voice in the new science of "home economics," epitomizes the spirit of change that Gilman advocates in her nonfiction and exemplifies in her fiction. Richards's proclamation that the "axiom" of the new century should be to "throw or give away" anything that does not have immediate use mirrors Gilman's language of memory and forgetting in *Women and Economics* and *The Home* where she resolutely calls for change in the way that homes are set up based on a nonprogressive, collective memory from the past. Gilman makes an examination of how homes affect women's lives and, by extension, how they had been adversely affecting all of society, but her immediate concerns are with the way that homes are set up physically. This architecture of the home, she believes, is at the root of women's economic dependence on men. [21]

[21] The artistic, expressive, and economic dependence of women on men will be central to my discussion in the next chapter.

As I argued in Chapter One, we have to be careful when using elusive terms such as "conservative" and "radical" feminisms, especially when we are dealing with writers from a time with different ideas of tradition and different ideas of the meanings of the radical. It is, however, safe to say that women's association with the home is a rather conservative and traditional idea, at least since the nineteenth century which was the frame of reference from which Gilman and her contemporaries worked. Women are traditionally associated with the home as homemakers or even as members of the family who remain in the home exclusively. The rest of my discussion will be focused around Gilman's, Cather's, and Addams's use of traditional ideas of the home to engender change in the culture and in women's lives. Each located her particular avenue for new ways to see the world in her ideas of the home mixed with her individual theories of memory. In this chapter, I will focus on the associations between women, homes, and "memory." Then, I will turn to Gilman's call for change—for a forgetting of American "home" ideas and her visions for new ways of designing and making use of homes. Gilman gives historical and scientific discussions of problems with the way that homes are set up both physically and conceptually because of the "sway of the past." Although these are problems that are practical and affect individuals within individual homes, they are also theoretical and effect the way that the overall society functions and the ways that women function within it.

Homes and Memory

"Memory" has historically been connected to homes as both markers of cultural ideas and of physical embodiments of the past. Frances Yates, who was the "first to show us the intellectual significance of the memory palace and the forgotten history of the art of memory" (Hutton 168), asserts the connection between the idea of memory and physical structures of buildings when she

describes the legendary "discovery" of the art of memory in classical Greece. As the legend goes, the poet Simonides had left a banquet only minutes before "the roof of the baqueting hall fell in crushing . . . all of the guests to death beneath the ruins" (1). The bodies of the people at the banquet were so mutilated in the destruction that they could not be identified by their relatives. Simonides helped to identify them all by making mental note of the arrangement and features of the building in order to remember where each person was located at the banquet. As a poet who chanted poetry as entertainment at the banquet, memory was essential to Simonides's profession, and he "realized that orderly arrangement is essential for good memory" (2). Applying this principle and the "orderly" arrangement of the building before the disaster, all of the revelers were identified for their loved ones, and the classical "art of memory" was invented. Classical rhetoricians were taught to improve their memories to orate in an organized and detailed way by associating each point of a speech with a particular place in a building as Simonides had done in the banquet hall (Yates 1-2). Thus, memory has had a strong connection with physical spaces and structures in Western and thought.

Also writing at the turn of the century, James and Halbwachs each make psychological associations between memory and the home. James makes a more cursory connection between the two ideas than Halbwachs's more detailed discussion, but it is worth noting here that James writes that "we make a search in our memory for a forgotten idea, just as we rummage our houses for a lost object" (James 654). Here, James refers to similar associations that the classical rhetoricians made in the art of memory.

Halbwachs has the idea that our earliest associations and, therefore, our earliest memories come from the home and the family. These associations become "interiorized" and "enclosed within the limits of the family. But after we are called by the outside world, on the contrary, we leave the intimate sphere, and

memory is deployed outside. From then on our life is made of our relations; our history becomes their history" (Halbwachs 81). As Halbwachs characterizes memory, the source of memory and identity is always the home and family collectively. Although most people at some point, and especially at the time of Halbwachs's writing, most men, must eventually leave the physical boundaries of the home, identity and memory always return to and are shaped by that home. In Halbwachs's sense of memory as based on and shaper of relationships, those first associations will always color the nature of relationships that are based in associations outside of the family and home:

> We extend family memory in such a way as to encompass recollections of our worldly life, for example. Or we place our family recollections in the frameworks where our society retrieves its part. This amounts to considering our family from the point of view of other groups, or, inversely, to combining, along with recollection, modes of thinking belonging to the former and the latter. (81)

In Halbwachs's sense of collective and individual memory, we must always at least start out with homes as vantage points from which to shape our lives and from which to interpret history. According to Halbwachs, our homes shape the societies that we live in as much as our societies shape our homes. An integral part of our history, then, has become the way that we set up homes based on the ways that we remember them from our own childhoods.

Gilman's contemporary, Ellen Richards also makes this connection between the idea of the home and memory. While Richards makes some of the same arguments as Gilman concerning the need for changes in houses as buildings and ideas, she is well aware of the feelings and emotions that are attached to the ideas of "home" within the "Anglo-Saxon race." She tells us that

"around it cluster the memories of childhood" (1). Given the classical associations between the home's conservative manifestations and memory and similar associations spelled out by contemporaries of Gilman, it is not surprising that she also makes associations between memory and the home. Gilman describes this connection as a result of early humanity's common need for a place of shelter and safety for the young and weak. She writes that the need is not unique to our species, but common to all animals:

> Far down below humanity, where 'the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests,' there begins the deep home feeling. Maternal instinct seeks a place to shelter the defenceless young, while the mother goes abroad for food. The first sharp impressions of infancy are associated with the sheltering walls of home, be it the swinging cradle of the branches, the soft dark hollow of a tree, or in the cave with its hidden lair. (*Women and Economics* 220-1)

Gilman describes common affectionate memories of home as both racial and individual. Homes are the "first sharp impressions of infancy" that are carried collectively and individually within the human species. But Gilman also alludes to a source for the associations between homes and the female of all mammals as mothers. Throughout the history of humanity, it has been "maternal instinct," she writes, that "seeks" homes.

In effect, Gilman sees a historical, scientific basis for the traditional associations linking homes, memory, and women, but she also realizes a cultural connection in humanity's association of woman with the home that differs from the condition of other mammals. Since it requires a longer duration of time to raise human children than it does most other animals, we "become more conscious of our relation" to our offspring (*The Home* 20). As a result, "the extension of the family from a temporary reproductive group to a permanent

social group is [a] human addition to the home idea" (*The Home* 20). Along with "private property rights" and "the exaltation of blood-relationships," Gilman writes, an important "feature of home life . . . which has contributed enormously to our home sentiment" is "the position of women" (21-22). This "position" Gilman assures has its "rise, no doubt in the overlapping babyhood" that occurs in human reproduction and rearing and in the fact that "women became, practically, property." This position of continuous reproduction and subjugation was the cause of the "habit" of "associating women more continuously with the home" (22). This position and association, Gilman writes, is "manifested most in the male" (29). The human male, "by forcibly combining the woman with the home in his mind, and forcibly compelling her to stay there in body, then, conversely, by taking himself out and away as completely as possible," has "turned the expanding lines of social progress away from the home and left the ultra-feminised woman to ultra-conservatism therein" (29). Gilman's argument in most of *The Home* and *Women and Economics* is that in the current state of humanity's evolution, there is a strong but outdated association between these ideas. The over emphasis of the association in the culture has led to problems within the culture and in women's lives. Since we have outgrown the association, it is a part of our racial "memory" that needs to be forgotten, or at least altered to fit current needs.

In Gilman's feminist theory, our social evolution has progressed in many avenues, but because the home has not progressed along with the rest of the culture, the culture's overall evolution has been stunted. In *The Home* she writes that "the essential changes that follow changed conditions" always reacted with "the downward pull of inviolate home-tradition, to hold back evolution when it could" (Gilman *The Home* 27). Gilman calls for a concerted effort to change the structures and concepts of homes in American culture. She asks for these changes

because she believes they will make the society better in general, but most importantly, she believes that they will help to facilitate evolutionary changes that were already taking place. In Chapter VIII of *Women and Economics*, she calls her proposal to change American homes a "radical change" (146). The impetus of these radical changes is not hers alone, she writes, but the path of sociological change to which our evolutionary state of existence had been developing. She writes that there is "an undeniable proof of the radical change in the economic position of women that is advancing upon us" (*Women and Economics* 153). Gilman believed that women would have economic independence because the of law of our racial "progress." This "law" is described in *The Home*: "Nature has one more law to govern life besides self-preservation and reproduction—progress. To be, to re-be, and to be better is the law" (88). Since Gilman believed that economic independence for women is an inevitable end, it followed that the culture should make the change easier and smoother by altering the structure of home life.

This alteration would call for the forgetting of some of our most cherished, past cultural images of homes. These cherished images include that of a home with fires kept burning by a mother who is always present. They also include images of childhood spent in the home with a mother either alone or with the help of servants. Gilman again uses the language of memory and forgetting to describe the need for change. In order "simply to give a general impression of the continual flux and growth of the human home as an institution" (*The Home* 88), we will have to check "our human characteristic of remembering, recording, and venerating the past" (29).

Gilman and Richards agree on the need for houses to progress along with other advancements of society. She writes that even though there are no more "pioneer and colonial communities on this continent," we should "not waste tears

on [their] passing, but address ourselves to the future" (Richards 5). We are always affected by those who come before us, but unlike Richards, Gilman asserts that that influence should be reevaluated by every generation to ascertain the practicality of the sway of the past. In Gilman's estimation, "the influence of our ancestors has dominated the home more than any other human institution, and the influence of our ancestors is necessarily retroactive" in that area (*The Home* 25). The old, perhaps even prehuman, impulses and associations between home and sanctity, safety, and shelter from the ravages of beasts and other humans were collective and conservative elements in Gilman's time as well as our own that keep us from seeing "progress in the home ideas" (*The Home* 31). Conversely, Richards asserts that although houses have changed over time, "the need of the race is just the same: protection, safety from danger, a shield for the young child, a place where it can grow normally in peaceful quiet." At the same time however, Richards seems to agree with Gilman's concern regarding uncritical acceptance of history's models for the human home. She confidently announces this principle: "It behooves the community to inquire whether the houses of to-day are fulfilling the primary purposes of the race in the midst of various other uses to which modern man is putting them" (2-3).

In 1897, another well-known turn-of-the-century woman writer, Edith Wharton, and her co-author, Ogden Codman, Jr., published *The Decoration of Houses* in which they express some of the same concerns about the need for changes to the structure of houses. The thesis of their book is that houses should be designed and decorated with "the chief end . . . being the suitable accommodation of the inmates of the house" (Wharton and Codman n.p.). They focus a great deal on art and beauty in the book, but their concern for an uncritical reliance on the past in home building and decoration is in line with Gilman's concerns for change. In their introductions to the 1978 reprint of the turn-of-the-

century book, John Barrington Bayley and William A. Coles each mention several times the importance of practicality, "suitability," and "appropriateness" to the authors. Wharton and Codman protest the design and decoration of Victorian houses on the basis that they were not practical for people's current needs. Like Gilman, they argue that a strong tradition of how houses should be built keeps them from being designed with contemporary needs and lifestyles in mind. They remind their readers that "our whole mode of life has so entirely changed since the days in which these buildings were erected that they no longer answer to our needs. It is only necessary to picture the lives led in those days to see how far removed from them our present social conditions are" (Wharton and Codman 2). Like Gilman, they refer to an earlier age when human's concerns for erecting homes were based more on safety and shelter than comfort and social interaction:

> Inside and outside the house, all told of the unsettled condition of country or town, the danger of armed attack, the clumsy means of defence, the insecurity of property, the few opportunities of social intercourse as we understand it. A man's house was in very truth his castle in the middle ages, and in France and England especially it remained so until the end of the sixteenth century. (Wharton and Codman 2)

Victorian houses, they tell us, recall feudal systems no longer used or practical. American houses replicate most prominently those of France and England whose "architecture was proportionately slow to give up many of [their] feudal characteristics" (Wharton and Codman 3). [22]

---

[22] Wharton and Codman assert that houses in Italy would perhaps be more appropriate models for contemporary homes since they were based on the need for social interaction. Unlike the motivations for style in France and England, in Italy "life being relatively secure, social intercourse rapidly developed. This change of conditions brought with it the paved street and square, the large-windowed palaces with their great court-yards and stately open staircases, and the

Like Gilman, Wharton and Codman are concerned with the "sway of the past." They call the attitude of their age "an archaeologizing spirit," which "so often leads its possessors to think that a thing must be beautiful because it is old and appropriate because it is beautiful." (Wharton and Codman 11). Unfortunately, this "spirit" does not lend to the "appropriateness" of items, and, as such, they "may in every case be replaced by a more suitable form . . . without loss to the general effect of house or room" (Wharton and Codman 11).

Not only do Wharton and Codman refer to the need to change houses in structure and concept as Gilman does, they also refer to the "sway of the past" in ways which suggest the idea of a collective memory which keeps these changes from being realized. They explain that "every one is unconsciously tyrannized over by the wants of others, —the wants of dead and gone predecessors, who have an inconvenient way of thrusting their difficult habits and tastes across the current of later existences" (Wharton and Codman 18). This "unconscious" tyranny holds people to old-fashioned ideas and homes as a collective memory:

> The unsatisfactory relations of some people with their rooms are often to be explained in this way. They have still in their blood the traditional uses to which these rooms were put in times quite different from the present. It is only an unconscious extension of the conscious habit which old-fashioned people have of clinging to their parents' way of living. (Wharton and Codman 18)

These traditions "in their blood," this "unconscious extension," is the same collective memory that Gilman believes should be forgotten and made conscious so that it could be critically examined for "suitability" and "appropriateness" to

---

market-place . . . Italy, in short, returned to the Roman ideal of civic life: the life of the street, the forum and the baths" (Wharton and Codman 3-4).

the current age.

Gilman laments the fact that social evolution had not extended within her culture to the home. In *The Home*, she writes, "If there is one fact more patent than another in regard to social evolution, it is that our gain is far greater in material progress than in personal" (*The Home* 300). A little later, she asserts that "the advance in public good is far greater than the advance in private good" (*The Home* 300). By "private" here we can read anything that is connected to the home—the actual buildings, the activities that take place there, and the people who spend the most time there, women. Gilman states what she sees as a simple solution to this problem in lagging home evolution: "Bring the home abreast of our other institutions; and our personal health and happiness will equal our public gains" (*The Home* 301). In order to reap the benefits that Gilman spells out, we must forget the sentiment and sanctity that our collective memory attaches to the home and make progressive changes there in the same ways that we make changes to other, more public, institutions.

Toward Radicalism: Varying Degrees of Reliance on Memory as Tradition

It must be stressed here that Wharton and Codman were driven much more by a strong sense of the importance of tradition than was Gilman. As I argued earlier, Gilman was much more concerned with making breaks with the past to the extent that in *Herland* her characters recognize no debt to or inheritance from their foremothers. This issue of tradition and reliance on a "memory" of art and culture, of course, will be central to my discussions of Cather and Addams who rely much more heavily on the idea of women's source of strength in a collective memory of womanhood. It is in this reliance that I have argued that their feminist theories separate them from Gilman's theories and make them both seem conservative. But it is in this source of women's strength that I argue they persuasively argue for radical changes for women's lived experiences.

Gilman does recognize that there was some time in the remote past when women were equal to men whether or not they were just like men in every way. As I have argued in Chapter 2, her Proem to *Women and Economics* is suggestive of a latent feminine collective memory in that "Nature" and "God hath not forgotten" women's true, strong nature even "though man doth still forget" (xi). If humanity is to realize a stage of social evolution in private affairs equal to its advance in public ones and get past the years of women's oppression, she believes that private structures—homes—should change drastically. While Wharton and Codman, Cather, and Addams, all to varying extents, rely on tradition or a collective memory of woman's culture, the essential criteria for each in deciding when to use the influences of the past and when to "forget" them in favor of change is that issue of "suitability" that is so important to Wharton and Codman.

Wharton and Codman would seem to be the most "conservative" in their reliance on tradition. Bayley's and Coles's introductions both mention the influence of tradition on the arguments presented in *The Decoration of Houses.* Bayley writes that the changes Wharton and Codman call for are not completely modern and unknown. Wharton and Codman do not ask that "The world . . . be reinvented. *Suitability* as used in this book is rooted in the traditions of the Graeco-Roman world" (Bayley vii) (emphasis Bayley's). Unlike Gilman, Wharton and Codman look to an earlier time for influence more suited to needs of the current age. The difference could be in their motivations for writing. On the one hand, while Wharton and Codman search for models of appropriate houses, they do not have to look as far back historically for these models. On the other hand, Gilman has to look much further to find a model for women's independence.

Coles sees the radical nature of the changes called for by Wharton and Codman, but an examination of their suggestions show that while they were

perhaps anticipating the upcoming Modernist movement, they were still not as radical as Gilman in ideas of change. In showing the innovative energy in their ideas, Coles writes, "in a way there is more of youth than of age in the somewhat brash way in which the authors here gather the mantle of tradition around themselves and discount an outworn taste. One is reminded of the early writings of T. S. Eliot, both in tone and in the concern manifested for the resumption of a lapsed tradition" (Coles xxxvii-xxxviii). This Modernist concern for the "resumption of a lapsed tradition" may exist in *The Decoration of Houses* perhaps even for the sake of that tradition alone. Gilman never relies on tradition for tradition's sake, and she ridicules that practice in *Herland.*

Wharton and Codman agree that what is needed in American homes is innovation, but they see no conflict in relying on earlier models to achieve innovative results:

> It might of course be said that to attain this end originality is more necessary than imitativeness. To this it may be replied that no lost art can be re-acquired without at least for a time going back to the methods and manner of those who formerly practised it; or the objection be met by the question, What is originality in art? (Wharton and Codman 9).

Once it is understood that all forms of art draw from tried traditions, "it will be seen that the supposed conflict between originality and tradition is no conflict at all" (Wharton and Codman 10). This conflict reemerges for Gilman who sees no recent model for a culture that accommodates for independent women.

Consequently, Gilman wrote fiction such as *Herland* to provide examples of such a model. At the same time, however, she cautions her readers from thinking that her plans for homes include an "iconoclastic frenzy of destruction" of the family (*The Home* 13). Human evolution, she believes, has created a

situation in which monogamous relationships are appropriate for the rearing of children: "The deepest forces of nature have tended to evolve pure, lasting, monogamous marriage in the human race" (*Women and Economics* 95). But our social progress does not mean that the conditions of raising those children must remain as they always have. She assures her readers that the changes that she suggests do "not in any way militate against the true relations of the family, marriage, and parentage, but only against those sub-relations belonging to an earlier period and now in process of extinction. The family as an entity, an economic and social unit, does not hold as it did" (*Women and Economics* 156). One of those "sub-relations" to which Gilman refers here is the dependent "position" of women in which they are confined for life to houses, babies, and repetitive, uncreative labor. Gilman's complaint is not with the family itself, but with the state of the family and homes that causes women to remain economically and emotionally dependent on men in order for children to be reared properly. This approval of the family might seem to some to be one of Gilman's two concessions to conservatism. She does see the need to preserve the family, but her conservative contemporaries might not recognize the traditional family after her changes are made.

"The Yellow Wallpaper": Gilman's Feminine Collective Memory

Along with her recognition for the need for keeping some family structure intact, another seemingly conservative concession is Gilman's utilization of the feminine collective memory in what has become her most famous short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper." Although it seems that we can only discreetly read this tradition into the story after years of feminist criticism and psychology, Gilman rarely acknowledges this feminine collective memory even this overtly in her

nonfiction texts. [23] In the Proem to *Women and Economics*, feminine collective memory appears only as something that stands at the edge of human memory because the masculine collective memory has overpowered it. "The Yellow Wallpaper" is a story of women's confinement in houses, and Gilbert and Gubar have linked it with the tradition of the "Madwoman in the Attic" of women's literature in which women writers make "anxiety-producing connections between . . . their parallel confinements in texts, houses, and maternal female bodies" (145). What is important to my reading of this short story is that literary tradition and how it reveals an underlying abject feminine collective memory. Like the traditional Madwoman who is trapped in the attic or some other part of the house, this feminist collective memory (in Gilman's feminist theory) can only lurk about houses on the fringes, above or underneath the lived space, always hidden from view.

Feminist critics have unraveled this confinement story since the 1973 Feminist Press reprint and have found a certain strength to what can be read as a sadly triumphant ending. Elaine R. Hedges's article, "'Out at Last'? 'The Yellow Wallpaper' after Two Decades of Feminist Criticism," chronicles the various strains of criticism of the story since that reprint. Hedges writes of the story's "endlessly debated ending" which "has been interpreted as the narrator's triumph and/or her defeat." The positions in this debate range "along a spectrum that, at one end sees her madness as a higher form of sanity and her search for meaning in the paper as successful and liberating" and the other end that "sees her as fatally retreating to a condition of childishness, or infantilism, or animalhood, or even

[23] Borrowing from Annette Kolodny, Janice Haney-Peritz tells us that the story was "unreadable in its own time because neither men nor women readers had access to a tradition or shared context which would have made the 'female meaning' of the text clear . . .On the other hand, women readers may have been familiar with domestic fiction but such fiction would not have prepared them for a narrator whose home life is psychologically disturbing" (269).

inanimateness" (320). Similarly, in "One Hundred Years of Reading 'The Yellow Wallpaper'," Catherine Golden writes that the "richly ambiguous story . . . defies one reductive explanation" (12) and that various interpretations of the story leave it "open to the multiplicity of meanings in the text" (13). Hedges explains the history of the story's criticism as patterned after the changing climate of the women's movement since the 1970's. This was a "historical moment" when "there was a community of readers sharing" not only "the same expectations of women's literature" but also "the same political hopes" (328). In looking for a model of feminist identity and agency, they would automatically find it Gilman's story. Golden, along with others somewhere in the middle of the spectrum, "permits only dubious victory over patriarchal control" in the story's ending (13). Hedges maintains that, whatever degree of triumph or success one reads into the narrator's ending, Gilman's purpose still remains acutely feminist: "While we may have lost a feminist heroine, we have retained a feminist text" (330). Critics seem to agree that the story should serve as impetus for "political and social change" (330).

Given Gilman's concern for social change in the "position" of women, this story cannot be read as triumphant, but one that shows the profound problems for women in the status quo. It is my argument that by looking at Gilman's embedded use of a feminine collective memory, we can that her intention in the story is not to show the triumph of that memory, but to show how the structures within culture disallow women's healthy access to it. Gilman does not want a strongly subversive subculture of women but a culture in which women are a healthy part of the economically and emotionally independent dominant group.

Gilman makes profound connections between homes, women, and memory in "The Yellow Wallpaper" through her main character and narrator who slowly loses her sanity because of her confinement in a house and because of the

pull of the past. It is in this short story that Gilman makes covert references to her second kind of memory, a feminine collective memory. This second kind of memory lies somewhere on the borders of culture's acceptable meanings. This collective memory which represents the feminine and the maternal in the story encompasses what Julia Kristeva has characterized as the abject. The abject is the grotesque, the unclean, that which is not sanctioned by society; it is what "draws [one] toward the place where meaning collapses" (Kristeva "Approaching" 2). By the end of the story, all readily attainable meaning seems to have collapsed for the narrator. This feminine memory of a creative, active womanhood is almost unnamable for Gilman's narrator. This memory is ultimately rejected by Gilman in this story because in order for it to be a healthy source of strength for women it will have to be namable and sanctioned by society in order for women to have easy access to it.

From the story's opening line, Gilman associates the house—the representation of the narrator's confinement—with the same masculine collective memory that she mentions in her nonfiction works. The house is a bastion of domesticity and represents the masculine collective memory of American homes that is to be forgotten. The narrator calls the house to which she and her husband have gone for the summer an "ancestral" hall (165), and in *The Home* Gilman refers to the influence of ancestors as a part of that masculine collective memory.[24] The female narrator calls the colonial mansion a "hereditary estate" and a "haunted house" (165). Even though the house was not owned by her own family and was not inherited by her or her husband, it holds the aura of a house with a history and tradition. The female narrator describes the house as "the most beautiful place" which is "quite alone" and a scene of domestic perfection and

[24] She writes that "ancestor-worship is what gave the element of sanctity to the home" in human cultures (*The Home* 20).

privacy (166). Despite this, the narrator is seemingly haunted by the house, the wallpaper, and the women she later discovers embedded in the paper. She says that "there is something strange about the house— [she] can feel it" (166). This "something strange" will later be manifested to her as a hidden, latent, even abject tradition of womanhood, which had not been overtly available or acceptable to her at the beginning of her narration.

For Kristeva, too, there is the connection between the abject and memory, but that connection is always difficult to detect by the "I" who is experiencing the abject. Kristeva writes that the abject is "a burden both repellent and repelled, a deep well of memory that is unapproachable and intimate" (6). This "deep well" is memory that is on the borders of our memory, and most of us do not and will not notice it or bring it to consciousness. There are those, however, who do notice it, those who Kristeva calls the "strays" of society. For them, the nature of abject memory is "a *land of oblivion* that is constantly remembered" ("Approaching" 8) (emphasis Kristeva's). These "strays" are people who are self-exiled from culture and who dare to ask what lies beyond the obvious grasp of consciousness. The narrator of "The Yellow Wallpaper" will come to be this kind of cultural "stray" or "exile" by the end of the story, and she will become such by making use of a latent, hidden memory of a suppressed creative womanhood.

Gilman subtly makes a connection between the woman in the house who has a creative, active drive to participate in life and a hidden tradition of creative women. While this tradition is bold and unavoidable in Cather's fiction, it can only be carefully and discreetly read into Gilman's short story. The main difference between the narrator of this story and one of Cather's artists, such as Ántonia or Alexandra, is the creative space that is available to them. While Alexandra and Ántonia live outside the boundaries of civilization on, or even past, the frontier, they are less confined by the societal conventions of womanhood.

The nearby frontier community may look with disdain at Ántonia's masculine manners and appearance or Alexandra's innovative ways of farming, but these female artists can always step back across that boundary of frontier where the opinions of those people do not matter and are completely alien to survival beyond the frontier and "outside of man's jurisdiction" as Jim calls it in *My Ántonia* (7). While Cather's characters are quite openly and easily able to step over and stay over this boundary of frontier and "man's jurisdiction," Gilman's narrator lives in a traditional home—a space in which the boundaries of the "frontier" are hidden. Kristeva also calls the abject a "frontier" (9), and its causes are "what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (4). For Cather's Ántonia and Alexandra, it is easy to be creative and maintain artistic identity because they do not have to "respect borders" to do so. They live most of their lives outside of the boundary on the prairie. Ántonia's short time in town proves to her that her identity as an artist (of the land) can only exist on the divide and not in the town that is the "frontier"—the border between man's jurisdiction and what is outside of man's jurisdiction, between the abject in society and the normal existence of the creative woman.

Gilman's narrator, conversely, lives within an eastern community in which conventions of female roles are strongly enforced. Here, she must either "respect borders, positions, rules" or embrace the abject and the conventionally acceptable. For this female narrator, the house overtly represents two options that seem to be available to her in life—the "borders, positions, rules" of traditional female roles. One of these options is the sickly, nervous, childish inmate that her condition and her husband's medical advice have reduced her to. She stays in the "nursery at the top of the house" which has "windows barred for children" (167). The other option is manifested by her sister-in-law, Jennie, who also lives in the house and

cares for the narrator's infant child. Jennie takes on the traditional role of woman of the house in the narrator's absence of illness, and she feels completely comfortable in this "ancestral hall." This sister-in-law is in direct opposition to the nervous, undomestic woman who narrates the story. The narrator tells us that "she is a perfect and enthusiastic housekeeper, and hopes for no better profession" ("Yellow" 170) which leads us to believe that the narrator does perhaps hope for a "better profession." Even though the narrator never articulates that desire overtly, she mentions her writing often throughout the narrative, and even the narrative diary itself serves as a creative outlet for her bored confinement in the house. The sister-in-law "thinks that it is the writing which made [the narrator] sick" ("Yellow" 170), and she has no understanding of creative impulses in a woman other than the domestic ritual of housekeeping.

Within these two available options of womanhood, the narrator finds a position like Kristeva's abject in which "nothing is familiar, not even the shadow of a memory" (Kristeva "Approaching" 5). As a result, she identifies with a feminine collective memory that lies latent in the house. Before she makes this identification, though, the narrator attempts to identify herself with these two acceptable models of womanhood. She goes through the same process that Kristeva describes as that of coming to the abject. This process ". . . is experienced at the peak of its strength when the subject, weary of fruitless attempts to identify with something on the outside, finds the impossible within; when it finds that the impossible constitutes its very *being*, that is none other than the abject" (Kristeva "Approaching" 5) (emphasis Kristeva's). Gilman's narrator sees no model for a creative, artistic, and active womanhood—the impossible in her community—until she identifies with the covert influence of the house to

which her husband has brought her to recover from a nervous condition. [25] This influence can be read as both the abject and a feminine collective memory that has been so hidden most people cannot notice it consciously. This feminine collective memory seems to linger in the house—most profoundly in the wallpaper in the woman's bedroom in which she spends the most time.

Within the wallpaper's hidden messages, the narrator eventually envisions another "impossible," even abject, role. As she studies it day by day, she begins to be haunted by the women that she makes out in the strange pattern of the wallpaper. [26] This "haunting" comes about as a direct result of the rest cure that is prescribed to her by her husband, a physician "of high standing" (163). This rest cure is similar to the one prescribed to Gilman by Dr. Weir. The narrator tells us that she is "absolutely forbidden to 'work' until [she is] well again" ("Yellow"165). Her husband's treatment is backed up by his sister, but the narrator "disagree[s] with their ideas" (165) and "believe[s] that congenial work, with excitement and change, would do [her] good" (166). When her husband John tells her not "to think about her condition" she resolves to "talk about the house" as if there is some connection or correlation between her sick condition and the house (166). Similarly, later in the narrative, she exclaims that she wishes she could "get well faster" (169) but immediately changes the subject: "But I

---

[25] The woman's nervous condition and treatment closely mirrors Gilman's own experience with "nervous prostration" (*Living* 90), or neurasthenia, after the birth of her daughter. She was treated by Dr. S. Weir Mitchell who is mentioned in "The Yellow Wallpaper" and treated many other prominent women of the time including Jane Addams and Edith Wharton. In her autobiography, Gilman reports being given the prescription to "Live as domestic a life as possible. Have your child with you all the time . . .Lie down an hour after each meal. Have but two hours intellectual life a day. And never touch pen, brush or pencil as long as you live" (*Living* 96). Of course, Gilman did not adhere to this prescription; otherwise, we would not have most of her existing works.

[26] This woman can be read as the narrator herself, and Gilbert and Gubar say that "it becomes obvious to both reader and narrator that the figure creeping through and behind the wallpaper is both the narrator and the narrator's double" (147).

must not think about that. This [wall] paper looks to me as if it knew what a vicious influence it had!" (169). She makes a direct cognitive leap from her confinement and illness to the strange wallpaper in the house signifying the only source of subversive escape available to her. [27]

From the story's beginning the narrator is repelled by the wallpaper but is intrigued and eventually drawn to it. She describes the color of the wallpaper which does not seem to respect "borders, positions, rules" and becomes a manifestation of the abject: "The color is repellent, almost revolting: a smoldering unclean yellow, strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight. It is dull yet lurid orange in some places, a sickly sulphur tint in others" (Gilman "Yellow"167). By this description the colors are inconsistent at best, but they also become "hideous," "unrealizable," "infuriating," and "torturing" as well (Gilman "Yellow" 174). Wharton and Codman would seem to disapprove of the colors of the wallpaper. On color, they write, "it is safe to say that the fewer the colors used in a room, the more pleasing and restful the result will be. A multiplicity of colors produces the same effect as a number of voices talking at the same time. The voices may not be discordant, but continuous chatter is fatiguing in the long run" (Wharton and Codman 28). The wallpaper's colors do seem to have become discordant "voices" from the past to this narrator. In any case, they do not have a "pleasing and restful" result on the narrator.

Not only is the color "infuriating" and "torturing," but the pattern defies artistic "borders, positions, rules" as well. Gilman had studied art and, doubtless, knew the principles of symmetry put forth by various instructors of art as well as

---

[27]7 It is interesting to note that while Gilman's yellow wallpaper represents this tradition of either subversion or confinement, Cather's Thea Kronborg's wallpaper in her attic bedroom represents escape from the conventions of her hometown as well as the "room of her own" where she nutures her artistic imagination.

those recommended by Wharton and Codman in their book. These principles show the wallpaper's defiance of the rules of art's symmetry and decorum. Gilman's narrator describes the wallpaper's pattern: "I never saw a worse paper in my life. One of those sprawling, flamboyant patterns committing every artistic sin" (Gilman "Yellow" 167). She continues to describe the wallpaper as "dull enough to confuse the eye in following, pronounced enough constantly to irritate and provoke study, and when you follow the lame uncertain curves for a little distance they suddenly commit suicide—plunge off at outrageous angles, destroy themselves in unheard-of contradictions" (Gilman "Yellow"167). The paper is full of "contradictions" and "outrageous angles" that defy the rules of symmetry and "confuse" and "irritate" the narrator for a time. Wharton and Codman would most likely object to home decoration that has this effect. They reason that "If proportion is the good breeding of architecture, symmetry, or the answering of one part to another, may be defined as the sanity of decoration" (Wharton and Codman 33). This wallpaper is not symmetrical and does not seem to define the "sanity of decoration." In fact, it has just the opposite effect on the narrator who is insane by the end of the story according to her husband's definitions.

As she approaches this state of insanity, the narrator identifies more and more with the wallpaper and the women that she sees in it and less and less with the house's tradition of masculine memory and her sister-in-law's perfect housekeeping. At first, she gets "positively angry with the impertinence of it and the everlastingness. Up and down and sideways they crawl, and those absurd unblinking eyes are everywhere. There is one place where the two breadths didn't match, and the eyes go all up and down the line, one a little higher than the other" (Gilman "Yellow" 169). This abject pattern even takes on violent tendencies as "There is a recurrent spot where the pattern lolls like a broken neck and two bulbous eyes stare at you upside down (Gilman "Yellow" 169). This description

of the wallpaper continues to follow Kristeva's theory of the abject which she describes as, not only violent, but "sinister . . . and shady: a terror that dissembles" (Kristeva "Approaching" 4). Eventually, following the woman's impending insanity or realization of reality, the pattern becomes more active and even violent: "The faint figure behind seemed to shake the pattern, just as if she wanted to get out" (Gilman "Yellow" 173). And a little later, she expresses a similar sentiment: "at night . . . it becomes bars! The outside pattern, I mean, and the woman behind it is as plain as can be" (Gilman "Yellow" 174). Kristeva describes the abject as an underlying violence within culture that Gilman's narrator seems to have recognized. About the abject, Kristeva writes, "There looms within abjection, one of those violent dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside . . . " (Kristeva "Approaching" 1). The narrator sees the wallpaper as a terrifying reality of the identity that she must accept according to convention—an identity enforced by a source outside of her and represented by a structure of inside homes. By embracing the abject by the end of the story, she appropriates the terror that an imposed identity and domestic confinement cause.

As she approaches insanity, she sees the wallpaper in a different light both literally and figuratively. By daylight, "on a pattern like this . . . there is a lack of sequence, a defiance of law, that is a constant irritant to the normal mind" (Gilman "Yellow" 174). But the narrator's mind is increasingly less "normal." Rather than repellent as it had been, the wallpaper and the woman behind it become more comforting to the narrator. They even become a source of creativity that had been stifled by her husband, sister-in-law, and tradition: "I never saw so much expression in an inanimate thing before, and we all know how much expression they have! I used to lie awake as a child and get more entertainment and terror out of blank walls and plain furniture than most children could find in a

toy store." (Gilman "Yellow" 169) The wallpaper has become for her a code for the latent creativity and expression within (or "inside" in Kristeva's terms) her, and with these come the "entertainment and terror" of her own expression and, unfortunately, an abject identification.

Not only does Kristeva define the abject as "sinister" and "shady," but she also calls it "scheming" ("Approaching" 4). Gilman's narrator, by embracing the abject becomes part of a sort of subculture, defying conventions of the culture to which her husband and sister-in-law adhere. It is this subculture that Gilman wants to avoid for American women. She illustrates the terror and danger of lives lived within this subculture in "The Yellow Wallpaper." The wallpaper takes on a subversive, even sneaky nature as the narrator's writing and thinking become more subversive and hidden from the others in the house. She writes that the "wallpaper has a kind of sub-pattern in a different shade, a particularly irritating one, for you can only see it in certain lights, and not clearly then." Under certain shades of light she "can see a strange, provoking, formless sort of figure that seems to skulk about behind that silly and conspicuous front design" ("Yellow" 170). This passage about the figure that "seems to skulk about" is couched between two comments about the sister-in-law who "is a perfect and enthusiastic housekeeper." After, the above description of the wallpaper's "sub-pattern," the narrator hears the sister-in-law coming to check up on her: "There's sister on the stairs!" This is the narrator's cue to hide the diary that she is writing in.

Like the subversive nature of the "sub-pattern" on the wallpaper, the narrator becomes even sneakier about her ideas and thoughts. Of the wallpaper she says that "I never mention it to them any more—I am too wise—but I keep watch for it all the same" (172). She becomes more and more identified with the sub-pattern: "There are things in that wallpaper that nobody knows but me, or ever will. Behind the outside pattern the dim shape gets clearer every day" (172).

Like the narrator, who must sneak around to have any kind of emotional outlet in her life, the pattern in the wallpaper "is like a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern" (172). The wallpaper has revealed its true self to the narrator or she has realized the truth of her situation and identity. "I didn't realize for a long time what the thing was that showed behind, that dim sub-pattern, but now I am quite sure it is a woman" (174). The narrator continues to keep her secret of the woman to herself as she watches her by night while everyone else is sleeping. This habit "cultivates deceit, for I don't tell them I'm awake—oh no!" (175).

In "The Yellow Wallpaper," the narrator does discover a source of creativity, if not strength, in a feminine memory that is very similar to the collective memory of womanhood discussed by Addams and the tradition of domestic and artistic ritual upheld by Cather. While this source of strength allows a creative and expressive outlet for some of Cather's characters, Gilman's use of this memory does not lead to a productive and well-adjusted member of society but to detached insanity. This model for a memory of womanhood does not prove a healthy one in Gilman's theory because of the price women have to pay to obtain access to it.

This price had been paid by Gilman herself, and she describes it with less graphic detail in her autobiography. In her chapter entitled "The Breakdown," she describes going through a similar ordeal as the narrator's in which she "came perilously close to losing [her] mind" (*Living* 96). Her condition during this time was "absolute incapacity. Absolute misery. To the spirit it was as if one were an armless, legless, eyeless, voiceless cripple" (*Living* 91). She wrote in a *Forerunner* article called "Why I Wrote 'The Yellow Wallpaper'" that her purpose was not "to drive people crazy, but to save people from being driven crazy" (53). Certainly, these "people" who are to be saved "from being driven

crazy," are other women who suffer from a condition similar to that of Gilman and her narrator. They will, she hopes, identify with this narrator and, in turn, find their way out of their insanity. In this sense, those earlier, 1970's critics of the story point to Gilman's, if not the narrator's triumph in the story's ending. By identifying with this problem, women in the early years of second-wave feminism could rightly read triumph into the story's ending. Gilman, however, does not see this identification as the culture's cure for the problem, but she does sees changes in the causes of the condition as the logical response to "The Yellow Wallpaper." The cause of her own close call with insanity was the traditional home. While she makes the connections between her narrator's mental condition and the house that she lives in subtly and metaphorical in her short story, she makes the connection in her own case quite clear: "now I saw the stark fact—that I was well while away and sick while at home" (*Living* 95). While she does not enumerate the necessary cultural changes in the short story, she will later spell out the solutions in her nonfiction and subsequent short stories.

While Gilman does acknowledge a feminine memory in "The Yellow Wallpaper," a reading of the story alongside her feminist theory indicates that she does not attribute to it the same strengthening properties that do Cather and Addams. As a radical feminist, Gilman saw the need to change society's makeup so that women have access to means for economic production and creative expression. In the past women have perhaps found strength in a subversive, hidden women's tradition, but Gilman sees the creeping and skulking that is required of women who wish to make use of that tradition as unhealthy and unfair to women. Instead, she envisions a society in which domestic ritual is not the only tradition for women to take part in and in which domestic confinement does not stifle women's creativity. In order for this society to materialize, Gilman sees changes in homes as the first order of business.

Changing Homes—Gilman's ideas of change and Cutting Away the "clinging masses"

> It is therefore, with no iconoclastic frenzy of destruction, but as one bravely pruning a most precious tree, that this book is put forward; inquiring as to what is and what is not vital to the subject; and claiming broadly that with such and such clinging masses cut away, the real home life will be better established and more richly fruitful for good than we have ever known before.
>
> —Gilman, *The Home* (13)

In *The Home*, Gilman describes the "long period of progress" in which "the moving world has carried with it the unmoving home; the man free, the woman confined; the man specializing in a thousand industries, the woman still limited to her domestic functions." Because of society's insistence that women remain in the home, women and homes alike have not progressed with the rest of humanity's accomplishments. Admonishing her culture's backwardness, Gilman continues: "We have constantly believed that this was the true way to live, the natural way, the only way. Whatever else might change—and all things did—the home must not" (Gilman *The Home* 6). Gilman sets out in *Women and Economics* and *The Home* to describe changes to the structure of homes and to home ideas that will provide appropriate, suitable, comfortable spaces in which men and women alike can live and grow physically and creatively. She says that this task should be taken on "as one bravely pruning a most precious tree" (*The Home* 13). In this section, I will recount the steps that Gilman sees as necessary to "prune" this "most precious tree"— the American home. In that recounting, I will make comparative references to some of Gilman's contemporaries—Richards, Wharton and Codman, and Edward Bellamy—who were calling for similar changes to the home's structures and functions. Central to Gilman's plans for change, is her philosophy of the evolution of society as one of constant growth

and flux as opposed to the futuristic stationary one envisioned by Bellamy in his utopian novel, *Looking Backward.* Gilman's sense of a constant growth within culture leads to a discussion of her call for suitable houses that are comfortable, aesthetically pleasing, sufficiently private, and conducive to creative expression. In order to acquire this suitability, houses should be cleared of extraneous clutter. Once houses have been made suitable and devoid of unnecessary things, it will be easier for women to become integrated into public society and to join the productive ranks of the economically independent.

This suitablility will involve reducing the amount of housework that actually has to be done by reducing the number of things that have to be cared for and cleaned by women. It will involve the reduction of private space so that there are fewer areas that have to be cleaned by individual residents. This process toward incorporating women into the public will involve realizing women's full potential, which has been wasted for so long, and professionalizing housekeeping and child care. In Gilman's vision of this potentially equal society, homes will be structurally smaller and collective or community living areas will be larger in order to make for the most efficient operation of them and the people who live in them.

The Nationalists and Edward Bellamy influenced Gilman, and it is no coincidence that some of her ideas overlap with those that Bellamy portrays in *Looking Backward.* [28] In this utopian novel, Bellamy's main character, Mr. West,

---

[28] In *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman* she writes of her Nationalist influences: "My Socialism was of the early humanitarian kind, based on the first exponents, French and English, with the American enthusiasm of Bellamy" (131). In turn, her ideas must have had some reciprocal effect since she mentions being asked to "preach" for the Nationalists on several occasions (*Living* 134). Her uncle, Edward Everett Hale "was a friend of Edward Bellamy, and a Nationalist, said that is was true Americanism." Gilman arranged for her uncle to speak for the Nationalist group in Los Angeles during a visit to her (*Living* 129).

becomes suspended and wakes up to find himself in the year 2000, one hundred years later. He is amazed to find that most of society's problems have been solved by the implementation of Nationalist ideas. The important aspects of the outcome of this societal alteration in comparing Bellamy's novel to Gilman's ideas are his sense of a static society and his vision of equal and collective living conditions. Perhaps Bellamy's ideas differ greatest from those of Gilman in his sense that we can and will someday reach perfection as a society. Gilman believes too firmly in the power and merits of evolution to ever settle for this. In her worldview, there will always be growth; that is the nature of life in our universe. Dr. Leete—Bellamy's futuristic travel guide for his main character—alludes to an idea that human social evolution has ended by the year 2000 when he says, "you will see that we have nothing to make laws about. The fundamental principles on which our society is founded settle for all time the strifes and misunderstandings which in your day called for legislation" (*Looking Backward* 156).

Gilman's utopia allows for a more far-reaching scope of change. Even in Herland a seemingly perfect society, the inhabitants realize that there is always need for improvement for the betterment of the future. In explaining the principles of their religion, Ellador tells the male narrator that what "we all want" is "Peace and Beauty, and Comfort and Love—with God! And Progress too, remember; Growth, always and always. That is what our religion teaches us to want and to work for" (*Herland* 117-18). It is for this reason of learning more about the "man-ways" that the women wish to have children the "old fashioned way" through the use of both sexes (*Herland* 98). As a result, Ellador agrees to return to the men's civilization. Ellador explains her reasons for returning with the male narrator: "We have done what we could alone; perhaps we have some things better in a quiet way, but you have the whole world—all the people of

different nations" (*Herland* 135-6). The women of Herland feel the need to know what their exclusively female society can learn from the outside world and if the society outside has developed to such a condition that would call for a rejoining of the two cultures. Conversely, Gilman sees her own society as needing to incorporate the feminine side of the species into its "man-ways" in order for it to reach its full potential of the age, but with that incorporation will remain the constant need for growth. [29]

Gilman, like Richards, focuses on changing homes and home life to make this realization. Richards affirms the importance of well-run homes in civilization's progress when she writes, "It has been said that the highest modern civilization is shown not so much by costly monuments and works of art as by the perfection of house conveniences" (Richards 71). In order to make American homes well run, efficient, and convenient, Gilman believes, along with Richards and Wharton and Codman that houses must be built to meet the purposes for which they are needed by their inhabitants rather that the purposes for which they were used in the past.

Gilman focuses on the suitability of houses based on their comfort, aesthetic value, privacy, and ability to promote creative expression. If the decorators, architects, and inhabitants are to create homes to these ends, then homes must be designed with them in mind. Wharton and Codman assert that "A building, for whatever purpose erected, must be built in strict accordance with the requirements of that purpose; in other words, it must have a reason for being as it is and must be as it is for that reason" (10). This careful planning should occur at the level of the architect when designing the house and the level of the decorator

---

[29] In fact, Zona Gale, in the forward to Gilman's Autobiography, writes that "one message" comes "blazing" through in "her spoken and written words": "Life is Growth" (xxvii).

since "Before beginning to decorate a room it is essential to consider for what purpose the room is to be used" (17).

Central to Gilman's idea of changing the physical makeup of American homes is ridding them, and, therefore, women's lives, of clutter—Richards's "throwing or giving away" of extraneous items, rooms, and activities. This is what Gilman metaphorically refers to as cutting or pruning away the "clinging masses." After this process, homes will be more comfortable, and their inhabitants will be able to realize and utilize their purposes much more easily. As a result, everything will have a place and purpose and will always be in place and used to the best purpose. Gilman's first and largest change to this effect is to "Take the kitchens out of houses, and you leave rooms which are open to any form of arrangement (*Women and Economics* 299).

In *The Cost of Shelter,* Richards expresses the same sentiments as Gilman when she suggests ridding our homes of the superfluous. She writes that there should be "nothing in the room because some other person has it; this shows poverty of ideas. Let there be nothing in a room which does not satisfy some need, spiritual or physical of some member of the family" (78). And later she repeats this idea in terms of progress of homes: "If a fetish stands in the way of social progress, do away with it" (Richards 79).

Wharton and Codman are so concerned with this issue of clutter in homes that they devote their last chapter, entitled "Bric-A-Brac," to a discussion of "how the removal of an accumulation of knick-knacks will free the architectural lines and restore the furniture to its rightful relation with the walls" (185). Throughout the book, they describe simplicity as the rule in house decoration. In a chapter on the "den," they discuss the need for comfort and common sense in decorating this well used room. They describe the favorable results for the occupants: "Thus freed from the superfluous, the den is likely to be the most comfortable room in

the house; and the natural inference is that a room, in order to be comfortable, must be ugly" (152). Wharton and Codman, along with Richards and Gilman would like to dispel this "natural inference" and encourage people to create homes that are both comfortable and aesthetically pleasing since the "true office of a house is not only to be useful but to be aesthetically a background for the dwellers therein, subordinate to them, not obtrusive" (Richards 78).

Along with practicality and comfort, Gilman and Wharton and Codman name privacy and creative expression as two other necessary elements of the American home of the future. Wharton and Codman focus on the "material liveableness of a room" which consists of arrangement as well as "the privacy of the room and the absence of the superfluous" (19). Wharton and Codman agree with Gilman that even though Americans place a great importance on the "privacy of the home," their homes do not actually provide it (*Women and Economics* 249-55). While it would seem that privacy is "one of the first requisites of civilized life" one must only "observe the planning and arrangement of the average house to see how little this need is recognized" (Wharton and Codman 22). Wharton and Codman tell us that this is evident in the existence, placement, and size of doors, but Gilman goes much further to call for private rooms or suites for each person. She claims that this, along with the removal of the kitchen from the house and therefore less need for daily cleaning by servants, would create much more privacy than actually existed at the time (*Women and Economics* 249-55).

When true privacy is accomplished in the American home, Gilman believes that people, men and women alike, will be able to become the expressive individuals that women's confinement in the home has repressed. Wharton and Codman write of the importance of environment for creative abilities in their discussion of decorations for the school room or the nursery. Children should be able to make associations between their surroundings and creative learning. Their

surroundings should be suggestive of artistic endeavors instead of "regarding 'art' as a thing apart from life" which is "fatal to the development of taste" (174-5). While Gilman will call for the professionalization of child care and, therefore, remove the need for schoolrooms in homes, she agrees with the need for stimulating environments to promote emotional and artistic growth.

In her feminist theory, Gilman sees a direct connection between the confinement of women to the home, their lack of economic and artistic production, and their creative stagnation. A woman who has been relegated to "the attic" (as Gilbert and Gubar have named woman's confinement in the home) is destined to become "the madwoman" if she seeks creative outlet. Environment alters evolution in her theory:

> To reduce so largely the mere area of environment is a great check in voluntary activity to which the human female has been subjected. Her restricted impression, her confinement to the four walls of the home, have done great execution, of course, in limiting her ideas, her information, her thought-processes, and power of judgment; and in giving a disproportionate prominence and intensity to the few things she knows about; but this is innocent in action compared with her restricted expression, the denial of freedom to act. (*Women and Economics* 65-6)

Women's confinements in the home and home duties have stunted their creative evolution collectively. In order to solve this problem of women's evolution, society must make spaces for them in public and homes of the future must allow women the freedom to act and to express.

The next step in Gilman's plan for economic independence for women and an equal society is to realize the full creative and productive potential of women by integrating them into public. We see a futuristic model of this in Bellamy's

Looking Backward when he describes women's "position" in the year 2000. This description sounds much like the religion of Herland with the main difference, of course, being that the men of Bellamy's world ascribe to this sentiment while Gilman's society has only just experienced the addition of three men after centuries of an exclusively female society. Dr. Leete explains that in the year 2000 "women have risen to the full height of their responsibility as the wardens of the world to come, to whose keeping the keys of the future are confided. Their feeling of duty in this respect amounts to a sense of religious consecration. It is a cult in which they educate their daughters from childhood" (Bellamy *Looking Backward* 192). While women have a separate system of command with a "woman general-in-chief" they "are members of the industrial army, and leave it only when maternal duties claim them. The result is that most women, at one time or another in their lives, serve industrially some five or ten or fifteen years, while those who have no children fill out the full term" (Bellamy *Looking Backward* 184). Bellamy's women work in jobs which are more fitting to their "inferior" strength, and have shorter working hours than men.

In describing the ways that Americans overcame the issue of gender in preceding years, Dr. Leete tells the narrator that the answer was in "giving full play to the differences of sex rather than in seeking to obliterate them, as was apparently the effort of some reformers in your day" (168). In the year 2000, Bellamy's society has realized the importance of both "the enjoyment of each [gender] by itself and the piquancy which each has for the other." With this philosophy in practice, women are able to have careers other than "an unnatural rivalry with men." Dr. Leete continues to say that women have been "given . . . a world of their own, with its emulations, ambitions, and careers, and . . . they are very happy in it" (Bellamy *Looking Backward* 186). This "world of their own" is made up of "rooms" and homes of their own in which they are able to grow

creatively and are not confined to domestic ritual and labor prescribed by another.

As in Herland, in Bellamy's utopia motherhood is valued to the point of religious exhaltation, but women are paid for their labor as workers and compensated for when they need to take maternity leave from the army of the nation's labor. Dr. Leete expresses his society's feelings about motherhood further by telling Mr. West that women are paid the same wages as the men (an equal allowance of credit in the nations' wealth), but if they were paid for their worth, ". . . it would be by making the woman's credit larger, not smaller. Can you think of any service constituting a stronger claim on the nation's gratitude than bearing and nursing the nation's children?" (Bellamy *Looking Backward* 188). Like Gilman, Bellamy asserts, through Dr. Leete that women's "disability . . . was her personal dependence on man for her livelihood, and I can imagine no other mode of social organization than that you have adopted, which should have set women free of man at the same time that it set men free of one another" (Bellamy *Looking Backward* 189). Like Gilman, Bellamy realizes that in order to make a "radical improvement in the position of women" possible, radical changes will have to be made in the "system of organized production and distribution" (*Looking Backward* 189). Gilman adds to that assertion the need for houses for each person in which women, children, and men are not tied to domestic labor and can find expressive ways to contribute to the production of society's wealth.

In the current system, however, Gilman asserts that women's "labor is the property of another: they work under another will; and what they receive depends not on their labor, but on the power and will of another. This is true of the human female both individually and collectively" (Gilman *Women and Economics* 7). Even though it is thought in society that "women earn all they get, and more, by house service," that "labor which a wife performs in the household is given as her functional duty, not as employment" (Gilman *Women and Economics* 13). The

problem, to Gilman then, is not only the type of work that women do but also the nature of that work for women. It becomes their identity, instead of their employment, or their jobs. The assumption in society is that "the human maternal duties require the segregation of the entire energies of the mother to the service of the child during her entire adult life" (Gilman *Women and Economics* 19). As a result, women can participate only in what she calls "sex-functions" and never in "race-functions."

Gilman's solution involves the professionalization of housekeeping and child care and homes that are designed for collective living. With society altered in these ways, individual women will no longer be tied to individual houses with the ensuing housework. Children will no longer tie women to houses either because women or men who are especially trained for caring for children will take care of many children at a time. There will be adequate living space for individuals and groups to allow for individual and social creative endeavors.

Chapter Four: Cather's Artists and Memory Problems—Crossing Boundaries of Home, Identity and Expression

> . . . housekeeping is the thief of art, and the artist's gifts are leached away into the byproducts of domestic life: food, drink, and cleaning solution.
> —Ann Romines, "Willa Cather: Repudiating Home Plots" (130)

> What we do modifies us more than what is done to us. The freedom of expression has been more restricted in women than the freedom of impression, if that be possible.
> —Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics* (66)

In this chapter, I will show Cather's portrayal of artistic characters who experience conflicts of identity and artistic stagnation and the ways that one of her characters, Ántonia, finds alternative domestic/artistic spaces to traditional ones. In so doing, I will identify three essential problems in women's "position" as I have found them in early twentieth-century American women's writing. For Cather, as well as for many other women writers, these problems of the conflict between "home" and art can be summarized by problems of memory, of identity, and of expression. Not only does Cather make use of images of memory throughout her fiction and rely on a tradition of women's memory in her feminist theory, but she and other women writers of the period point out direct links between women's "forgetting" and their own sense of identity. Memory problems for women's female characters often seem to be linked not only to their confinement to homes and home life, but also to men's movement, disruptions, and invasions of the structures and routines of home life. These movements and disruptions are integral to women's lost sense of identity or to their inability to establish a strong self-identity. For Cather, women's need to establish and maintain identity separate from their homes becomes central. I will show how

Cather appropriates these very movements, disruptions, and invasions to enable her female characters to negotiate and create their own domestic and artistic spaces and boundaries. Once she and her characters arrive in and accept these "spaces," they are free to develop their own artistic expression.

Memory Problems—Forgetting

While I have shown a tradition of associations between various ideas of "memory" and "home" ideas, there is also a strain of images of "forgetting" associated with women and homes in American women's writing during this period. These "forgettings," or "memory problems," occur in connection with movement between boundaries of civilization and frontier in some women's writing, and they occur in connection with women's confinement in the home in other women's writing. We can define the differences between these two kinds of memory problems in two ways: First, undomestic women who are forced to stay (and thus not move) in traditional domestic spaces are portrayed as "losing their memories." Second, domestic women, who identify with nineteenth-century notions of womanhood, are portrayed as "losing their memories" when they are forced to move and abandon their traditional spaces and when those spaces are disrupted.

Memory Problems Become Identity Problems

The first "memory problem" in American women's writing, and one central to Cather's fiction, occurs in women's lives and home lives when the memory of the art of domestic ritual is forced on "undomestic" artists. We see this problem manifested as insanity for Gilman's narrator in "The Yellow

Wallpaper." Dorothy Canfield, a writer and friend of Cather's, deals with this connection between women's "forgetting" and their state of being tied to homes in her 1924 novel *The Home-maker*. In this novel, there are "crossings" as in Cather's novels when the characters cross cultural boundaries of gender expectation as well as physical boundaries between "home" and "public sphere." Canfield's main character, described as having "more vitality than all of us together," is much like one of Cather's artists who are born with a driving spirit to accomplish things. In this novel, as in Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," we see the case of an undomestic woman confined in the home. Unlike Gilman's narrator, though, Canfield's main character, Evangeline, is given the chance to experiment with the boundaries of her duties as a wife and mother as well as the boundaries of home life and the "domestic sphere."

In this novel, we see through her child's eyes, a mother's forgetting of her children, and, therefore, a forgetting of her female identity as it was defined by nineteenth-century separate-spheres ideology. Evangeline Knapp "forgets" her children as a result of her confinement to domestic duties. When Evangeline's youngest son, Stephen, finally gets away from his mother's restrictive eye early in the story, Canfield narrates his thoughts to us:

> When Mother was scrubbing a floor was always a good time for Stephen. She forgot all about you for a while. Oh, what a weight fell off from your shoulders when Mother forgot all about you for a while! How perfectly lovely it was just to walk around in the bedroom and know she wouldn't come to the door any minute and

> look at you hard and say, 'What are you doing, Stephen?' and add, 'How *did* you get your rompers so dirty?' (emphasis Canfield's) (15).

In his childish imagination, Stephen equates the joy of being "forgotten" by his mother with an escape from her obsessive housekeeping.

When Stephen makes this observation at the beginning of the novel, the whole family is experiencing problems that are caused by their domestic situation. The world of business, money, and commerce are obviously alien to Lester, the husband and father, who is a poetic dreamer. The world of home, housework, and childcare, are unfitted to Evangeline's sensibilities as well. The family's problems, connected by Stephen to his mother's obsessions with housework and mothering (which she equated with keeping the children clean), are physically manifested in the characters' health. Evangeline has eczema that she must treat with ointment and bandages nightly. Henry, the oldest child, has "chronic trouble with his digestion" (9). Henry's problem is worse when his parents fight over their financial status (brought on by his father's unsuitable job) or at his mother's outbursts about messes in the house. Evangeline's admission to a friend that "the doctor doesn't seem to do [Henry] any good" (9) seems indicative of psychological rather than physical causes for his problems. Stephen is prone to tantrums, hiding, and general disobedience of his busy mother. When Evangeline later leaves housework for a job at a department store, all of these problems seem to disappear. [30]

---

[30] Like Gilman, whose health improved as she went west to recover and then worsened the closer she got to "home" on her return, Evangeline's and her

We later learn that Stephen has an individual and artistic personality and needs his personal space in ways that his older brother and sister would never imagine. On this first day of the narrative, Stephen is hiding from his mother in his room, glad that the floor's dirt has allowed her to "forget" him for awhile. Like other artists, and many of Cather's female characters, Stephen needs time alone in a "room of his own." He is able, for once, to see the world with a new perspective. On this rare day, "the bed, the floor, the bureau, everything looked different to you when Mother forgot about you for a minute" (15-16). It occurs to the imaginative Stephen that "maybe it was a rest for [the furniture], too, to have Mother forget about them and stop dusting and polishing and pushing them around. They *looked* sort of peaceful, the way he felt. He nodded his head to the bed and looked with sympathy at the bureau" (16) (emphasis Canfield's). Stephen gives the furniture personalities and identifies with them as fellow objects of his mother's obsessive housecleaning.

The novel progresses as a series of events change this family from a traditional to nontraditional domestic situation. Lester's legs become paralyzed, leaving him unable to return to work. Evangeline is forced to seek employment in the store where Lester had unsuccessfully worked for years. She quickly shows to be as diligent at her job as she had been about her housecleaning, but now, she feels that she has a purpose and enjoys what she is doing in the store. She is able to utilize her artistic eye for fashion and for decoration to help customers make purchases, to make suggestions for window displays, and, eventually, to become a buyer for the store's inventory.

---

family's illnesses seem to be connected to their domestic situation.

When Evangeline leaves her traditional place in their home, Lester, who remains at home with the children, learns to cook and to do some of the housework. He is sensitive to the children's needs and individual personalities in ways that Evangeline never could have. He learns that Steven, rather than simply being a bad child, "had more vitality than all the rest of them put together (except Eva, of course)." Lester has a poet's understanding of his son's sensibilities:

> When [Stephen's vitality] did not find free outlet it strangled and poisoned him, made him temporarily insane, in the literal sense of the word, like a strong masterful man shut up by an accident deep in a coal-mine, who might fall insanely to work with his bare hands to claw away the obstructing masses of dead, brute matter that kept him from the light of day! (220).

This masculine description of confinement with its "insane" "clawing away" of "dead matter" instead of wallpaper and the inmate's relationship with "the light of day," is strikingly similar to that of Gilman's narrator in "The Yellow Wallpaper." Unlike John of Gilman's story, who laughs and later faints in reaction to his wife's strange behavior, Lester realizes that this description of insanity patterns Evangeline's former domestic condition. Fortunately for Canfield's characters, this family is forced to rearrange its domestic situation and avoid the insanity of Gilman's character. Lester, unlike John of "The Yellow Wallpaper," understands his wife's needs to express herself in ways different from the traditional gender expectations.

Not only is Evangeline better fitted to life outside of the home, Lester is

better fitted to life he finds in it. In his new domestic position, Lester is able to compose poems and tell stories to Stephen while he does repetitive household tasks such as peeling potatoes. This lifestyle is in direct opposition to his old life of business of which "one of the most embittering elements . . . had been the absence of any leisure when he could really think" (219). At the same time, he realizes how unfitted Evangeline had been to housework: "his heart ached with the remorse as he thought of the life to which he had condemned her. Why, like Stephen, she had been buried alive in a shaft deep under the earth . . . What she had thought was her duty had held her bound fast in a death-like silence and passivity" (221). Like Gilman's narrator in "The Yellow Wallpaper" and like many of Cather's artists, Eva's nature and personality do not suit her for the traditional roles that her culture have allowed her. It is only because Lester becomes unable to perform his duties in the public, male sphere that Evangeline's entrance into it is socially acceptable. While extenuating circumstances allow this couple to find alternative living arrangements to the traditional ones, Canfield envisions the possibility for these alterations in the culture at large.

As a result of all of these changes in domestic arrangement, the family's situation improves in every respect. Evangeline and Henry both recover from their respective illnesses. Stephen becomes a happy, well-behaved, communicative child once he feels like a person rather than a piece of furniture. Both parents are happy with their new roles. The Knapps have just begun to feel at home in their new lifestyle and to make plans for the future when tragedy strikes: Lester and Evangeline each separately discover that Lester's legs are no

longer paralyzed. The horror that they each feel without telling the other is that if Lester has recovered, their community's values would dictate that they should go back to the way they had been before. Evangeline would return to the detestable housework, and Lester would return to what he considered the mundane routine of numbers, money, and business. Fortunately for this family, two insightful members of the community intervene. A relative simultaneously realizes that Lester could recover and that there is a connection between the family's newfound health and the changed domestic roles of the parents. This relative and a doctor decide that it would be best to tell Lester that he will never recover, and the family continues, happily.

Evangeline Knapp, Gilman's narrator, and Cather's artists, all have similar problems even though their authors give them different situations in which to play out these problems. Essentially, their problems all come down to issues of identity. Each character struggles within and against the identity that is prescribed for her by her culture and an identity that contrasts with one she can be healthy and comfortable in. Gilman's narrator, Ántonia Shimerda, and Evangeline Knapp all experience problems of identity when the roles that are prescribed for them by the culture are not ones their artistic natures can function within. I will now turn to this issue of identity as the second problem that Cather poses in her view of the domestic sphere as it existed for her and her characters. She uses her technique of "crossing" to allow her characters to cross over traditional gender boundaries to find "places" in which their identities are comfortable and healthy.

For Cather, memory seems to be a way of exploring identities, especially

identities of artists. The main characters in her novels are driven by something inside of them, a life force, of which the rest of us only experience a fraction. The people around these artists who become close to them remember various episodes of the artist's life and the way this particular artist developed into the success that he or she is in the present of the story.

Memory, Migration and Homemaking on Cather's Frontier

Another "memory problem" occurs for some female characters as a result of movements, disruptions, and invasions of the domestic sphere and their sense of identity. Nineteenth-century middle class culture was divided into two spheres of gender. Men went into business, learned how to make money, and traveled in the circles of commerce, trade, and industry. The public world of business was fast-paced and always moving while, the ideology seemed to say, the home remained constant, unmoving, and stable. Businessmen could always go home at night to a peaceful, private place kept in order by their wives, who inhabited the other sphere of home, family, and stability. The male sphere of business, movement, and adventure also expanded to include the frontier and the wilderness beyond it. Women writers often locate this second "memory problem" for female characters, focused around movement, on the frontier, and beyond it, in the wilderness. One of Cather's "prairie" novels, *My Ántonia,* makes interesting comments about her assessment of how mobility and memory, as important features of American life, shape the boundaries of women's new versions of home ideas.

The frontier is an idea that has been discussed and theorized in American

literary circles with great fervor. The importance of frontier in American history and culture has been an important shaping force in much American literature and of the American psyche, but with an increased interest in women's studies and women's writing, the frontier as an area of research and theorization in the context of women's lives has only recently become an important issue. Feminist scholars have begun to examine ideas of the frontier from the female perspective and with the female sphere of Victorian America in mind. In nineteenth-century separate-spheres ideology, the frontier was a part of the male sphere of adventure and extra-domestic life. Traditionally, a man went into the wilderness, found a site for a homestead, tamed it somewhat, and took his wife and family there to build a home with him. Women were often brought to the homestead only after it had been tamed of some of the savageness, and only then could women bring civilization to it. As long as there was some element of civilization in a location, there could be homes and women; when this place is located at the edge of civilization it is called the "frontier," or that border between acceptable places for women and homes and unacceptable places for them.

Unfortunately, for many pioneer women the degree of civilization awaiting them was often minimal, and they were expected to cross unwillingly over that boundary into the wilderness. In her autobiography, Anna Howard Shaw, a suffragist who traveled the lecture circuit with Susan B. Anthony, writes about her own experiences as a child pioneer. Shaw's mother, who identifies quite comfortably with the cultural definitions of womanhood, experiences a "memory" or identity problem when the boundaries of that definition are stretched too far. This mother and her children finally reach the homestead that her father and brother have prepared for them. The family is to begin working the farm while the father remains in town to earn money for the hard first year. Shaw describes the family's expectations that have been shaped by the mother's

memories of country farms in England where she had lived before her immigration:

> The next morning we made the last stage of our journey, our hearts filled with the joy of nearing our new home. We all had the idea that we were going to a farm, and we expected some resemblance at least to the prosperous farms we had seen in New England. My mother's mental picture was, naturally, of an English farm. Possibly she had visions of real barns and deep meadows, sunny skies and daisies (25).

Clearly, Shaw's mother does not expect to cross the frontier into the wilderness. What she and her family find is vastly different from their pleasant vision of a farm or "home" that fits within the boundaries of civilization and, therefore, domestic space within which Shaw's mother can feel comfortable. Instead, their Michigan "farm" turns out to be a clearing in the forest just big enough to build a log cabin that consists of walls only. There is no floor, and the windows are only holes hewn into the sides of the log structure. Shaw writes that the "whole effect" is "achingly forlorn and desolate"— there is no civilization here yet, only the shell of it. It would be the women's responsibility to make the cabin respectable, comfortable, and stable—a home. Somewhere along the journey, Shaw and her family had unknowingly stepped over a boundary.

A striking feature of this narrative is Shaw's mother's reaction to their new "farm." This reaction comes after several disruptions of the family's home life: a move from England to New England, and then to this Michigan wilderness, as well as bankruptcy and the shame of debt. Most of these major disruptions have been handled by Shaw's mother alone. Like Lester Knapp, the father is a studious, but impractical man, and would often go to the next destination while the mother managed the mess that was left, the growing number of children, and

whatever was left of their home life. This particular move is apparently the last straw for Shaw's previously patient mother:

> I shall never forget the look my mother turned upon the place. Without a word she crossed the threshold, and, standing very still, looked slowly around her. Then something within her seemed to give way, and she sank upon the ground. She could not realize even then, I think, that this was really the place father had prepared for us, that here he expected us to live. When she finally took it in she buried her face in her hands, and in that way she sat for hours without moving or speaking. For the first time in her life, she had forgotten us (24-5).

This passage gives an interesting account of a historical woman's first encounter with the wilderness and the frontier because it embraces some important issues in women's history and writing about their relationships to America—its identity, its mission, and its image. Mrs. Shaw, an immigrant, who has carried her children across the Atlantic alone and has now crossed the Michigan wilderness alone, has lived an adult life marked by movement and migrations, and through these she has maintained a family and her identity as homemaker. It would have been her job as the mother to maintain stability despite the turbulent waters the family has crossed—both physically and emotionally. Now, this woman who never wanted to leave England in the first place, who never wanted to leave New England in the second place, has stopped *moving*. In her soon-to-be famous daughter's eyes, she has ceased to move, and that stillness is accompanied by a profound *forgetfulness*. She refuses to remember her children and her duties as a wife and mother.

The ideas of movement and memory seem to be intrinsically linked in American literature and especially in American women's writing where there are strong connections between individual (fictional or historical) women's memories, women's migrations (physical as well as emotional), and the permanence or fluidity of the domestic sphere. Mrs. Shaw's and other examples of "forgetting" in American women's fiction is often central to what Joseph R. Urgo in *Willa Cather and the Myth of Migration* has called "crossing." He distinguishes this feature as "something distinctly American" (66) in that "the crossing, the passage itself, is the moving ground on which Americans share a heritage . . . of transferring home from actuality to memory, of shifting from one set of allegiances to another" (Urgo 63). In this sense, Cather is radically mixing the male and female spheres of nineteenth-century culture that were thought to be quite separate. She sets up other oppositions that question the principles behind the separate-spheres culture. Urgo refers to some of these oppositions of memory/forgetting, movement/stability of the home, and the idea of a set "heritage" and the notion that that heritage involves constant movement as central to the formation of a distinctively American experience or heritage:

> Consideration of the functions of memory (both remembering and willfully forgetting the past), emphasis on the common experience of crossing (with its various manifestations), and the insistence on the synthetic nature of the past . . . provide the grounds on which a synthesis of American heritage might be forged based on a common migratory experience. (Urgo 64)

For Cather, these crossings become not only an issue of American identity and literary tradition, but also a profound feminist statement about female identity as well.

Urgo identifies Cather's writing as part of a "logic of a migratory culture" which "reinvents the relationship between people and country, reinvents 'nation,' by rooting citizens in their movements across the landscape rather than in their establishment on it" (Urgo 62). It is my argument that Cather, by making use of the tradition of this "migratory culture," not only "reinvents the relationship between people and country," as Urgo suggests. She also allows her female characters to reinvent the relationship between women and homes (and the domestic sphere). By allowing her female characters to claim a part of that migratory culture as their own, she allows them into the male sphere of movement and change. As a result, they can invent new identities based on traditional male markers of identification, traditional female markers of identification, or a combination of both.

Urgo explains his argument for a new migratory reading of Cather's works based not only on subject matter of her novels and the lives of characters but also on Cather's style which does not readily lead to a New Critical close reading:

> Critical inquiry into Cather cannot be accomplished by writing twenty pages explicating one paragraph of dense language. Her texts do not allow such dwelling. Serious readers of Cather learn to move within the text, from section to section, from inset story to overall plot, for Cather's aesthetics demand a migratory acumen (Urgo 11).

If a reading of Cather's works demands, as Urgo suggests, "a migratory acumen," a reading of her characters—especially Ántonia Shimerda and Jim Burden—do so

as well. [31]

Cather is certainly working within this "migratory culture" when she creates her characters and their relationships to each other and to their homes, but she also deals with these "migrations" as a continued conflict for many of her characters. These characters continue to desire often in nostalgic ways their ties to "home." As Jim Burden, her most migratory character tells the story of *his* Ántonia, he does so with a certain nostalgia for *his* home on the Nebraska Divide. He ends with the narration of his visit to Ántonia's home with its fruit cave, pleasant kitchen, and filled barns. Knowing that Ántonia enjoys a permanent home is a source of comfort to Jim in all of his moving around, but it overlooks "crossings" that Ántonia has performed throughout her life. But is Jim's nostalgia also Cather's nostalgia? Does Cather undermine any feminist intentions or progress because of her use of the past in "nostalgic" ways? Bernice Slote makes mention of this nostalgic "aura" in Cather's fiction that "no reader can escape." Slote asks, "Did she then, even at the beginning, look back with regret to a past of vanished glory?" and "what in 1896 was her fundamental attitude toward her own present and historical past?" In answer to these questions about Cather's use of the past, Slote writes that "she was no dreamy eyed recluse, was quite alive to her own time, smart, advanced, eager to achieve" ("Kingdom" 33). Given Cather's awareness of the world east of the Missouri River, even in 1896, it can be argued that her use of the past is literarily and culturally critical and conscious. Slote cites her "tendency to look back with nostalgia" as a literary "tone rather than a

---

[31] This "migratory acumen" can be read in Cather's "kingdom of art" and sense of aesthetics as esentially the same thing as Gilman's sense of growth—the thing that drives all living things. When living things stop moving they stagnate and die. Cather's sense of artistic development required the same principle: in order to take part in the world of "art" the artist must never lose sight of the life force within her. This life force is a source of constant change, movement, and growth.

theme" ("Kingdom" 34).

Given that Cather's use of the past is in fact a "tone," as Slote suggests, it is important to locate the nature of that "tone." What tone does her nostalgic use of the past imply? If we follow I. A. Richards's use of the term, "tone" as "designating the attitudes towards the subject and toward the audience implied in a literary work," we should then determine what relationship Cather is trying to establish with her audience and who that audience is. The past and its relationship with the present and future enable Cather to establish a relationship between the movements across boundaries that take place in her fiction. Cather's characters and her American audience as well have experienced a shared past of movement and migration that she uses to "move [her characters] spatially to cross over into the temporal future" (Urgo 66). In making use of the past in various ways in her writing she is able to develop her feminist themes in very careful, calculated ways. By appropriating the "masters tools" of the traditional frontier conquest narrative for her female character, Ántonia, she turns the tradition upside down. Ántonia is allowed by Cather to move at will across the frontier, and she, rather than conquering the land, learns to nurture and reproduce it. Cather knows that her audience can identify with the past that she describes in her works. As Americans, this audience can identify with the movements she describes as well as the need for homes and homesteading. It is through the use of this identification that Cather skillfully puts forth her feminist message of change in home ideas and the domestic sphere. She appropriates these new American "traditions" of movement for her female characters. As a result, they can practice the American traits of both "remembering and willfully forgetting the past" (Urgo 64). As individual agents, moving into the "new" space of the wilderness and thus deciding *what* to remember and *what* to forget about gender conventions and

roles, women can create new homes and new identities.

In the wilderness, the movement of rules and conventions becomes the norm rather than stability of rules. Ántonia is able to move around social conventions of gender as easily as she moves across spatial boundaries. Urgo describes the type of crossing that Ántonia undergoes: "...once such experiences become the common ground of cultural mythology, once consciousness is at home with migration, then changing structures, periodic defamiliarization, and the disintegration of prescribed rules of social behavior emerge as social norms, existing instead as cohesive elements, as cultural markers" (Urgo 67). While Urgo describes the process of the formation of a new sense of nationhood, this passage also describes the gender crossings that Ántonia undergoes in Jim's story about her. Cather creates characters who have become comfortable with this kind of movement and, by extension, are comfortable with crossing boundaries—they are, in Urgo's words, "at *home* with migration." These boundaries are spatial, of course, but they are metaphorical as well in that they embody the characters' identifications of gender and role.

In providing a space that allows her characters to experiment with gender roles, Cather takes on a less conservative agenda than her seemingly nostalgic stories might indicate on the surface. There is a direct link between conservatism and the aversion to change and movement. Cather has generally been read as a "writer of place" since she focuses so much on her native Nebraska, but this rather traditional reading of Cather overlooks, as Urgo points out, the movements and migrations that are so prominent in Cather's characters. It is this kind of reading of Cather that has led to her reputation "as nostalgic for the pioneer era, a repository of old virtues" (Urgo 11). Urgo argues that her life would suggest a

less conservative agenda. He writes that "Cather's unconventional life-style, however, the strong possibility of lesbianism, and the experimentation with gender identification in her fiction have made such categorizations of her writing difficult." This seemingly conservative tactic, a strong reliance on the past, becomes, in Cather's works a tool of her radical vision of a future in which women can be comfortable in the roles that they choose.

Cather's Personal Crossings: Conflicts Between Artistic Identity and Home

In Red Cloud, Nebraska, Willa Cather's hometown, visitors can see glimpses of the author's life in the houses and structures that remain there. One of the central buildings on the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial tour in Red Cloud is the original depot from which the town's famous author left and returned "home." It is to this depot that she refers in the beginning of *My Ántonia* when Ántonia's family and Jim simultaneously arrive in Black Hawk (for which Red Cloud is the model) for the first time. The depot and its trains become symbolic in Cather's fiction of escapes and returns and of movements of boundaries of home and identity. [32] It is also to this depot that she refers in a letter written "home" after going east for one of her first jobs in journalism. [33] The job with *Home Monthly*, would be quite different from those she had previously held with the University of Nebraska's publication, the *Nebraska State Journal,* and the

---

[32] Similarly, in "Paul's Case," it is on the train that Paul escapes his mundane life in Pittsburg to the beauty that he expects to find in New York. Ultimately, his final escape from all of life's ugliness comes when he jumps in front of a speeding train at the end of the story.

[33] Copies of this and all other letters referred to are located in the archives at the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial (WCPM) in Red Cloud, Nebraska, unless otherwise noted. The original letters are kept in Lincoln. Cather stipulated in her will that her letters should never be reproduced, so, like other scholars before me,

Lincoln *Courier,* for which she wrote during her college years in Lincoln. While she considered the kinds of subjects that were addressed in the *Home Monthly* trivial and useless, the job was a chance for her to get her start in literary circles in the East. She was undoubtedly excited about the prospect of the new job in the big city. Despite the excitement accompanying this job and move, Cather writes of her own feelings of homesickness and the desire to jump off the train and run all the way back home to her family and friends. [34] This conflict between "home" and one's work is a central theme in Cather's fiction and to my own discussion of homes in American women's writing.

While in calling for a "cultural forgetting," Gilman seems to disavow any use of the "master's tools to dismantle the master's house," Cather recognizes and appropriates women's traditions within that house for her radically feminist agenda. She appropriates a tradition or memory of art, and women's homemaking, as well as American traditions of movement to imagine new spaces for her women characters. Writing as a contemporary to Gilman and Addams, Cather uses images of memory, mobility, and the importance of them to construct unconventional gender roles. In this process, she makes an important examination of women's roles as homemakers in the separate-spheres culture in which she was raised. As I argued in Chapter One, Cather uses a language of memory to describe an artistic tradition from which her female artists draw a

---

I have paraphrased the sentiments but not the exact wording.

[34] Jeanette Barbour, in her series "Pittsburg's Pioneers in Woman's Progress," writes of Cather's "true progressive western spirit" that allowed her the strength to make this move: "To go off, when one is but twenty-one, into an entirely new part of the country and undertake to establish and edit a new magazine requires plenty of 'grit'—a quality as valuable in a business woman as in a business man"

sense of power and agency when they are allowed to access it. They are seemingly born with their artistic talents, but they have to work and practice in order to hone those talents within a stifling home and community atmosphere. While Cather's ideas of "art" do expand to include what Ann Romines has called "domestic ritual," the honing and practicing of most artistic talents come in direct opposition to women's traditions of housekeeping.

Like Gilman, Cather sees a conflict between the reality of homes as they were and the way that they should be to satisfy the needs of artistic people, and especially creative, artistic women. While men can easily move back and forth between home life and their life's work and art, women, being constantly attached to the "home" by cultural identification, find it difficult to locate artistic space within traditional ideas of the home. Cather, like Gilman, sees the problem for creative women in the cultural expectations of homes and women's roles in them. Gilman describes those expectations as familial: homes are for families in which a man is "head" and a woman does "housekeeping." But when a woman is an "artist" as Cather and many of her characters were, her familial relationships are quite different from traditional ones. The result is an intrinsic conflict between cultural expectations of what a woman should be doing with her time in the "home," and what her "home" should look like, on the one hand, and what she must do to live up to her own artistic standards and talents on the other. One of Cather's most constant themes in her early writing is this conflict between two sides of the artistic woman's life. By "moving" her characters between traditional spaces and those that are not traditional spaces for women, Cather plays with

---

(2-3).

gender roles and creates new ones for her characters.

In "The Kingdom of Art," an essay on Cather's early principles of art, Slote discusses this duality in Cather's theories. Slote points out the suggestion of this duality in Cather's early nonfiction, but it is quite apparent in Cather's fiction as well. Slote writes that "of all the dilemmas which appear in Willa Cather's frank statements during these first years, none is stronger or with more permanent implications than this one of artist and person. It is one form of the duality of self which was to appear in many guises through her yet unwritten pages" (66). For women raised in the last years of the nineteenth century, self and personhood was wrapped up in their relationship to their homes because women were identified as keepers of the home and not as agents outside of it. The grown woman of this era had been taught by family, community, and culture to be a wife and, by extension, a housekeeper. Cather and her artistic characters had the constant task of disentangling themselves from that cultural identity. For the artistic woman, Slote writes, "marriage was one hazard" because "domestic and artistic life do not mix well . . . in art there is no compromise . . . Liberty and solitude . . . are the two wings of art" ("Kingdom" 70). In order for a woman to find this "liberty" and "solitude," she would have to have access to a "room of one's own," an idea that Virginia Woolf would add to feminist literature only a few years later.

The need for this "room" is as apparent in Cather's life as it is in the lives of her characters. In her letters, Cather privately writes about this conflict in her life that she would publicly portray in her characters' lives. In a 1922 letter to Carrie Miner Sherwood, a close friend in Nebraska, she writes of her dislike for

New York and the world east of the Missouri River (the boundary of her Nebraska "home"). She says that in order to learn to be a writer and artist, she had had to live around other artists. While her talents were developed far away from home, the material for her stories—the people and land of Nebraska—had already been implanted in her mind and heart. At least she believed this to be the case. In an October 1921 interview with the *Omaha Bee,* she remarks that the reason that she considered herself a Nebraska writer rather than "an eastern, western, northern, or southern writer" was that she had lived in Nebraska from the ages of 8 to 19. She explains that "the years from 8 to 15 are the formative years of a writer's life, when he [sic] unconsciously gathers basic material" ("Lure" 31). In 1927, she writes in a letter to Carrie that she is without a home for the first time in her life. She has moved out of her apartment and has placed her things in storage because of the noise ensuing from the construction of the new subway tunnels. The noise had obviously not been in keeping with her artist's sensibilities or with her need for "solitude" to do her work. She confides that the work involved in the move has greatly affected her stamina and ability to write.

Five years later when she records her move into a new apartment, she describes a disruption in her work because of the intense physical labor that is involved in putting a comfortable home together. She tells of choosing and installing carpets and bookcases for the new apartment and other domestic decisions that are both time-consuming and physically and mentally draining. She explains that she has had all of the tasks to do alone since Edith Lewis, her companion and house mate, had had too many responsibilities at her own office to

devote much time or energy to the putting together of their home. Even in this Eastern city, far away from her Nebraskan home, Cather was still forced to put away her art, on occasion, and to take up the domestic duties that life in the East usually allowed her to avoid.

In these letters of her personal life as well as in her fiction, Cather portrays the dilemma that most women have to face at some time in their lives—the conflict between home duties and other interests. We see this pattern especially in *The Song of the Lark* which one 1921 critic called "the story of Thea Kronborg, a Sweedish-American singer, who wrenches herself away from an environment antagonistic to art, and becomes an opera 'star'" (Carroll 22). On one hand, the female artist feels compelled to leave the stifling atmosphere of housework that is inherent to home life. On the other hand, she needs a real home that provides those necessities of life that Gilman spells out in her nonfiction: suitability based on comfort, privacy, practicality, and space that is free from clutter, has aesthetic value, and promotes creative expression.

Cather's artists are so busy developing their artistic identities and talents that they do not have time for domestic responsibilities. Thea Kronborg and Bartley Alexander in particular, are so driven that they don't have time for the daily nuisances of life. And they don't have time to stop and reflect on their lives in ways that they will later remember and cherish. These artists are here for the rest of us to cherish.

At the same time, these artists have a constant struggle with home life and home ideas. This is a problem of artistic temperament, but Cather also makes it a

gender problem. If we compare the homes and conflicts of Thea Kronborg and Alexander Bartley, this gender difference becomes clear. Thea, like most of Cather's artists, finds herself in out of the way, shabby places at times, especially when she is working her way up to greatness. As she works from day to day, she does not seem to mind, but occasionally she reaches a breaking point and needs a place of solace in which to recuperate and rejuvenate her creative sensibilities. Thea experiences this need when she is studying in Chicago and Fred Ott offers his Arizona ranch for her use. She spends entire days renewing her spirit in the ruins of Anasazi Indians. She sleeps, reads, eats, and baths in complete solitude for weeks at this secluded "home."

Near the end of *The Song of the Lark* when Thea Kronborg has become a successful opera singer, she is enduring a particularly demanding week of rehearsals. When she goes home to her hotel apartment for the evening, she is unsatisfied with her surroundings and the dinner that is brought to her room. She then gets into a fight with her maid about some laundry that has been lost. Cather describes this domestic scene and Thea's realization that it is direct opposition to her position as an artist:

> The housekeeper was indifferent and impertinent, and Thea got angry and scolded violently. She knew it was very bad for her to get into a rage just before bedtime, and after the housekeeper left, she realized that for ten dollars' worth of underclothing she had been unfitting herself for a performance which might eventually mean thousands (Cather *Song* 477).

She takes out her exhaustion and frustration on the housekeeper who doesn't have the same attachment to Thea's comfort as a wife would or as her mother in Moonstone had done when she was a child.

As the artist, away from all family ties, Thea must make do with what she has. On this night she makes do with a bath. "She rushed into the bathroom and locked the door. She would risk the bath and defer the encounter with the bed a little longer. She lay in the bath half an hour. The warmth of the water penetrated to her bones, induced pleasant reflections and a feeling of well-being" (Cather *Song* 478).

Later, Thea agonizes over the decision to find other, more suitable lodgings: *'Why* did I undertake to reform the management of this hotel to-night? After to-morrow I could pack up and leave the place" (478). In mentally "going over the advantages and disadvantages of different apartment hotels, she checks "herself. 'What *am* I doing this for? I can't move into another hotel to-night. I'll keep this up till morning. I shan't sleep a wink'" (Cather *Song* 478). Thea has no time to think about details of home life, but like everyone else, she needs a home—a place to unwind. In her case now, at the height of her career, the problem is not one of money, but of time and frame of mind. If she worries about her living conditions all night, she won't be fit to perform in the next concert. Like Cather, Thea is distracted from her art by domestic decisions at the expense of her artistic identity.

Unlike Thea, Alexander of "Alexander's Bridge" does not have a problem of finding domestic space in which to rest and be comfortable. This difference is

mainly because he has a wife not only to do all of his remembering for him as I pointed out in Chapter One, but also to do all of the thinking about the everyday details. Each time he returns from trips abroad or to New York, his wife and home are in place for his comfort.

Cather's fiction is made up of characters such as Thea Kronborg who constantly struggle between the need for the nurturing qualities of domestic spaces such as those described by Gilman, and the need to make breaks with their own homes (and hometowns) which, despite their originally nurturing atmosphere, have stifled their creative impulses. Like Gilman, in pointing out this conflict in her fiction, Cather envisions alternative domestic spaces for women artists. For Cather, there are two criteria for this envisioned domestic space. The first is the opportunity to develop a personal/artistic identity separate from that of community and cultural expectations. The second is an environment instrumental to artistic expression.

Jim's Crossings—The Masculine Version

In *My Ántonia*, it is easy for us to see Jim's crossings. He starts the novel with his leaving Virginia, riding a train across half of the country and arriving in Nebraska on the Divide. We see him move into town, then to the University, and then to New York. In his adult life, he spends his time going back and forth from New York to California working for the railroad, that American symbol of progress and movement. Ántonia's crossings are not so obvious as Jim's and they involve the crossing of gender as well as spatial boundaries as I will discuss later in this chapter. After Ántonia and her family crossed a continent and ocean, they

make the same crossing that Jim does, but Ántonia continues to move across the boundary of the "frontier" until she has finally established a new identity in the new space in the "wilderness."

Through Jim Burden's story we see an American-born male who grows up in Nebraska, lives a transient lifestyle as an adult, and becomes an integral part of the business of moving west. In his narrative, he juxtaposes himself to Ántonia, an immigrant who also grows up in Nebraska, learns to be a farmer and mother, and remains an integral part of the land and homestead. The immigrant woman becomes stable, builds a home, and the American born man realizes early in life that he will always be a transient. While this duality is the most apparent narrative in Jim's story, if we try to read Ántonia's story through Jim's, we see Ántonia crossing many invisible boundaries of gender conventions that parallel spatial boundaries.

Ántonia's Crossings—Radical Feminist Crossings

What does it mean to Cather's characters, and especially to her female characters, to be a part of this culture of migration and to uphold the important duties of womanhood in the midst of all of this moving around? It is important to ask this question about two characters in particular—Ántonia Shimerda and Jim Burden—who constantly move across boundaries of gender, space, and time throughout the novel. Although Jim is a male character, he is Cather's principle mouthpiece in the novel, and even though it would be naive to read his character *as* Cather, his point of view seems to come closest to the author's. Reginald Dyke, in his review essay, "The Feminist Critique of Willa Cather's Fiction,"

describes several interpretations of Cather's use of a male narrator in this and other novels, a matter that "has been considered extensively as a gender issue" (276). Some feminist critics point to Cather's supposed lesbianism as the generative force behind this narrative decision.

Judith Fetterly, in "My Ántonia, Jim Burden and the Dilemma of the Lesbian Writer," writes that the tactic was also a response to the American male literary tradition:

> The pressure that converted Willa Cather into Jim Burden was not simply homophobic; equally powerful was the pressure exerted by the definition of the American "I" as male and the paradigm of American experience as masculine. Yet perhaps the ultimate irony of Cather's career lies in the fact that she is best remembered, not for her impersonations of male experience, her masculine masquerades, but rather for the strategies she evolved to maintain her own point of view and tell her own story within the masquerade. (144)

This "masquerade" by Cather as Jim Burden is marked as well by the other speaker in the novel who is *unmistakably* Cather's. This speaker appears in the Introduction as a "voice that is marked as neither male nor female," and through this voice that "recurs throughout the text" we often "forget that we are listening to Jim Burden—his masculinity . . . has been made easy to forget—and we assume that we are hearing the voice of Willa Cather" (Fetterly 145). In any case, most feminist critics consider the choice to be driven by "the sexual and gender tensions experienced by the author and her society" (Dyke 275) and "gender ambiguity" (Dyke 271).

We see a similar "masquerading" in Cather's own life. Cather scholars

are indebted to Bernice Slote for her records of the inscriptions in the books in Cather's personal library. These inscriptions reflect Cather's own developing gender identity before her professional writing career began. These books in her "private library" have an interesting assortment of names inscribed in them that allow us to trace an identity quest or trail in which she moves into masculine names and later to non-gender specific names, and then to more feminine names. In the 1880's she often inscribes the masculine "Wm Cather Jr" which was a "signature she affected for a time in her childhood and into her freshman year at the University" (Slote "Kingdom" 39). While Cather had a relative named William and she liked to claim to be his namesake in these early years, Slote writes that she was actually named for an aunt Wilhemena. During this early time "some of the books are stamped several times with 'Willie Cather' (the family version of her name) in small formal script" (Slote "Kingdom" 39). Later inscriptions in the "Private Library" change "slightly to 'W. Cather Jr' with a less curly, more upsweeping initial 'W'" (Slote "Kingdom" 39). This "less curly" initial suggests a less gender specific owner, while the "Jr" continues to indicate Cather's identification with the male William. Cather seems to have been consciously thinking about the inscription of her name and of her gender as one book has "'William Cather' inscribed on the cover, and 'Willie Cather' stamped there three times" (Slote "Kingdom" 40). Slote writes that in Cather's "later University years, 'Private Library' is dropped and the signature is an efficiently scrawled 'W. Cather' or 'Willa Cather'" (Slote "Kingdom" 40). At this point, she seems to vary from non-gender specific inscriptions to feminine ones showing, perhaps, a period of gender ambiguity. Finally, Cather seems to have become satisfied or comfortable with a feminity in what she saw within her culture as the masculine world of movement and writing. On one volume of the works of Shakespeare, "the name 'William Cather' has been erased and 'Willa Cather'

written over it" (Slote "Kingdom" 40).

Are we able to see the real Ántonia Shimerda-Cuzak? Her life is conveyed to us through the romantic eyes of Jim Burden, who sees her as a strong female model by the end of the novel. Key to this discussion is Jim's romanticization and infatuation with Ántonia from their childhood and his insistence that the manuscript that he hands over to the narrator of the introduction is about *his* Ántonia. The introduction concludes with his naming of the manuscript: "He went into the next room, sat down at my desk and wrote across the face of the portfolio the word 'Ántonia.' He frowned at this a moment, then prefixed another word, making it 'My Ántonia.' That seemed to satisfy him" (Cather n.p.).

By the end of the novel, Àntonia is attached to the land and rarely leaves her farm. Her husband takes occasional trips into town to see to business for the farm and to socialize, and some day her sons will be old enough to accompany him. The women of the Cuzak farm, Ántonia and her daughters, remain physically, and perhaps emotionally and mentally attached to the farm, but Ántonia was not always this model of feminine motherliness. She was not always so stable spatially. As she grows up on the farm that her family traveled across the ocean and country to live on, she becomes completely engrossed in working the land. She loses much of the childhood contact she had had with Jim, and works long hours on her own land or works for wages on other people's land to help the family make ends meet. Jim starts to call her by the more masculine "Tony" and notices her behavior becoming more masculine as well. When Jim stays for dinner during one of his rare visits to the Shimerda family, he reflects, "Everything was disagreeable to me. Ántonia ate so noisily now, like a man, and she yawned often at the table and kept stretching her arms over her head, as if they ached. Grandmother had said, 'Heavy field work'll spoil that girl. She'll

lose her nice ways and get rough ones.' She had lost them already" (125). The remembered quotation of his grandmother is especially important in how we see Ántonia through Jim's eyes. He has formed his ideas of femininity from his grandmother's examples and ideas. Even though she is an old woman, as far as young Jim is concerned she is the one person who should know what an American woman should be like.

At this period in her life, Ántonia continues to cross the boundary of frontier into the wilderness and into the "civilization" in the town of Black Hawk. As the depot was a boundary for Cather's own life's movements, it was a boundary of space and cultural conventions for Jim and Ántonia as well. When they first come to Black Hawk as children, they cross that boundary, unknowingly, together. Jim describes his first encounter as one during a crossing: "I first met Ántonia on what seemed to me an interminable journey across the great midland plain of North America" (3). On the train, they are still within civilization's boundaries, but can, perhaps, look over those boundaries into the wilderness of the prairie. When they get to the depot in the middle of the night. The darkness does not hide the fact that they are about to cross over a line into the wilderness: "We stumbled down from the train to a wooden siding, where men were running about with lanterns. I couldn't see any town, or even distant light; we were surrounded by utter darkness" (5). Even today, the Red Cloud's depot (now owned by the Nebraska State Historical Society) is separate from the town. The boundary between town (civilization) and prairie (wilderness) is still marked by that depot. Jim's description of passing through this darkness and the bright, open land that he will see the next day is not unlike a birth description particularly appropriate to this movement because it represents a transformation or the opportunity for Jim and Ántonia each to be reborn.

Jim describes the land that he sees the next day as a new experience for

him, but also as outside of the civilization that he had known in Virginia. He remembers:

> There was nothing but the land: not a country at all, but the material out of which countries are made. No, there was nothing but land—slightly undulating . . . I had the feeling that the world was left behind, that we had got over the edge of it, and were outside man's jurisdiction. I had never before looked up at the sky when there was not a familiar mountain ridge against it (7).

Jim's description of the land that Jim and Ántonia come to at the beginning of the story designates a new space within which Jim and Ántonia can reinvent themselves as many times as they like. As long as they stay there beyond the boundary of "man's jurisdiction" they are not bound by the rules of it. Rather than making a "country" out of the land, Ántonia will use it to make an identity that is not bound by culture's expectations.

Jim's early portrait of the land closely mirrors Cather's description of her own entrance into the new land on the Divide. In a 1913, interview she describes her first sight of Nebraska: "The land was open range and the roads were mostly faint trails over the bunch grass." The boundaries of roads were "faint," but other boundaries did not yet exist as "there was no fencing." Cather describes her own first experience as a release from both spatial and gender/cultural boundaries: "As we drove further and further out into the country, I felt a good deal as if we had come to the end of everything—it was a kind of erasure of personality" (qtd F. H. 10). Cather will allow this erasure of personality for her characters, Jim and Ántonia, as well, as they move out into the country and away from society's restrictions.

This is a "new" space for Ántonia and Jim, it is not "empty" as the American male tradition of movement west has assumed. Jim could feel the

energy that Ántonia would later come to understand as an artist on the land:

> As I looked about me I felt the grass was the country, as the water is the sea. The red of the grass made all the great prairie the colour of wine-stains, or of certain seaweeds when they are first washed up. And there was so much motion in it; the whole country seemed, somehow to be running. (35).

Not only is this land not empty, but what it contains is obvious to Jim and, we can assume, to Ántonia. It is inside-out, with its "seaweed" and life bursting out. As one who can identify the life force around him, Jim recognizes this quality in the land as he does in Ántonia.

The houses or "homes" on the divide are an interesting location of spots of culture and civilization within the wilderness. While the town of Black Hawk, with its depot is clearly the frontier, the boundary to the wilderness, the homes on the Nebraska Divide represent pockets of various versions of civilization. Their inhabitants, being beyond the frontier, can experiment freely with previous notions of home in this "new" space. For Jim, home on the Divide encapsulates a transplantation of some of his familiar Virginia culture. In fact the area of the Divide where the Cathers located is called "New Virginia," and the structure of the New Virginia Church stands there as a reminder to this day of that transplanted culture. While there are some similarities to his Virginia home, he notices differences in structure and lifestyle. He finds "curious" the expression "down to the kitchen" since in Virginia it had always been "out to the kitchen" (9). More profound that this distinction, however, is that between the Burdens house and the others on the Divide:

> Ours was the only wooden house west of Black Hawk—until you came to the Norwegian settlement, where there were several. Our neighbors lived in sod houses and dugouts—comfortable, but not

> very roomy. Our white frame house, with a storey and a half-storey above the basement stood at the east end of what I might call the farmyard, with the windmill close by the kitchen door. (14)

Jim's home on the Divide is a farm with some of civilization's trappings.

It is to one of the sod houses that Ántonia goes on her first night on the Divide. The Shimerda's sod house is described as a "cave" by Jim and his grandmother, and as such, it is a part of the land more than it is a structure of the family's transplanted culture. When Jim first visits the Bohemian family, he doesn't even recognize the dwelling as a structure until he is almost on top of it:

> As we approached the Shimerda's dwelling, I could see nothing but rough red hillocks, and draws with shelving banks and long roots hanging out where the earth had crumbled away. Presently, against one of those banks, I saw a sort of shed, thatched with some of the same wine-coloured grass that grew everywhere . . .We drove up to this skeleton to tie our houses, and then I saw a door and a window sunk deep in the drawbank. (22).

It is hard for Jim to identify the exterior of this land structure as a home, but the interior is not much more identifiable for him. The few markers of civilization include a stove, an oil barrel, and some quilts on a pile of straw. The separate room that Ántonia and her mother sleep in is described as "another little cave, not much bigger than an oil barrel, scooped out of the black earth" (75). While Jim and his grandmother are incredulous of the family's living conditions, Ántonia is comfortable with them. She describes her separate "cave" as "warm like the badger hole. I like for sleep there" (75). While Jim experiences the newness of the wilderness, he takes some of "home" with him. Ántonia does not, and as a result, she has fewer identity markers to work with when she grows up to establish her own new identity on the Divide.

It is through the crossing back and forth across the frontier boundary that we see Ántonia's identity develop. We see a series of these crossings until Ántonia realizes her identity on the Divide and never leaves it. The town of Black Hawk provides the passage into civilization for both Jim and Ántonia. Neither feels comfortable there. Jim, while he remains a transient, crosses back to the world of civilization once he has established his own sense of identity. As a man, he is able to continue to make these crossing with a certain amount of ease, but as a woman, Ántonia's version of identity is only acceptable in the wilderness.

Black Hawk, in representing the frontier boundary, demonstrates the worst kind of conventional restriction. Jim feels stifled by the expectations and conventions of small town life. As he develops into maturity he feels the repression of Black Hawk. Of his earlier discouraged reflection of Black Hawk he remembers:

> The life that went on in them seemed to me made up of evasions and negations; shifts to save cooking, to save washing and cleaning, devices to propitiate the tongue of gossip. This guarded mode of existence was like living under tyranny. People's speech, their voices, their very glances, became furtive and repressed. Every individual taste, every natural appetite, was bridled by caution. The people asleep in those houses, I thought, tried to live like the mice in their own kitchens; to make no noise, to leave no trace, to slip over the surface of things in the dark. The growing piles of ashes and cinders in the back yards were the only evidence that the wasteful, consuming process of life went on at all. (Cather *Ántonia* 219-20)

Here, words and phrases such as "evasions," "negations," "save," "guarded," "tyranny," "furtive," "repressed," "bridled by caution" (219) suggest the effect

that the town and its morals have had on Jim. The town is, essentially, lifeless and stagnant. Things there do not move and, as a result, they fester. This description of the town in general reflects Jim's notion of the differences between the hired girls and the town girls. The hired girls have moved and immigrated, but they continue to move, grow, and live. The town's lethargy and resulting stagnation are also reflected on a smaller literal level by the images of the dancing that occurs (or notably does not occur) in the town. Since moving to town, even Jim's grandfather has become stagnant and less open-minded about the world around him. Upon recalling his plans to join and regularly visit a dance club, Jim remembers "I knew it would be useless to acquaint my elders with such a plan. Grandfather didn't approve of dancing anyway" (220). This environment is not conducive to an expressive or artistic individual, and Jim suffers from the suffocation of it.

While Jim narrates that "in every frontier settlement there are men who have come there to escape restraint" (209), Jim and Ántonia find more restraint in one of them than anywhere else. This restraint is most evident to Jim in the town's treatment and estimation of the "country girls" who came in from the farms on the Divide to work in town. Jim minces no words in his reprimand of the town's shallowness in this respect when he says "the country girls were considered a menace to the social order. Their beauty shone out too boldly against a conventional background. But anxious mothers need have felt no alarm. They mistook the mettle of their sons. The respect for respectability was stronger than any desire in the Black Hawk youth" (201-2).

Part of Jim's restlessness is incidental to his life situation—he was orphaned at a young age, his grandparents became too old to farm, and he was a bright young man who needed an education—but his rootlessness is also spawned by his early evaluations of provincial middle America. He begins to form

conflicting ideas about small-town conventions, even disdain for them at times, because of his close relationships with the immigrant girls in the town of Black Hawk. In direct opposition to the town girls (the daughters of well-to-do families) are the hired girls who have come in from the country to work. Jim writes that because of them, "there was a curious social situation in Black Hawk" (Cather *Ántonia* 197). He describes the differences between the town girls and the hired girls:

> The older girls, who helped to break up the wild sod, learned so much from life, from poverty, from their mothers and grandmothers; they had all, like Ántonia, been early awakened and made observant by coming at a tender age from an old country to a new . . . . I can remember something unusual and engaging about each of them. Physically they were a race apart, and out-of-door work had given them a vigour which, when they got over their first shyness on coming to town, developed into a positive carriage and freedom of movement, and made them conspicuous among Black Hawk women. (198)

Jim, as an adolescent boy, looks at the girls of Black Hawk sexually, and through his eyes, the country girls seem strong, sexual and exotic while the town girls are cold and lifeless. He explains that "physical exercise was thought rather inelegant for the daughters of well-to-do families" and that "when one danced with them, their bodies never moved inside their clothes; their muscles seemed to ask but one thing—not to be disturbed" (199). Because of the sexuality that they evoked to the townspeople and because of their differences in mannerisms and appearance, Jim remembers that "the country girls were considered a threat to the social order. Their beauty shone out too boldly against a conventional background" (201).

If Jim, a male who has a freer range of identity markers as a man, finds

Black Hawk restrictive, Ántonia, an artistic, expressive woman, finds it even more so. It is when the Burdens move to town that influence of American women's femininity is particularly apparent on Ántonia's development. When she lived in the country, she tried not to pay attention to the advice that Mrs. Burden gave her on being more lady like. She tells Jim, "Oh, better I like to work out-of-doors than in a house! . . . I not care that your grandmother say it makes me like a man. I like to be like a man" (138). But when Jim's perspective moves from the country to the town of Black Hawk, he has a larger field of comparison for assessing Ántonia's femininity than that of Mrs. Burden alone. Here, Ántonia is juxtaposed against the "hired girls," represented by Lina Lingard, and the good townspeople of Black Hawk, represented by Mrs. Harling. Just as Mrs. Burden, Jim's grandmother has tried to tame and civilize Ántonia, Mrs. Harling teaches Jim about the correctness of town life. She "restrained him from utter savagery" by keeping "an eye on" him, and if his behavior "went beyond certain bounds, [he] was not permitted to come into her yard or play with her jolly children" (145-146). Since Mr. Harling was away tending to business matters often, Mrs. Harling was usually the "head of the household," and the tasks of keeping house were major endeavors at her house: "Her enthusiasm, and her violent likes and dislikes, asserted themselves in all the everyday occupations of life. Wash-day was interesting, never dreary, at the Harlings'. Preserving time was a prolonged festival, and the house cleaning was like a revolution" (148).

When Mrs. Burden suggests that Mrs. Harling hire Ántonia to work in the Harling household, there is much discussion between the two women after Mrs. Harling's initial visit with the Shimerda family and Ántonia. She finally tells Mrs. Burden not to worry because she can "bring something out of that girl. She's barely seventeen, not too old to learn new ways. She's good looking too!" (153). That "something" to be brought out by this representative of American

femininity—and the stability of home life—is the latent essential femininity that Mrs. Harling assumes can be brought "out" in Ántonia with the proper example and instruction despite Ántonia's family, history, and immigration.

Interestingly, Mrs. Shimerda, Ántonia's mother, is never a role model for feminine behavior, at least from Jim's perspective, because not only is she an immigrant, but she is also from the lower class in her own country, and her social status is one of the reasons that Mr. Shimerda had to leave his family in shame. Mr. Shimerda's own mother who might have had some ideas similar to those of Mrs. Burden and Mrs. Harling (about femininity) would not allow her daughter-in-law or grandchildren into her home. We see Ántonia, then, as a complete exile from all real civilization and cultivation. Her brother is crude like his mother. The immigrant girl, who takes after her father in disposition and manners more than her mother, has been cut off from her noble ties to the Old World since her father's death. Mr. Shimerda had represented the continuity of the Old World to Ántonia, and he had tried to pass some of its refinements along to his daughter before his death. She realizes the importance of his heritage but also that she must learn a completely new life now, not the one of her father or her mother. When Jim must go to school without her, she tells him "I ain't got time to learn. I can work like mans now" (123). Jim wonders, "Was she going to grow up boastful like her mother . . .?" Ántonia cries as she leaves her father's world behind her, and she tells Jim, "Sometime you will tell me all those nice things you learn at the school won't you Jimmy? . . . My father, he went much to school. He know a great deal; how to make the fine cloth like what you not got here. He play horn and violin, and he read so many books that the priests in Bohemie come to talk to him. You won't forget my father, Jim?" (124). Ántonia, even at this young age, realizes that in America she will be an outsider to both her mother's world and her father's, as well as the new one to which they have brought her.

This idea of the image of the exile or foreigner that forms both Jim's and Ántonia's identity, is an important theme in American literature and within American literary culture. Urgo points out that Malcolm Cowley, "writing about his own generation of literati in *Exile's Return* . . . was struck above all else by the condition of homelessness that intellectuals shared in the 1920's" and that "the eventual return of these Americans to the United States in the 1930's amounted to 'a mass migration,' in Cowley's terminology." These writers became "at home being uprooted" and "the experience marked their outlook, critical perspective, and creative energies" (Urgo 7). In *Foreigners: The Making of American Literature 1900-1940*, Marcus Klein also refers to this experience as particularly American when he writes of a split which began to form around the turn of the century and the decades that followed within the American literary world. This split was between the American born writers who had a cultural and literary tradition that had had its roots in the Anglo-Saxon, Puritan immigrants who came to the New World early in the history of its development and the newcomers, the immigrants, who flocked into American cities by the thousands. These Klein calls "barbarians," but he uses the term loosely to indicate anyone who somehow fails to fit into that earlier tradition of eastern, Anglo-American tradition. He even includes in this group of "foreigners" the members of such groups as the Fugitive poets such as John Crowe Ransom and Robert Penn Warren who were trying to extol the tradition of southern agrarian culture even at a time when the South was a "lost cause" and, according to Northern writers, devoid of cultural or literary merit. He also includes the dispossessed southerners who had lived farm lives but were moving to mill towns to work and were being pulled into the same labor issues which concerned the immigrant laborers in the North. Of course, his main example of the "foreigners" are the immigrants—Jews, Poles, Russians, Eastern Europeans—who came to the shores of America seeking the American

dream and the good life—people like the Shimerdas. These particular immigrants were vastly different in manner, language, appearance, and cultural custom from the native born Americans who already populated America and who were building it into a wealthy showplace of Christian cleanliness, opulence, and greed. The immigrants congregated in the large cities of the time, especially New York, as it was the stopping off place of most of the people who crossed the Atlantic to reach America's prosperous shores.

Contrary to their Old World dreams of America, most never saw any more of America than New York City's ghettos and sweatshops. Some made their way to Chicago where they found and lived in the same conditions as their New York counterparts. Others—perhaps they were braver or had more vision—set out for the West and land of their own. Still others became pioneers of other sorts—pioneers of art, literature, education, and culture, and it is this last group to which Klein mostly refers when he discusses this schism between American writers. The participants of the second, barbarian group were the children of immigrants who set out to create a literary and cultural tradition that ran contrary to, or at least did not fit into, the literary tradition that already existed in America. Cowley and Klein seem to point out a trend of cultural homelessness and migration that would eventually lead to Urgo's assertion about American literature in general and his reading of Cather's fiction specifically.

Urgo explains that "Cather is mentioned only once in *Exile's Return*, as a member of a previous and by implication more settled generation, along with Sherwood Anderson and Theodore Dreiser" (Urgo 8), but "critics like Malcolm Cowley, [have] not voiced the full cognizance of her fictional imperatives" (Urgo 11). Many contemporary critics, especially scholars of lesbian and women's studies, affirm Urgo's claim that Cather's fiction is not only more complex than these earlier readings allow, but that Cather cannot simply be read as a "member"

of a more "settled" generation. Her life and fiction both assiduously confront the tensions between a conservative stability and an untraditional lifestyle marked by movement of both mind and body and unconventional views on sexuality and gender roles. Ann W. Fisher-Wirth notes that Cather's confirmation (along with her family's) into the Episcopal Church "was a reflection both of Cather's increasing conservatism—her increasing desire to fill her life with tradition and ritual" (37). But alongside this "conservatism" is Cather's migratory and nontraditional lifestyle. These conflicts are mirrored in Jim Burden's own migrations, disdain for the small town narrowness of vision that he experiences in Black Hawk, and the sense of loss he feels upon visiting the stable, homebound Ántonia who despite the title of his manuscript will never really be *his*.

Instead of being a refined preserver of Old World culture or becoming a staunch example of American feminine virtue, Ántonia is forming a new female identity unlike any of her models. [35] Her skin has become "as brown as a sailor's," her strong neck resembles the "draught-horse neck seen among the peasant women in all old countries" (122), and "beads of perspiration" gather "on her upper lip like a mustache" (138). She talks of "nothing but the prices of things, or how much she could lift or endure. She was too proud of her strength" (126). Essentially, she is mixing the signs of both genders and worlds to form one that fits her own version of a female lifestyle.

Like Ántonia, Jim's character is full of conflicting tensions of gender and identity. Like Ántonia, he is an immigrant of sorts, but unlike Ántonia, Jim never settles in the novel. Even the introduction, in which we see the most current

---

[35] Like Gilman's narrator in "The Yellow Wallpaper," Ántonia struggles with what are to her unacceptable models of womanhood or femininity. Unlike this narrator, though, Ántonia has more freedom of gender because she is not confined by space but is located past the frontier where she is able to negotiate and redefine meanings of female space and the home.

version of Jim, portrays a man encountered on a train in an intercontinental transit. He constantly migrates from the East, where he resides with his wife, to the West, where he does business as legal counsel for the railroads. He is often engaged in all points in between, and it is on one of these trips that he stops in Nebraska and takes the time to go out to Ántonia's homestead that she shares with her husband. Jim's life began, like Ántonia's, in homelessness as a series of migrations. His life, like Cather's began with a migration. The story recounts this migration of author and character as it opens when Jim is traveling from his previous home in Virginia where he had lived with his parents to Nebraska where he will live with his grandparents as he has been orphaned. He will later move with his grandparents into the town of Black Hawk where he will learn of small town life, and then to Lincoln to go to school, and finally to New York. [36]

Jim's Movement and Memory/Nostalgia

For all of this agony over the state of life in Black Hawk and his desire to move and experience life, Jim still has conflicting feelings about "home" and his memories of it. On one of his early trips home from school, he and some of the hired girls have taken a picnic outside of town. The group's discussion turns to a local rumor that places the Spanish conquistadors as far north as Nebraska. The idea that the Spaniards from a far away land and time seems somehow exciting and exotic to the group of girls, and their impressions mark them as people who have settled and perhaps feel at home on the Nebraska plains. Ironically, their lives have been the representation of exoticism to the people of Black Hawk because these girls have come from far away lands bringing different languages and customs. Jim remembers that "the girls began to wonder among themselves. Why had the Spaniards come so far? What must this have country been like,

---

[36] These progressions follow the pattern of movement in Cather's life as well.

then? Why had Coronado never gone back to Spain, to his riches, and his castles and his king? I couldn't tell them. I only knew the schoolbooks said he 'died in the wilderness, of a broken heart'" (244). These now settled immigrant girls must ask Jim, a transient, but native all the same, about the nature of wandering and migration. Jim does not have the answer they want, but he can understand both the Spaniards' need to explore the world and his death "in the wilderness" and his "broken heart." Jim relates to the wandering conquistador of their discussion on the one hand because of his own desires to experience life and adventure. On the other hand, he cannot consciously express his feelings about his relationship to the wanderer.

Jim's conflicting notions about movement seem to be, like Cather's and Shaw's pioneer mother, intricately related to his memories about the past, home, and familial relationships. For Cather, especially in this novel, those relationships and Jim's idea of home expand to include the landscape of the Nebraska plains. As Jim returns after an extended stay away from the area, the land impresses him as a remnant of home. He says that he "recognized every tree and sandbank and rugged draw. I found that I remembered the conformation of the land as one remembers the modeling of human faces" (306). Important to Jim's relationship with the land of home, family and the past is, of course, his relationship to the Ántonia whom he knew as a child and young man, but the adult Jim knows that he does not necessarily want to remember all of the past or the truth about everything that happened in the past. He says that his reluctance to visit Ántonia in adulthood was because of the fear of losing the memories of the past by seeing the reality of Ántonia's present. He says, "I did not want to find her aged and broken; I really dreaded it. In the course of twenty crowded years one parts with many illusions. I did not wish to lose the early ones. Some memories are realities, and are better than anything that can ever happen to one again" (328).

Jim's insightful reflection into his own psyche is representative of an important technique of Cather's narrative style and stories. This technique involves what Urgo calls the "intersection of historical preservation and future purpose—Cather's two kinds of memory, remembering and willful forgetting" (41). Jim, like Cather, wants to pick and choose the parts of his past and his memories of the past to remember.

This selective forgetfulness is essential to migration for immigrants and for people like Jim who live transient lives physically and emotionally. When moving all the time, you must pack lightly as too much baggage will slow you down and perhaps even keep you from getting where you want to go. Urgo explains that "migrants abandon valuable artifacts for lack of room; space is created within conscious memories for these valued sources. The first casualty of migration is a shared sense of certainty, which is replaced by a highly personalized sense of the past" (35). Jim sees the road that he and Ántonia have traveled together as shared and intertwined because in a migratory existence the migration serves as the shared experience. The experience that is shared between Jim and Ántonia serves as a metaphor for American identities of cohesion because according to Urgo "the crossing, the passage itself, is the moving ground on which Americans share a heritage. To forget that all Americans have a history of transferring home from actuality to memory, of shifting from one set of allegiances to another, is to misconstrue the culture itself" (63). Jim writes in his last lines about his own understanding of the passage and his own interpretation of the past:

> For Ántonia and me, this had been the road of Destiny; had taken us to those early accidents of fortune which predetermined for us all that we can ever be. Now I understood that the same road was to bring us together again. Whatever we had missed, we possessed

together the precious, the incommunicable past (372).

This "incommunicable past" has become the sacred foundation on which Jim builds his interpretation of the world around him—the home that he carries on his back in his transient lifestyle. He can only hold onto the conventions, memories, and artifacts that are the most important.

Problems and Solutions of Expression

> In the end the artist does put his work first; he does not care about the world.
>
> —Bernice Slote "Kingdom of Art" (71).

Klein seems to be silent on the America west of the Mississippi. He does not mention the west or the frontier, and this omission is rather alarming since many of these foreigners went west and because the west was both a place for the expansion of the Anglo-American tradition and an ever expanding repository of immigrant hope for independence. When Willa Cather wrote *My Ántonia* in 1918, she was, on the one hand, living in New York and a full-fledged part of the American born stock which Klein places in the first category of writers who were continuing in the already established American literary tradition. On the other hand, Cather makes her principle subject of the book an immigrant woman in the west and her relationships with the native born Americans around her. Was Cather simply writing about what she knew? Was she just taking advantage of the subject of great concern to many Americans? Or was she in some ways bridging the gap in the schism between the two sides of Klein's split in American literature? At the same time can such a split be used to look at American women's literature in particular, since American women had been rarely a part of the stream of masculine literature in America? There had to this point been many American women writers who had been quite successful and quite popular but

who had also been marginalized by the "Eastern Brahmins" of American literary tradition. These women had written sentimental, emotional, and local works that dealt with women's issues of home and hearth and were not really a part of the American literary tradition to which Klein refers. Cather herself considered her work to be in a direct line from Sarah Orne Jewett and Harriet Beecher Stowe who, though part of the Eastern literary circles were scorned by some Eastern writers for their local and regional presentations of the people.

In arguing that Cather was, despite the tradition that she appears to be in on the surface, really a part of that second group of barbarians, Cather is endowed with a "covert" literary radicalism. I base this argument, in part, on her subject matter—plain, common people trying to make it in the west, but most especially, immigrants not as dirty, ignorant masses, but as people who brought with them another culture and traditions of art, literature, and beauty. Cather enters this group covertly, and conservatively—not as a socialist (as Gilman was), or ensconced in politics, but as a woman who wishes to point out the incongruities of small-town America and its values as well as its prejudices.

In *My Ántonia*, Willa Cather writes about relationships between immigrant women and white women who carry the tradition of Anglo-American culture that are similar to those in Anzia Yezierska's "The Lost 'Beautifulness'" and *Bread Givers*. We can see these relationships in three different characters—Jim Burden's grandmother who has some concern for Ántonia's early Americanization, Mrs. Harling who hires Ántonia and teaches her how to keep house in town, and Jim Burden the narrator who embodies the narrative voice and consciousness of Cather herself.

Yezierska—Expressive Home Life

Anzia Yezierska is one writer whom Klein mentions as a spokesperson for

the barbarians. He mentions her a couple of times only briefly, but her work merits more examination for the particular role that she plays in the production of American "barbarian" literature. She, as well as her characters, is familiar with the culture of migration in which Cather writes. She is also important to my examination of Cather's treatment of characters' relationships to homes because of her characters' need to create a beautiful surrounding despite the poverty and environment of movement in which they live.

In Yezierska's short story "The Lost 'Beautifulness,'" she writes about the struggle of one Jewish immigrant woman to create something beautiful for herself and her family in the American ghetto. In this process, she creates her own expressive space, despite the dreariness of her community and its boundaries of gender and class. Hanneh Hayyeh, like Yezierska, is a Russian Jew and fights the poverty of the New York Jewish ghetto every day of her life. The story revolves around the woman's desire to create something beautiful in her dark, dirty, cramped surroundings. She looks to the opulence of America for its beauty and finds a way to fix up her smoke and oil stained kitchen before her son returns from fighting in the American war. To do this, she mimics the "best representation" of American beauty and opulence that she knows, her employer, Mrs. Preston.

Hanneh is a washer woman for the wealthy Mrs. Preston, a wealthy woman who obviously does not live on Hester Street or anywhere on the Lower East Side. She represents to Hanneh the splendor and attraction of the American dream. She is wealthy, clean, kind, and she believes in democracy and equality for all, as she has often told Hanneh. She also has clean, white paint on all her

walls, probably something that does not cross her mind too often. To Hanneh though, these clean walls represent the whiteness and beauty of American opportunity, so week by week she begins to save her pennies from her washing. The clean, starched laces, collars, and linens of Mrs. Preston's household would soon become a bit of beauty and hope in Hanneh Hayyeh's. Mrs. Preston sees this same beauty in Hanneh's work. She tells her, "You do my laces and batistes as no one ever has. It's as if you breathed part of your soul into it . . . You're an artist—an artist laundress" (1176). Hanneh explains the new beauty of her kitchen, and Mrs. Preston is struck by the immigrant woman's passion for beauty and life.

After Hanneh has finally finished the painting, she invites everyone in the neighborhood to come see the "beautifulness" of her kitchen, and they all marvel at its brightness. "Gold is shining from every corner!" one exclaims. "Like for a holiday!" cries another. They all declare blessings on her for bringing some beauty into their dark lives (1175-6). Unfortunately, Hanneh also shows the kitchen to the landlord who raises her rent because of it and bleeds Hanneh of every cent that she works for. When she appeals to Mrs. Preston, the wealthy woman gives her money to "tide" her over until something can be done. Hanneh will not take her money as charity, and eventually she is evicted from her apartment on the same day that her son returns from the war.

This scene between Mrs. Preston and Hanneh evinces an awakening on the part of Mrs. Preston. She has always meant well. She probably thought that she was being of service to Hanneh Hayyeh when she hired her to do her weekly washing. She has explained to Hanneh that the war is being fought by both of their sons "to give everybody a chance to lift up his head like a person. It is to bring together the people on top who got everything and the people on the bottom who got nothing." She explains to Hanneh that "democracy means that

everybody in America is going to be with every body alike" (1174). If you had asked Mrs. Preston what she thought about racism, classicism, and prejudice in her overtly politically incorrect era, she would probably have thrown up her hands in opposition. She is a good, Christian woman who feels no guile to anyone. She is not a slave driver, and she pays Hanneh well for washing her things. So Mrs. Preston probably could not have been more shocked "baffled and bewildered" by Hanneh's reaction to her aid, and she is "distraught for the first time in her life" (1180). She begs Hanneh to ease her guilt by taking the money, but she also tries to explain her own position as a representative white woman: "These laws are far from just, but they are all we have so far. Give us time. We are young. We are still learning. We are doing our best" (1181).

Unfortunately, this explanation is no help to Hanneh, who will soon be evicted from her apartment, and they would have been of little help to Yezierska herself, who had to live in the same surroundings as Hanneh Hayyeh. Mrs. Preston is like many American women who meant well toward the immigrants and all people who were less fortunate than they, but who really could not (or did not know how to) do anything about the problems that led to the poverty of immigrant people in places such as New York's lower East Side. There were other American women who shared Mrs. Preston's "breeding" and "Anglo-Saxon forbears" (1177) who had noticed the real injustice of the situation much sooner that Mrs. Preston did. These women were striving at the turn of the century and during the time that this story takes place to do something about the problem. Like Mrs. Preston they often used their money, but unlike her they set out to find ways to change the injustice as well as help people like Hanneh to survive while that process was taking place. But sometimes the process takes too long, and Hanneh Hayyeh would soon be evicted from her apartment.

In her autobiographical novel, *Bread Givers*, Yezierska mentions the work

of some of these women. When Sara Smolinsky, the main character, has left home to make her own way and to gain an education on her own, she turns to the "Grand Street Cafeteria for something to eat." She tells us that she had "read about the place in the paper" and that "kind, rich ladies had opened it for working girls, to have their meals in beautiful surroundings and cheap" (161). Sara sadly learns that even these well-meaning women cannot solve the immediate problems of poverty and hunger when she goes to the cafeteria for what she believes will be her last meal for some time to come, as she is at the end of her money supply. She wants to make the most out of this last bowl of beef stew when she discovers that the servers give more meat to the men in the line. She has worked hard all day ironing in a laundry, and she is hungry. "But you didn't give me as much as you gave him. Isn't my money as good as his?" she asks in desperation. When she realizes that she is defeated, she wants to cry out, "Why do you keep flowers on the tables and cheat a starving girl from her bite of food?" (169).

There is a stark contrast here between the need for artistic, creative surroundings and the need to have the basic necessities for survival. While creative and intellectual women need beauty around them, they also need food, shelter, and clothing. While Cather focuses mainly on the need for creative spaces, Gilman addresses the need for both and calls society to create spaces which allow women to have both in life.

Ántonia's Expression—Nurturing Harmony on the Divide

Ántonia does finally become comfortable with her identity as a woman, as a homemaker, as an artist, and as a mother. In so doing, Ántonia makes her own combination of tradition ideals of American womanhood and her own artistic version of that by using the land and reproduction in her own ways. We see this

turning point for Ántonia after her first child is born. Ántonia is seduced by a handsome railroad man who convinces her to go to Denver to marry him. After all of the ensuing preparation of clothes and other feminine items, Ántonia leaves the Divide by train for the first time since her childhood arrival as an immigrant. This move proves to be disastrous for Ántonia in the eyes of the Black Hawk community and liberating for Ántonia in her own ways. When she returns unmarried and pregnant, she returns to the Divide rarely to be seen in town again for the rest of her life. The old widow who cared for Ántonia during her pregnancy explains the young woman's change to Jim: "no baby was ever better cared-for. Ántonia is a natural-born mother. I wish she could marry and raise a family, but I don't know as there's much chance now" (318). In Black Hawk, or in another town of its sort, there was not a chance of this for Ántonia, but in the Divide, "beyond man's jurisdiction," Ántonia is free to continue her life.

Ántonia returns to the Divide, marries and immigrant farmer, and raises her own large family there. This family makes use of a mixture of traditions—some that she learned in town, some that she learned from her farming neighbors on the Divide, some that her parents brought with them from the Old Country, and some are from her own artistic spirit and use of the land. Her house exudes a sense of harmony, and it is an environment of nurturing care. When Jim visits the farm house, her daughters are working together in the kitchen. The children are proud of their help with the farm, the table, the preserving, and the animals. At the same time, they all care about each other and recognize each other's differences in personality.

Jim shows us the "fruits" of Ántonia's labors of love most vividly through the images of the fruit "cave" or cellar that the children proudly show him on his visit. Unlike Ántonia's first "cave" on the Divide, this one has "stout walls and [a] cement floor" (337). The bounty of Ántonia's land is metaphorically contained in her children and literally "bottled" in this small underground room:

> Nina and Jan, and a little girl named Lucie, kept shyly pointing out to me the shelves of glass jars. They said nothing, but, glancing at me, traced on the glass with their finger-tips the outline of the cherries and strawberries and crabapples within, trying by a blissful expression of countenance to give me some idea of their deliciousness. (338)

These children enjoy a fruitful existence on Ántonia's farm where they are not wealthy by the community's standards, but where they are never hungry for food, love, or companionship. They also never seem to have the restless searching that Ántonia had to endure as a young woman since they live in an environment that is open to their individual personalities and temperaments.

At the same time they seem to live in an environment where their existence revolves around Ántonia's mothering qualities. They have the ability within that circle to be reborn at any time. Jim experiences one of these rebirths as he watches the children emerge from the fruit cave as if being born from the earth with new life and vitality:

> We turned to leave the cave; Ántonia and I went up the stairs first,

> and the children waited. We were standing outside talking, when they all came running up the steps together, big and little, tow heads and gold heads and brown, and flashing little naked legs; a veritable explosion of life out of the dark cave into the sunlight. It made me dizzy for a moment. (338-9)

As the old woman had pointed out to Jim, this bounteous motherhood is Ántonia's gift and art, but in Black Hawk, "there's not much chance" or expressive space for this gift to manifest itself. Only on the nonrestrictive space on the Divide, "outside of man's jurisdiction," is this result possible for Ántonia. Able to flourish, however, she is as Jim comments, "a rich mine of life, life the founders of early races" (353).

In the works of Willa Cather, as evidenced in *My Ántonia*, the author encounters and confronts several important facets of American identity formation. She reveals the existence of the myth of the American home (our desires to be rooted and at home) which coincides with a culture in transit on societal and individual levels. This revelation comes at a time when the builders of homes (and of the home myth) were reevaluating their own sense of their roles and status. Cather also questions the notions of fixed roles of gender within her culture of transit. While women writers such as Jane Addams and her activist counterparts were on the one hand radical in the gender concerns and their political and economic agendas, they were, on the other hand, conservatively solid in their crusade for "municipal housekeeping" and for middle-class permanence for immigrants and the working class. Unlike these women, Willa Cather, often perceived as "settled," conservative, and politically inert, envisions an American plurality of values and gender constructions. At the same time, she sees a,

perhaps, more accurate view of the conflicts Americans face between home and the road. While Jane Addams reaffirms traditional conventions of women's roles and essential nature in *The Long Road*, Cather magnifies the American reality of plurality, movement, and change.

Chapter Five: Municipal Housekeeping: Gilman's Architecture of Domestic Space and Addams's Revision of the Domestic Sphere

> So when the great word "Mother!" rang once more,
> I saw at last its meaning and its place;
> Not the blind passion of the brooding past,
> But Mother—the World's Mother—come at last,
> To love as she had never loved before—
> To feed and guard and teach the human race.
>
> The world was full of music clear and high!
> The world was full of light! The world was free!
> And I? Awake at last, in joy untold,
> Saw Love and Duty broad as life unrolled—
> Home was the world—the World was Home to me!
> —Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "Two Callings" (xxiii)

> Maternal affection and solicitude, in woman's remembering heart, may at length coalesce into a chivalric protection for all that is young and unguarded. This chivalry of women expressing protection for those at the bottom of society, so far as it has already developed, suggests a return to that idealized version of chivalry which was the consecration of strength to the defense of weakness, unlike the actual chivalry of the armed knight who served his lady with gentle courtesy while his fields were ploughed by peasant women misshapen through toil and hunger.
> —Jane Addams, *The Long Road of Women 's Memory* (82)

Cather deals with women's relationships to homes on a personal level of identity and on a symbolic level in which she can play with the boundaries of the social *ideas* of homes. While Cather's literary examinations of American homes can be considered radical questionings of women's roles, Gilman and Addams both focus on radical solutions for American women in more physically visible ways. In this chapter, I will describe Gilman's radical vision for reducing the domestic sphere of homes through professionalization of the home occupations.

When this goal was completed, she believes, women could feel "at home" in the rest of the world. I will then argue that an examination of Addams's use of immigrant and personal memories (in the form of narratives) reveals her equally radical call for change in the "domestic sphere" and women's access to the public sphere. Unlike Gilman's overt radicalism, Addams's subtle radicalism in couched in the rhetoric of memory and domesticity.

In *The Long Road of Woman's Memory* Jane Addams examines woman's memory as a collective force that is shaped by social evolution and history. It is this collective memory that, according to Addams, makes woman especially equipped for the jobs of mother and homemaker. But rather than confine women to the home in these endeavors, as women had historically been, Addams, along with other Hull House woman and feminist thinkers at the turn of the century and shortly after, considered these socially evolved qualities of women's natures as equipping them with the tools needed to make a "home" of the whole world—or at least in communities, cities, and states. In her theorization about women's roles, Addams combines Victorian female virtue and service with Old World stories and legends told by the immigrant women in her neighborhood to envision a new public position for women (as well as a better world for their children). In one sense, Addams helps the immigrant women to become Americans by making new uses and interpretations of their stories. They have immigrated across the ocean and migrated across the country, and Addams helps them to "move" the stories that they have brought with them. At the same time, her interpretations of their stories enable her to enlarge the "domestic sphere" and, thus, allow for women's

safe, even acceptable, entrance into the public sphere. Unlike Gilman, who wants to shrink the domestic sphere to allow women entrance to the public, Addams enlarges the domestic sphere so that it overlaps with the public sphere.

Gilman's New Designs for Domestic Space and Domestic Duty

> All the surrendering devotion our women have put into their private families, these women put into their country and race. All the loyalty and service men expect of wives, they gave, not singly to men, but collectively to one another.
> —Charlotte Perkins Gilman *Herland* (96)

Gilman identifies the problems with integrating women into society in order to realize their full potential in the way that homes are designed. This faulty design is based on two main assumptions: first, that women as wives are unprofessional housekeepers and child carers who will remain in houses and, secondly, that homes are for families in which men go out into the public sphere and women and children remain in the domestic, private sphere. These two assumptions do not allow homes for anyone other than this traditional model of the family. Gilman writes that since "home life" is "in our minds inextricably connected with family life, a home being held to imply a family, and a family implying a head" those "detached persons" who are not a part of a traditional family "are unable to achieve any home life, and are thereby subjected to the inconvenience, deprivation, and expense, the often unhygenic, and sometimes immoral influences, of our makeshift substitutes" (*Women and Economics* 298). In previous chapters, I have shown examples of these "detached" members of society who figure in Cather's fiction and in Gilman's short stories. They all struggle for home life coupled with an artistic or productive lifestyle. As a result

of these "detached persons" in society, Gilman asks that homes be deigned with all other conceivable relationships in mind—single adults living alone, groups of single adults who may or may not be related, single mothers, and professional women with or without families and children:

> Every human being needs a home,—bachelor, husband, or widower, girl, wife, or widow, young or old. They need it from the cradle to the grave, and without regard to sex-connections. We should so build and arrange for the shelter and comfort of humanity as not to interfere with marriage, and yet not to make that comfort dependent upon marriage. (*Women and Economics* 298)

In Gilman's time, these "detached" members of society were forced to board in houses divided up for that purpose or in tenement buildings that were cramped and lacked proper ventilation and sanitation. Gilman herself lived in boarding houses much of her life. When she was still at home with her mother, the family moved from boarding house to boarding house, or stayed with various relatives without the privacy of their own spaces. After her marriage and divorce, Gilman lived and worked in boarding houses in California. She writes in her autobiography of doing cleaning and laundry for her landlords and tenants in these houses for rent and pay. These semi-professional endeavors were a constant drain on her work and writing, and her health often suffered as a result.

In Gilman's view of housing and women—and by extension all of society—were faced with the question of loyalty between women's traditional

roles as full-time mothers and housekeepers and the need to be creative and productive in other ways. Women who were not mothers and wives and who sought employment in the public sphere, had no "homes" because they were not a part of the traditional home setup. If they married, they were expected to leave their professions or jobs and to maintain houses and home life. In her vision of future home design, Gilman sees a very different picture of home life in which it would be more efficiently designed and maintained so that everyone could have a comfortable, private home and no one would be tied to housework and childcaring on a full-time, round-the-clock basis. This vision is based on professionalization of what had traditionally been seen as "women's work" or the job of wives—house keeping and cleaning, cooking, and childcaring.

In *The Home* and *Women and Economics* Gilman points out that the solution to women's problem is wrapped up in the solution to the world's problems. Like Addams, Gilman sees woman's duty to be to the world and not just to individual families. She feels that being "compelled" to "work with her own hands, for nothing, in direct body-service to her own family" has kept women as a class from being able to "do anything further" (*Women and Economics* 67). This "direct body-service" of individual women has been done "in private and alone." To solve this problem, Gilman sees houses designed with smaller private spaces for individual families and individual people and larger areas of community space in which eating, socializing, cooking, and child care would take place. Her poem, "Two Callings," alludes to the solution for humanity's problems concerning women and the home. She writes that the duty

of motherhood (and all of the other "duties" that accompany it in the family) should be women's duty to the world. Women, if better organized as a group in various ranks and divisions, would be able to "feed and guard and teach the human race" ("Two Callings" xxiii). In these ranks, women who are inclined to cook will enter the profession of cooking. Those who are better at child care will work in day care centers. These women would enhance their natural inclinations and talents with training in their particular profession. As a result of more efficient arrangements of women, they would accomplish more in less time for less money.

The Professionalization of Housecleaning

> They developed all this close inter-service in the interests of their children. To do the best work, they had to specialize, of course; the children needed spinners and weavers, farmers and gardeners, carpenters and masons, as well as mothers"
> —Charlotte Perkins Gilman *Herland* (68)

Gilman demands, first, a change in the domestic sphere by reduction. She believes that the home is too large, cluttered, and complicated. Homes should exist for comfort of living rather than industry which belongs, she believes, in the public sphere. In her new world, Gilman sees a "division of labor of housekeeping" which "would require the service of fewer women for fewer hours a day" (*Women and Economics* 245). With this end, individual women could accomplish more to more efficient ends, and no woman would have to work all day, every day in the spirit of the old, but accurate adage: "A woman's work is never done."

This system would allow for efficiency not only as a division of labor, but also in its flexibility for women's different talents. Gilman asserts that, like men who train for specific jobs rather than *all* jobs in the public sphere, women have individual talents and inclinations as well:

> There are several professions involved in our clumsy methods of housekeeping. A good cook is not necessarily a good manager, nor a good manager an accurate or thorough cleaner, nor a good cleaner, a wise purchaser. Under the free development of these branches a woman could choose her position, train for it, and become a most valuable functionary in her special branch, all the while living in her own home. (*Women and Economics* 245)

This description points out not only an inefficient system in terms of goods and services, but also an unfair system in terms of women's energies and creative abilities. [37]

For those skeptics who are concerned that women will neglect their natural duty of motherhood, Gilman allows that many women will choose careers in fields currently linked to the home or, even more likely, fields that allow for mothering. She takes this assumption for granted when she writes that "it seems almost unnecessary to suggest that women as economic producers will naturally choose those professions which are compatible with motherhood, and there are

---

[37] Similarly, Bellamy's utopian vision includes a cooperative distribution of what had been considered "women's work." Belamy's character describes the problem and outcome: "A very important cause of former poverty was the vast waste of labor and materials which resulted from domestic washing and cooking, and the performing separately of innumerable other tasks to which we apply the cooperative plan" (Bellamy *Looking Backward* 167).

many professions much more in harmony with that function than the household service" (245-6). Gilman herself, as a writer and a speaker, of course, saw other avenues of production and activity for women.

Ellen Richards, while disagreeing with Gilman on some particulars, does agree with Gilman's idea that homes should not be places of economic production when she writes that "the house as a centre of manufacturing industry has passed" (63). Like Gilman, she saw the need to train people to perform "domestic" duties professionally:

> We need to educate house experts, home advisors, those who know how to examine a house not only while it is empty but while it is throbbing with the life of the family. The advisor must be, for many years at least, able to suggest practical methods of overcoming structural defects (more difficult than fresh construction), as well as modifying personal prejudices. (71)

While Gilman sees women going into other professions, it would seem that, by extension, she would also see men entering what had previously been seen as home duties. Richards assumes that these new professionals would be women. These "house experts," Richards speculates, should be "women of the broadest education" with "the tact and enthusiasm of the missionary . . . to the despairing mother and the discouraged householder" (Richards 71). Seemingly these experts, in Richards's plan, would not take women out of the home, but make homes easier for women to run. In this sense, she sees a much less far-reaching solution for homes of the future and women's roles in them.

Another difference between Gilman's vision of homes of the future and Richards's is in their scope. Unlike Gilman's idea of the professionalization of housecleaning, Richards sees the houses of the future designed so economically and efficiently and equipped with time-saving machines that there will be little need for cleaning them. She quotes at length H. G. Wells's ideas about these houses of the future. What little is left to be done, she believes, will then be a joy to the member of the family to do: "when all the work of the house which cannot be done by machinery is that of handling beautiful things and has a meaning in the life of the individual and the family, service will not be required in the vast majority of homes: then we may approach to the Utopian ideal of the nobility of labor" (79). In Richards's view, then, homes would stay the same size and shape, but machinery and design would eliminate women's slavery to them.

The main difference, then, in these two turn-of-the-century women's views of the future of housekeeping is in scope. In Richards's plan there should be professionals (who may or may not be women) to advise women in how to run houses better. In Gilman's plan, women would train for the cleaning profession (presumably along with men) to work outside of their own homes. This field, as a profession, would then gain the status of any other profession rather than the status of "women's work," unpaid labor, or the work of servants (the subservient).

The Professionalization of Cooking

> The selection and preparation of food should be in the hands of trained experts. And women should stand beside man as the comrade of his soul, not as the servant of his body.
> —Charlotte Perkins Gilman *Women and Economics* (237)

A similar process will take place for the production and preparation of

food. Gilman wants kitchens to be removed from individual homes. This change would "render impossible the present method of feeding the world by means of millions of private servants [wives] and bringing up children by the same hand" (*Women and Economics* 211).

In *Women and Economics* and *The Home*, Gilman gives several reasons for the need for this change. One is that the food that most women cook is not healthy. She writes that most women do not know how to cook nutritionally sound meals; they are caught up on pleasing their families (because this is how they maintain their positions) so families eat things that taste good to them—not what is good for them. Kitchens also cause most of the disarray through ashes and grease. Therefore, without them, it would be easier to keep houses or living spaces clean.

While much of what Gilman suggests in changed living conditions calls for cooperation, or at least a sharing of spaces, she is not necessarily advocating the ideas of neighborhood cooporations that were suggested to housewives at the time by home economists such as Richards. Gilman wants to do away with the whole notion of the "housewife" and the idea that a woman could be married to her house. In Gilman's plan, all of these tasks will be performed by trained, well-paid professionals who have the respect of the community as a result. At the same time, however, this system will work in the same way that any other neighborhood business does. She writes that "Co-operation is not what is needed for [better food preparation], but trained professional service" (*Women and Economics* 241). Similarly, members of a society make use of other professional

services: "When numbers of people patronize the same tailor or baker or confectioner, they do not co-operate. Neither would they co-operate in patronizing the same cook" (241).

While these business endeavors would not be socialistic in nature, as professions, they could be regulated for standards of health, cleanliness, taste, and nutrition in ways that individual family kitchens are not. These professional standards would help avoid what Gilman describes as the current system of feeding the world, which "has no Bureau, no Secretary, no Experiment Stations":

> The most valuable livestock on earth are casually fed by the haphazard efforts of any and every kind of ignorant woman; hired servants, as the case may be; dull, shortsighted, overworked women, far too busy in "doing the cooking" ever to study the science of feeding humanity. (*The Home* 141)

The Professionalization of Child Care

Like housekeeping, cooking and cleaning, child care, too, should be professionalized in Gilman's vision of this redistributed domestic sphere. As is the case with the other main occupations of the housewife, the care of babies and children is better left to women who understand them and their needs better, according to Gilman. While the ideology of the time said that women were naturally better mothers than men, Gilman conceded that there are some women who are not as good at mothering and teaching as others. Gilman thinks that women who are more nurturing should be trained and paid to care for children of a specific age while other mothers work in their own chosen professions.

She gives two "reasons why the individual mother can never be fit to take all the care of her children" (*Women and Economics* 292). She writes that "first, not every woman is born with the special qualities needed to take right care of children," and "second, not every woman can have the instruction and training needed to fit her for the right care of children" (292-3). She bases this reasoning on her observations of mothers around her, but she undoubtedly bases it on her own experiences as a mother and daughter as well. In *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman,* she writes that she had inherited "something of [her] mother's passion for children, but not especially for babies" (153). This recollection of her mother's coldness toward her as a child and her own flight from her daughter soon after her birth told her that mothering was not a "natural" talent possessed by *all* women.

Gilman allows for these natural differences in her utopian vision of a woman-centered country in *Herland.* In that country, all women are mothers in that they participate in "maternity, to bear a child" (83). The residents of Herland see a profound distinction between the physical act of giving birth and rearing or educating a child. There, a mother is "allowed to rear her own children" only in the case that she is "fit for that supreme task." The members of Herland see education as "the highest art," and it is "only allowed to [their] highest artists." This part of Gilman's argument comes across as contradictory. She espouses an essentialism for women while she seems to reject it in other areas. She seems to endow all women with natural abilities to cooperate, but not the natural abilities to mother, teach, and nurture. Gilman, seemingly, would respond to this accusation

in the following way: Women are natural mothers, and that means that they recognize what is best for their children, even if what is best is allowing someone else to teach them.

Gilman saw models for her plan for child care in the "beautiful development of the kindergarten" which "has brought education to the nursery door" (*Women and Economics* 286). She specifically saw models of this new system of educating and caring for very young children at Hull House where the residents there were responsible for developing and running one of the first kindergartens in the country. She also advocates the use of the Montessori system of educating young children in *Herland* (107).

She illustrates this arrangement for child care and its benefits in short stories and in *Herland* as well as *Women and Economics*. "It would mean," she writes, "mainly, a far quieter and more peaceful life than is possible for the heavily loved and violently cared for baby in the busy household" (*Women and Economics* 287). The child will not be ignored while the mother handles several other household jobs each day. At the same time, Gilman believes, there will be less spoiling of children and babies by doting and guilt-ridden mothers who don't have time or don't know how to care for their children properly. The trained child care professional would know how to create "impressions" which "would be planned and maintained with an intelligent appreciation of [the child's] mental powers." Gilman's critics should not be alarmed at her usurpation of the mother's duty because she "would not be excluded, but supplemented, as she is now, by the teacher and the school."

The children in Gilman's description will be cared for in rooms and facilities designed especially for the care and education of children, and they will be away from the other occupations and what had been thought of as domestic work: "The long, bright hours of the still widening days would find one in sunny, soft-colored rooms, or among the grass and flowers, or by the warm sand and waters" (Gilman *Women and Economics* 287). In *Herland* the children are provided with an environment that is both safe and stimulating: "The houses and gardens planned for babies have nothing in them to hurt—no stairs, no corners, no small, loose objects to swallow, no fire—just a babies' paradise" (108). In these houses there are soft floors and raised walkways made of a "sort of rubber rail raised an inch or two above the soft turf" so that the children can learn to balance on them without hurting themselves when, inevitably, they fall. The children of Herland are "always playing at something; or else, sometimes, engaged in peaceful researches of their own . . . It was all education but no schooling" (107). In this environment, children learn without the anxieties of the schoolroom or the pressure of the untrained parent. Gilman sees the child care facility of the future as modeling this pattern. As a result, children will be better trained, and women will not be confined to child rearing for most of their lives.

A Move Towards Collective and Cooperative Living

> I tell you, women are the natural cooperators, not men!
> —Charlotte Perkins Gilman *Herland* 68

This redistribution of "home" labor will come about in Gilman's plan as a result of more collective living arrangements and designs. Hand in hand with Gilman's plan for the professionalization of house keeping is her plan for the

arrangement and distribution of private and community space. In her rearranging, Gilman calls for a collective or at least a cooperative spirit, which is in line with Richards's suggestions for homes and neighborhoods of the future. These changes will require the united concern of the community at large. While Gilman writes that "co-ordination requires first a common interest, and then the establishment of a common consciousness" (*Women and Economics* 123), Richards calls this common interest a "spirit of cooperation" (64).

These collective home arrangements, according to both Gilman and Richards, entail a vast economic rethinking as well. Richards seems to believe that one way for this cooperation to be set into motion is for some member of the wealthy class to help: "the skill needed to acquire large tracts of land . . . belong[s] to the capitalist. Only when he is a philanthropist besides, is the housing question safe in his hands. Such an example we find in the Morris houses" (Richards 20). Philanthropy aside, Richards and Gilman both believe that a collaborative mindset could create the opportunities for more pleasant living conditions. Richards writes that while "one family cannot as a rule put up in a city or in the suburbs—and half of the world lives in cities—its own idea of a house without undue expenditure," with cooperation, "ten families may combine and secure a building which fairly suits them all. I say fairly, because all cooperation means some kind of sacrifice of whim or special liking" (Richards 64). In planning for more cooperative communities, Richards suggests that while "a single family cannot control a whole street," the "cooperation" of like-minded individuals or families "can accomplish a great deal in the way of congenial

neighborhoods" (Richards 20). Even when wealthy capitalists take part in the funding of cooperative communities such as the existing Morris houses of New York, Richards asserts that once the trend is started, not only will "groups of like-minded families make their own surroundings," but "the capitalist will soon learn where his interest lies" and will continue to support the stimulation of cooperative living communities (Richards 27).

In this "spirit of cooperation," Richards calls for the sharing of resources. This sharing foresees the modern electric company or coop: "Heating might now be accomplished without dust and ashes, without the destructive effects of steam, if enough houses would take electricity to enable a company to supply it in the form of a sort of dado carrying wires safely embedded in a non-conducting substance, or in the form of a carpet threaded with conducting wire" (Richards 65). Unlike the modern power company, the one in Richards's vision will help to keep our houses clean and lessen the need for women's labor in houses. Along with the sharing of resources, Gilman suggests the sharing and redistribution of space.

Redistribution of Domestic Space

> If there should be built and opened in any of our large cities to-day a commodious and well-served apartment house for professional women with families, it would be filled at once. The apartments would be without kitchens; but there would be a kitchen belonging to the house from which meals could be served to the families in their rooms or in a common dining room, as preferred. It would be a home where the cleaning was done by efficient workers, not hired separately by the families, but engaged by the manager of the establishment; and a roof garden, day nursery, and kindergarten, under well-trained nurses and teachers, would insure proper care of the children.
> —Charlotte Perkins Gilman *Women and Economics* (242)

Gilman wants the replacement of cramped tenement buildings with efficiently designed apartment buildings that have individual rooms or suites for people to conduct their private affairs in and collective spaces that would be available to all of the residents of the building. The above description encapsulates Gilman's picture of living arrangements for women in the future. This apartment building provides private space for any professional women with or without children. It also provides public or community spaces for her children and babies, for her family's dining, and for her social needs. It is cleaned by professionals, and her children are cared for by professionals on-site in rooms designed for children's needs. While this description of city dwelling seemed ideal to Gilman, she had plans for families or groups who would rather live in a house in the suburbs or in more rural settings as well. In these, " . . . groups of women or groups of men can also have a home together if they like, or contiguous rooms. And individuals even could have a house to themselves, without having, also, the business of a home upon their shoulders" (*Women and Economics* 299). All of these dwellings have some specific innovations in domestic space.

The first innovation that Gilman calls for in the redesign of homes of the future is to "take the kitchens out of houses" (Gilman *Women and Economics* 299). If cooking is to be professionalized and not left to individual women in their own homes, kitchens would be unnecessary. The cooking in both city and suburb would, of course, be done by professional cooks in a central location. Apartment buildings would have dining areas within the buildings. Similarly, "in

suburban homes this purpose could be accomplished much better by a grouping of adjacent houses, each distinct and having its own yard, but all kitchenless, and connected by covered ways with the eating-house" (*Women and Economics* 243).

Kitchenless houses, Gilman believed, will provide for the most comfort, privacy, and efficiency. For those people who want individual or familial privacy at meal times, Gilman suggests that "meals could of course, be served in the house as long as desired" (*Women and Economics* 244). This practice would not be the norm, though. She believes that once "people become accustomed to pure, clean homes, where no steaming industry is carried on, they will gradually prefer to go to their food instead of having it brought to them" (244). Without the encumbrance of kitchens in the designs of houses, Gilman thought that there would be "rooms which are open to any form of arrangement and extension . . . In such living, personal character and taste would flower as never before; the home of each individual would be at last a true personal expression" (299). These arrangements allow for a more collective living arrangement for many activities such as eating, socializing, and dancing. The private space for each individual would then be more private than in the traditional house, she concluded.

Along with removing kitchens from homes, Gilman also suggests the removal of all meeting, assembling, and ballrooms from the home. These spaces would be replaced by public or community rooms to be shared by all members of a neighborhood or apartment building. These public spaces are, Gilman believes:

> as deep a need of human life as the retiring room,— not some ball-room or theatre, to which one must be invited of a set purpose, but

> great common libraries and parlors, work-rooms and play-rooms, to which both sexes have access for the same needs, and where they may mingle freely in common human expression (*Women and Economics* 314).

The buildings that Gilman sees to provide for these kinds of community spaces, would have "separate rooms for individuals and the separate houses for families; but there will be, also, the common rooms for all" (314). In this plan there would be a greater separation between public and private space. There would be less private space, but that space would be more private in Gilman's estimation and would be easier for individuals living in it to maintain and clean.

While Wharton and Codman do not promote collective living arrangements in the way that Gilman does, they do point to problems in the designs of family homes that lead to Gilman's conclusions about shared social spaces. They write that the "confusion of two essentially different types of room, designed for essentially different phases of life" has led to awkward and useless rooms in American homes (134). As a result, the woman of a house designed as such will try to make double use of a large entertainment room or gala room by filling it up with furniture and screens to create more intimate spaces, which makes the room look clumsy. In this effect, "the room dwarfs the furniture, loses the air of state, and gains little in real comfort; while it becomes necessary, when a party is given, to remove the furniture and disarrange the house, thus undoing the chief *raison d'etre* of such apartments" (136). In Gilman's plan, there would be no need for individual families to have large gala rooms which would remain

empty or misused most of the time because there would be shared community spaces to be used by any or all of the community's members.

Along with these changes in interior space, Gilman and Richards both suggest innovative and cooperative use of exterior spaces around homes. In Gilman's description of the ideal apartment building, she concludes that city dwellers will share roof gardens. Richards maintains the opportunity for family privacy and access to exterior space by stipulating that "whether a single family house or one of two or more 'compartments,' each family will have a side, that is, the entrance doors will not be side by side" (Richards 73). Richards also suggests the beginnings of planned communities with regulations and standards to be kept by each resident or family: "Those who wish to have a garden may; but no one will be obliged, for there will be regulations about the general appearance of the whole park, and every man his own lawn-mower will not be true" (73). While these regulations might seem to put a strain on residents who are busy with their own professions, Gilman's plan for the professionalization of housekeeping would necessarily extend to the professionalization of the upkeep of the exterior of houses as well as their interiors. As a renter and tenant, Gilman would not have considered the exterior of houses as central to her plans, and since her main concern is with women's work and its confining result on women's lives, she naturally, would have been less concerned with outside lawn and garden work even though these were jobs often maintained by women, especially in rural area of the country.

Gilman optimistically describes the benefits of these new living

arrangements:

> With the industries of home life managed professionally, with rooms and suites of rooms and houses obtainable by any person or persons desiring them, we could live singly without losing home comfort and general companionship, we could meet bereavement without being robbed of the common conveniences of living as well as the heart's love, and we could marry in ease and freedom without involving any change in the economic base of either party concerned (*Women and Economics* 298-299).

With the realization of Gilman's vision for more collective spaces, private lives would be better arranged and more comfortable.

Gilman's plan for living arrangements of the future does, indeed, sound perfect, even utopian. They are certainly not without flaws. While Gilman says that she is making arrangements for all personalities and preferences in terms of privacy and choice, she does not adequately take the American sense of privacy and individualism into account. This plan would not seem to work for those pioneers in Cather's stories who lived in such isolated surroundings, but who because of the open spaces around them, seemed to have more freedom of gender roles and identity. While she and Richards are both optimistic about the feasibility of such enterprises, the reality of the American political and economic situation at the time did not lend itself to cooperation, and philanthropic endeavors by most wealthy members of the society focused on other aspects of public rather than private life. Most of them wanted to have the luxuries of private libraries, ballrooms, and meeting rooms. Also, with the coming years, any mention of cooperation smacked of Communism or Socialism to the average

American. As a result, Gilman's ideas about home spaces proved to be too radical for the culture as a whole.

At the same time, Gilman's agenda was openly feminist and openly radical. While she enjoyed a following and an audience, she never enjoyed the popularity of her less visibly radical friend, Jane Addams. Addams's feminism, while calling for the same ends as Gilman's—opportunities for women to enter the public sphere and making the public sphere more "homelike"—was more palatable for the conservative members of her audience because it was layered in the language of memory and of women's roles in domesticity. While Gilman shocked audiences by asking for changes in the home, Addams's suggestions that women's domestic natures equipped them for work outside the home left the issue of the "sanctity of the home" intact.

Memory, Virtue, and Service: Jane Addams's Feminist Domestic Sphere

In 1912 an alleged "Devil Baby" appeared at Chicago's Hull House, and despite the protestations of Jane Addams and the other Hull House women, a group of elderly immigrants could only with great difficulty be convinced that there was no Devil Baby. She writes that for "six weeks" she would

> hear a voice at the [Hull House] telephone repeating for the hundredth time that day, "No, there is no such baby"; "No, we never had it here"; "No, he couldn't have seen it for fifty cents"; "We didn't send it anywhere because we never had it"; "I don't mean to say that your sister-in-law lied, but there must be some mistake"; "There is no use getting up an excursion from Milwaukee, for there isn't any Devil Baby at Hull-House"; "We can't give reduced rates, because we are not exhibiting anything"; and so on and on. (*The Long Road* 5-6)

If there was and actual Devil Baby, it was not being sequestered by the

Progressive-Era reformers at Hull House.[38] As Addams fondly describes Hull House's initial contact with the Devil Baby story, "The knowledge of . . . [it]. . . burst upon the residents of Hull-House when three Italian women, with an excited rush through the door, demanded that the Devil Baby be shown them" (Addams *Jane Addams* 66). Addams explains that the story was one of the verbal treasures that immigrant women brought with them from their homelands. There were at least two different versions of the story, and she specifically mentions a Jewish one and an Italian one. Addams pieces together the various versions of the story to show what this Devil Baby would have looked like. She tells us that he would have "cloven hoofs, his pointed ears and diminutive tail; the Devil Baby had moreover, been able to speak as soon as he was born and was most shockingly profane" (*The Long Road* 3). On another page, she tells us of the event of his birth and supposed arrival at Hull House:

> As soon as the Devil Baby was born, he ran about the table shaking his finger in deep reproach at his father, who finally caught him and, in fear and trembling, brought him to Hull-House. When the residents there, in spite of the baby's shocking appearance, wishing to save his soul, took him to church for baptism, they found that the shawl was empty and the Devil Baby, fleeing from the holy water, was running lightly over the backs of pews (*The Long Road* 3-

[38] Hull House was founded by Addams in 1889 as one of several American settlement houses established in urban residential areas of high immigrant concentration. The houses were set up as philanthropic endeavors usually by middle-class women, who wished to alleviate problems of poverty and poor living conditions in immgrant tenement neighborhoods. The residents served the communities by providing educational and cultural oppurtunities for their neighbors as well as exposure to the Americanization process. Addams's autobiographical *Twenty Years at Hull-House* is her own account of Hull-House's origins and early workings.

4).

Originally, in the old country, the legend of the Devil Baby was used as a normalizing story to keep wayward, and abusive husbands in line, and his behavior always points to associations with his father in the tales. The final details Addams gives us about this would-be Devil Baby account for the story's modern updates: "Save for a red automobile which occasionally appeared in the story and a stray cigar which, in some versions, the new-born child had snatched from his father's lips, the tale might have been fashioned a thousand years ago" (*The Long Road* 4). Another indication that it was not fashioned a thousand years ago is the placement at Hull House, which perhaps replaced a convent or nunnery in some earlier, old-country version of the story. The overall meaning was the same in each version: When a man is abusive or impious, profane or irreverent, he could be punished through an unholy birth; a "Devil Baby" could be born to his wife.

Addams devotes a good portion of space in her prolific writings to her renderings and explanation of the Devil Baby account. She writes about the strange story in at least two places—a brief section in *The Second Twenty Years at Hull-House* and half (three full chapters) of *The Long Road of Woman's Memory*. As I encountered the story the first few times, I wondered why Addams was so compelled by the retelling of this story. The story of the Devil Baby itself is certainly a strange relic from the "Old World," but Addams is really more concerned with the *second* story and its explanation. The story *she* tells us is the resurfacing of the Devil Baby story at Hull House in the adopted country of European immigrants. Why did these women need to bring this story with them to America? What caused them to remember the story at that particular moment? Addams devotes *The Long Road* to answering those questions, but she extends them in search of her own application. What does the story tell her about all

American women and their roles, natures, and duties? What can these women from "primitive" cultures tell us about women in their most "natural" state? To make her modern application, she follows the three chapters on the Devil Baby with one on women in industry and women's organizations (such as those formed at Hull House) and one on women's roles in protesting wars. What is the connection between the Devil Baby story and the subjects of these later chapters?

To understand Addams's use and persistent return to this immigrant story, I look to social movements of the time and argue that Addams used her radical modernization of this story to recall and reaffirm conservative nineteenth-century feminine qualities. Most importantly, this recall was in response to recent attacks by men's movements on feminism and on women's public reform activities. Rather than completely rejecting nineteenth-century feminine virtue as detrimental to the women's cause as some of her contemporaries did, Addams champions women's virtue and ability to serve as defined by the Cult of True Womanhood or the Cult of Domesticity.[39] In her modern "feminist" version of True Womanhood, though, she argues that women's virtue and service have a public and municipal place, rather than an exclusively private, domestic one in American society. At the same time, rather than attacking the men who spoke against the woman's cause and feminism, she wrote *The Long Road.* Although it is never explicitly stated by Addams, I believe that this book is a direct but subtle response to these turn-of-the-century assaults on "femininity" and feminism.

Progressive Era Reform's Roots in Nineteenth Century Femininity

As I have argued in Chapter One, The Cult of True Womanhood plays an important role in Addams's theories of feminism and memory. And it is through the use of the Devil Baby story that we can see a convergence of her ideas of

[39] See Barbara Welter's *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* for the initial usage and discussion of this term.

feminism (a new "place" for women) and memory. She uses this story in *The Long Road* to verify women's roles in the early twentieth century because although the Cult contradicts the very idea of participation, it locates women's authority to act in their virtue. The story was a primitive manifestation in modern times of the result of women's confusion over that authority which they knew should be theirs, but which seemed to evade them in the community around them. They were, in a sense, confused about the boundaries of the "domestic sphere." The boundaries of this sphere were much more fluid than those of the more conspicuous and precise private sphere. Exactly where did this sphere exist? Of course, it was in the home where men still had authority (even though women knew how homes worked through experiences as mothers and through their female "influence"). In nineteenth-century American culture, the domestic sphere (as distinct from the private sphere) could extend into the church, a place where men could be also and where they continued to have authority (even though women were more religiously virtuous by nineteenth-century standards). It also extended to church work, but men and women both questioned the boundaries between the domestic duties of church work and the public and therefore unfeminine public sphere. Women who questioned and pushed the boundaries of this sphere also questioned women's personal identity located in a place of autonomy, authority, and even (at times) subversion. In writing *The Long Road* Addams puts into question the boundaries of this women's domestic sphere, and in its unfolding, she calls for an expansion of it.

Attacks By Men and Their Attempts to Redefine the Female Sphere

Of course, conservative men's groups had their own boundaries, and there were two motivating factors behind these conservative boundaries. The first factor was the "feminization" of American churches, and the second was men's anxieties over their changing roles in the workplace. American Protestant

churches had been "feminized" by the large numbers of church workers and members who were women as well as by middle-class American Victorian notions of feminine gender identity.[40] As the Victorian era gave way to the Progressive Era, many men individually and in groups demanded that women return to their "place." In other words, they wanted to define the women's sphere as that which exists only in the home. Women could still go to church, but men, they felt, needed to take back the active roles that women had over the past century overtaken.

Gail Bederman identifies one very conscious effort by a middle-class Protestant men's movement to redefine the domestic sphere and the boundaries of that sphere in church work. In her article on the Men and Religion Forward Movement of 1911-1912, Bederman explains that "while historians have recently paid a great deal of attention to widespread cries for a muscular Christianity as an aspect of a larger cultural transformation during the years 1880-1920, they have been surprisingly insistent that the movement for manly Christianity had very little to do with issues of gender" (434). Instead, Bederman reads the movement as an important indicator of cultural shifts that encompass the hegemony of economy *and* gender. She makes this argument because "it cannot be ignored that these men addressed issues of power and cultural dominance in emphatically gendered terms—celebrating the virility of Protestantism and condemning 'effeminate religion'" (435). The advocates of the Men and Religion Forward Movement "understood power and religion in terms of gender" and so "used this sexualized language." Men in the American middle-class "did not compartmentalize 'gender' and 'cultural' issues, as today's historians sometimes do" but instead "addressed their cultural crisis in gendered terms, and their

---

[40] See Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* for a complete discussion of this idea of "feminization" especially within American religion.

masculinity crisis in cultural terms" (435).

The advocates of the movement attempted to define cultural gender perceptions by creating new connections between service/charity and church work and anything previously associated with masculinity—especially business, the corporate world, and advertising. Where service, charity, and church work had signified the feminine in Victorian definitions, they would, in the hopes of the Men in Religion Forward Movement, signify the masculine. At the same time, they would be associated with business and laissez-faire capitalism, which were already signifiers of masculinity.

Bederman also describes anxieties many men felt during this period over gender boundaries. While women's roles seemed to be becoming increasingly public, men's previous public autonomy seemed to be diminishing. Bederman explains that in the years "between 1880 and 1920, many middle-class men experienced the social and cultural changes tied to the development of a corporate, consumer-oriented society as dangerous challenges to their manhood" (435). These cultural changes created a crisis for middle-class men, and, in turn, led to their belief in the need for changes in cultural gender signifiers:

> Worried that middle-class men were becoming "effeminate," they moved to reclaim their threatened cultural dominance by redefining gender. By focusing on the Men and Religion Forward Movement as one representative of a much wider struggle, we can see some of the ways gender shaped the social and cultural tensions of the period and, perhaps, how men's moves to reformulate male identity limited women's options. (435)

The Movement to which she refers was an attempt by middle-class Protestant men to "take back" service and "church work" from its feminized status in society and, at the same time, from their middle-class women because the corporation and government regulations had stifled the masculine individualism that middle-class men had previously associated with business. It is difficult to say exactly how much influence this individual movement had, but Bederman reports that the movement had conferences and representatives in all of the major cities, and it was strongly connected with the YMCA and the Social Gospel, so its message was evidently widespread. It is almost inevitable that Addams came into contact with the message of this movement, but if not, she certainly could not have avoided similar messages by other men's groups.

Not only were some men's groups organizing to redefine, reduce, and reprivatize the domestic sphere in terms of church work and the traditional public social arena, some groups stepped even further over the boundaries of gender definition into the home. Jeffrey Charles describes this redefinition in *Service Clubs in American Culture* when he writes about the rise of men's service clubs during this era. The Victorian fraternal organizations began to give way to men's service clubs such as the Rotary, the Lions, and the Kiwanis, and the fraternal groups that did survive into the twentieth century no longer included their women's auxiliaries. He writes that "the new interest of males in children, while demonstrating the decline of Victorian gender roles, also removed one of the rationales for the operation of female auxiliaries" (23). Charles writes that this exclusion was the result of another indicator of this cultural gender change—the renewed interest of middle-class men in family and in the raising of their children, especially their sons. Men now were seeing active roles in the upbringing of their children as a part of their "patriarchal duty" (Charles 23). The anxieties of middle-class men over the decrease of individual autonomy in the business world

resulted in both conscious and perhaps not so conscious efforts by those men to take over or "reclaim" both avenues through which American middle-class women had previously located influence and self-identification.

A Feminist Response—Jane's Addams's Definition of the Female Sphere

A logical feminist response to this new plan for masculine identity would be to inquire about the components of an appropriate feminine identity or female sphere that can exist in place of the old one. Were these men planning to provide new gender indicators to replace the ones that they were attempting to steal from their women? If so, were they planning to tell the women about them? Progressive Era women were also establishing their authority within some public arenas by setting definitions and new boundaries for femininity. One way that they did this was to enlarge, rather than diminish the domestic sphere. Different Progressive Era women had different versions of these definitions, and Addams explains her own justification for an enlarged domestic sphere in *The Long Road of Women's Memory*. The book was published in 1917 after the initial impetus of the Men and Religion Forward Movement, and over 20 years after Addams's establishment of Hull House in Chicago. Even though she does not state in the book that she is writing in response to men's recent need for control of the women's sphere, she acknowledges change in both women's and men's attitudes about women's roles, and at the same time, she expresses a need to maintain women's autonomy in moral and benevolent power.

By the time that Addams wrote this book, she was already a well-known public advocate of improved conditions for the poor and of the women's movement. Although Addams and the other Hull House residents did not perform acts of service in the name of religion and Addams was not directly associated with the Social Gospel movement, her philosophy and practices seem to have been an excellent manifestation of that movement's aims. She is often cited as a

representative of the Social Gospel in action despite the fact that she did not associate herself as such. Kathryn Kish Sklar writes of Addams's connections to this movement by saying that "Hull House was much the mother as the child of the Social Gospel" (Sklar 200-201).[41] Addams's very identity was contrary to the principles set forth by the Men and Religion Forward Movement since its advocates condemned the Women's Movement and feminists; also, as a tireless social servant she was standing in the pathway of their agenda of taking back the sphere of service and church work. In *The Long Road*, she explores women's natures as women's "memory," and even though she describes them in rather romantic terms at times, she reaffirms woman's rightful position as servant and moral agent in a larger domestic sphere.

Addams justifies this larger female domestic sphere along two lines of reasoning. In terms of Welter's "cardinal virtues," Addams, along with many other conservative Progressive Era feminists, conflated the nineteenth-century ideas of purity and piety and translated those terms into a vague category of female morality and the less religious counterpart of duty. Submissiveness seems to fall away from the system completely, while domesticity grows into two distinct areas—mothering and housekeeping. [42] These two ideas stemming from nineteenth-century ideas of femininity take on new meaning to the Hull House women, justify women's place in a more public and powerful sphere, and are essential to any reading of *The Long Road.*

The Domestic as Maternal: Essentialism vs. Social Evolution

---

[41] Sklar describes the Social Gospel movement as one that "deliberately blurred the lines between secular and religious concerns by emphasizing God's immanence in everyday life" (200). She writes that the movements concerns were with social reform in areas of labor, industry, and poverty--the "social question."

[42] While Gilman seeks to professionalize these two "female" activities, Addams seeks to use them to make women professional.

In her discussion of women in American religious history, Susan Hill Lindley writes that Welter's "cardinal" virtues were considered by the Puritans to be feminine traits because of women's *experiences*, especially those female experiences that revolve around motherhood, childbirth, and child rearing. The idea of experience as the origin of femininity was displaced in the nineteenth century by the idea that these virtues were *natural* qualities of femininity (Lindley 52). In mid-nineteenth-century literature, Motherhood enjoyed a position almost equal to sainthood in separate-sphere culture. Women writers who spoke out about social problems could justify their actions by appealing to women's influence and duty as mothers, and sentimental novels of the time are filled with stories of mothers, dead and alive, who save whole families and communities from sin and despair because of their virtue, morality, and status as mothers. The most famous example is *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in which Catherine Beecher Stowe constantly appeals to the mothers of white northern society to open their maternal eyes to the cruelty of slavery. Even the most evil of slave holders, Simon Legree is reminded of his own moral state because of a lock of hair that reminds him of his own good, dead mother. Addams's own stance on the idea of essential femininity (an idea that continues to fuel late twentieth-century feminist debate) is rather hard to pin down. Throughout her discussion in *The Long Road*, she *seems* to perpetuate nineteenth century ideas of essential feminine virtue, but she takes a complicated turn when she applies social evolution. She places motherhood at the root of feminine virtue because she describes collective female evolution as developing around the experiences of motherhood. She romantically locates this evolved nature in woman's collective "memory."

To answer her own questions about the Devil Baby story's reappearance in a modern American city, she goes to the source of the story as well as the roots of modern woman's nature—primitive women. In this case, Addams uses the older

immigrant women as examples of primitive women who were available to her in the Hull House neighborhood. These women represent for her the roots of woman's collective memory which women must use in order to apply their natural abilities to their fullest potential. These natural abilities have developed over time as a result of woman's capacity for motherhood. Addams explains that woman's nature has developed as it has because "maternal affection and solicitude, in woman's remembering heart, may at length coalesce into a chivalric protection for all that is young and unguarded" (82).

At the same time, Addams reaffirms that the serving and moralizing components of womanhood continue to be woman's duty because they have evolved essentially as a female feature. She supports this claim by referring to women's maternal instincts, their capacity to remember shared experiences of womanhood and motherhood, and their morality and ability to follow conventions. She refers to the "fact that women remain closer to type than men do and are more swayed by the past"(64) and their difficulty in modifying conventions as a result of this fact (65). Women are "more swayed by the past" because of their collective memory. Catherine Peaden describes this essentialism as a part of Addams's "enlightenment discourse" that is a "Rousseauian concept of the primitive—at times conflated with the immigrant—whose essential goodness she never doubted" (199). At the same time, writes Peaden, this Romantic enlightenment discourse is woven with a Christian discourse that constructs her social theory. Addams's social theory "draws heavily on evolutionary theories of gender" which she discussed with Gilman, a short time resident of Hull House (Peaden 197).

In Addams's feminist theory, women's collective memories are the agents that drive the moral forces of civilization. When conventions within civilization need to be changed, the "analytical efforts" of self-conscious women "are steadily

supplemented by instinctive conduct of many others. A great mass of 'variation from type,' accelerating this social change, is contributed by simple mothers who have been impelled by the same primitive emotion which the Devil Baby had obviously released in so many old women" (65). According to Addams, this primitive emotion consists of an overwhelming pity and sense of "tender comprehension." This "tender comprehension" has developed through the process of social evolution from the earliest civilizations but has been most prevalent in the evolution of women. Addams writes that this comprehension is "doubtless closely related to the compunction characteristic of all primitive people which in the earliest stage of social development long performed the first rude offices of justice" (65). The comprehension of compassion has been central to human social structure from the beginning of civilization, but it has evolved principally in women as a result of the experiences of motherhood.

Addams's connection between women's collective memories of motherhood and their propensity toward justice is a particularly radical stance. Although nineteenth-century notions of True Womanhood dictated that women might be more moral than men, their influence over others in moral matters was to be through example rather than through instigation. For centuries, thinkers in Western culture had debated the moral nature of "woman," and even though she had risen to a "pedestal" during the nineteenth century, Eve's legacy as temptress and moral degenerate still lingered. In psychological theory, only a few years after Addams wrote *The Long Road*, Freud would expound on the nature of femininity because "throughout history people have knocked their heads against" this "riddle" (123). On this riddle, he concludes, unlike Addams, with "the fact that women must be regarded as having little sense of justice" (132). In direct opposition to Addams's theory that women's capacity for justice stems from their unselfish devotion and care for their children, Freud concludes that women's

incapacity for justice is "in no doubt related to the predominance of envy in their mental life; for the demand for justice is a modification of envy and lays down the condition subject to which one can put envy aside."

Quite contrary to Freud's views on femininity which would prevail long into the twentieth century, Addams writes that luckily for the human race and because of women's evolution of a collective memory, "this early trait is still a factor in the social struggle, for as has often been pointed out, our social state is like a countryside—of a complex geological structure, with outcrops of strata of very diverse ages" (65). Here Addams is speaking of the layers of American society, which were, especially at the time of her establishment of Hull House and her writing of *The Long Road*, "of very diverse ages." At Hull House, she could see those layers most clearly in the different social states of immigrant women, their mothers, their daughters, and in herself and the other Hull House women. From this social vantage point the layers helped her also to see shifts and interconnections in those layers. In *The Long Road* she depicts shifts in American society's perceptions of justice and the merits of charity. This perception exists when various stages of morality overlap and converge, but if women apply the talents and knowledge that they have developed through the ages, Addams believes that together they can forge a harmonious society.

The Domestic as Keeping House: Progressive Era "Municipal Housekeeping"

According to Addams, women (all women, not just those at Hull House) should use their experiences and collective memory as mothers and women to help the larger society that was at the time a mess of converging cultures. The Hull House women were attempting to do this through "Municipal Housekeeping" which is the use of all of those traditional female qualities and functions that had been so cherished in nineteenth-century American woman taken outside of the home and into the communities. This new vision of female

identity in American society utilizes the same virtues of the nineteenth-century Cult of True Womanhood, but it is profoundly different in its entrance into the public sphere. It is also in this difference that Jane Addams is subtly subversive in *The Long Road.* To the leaders of the woman's movement and social reformers such as Jane Addams, it seemed only fitting for women to serve the community in public capacities because, even though that service forced women out of their traditional sphere of location, they could maintain decency by remaining in their sphere of duty and action. They would continue to do what they did best in the domestic sphere; this sphere would, now, simply be much broader.

This idea of "Municipal Housekeeping" extended beyond the doors of Hull House to the community around it, and the Hull House women were involved in various community projects such as building parks and playgrounds, inspecting city sanitation standards, and providing forums for representatives from labor unions and political parties. By the time that Addams wrote *The Long Road*, she was convinced more than ever that women should have active roles in these more public activities because of their maternal instincts. In Chapters Four and Five, she argues for women's input in the decisions about public issues. At the end of Chapter Four, "Women's Memories—Integrating Industry," she concludes with acclamation for women's organizations which are an "enormous advantage . . . dimly perceived even by the pioneer women two hundred years ago" (112-13). Here she draws comparisons between the "hostesses of the famous drawing rooms of the eighteenth century" and the "simple old women" who have "reared their own children" and have "come to be regarded as a depository for domestic wisdom" (114). She seems to conclude that both come together as "prototype[s]" of the emerging women of the twentieth century who "are gradually learning to 'exercise justice' if only because they have 'come together'" (113). As a result of this coming together, she writes that

> women's organizations of all types are but providing ever-widening channels through which woman's moral energy may flow, revivifying life by new streams fed in the upper reaches of her undiscovered capacities. In either case, we may predict that to control old impulses so that they may be put to social uses, to serve the present through memories hoarding women's genuine experiences, may liberate energies hitherto unused and may result in a notable enrichment of the pattern of human culture. (114)

Here, Addams suggests that through women's organizations, women—old and young, immigrant and native born—can come together to share their varied "memories" and to forge a more complete collective female memory that utilizes many experiences. This collective will then be utilized in homes, but also in the communities in which homes exist—the new, enlarged, *public* domestic sphere. Women's organizations such as those active at Hull House and around the country were participating in Municipal Housekeeping in more public ways than the nineteenth-century ideals of femininity allowed, but Addams would continue in Chapter Five to ask for women's participation in an even more public and masculine sphere—war.

In Chapter Five, "Women's Memories—Challenging War," Addams perhaps steps over the line for many of her contemporaries by arguing that women should have some say about the international situation involving wars—an ever-growing issue at this day of the Great European war into which the United States had not yet entered. The majority of the chapter is devoted to the story told by an educated European woman (whose nationality is not disclosed) who had recently lost a son in the war. She found herself in conflict between her sense of "duty" to the State and "tradition" and her ideals and a mother's sense of loss (121-22). At

the same time, she struggled against her father's traditional sense that women had no place wondering about the validity of war. To him "it was enough for women to know that government waged war to protect their firesides" and "they should keep their minds free from silly attempts to reason it out" (123). Despite her old father's traditional views on women's relationship to war, this European woman attempts to "reason it out," as Addams does by looking to primitive women who must have "held the lives of their children above all else" and "insisted upon staying where the children had a chance to live" (127). She believes that all women in the warring countries of Europe should speak out because "the women in every country who are under a profound imperative to preserve human life, have a right to regard this maternal impulse as important" (126).

As in Chapter Four, Addams uses the stories of women that she met to draw connections between woman's collective memories as mothers and their rights to have some control in the outcome of the world in which their children were to live. As in Chapter Four, she ends Chapter Five with a call for an acceptance of women's more public roles:

> This may be a call to women to defend those at the bottom of society who, irrespective of the victory or defeat of any army, are ever oppressed and overburdened. The suffering mothers of the disinherited feel the stirring of the old impulse to protect and cherish their unfortunate children, and women's haunting memories instinctively challenge war as the implacable enemy of their age-long undertaking. (140)

Like Stowe, a generation before her, Addams claimed maternal knowledge as reason enough for women to participate in public social issues. It was this claim, in this climate of masculine insecurities, that made Addams both radical and

conservative at the same time. While she was evoking what had been traditional American women's right, as mother, she became stridently overborne when men have called for a replacement of women in the home. When she became an activist in the peace movement, however, she had, as Allen Davis has written, "stepped out of the mainstream. By challenging the part of the American dream that saw war as glorious and patriotic, she had fallen from grace" in public opinion" (229).

Addams's call for the entrance of women into public roles would, of course, cause anxiety to middle-class men because of their already rising concern over loss of control in the workplace, but now, to make up for that loss, many men actively sought more powerful roles in traditionally feminine areas. In order to make that goal possible, these men tried to redefine masculinity so that it included roles, which had, of late, become sources of empowerment for many middle-class women. The most important of these roles included service, church work, and charity. Jane Addams responds to the goals of these men's groups by reaffirming traditional feminine identity, but, at the same time, she redefines that identity as publicly useful. In this response, she shows the talents in arbitration for which she was so well-known, because even though she seems to be simply reaffirming the feminine virtues as defined by the nineteenth-century Cult of True Womanhood, she is drastically redefining those virtues since publicity was adverse and alien to Victorian femininity. Addams adeptly (in true Victorian feminine fashion) carries through this redefinition in a rhetorically nonconfrontational manner by, first of all, couching her argument in narrative and, secondly, by suggesting that this new definition not be brought on by forceful, outspoken, feminists, but by women, old and young alike, who are following their natural instincts—the "old impulses." Any real change that is taking place or that will come about, Addams is claiming, is the result of natural

social evolution.

The "Charm of Words": Feminist Strategies for Change

As in most of her other writings, in *The Long Road* Addams focuses on women, the poor, and unwanted children in order to discuss social problems and ways that those problems could be alleviated. Here, her most important rhetorical tool is autobiographical, reflective narrative in which she uses the account of a "Devil Baby" to begin her discussion of the condition of Chicago's poor and immigrant families. In her account of this story, an old-country legend was brought to life in turn-of-the-century, Progressive America. People came from all around to see it even though the volunteers and tenants of Hull House had never seen or heard of it. Some people became angry, and others even offered to pay to view the social aberration (Addams *Jane Addams* 66).

Of those many groups, Addams describes two different types of male visitors to Hull House. The first group consisted of men who were to be shown the aberration as a warning:

> The legend [of the Devil Baby] exhibited all the persistence of one of those tales which has doubtless been preserved through the centuries because of its taming effects upon recalcitrant husbands and fathers. Shamefaced men brought to Hull-House by their women folk to see the baby, but ill concealed their triumph when there proved to be no such visible sign of retribution for domestic derelictions. (26)

Another group of men who came to see the Devil Baby she describes as "the members in the group of hard-working men" who "wore a hang-dog look betraying that sense of unfair treatment which a man is so apt to feel when his womankind makes an appeal to the supernatural" (27). The men were quite aware

of their "womankind's" power to make appeals to the "supernatural" because these women attended church more, did more good works, and were closer to God as a result. Even though Addams reads the legend as historic folklore, she knows that the men still put some stock in the old wives' tale because

> in their determination to see the child, the men recklessly divulged much more concerning their motives than they had meant to do. Their talk confirmed [Addams's] impression that such a story may still act as a restraining influence in the sphere of marital conduct which, next to primitive religion, has afforded the most fertile field for irrational taboos and savage punishments. (27)

Addams sees old wives tales, stories such as the Devil Baby, as manifestations of women's essential function of keeping their families and communities socially and morally responsible—through the memory of old-country standards of morality. Even when women are not able to organize into groups that serve and reprimand the downtrodden and wayward, they have always had some method of normalizing those around them. When women had no other power to change society, they have always had the spoken word. She writes that the mystical stories told by women "remind us that for thousands of years women had nothing to oppose against unthinkable brutality save 'the charm of words,' no other implement with which to subdue the fierceness of the world about them. Only through words could they hope to arouse the generosity of strength, to secure themselves and their children, to so protect the life they had produced . . ." (29). In 1912 these words took the form of a remembered, moralizing story.

American women had had roles in moral convention-maintaining in the dominant discourse of Victorian America, and this discourse was being questioned by white, middle-class Protestant male circles. In *The Long Road*

Addams shows, through her own use of the "charm of words," that women's duty is not simply a matter of discourse or convention, but one of evolved biology and social makeup. This social makeup works much like the geological strata that compose the Earth's crust and surface. When there is strain on that surface, the layers are pushed, and several layers of various ages may be exposed at the same time. The pressures that were occurring in Jane Addams's America, and especially in the Hull House neighborhood had everything to do with the pressures that were causing concern for white middle-class men—labor, big business, lassiez-faire capitalism, and immigration. For Jane Addams's neighbors, however, those issues also collided with the problems of immigration from very close range. These immigrants were trying to survive in a new country and culture, and that culture included its economic structure. Because they were immigrants and at the bottom of the culture, they did not understand the economic system.

Through their communications with Hull House residents, the daughters of old, immigrant women could come into contact with the autonomy that came with Progressive Era feminism's definitions of femininity. By acknowledging these definitions, they were forced to go against the conventions of their parents' and grandparents' cultures on many levels.[43] For them, the adoption of these conventions was to take part in a new discourse over their own, traditional mores. For the Hull House women, the continued reaffirmation of them was to participate in conventions that shaped their identities as American women, but to American middle-class men who were threatened by their own loss of autonomy,

---

[43] Christopher Lasch points out that this issue of the "conflict of first- and second-generation immigrants" is especially important in Addams' writings because, although the problem has now "become a sociological commonplace," Addams "was one of the first people to discover it and to subject it to analysis." See especially her book *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets* (37).

participation in social service was a way to forge a discourse of middle-class male identity and power. Addams wants her readers to realize that it is not only important for American women to continue to be leaders of social service and morality but also natural for them to do so. Addams shows the connections between the qualities of old immigrant women, their daughters, and middle-class American women through her example of the Devil Baby. The realization by young American immigrant women of their duty as women was, according to Addams, actually brought on by their mother's and their grandmother's traditional stories of the Devil Baby. Their convention-making served the same function as the old stories but took on new forms of feminism and progressivism. It was in these forms that Addams writes, "many achievements of the modern [women's] movement demonstrate that woman deals most efficiently with fresh experiences when she coalesces them into impressions Memory has kept in store for her" (81). Thus, immigrant women who were adapting to and establishing themselves in American society were able to come together with progressive, middle-class women at places such as Hull House to realize that as women they all had in common their duty and capacity to be moral examples and normalizers in their communities. It is this coming together to which Ginzberg refers when she writes of a growth of "sisterhood" among women which was instrumental in solidifying the ideology of women's virtue that "obscured real differences among women" while, at the same time, it contributed to "many women's sense of power and autonomy" (24).

In history, women were only able make use of this maternally motivated protection by using the "charm of words" by teaching their children and (husbands if necessary) how to live in the world and among other people. One manifestation of women's use of the "charm of words" for this purpose is the story of the Devil Baby that appeared on the steps of Hull House. The story

appeared there literally, to the dismay of the Hull House residents, and the Baby appeared figuratively in the form of their immigrant neighbors' confusion about codes of conduct and survival in America.

The story of the Devil Baby shows the natural result of the failure by men to recognize women's ability to set standards of morality and to heed their mothers' teaching—their failure to heed the "charm" of her words. The baby is horrid, profane, shocking, and reproachful. He represents everything irreverent and blasphemous. He, of course, carries physical characteristics of a Devil who has turned his back on all authority and convention, but he is also blatantly male—an appropriate heir to one who refuses to respect devout womanhood. It is no coincidence that the tale involves an aberration of the source of woman's most important duty—childbirth. This failure of men to follow the moral codes turns woman's natural function into an aberration. In the old countries, the people understood the aberration that took the form of the legend of the Devil Baby, but in the industrial cities of America, the immigrants did not understand the codes and conventions. The Devil Baby, then, becomes a sign for the manifestations of their confusion. In reality, this confusion resulted in poverty, abandonment, overcrowding, and unsanitary conditions. The horror of the lifestyle in which many first- and second-generation immigrants found themselves in American cities became signified by this Devil Baby in Hull House neighborhood gossip.

It is no accident, then, that the Devil Baby was figuratively left on the steps of Hull House. The residents there were devoting their lives to helping the immigrants sort out and interpret the codes of American culture. The women of Hull House had taken the place of old-country saints and nuns, and the people of the neighborhood trusted them as a liaison to the rest of American society. Hull House had become a new signifier for the "charm of words" that had produced the legend of the Devil Baby. It was the goal of the residents for Hull House to

function in much the same way that the legend had in the old country. It would now be only natural in social evolution for legends like the Devil Baby to be replaced by a new "charm"—the charm of action in public meeting places where women could bring the advantages of their "maternal impulses."

Conclusion: Feminist Memory Work for the Future

> By the millennium housework should have been abolished. In a sane world meaningless repetition of non-productive activity would be seen as a variety of obsessive-compulsive disorder.
>
> —Germaine Greer, *The Whole Woman* (137)

Some people might argue that we have reached the state of society that Gilman calls for despite the continued existence of kitchens in houses. We have all manner of prepared foods that can be purchased in any stage of preparation from completely cooked and arranged and brought to your doorstep to ingredients prepared for cooking—grated cheese, minced onions, sliced meat, and so on. Barring those prepared foods, we can drive around the corner to any number of fast food establishments or mid-priced restaurants or buffets so that all members of the family can have their appetites satisfied with something different and affordable every day. Millions of children attend day care and nursery schools every day so that their mothers can go to work. Many middle and upper class families have every degree of housecleaning performed in their homes from complete service to the Merry Maid who comes in every week or so to take care of the heavy work. Despite all of these changes in domestic duties, we do not live in the utopian world that Gilman envisioned for us.

Perhaps because of our lack of "memory," or perhaps because of the ways that male "forgetfulness" disallows a memory of women's tradition in American society, we have been in danger of forgetting what first-wave feminists had to say about the American home and women's roles in and out of it. If we listen to what feminists are still saying about those issues, we will see that we still grapple with

the same issues. In the 1970's Angela Davis, a Black Panther and self-proclaimed Communist had a very similar message about housework to Gilman's. Like Gilman, she believes that "neither men nor women should waste precious hours of their lives on work that is neither stimulating, creative, nor productive" (223). Like Gilman she identifies capitalist society's "guarded secret" of the "real possibility—of radically transforming the nature of housework" (223). Like Gilman, Davis looks to the evolution of the home and of the family to point to the roots of the problem in modern America. In Marxist terms, she describes the changes in women's status in society as being based around the changes in the values of labor in an industrial age. As a result, "since housework does not generate profit, domestic labor was naturally defined an inferior form of work compared to capitalist wage labor" (228). At this point, Davis writes, women, who had previously been "valued and respected as productive members of the community" (224), were now adjunct members of society. The "housewife" and wife, she writes, came to be "established" as the "universal models of womanhood" (229). This system, Davis maintains, "qualitatively unaffected by the technological advances brought on by industrial capitalism" serves to keep women's work, in the home or out of it, degraded and undervalued, and women economically dependent members of American society. Like Gilman, Davis recognizes that the myth that women do not work outside of the home for wages is not the reality for many women in America, and the society's failure to recognize this fact and to adequately compensate women's work is the result. Davis calls for women's work to be paid and for society's recognition of the value

of women's work. At the same time, she points to fast food restaurants and child care as a movement within capitalist culture toward the "approaching obsolescence of housework."

Interestingly, in the 1990's, Hilary Rodham Clinton presents very similar messages to those of Addams in her book *It Takes a Village and Other Lessons Children Teach Us*. In that book Clinton asks that we find ways to make the world more homelike in order to make it safer and a better place for our children. Like Addams, she uses a narrative style to get her message across, referring to her own experiences of motherhood and her own experiences of growing up in a safe secure environment. Clinton makes her book both a piece of "memory work" and a critical look at our culture's tendency to view "the way things used to be" nostalgically. While she points out the need for people to return to a time when children felt safe and cared for, she also argues that our nostalgia often "obscures not only the reality of earlier times but the larger settings in which the family finds itself today, as it struggles with the effects of broken homes, discrimination, economic downturns, urbanization, consumerism, and technology" (29). Clinton ascribes traditional "family values" in her call to make marriages work in more cases and to build communities that support families and children.

Clinton and Davis are two examples of late-twentieth century feminist writers who demonstrate the model of receptivity that I have pointed to in feminist works at the turn of the century. Like Gilman, who took on the whole structure of society and wanted to tamper with the structure of the home as well, Davis has been ignored and castigated for her radical ideas about the nature of women's

work and their place in public. Addams and Clinton on the other hand, both address women's issues in public that encompass women's traditional roles as mothers and wives. When either of them stepped over those boundaries—to the issue of war, in the case of Addams, and to the healthcare industry, in the case of Clinton—various members of society have silenced them through ridicule. While Addams audiences read in agreement her books on ways to save our youth and to clean up the city streets, *The Long Road of Woman's Memory* was written after her involvement in the peace movement. As a result, it has become one of her least read and recognized books in the cultural memory and even in feminist scholarship. During this time of Addams's conscious effort to recompose her public image, Addams turns to conservative tactics to present a radical message of women's entrance into the public sphere. Clinton, similarly, was castigated early in her husband's term of office for taking an active role in public policy. She wanted to make changes in health care, a powerful, economic industry in modern American society. Her next public voicing was *It Takes a Village*, which takes on our society on the level of the family and the communities surrounding families. Like Addams, she appeals to her readers as a woman/mother who just wants to make the world a safer place for children. While some members of the political right wouldn't give the book a second look, because of Clinton's "liberal" and radical" past, most Americans seem to espouse her overall thesis that we need to build stronger homes, families, and communities through a cooperative spirit in order to make the world better, if not for ourselves, for our children.

We still deal with the same issues that first-wave feminists did despite

profound cultural changes. While changes in culture will always be a part of life on this planet, it seems that we can always learn by acknowledging and "remembering" the past. While all mothers everywhere have not had all of the answers about raising children, they had something to add to our human experience. Some of the things they knew and did were right. Some were not. Our task for the future is to acknowledge or "obligation to memory" in order, not to replicate the past, but to acknowledge what we can learn from it. From the feminist writers I have discussed, we learn a lot about issues that continue to confront women about their roles in society, in the home and as mothers, but we also learn a lot about how to present feminist messages in ways that may, while making use of the "master's tools" of the past, be more palatable and, thus, more persuasive.

Works Cited

Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 6th ed. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College, 1993.

Addams, Jane. *The Long Road of Woman's Memory*. New York: MacMillan, 1917.

---. *Jane Addams: A Centennial Reader*. Willaim L. Neumann, Ed. MacMillan: New York, 1960.

---. *Twenty Years at Hull-House: With Autobiographical Notes*. (1910). New York: Signet, 1960.

Banner, Lois W. *Women in Modern America: A Brief History*. 3rd ed. Ft. Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1995.

Barbour, Jeanette. "A Woman Editor." (1897).). *Willa Cather in Person: Interviews, Speeches, and Letters*. Bohlke, L. Brent, ed. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1986. 2-3.

Bayley, John Barrington. "*The Decoration of Houses* as a Practical Handbook." *The Decoration of Houses*. New York: Norton, 1978.

Bederman, Gail. "'The Women Have Had Charge of the Church Work Long Enough': The Men and Religion Forward Movement of 1911-1912 and the Masculinization of Middle-Class Protestantism." *American Quarterly* 41 (1989) : 432-65.

Bellamy, Edward. *Looking Backward: 2000-1887*. (1888) Cecelia Tichi ed. New York: Penguin, 1982.

Bohlke, L. Brent, ed. *Willa Cather in Person: Interviews, Speeches, and Letters*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1986.

Canfield, Dorothy. *The Home-Maker*. (1924). Chicago: Academy, 1983.

Carroll, Latrobe. "Willa Sibert Cather." (1921). *Willa Cather in Person: Interviews, Speeches, and Letters*. Bohlke, L. Brent, ed. Lincoln: U of

Nebraska P, 1986. 19-24.

Cather, Willa. "Alexander's Bridge." *Willa Cather: Three Novels and Selected Stories*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1993. 489-552.

---. *My Ántonia*. (1918). Sentry Edition 7. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1954.

---. *O Pioneers!*. (1913). *Willa Cather: Three Novels and Selected Stories*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1993. 1-141.

---. *The Song of the Lark*. (1915). *Willa Cather: Three Novels and Selected Stories*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1993. 1-141.

Charles, Jeffrey A. *Service Clubs in American Society: Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions*. U of Illinois P: Urbana, 1993.

Clinton, Hilary Rodham. *It Takes a Village and Other Lessons Children Teach Us*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996.

Connerton. Paul. *How Societies Remember*. Theme in Social Sciences. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989.

Coles, William A. "The Genesis of a Classic." *The Decoration of Houses*. New York: Norton, 1978.

Coser, Lewis A. Introduction. *On Collective Memory*. By Maurice Halbwachs. Heritage of Sociology Series. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992. 1-34.

Davis, Allen F. *American Heroine: The Life and Legend of Jane Addams*. New York: Oxford UP, 1973.

Davis, Angela. "The Approaching Obsolescence of Housework." *Women, Race and Class*. New York: Random House, 1981. 222-44.

Doane, Janice and Devon Hodges. *Nostalgia and Sexual Difference: The Resistance to Contemporary Feminism*. New York: Methuen, 1987.

Douglas, Ann. *The Feminization of American Culture*. 1977. New York: Anchor-Doubleday, 1988.

Dyke, Reginald. "The Feminist Critique of Willa Cather's Fiction: A Review

Essay." *Women's Studies*. 22 (1993) : 263-279.

Eagleton, Terry. "What is Ideology?" *Ideology: An Introduction*. London: Verso, 1991. 1-31.

Eliot, T. S. "Tradition and the Individual Talent." (1919). *Contemporary Literary Criticism: Literary and Cultural Studies*. Ed. Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer. 3rd ed. New York: Longman, 1994. 27-33.

Feld, Rose C. "Restless Such as Ours Does Not Make For Beauty." Interview with Willa Cather. *New York Times Book Review*, 21 Dec 1924: 11. Rpt. in *Willa Cather in Person: Interviews, Speeches, and Letters*. Ed. L. Brent Bohlke. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1986. 68-72.

F. H. "Willa Cather Talks of Work." *Willa Cather in Person: Interviews, Speeches, and Letters*. Ed. L. Brent Bohlke. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1986. 7-11.

Fisher-Wirth, Ann W. "Dispossession and Redemption in the Novels of Willa Cather." *Cather Studies*. Volume 1. Susan J. Rosowski, ed. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1990. 36-54.

Freud, Sigmund. "Femininity." (1933). *Issues in Feminism: An Introduction to Women's Studies*. Sheila Ruth ed. Mountain View, California: Mayfield, 1998. 122-33.

Fuss, Diana. *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature, and Difference*. New York: Routledge, 1989.

Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar. "From the Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination." *The Captive Imagination: A Casebook on The Yellow Wallpaper*. Catherine Golden, ed. New York: Feminist Press, 1992. 145-48.

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. "Herland." (1915). *Herland and Selected Stories by Charlotte Perkins Gilman*. Barbara Solomon, ed. New York: Signet, 1992.

1-146.

---. *The Home: Its Work and Influence.* New York: Charlton, 1910.

---. *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: An Autobiography.* (1935). Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1990.

---. "Two Callings." *The Home:Its Work and Influence.* (1903). Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1972. xix-xxiii.

---. "Why I Wrote 'The Yellow Wallpaper'." (1913). *The Captive Imagination: A Casebook on The Yellow Wallpaper.* Catherine Golden, ed. New York: Feminist Press, 1992. 51-3.

---. *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation Between Women and Men.* (1898). Great Minds Series. Amherst: Prometheus, 1994.

---. "The Yellow Wallpaper." (1892) *Herland and Selected Stories by Charlotte Perkins Gilman.* Barbara Solomon, ed. New York: Signet, 1992. 165-80.

Ginzberg, Lori D. *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States.* Yale UP: New Haven, 1990.

Golden, Catherine. "One Hundred Years of Reading 'The Yellow Wallpaper'." *The Captive Imagination: A Casebook on The Yellow Wallpaper.* Catherine Golden, ed. New York: Feminist Press, 1992. 1-23.

Greene, Gayle. "Feminist Fiction and the Uses of Memory." *Signs* 16 (1991): 290-321.

Greer, Germaine. *The Whole Woman.* New York: Knopf, 1999.

Halbwachs, Maurice. *On Collective Memory.* (1941). Trans. and Ed. Lewis A. Coser. The Heritage of Sociology Series. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992.

Haney-Peritz, Janice. "Monumental Feminism and Literature's Ancestral House: Another Look at 'The Yellow Wallpaper'." *The Captive Imagination: A*

Casebook on The Yellow Wallpaper. Catherine Golden, ed. New York: Feminist Press, 1992. 261-76.

Haynes, Carolyn A. *Divine Destiny: Gender and Race in Nineteenth-Century Protestantism*. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1998.

Hedges, Elaine R. "'Out at Last'? 'The Yellow Wallpaper' after Two Decades of Feminist Criticism'." *The Captive Imagination: A Casebook on The Yellow Wallpaper*. Catherine Golden, ed. New York: Feminist Press, 1992. 319-33.

Holman, C. Hugh and William Harmon. *A Handbook to Literature*. 5th ed. New York: Macmillan, 1986.

James, William. *The Principles of Psychology*. (1890) Authorized Edition in Two Unabridged Volumes Bound as One. Vol. 1. New York: Dover Publications, 1950.

Klein, Marcus. *Foreigners: The making of American Literature 1900-1940*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981.

Kristeva, Julia. "Approaching Abjection." *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Leon S. Roudiez, tranz. New York: Columbia UP, 1982. (1-31).

Lasch, Christopher. *The New Radicalism in America, 1889-1963: The Intellectual as a Social Type*. Knopf: New York, 1965.

Lindley, Susan Hill. *"You Have Stept Out of Your Place": A History of Women Religion in America*. Westminister John Knox: Louisville, 1996.

Lorde, Audre. "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color*. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua eds. New York: Kitchen Table, 1983. (98-101).

"Lure of Nebraska Irresistible, Says Noted Authoress." (1921). *Willa Cather in*

Person: Interviews, Speeches, and Letters. Bohlke, L. Brent, ed. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1986. 31-33.

Moi, Toril. "Feminist, Female, Feminine." *The Feminist Reader: Essays on Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism*. Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore eds. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991. (117-32).

Morgan, Robin. "Light Bulbs, Radishes, and the Politics of the 21st Century." *Issues in Feminism: An Introduction to Women's Studies*. Sheila Ruth ed. Mountain View, California: Mayfield, 1998. (187-189).

Peaden, Catherine. "Jane Addams and the Rhetoric of Democracy." *Oratorical Culture in the Nineteenth-Century America: Transformations in the Theory and Practice of Rhetoric*. Ed. Michael Halloran and Greg Clark. Carbondale: SIU Press; 184-207.

Richards, Ellen H. *The Cost of Shelter*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1916.

Shaw, Anna Howard. *The Story of a Pioneer*. New York: Harper, 1915.

Sklar, Kathryn Kish. *Florence Kelley and the Nation's Work: The Rise of Women's Political Culture, 1830-1900*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1995.

Slote, Bernice. "The Kingdom of Art." *The Kingdom of Art: Willa Cather's First Principles and Critical Statements 1893-1896*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1966. 31-112.

---. "Writer in Nebraska." *The Kingdom of Art: Willa Cather's First Principles and Critical Statements 1893-1896*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1966. 3-29.

Urgo, Joseph R. *Willa Cather and the Myth of Migration*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1995.

Weedon, Chris. *Feminist Practice and Postructuralist Theory*. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1987.

Welter, Barbara. *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth*

Century. Athens: Ohio UP, 1976.

Wharton, Edith and Ogden Codman, Jr. *The Decoration of Houses*. (1897). New York: Norton, 1978.

Woolf, Virginia. "Introductory Letter to Margaret Llewelyn Davies." *Life As We Have Known It: by Co-Operative Working Women*. (1931). Margaret Llewelyn Davies, ed. New York: Norton, 1975. xv-xxxix.

Yates, Frances A. "The Three Latin Sources For the Classical Art of Memory." *The Art of Memory*. U of Chicago P: Chicago, 1966. 1-26.

Yezierska, Anzia. *Bread Givers*. 1925. Persea: New York, 1975.

---. "The Lost 'Beautifulness.'" *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. Volume 2. Fourth ed. Norton: New York, 1979. 1173-83.