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By

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ANTIMODERN STRATEGIES: AMBIVALENCE, ACCOMMODATION, AND PROTEST IN WILLA CATHER'S THE TROLL GARDEN

A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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Introduction

In 1905, the same year which saw the publication of Max Weber's The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Willa Cather published her first collection of short stories entitled The Troll Garden, a volume of seven stories which includes "The Garden Lodge," "Flavia and Her Artists," and her perhaps best known short story, "Paul's Case." The following year would see Cather give up her teaching job in Pittsburgh and accept S. S. McClure's offer of a position at his magazine in New York. In Cather's second collection of stories, which includes some revised stories from The Troll Garden, entitled Youth and the Bright Medusa, Cather alludes to life in the still uncommercialized, bohemian Washington Square,[1] what Cather's lifelong companion Edith Lewis calls "the rather poetic mood of those days before the automobile, the radio, the moving picture—and before the two wars."[2] However, Cather's position at McClure's magazine, a notorious muckraking journal, consisted almost entirely of reading stories submitted in the hopes of commercial success, without the "devotion" to art that Cather all her life avowed. "In reading manuscripts submitted to me," Cather

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[1] Walter Tittle writes about Greenwich Village in 1925 in a way which confirms Cather's own observations: "One does not need to be old to remember when its streets were quiet, but now it is the haunt of Bohemianism, Incorporated, where from humble beginnings that were more sincere have risen myriad dance-halls, taxi-stands, tea-shops, theaters, and cabarets with couvert charges and like ostentations that promise soon to rival Broadway. Persevere still farther west, and one is rewarded. This modern commerce has not yet obliterated all of the former charm. The crooked streets again resume their quiet, and an Old World touch is contributed by occasional lingering architectural fragments of Georgian flavor. In this pleasant back-water I found the dwelling of Willa Sibert Cather." (Excerpted from Century Magazine, July 1925). Reprinted in Wasserman, 103.

[2] From the introduction to Willa Cather Living, by Edith Lewis (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953). xi-xviii.

says in a 1921 interview, "I found that 95 per cent of them were written for the sake of the writer—never for the sake of the material. The writer wanted to express his clever ideas, his wit, his observations. Almost never did I find a manuscript that was written because a writer loved his subject so much he had to write about it." As a result, Cather claims that she began to have a "definite idea about writing," that one "must know his subject with an understanding that passes understanding—like the babe knows its own mother's breast."[3]

While Cather's early work, including most of the stories in The Troll Garden, has often been criticized (significantly by the author herself) as not "true" to her best writing, "superficial," and even in Cather's own estimation somewhat more like the manuscripts she read at McClure's, nevertheless these stories from what is often termed her "Jamesian period" all in some way deal interestingly with the dilemmas of the artist and the aesthete in the modern world of industrial capitalism, with conflicts concerning the advent of individualism and consumer culture, and with the available choices for individuals who search for alternatives to the flattened experience of an increasingly rationalized world. These concerns are articulated in the contemporary American intellectual culture of Cather's early years in Pittsburgh and New York. The resultant intellectual and scholarly conversations revolving around such issues were available to Cather in salons such as the one held at the Fields' house in Boston (where she met Sarah Orne Jewett and Henry James, among many others), the various writers she would have come

[3] From an interview with Eve Mahony in the Omaha World-Herald, 27 November 1921. Reprinted in Wasserman.

into contact with in her editorial position, and the reading she was so fond of indulging in whenever possible.

While critics have often broken Cather's career into various "phases" or cycles,[4] I see concerns in her work that begin in The Troll Garden and which persist well into her later career. Cather, like many of her contemporaries, felt great ambivalence towards the advent of modernity, specifically the production of wealth for its own sake (understood as "progress"), the new "leisure class" (famously identified by Thorstein Veblen in 1899), widespread bureaucratized education, and the enormous availability of consumer goods. The cultural mood at the turn into the new century is one of doubt and uncertainty, with an accompanying sense that modern life has become what historian T. J. Jackson Lears calls in his book No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture: 1880-1920, "inauthentic," "overcivilized," and "unreal." One subject with which Cather becomes particularly acquainted "with an understanding that passes understanding" is the sense that modern life is intruding upon art and the artist in unacceptable ways, challenging the potential for art to reenchant bourgeois experience in a world faced with the collision of Enlightenment principles and growing modernist doubt concerning the practical effects of these principles after

[4] For an account of various critical positions on Cather, including H. L. Mencken and Carl Van Doren, see the "Introduction" to John J. Murphy's Critical Essays on Willa Cather, Boston: Hall and Co., 1984. Perhaps the first to divide Cather's career into such phases was Fred Pattee in 1930 in The New American Literature, followed by a comprehensive study of Cather's career in Maxwell Geismar's The Last of the Provincials in 1947 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.) which appeared the year of Cather's death. The debate continues, centered on Cather's place within Modernism and regionalism.

the second Industrial Revolution. The ethos at the turn of the century as Cather begins her public career in fiction is one which has been characterized by her contemporaries as one of unprecedented greed and unusual psychic and spiritual uncertainty. Lears argues that, as a result, many long for a return to premodern forms of psychic, spiritual, artistic, or newer psychological or therapeutic cultural forms to fill what seemed to be an expanding void as modernity demanded more of individuals and offered them less sense of solidity. Lears chronicles these responses which can be found again and again in the fictional production, the poetry, the plastic arts, and the spiritual and psychological theories and practices of the period.

"Antimodern" culture, as Lears describes this reaction to incipient modernity, is an inherently ambivalent response, relying as it does on progressive "modern" rhetoric while at the same time protesting the effects of modernity. Lears is not referring to literary Modernism per se, though that is often "antimodern" in its response, but to a broader reaction that includes artistic response. Lears' term "antimodernism" can be a bit misleading, since it sounds unambiguous. But Lears uses the term to mean an inherently ambivalent reaction to modernity. The term is especially appropriate for my purposes, since Cather herself has come to be seen more recently as a literary Modernist; and while Cather does not celebrate modernity she does participate in modernist experimentation with form. And Cather, particularly through her ambivalent depictions of the celebrity artist and the dandy figure, attempts to mediate the contradictory impulses she feels towards modern consumer culture.

The term "antimodernist" therefore is most usefully read as both "anti" and "modern": not an "either/or" but rather an "also/and." Lears' thesis suggests a way of reading contradictions I find in Cather's early fiction. Like the antimodernists Lears examines, Cather, while believing in and advocating "progress" and the abundance it represented, also remained suspicious of excesses of wealth and the hedonism that it represented; in other words, the very forces of progress which advance modernity might also bring about unwanted effects that could endanger the moral fabric of the republic. This is described by Lears as the vestiges of "republican moralism," and the tension between these fears and the hopes progressive rhetoric inflamed is at the very root of antimodernist response. Lears' notion of antimodernism is a complex mix of faith in the myths of America (in the work ethic, in positivistic science and progress, in technological achievement, all based on Enlightenment values) with the simultaneous fear of the hedonistic excess such material and technological progress might entail. While Lears' notion is a more general description of an attitude of anxiety towards modernity, found in all cultural, psychological, and spiritual realms, Cather's antimodernism manifests itself in her aesthetic, and most especially in the tension revolving around her figures of modernity, the celebrity artist and the dandy. Cather's antimodern reaction is also inherently ambivalent, mixed as it is with the still largely unconscious acceptance of "progressive" rhetoric and commitments, and these same commitments lend Cather's early fiction its often irresolvable tension.

Cather creates her early fiction in this culture of contradiction: an America both entranced by and fearful of what the second Industrial Revolution has

wrought. Cather's early fiction is never explored by Lears, nor does he examine the celebrity artist figure as a figure of mediation among competing antimodern impulses. But Cather's earliest fiction fits within the "antimodern" responses to the culture of contradictions in fin de siècle America which Lears describes. Cather's fiction is particularly striking in its overt critique of the individualistic, self-seeking hedonism of consumer culture and the debasement of art within that increasingly materialistic milieu. Rather than protesting modernity through manifestos, or through establishing a movements to resist some particular effect of modernity, or through an advocacy of militarism and the reassertion of the strenuous life, all contemporary alternatives to modernity available at the fin de siècle, Cather instead uses art itself to critique the position of art in consumer culture, art which will itself be subject to market forces. In Cather's fiction, the forceful collision of competing antimodern impulses is located within the most basic of her commitments: her commitment to individual achievement, particularly the potential for achievement in art. It is this commitment, to an American individualism and the work ethic, which ultimately subverts her protest to modern, consumer culture.

As an artist, Cather maintains a belief in "inherent, individual beauty" and the ability of the artist to communicate these "immediate impressions." [5] Yet Cather is also subject to the claims of the historical moment, to the pressure on the artist to produce, to participate in the work ethic to survive and to succeed. Her battle with modernity's forces revolves around the issue of the consumption and

[5] This is just one example of Cather's aesthetic rhetoric, found in her preface to "The Best Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett." Willa Cather on Writing: Critical Studies on Writing as an Art. Forward by Stephen Tennant. Lincoln: Bison Books, 1988.

production of art within the progressive culture — itself committed to the Protestant work ethic and to the creation of a consumer culture to further the aims of modernity's most unique contribution: high finance capitalism, and, what Alan Trachtenberg has called in his book by the same name, "the incorporation of America."

To claim that Cather's aesthetic is "antimodernist" is also to claim that she is both suspicious of modernity and, in a particularly American way, also committed to many of the ideals which advance modernity — specifically the radical individualism which is both to some extent produced by but certainly crucial to the success of consumer culture. In addition, Cather, like many other literary Modernists, will protest the effects of modernity using new "modernist" techniques, and will also actively manage the image and marketing of her own works. This further complicates her relationship to modernity, as she must negotiate consumer culture in order to find success as an artist. Her antimodern impulse to critique the crass consumption of art, and to critique what often passes for art, collides with her need to produce art which will find an audience, as well as with her need to keep an artistic realm available as a separate sphere, a place safe from what Max Weber termed the "disenchantment" of everyday life: the result of the rationalization and control of people's lives in order to increase productivity and profit.

Antimodernist artists and cultural critics express the contradictions swirling around notions of progress and individual autonomous achievement by at once accepting and rejecting modernity and its effects. But Cather's concerns, while rooted in the same cultural dilemmas as those which Lears' chronicles, have been

misread. In order to fully understand the contradictions in Cather's work it is crucial to avoid oversimplifying her antimodern response; it is not simple conservative escapism or a refusal to confront the political, economic, and social conditions of her time, not a simple flight from modernity into art, as many critics have argued.[6] This is despite the fact that some of her own remarks concerning art and writing seem to suggest this position. But, read carefully, there is in Cather's own articulation of her aesthetic an ongoing element of protest, particularly through what I term her "sensational" aesthetic and her revaluing of a particular type of realism. Cather's attempts to find a solution to the contradictory impulses and dual commitments she has are centered in two figures which can be found recurring throughout her early fiction: the celebrity artist and the dandy.

In order to read Cather effectively, to understand her ambivalence and contradictions, both her more theoretical statements and her fiction must be read as overdetermined responses to the overdetermined culture of antimodernism. Lears' description of antimodern reaction as both protest *and* accommodation to modernity is extraordinarily useful therefore, accounting as it does for what one critic termed Cather's "failure of technique" in her early work. This "failure" however is actually Cather's attempt to come to terms with the "antimodern impulse" Lears describes, and her earliest fiction represents her genuine conflicting commitments. This notion of antimodernism points to the critical distinction between Cather as a conservative, Episcopalian, Republican, literary figure intent on fleeing modernity — intent upon

[6] See editor John J. Murphy's "Introduction" to Critical Essays on Willa Cather (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1984) for a detailed and useful account of the debates surrounding Cather's early fiction and its critical reception.

stubbornly reasserting tradition for tradition's sake, and Cather as an astute critic of American culture — prescient, engaged, and forward rather than simply backward looking. Cather's complex antimodernism leads me to call Cather a "radically conservative" critic of her American situation as she maintains commitments to particular strands of modern ideology while protesting the effects of them.

This project examines various strategies of Cather's radically conservative, antimodern aesthetic which, each in their way, attempt to come to terms with issues of personal authenticity, the artist, and the place of art in consumer culture, as well as the potential for the individual imagination in modern life under pressure from the American Protestant work ethic as described by Max Weber. The celebrity artist and the dandy are each figurative attempts to mediate the forces of progress, individualism, and modernity with an aesthetic realm outside modern market pressures. Cather's antimodern response, her accommodation to and protest of modernity, is most obvious in these two figures, which she reconfigures in nearly each one of her earliest stories in order to illuminate another aspect of modernity's effects on art and the artist.

Weber, Cather's contemporary, was one of the most salient cultural critics to describe the ambivalence present in fin de siècle American culture. The controversy over his theories of cultural formations continues even today, but there is no doubt as to his influence on many fields of study: sociology, history, religion, psychology and economics, just to name a few. The concerns which occupied Weber are found in his most famous work The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, which charts the contradictions within the American ideology of

progress and obsession with wealth, figured by Weber as "vocation." These are the same concerns found in Cather's earliest work. The early stories are urban in setting as opposed to her later more rural and "regional" works, and are concerned with class and status as well as with the spiritual lack which often accompanies material or artistic success. Like Weber, Cather attempts to locate the notion of "vocation" in American culture, and posits a separate aesthetic sphere safe from the marketplace, which Weber termed "aesthetic culture." Cather remains committed to the notion of vocation which Weber identified in American progressive ideology, but, unlike Weber, locates it within the realm of artistic success.

Cather is also known to have read widely in contemporary philosophy (William James and Henri Bergson were favorites), and she was intellectually active all her life. She had particular interests in German and French literary and musical culture, and read and admired, among others, both Flaubert and Balzac; these influences on her writing have been well documented by other critics[7]. She also read Russian literature, including and especially Tolstoi, whose impact on Cather's depiction of work may be seen, for example, in a later story like "Neighbour Rosicky" or her novels set in Nebraska. The socio-historical as well as aesthetic ethos informing the production of her work can be traced through the contemporary writers whom she read, of course. Yet, as the variety of her reading in the abbreviated list above suggests, the period was complex; and while I am certainly not claiming that Cather, or any author, expresses the specific cultural,

[7] Susan Rosowski, for instance, gives a nice account of Cather's documented influences in her introduction to The Voyage Perilous, also cited below.

historical moment through an overt adaptation of theory into her fiction, there are elements of Cather's fictional presentation which can only be accounted for through an examination of the critical and aesthetic conditions which contributed to and surrounded her own experience.

Cather would not, for example, have had direct access to Weber's The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, because it had not yet been translated, but the ideas he addressed were the same ones often dramatized or discussed in other authors and their fiction: for instance, the concern over the effects of high finance capitalism, advertising, the place of art in modern culture, the collision of the work ethic with artistic impulse, all of which can be read in Dreiser, Wharton, Crane, and James, to list only a few of Cather's American contemporaries. The concerns to which Weber responded as a result of his visit to America in 1904 were certainly widespread. Critics have also, for instance, long accounted for some of Cather's nonlinear structure in terms of her acquaintance with and adherence to certain notions of Bergsonian time. But there are other strains of philosophy and cultural criticism with which she was acquainted, as well as ideas in circulation such as Weber's or Thorstein Veblen's with which she may have had no formal contact but which are nevertheless relevant to a more complete discussion of her work.

In this project I examine three of Cather's early stories and the relevance of Weber's observations of American culture to them. In chapter one I look at "The Garden Lodge" and Cather's character of bourgeois success, as well as a brief examination of the celebrity artist figure. In chapter two I also read Cather's

concerns using Thorstein Veblen's The Theory of the Leisure Class, published in 1899, in which he outlines his notion of "conspicuous consumption." Using Pierre Bourdieu's ideas of "distinction" and the acquisition of cultural capital, I augment Veblen and Weber's ideas though an examination of Cather's self-made bourgeois character, her figure of ascetic rationalism, her nouveau-riche character, and, finally in chapters three and four, her figure of the dandy. Throughout the project, in addition to relying on Lears' basic thesis of antimodernism, I interpret Cather's response through another set of useful ideas from Mikhail Bakhtin.

Bakhtin offers a provocative notion of how artists express the historical, technological and cultural issues of their time in a short essay he wrote in 1919, entitled "Art and Answerability." Bakhtin's notion of what his translator and editor Michael Holquist terms "the struggle to effect a whole out of the potential chaos of parts"(xxiii), which partially defines Bakhtin's theory of architectonics, suggests a method of reading Cather's ambivalence as she responds to modernity. "What counts" in this struggle, Holquist claims in his useful gloss of Bakhtin, is not the simple oppositional categories (self/other, space/time; or for example, in Cather's case, the oppositions I identify between individualism/ ethical responsibility, the sphere of art/commodity culture, or her republican moralist fears of excess/her advocacy of progress), but the "architectonics governing relations between them . . . the simultaneity that makes it logical to treat these concepts together." Holquist continues, claiming that even in Bakhtin's early writings:

> the point is that Bakhtin honors both things and the relations between them — one cannot be understood without the other. The

> resulting simultaneity is not a private either/or, but an inclusive also/and. In other words, the logic of Bakhtin's simultaneity is—dialogic. (xxxiii)

I am interested in how Cather demands to be read over against some of her own theoretical statements regarding the production of art, and how the contradictions, the "either/or" in her fiction, demand to be read as "also/and"; in other words, I am interested in the "dialogic" nature of her early fiction — in its antimodern quality of both protest to and accommodation to modernity and her particular strategies for mediating her conflicting commitments. Holquist makes the additional point that "it is only slightly less vital to keep in mind that architectonics is intended to describe an activity: the relations it orders are always in a state of dynamic tension" (xxiii). This tension is at play in Cather's variety of representations and faceted examinations of the issues of consumerism, the celebrity artist, the American work ethic and ascetic rationalism, and the effects of progressive ideology and radical individualism. Cather, in her attempt to transcend ideology, to separate her "art" from what she termed "economics," nonetheless interacts with the material of her art, creating a fascinating array of approaches to complex issues in what Bakhtin calls, in "Art and Answerability," "an excess of seeing." This nuanced array may be seen in her varied treatment of the same issue in the stories she collected for The Troll Garden. Far from being a search for "unity" of style or discourse, as Bakhtin describes the search for unity in language in The Dialogic Imagination, Cather's fiction is part of the conversation which "lives, as it were, on the boundary between its own context and another, alien,

context" (284). Cather's fiction responds to the "social heteroglossia," described by Bakhtin in his "Discourse in the Novel," by creating a multiplicity of responses, refracting the issues and problems of modernity and antimodern response, and in accordance with Bakhtin's claim, "the social atmosphere of the word, the atmosphere that surrounds the object, makes the facets of the image sparkle" (277).

I hope to account for some of the contradictions and tensions within Cather's earliest fiction by examining the cultural moment and how it impacted Cather's active, perspectival depiction of the age. Cather's multiplicity of approaches to the dominant themes in her early work indicates her artistic "excess of seeing," a Bakhtinian idea which Holquist explains usefully:

> The general aesthetic Bakhtin provides is grounded in the primal condition that holds for all perception of any kind, a condition that might be called the first law of human perception: whatever is perceived can be perceived only from a uniquely situated place in the overall structure of possible points of view. The enabling condition for having a point of view on anything is to be able to "see" and one can see only from a particular place. The a priori from which the rest of Bakhtin's thought flows is the assumption that each of us occupies a situation in existence that, for the time we occupy such space, is ours and ours alone: what I see is not the same as what anyone else sees. Perception, how I "see" the world, is always refracted, as it were, through the optic of my uniqueness.

> Bakhtin calls this uniqueness of vision my "excess of seeing" insofar as it is defined by the ability I have to see things others do not. (xxv)

Cather's "refraction" of the issues surrounding the production of her writing constitute her excess of seeing and in the sheer complexity of her response and attention to possibility the reader may feel what Susan Rosowski has termed a "lack of conviction"[8] rather than an overdetermined and incisive critique of simultaneous, pressing concerns. This project is concerned to outline Cather's convictions, which I find to be strong but inherently dialogic. Cather's dialogic artistic response itself "answers" the socio-historical dialogic questions in the culture in which she writes.

Lest Bakhtin's idea of perspective seem obvious to those who do not subscribe to the "death of the subject" it is important to understand, as Holquist explains, that Bakhtin also posits that you also see what I cannot, and therefore the "uniqueness of the self" depends upon the "necessity of the other" (xxv). For complex refraction of experience to take place there must be what Cather herself termed a unity of art and life, where "literalness ceases to be literalness," as she asserts in "The Novel Démeublé." Cather's perception depends upon the ability to discern the other through what she calls "sympathy"— and it is through sympathy that the artist can "see" from more than one perspective, the "necessity of the other" becomes the prerequisite for art as an answer to the multiplicity of questions, for the refraction of experience.

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[8] Susan J. Rosowski. The Voyage Perilous: Willa Cather's Romanticism. Lincoln: Nebraska UP. When Rosowski discusses the early works she asks what "distinguishes them from the mature fiction? The first impulse — to cite technical skill — doesn't take us very far, for Cather's technique in these stories is often quite good. What is missing instead, I believe, is conviction"(29).

"It is this very personal quality of perception, a vivid and intensely personal experience of life, which make a 'style,'" Cather claims in Not Under Forty, in an essay on Sarah Orne Jewett (95). But Bakhtin, in "Art and Answerability," claims that "When a human being is in art, he is not in life, and conversely. There is no unity between them and no inner interpenetration within the unity of an individual person." He asks:

> what guarantees the inner connection of the constituent elements of a person? Only the unity of answerability. I have to answer with my own life for what I have experienced and understood in art, [emphasis mine] so that everything I have experienced and understood would not remain ineffectual in my life. But answerability entails guilt, or liability to blame. It is not only mutual answerability that art and life must assume, but also mutual liability to blame. The poet must remember that it is his poetry which bears the guilt for the vulgar prose of life, whereas the man of everyday life ought to know that the fruitlessness of art is due to his willingness to be unexacting and to the unseriousness of the concerns in his life. The individual must become answerable through and through: all of his constituent moments must not only fit next to each other in the temporal sequence of his life, but must also interpenetrate each other in the unity of guilt and answerability . . . (2)

Cather, as if in response to Bakhtin's concerns, maintains that "it is a common fallacy" that an artist can use his "imagination" upon subject matter to produce strong feeling. "The truth is" she claims, "that by such a process (which is not imaginative at all!) he can at best produce only a brilliant sham, which, like a badly built and pretentious house, looks poor and shabby in a few years." She continues,

> If he achieves anything noble, anything enduring, it must be by giving himself absolutely to his material. And this gift of sympathy is his great gift; it is the fine thing in him that along can make his work fine. He fades away into the land and people of his heart, he dies of love only to be born again. The artist spends a lifetime in loving the things that haunt him . . . (79-80)

Cather here formulates, in 1922, just the idea Bakhtin articulated in 1919. The claims of art as answerability require the unity of "life" with art, artist with other, to take "the vulgar prose of life" and turn it into something "noble." Bakhtin speaks in similar terms to Cather's claim about imagination when he claims that:

> Inspiration that ignores life and is itself ignored by life is not inspiration but a state of possession . . . it is certainly easier to create without answering for life, and easier to live without any consideration for art. Art and life are not one, but they must become united in myself — in the unity of my answerability. (2)[9]

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[9] In an unpublished fragment which has been entitled "Light on Adobe Walls," Cather writes of "the limits of inspiration" or "possession" in art:

> No art can do anything at all with great natural forces or great elemental emotions. No poet can write of love, hate, jealousy. He

As Cather writes, the artist must give him or herself "absolutely to his material," "to die of love only to be born again," and, one can translate this into Bakhtinian terms of "answerablity."

Ronald Schleifer, in his book, Modernism and Time: The Logic of Abundance in Literature, Science, and Culture 1880-1930, describes answerability as the aesthetic response that "allow[s] the political/economic/technological culture in which they emerge to 'coalesce' as living events which themselves call for a response . . .". Furthermore:

> Answerability is predicated on the aesthetic possibility of grasping phenomena whole, momentarily, in order to render a judgment and, as Benjamin says, by means of their temporally enlarged wholeness to "redeem" them. As such, art is not simply a reflex of techno-political culture; it momentarily and repeatedly coalesces such culture into something to be comprehended, evaluated and valued . . . (21-22).

In her essay on Katherine Mansfield, in Willa Cather on Writing: Critical Studies on Writing as an Art, Cather describes the first-rate artist as possessing "the thing that is his very own, his timbre, this cannot be defined or explained any more than the quality of a beautiful speaking voice can be" (108), which can be seen as the

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> can only touch these things as they affect the people in his drama and his story . . . Art is a concrete and personal and rather childish thing after all — no matter what people do to graft it into science and make it sociological and psychological; it is no good at all unless it is let alone to be itself . . . (124-25)

expression of the artist's own "excess of seeing." In "The Novel Démeublé" Cather discusses Tolstoi's depiction of the "material things" of life, "always so much a part of the emotions of the people that they are perfectly synthesized; they seem to exist," she claims, "not so much in the author's mind, as in the emotional penumbra of the characters themselves. When it is fused like this, literalness ceases to be literalness — it is merely part of the experience" (40). Here Cather seems to be describing the process of "coalescence," the aesthetic answer to material reality, fusing "life" with "art." Cather continues, as if prefiguring Bakhtin's notion of answerability in art:

> If the novel is a form of imaginative art, it cannot be at the same time be a vivid and brilliant form of journalism. Out of the teeming, gleaming stream of the present it must select the eternal material of art. There are hopeful signs that some of the younger writers are trying to break away from mere verisimilitude, and, following the development of modern painting, to interpret imaginatively the material and social investiture of their characters; to present their scene by suggestion rather than by enumeration. (40)

Importantly, Cather accounts for the artist's vision, the fusing of art with life that transcends the literal, within the ambivalent relations between persons. Cather goes on to describe the life of the family, and in so doing describes the response of the artist in terms which suggest her "answerability" to art and experience, to "life" as the "tragic necessity" of relationship between artist and other:

> One realizes that even in harmonious families there is this double life: the group life, which the one we can observe in our neighbour's household, and, underneath, another — secret and passionate and intense — which is the real life that stamps the faces and gives character to the voices of our friends. Always in his mind each member of these social units is escaping, running away, trying to break the net which circumstances and his own affections have woven about him. One realizes that human relationships are the tragic necessity of human life; that they can never be wholly satisfactory, that every ego is half the time greedily seeking them, and half the time pulling away from them. In those simple relationships of loving husband and wife, affectionate sisters, children and grandmother, there are innumerable shades of sweetness and anguish which make up the pattern of our lives day by day, though they are not down in the list of subjects from which the conventional novelist works. (109-10)

Cather was no "conventional novelist," as any superficial look at a novel such as My Ántonia or Death Comes for the Archbishop will show. Cather's "answerability" to life is fearless in its willingness to offer the contradictions of life in her art, the "shades of sweetness and anguish" that make up relationships and inform her artistic excess of seeing. Cather's answerability in art relies on the process of "simplification," but also, as she writes in the preface to Jewett's stories, on the "gift of sympathy" (51). While always quick to maintain that art was indeed

a form (a complicated form) of "escape," that art and religion have more in common than "art and economics," and while maintaining the possibility of art remaining safely separate from "life" in this sense, Cather nonetheless actively "answers" the impact of the modalities of modern life through her complex aesthetic response.

Hers is a response which is not simply contradictory, but ambivalent as a result of its dual commitments: to individualistic artistic achievement which incorporates the American work ethic and can thus achieve a measure of "success," and, simultaneously, to the preservation of an artistic sphere, safe from the demands of modernity and the corruption of the marketplace. Each of the chapters in this project will examine Cather's varying strategies of coping with these contradictions within her own ideology of art.

Cather's earliest fiction seems a complex "answer" to Weber's analysis of what he terms the "spirit" of the age: the ethos of a new type of capitalism, and the incumbent problems for the individual he defines and analyzes. The interpretation of Weber's ideas and the resulting historical thesis regarding antimodern reaction as found more recently in Jackson Lears' study is extraordinarily useful in accounting for some of the crosscurrents, ambiguity, and contradictions within Cather's earliest work, which many times seem an almost obvious "coalescence," as Schleifer uses the idea, of many of the ideas put forth by cultural critics. Cather, like such observers of American culture as Weber and Veblen, identified a sense of loss and uncertainty accompanying the shift in priorities within American culture occasioned by the advent of modern consumerism. This antimodernist content of

Cather's work has often been either ignored, oversimplified, or misrepresented by critics of her work. Instead of reading Cather's work as her answerability, the unity of "life" with "art" through her aesthetic expression, many critics have chosen to focus on Cather's narratives (especially her "regionalist" work, later in her career) as a kind of romantic "escape" from life. This critical response hears only one part of her answer to modernity.

After turning first, then, in chapter one, to the story "The Garden Lodge," in order to examine how Cather "answers" the lack of intense, authentic experience in modern bourgeois culture through her positing of a separate realm of visionary imagination, outside the conscious, rationalized ethic of self-control described by Weber and represented in the character of Caroline Noble, I further investigate how she uses the trope of the celebrity artist to locate such a space outside "rationalized" modern life. In "The Garden Lodge" Cather challenges what she calls the "system and discipline" of modern bourgeois life with the experience of artistic vision and imagination. "The Garden Lodge" dramatizes Weber's notion of rationalization, the pressures of modernity on the individual and the imagination, and Cather's own resistance to such pressures through her depiction of the search for individual, authentic, intense experience as Lears describes it.

While both chapters one and two examine Cather and her work as a Bakhtinian "answer" to the ambivalent ethos of the period which Weber identifies, they also examine the residual possibility for art's existence in a protected separate sphere which Cather locates outside American capitalist culture, especially in an idealized, preindustrial European bohemianism, indicating her conviction that art

retains an element of potential protest to the American elision of art and work. (This suggestion seems particularly strong given her choice of epigraph from Rossetti's "Goblin Market," a short reading of which is also included here).

"The Garden Lodge" offers the celebrity artist as a mediating figure of accommodation to the pressures of modernity intruding upon the sphere of art postulated by Weber, containing antimodern ambivalence within an elision of the American work ethic and artistic development. But "Flavia and Her Artists" does more: it offers yet another alternative to the rationalized bourgeois existence represented by Flavia's rise from working-class status to nouveau-riche: it posits an ascetic rationalism to both the crass celebrity culture of the "artists" in Flavia's collection, and to Flavia's acquisitive instinct itself. Using Veblen's notion of conspicuous consumption to examine Flavia's behavior and the consequences for art under these conditions, Cather's antimodern ambivalence towards consumer culture can more easily be located in the figure of ascetic rationalism, represented by Arthur Hamilton, Flavia's husband. In "Flavia and Her Artists," Cather further suggests, as Pierre Bourdieu does, that consumption can include the acquisition of aesthetic experience in addition to material objects. This type of consumption contributes to the cultural capital of the aspiring bourgeoisie (what Veblen termed the "leisure class"). Cather's depiction of the consumption of aesthetic experience shows the dearth of available authentic experience for the bourgeoisie, the modern hedonism of consumer culture, Cather's ambivalence towards American radical individualism, and the problem of aesthetics in nascent modern consumer culture. I also use Weber's "disenchantment thesis" in order to more fully account for

Cather's ambivalence towards the celebrity artist in this story. Cather's story suggests Weber's notion of personal redemption through art, but as augmented through Veblen's ideas on conspicuous consumption, reputability, pecuniary ability and predatory behavior which locates such "redemption" outside the purely individual, spiritual, or therapeutic levels and place it within the issue of class.

While vividly depicting such ideas through her story, Cather nevertheless maintains a commitment to republican ideals in her "ascetic rationalism," located in one character, Arthur Hamilton, Flavia's husband, further betraying her republican suspicion of the culture of consumption and the individualism which informs it, as well as her ambivalence towards the European, Arnoldian view of culture and the class which supports it. I therefore examine the inherent dialogic, contradictory tensions between antimodern residual strains of ascetic rationalism and conspicuous consumption based on hedonistic, status seeking individualism. I also read this story against other, oversimplified readings which validate Cather's antimodern conservatism but ignore her antimodernist critique; misunderstanding or misreading the contradictions within her early work, such readings often cite a "failure of technique" or "lack of conviction" instead of reading the crosscurrents of antimodern reaction as the partly reactionary but radical critique of modernity that they are.

Each of these are issues which will preoccupy Cather throughout her long career, and as the effects of modernity increase and multiply, her aesthetic answer will dynamically change. But even years after The Troll Garden, one sees the protest to modernity in Cather's traditional conservative depictions of meaningful

work, and in her need to locate meaning within relationship, though she does not deny the modernist alienation present in the culture and even depicts it graphically (in My Mortal Enemy for example). However, one also continues to see her alternate commitment to radical individualism and aestheticism, which ultimately functions as an accommodation to modernity. The dialogic, ambivalent answer Cather gives to antimodern sentiment present within the fin de siècle has seemed to critics reactionary, antiprogressive, and elitist, particularly in the 1930s. But as early as 1947, the year in which Cather died, belle-lettrist critics had noted the conflict in most of Cather's works between the individual seeking meaning through art and the moral struggle to maintain "values" in light of modernity's pressures. Maxwell Geisman called Cather "one of the most complex, if not difficult and contradictory, minds in our letters" in his 1947 book, The Last of the Provincials. Despite attempts to position Cather's contradictions within literary movements (i.e. Romanticism, realism, or Modernism) or to account for them in terms of flaws in her "technique," usually in readings of the novels, or to account for inconsistencies or contradictions in terms of gender or queer theory, Cather's work still resists easy categorization. Indeed this problem has generated much criticism in itself. My contention here is that Cather's "contradictory mind" is informed by the antimodern ambivalence present in the fin de siècle: the necessity to both protest the conditions of modernity after the second Industrial Revolution and to accommodate to its demands.[10] But while these contradictions are themes that have

[10] James McFarlane contends in his essay "The Mind of Modernism" that this ambivalence is an essential part of modernism. And yet, the term "ambivalence" is

been noted in her later work, they have generally been attributed to her need to "escape" rather than to confront modern life, and thus have not been fully identified or satisfactorily accounted for, especially in their earliest, latent forms.[11] Cather, far from attempting an escape from modern life, answers the challenges modernity is mounting to art as a separate, safe alternative to commercial, consumer capitalist culture and the bourgeois individualism that informs it. Nowhere is this more evident than in the short story "Paul's Case," which is the focus of chapters three and four of this project.

While critiquing bourgeois values associated with American culture and the cultural elite, thus resisting modernity in specific ways, Cather also betrays an odd ambivalence towards the role of the artist, and even toward that figure of self-seeking, radical individualism, the consumer. Chapter three examines modernity through Paterian notions of aesthetic experience and Cather's interpretation of this

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"less than satisfactory. Strictly," McFarlane says, "our dictionaries lack the word which would embrace all the diverse ways of interconnecting opposites and contraries and contradictions, which would gather within one semantic category such notions as polarity and dualism and dialectic and schizophrenia and synthesis and ambivalence, which would admit the simple oxymoron as well as the Aristotelian idea that 'the highest harmony springs from opposites', and which would run right through to the sophistications of Freudian and Jungian psychology. What is distinctive—and difficult — about the Modernist mode is that it seems to demand the reconciliation of two distinct ways of reconciling contradictions, ways which in themselves are also contrary" (87).

[11] Indeed, as early as 1924, Lloyd Morris argues in the North American Review that Cather had "failed to discover a national faith or destiny in contemporary America," and one Nation reviewer regarded the early stories as "an American debate between body and soul on the questionable compatibility of American ideals and the development of the artist" (Murphy 5). However most critics, with a few notable exceptions, continued to claim that Cather was either simply "nostalgic" or "escapist," particularly in the 1930s. See Murphy's "Introduction" for an account of this critical debate.

aestheticism. The first section of chapter three outlines Cather's "sensational aesthetic," an interpretation of Paterian and Fordian impressionism and her commitment to a "bodily" art. While this seems to stand in contrast to both consumer culture and the Victorian ethos of ascetic rationalism, therefore acting as a protest of Weberian rationalization of modern life, nevertheless in her commitment to art as a quasi-religious ideal, in an attempt to transmute ascetic rationalism rather than to fully reject it, Cather effectively affirms an artistic asceticism found first in Flaubert and also later in many antimodern movements. In this section I examine aestheticism's fruitfulness as an alternative antimodern strategy, raising the question of whether it functions as accommodation to or protest of the conditions of modernity. Also, I look at the unique history of aestheticism in America and attempt to place Cather within this tradition.

In the next section of chapter three I outline the problem with Cather's theory of art as pleasure. Cather's antimodern stance contains within it the inherent contradiction modern aestheticism cannot avoid: the radical individualism which undergirds American consumer culture and the opposition between "art" and "life" which Cather at once rejected and claimed must exist, and which her ascetic view of art attempts to contain. The chapter primarily uses "Paul's Case" to examine these issues as well as to examine Cather's technique of impressionism.

Chapter four is also in two sections, both of which deal with modernity as defined in previous chapters but which also introduce Baudelaire's reaction to modernity as prototype for Cather's ultimate yet uneasy strategy for accommodation to it: the dandy. In this chapter I examine the issues of class, work,

and modern education within American culture and how they impact Cather's inflection of the dandy figure. "Paul's Case" is the most noted of the stories from The Troll Garden, and was reprinted again in a later collection after Cather edited it. This story epitomizes each of the issues at stake in my previous three chapters, and offers the clearest picture of fin de siècle antimodern ambivalence and Cather's continued responses to it. Walter Benjamin (another of Cather's contemporaries) offers an analysis of the dandy or flâneur which helps account for Paul's dandyism in its Americanized form: an expression of high capitalism and the modern individual under conditions quite different from Baudelaire's or Wilde's historical moments.

Part of chapter four examines the elision of religious duty with desires for conformity and success present at the turn of the century in republican moralist visions of individual autonomy, and the residual strains of the Victorian ethos of self- repression as over against the emergent bourgeois consumerism which informs Paul's rebellion. This section is a close reading of "Paul's Case" in order to demonstrate Cather's concerns and how Cather highlights them in this particular text through her expression and critique of American consumer culture and her response to them through the figure of the dandy.

The second section of chapter four examines Paul as flâneur and dandy and uses Benjamin's views on Baudelaire to help account for the differences within the later, American dandy figure of Cather and that of Baudelaire and other European, decadent figures such as Wilde, Gide, and others. It is in "Paul's Case" that Cather asserts most strongly the lost potential of art to reenchant everyday life; Cather's

story is about the confusion of art with icons of success and cultural capital, and the consumer with the aesthete. Her depiction of the contradictions modern capitalist culture imposes on the realm of art is brilliant, unshrinking, and even brutal. Cather's attempt to mediate the demands of consumer, market-driven aesthetic culture with the very real lack of authenticity present in modern culture through the figure of the dandy is, while impossible and irresolvable, nevertheless prescient, incisive, and, ultimately, tragic. Cather's earliest fiction presents the available alternatives at the fin de siècle, but shows each to be overdetermined, full of "sweetness and anguish," and finally, endlessly refractable; there are no genuinely viable alternatives as market consumerism and finance capitalism strip art of subversive potential. Cather leaves the reader with the dilemma of American culture under capitalism — the cultural contradictions, the unfulfilled hopes, and the irresolvable tensions — and with her dialogic, antimodern aesthetic answer.

Chapter One *Antimodern Alternatives in the New Century: Art, Authenticity and "the nothingness of system and discipline."*

Part I. *Introduction.* Rhetorics of modernity and the question of "devotion."

In 1905, Max Weber described "modernity" as the deepening of a fundamental conflict of values. In an essay entitled "The rule of man over man: politics, power and legitimation," Peter Lassman claims that this notion of modernity is crucial to understanding Weber, who felt it "the fate of modern man to live with a 'polytheism' of conflicting values"(98). The cultural effects of a new form of advanced capitalism, and the ethos which informs it, including that known as "the Protestant ethic," are concomitant with modernity in Weber's analysis. The systematized rationalization of individual lives for "maximum productivity" and "personal achievement" as one necessary response to finance capitalism epitomizes modernity for Weber. This new form of capitalism, according to Weber, is characterized by the rational organization of enterprise through a new, thoroughgoing bureaucratization process which by the fin de siècle had turned the pursuit of wealth into an end in itself. In fact, Weber claims, "the capitalistic system so needs this devotion to the calling of making money"— a calling which essentially derives from the antimaterialist notion of "vocation" formerly associated with religious belief— that "it no longer needs the support of any religious forces, and feels the attempts of religion to influence economic life, in so far as they can still be felt at all, to be as much an unjustified interference as its regulation by the State" (72).

Weber toured America in 1904 and came away convinced that America exemplified modernity both in its degree of efficiency in aggressively accumulating

wealth and in its success in internalizing rational standards for such efficiency in Americans' personal lives. In his essay "The Spirit of Capitalism," contained within The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Weber begins by quoting Benjamin Franklin's aphorisms at some length and then noting Kurnberger's satire of Franklin in his Picture of American Culture. Franklin's admonitions concerning the handling of money are, according to Kurnberger, "the supposed confession of faith of the Yankee." After this observation, Weber continues:

> That this is the spirit of capitalism which here speaks in characteristic fashion, no one will doubt . . . The peculiarity of this philosophy of avarice appears to be the ideal of the honest man of recognized credit, and above all the idea of a duty of the individual toward the increase of his capital, which is assumed as an end in itself. Truly what is here preached is not simply a means of making one's way in the world, but a peculiar ethic. The infraction of its rules is treated not as foolishness but as forgetfulness of duty. It is not mere business astuteness . . .it is an ethos. *This* is the quality which interests us. (51)

Reading Cather's early work through Weber's definition of modernity, particularly his observation that it is the "deepening" of conflicting values, and the ethos which accompanies it, is one way of accounting for contradictions within stories such as "The Garden Lodge." In this story in particular, Cather overtly addresses the problem which Weber first described as the hallmark of modernity: rationalization, and its practical effects — "the systematic organization" of an individual's life for "maximum personal achievement." Cather's story, much as Weber's analysis does, also

foregrounds the question of "devotion"— both her protest and accommodation to modernity are figured through "devotion" to art, but also to success.

This section of this chapter contains a discussion of Weber's analysis of American modern culture and the contradictions he noted within it as well as the relevant antimodernist reactions which Lears has described. In the second section of this chapter I then utilize each of these social analysts' and historians' ideas in order to read Cather's Bakhtinian answer to modernity in "The Garden Lodge." Cather's story exhibits many of the same conflicting values and contradictory impulses that Weber described and answers those conflicts through what Lears has described as antimodern response. I outline Lears' notion of antimodern response and Weber's arguments in more detail before turning to the story, in which Cather both positively and negatively depicts her character's success, and in which she both asserts and denies the alternative possibility of a separate sphere of art. In doing so, Cather answers both the modern cultural need for authenticity and "real" experience which Lears describes as one bourgeois reaction to modernity, and the commitment she maintains to progressive values. The sense of "spiritual" lack and the subsequent need for "authentic" or reinvigorated experience within the rising bourgeois class which Lears describes is especially significant in interpreting Cather's antimodern answer in her early fiction. Since "The Garden Lodge" is both an example of how Cather posits the challenges raised by modern rationalization and, simultaneously, one antimodern response to such challenges, it is critical to see how Weber's notion of "devotion" relates to the modern process of rationalization, and to the sense of "unreality" which Lears identifies and which Cather eloquently confronts in her story.

Weber claims that the internalization of notions of "vocation" and "devotion" and the self-repression required to fulfill the duties associated with bureaucratized labor are the result of shifting social structures which have become necessary in the face of an industrial and increasingly bureaucratized finance capitalism, itself derived from principles of scientific progress and positivistic science. Weber termed the personal internalization of "system" an "ascetic orientation," but in the concluding section of The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism declares that "modern culture" will replace this ethos with the "purely mundane passions" associated with the pursuit of wealth: namely, hedonism, consumption, and greed (182). Cather's early fiction is produced just at the time modern culture and its "mundane passions" collides with ascetic rationalism. Her early fiction is an attempt to answer this conflict of values, in the Bakhtinian sense outlined in the introduction to this project, by a process which vacillates between protest and accommodation to modern forms.

Weber remained fascinated by the dynamic of ascetic rationalism which he saw, particularly in America in 1904, as still informing notions and values of individualism and worldly accomplishment and noted the notion of "duty" or "calling," originally associated with spiritual vocation, which still "prowls about in our lives like the ghost of dead religious beliefs" (182). But the "purely mundane" passions — to accumulate wealth, to succeed in the American dream — do not fill the space of religious belief, however much they fuel the drive to succeed. Ascetic rationalism becomes less and less associated with self-denial in the service of a greater good, and more and more subject to "bureaucratized processes of rationalization"; that is, self-denial ultimately serves the ends of finance capitalism. It

is important in order to follow Weber's rather complex argument to understand that acetic rationalism was essentially a religious form in its earliest stages, but the religious or spiritual component has been overwhelmed by the forces of bureaucratized and finance capitalism and have therefore been coopted for another use.

One of the hallmarks of modernity in Weber's thinking is what he terms "rationalization" — what Lawrence Scaff glosses in an essay on Weber as "the increasing dominance of abstract cognitive processes." It is most important to understand that this process was seen as permeating all facets of everyday life. Scaff elaborates:

> Rationalization can thus include pervasive features of modern life such as standardization, commodification, measurement in terms of efficiency, cost-benefit analysis, legalistic administrative procedures, and bureaucratic coordination and rule. The last of these features — the tendency toward "bureaucratization" in public affairs, which Weber tends to characterize as "inescapable" and an "objectification of mind" — therefore becomes an exceptionally obvious example of a more general deep-rooted cultural development. (104-05)

For labor to unwittingly conspire in the accumulation of capital and wealth, the ascetic impulse must be harnessed and manipulated. The notion of duty or calling serves this purpose. Weber writes that at the turn into the twentieth-century:

> Man is dominated by the making of money, by acquisition as the ultimate purpose of his life. Economic acquisition is no longer

> subordinated to man as the means or the satisfaction of his material needs . . . At the same time it expresses a type of feeling which is closely connected with certain religious ideas. . . The earning of money within the modern economic order is, so long as it is done legally, the result and the expression of virtue and proficiency in a calling; and this virtue and proficiency are, as it is now not difficult to see, the real Alpha and Omega of Franklin's ethic . . . .(53-4)

This helps to explain the language which Weber uses to describe modern culture: religious allusions to "devotion," to "preaching" and to "calling" have become part of capitalist rhetoric, ideology and practice.

The contradictions Weber identified, which mix the ascetic notion of duty with the aggressive pursuit of wealth, what Daniel Bell has called "the cultural contradictions of capitalism," are manifest in Cather's early stories, which often look to art and the artist as at least potential alternatives to what Weber terms "the reduction of the world to a disenchanted object." The "close connection" of this sense of duty or calling to "certain religious ideas" and feelings, figured in Weber as an "ultimate purpose in life," connotes the lack of spiritual purpose elsewhere in modern life. T. J. Jackson Lears has identified the longing for a reinvigoration of experience as one antimodern reaction to the hyperrationalization of modern life, particularly in the bourgeois American culture which Weber described. The spiritual lack in the culture is at least partially the impetus for antimodern reactions. I discuss this aspect of Lears' argument in more detail here, before turning back to Weber's

argument, because it has a peculiarly important place in Cather's early work, and in particular "The Garden Lodge."

In order to more fully understand the sense of loss and uncertainty within bourgeois life at the end of the Victorian period, just as the second Industrial Revolution gains momentum and industrial capitalism begins to give way to high finance capitalism and the consolidation of wealth in the hands of a very few institutions, I rely here on a basic account of the growth of radical individualism as theorized by Lears. Though I return to this in more depth in chapter three, here it is enough to note how Lears traces the shift in American thought from its origins in republican moralism, dependent upon Whig historiography — itself suspicious of the progress and success that was seen to have brought down empires, and thus required "moral certainty and martial force" to resist corruption and irresponsibility (27) — to a more internalized superego, which takes hold in the place of a stern Calvinism on the decline (32). As the work ethic is legitimated both through and despite its Calvinist origins, as morality is shifted from external authority (which is under siege in the late Victorian period) to a more internalized and individuated conscience, the responsibility of an individual's success or failure is shifted onto the autonomous self. This has the effect of making the individual paradoxically more vulnerable to doubts concerning his or her own efficacy in the world and in moral decisions, all the while demanding more from the individual in terms of "success" and self-determination.

While the pervasive rhetoric[1] at the end of the nineteenth century still advanced the firm belief in the strength and autonomy of the individual — useful in arguments for "progress" and in justifying massive accumulations of wealth by individuals — by the height of the second Industrial Revolution, with the emergence of a national market economy dominated by bureaucratic corporations, according to Lears "the bourgeois ideal of the independent self seemed barely tenable" (32). In addition, new theories of evolutionary biology, Freudian psychology, and a decline in spiritual authority increase the burden on the individual, while at the same time creating more uncertainty. There are new factors (such as the theorization of the unconscious) being identified outside the individual's control while, simultaneously, the individual is forced to accept more responsibility for the outcome of his own life, no longer able to rely on traditional structures of belief which accounted for class or station and are no longer available to hold the larger community responsible to the individual. As a result, the modern individual is confronted with contradiction and uncertainty. The notion of the independent self is asked to carry more individual responsibility, as is evident in the American myths of the "self-made man" and theories of scientific "progress."

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[1] See Lears, chapter one, for detailed discussion of this phenomenon. For instance, Lears claims: "Late-nineteenth-century enthusiasm for material progress is difficult to chart because it was omnipresent and often implicit in the emergent modern culture. It united businessmen, politicians, ministers, journalists—all the stout thought-leaders of the urban bourgeoisie. Even many labor leaders, socialists, and dissident farmers accepted the progressive faith: they attacked the maldistribution of wealth, not the fundamental beneficence of economic growth; they accepted the conventional link between technological development and national greatness. Americans who despised the steel magnate Andrew Carnegie would have echoed his claim in Triumphant Democracy (1886): 'The old nations of the earth creep on at a snail's pace; the Republic thunders past with the rush of the express.'"(8)

Therefore, as Lears explains:

> As new theories in sociology and psychology gave scientific sanction to the notion of an overcivilized, diminished human personality, the bourgeois vision of individual autonomy began to seem sharply circumscribed. And if autonomy was circumscribed, personal moral responsibility was undermined as well. Familiar ideas of character and will were shaken by the triumph of organized capitalism. (32)

This haunting anxiety that the power of the individual might indeed be illusory results in what Nietzsche had called "weightlessness," "marked," as Lears notes, "by hazy moral distinctions and vague spiritual commitments," and, according to Lears, "gradually personal identity itself came to seem problematic." He continues:

> For many, individual identities began to seem fragmented, diffuse, perhaps even unreal. A weightless culture of material comfort and spiritual blandness was breeding weightless persons who longed for intense experience to give some definition, some distinct outline and substance to their vaporous lives. This sense of unreality has become part of the hidden agenda of modernization. Throughout the twentieth century, a recoil from the artificial, overcivilized qualities of modern existence has sparked a wide variety of quests for more intense experience, ranging from the fascist fascination with violence and death, to the cults of emotional spontaneity of avant garde artists to popular therapies stressing instinctual liberation. Antimodern

> impulses, too, were rooted in longings to recapture an elusive "real life" in a culture evaporating into unreality. (32)

Weber himself identified the tendency to idealize the sphere of art as a separate sphere safe from the intrusions of modernity and postulated an "aesthetic culture" as one reaction to modernity. Lears' identification of a sense of "unreality" in modern life and his positing of antimodern reaction as attempted amelioration of that anxiety can be seen manifested in flights into an "aesthetic culture," which Weber described as a culture of "feeling, emotion, authenticity, self-expression and interiority" (Scaff 105). Indeed, Lears delineates various forms of artistic cultural responses to hyperrationalization, including some fictional production. But, while Lears traces fin de siècle antimodern reaction through cultural forms such as architecture, militarism, therapeutic culture, and artistic forms, other than Henry Adams he does not read the contemporary writers.

Cather's early stories, perhaps because they differ at least on the surface from her later writing, have not had much critical attention. It is precisely, I think, because their antimodernist quality is so strong but so difficult to interpret that critics have not quite known how to approach them. Both Lears and Weber help to make sense of the contradictory quality of the early stories, and it is this antimodern quality which makes the early stories so intriguing. What seems more "antimodernist" in Cather's later work, and more obviously so (here I am thinking of her more traditional depiction of land, work, family, and community present in a short story like "Neighbour Rosicky") is, while more subtle, first identifiable in her early work. The antimodern qualities in the cultural responses which Lears identifies can be found in

any number of fiction writers at the turn of the century, but Cather's earliest fiction seems to be a prime candidate for such exploration, particularly in light of the language she uses in some of the stories. In her critique for instance of "system and discipline" in "The Garden Lodge," or her reference to characters in the story as "rather ascetic," one begins to sense the ethos of the period to which she responds, and the concerns at stake in Cather's antimodern response, concerns which Weber articulates in the language of what he called the "historical sciences."

In his essay entitled "Weber on the cultural situation of the modern age," Scaff has identified what he calls Weber's "Five theses about modernity." Scaff claims:

> It is to Weber's credit that he realized that challenges to the "organic" cycle of life and its sense of "wholeness" can lead to a search for alternatives, for counter-cultural routes of escape from the iron cage of modern forms. Such challenges, acutely perceived by Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, tend to result especially in the turn to what we can call "aesthetic modernity." At one level Weber set out to understand the conditions generating this kind of search. At another he wanted to trace the paths followed by social groups and individuals in their confrontations with the mechanization of life. (103)

Cather, in the early stories, often seems to posit an "aesthetic modernity" as a "protected sphere," separate from modern processes of rationalization and objectification. Present in Weber's analysis, in Cather's fiction one also finds tensions between what Scaff identifies as "the morality of self-control and the

morality of self-gratification, between aesthetic culture and social modernity, between pessimism about cultural development and affirmation of modern culture and its 'goods,'" oppositional forces which Weber himself identified as continually and dynamically shaping modern experience (102). Lears claims, as I discuss in my Introduction to this project, that just such contradictory feelings are the impetus of antimodern responses. I argue here that Cather's art is her attempt at an uneasy resolution of — an "answer" to — exactly these contradictions and tensions. Cather's antimodern literary response is her "answerability" to the social, historical and technological challenges of modernity, her "confrontation" with the "mechanization of life" and rationalization which Weber first identified in 1905, the year The Troll Garden was published.

Cather, like Weber, depicts rationalization as "inescapable." For instance, in "The Garden Lodge" Cather posits Caroline Noble's bourgeois success and self-repression against the possibility for authentic experience suggested by the actual presence of the artist (Raymond d'Esquerré) in the garden lodge; but she makes it clear that the hegemony of such rationalization of individual life remains undeniable — the story ends with Caroline's continued and deliberate self-repression. While Cather objects to the "system and discipline" to which Caroline subjects herself and clearly figures the emptiness accompanying it, she retains an ambivalence towards "success" and "progress" that subverts her protest of this aspect of modernity. This same ambivalence can be read in other of her early stories, and perhaps especially in "Paul's Case" (which I examine in detail in chapter four). Scaff explains that the

inescapable hegemony of repression and rationalization is a quality of Weber's "pessimistic" analysis as well:

> The peculiar feature of modernity is that it does not tend toward a new unity. Modernity has two sides: material progress, but also the manipulation of subjectivity and individual choices, which subverts the achievements and spiritual basis of modernity itself. In Weber's usage, "modernity" contains the idea of "progress" through production and accumulation of wealth and the mastery of nature (that is, "social modernity"), as well as the idea of emancipating the rational subject. The nature of specifically *modern* culture is to subvert not only the traditional or pre-modern, but also those accomplishments that come to characterize "modern culture" itself. The difficulty, however, is that one aspect of modernity eventually comes into conflict with the other: the conditions for subjective freedom run up against the conditions for objective control, such that "modernity" as a general socio-cultural phenomenon comes to be divided against itself. (103-04)

It is such a division or inherent contradiction that Cather attempts to mediate in many of her early stories, and, as my reading of "The Garden Lodge" will show, the divisions are often contained within one character, in addition to being distributed among characters. Cather's lens is a refractive one, which, like modernity itself, resists a "new unity" of commitment to either pure subjective freedom or objective control through ascetic rationalism.

Cather's stories are part of the antimodern reaction at the turn into the twentieth-century, and, in "The Garden Lodge," specifically to what Lears has identified as a sense of loss of authenticity among the bourgeoisie; but at least three of Cather's early stories, "The Garden Lodge," "Flavia and her Artists," and "Paul's Case," while addressing that sense of loss, also address the lower middle classes which are in some cases beginning to benefit from "progressive" ideology. Some of Cather's early characters, like Caroline in "The Garden Lodge," are moving into a higher socio-economic class, are, in fact, becoming the nouveau-riche. Cather in fact depicts "success" in "The Garden Lodge" as Caroline's embourgeoisement, her self-determined movement from lower-middle-class immigrant to first generation nouveau-riche. In each of the stories I examine in this project the tensions between class status and aesthetic experience or artistic expression are exhibited but find different modes of expression.

While critiquing bourgeois values associated with American culture and the cultural elite, thus protesting modernity in specific ways, Cather also betrays an odd ambivalence towards the role of the antibourgeois artist, and even toward that figure of self-seeking, radical individualism, the modern consumer. Cather's often ironic depiction of the longing for authentic experience common among the emerging bourgeoisie in America at the turn of the century, and her surprisingly ambivalent stance towards the artist in an increasingly commodified culture, are usefully illuminated by Weber and by Thorstein Veblen, and their respective explications and critiques of early twentieth-century art and consumer culture. I turn to Veblen's and Weber's thoughts on class and consumption in more depth in chapter two.

However, here I first examine Lears' more recent account of antimodern impulses in the fin de siècle culture as an extraordinarily useful lens through which to view Cather's conservatism but also the radical protest which accompanies it. Cather's resistance to modernity can be accounted for partially through Lears' notion of antimodernism and the responses he traces. Cather's specific response is best read in the context of other antimodern strategies available at the turn of the century, many of which, as Lears argues, also function as both protest and accommodation to the forces of modern "progress." Antimodern responses often turn to the past for inspirational alternatives to modernity, but in doing so also unwittingly reinforce the very progressive and Enlightenment values which inform modernization.

Lears' reading of this moment in American culture — still informed by Victorian notions of self-determination and propriety but increasingly mixed with doubts concerning "progress" — rests on historical scholarship which underscores the ambivalence present in many different venues at this particular moment of American culture. For Lears, antimodern response represents an attempted flight from modernity while at the same time championing — or at least unwittingly reinforcing — beliefs in progress and individualism which are inherent in the American work ethic. These same beliefs are arguably implicit in an ideology of manifest destiny and national identity.[2]

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[2] See Walter Benn Michaels for a discussion of the later Cather's "nativism," which he associates with William Carlos Williams' notion of modernism articulated in 1929. Michaels reads Cather's Death Comes for the Archbishop and argues that Cather's modernism resembles Williams's in that "Williams's modernism is inextricably connected not exactly to American nationalism but, more precisely, to American nativism, the conversion of national identity to racial identity" which takes

In order to understand how Cather's own antimodern aesthetic answers the ambivalent cultural moment, it is useful to first look at Lears' description of the "the antimodern impulse," which:

> stemmed from revulsion against the process of rationalization first described by Max Weber — the systematic organization of economic life for maximum productivity and of individual life for maximum personal achievement; the drive for efficient control of nature under the banner of improving human welfare; the reduction of the world to a disenchanted object to be manipulated by rational technique. (7)

Antimodernism is foremost a revolt against the effects derived from scientific positivism (some of which are listed above), against the banality of an eviscerated Protestantism, and a protest against what Cather terms, in "Paul's Case," "the homilies by which the world is run" (189), the "progressive rhetoric" of the period which promises individual achievement and autonomy, but which is also suspicious of "excess" and hedonism. The early stories, as a result of Cather's own ambivalence toward the notion of progress, often exhibit something pervasive in all her work, including the later novels: an ambivalence toward radical individualism — which is where I locate the basis of what I call her sensational aesthetic (examined in chapter three), but which is also at the basis of much of her irony. Cather has often been

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on the task of fostering "among the native-born a proper appreciation of their own Americanness" after "giving up the impossible task of turning aliens into Americans" (39). "American Modernism and the Poetics of Identity." Modernism/Modernity 1.1 (1994): 38-56. In this light, I think Cather's earliest collection of stories may be read as her attempt to define more precisely what it means to be "American."

lauded for her faith in American bourgeois individualism: for instance, in a 1942 Sewanee Review article George White called her "Emersonian" because she had "described in permanent brilliance the importance of the affirmative, intelligent individual"; Alfred Kazin termed Cather a "spiritual aristocrat with democratic manners," whose characters were safe from the ravages of the industrial world.[3] However, she has also been vilified for her "escapism" into art (most notably in the famous Granville Hicks essay of the 1930s) and her "abandonment of the middle class" (as Newton Arvin of the New Republic put it in 1932).[4] These contradictory assertions in her critical reception reflect the ambivalence actualized in Cather's work.

In 1905, in "The Garden Lodge" for instance, Cather connects individualism with the ascendant leisure class through the figure of Weber's "ascetic rationalism," the self-made, self-repressed individual who nonetheless exhibits what Lears terms "vague longings" for authentic and intense experience. For Cather, authentic experience is identical with artistic experience. Cather's positive depiction of her character's "success" is real, but in typical anti-modern fashion, Cather also details the lack of authentic experience through Caroline's longing for "real life" as she realizes that "success" is not enough. In other stories, Cather will depict success differently, but she is never as obvious in her ambivalence towards success and the notion of "devotion" as she is in "The Garden Lodge."

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[3] George White, "Willa Cather." Sewanee Review 40 (1942): 18-25. Alfred Kazin, On Native Grounds. New York: Harcourt, Brace. 1942. 247-57.
[4]Granville Hicks, "Case Against Willa Cather." English Journal 22 (1933): 703-10.

Cather's depiction of bourgeois longing and success is more than modernist irony, though that is present, and it is also more than a vague emotional ambivalence; most importantly, the stories I examine here answer to two very different strands of strong belief and commitment. Cather, like the antimodernists whom Lears describes, is torn between the strong American commitment to the ideal of unlimited individual potential, figured by both Weber and Cather as "devotion" — an outgrowth of the "work ethic" — and the fears of what individualistic success might mean for the republic. Therefore, while maintaining progressive hopes, Cather is also committed to the necessity to protest the excess of modern consumer culture which threatens the protected space of aesthetic culture. Both commitments are, however, based upon a basic adherence to the notion of radical individualism.

It is the underlying commitment to radical individualism which, in America, is elided with the work ethic and "devotion" to the calling Weber described, which accounts for why Cather, in "The Garden Lodge," figures artistic antibourgeois culture as negative. That is to say, the possibility for an artist devoted to art outside the American work ethic is a doomed one, and thus any potential art has for subverting modern culture is itself subverted by the necessity of the work ethic. The fundamental conflict between art and success is figured in Cather's fiction, and especially in "The Garden Lodge," as a premodern ethos against the modern. The only figure of possible subversion of bourgeois modernity — in "The Garden Lodge" this is Caroline Noble's father, a first generation immigrant composer — is presented as holding premodern values outside the work ethic, and as European, not American, in origin. But he is also

figured as a failure, spending his days in "pitiful devotion to the labour that brought him only disappointment" while "neglecting his duties" (31).

The figure of the celebrity, the "successful" artist, on the other hand, is suggested as a form of mediation between modern consumer culture and aesthetic culture, and Cather's attempt to mediate these forces results in what Lears terms an "accommodation" to modernity. Though figured as a separate sphere, the place of art and the artist in modern consumer culture has already been intruded upon by Cather's basic commitment to radical individualism and the American work ethic. The celebrity's very success means that the separate sphere has been breached by consumer culture and that art has lost any meaningful potential for subversion of such culture. And the "failure" and questionable work ethic of the antibourgeois artist in American culture betrays Cather's commitment to progressive values which themselves work to subvert her protest to modernity and consumer culture. The story raises the question of the place of art and the artist in modern consumer culture, and the place and function of the imagination which informs art and authentic experience. The question of devotion therefore becomes one she must continually work to answer.

While Cather never seems willing to relinquish the potential of the individual, the modern effects of individualism are problematic, and this is manifest in her ambivalence towards the self-made figures of the celebrity artist and the American aesthete (a particularly ambiguous, dandy figure). While suggesting an accommodation to modernity through the celebrity, Cather's fiction nevertheless suggests a further ambivalence towards even this figure. For instance, in "The Garden Lodge," d'Esquerre, the celebrity, is actually unavailable — except in Caroline's imagination

and memory — by the time the story takes place. He, like Caroline's father, is European and his name is actually a fictional one, since no such name exists in French the suggestion is that it is a pseudonym. In separating the celebrity from American culture, with the exception of his ability to bring in profits for the Metropolitan opera company, Cather betrays her ambivalence towards this figure while still presenting him as a (potential) mediation between modernity and art. In other of her early stories, Cather presents the celebrity figure as harassed by the public ("Scandal"), exploited by her family ("The Diamond Mine"), or in danger of compromising her reputation, but her view towards the celebrity artist is always a problematic one, suggesting Cather's own ambivalence towards the marriage of success with art, the ascetic with the aesthetic realms of modern culture.

Additionally, Cather's anxiety towards the rising class which Thorstein Veblen named "the leisure class," and the individualism which undergirds this class may be found in nearly every one of her earliest stories, at least in part in her need to create a separate space — or the illusion of a separate space — for the artist. The complex portrayal of the figure of the artist, particularly the celebrity artist, and the pecuniary relationships figured between the leisure class and the celebrity artist underscore Cather's concerns regarding the consumer culture which is evolving and threatening the realm of art. The celebrity also however represents the successful execution of the American work ethic and Cather's continued belief in progressive individualistic achievement, functioning as a kind of Weberian "ideal type" in bourgeois imagination. In "The Garden Lodge" the celebrity artist, represented by d'Esquerrè the opera singer, and the anxiety-ridden, self-made, bourgeois,

represented by the main character, Caroline, share one thing in common: their commitment to the work ethic. However, the celebrity artist in this story simultaneously represents an ideal which is suggested and elided with the visionary, artistic realm outside rationalized existence; but, in this story, this ideal is available only *through* the imagination *to* the bourgeois imagination.

In many of Cather's other early stories the celebrity is all too available to the vagaries of modern consumer culture. In "The Garden Lodge" the celebrity artist figure, while suggesting the possibility of the marriage between the self-made individual and the realm of imagination, points to a recurring theme to which Cather will return many times, but he is not actually physically present or available in reality. In "The Garden Lodge," while suggesting the celebrity artist as a potential antimodern answer, yet confining him to either the garden lodge or to Europe, and thus to Caroline's imagination, Cather is primarily interested in defining the limitations of "success" and representing the sense of loss incumbent on the modern individual who relies on progressive rhetoric for meaning. Another way of saying this is that in "The Garden Lodge," Cather poses the question to which the celebrity artist in this story, as well as in her other stories, may be an answer. The ideal type of artist mixed with "devotion" is, for the bourgeois consumer, a nicely packaged antimodern accommodation to modernity. But, in "The Garden Lodge," Cather keeps him available only to the imagination.

However, Cather strongly and unambiguously represents the self-repressive aspect of industrial modernity — suggested by Weber in his "rationalization thesis" of individual life. She does this through many of her early characters, and most particularly

in the figure of Caroline. Unlike the question of the celebrity and the separate sphere, Cather is quite clear about her stance toward modernity's "systematic organization" of individual life "for maximum personal achievement" in and through her bourgeois, self-made character. The type of rationalization of individual life which Caroline represents is, as Lears argues, wholly dependent on the discipline of the will. Cather is not only clear about the potential for individualistic success but is clear about the results as well. Cather uses the figure of the self-made individual to show the resultant social and personal tensions arising from this "ascetic" discipline — the repression of instinct, passion and imagination through an exercise of the will — in order to achieve "success." Since success in this story is quite simply depicted as the achievement of Caroline's embourgeoisement, then besides positing art as a complex and potentially subversive alternative response to modern culture (and the ethic of individualism which informs it), Cather implicitly confronts issues of class which arise from the American obsession with individualism. And Cather clearly points to the negative repercussions of such an obsession.

The figure of the artist, while maintaining a subversive and alternative potential to the American ethic of success, is not however a simple figure of protest to modernity, in either Cather's other stories or in "The Garden Lodge." While this figure suggests the ideal marriage of aesthetic culture with ascetic culture — the artist with the self-made man — the celebrity also highlights the market forces involved in the very production of the celebrity artist. His success, while a result of the work ethic and ascetic rationalism, also depends upon forces of modernity of which Cather is critical: specifically, modernity in the form of consumer culture. In fact, it is the complexity of Cather's representations

of this celebrity figure and his or her relation to consumer culture in her earliest stories which calls attention to her antimodern ambivalence. The multiple and faceted view of the celebrity artist in a variety of her early stories reveals the complexity of the antimodern situation of art and the artist under modernity.

Clearly, Cather's depiction of the artist as celebrity raises many questions which are not easily resolved but point to at least two different strains of commitment in Cather's aesthetic which I first mentioned above: the first, her commitment to residual strains of what Lears' terms "republican moralist beliefs" — fears for the republic —contained within the rhetoric of "progress" and accompanying notions concerning duty, control of the will, and self-denial which are the basis of the work ethic and individualistic success. These are the notions which also inform Weber's notion of the American "Protestant ethic," and the contradictions within this rhetoric are those which Lears points to as the basis of antimodern response. The second is Cather's commitment to an alternative artistic sphere such as the one Weber postulated: his "aesthetic culture," outside this rationalistic ethic of self-control and ascetic rationalism. In this sphere, located outside consumer culture and market forces, the potential for idealism, imagination, and self-expression rather than self-denial retains a subversive potential.

Both positions, contradictory though they are, imply a broader but problematic shared commitment to the modern notion of the autonomous self and the American ethic of individualism, both of which are products of and forces which perpetuate and accelerate modernity. Each of Cather's antimodern commitments, while potentially contributing to the advancement of modernity (especially as it manifests as

consumerist culture), also contains within it seeds of protest against American modernity, against the "ghost" that prowls insistent on material gain and the quest for wealth and self-aggrandizement through it.

As Weber noted in the concluding section of The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, "the modern capitalist economy now rests on mechanical rather than moral or 'spiritual' foundations" (181-82). Weber theorized that the new "aesthetic culture" was in the ascendant, and that this culture of feeling, emotion, authenticity, self-expression and interiority described above was one response to the "mechanical" foundations of rationalized culture. Clearly, the bourgeoisie most strongly pursue this aesthetic culture, even though effects of it (such as what Lears terms "therapeutic culture") may manifest in all classes, and eventually come to inform the ideology of even the lower working classes. While Weber acknowledges that the bourgeoisie preceded the advent of the new form of capitalism, in America one result of the rationalization supporting such capitalism is an "expectation of profit by the utilization of opportunities for exchange" and of "forever *renewed* profit, by means of continuous, rational, capitalistic enterprise" (17). The rationalization of labor which Weber postulates as the precondition for such profit creates new classes of managers, accountants, and bureaucrats who, in many cases, become nouveau-riche. It is this class which feels most intensely the lack of spiritual grounding and the emptiness of the "purely mundane" beneath the quest for wealth. Even those who are not so fortunate as to rise to this class at least obtain a level of material comfort and security unknown to their forebears. Only those who were in a condition of relative leisure and material comfort were afflicted with the anxiety Lears describes

as part of their reaction to the "overcivilized" and "unreal" modern world. In Cather's "The Garden Lodge," it is only after the main character achieves her own embourgeoisement, which Cather defines as "success," that her self-doubt, emptiness and sense of unreality rise to consciousness. Cather will have her character turn to the sphere of art to achieve release from this sense of unreality and anxiety, and it is in this search for authenticity that I locate Cather's protest to rationalization.

Weber also theorized that "modernity is characterized above all by the increasing dominance of a specific kind of rationalism which must be understood in terms of means-ends categories," an increasing "dominance of abstract cognitive processes," an "objectification of mind" which is responsible for the "disenchantment of the world" and the loss of a "sacred sense of wholeness." By 1905, in Weber's analysis, art no longer functions in a protected sphere from this rationalistic, instrumental modernity (Scaff 104-05). Aesthetic culture however represents an attempt to reenchant modern life. The figure of the celebrity artist, representative of aesthetic culture, represents the intrusion of modernity into this projected sphere of art. Through the proscription by advertising and through his definition by consumer culture, the celebrity artist cannot remain outside modernity, and his art cannot redeem him from the vagaries of rationalized, bureaucratized and mechanical existence. Therefore, Cather's celebrity artist, while suggesting an alternative sphere outside rationalized existence and the potential for art to provide authentic experience, is already colored by modern accommodation since the celebrity depends upon consumer culture for his very existence. The celebrity artist becomes then an ambiguous figure of both accommodation to modernity and a protest against elements

of it. The figure of the celebrity is one to which Cather returns again and again in order to make peace with the loss of an autonomous artistic sphere and with the pressures of modernity, most especially the Weberian process of rationalization of individual life.[5] But Cather's attempt at protest to commodity culture is undercut before she even begins by her fundamental commitment to individualist, progressive values which define her as a radically conservative antimodernist.

Therefore, an examination of Cather's antimodernism must begin with her careful depiction of modern individualism and success through the processes of personal rationalization and the American work ethic. I am interested first in identifying how Cather's ambivalence informs her antimodern answer to the questions modernity poses within itself. Her character's subsequent sense of the "unreality" of her personal existence calls attention to the tensions within the culture, to the same contradictions Weber described as tensions between the "morality of self-control" and the "morality of self-gratification," as well as between "aesthetic culture" and "social modernity." Scaff's identification of these recurrent themes in his reading of Weber's ideas augments the tensions within antimodern culture which Lears has described. Cather, in clearly representing the bourgeois longing for authentic and intense experience, calls attention to her ambivalence regarding rationalistic success. The need for authenticity, which Cather locates in an idealized sphere of art and imagination, refracts the tension within the culture. In the next

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[5] In 1952 Howard Mumford Jones, in The Bright Medusa, claims that one of Cather's themes is the "necessary accommodation" of the artist in a world committed to things other than the pursuit of beauty. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1952). Jones had also refuted the "escapist" label in 1938 in an essay "The Novels of Willa Cather," Saturday Review of Literature, 18 (August 6, 1938): 3-4, 16.

section I examine some of the strategies which inform Cather's complex, antimodern response in "The Garden Lodge."

Part II. The dialectic of aesthetic modernity: "vague longing" and the price of "cold calculation" in "The Garden Lodge."

Cather's story "The Garden Lodge" suggests a separate space for artistic vision and elides that space with the possibility of authentic experience by removing it from the everyday bourgeois experience of Caroline Noble. Caroline has spent many afternoons in the garden lodge before the story begins, accompanying the visiting celebrity artist on the piano, as a kind of respite from her duties as wife and society matron. Caroline's husband, a power in Wall Street, would like to tear the lodge down to replace it with a more public place for entertaining. The lodge, at the center of the garden, is a sequestered place which Cather identifies with Caroline's psyche: "Her garden, indeed, had become quite a part of her; a sort of beautiful adjunct, like gowns or jewels" (34). The story begins after the artist has left, and Cather depicts the turbulence within Caroline's psyche as she spends the night in the garden lodge confronting her repressed passion for d'Esquerré. The "plot" of the story is quite straightforward and centers around one night in the lodge after Cather gives the background of d'Esquerré's visit: a short account of the time they spent together with Caroline accompanying him on the piano in the afternoons in the lodge, Caroline's upbringing in a poor family devoted to her father's art, her self-determined rise to success, and her state of mind after the artist leaves. On the surface it would seem that Caroline's principle dilemma is whether or not to acquiesce to her

husband's wishes to tear down the lodge, but the story is about what the lodge represents. To be more precise, the story is really about what Caroline's decision concerning the lodge represents.

After her anguished night alone in the lodge, Caroline's mind is made up: Cather writes that she will continue to hold to "the middle course" by not allowing her passion or sentiment to overtake her reasoned self-denial. "If she was apt to regard with distrust everything which inclined toward extravagance, it was not because she was unacquainted with other standards"— Caroline had grown up in poverty and had determinedly committed herself to success and the ascetic rationalism required for it. Having learned self-denial and self-repression as a result of her upbringing, she has used those same strategies to acquire the things she lacked as a child. By eschewing "sentimentality" she had enabled herself to sacrifice for her later success. And therefore, even now, she goes along with her husband's plan to replace the lodge, the one thing she has ever allowed herself (privately) to be "sentimental" about, with a more public space for entertaining.

Caroline's state of mind is figured through Cather's description of nature throughout the story. The "presaging storm" out over the Sound, just as Caroline enters the lodge at night, mirrors Caroline's state of mind which is restless and about to break from its quiet bourgeois complacency. On this night, two weeks after d'Esquerré's departure, Caroline cannot sleep. "The night was close and warm, presaging storm. The wind had fallen and the water slept, fixed and motionless as the sand. She rose and thrust her feet into slippers and putting a dressing-gown over her shoulders opened the door of her husband's room; he was sleeping soundly" (35).

The subtly eroticized language of the passage suggests that perhaps Caroline's husband has denied her his sexual attention, and so Caroline left his room and stepped outside, moving towards the lodge in the garden as an alternative to returning to her own bed. "The scent of the June roses was heavy in the still air . . . Heat-lightening flashed continuously from the bank of clouds that had gathered over the sea . . . Caroline had the key of the lodge, and the door creaked as she opened it." The sensual moment is "heavy" with scent, with expectancy, with the "closeness" of the "storm" to come. Inside, she sees the room, "radiant with the moonlight which streamed through the bow window." Even the "tall candlesticks, the picture frames and white casts [stood] out as clearly in the half-light as did the sycamores and black poplars of the garden against the still, expectant night sky" (35). The familiar space takes on an unfamiliarity at night, and the familiar objects become visible and identifiable only when illumined by a different light. Her physical movement into the lodge suggests her movement into another "expectant" psychic space. Cather further suggests that the still, dark space is "feminine" (lit only by moonlight), perhaps even passive in its expectancy. This is a realm with which Caroline is unfamiliar, having been self-fashioned, deliberately self-made and even, according to her friends, "calculating" and "hard" in her success, "paramountly cool-headed, slow of impulse, and disgustingly practical, " always having herself "so provokingly well in hand" (30). Her unconscious, psychic realm so far has been successfully repressed and unexplored. Her very movement from the safe, bourgeois familiar space of the house out into the lodge during the night is suggestive of a daring and improprietous move (Caroline is terrified lest she wake the servants in the morning); as she opens the door

to the lodge Caroline also opens the door to the unknown, her own repressed psychic space. The repression of the unconscious, of that which the will can only hope to dominate, is important given that Caroline prides herself on her ability to repress parts of herself in order to live a "well-ordered life." And in order to see now, in this space, Caroline has to adjust her vision.

Caroline, always envied and resented by her friends for her good fortune and her ability to "cold-bloodedly set about complying with the demands of life and making her position comfortable and masterful," has not, up to now, allowed herself any of the "sentimentality" that she has towards the lodge. She is rather baffled by this, though her husband finds it amusing. Feeling, "sentimentality," is either "allowed" or is not, but is subject to the power of the individual will. Strong emotion and passion here are contrasted with the rational self which functions consciously in the light of day. Cather writes:

> Women who did not get through life so well as Caroline, who could not make such good terms either with fortune or their husbands, who did not find their health so unfailingly good, or hold their looks so well, or manage their children so easily, or give such distinction to all they did, were fond of stamping Caroline as a materialist and called her hard. (31)

Cather also says that "The impression of cold calculation . . . was far from a false one," that Caroline had "made herself what she was" and the most sentiment she had ever allowed herself was to keep the garden lodge, surrounded by the garden in "impassioned bloom," from being torn down after the singer had left. Cather's tone

in this passage suggests an ironic and typically modern position towards those who have called Caroline "hard" and a "materialist" for making herself comfortable, suggesting that she has every right to have done so, and that she is to be commended for her strength of character and will. However, Cather will quickly complicate this impression. Caroline's "cold calculation" will soon give her trouble, as she comes face to face with the "impassioned bloom" which she experiences despite her will to repress it. This wrenching experience of repressed but undeniable desire is the price she has had to pay for her success in such a "rationalized" existence.

Alone in the lodge at night where she spent time in the artistic sphere (in hours of practice with d'Esquerré), yet no longer on guard against any impropriety, Caroline is confronted with "a maze of memories":

> where there was neither path, nor clue, nor any hope of finality. She had, she realized, defeated a lifelong regimen; completely confounded herself by falling unaware and incontinently into that luxury of revery which, even as a little girl, she had so determinedly denied herself; she had been developing with alarming celerity that part of one which sets up an idol and that part of one which bows down and worships it. (35)

Her self-repression is here elided with the clarity and "finality" of the "lifelong regimen" of the American work ethic, the pursuit of "success" which Caroline's marriage to her Wall Street husband marks, and is contrasted with the "maze" of idealistic and vague longings. The notion of the will having been "defeated," of Caroline having "fallen unaware," suggests the assertion of the unconscious, of a

force outside rational control that is powerful and dangerous in its subversive potential.

Cather will explain how Caroline arrived at her decision to follow such a clear and rational "path," and in doing so will oppose it to the alternative path of the bohemian artist who has access to the unconscious, the irrational, the imagination, and further, freedom from the American work ethic. While Caroline's passion is aroused through d'Esquerré, it is not simply for him, or even the idea of him, but for the things she feels her father and mother threw their lives away to pursue, ideas which she would like to associate with his success as an artist and which she has so far successfully repressed and consciously rejected. Caroline's longing is however not mere sentimentality or nostalgia for an idealized past; Caroline remains singularly unsentimental regarding her childhood. What Caroline senses is the genuine loss of authentic, intense experience itself, identified for her with a passionate devotion to art and ideas and the realm of the imagination. Cather describes Caroline's childhood home life:

> The house had served its time at the shrine of idealism; vague, distressing, unsatisfied yearnings had brought it low enough. Her mother, thirty years before, had eloped and left Germany with her music teacher, to give herself over to life-long, drudging bondage at the kitchen range. Ever since Caroline could remember, the law in the house had been a sort of mystic worship of things distant, intangible and unattainable. The family had lived in successive ebullitions of generous enthusiasm, in talk of masters and masterpieces, only to

> come down to the cold facts in the case; to boiled mutton and to the necessity of turning the dining-room carpet. All these emotional pyrotechnics had ended in petty jealousies, in neglected duties and in cowardly fear of the little grocer on the corner. (32)

Caroline's childhood, despite her own predilections, was in fact lived in devotion to an alternative set of values which were in direct opposition to the American work ethic and its commitment to success. Cather's tone in this passage seems to suggest contempt for this alternative, antibourgeois life devoted to art and ideas; however, Caroline's disenchantment with her bourgeois success points as well to Cather's critique of modern notions of success. Cather's depiction of Caroline's very real lack of authentic and meaningful experience, an authenticity which Caroline's parents had and which Caroline eventually admits, is itself a "ghost" that haunts the story, the "shadows of reality" with which Caroline must eventually contend.

Cather locates antimodern ambivalence towards the ethic of progress and individualistic success in Caroline's experience in the lodge: her self-doubt, her sense of loss, her vague longing which is a mirror image of that which pervaded her childhood. Instead of the longing for conformity and for material comfort, Caroline now experiences the loss of idealism she previously rejected in her childhood. In her twenties, Caroline resolved to take her life in hand, and in order to do this felt she must reject idealism, enthusiasm, passion, or any "vague, distressing" illusions and must instead turn her attentions to the "cold facts" deliberately; therefore she committed herself quite consciously to the rational, systematic organization of her own life in the face of her parents' idealism:

> From her childhood she had hated it, that humiliating and uncertain existence, with its glib tongue and empty pockets, its poetic ideals and sordid realities, its indolence and poverty tricked out in paper roses. Even as a little girl, when vague dreams beset her, when she wanted to lie late in bed and commune with visions, or to leap and sing because the sooty little trees along the street were putting out their first pale leaves in the sunshine, she would clench her hands and go to help her mother sponge the spots from her father's waistcoat . . . (33)

Cather tells us that it is "with the strength of her will" that Caroline "gave herself a chance," never letting herself "look further than a step ahead," taking on the management of the household after her indigent brother's suicide and her mother's subsequent death. She herself then took on piano students, and doggedly got musical engagements to make money, and finally, at twenty-four, she married Howard Noble, a widower of forty and a "power in Wall Street." "Then she relaxed a little, feeling that there was a barrier to be counted upon between her and that world of visions and quagmires and failure" (34).

Hoping to divest herself of uncertainty and threatening artistic, idealistic, "vague" longings, and identifying "the world of visions" with "quagmires and failure," Caroline literally weds herself to practical Wall Street dreams of success. But at this point, the artist as celebrity intervenes and breaches the safe "barrier" of her successful embourgeoisement. Cather suggests that the lodge, before d'Esquerré's arrival, had been a place of bourgeois dalliance with art as entertainment, but that the lodge had never been the staging site for any real devotion to art. Her friends' perspective seems

to indicate that Caroline does not really appreciate the artist: "Of course it would be she, always mistress of herself in any situation, she who would never be lifted one inch from the ground by it, and who would go on superintending her gardeners and workmen as usual, it would be she who got him" (30). Caroline's society friends are envious that Caroline "got" the French artist, given that she is "the mistress of herself in any situation," yet nothing seems to have prepared Caroline for the effect someone devoted to both art and success would have on her.

Caroline had been married six years, Cather tells us, when she came to the lodge to "think it all over," since

> d'Esquerré was a man to reckon with. Caroline did not deceive herself now upon that score. She admitted it humbly enough, and since she had said good-bye to him she had not been free for a moment from the sense of his formidable power. It formed the undercurrent of her consciousness; whatever she might be doing or thinking, it went on, involuntarily, like her breathing; sometimes welling up until suddenly she found herself suffocating. There was a moment of this to-night, and Caroline rose and stood shuddering, looking about her in the blue duskiness of the silent room. She had not been here at night before, and the spirit of the place seemed more troubled and insistent than ever it had been in the quiet of the afternoons. (36)

The "still, expectant" night sky, the troubled spirit of the night, the danger of suffocation from the unconscious desire, the shuddering in the face of silence, all indicate that what is involuntary or uncontrollable is outside the conscious will.

Caroline had visited the lodge during the light of day, in the full expectation that art was an addendum to her bourgeois experience, not a threat. She had never been there at night to confront "the spirit of the place," "troubled" but also "insistent." The idealism of a separate artistic sphere intruding on the conscious, well-ordered bourgeois mind is a striking image. Cather clearly intertwines the realm of art with desire and presents both as potentially subversive to rationalized life.

Despite the assertions of Susan Rosowski who claims that at the end Caroline "recovered her balance" when she decided to tear down the garden lodge after her night there, this is not a story about the merits of bourgeois values or even the assertion of conventional values, such as marriage. Rosowski says, "The story ends with relief that by recalling the human bonds of love, Caroline Noble had saved herself." Rosowski reads this as a story about resisting the temptations of sexual or romantic passion; I read it as a much more complex and ambivalent story about the dangers of a particular kind of passion that has very little to do with sexual or romantic love, even less to do with "recovering balance," and still less with "saving herself." In fact, the story is about the dangers of such "balance" and Caroline does not so much "save" herself as lose herself in her renewed commitment to repress her own experience of that which lies outside conscious control.

This is a story about an altogether different sort of passion and the subversion of a different set of rules than those that govern marriage or conventional relationships. What Cather describes is the collision of two world views: the first is represented in Caroline's decision to commit herself to success, to deal with the "cold facts" of life instead of the vague longings which her family of artists represents.

Paradoxically, by wedding her dreams to Wall Street notions of success and the American work ethic, thus rejecting the idealism of her father and his household, Caroline can nevertheless still imagine that art is available as a separate sphere, should she choose to visit it; that art is still protected from the influences of modernity and therefore remains available to feed her hunger for intense "authentic" experience. Art, in other words, still retains the possibility of protest to the "overcivilized," rationalized Weberian ethos of the spirit of capitalism.

But though art offers access to the imagination, it also implicitly offers a critique of bourgeois comfort. If Caroline literally follows her father and brother into an idealistic pursuit of art she will all too quickly discover the price one pays as an artist in the modern world. By distancing herself from their idealism she protects for herself a vision of aesthetic culture free from the "cold facts" and is free to pursue her own success while safely containing such visions in the imagination. Her father's life and his devotion to art and the access to imagination it offers is the opposing world view to the rationalized, pragmatic, successful approach to the modern world, the "lifelong regimen" Caroline has followed in order to distance herself from the emptiness at her core, which itself is represented in Caroline's personal history. But her rejection of her idealistic inheritance from her father (his commitment to art which rejects the accompanying American ascetic work ethic) allows her to maintain an imaginative space for an idealized sphere of art nonetheless.

On the other hand, the alternative Cather writes into the story, as in so many of her stories, is the celebrity artist figure. This, as I've argued, represents the accommodation of "art" to modernity. Cather uses the character of d'Esquerré as a

mediating figure. Rosowski has argued that d'Esquerré tempts Caroline's "womanish desires" and that he is the "source" of her "beautiful illusion;" that the celebrity triggers a romantic reaction in Caroline. A more careful reading however suggests that the "temptation," such as it may be, is to an antibourgeois position, outside the rationalized, ordered life, the path of "finality" that Caroline has chosen. Further, the "source" of Caroline's "illusions" is within herself; the source, to the extent it comes from without, is from her father and her childhood. Cather is quite clear about this later in the story, as I show.

D'Esquerré does offer a temptation of another kind than the "romantic" one Rosowski posits however: the vision or modernist illusion that art can happily accommodate consumer culture. Caroline comes face to face with her own wish to combine art and idealistic longing with material success in the garden lodge. It is only in confronting the truth about such an illusory and potentially mediating figure, and the light it throws on her own life and the position she has taken, that brings about her crisis: the sense that her modern life has become "unreal." It is only to this extent that d'Esquerré precipitates Caroline's crisis, not in his tempting her "womanish desires."

The confrontation of opposing approaches to modern life takes place in the liminal space between the conscious and the unconscious mind, while Caroline spends a restless night in the lodge. Caroline cannot afford "the luxury of revery" since it "completely confounds" her and flies in the face of all she has devoted herself to up to this point, leaving her faced with "neither path" nor "finality." Her commitments are challenged, her moral base, as Lears has observed as a common

stance among the bourgeoisie late in the nineteenth-century, is as vague as her longings.

Initially, Cather seems to depict the American dream of success positively, finally realized after many years through Caroline's fortitude and single-minded work ethic: through her adherence to what Lears calls the "evasive banality" of the modern cultural rhetoric of the period. Faced with the disillusionment wrought by industrialization and what Weber calls the disenchantment of modern life, the clichés abound: work hard, succeed, pull yourself up by your own bootstraps, keep your nose to the grindstone. Caroline precisely represents Weber's ethic of "rationalization," what he described as the systematic organization of individual life for maximum personal achievement. But Cather qualifies the opposition, the "either/or," of "success/separate sphere of art" by presenting the mediating alternative of the celebrity artist. This figure represents the marriage of success and art, an accommodation to the pressures of modernity on the sphere of art. Not wanting to reject the republican moralism she has inherited, clinging to the American belief in individualism yet acutely aware of the problems such a position implies, Cather recognizes the loss of authentic and intense experience in modern life and therefore postulates an artist who has combined the best of both alternatives. While admitting that something is missing in successful, bourgeois life, Cather is unwilling to relinquish the figure of successful individualism, the self-made individual, and represents this through the celebrity artist. In an attempt to locate a synthesis of art with its inherent potential for protest against the conditions of modernity, Cather will

again and again turn to the figure of the successful artist as a mediating figure of both residual protest and accommodation to the evolving myth of the self-made individual.

Cather attempts a synthesis of work and art in this story and throughout this collection which she named The Troll Garden, which bears an inscription from Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market." The epigraph to the collection reads:

> We must not look at Goblin men,
> We must not buy their fruits;
> Who knows upon what soil they fed
> Their hungry, thirsty roots?

Cather, in her use of the figure of the celebrity, must acknowledge and wrestle with the market forces accompanying the modernization of the artist and the artistic sphere. In Cather's early fiction, each story refracts the questions of the "fruits" of art in the marketplace, and with each question, Cather "answers" differently though always maintaining her dual antimodern commitments.

In "The Garden Lodge" Cather acknowledges the limits of her mediating figure in at least two ways: through the reassertion of the European, Old World ideals of Caroline's childhood home — with its devotion to art rather than the marketplace, where Caroline's true "roots" are located; and through the dangers a celebrity like d'Esquerré represents to bourgeois safety and complacency, despite his adherence to the work ethic and progressive rhetoric. The effect which d'Esquerré has on Caroline during her night in the lodge as she confronts her repressed desire represents art's subversive access to the power of the imagination which, however bought and paid for, still retains a subtle but potential danger to bourgeois complacency. It is only

when Caroline lets herself feel the uncertainty, the "vague longings" she has so long repressed, that she knows the "nothingness of system and discipline," that she realizes her "happy, well-ordered life was not enough" (40).

The artistic ideal that Caroline grew up with is associated with the absence of an American work ethic, which the bourgeoisie define as a kind of self-indulgence, and, as such, through their antimodern, residual republican moralism, find suspect. They suspect art for its implicit, antibourgeois critique. And yet while Caroline's class is suspicious it is also ambivalent towards the role of art, as Caroline is despite her conscious will to reject it as anything more than a vehicle to a comfortable living. This is at least in part because the new leisure class or nouveau-riche, of which Caroline is a part, covet art for its potential as "cultural capital," to use Pierre Bourdieu's term, as something to grant legitimacy to their rising status; in associating themselves, in Arnoldian fashion, with a cultural elite, they hope to claim more power as a class. I examine this concomitantly with Veblen's notion of conspicuous consumption in the next chapter, but Cather alludes to this in "The Garden Lodge" as well as in "Flavia and Her Artists."

But the bourgeoisie also covet art, as Weber's thesis suggests, for its potential to help in a reenchantment of everyday life, as a sort of antidote to their own self-repressive daily life. It is this aspect of art that Cather is most concerned with in "The Garden Lodge." This is the "vague longing" Caroline experiences in that "moment between world and world, when, neither asleep nor awake, she felt her dream grow thin, melting away from her, felt the warmth under her heart growing cold. Something seemed to slip from the clinging hold of her arms . . ." (40). The

pessimism of Weber towards the inevitability of rationalization seems to permeate this passage. Cather, while showing Caroline's grief at her lost dream and empty life, nevertheless has her turn, the next morning, to rationalization and self-repression. The ability of art to reenchant bourgeois life is diminished, having been replaced by the "mundane passions" Weber identified as informing modern consumer culture.

The celebrity artist, a figure with whom Cather wrestles in many of her early stories, most often represents a type of accommodation to rather than protest against modern culture, rich in its notions of how to achieve success. The celebrity is a combination of art and the American work ethic — and the success it promises — a figure of accommodation to modern culture. But though Cather posits this compromise, she remains uncomfortable with it, since for her it also represents the antithesis of the republican tradition of moralism which is suspicious of too much success and the indolence and self-indulgence, the "excess," which often follows. The celebrity, with his ties to consumer culture, can represent for the republican moralist both the cooption of art by the nouveau-riche class and the triumph of radical individualism and hedonistic consumerism that class itself signifies — a challenge to both exclusive cultural elitism, and to fears for the republic which inform conservative antimodernists. It is in this particular way that Cather seems to me to be a radically conservative antimodernist. While rejecting the forms of modernity in much the same ways theorists such as Adorno and Benjamin do later in the century — thus radically challenging the roots of modernity's consumer culture — Cather also retains her belief in humanistic individualism and the potential for progress, the legacy of the Enlightenment. Attendant upon this ideology is the American work

ethic, and Cather continually asserts this in her dogmatic statements in her own commentary on writing and artists, insisting upon a total devotion to art that amounts to "vocation."

While the celebrity in Cather's writings marks the triumph of the work ethic, he or she also simultaneously represents the Whiggish fear of too much success, leading to a new kind of indolence, in a new form — a consumer culture which expects to purchase authentic experience. I believe it is this, rather than a simple romanticism (as Rosowski argues), which is the basis for her choice of epigraph to The Troll Garden. In Rossetti's poem, the goblins seduce Laura with advertising and their constant aggressive exhortation to "Come buy, come buy," as if the purchase of sublime experience and happiness is possible. The fruit of course turns out to offer illicit pleasures that quickly turn to a kind of poisoning, as most addictions do. Rossetti, in an antimodern move, rejects this early form of seductive advertising culture, preferring instead the earlier forms of direct trade, the earlier and more medieval forms of capitalism advocated by the Morris school and chronicled by Weber as those forms preexisting bureaucratized capitalism. Clearly the goblins promise more than they deliver, or, rather, deliver other than what is promised through their advertising. Advertising is depicted as lying or, at the very least, half-truths and certainly dangerous. The goblins know full well that consumption will lead to an insatiable desire which has killed before and will kill again. One result of the consumption of their "evil fruits" is the addiction to consumption itself, and the lack of any accompanying nourishment from the fruit.

In my reading of "The Goblin Market" (and for my purposes here I am forced to ignore the obvious allusions to homosexuality and to prostitution) I am struck by the ambiguous portrayal of the antidote. What is it exactly that makes it work? Rossetti seems to suggest that the antidote is much more than the juice of the fruits themselves (though the juices do ultimately work like an antivenom). I argue that Lizzie's ability to reject the goblins' exhortations to indiscriminately consume is significant in giving the juice its antidotal power. It is at least partly Lizzie's ability to resist the goblin's advertising and their literally violent pressure on her to consume which affords her the power to save her sister (Lizzie, unlike her sister Laura, knows enough to cover her eyes, to "not peep at goblin men"). It is only when Lizzie insists that her penny be returned to her if they won't abide by the rules of fair trade, if they won't allow her consumption on her own terms (i.e., to buy and then to take the fruits away with her, rather than have them forced on her for consumption against her will, on the spot), that the goblins become surly and violent, "Grunting and snarling" and physically attacking her.

What the goblins want is for Lizzie to not only buy, to give them her money in trade, but to consume the fruit so that she will become hypnotized and unconscious of what is happening to her. They claim "Such fruits as these/ No man can carry; / Half their bloom would fly, / Half their dew would dry, / Half their flavour would pass by." Like all good advertisers, they say "consume *now*," "it's your last chance," "you need it now," "you can't afford to wait." Part of the "magic" of advertising is to affect the will, to affect the unconscious, and to effectively strip the buyer of the real power of choice. The goblins want Lizzie to become addicted to consumption like

her sister, who is dying from withdrawal. It is Lizzie's ability to resist consuming the fruit that finally redeems her sister, that in effect turns the venomous juices into an antivenom.

Lizzie "night and morning/Caught the goblins' cry: / 'Come buy our orchard fruits, /Come buy, come buy :'--"(1515), but nevertheless sees through their promises by being always "Mindful of Jeanie" "in her grave" who "fell sick and died" for "joys brides hope to have." The allusion here is clearly erotic: consumption promises a dangerous and illicit ecstasy. The goblins' cry and their banal but detailed descriptions of their wares are quoted at length throughout the poem, and are highlighted as if Rossetti wants her reader to understand the seductive significance of their words as advertisements.

After her successful resistance, though she has been molested and beaten, Lizzie hears "her penny jingle/Bouncing in her purse, / Its bounce was music to her ear." I believe it is Laura's insistence on her own power to decide what she will buy or not buy, her insistence on fair trade, her ability to spend only out of need and for a good cause, and most importantly, her resistance to the lure of immediate consumption, which ultimately gives her power over the goblins and proves the key to her sister's recovery. It is, in fact, Lizzie's resistance to nascent consumer culture, in the mid-nineteenth century in accordance with the pre-Raphaelites' rejection of mass marketing and mass production, which allows Laura's resurrection outside market forces and the marketplace itself. That Cather chose a section of this poem for her epigraph to this collection of stories deliberately points to her concerns regarding the modern culture of consumption and its "roots."

Lears traces many antimodernists' reactions such as Morris and the pre-Raphaelite movement, Yeats, and later in America, Frank Lloyd Wright, to the political and economic anxieties provoked by modern capitalism. The longings for intense, alternative experience found in various forms of antimodern protest also inform Cather's early characters in their search for artistic transcendent experience. For Cather, as for the pre-Raphaelites and many other later antimodernists, including such literary Modernists (who, of course, protest Modernity using modern forms) as different as Yeats or Eliot, art is the most authentic experience available, and thus art retains the possibility of protest against modern culture. This is at least partly because work itself has been stripped of meaning as it becomes more and more subject to rationalized, bureaucratized control.

But art in its most authentic form, for Cather, is also a form of productive work: i.e., a manifestation of the American work ethic, a "devotion" and a "vocation," and thus becomes a form of accommodation to modernity, undermining its own subversive capacity. One other interesting point to note in Rossetti's poem is that Laura, in her misery over the lack of fruit to consume after becoming addicted to consumption itself, is incapable of work:

> She no more swept the house,
> Tended the fowls or cows,
> Fetched honey, kneaded cakes of wheat,
> Brought water from the brook:
> But sat down listless in the chimney-nook
> And would not eat. (295-98)

While Rossetti seems to equate work with meaning (in the Romantic sense Goethe first articulated), Cather continues to assert the American work ethic as vocation in her collection of stories. While Morris and the pre-Raphaelites saw art and work as meaningful, it was situated outside the American work ethic, outside rationalized and bureaucratized systems, and was deliberately modeled on premodern forms (the Medieval guild for example). Cather's adherence to the work ethic which Weber described betrays her antimodern sense that modern life holds other kinds of dangers in addition to those attendant on consumption — that art will become just another commodity, and will lose its redemptive power as vocation.

The fact that Laura finds real nourishment unappealing once she has learned to "consume" suggests that a capacity for authentic experience is lost as market forces and values are internalized, much in the way Weber suggested that systematic rationalization becomes internalized in everyday life. As bureaucratization begins to affect the management of individual lives outside the workplace, so advertising affects the personal desire of the consumer. Caroline, in Cather's story, has learned to consume as well, trading in her "turned dresses" and "improvised hats" for the monied existence her Wall Street husband can provide. In doing so, she has rejected the artistic visions and commitment to art that is her inheritance from her father. The lodge in the garden represents the locked portion of Caroline's unconscious life, which she unwittingly unlocks in the middle of the night, and her experience there of the idealism and imaginative visions that she has repressed for fear of their effects on her will to succeed threaten her bourgeois commitments. These "visions" exist outside the rationalistic ethic of success. Once Caroline's desire is ignited, her lack of

authentic experience is exposed and her compensatory, rationalistic drive to succeed is made vulnerable to doubt and scrutiny. But while Cather portrays Caroline's "materialism" as empty, she simultaneously cautions against an idealistic sentimentality which has no pragmatic use.

Caroline's lifelong dilemma is that of a disenfranchised woman in pursuit of security, but from a class which can hardly be named. Her father, an immigrant from Germany, is, while an educated musician, neither professional, since he is not connected with any institution and earns no salary, nor is he a proprietor, and thus does not fit into any traditional, identifiable class. Caroline's father also has what he sees as a vocation, a pure devotion to art, but it is not geared towards success in the American bourgeois sense. Like many Americans of this period, and in keeping with the rhetoric of the time, Caroline's family, first generation Americans, will seem to determine its own class status. Cather's early writings, in keeping with the American myth of individualism which prevails over all circumstances, insist on this open-endedness of class determination and status while simultaneously fiercely maintaining the limitations of class in determining meaning for an individual's life. In typical antimodern fashion, Cather shows that class will determine the limits of an individual's happiness, and yet, true to the tradition of American individualism, it is up to the individual to determine his or her own class station. This leaves the responsibility for personal morality and individual happiness squarely on the autonomous individual's shoulders, relieving any outside forces of moral responsibility towards the individual.

One way in which Cather asserts the power of the individual against class determination is to associate Caroline's bourgeois, successful status with an accompanying emptiness but also to look at the role of the antibourgeois artist, Caroline's father, critically as well. Again, this is clearly a sign of her ambivalence toward individualism, and Lears' explanation of antimodernism helps to clarify the motivation behind it. Caroline's father took on music students, but "neglected his duties to write orchestral compositions for which the world seemed to have no especial need" (31). Cather's tone betrays the republican moralists' fear of idleness and their suspicion of self-indulgence, of an art for which the world "seemed to have no especial need." As Cather lists the "duties which he neglected" she seems to underscore the differences in Caroline's father's attitude toward work from the American work ethic: illustrated somewhat ironically by the European d'Esquerré, the "successful" celebrity artist but also by Caroline and her husband's ascetic rationalism. Cather continues her description of Caroline's father and his work:

> his spirit was warped by bitter vindictiveness and puerile self-commiseration, and he spent his days in scorn of the labour that brought him bread and in pitiful devotion to the labour that brought him only disappointment, writing interminable scores which demanded of the orchestra everything under heaven except a melody. (31)

Clearly it is not the devotion to work which is the problem, but the type of devotion, the choice of work: useful work, or work for which there is no "especial need." The defining difference is in the commitments one makes. Cather rather unexpectedly, but fully in the republican moralist tradition, presents the antibourgeois artist in this

portrait as self-absorbed, impractical, wholly unsavory and fully responsible for his own failure, in "scorn of the labour that brought him bread." As an aspiring artist herself this seems rather disingenuous, particularly since Cather quit her editing job at McClure's in order to devote herself to her own art later. But what is clear is that Cather, like many antimodernists, is suspicious of art without a particularly American ethic of work, an ethic which betrays the unconscious acceptance of progressive belief which ultimately is responsible for the effects of modernity she and other antimodernists reject.

While Caroline's father and brother (a chloral addict who never works), berate successful artists and her father kept his pupils waiting "while he discussed Schopenhauer with some bearded socialist over a dish of herrings and a spotted table cloth," Caroline "wore turned gowns and soiled gloves and improvised hats all her life" and only wanted the "luxury of being like other people" (33). It is the desire to conform, for acceptance, for "success," for embourgeoisement and the work ethic that accompanies it, that brings Caroline to her husband, and ultimately to d'Esquerré and face to face with the conflicting values she has internalized yet successfully repressed up until now.

The celebrity artist is the posited alternative to either of these opposing realities: the starving, irresponsible artist, or the "hard" calculating success story of Caroline's life which refuses to admit idealism and artistic devotion into her material life, but rather holds it separate from "real" life as an imagined alternative available only to the imagination. Caroline's decisions indicate her own resistance to the "answerability" of art: she maintains, in her decision to tear down the lodge and to

deliberately forget what transpired in the lodge during the night, the separation of art and life Bakhtin describes as that liable to "blame" or "guilt." Caroline's answerability is elicited in the lodge during the difficult night, but she cannot afford to accept that responsibility, that unity of responsibility, not without rejecting the bourgeois sensibility she has determinedly adopted.

Cather's sympathies are complex: they only partially lie with the bourgeois Caroline and her work ethic, just as they only partially lie with the artist as success — the artist as celebrity. But Cather's dialogic narrative, her antimodern ambivalence, will become even more complicated in "The Garden Lodge." It is in the lodge, in the middle of the night, that Caroline sees yet another, quite unexpected vision. Caroline had never been to the lodge at night, and is unprepared for what is about to confront her. Cather contrasts the conscious control Caroline exercises in the daylight with the accompanying anxiety produced by awareness of that which is outside conscious control: that which Caroline now faces in the dark and which is outside the rationalized, systematic control of her life for "maximum personal achievement." Caroline's desire proves to be a surprise, no matter how much she attempts to rationalize it:

> Yet, she knew, she knew well enough, of what absurdities this spell was woven; she mocked, even while she winced. His power she knew, lay not so much in anything that he actually had — though he had so much — or in anything that he actually was; but in what he suggested, in what he seemed picturesque enough to have or be — and that was just anything that one chose to believe or to desire. (36)

Here the elision between physical, personal passion and the imagination and idealism becomes overt, and so does the threat to her self-denying ethos:

> His appeal was all the more persuasive and alluring that it was to the imagination alone, that it was as indefinite and impersonal as those cults of idealism which so have their way with women. What he had was that, in his mere personality, he quickened and in a measure gratified that something without which — to women — life is no better than sawdust, and to the desire for which most of their mistakes and tragedies and astonishingly poor bargains are due. (36)

Implicit in this description of passion (besides overt sexism, which perhaps points to Cather's desire to distance herself from heterosexual identification) is the pecuniary metaphor: passion (of whatever kind) exacts a price, and certainly marriage and relationships are bargains to be made or lost. Caroline's life has been built around the value of material success; her friends, we are told very early in the story, "were fond of stamping Caroline as a materialist and called her hard. The impression of cold calculation, of having a definite policy, which Caroline gave, was far from a false one; but there was this to be said for her, that there were extenuating circumstances which her friends could not know." And, thus, Caroline "held determinedly to the middle course" and distrusted "everything which inclined towards extravagance" — including passion, whether sexual, idealistic, or artistic (31).[6] Celebrities like

[6] A notable difference between Cather's and contemporary Kate Chopin's writing, which explores similar themes, is that Chopin's female characters are determinedly seeking out and exploring passion without the ambivalence consistently present in Cather's characters. Chopin's character Calixta, in "The Storm," for example, gives

d'Esquerré, like the goblin men, promise access to the imagination and to "visions" which are threatening, not because they mislead, but because they are accurate: they are subversive in their suggestion that bourgeois life is not enough in itself, that it is a bargain to be made or lost, and the implication is that one "standardized value" of bourgeois life — heterosexuality — is also a trap. Cather is clear that Caroline will continue to pay the price of her embourgeoisement.

Caroline, oddly, returns to her husband the next morning more pragmatic than ever, resolved in her denial of "that part of one which sets up an idol and that part of one which bows down and worships it" and to tear down the lodge about which she had been sentimental (35). Caroline spent the night wrestling with the impulses of the unconscious and deliberately decides to continue the assertion of her rationalized ethic of self-control — which she sees as necessary to an ordered, bourgeois life. In the absence of any clear religious commitment, Caroline, like many at the turn of the century, finds herself resorting to the banal cliché's of modernity, informed as they still are by republican ideals of duty, strength of will, and a belief in individualism which will somehow make up for the loss of meaning in an increasingly modernized, self-indulgent and hedonistic world.

Angered and alarmed at the prospect of losing her self-control — that loss here elided with the authentic experience of art and the desire for participation in its sphere —and of abandoning herself to the passions which drive the artist (not,

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in to her sexual passion for Alceé, and far from finding it alarming or threatening, in fact finds a kind of redemption in her sexual passion. While Chopin alerts her readers to the dangers from society of indulging in passion, "irrational" passion itself is not as threatening a force as much as are repression and rationalization.

significantly, very alarmed at the prospect of adultery), a passion which is at once sexual and much more than sexual, Caroline consciously chooses the path of self-repression after her night in the lodge. As Caroline remembers one day in the lodge with the celebrity artist, when he put his hand under her heart, Cather writes:

> She had been wonderfully the mistress of herself at the time; neither repellant nor acquiescent. She remembered that she had rather exulted, then, in her self-control — which he had seemed to take for granted, though there was perhaps the whisper of a question from the hand under the heart . . . (39)

Much to her own surprise however, as she thinks of this, "Caroline lifted her hands quickly from the keyboard, and she bowed her head in them, sobbing" (39). D'Esquerré represents much more than physical passion denied. He is a renowned artist, a celebrity, and it is partly his "success," his celebrity status, that Caroline recognizes and is drawn to.

But she is also threatened by something else he represents: the access to the imaginative realm of art, its passions, its challenge to her to "answer" for her own choices. He is threatening because he represents a challenge to her self-control. Further, he had taken that self-control for granted: he, as an artist, is still afforded passion, dreams, and imagination. She is not. It is the subversive element still present in the artist, not so much his ability to fire the imagination with romantic "womanish" visions or temptations to physical passion, which Caroline rejects. As Caroline thinks of him, she knows that "she had been haunted by an imploring little girlish ghost that followed her about, wringing its hands and entreating for an hour of

life" (38) and she thinks of the various types of women who are pathetically enamored with such dreams as she herself is fighting.

The "hour of life" is here opposed to the self-repression of the rationalized individual, at the mercy of the American myths of self-determination and self-repression required for success. The celebrity demands of her a self-control that she finds difficult and actually humiliating, since it awakens her to conflict and uncertainty about her own solid place in the world. It even seems to Caroline that she is, instead of a unique individual, simply one of the masses, perhaps not even individuated by her class status now, subject to emotions and impulses to which she had thought herself immune. She remembers scenes from his concerts in which:

> Women of the world who accepted him knowingly, as they sometimes took champagne for its agreeable effect; sisters of charity and overworked shop-girls, who received him devoutly; withered women who had taken doctorate degrees and who worshipped furtively through prism spectacles; business women and women of affairs, the Amazons who dwelt afar from men in the stony fastnesses of apartment houses. They all entered into the same romance; dreamed, in terms as various as the hues of phantasy, the same dream; drew the same quick breath when he stepped up on the stage, and, at his exit, felt the same dull pain of shouldering the pack again . . . Young and old, however hideous, however fair, they yielded up their heat—whether quick or latent—sat hungering for the mystic bread wherewith he fed them at this eucharist of sentiment. (37)

"Yielding up their heat" indicates a loss of control, a gift of what is personal and precious, an abandonment to desire, but also an abandonment to the imagination which can provide an "hour of life." Desire and imagination also exacerbate the "dull pain of shouldering the pack again," the effort required to fully repress the longings which survive a rationalized ordered existence and challenge it.

Furthermore, the enchantment with celebrity levels all class distinctions. Caroline herself realizes this when she admits her own "hungering for the mystic bread" of sentiment. Celebrity art is not an art which elevates or validates class distinctions, but rather obviates them; it grants equal access and is not reserved for the elite. D'Esquerré's appeal is to the imagination, not to the pragmatic; to idealism, not to the rational, and this is the danger he represents to Caroline. The celebrity is whatever one makes of him. Whatever "talent" he may have is lost in the haze of imaginative projections, and therefore, the artist has at least partially lost value as a real alternative to the forces of rationalization and control. But imagination itself retains its subversive potential, and is clearly presented as threatening the status quo of the American ethic of work and success and Caroline's successful achievement of bourgeois status. The celebrity threatens the bourgeois by stripping art of its potential as cultural capital reserved only society's elite. The celebrity can spark imagination, which can lead simply to more "sentimentality," to more banality, or it could, potentially, provide access to revolutionary passions which cut across all class boundaries, illuminating the emptiness and inauthentic experience of modern life.

Cather's depiction of the artist as celebrity forces the issue of antimodern response: where, if anywhere, is authentic experience to be located? If not in the

artist, who has been relocated out of a separate sphere into commodity culture then where? If not in private idealism, which is not to be trusted for its antiprogressive energy, then where? It is not until later in her career, I suggest, that Cather comes to clearer terms with these questions. She does however, in her earliest stories, ask the important questions and answers, as Bakhtin puts it, to the real dearth of alternatives present in the culture. As for Caroline:

> The storm broke and the rain beat in, spattering her night-dress until she rose and lowered the windows. She dropped upon the couch and began fighting over again the battles of other days, while the ghosts of the slain rose as from a sowing of dragon's teeth. The shadows of things, always so scorned and flouted, bore down upon her merciless and triumphant. It was not enough; this happy, useful, well-ordered life was not enough. It did not satisfy, it was not even real. No, the other things, the shadows—they were the realities. Her father, poor Heinrich, even her mother, who had been able to sustain her poor romance and keep her little illusions mid the tasks of a scullion, were nearer happiness than she. Her sure foundation was but made ground, after all, and the people in Klingsor's garden were more fortunate, however barren the sands from which they conjured their paradise. (39)

Cather leaves her reader wondering just what kind of artist she validates. Neither alternative is particularly sympathetic: the bohemian, idealistic but poverty stricken father, who has rejected the demands of modernity, nor the celebrity who participates

and even defines modern consumer culture. However, they both maintain subversive potential in their various ways: one in his rejection of the American work ethic and aggressive ordering of individual life for success, the other in the potential access he can provide to art and imagination despite his adherence to a work ethic and his subsequent success. Cather's overt allusion here to "The Goblin Market" ("Who knows upon what soil they fed?") through the "barren sands from which they conjured their paradise" suggests that success through adherence to progressive rhetoric and values is suspect, but also that happiness, through the rejection of progressive ideals, is impossible, or in any case, as Caroline sees clearly, "unreal." "The other things, the shadows — they were the realities."

The question remains, what are the shadows? Caroline spends the rest of the night in the lodge, her head buried in her hands, "fighting over the battles of other days" in "the blackness of storm." Having no definite or clear path to follow, Caroline's unconscious desire asserts itself in a liminal moment:

> Toward morning, when the occasional rumbling of thunder was heard no more and the beat of the rain drops upon the orchard leaves was steadier, she fell asleep and did not waken until the first red streaks of dawn ...There was a moment between world and world, when, neither asleep nor awake, she felt her dream grow thin, melting away from her, felt the warmth under her heart growing cold. Something seemed to slip from the clinging hold of her arms, and she groaned protestingly. . . . Then her eyes opened wide and she sprang up and sat holding dizzily to the cushions of the couch, staring down at her bare,

> cold feet, at her labouring breast, rising and falling under open night-dress. The dream was gone, but the feverish reality of it still pervaded her and she held it as the vibrating string holds a tone. In the last hour the shadows had had their way with Caroline. They had shown her the nothingness of time and space, of system and discipline, of closed doors and broad waters. (40)

In the lodge Caroline confronts the emptiness of her own life, only to face the day by denying it again. Cather clearly opposes the realm of rationalization, efficiency and self-denial, "system and discipline," with the "dream" of art, imagination and passionate commitment. The "shadows" which "had had their way with Caroline" are from the past, from a pre-industrial, European idealism, inherited from her father. The shadows represent the reality that lies beneath the surface of her well-ordered, rationalized and repressed life, outside of modern time, ordered efficiency, ascetic repression and "discipline."

The vague longings seem to Caroline to have come from her past, but she comes to realize that she has in fact internalized them:

> Caroline closed her eyes and dropped her elbows weakly upon her knees, her shoulders sinking together. The horror was that it had not come from without, but from within. The dream was no blind chance; it was the expression of something she had kept so close a prisoner that she had never seen it herself; it was the wail from the donjon deeps when the watch slept. (40)

What is finally real to Caroline then is a kind of return of the repressed, the "wail from the donjon" as the conscious "watch slept." Caroline is haunted by the idealism of an age past, her father's premodern, immigrant vision of what an artist can be, oblivious to the claims of American modernity. Caroline sees beyond system and discipline to a dream that she "held as a vibrating string holds a tone"— the dream seems the resonance of an idea of a self unsubjected to outside repression and the obsessive striving for comfort and control. That space no longer exists, though the ghost of it lingers in Weber's notion of "vocation," which has outlived its origins and now informs the hedonistic culture of consumption he forecast in 1905. There is no separate sphere available to turn to as a refuge from the goblin men who promise fulfillment in modernity, as art has been turned into what Lears calls (in his discussion of the loss of a coherent vocabulary of symbols) "commodities in the marketplace of taste"(33).

Caroline's decision to have the lodge torn down after her night of anguish there is a rejection of artistic dreams, the need for a clear "path" with "finality"; it is a conscious decision to reject "sentimentality" and imaginative passion for the sake of clarity, rationality and respectability, all modern bourgeois values. Caroline's brief moment of uncertainty, self-doubt and longing is symptomatic of the essential dilemma for people faced with ambivalence towards modernity: the sense that one must choose between a valid protest against hyperrationalization (which exists in tandem with a fear of irrationality or the unscientific), or accommodation to the pressures of modernity and its attendant ethic of individualism and myth of

autonomy. Cather's story "answers" this dilemma, though it does not attempt to solve it.

Chapter Two *The "Iron Cage" of Acquisition: Veblen's Conspicuous Consumption, "tasteless amplitude," and Ascetic Rationalism in "Flavia and Her Artists"*

In 1905, Max Weber described one outcome of the Protestant ethic as it has evolved under pressure from modernity: "The Puritan," he claimed, "wanted to work in a calling; we are forced to do so." Weber connects the notion of "victorious capitalism" with its origins in asceticism in the words which follow that famous pronouncement:

> For when asceticism was carried out of monastic cells into everyday life, and began to dominate worldly morality, it did its part in building the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order. This order is now bound to the technical and economic conditions of machine production which to-day determine the lives of all the individuals who are born into this mechanism, not only those directly concerned with economic acquisition, with irresistible force. Perhaps it will so determine them until the last ton of fossilized fuel is burnt. In Baxter's view the care for external goods should only lie on the shoulders of the "saint like a light cloak, which can be thrown aside at any moment." But fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage. (181)

Cather's "Flavia and Her Artists" confirms Weber's notion of modernity as "victorious capitalism" but also alludes to his notion of the "iron cage of acquisition." Flavia, a nouveau-riche social climber, has a "collection" of artists which she houses in rooms which her cousin terms "cages." But while the

ostentatious house was built for granting artists "asylum" and to exhibit Flavia's skill at "getting" them as guests, it is not merely the artists who live in cages, but Flavia as well. Flavia's consumerist behavior suggests, besides Weber's iron cage of acquisition, the relevance of Thorstein Veblen's notion of modernity as characterized by conspicuous consumption, as found in his famous satirical study, The Theory of the Leisure Class, first published in 1899. In "Flavia and Her Artists" Cather overtly critiques conspicuous consumption in terms which mirror Veblen's theory of the means and motivations for consumption.

In early stages of modern capitalist culture, what Veblen terms the "peaceable stage" of capitalism:

> The leisure class stands at the head of the social structure in point of reputability, and its manner of life and its standards of worth therefore afford the norm of reputability for the community. The observance of these standards, in some degree of approximation, becomes incumbent upon all classes lower in the scale. In modern civilized communities the lines of demarcation between social classes have grown vague and transient, and whenever this happens the norm of reputability imposed by the upper class extends its coercive influence with but slight hindrance down through the social structure to the lowest strata. The result is that the members of each stratum accept as their ideal of decency the scheme of life in vogue in the next higher stratum, and bend their energies to live up to that ideal. On pain of forfeiting their

> good name and their self-respect in case of failure, they next conform to the accepted code, at least in appearance. (84)

Cather, in "Flavia and Her Artists," considers the sphere of art as subject to invasion from the nouveau-riche class which seeks to "conform to the accepted code" and "ideal of decency" in the next level of society. The separate sphere of art and the idea of reputability are conjoined in the notion of a "cultured class" to which the new leisure class aspires. Cather demonstrates that the sphere of art is no longer safe from marketing and consumer forces, and counters this polluted sphere with the anachronistic force of ascetic rationalism: the hard-working, self-denying bourgeois, figured in this story as Arthur, Flavia's husband.

Just as Veblen is concerned with the consumption of goods for "pecuniary reputability," Weber, just six years later, claims that "since asceticism undertook to remodel the world . . . material goods have gained an increasing and finally an inexorable power over the lives of men as at no previous period" (181). But because "victorious capitalism . . . rests on mechanical rather than spiritual foundations" by the new century, it needs the "support of asceticism no longer." According to Weber, the "rosy blush of its laughing heir, the Enlightenment, seems also to be irretrievably fading, and the idea of duty in one's calling prowls about in our lives like the ghost of dead religious beliefs." Weber continues, in his discussion of the modern "vocation" of compulsive accumulation of capital:

> Where the fulfillment of the calling cannot directly be related to the highest spiritual and cultural values, or when, on the other hand, it need not be felt simply as economic compulsion, the individual generally

> abandons the attempt to justify it at all. In the field of its highest development, in the United States, the pursuit of wealth, stripped of its religious and ethical meaning, tends to become associated with purely mundane passions, which often actually give it the character of sport. (182)

Cather depicts the means of consumption in terms identical to Weber's theory of sport, which dovetails nicely with Veblen's theory of "predatory behavior," which I outline below. This is particularly written into Cather's representation of Flavia's aggressive self-assertion towards her guests, but also the way in which she literally "appropriates" their physical presence, their ideas, and even their passions. Flavia considers "interesting people" her "natural affinities," but also, as Cather tells the reader in the same sentence, her "lawful prey." Her behavior is depicted as predatory; her methods are those of a hunter. Cather's language underscores this, in just one instance, as one of the key characters arrives and is "immediately appropriated by her hostess" (3).

According to Veblen, sport itself is the mark of a society which exhibits archaic impulses of the need for mastery. "Modern competition," Veblen says, "is in large part a process of self-assertion on the basis of these traits of predatory human nature." While these traits of desire for mastery and domination may serve the interests of the individual, they are "not directly serviceable to the community . . . . Ferocity and cunning are of no use to the community except in its hostile dealings with other communities; and they are useful to the individual only because there is so large a proportion of the same traits actively present in the human environment to

which he is exposed" (263). Although this argument appears to be a bit circular, Veblen situates it in his overall analysis of conspicuous consumption, in which the "possession of property becomes the basis of popular esteem": and therefore "requisite to that complacency which we call self-respect" (31). He observes that:

> as fast as a person makes new acquisitions, and becomes accustomed to the resulting new standard of wealth, the new standard forthwith ceases to afford appreciably greater satisfaction than the earlier standard did. The tendency in any case is constantly to make the present pecuniary standard the point of departure for a fresh increase of wealth . . . the end sought by accumulation is to rank high in comparison with the rest of the community in point of pecuniary strength. (31)

This results in a "restless straining to place a wider . . . pecuniary interval" between the consumer and the prevailing, average standard (31). The "struggle" or competition is not based on an alleviation of want, but is "substantially a race for reputability on the basis of an invidious comparison," and, "no approach to a definitive attainment is possible" (32).

Add to this the spiritual lack and loss of what Weber called the "organic" cycle of life and sense of "wholeness"[7] also identified by Walter Benjamin, Lears, and many others, and acquisition takes on another incentive. "That propensity for purposeful activity," Veblen claims, "and that repugnance to all futility of effort

[7] From Lawrence Scaff, "Weber on the Cultural Situation of the Modern Age." The Cambridge Companion to Weber. Ed. Stephen Turner. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. 103.

which belong to man by virtue of his character as an agent do not desert him when he emerges from the naïve communal culture" and becomes individuated (33). However, under advanced capitalism, "purposeful effort comes to mean, primarily, effort directed to or resulting in a more creditable showing of accumulated wealth" (34).

In "Flavia and Her Artists" Cather shows her contempt for the conspicuous consumption outlined by Veblen, but further qualifies it by focusing on a kind of consumption that disregards the reality of artistic expression and even preys upon the artist. Flavia is, for instance, not interested in what art can do for others, what it speaks to, what it might confront or protest, and yet she needs the aesthetic culture posited by Weber for what he terms "personal redemption" — to grant meaning to a rather meaningless existence, and to counter rationalism's disenchantment of the world — and, as such, admits for art the possibility of critique of such an existence.

The need for personal redemption spoken of by Weber can be seen in the character of Flavia. But Flavia represents a particular American version of this need, and, as interpellated through the particular class dynamics at play in 1905, Thorstein Veblen's ideas on conspicuous consumption are useful in helping to understand this figure. Cather's figure of Flavia — certainly not an artist, not quite aesthete, but intensely interested in the artist as celebrity commodity, is a type of character who will show up again and again in Cather's early fiction as she wrestles with the notion of aestheticism and individualism in nascent bourgeois culture. Flavia seeks "personal redemption" in her conformity to the "rule" of the next higher social class and through her instrumental consumption of art. In attempting to gain access to that

strata of society which already holds the rights to "culture," Flavia will attempt to buy her way in.

The lines between classes are quite vague in the United States in the higher strata in at least one way: the "leisure class" is actually composed of at least two classes. First, there is the older moneyed class, generally several generations old, who have inherited their wealth and established their "reputability" through their access to forms of what Pierre Bourdieu calls "cultural capital," such as name, political influence, institutional endowments and the like, who have in general established the norm to which everyone else must aspire. In addition, they have lent their names to museums, to art collections, to opera houses, and the like, institutionally staking claims to cultural "legitimacy." The other subset of the leisure class is the emerging bourgeoisie, who have newly acquired financial capital, who are new to business, who have more recently acquired ownership of the means of production, and who have less established generational reputations. They may however, have more money than the older blue-bloods of the quasi-aristocratic class. The rise of this class accompanied the decades after the second industrial revolution in America. These are the nouveau-riche, and Flavia belongs to this segment of the leisure class.

As a member of the new American bourgeoisie, she looks to the realm of "culture"— traditionally associated, at least for her, with the aristocratic classes of Europe — for her "ideal of decency." In this, as in all things, Flavia is a plagiarist, and (like many good capitalists), a thief. Her social status is borrowed, co-opted, even stolen, and this perhaps is what the French writer in the story, M. Roux, most

vehemently objects to. Cather herself is suspicious of Flavia's status, and is vicious in her condemnation of her lack of discernment in matters of art.

Flavia has plenty of leisure, she has plenty of money to consume, but she is still nouveau-riche, and, like all Americans of this nascent, quasi-aristocratic ruling class, she lacks tradition, lacks cultural validation — perhaps the one thing a class cannot purchase, at least not in its beginnings. It can only be mimicked. As Veblen reminds us:

> The basis on which good repute in any highly organized industrial community ultimately rests is pecuniary strength; and the means of showing pecuniary strength and so of gaining or retaining a good name, are leisure and a conspicuous consumption of goods. Accordingly, both of these methods are in vogue as far down the scale as remain possible. (84)

However, Veblen continues, as communities become larger and more anonymous, and "it becomes necessary to reach a wider human environment," consumption "begins to hold over leisure as an ordinary means of decency," since people have no other way of judging a person's reputability than "the display of goods (and perhaps of breeding)" which he is able to make "while he is under direct observation" (86). In general, Veblen writes, "The only practicable means of impressing one's pecuniary ability on these unsympathetic observers of one's everyday life is an unremitting demonstration of ability to pay" (87). But, when those around you are also able to pay, are able to waste time and money conspicuously, how then does one assert a dominance of "reputability"?

For Flavia, as for those who seek embourgeoisement and the necessary accompanying cultural capital, the answer lies in finding something else to consume, in order to compete in the arena of consumption at the next level. "Consuming" the culture of the elite, buying the prestige of others by hosting them, then showing them off, rather like name-dropping, might give one a leg up so to speak, creating a new status marker for which others might then compete. Rather than commissioning their compositions or paintings, publishing their books, or hanging their art on walls, one might choose, as Flavia does, to try to own the artist's very ideas, their very persons, to buy a place at the celebrity table. Flavia consistently speaks of artists or "interesting people," as someone to be "got" in the sense of acquired goods. The crucial thing is the competition for such people: instead of someone else "getting" them at their house, to get them for yourself, so that everyone will know you won, that you have acquired the cachet of your guest, or, in the more perceptive and sardonic view of Jimmy, Flavia's cousin, that they have become your inmate, that they live in your "cage."

Besides the basic and well-known theory of conspicuous consumption, Veblen's Theory of the Leisure Class also details the notion of "conspicuous leisure." The forces at work in pecuniary emulation have different effects on the lower class; as the upper or leisure class develops, the most conspicuous display of wealth is one's ability to waste — not just money, but time. While the lower classes find pecuniary reputability in saving, the richest find reputability in wasteful behavior, including "an instinctive repugnance for the vulgar forms of labour" (37). Veblen further claims that ""the ancient tradition of the predatory culture is that

productive effort is to be shunned as being unworthy of able-bodied men, and this tradition is reinforced rather than set aside in the passage from the predatory to the quasi-peaceable manner of life" (39).

Before detailing Flavia's predatory behavior, it is worth hearing Veblen out in order to be clear about his position on this issue:

> The traits of predatory man are by no means obsolete in the common run of modern populations. They are present and can be called out in bold relief at any time by any appeal to the sentiments in which they express themselves . . . The common run of the population of any industrial community is emancipated from these, economically considered, untoward propensities only in the sense that, through partial and temporary disuse they have lapsed into the background of sub-conscious motives. With varying degrees of potency in different individuals, they remain available for the aggressive shaping of men's actions and sentiments whenever a stimulus of more than everyday intensity comes in to call them forth. And they assert themselves forcibly in any case where an occupation alien to the predatory culture has usurped the individual's everyday range of interest and sentiment. This is the case among the leisure class and among certain portions of the population which are ancillary to that class. Hence the facility with which any new accessions to the leisure class take to sports and hence the rapid growth of sports and of the sporting sentiment in any

> industrial community where wealth has accumulated sufficiently to exempt a considerable part of the population from work. (264)

As Cather critiques one modern reaction to the sense of unease within the "unreal city" of urban culture,[8] the status-seeking commodity culture which Veblen described, "Flavia and Her Artists" answers the search for authentic experience at the fin de siècle. Flavia's desire to house, feed and conspicuously display her "collection" of celebrities corresponds with Veblen's notion of competitive, predatory sport. "Costly entertainments . . . are peculiarly adapted to serve this end. The competitor with whom the entertainer wishes to institute a comparison is . . . made to serve as a means to the end. He consumes vicariously for his host" while at the same time he is "witness to" his host's excessive consumption (75).

Flavia's bourgeois hedonism and predatory behavior are the results of a "stimulus of more than everyday intensity": her need to acquire cultural capital. Flavia has both wealth and leisure, and her desire for reputability is certainly still insatiable; but this desire is further conflated with Flavia's need for what Weber termed personal redemption — one goal of the establishment of a separate sphere of art, the "aesthetic culture" Weber claims is postulated by the bourgeoisie as an alternative to the pressures of modernity. Veblen argues that "The leisure rendered by the wife . . . is, of course, not a simple manifestation of idleness or indolence."

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[8] This is, as Lears observes, the same "Swarming city" of Baudelaire, and the "Unreal city" of Eliot. Lears notes that "the most sensitive observers imagined the modern city as the breeding ground of a vapid, anonymous existence — a death-in-life. Yet the perception of urban culture's unreality was not simply the property of isolated literati. In various forms, that perception was shared by the educated bourgeoisie on both sides of the Atlantic; it was rooted in sweeping social changes which affected ordinary people as well as poets of genius" (32).

Flavia's leisure, like the housewife Veblen describes, vicariously displays her husband's leisure and wealthy privilege, but while certainly contributing to her husband's reputability, Flavia's consumption of culture also takes on a form which conspicuously displays her own need to compete.

Cather writes, intriguingly, that one of the criticisms of Flavia is that her "absurd" behavior is embarrassing to her husband. Her cousin remarks, "A man isn't going to see his wife make a guy of herself forever, is he?" (20). While the traditional duties of a wife in contributing to the husband's reputability entail leisure, Veblen says that they are almost always "disguised under some form of work or household duties or social amenities, which prove on analysis to serve little or no ulterior end beyond showing that she does not and need not occupy herself with anything that is gainful or that is of substantial use" (82). While this remains true for Flavia, she has demonstrated her need to assert herself competitively, and, rather than consuming vicariously for her husband, she herself crosses the gendered line into ego-centered competition.

While this cross-gendered behavior is one reason Cather satirizes Flavia, there is another hint at cross-gendering in the story which counters the aggressive, predatory, and superficial character of Flavia. Flavia's cousin, a famous female actress, is named "Jimmy" and is described more than once as reminding another guest of "a nice, clean, pink-and-white boy who has just had his cold bath, and come down all aglow for a run before breakfast" (4), and to whose face "rouge never seems to stick" (7). Jimmy, however, refuses to be categorized with "the artists." In a much more sympathetic portrait, Cather has Jimmy declare, "Just remember, I'm not one of

them; the artists I mean" (9). Jimmy is in fact the most celebrated and most talented of any on the premises, but refuses to be placed into the category of a mere celebrity in order to be used to increase Flavia's status.

The story can then best be read as Cather's critique of the commodity culture which attempts to subsume and consume art for its own ends: which may be defined as the nouveau-riche's need to participate in the cultural elitism which eludes them, their need to substitute authentic experience for religious conviction, and their sense that conspicuous consumption of "culture" will provide a kind of redemption on both counts. In the early stories Cather attempts to answer, in the sense Bakhtin describes, cultural questions concerning the potential for art to offer a separate space from modern consumer culture, the potential for it to offer authentic experience, and, especially in this story, the relation of art to class, to conspicuous consumption, and to the American work ethic. "Flavia and Her Artists" is Cather's most sardonic comment on the loss of the separate sphere of art postulated by Weber in his notion of an aesthetic culture. But Weber's notion of the personal redemption which may be found in this sphere is not simply the search for authentic experience, for meaning, but, I argue, a particularly American sense of that meaning, rooted in economic and class status and based on an ethic of conspicuous consumption.

As Lawrence Scaff notes in his discussion of Weber, the connection "between social structure and character was actually a Weberian theme from the 1890s" (112). Scaff glosses Weber's notion of "calling" at the beginning of the new century in this way:

> our lives, choices, opportunities, and cultural values are constrained by the "iron cage" of material goods and acquisitiveness. "Victorious capitalism" can dispense with its ascetic orientation or ethos and rely instead on opposite norms — hedonism, gratification, consumption, greed. (100)

Weber of course pointed out the contradictions inherent in the idea of duty or vocation, which "prowls about in our lives like the ghost of dead religious beliefs," and the ethically "unjustified" pursuit of wealth. In this story, through the character of Flavia, Cather also critiques the class which has exploited others in its pursuit of wealth, but she especially focuses on the pursuit of status — Veblen's reputability — through the conspicuous consumption, or "iron cage" of acquisition, of art. For Flavia, the self-indulgent quest for reputability is at others' expense, and Cather is clear that it is conflated with the notion of vocation, much the way the rationalized accumulation of wealth has become inseparable from the notion of vocation as Weber describes it in The Protestant Ethic.

While the status-seeking nouveau-riche class attempts to consume aesthetic culture, to appropriate it, the story makes it clear that Cather does not think that personal gratification, hedonism, status, or greed justifies this pursuit. As Cather satirizes the self-made snob, Flavia, she shows how far her own position is from simply maintaining an elitist position with regard to access to a rarefied art. Cather's position, similar to a critic like Matthew Arnold, is complex in holding art's intrinsic value safe against cultural exploitation. In holding art as a separate sphere, safe from consumerism and aesthetic devaluation, Cather is maintaining an antimodern,

contradictory, pro-republican yet nevertheless antiprogressive position. This is, in effect, both radical and conservative in its protest against and fear of modernity as "victorious capitalism" and the market forces which inform it.

In each of her early stories Cather is concerned with various types of poseurs, of which Flavia represents only one. However, the picture of Flavia is perhaps Cather's most critical and insightful representation of the modern consumer. In addition to her excessive consumption of objects, Flavia "collects" "interesting people" in order to be thought "clever," in a huge house which is a kind of pseudo-salon; her drive to be perceived as a patroness of the arts derives from what Jimmy calls her "icy fastness" of self-esteem, which is "like St. Peter's; you can't realize its magnitude all at once" (20). The conflation of Flavia's enormous ego with her will to acquire cultural capital through what Cather calls Flavia's "collection" of the "aves rares" answers Cather's concerns regarding the relationship between the nouveau-riche and the artistic elite, as well as her concern to maintain an artistic sphere outside the realm of businesslike rationalization, free from the progressive (and aggressive) rhetoric of consumer capitalism at the fin de siècle. In addition, the conflation of ego with consumerism points to a more basic problem of modernity: the ideology of individualism which Cather wrestles with throughout this early collection, and even later in such stories as "Neighbour Rosicky," or her novels such as My Mortal Enemy, The Professor's House, and Death Comes for the Archbishop.

While Flavia takes herself quite seriously, she is never taken seriously by anyone else, and in fact is laughed at behind her back by her guests, including her own cousin, and even the servants. Jimmy tells another guest that "you see, it's on

an entirely false basis. Flavia hasn't the slightest notion of what these people are really like, their good and their bad alike escape her. They, on the other hand, can't imagine what she is driving at" (20). But, Jimmy continues, describing the most celebrated guest on the premises:

> Roux, that merciless dissector of egoism . . . saw at a glance what some of them do not perceive at once, and what will be mercifully concealed from Arthur [Flavia's husband] until the trump sounds; namely, that all Flavia's artists have done or ever will do means exactly as much to her as a symphony means to an oyster; that there is no bridge by which the significance of any work of art could be conveyed to her. (20)

The climax of the story occurs when the above-mentioned novelist, M. Roux, writes an editorial for the local paper which is published after he has fled the house for France. It is an all too-thinly veiled, misogynistic description of his hostess, and is entitled "Roux on Tuft Hunters; The Advanced American Woman As He Sees Her; Aggressive, Superficial and Insincere" (22). This becomes Arthur's "cue to act," to protect his wife from herself by publicly proclaiming that Roux is a "mountebank and a snake-charmer," to Flavia's utter horror, and furthermore proclaims that Roux is a person one might receive but would never stoop to accepting an invitation from (24). Arthur, "a pillar of law" and "a rather ascetic man" (who is remembered by Imogen, the central consciousness of the story, as "the magician of her childhood and the hero of innumerable Arabian fairy tales"), is a figure of opposition to Flavia's hedonistic self-absorption. Arthur, the figure of anachronistic ascetic rationalism, is

shown to be not only a good bourgeois, but also a good husband, though he risks his wife's disavowal of him through his act of saving her from humiliation. The celebrity artists are shown to be opportunistic and obsequious, but also at the mercy of the culture of consumption as embodied in Flavia. When Arthur speaks of Roux in this way, it is an implicit condemnation of them as well from the standpoint of a stolid, old-fashioned morality based on a common sense view of hard work and decency. It is directly opposed to the self-serving hedonism of both the consumer and the market- driven celebrity.

Veblen's notion of conspicuous consumption and predatory behavior seems particularly applicable to Flavia. For example, besides appropriating artists and intellectuals for reputability, she also steals their "stories and opinions." Even more to the point, "Flavia," Jimmy tells her friend, "is infinitely more subtile than that; she can soak up the very thrash and drift of your day dreams, and take the very thrills off your back as it were." This is because Flavia "gets no feeling out of things herself, and she demands that you impart yours to her by some process of psychic transmission" (21). The theft of other people's passions and the collection of artists and celebrities themselves suggest a new level of American consumption,[9] and the exposition of this behavior by a "real" artist, not a celebrity at Flavia's mercy, suggests an alternative voice which can answer the culture of consumption by

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[9] And contemporary culture seems to have taken this even one step further. Anne Friedberg, for instance, notes in Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern, "The marketing of 'commodity-experiences' has almost surpassed the marketing of goods" (115). Friedberg also quotes Baudrillard, who claims that "individuals no longer compete for the possession of goods, they actualize themselves in consumption" (115).

maintaining, as Jimmy does, an alliance with the figure of ascetic rationalism (Arthur) and bourgeois values of hard work, dedication to one's art, and the rejection of celebrity status.

While Flavia is certainly of the nouveau-riche, industrial ownership class, thus of the bourgeoisie, her status or reputability is still relatively unfixed. She is a new member of the leisure class, in Veblen's scheme, and in order to justify her status, not out of any economic necessity, Flavia finds she must aggressively assert herself. In her case, this manifests as the aggressive pursuit of cultural capital through the celebrity associations she cultivates; their experience bought and paid for in her quest for intense authenticity to make up for a lack of meaning in her own life. As her guest Imogen, who is the daughter of an old friend and not a celebrity, asks, "in the name of goodness, why does she bother? . . . She is pretty, wealthy, well-established; why should she bother?" The only answer Jimmy can give her is that, "To Flavia, it is more necessary to be called clever than to breathe" (20). While able to consume whatever material goods she desires, Flavia and her nascent, quasi-aristocratic class still need validation. As Veblen observes, "this conspicuous leisure of which decorum is a ramification grows gradually into a laborious drill in deportment and an education in taste" as to "what articles of consumption are decorous and what are the decorous methods of consuming them" (50). Veblen's tone is most viciously satirical when he claims that "the possibility of producing pathological and other idiosyncrasies of person and manner by shrewd mimicry and a systematic drill have been turned to account in the deliberate production of a cultured class" (50). The "process vulgarly known as snobbery" is the outcome.

However, Veblen further notes that "A standard of life would still be possible which should admit of invidious comparison in other respects than that of opulence; as, for instance, a comparison in various directions in the manifestation of moral, physical, intellectual, or aesthetic force. Comparison in all these directions is in vogue to-day." But, he continues,

> the comparison made in these respects is commonly so inextricably bound up with the pecuniary comparison as to be scarcely distinguishable from the latter. This is especially true as regards the current rating of expressions of intellectual and aesthetic force or proficiency; so that we frequently interpret as aesthetic or intellectual a difference which in substance is pecuniary only. (97)

The pathos surrounding Flavia is that she does not seem to realize that she has bought and paid for the company of these people; they do not see her as any type of equal, they do not think of her as she thinks of herself (i.e., having "intellectual or aesthetic force or proficiency"), and that her status is completely and utterly dependant upon her "pecuniary" ability. She has mistaken her own "ability to pay" for aesthetic or intellectual ability. Her search for her own personal validation and redemption through cultural consumption is an impossible one unless the society also "interprets as aesthetic or intellectual a difference which in substance is pecuniary only." The potential for this realization seems to be one of Cather's gravest concerns. In her antimodernist reaction, she betrays a sense that "pecuniary substance" may have indeed begun to be confused with aesthetic or intellectual quality. Furthermore, Flavia has often mistaken mere celebrity success, which is

ultimately often pecuniary success based on market forces on the fringes of aesthetic culture, for intellectual ability or aesthetic excellence. This, despite her own pecuniary success, is not a mistake made by the "real" artist, Jimmy.

Throughout her career, Cather will persist in her critique of the American obsession with acquisition; to give just one example, Paul Comeau has noted how, in Cather's 1925 novel The Professor's House, Professor St. Peter returns from a shopping trip in Chicago exhausted from the "orgy of acquisition" on which his family insists, and Comeau reads the novel as partly a critique of such consumerism (154).[10] Cather describes her intentions in writing the book in a 1938 letter, published as "On the Professor's House" in Willa Cather on Writing:

> In my book I tried to make Professor St. Peter's house rather overcrowded and stuffy with new things; American proprieties, clothes, furs, petty ambitions, quivering jealousies — until one got rather stifled. Then I wanted to open the square window and let in the fresh air that blew off the Blue Mesa . . . . (31)

Cather's anti-consumerist aesthetic is also demonstrated in her 1922 essay "The Novel Démeublé," in which she speaks of "unfurnishing" the novel, to rid it of unnecessary clutter which will not stand the test of time. Her stated aesthetic preferences, as well as her fictional representations, answer the consumerist culture of the time, insisting on simple, elemental depictions that qualify the contemporary

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[10] Paul Comeau, "The Professor's House and Anatole France," in Critical Essays on Willa Cather, ed. John J. Murphy (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1984): 223.

notion of realism. Her denunciation of what is usually termed "realism" in the novel is, moreover, significantly figured as a rejection of consumerist materialism:

> But is not realism, more than it is anything else, an attitude of mind on the part of the writer toward his material, a vague indication of the sympathy and candour with which he accepts, rather than chooses, his theme? Is the story of a banker who is unfaithful to his wife and who ruins himself by speculation in trying to gratify the caprices of his mistresses, at all reinforced by a masterly exposition of banking, our whole system of credits, the methods of the Stock Exchange? Of course, if the story is thin these things do reinforce it in a sense, — any amount of red meat thrown into the scale to make the beam dip. But are the banking system and the Stock Exchange worth being written about at all? Have such things any proper place in imaginative art? (38)

Cather replies to her own question by claiming that "Balzac tried out the value of literalness in the novel . . .To reproduce on paper the actual city of Paris; the houses, the upholstery, the food, the wines, the game of pleasure, the game of business, the game of finance: a stupendous ambition — but," she concludes, "after all, unworthy of an artist." Cather claims, "In exactly so far as he succeeded in pouring out on his pages that mass of brick and mortar and furniture and proceedings in bankruptcy, in exactly so far he defeated his end" (38). In her essay "The Best Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett," Cather describes the problem of most novels which, unlike Jewett's, cannot "confront time and change . . . serenely" (58). "If a writer's

attitude toward his characters and his scene is as vulgar as a showman's, as mercenary as an auctioneer's, vulgar and meretricious will his product for ever remain" (57).

In "The Novel Démeublé" Cather differentiates Balzac's realism from Tolstoi's, claiming that "We have had too much of the interior decorator and the 'romance of business' since [Balzac's] day," but that "Tolstoi was almost as great a lover of material things as Balzac":

> almost as much interested in the way dishes were cooked, and people were dressed, and houses were furnished. But there is this determining difference: the clothes, the dishes, the haunting interiors of those old Moscow houses, are always so much a part of the emotions of the people that they are perfectly synthesized; they seem to exist, not so much in the author's mind, as in the emotional penumbra of the characters themselves. When it is fused like this, literalness ceases to be literalness — it is merely part of the experience. (39-40)

These statements underline Cather's resistance to the modern ethos of meaningless acquisition, to what she terms the "enumeration" of material detail. In conflating the minimal material necessary for exposition with "the emotional penumbra of the characters," Cather in effect redefines realism. What she calls "the material investiture of the story" should be "presented as if unconsciously"— and here Cather's contempt for the acquisitive instinct becomes even more apparent — "by

the reserved, fastidious hand of an artist, not by the gaudy fingers of a showman or the mechanical industry of a department-store window-dresser" (41).

It is not that Cather objects to sensation, as I demonstrate in chapter three of this project, but her statements seem to prefigure the kind of critique later theorists like Cornel West put forward of the American "addiction to stimulation." In a 1991 essay on postmodern culture, West agrees with Fredric Jameson in his thesis that "commodification of culture and commercialization of the arts are the major factors in postmodern culture," and that the modernist T.S. Eliot:

> rightly noted decades ago that American society is a deritualized one, with deracinated and denuded individuals "distracted from distraction by distraction" — that is, addicted to stimulation, in part, to evade the boredom and horror Baudelaire saw as the distinctive features of modern life. And in a society and culture that evolves more and more around the buying and selling of commodities for stimulatory pleasures — be it bodily, psychic, or intellectual — people find counsel, consolation . . . . (41)

West's (and Jameson's) critique echoes that of Weber's which posited what Lawrence Scaff has called a "disenchantment thesis."

In an essay entitled "Weber On the Cultural Situation of the Modern Age," Scaff notes that for Weber:

> Modernity represents a loss of the sacred sense of wholeness and reconciliation between self and world provided by myth, magic, tradition, religion, or immanent nature. It ushers in the disruptive

> sense of disengagement, abstraction, alienation, homelessness, and "the problem of meaning" that begins to gnaw at the vital core of modern experience and social philosophy. (Scaff 105)

Part of the reaction to this is a turn to aesthetic culture, as an attempt to "take a stand against rationalism, carving out a protected zone of exclusion for [art], or cultivating a posture of redemption from mechanization or the merely technically rational through art"— what Adorno, referring primarily to music, called "an irresponsible Ersatz for primary religious experience" (Scaff 114).

The problem of art for Weber, as for many antimodernist thinkers, was the emphasis on interiority as a reaction to the impersonal and formidable determining forces at work in the urban industrialized world: in response to the "technique" of everyday life, art becomes another form of the technical and rational in its attempt to "mirror the metropolis," as Scaff puts it. But, and here we see the antimodern ambivalence inherent in many different types of reactions to culture at this moment, art is also, simultaneously, "an effort to criticize and overcome its limitations" (114). Art therefore, for Weber, can be effective only insofar as it uses the techniques of industrialized urbanity in an attempt to confront that very manifestation of rationality. Weber especially sees poetry (in his later 1924 work, Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Soziologie und Sozialpolitik), as:

> partly a protest, as a specific means of escape from this [mechanized] reality — that is, escape through the highest aesthetic abstractions or the deepest dream-states or more intense forms of excitation — and partly as a means of adaptation, an apology for its own fantastic and

> intoxicating rhythmics. Lyric poetry...poetry characterized by such intense consciousness of the last impregnable fortress of purely artistic form, yet aware of the frenzy produced by the technique of our lives — could not be written at all without the poet allowing the experience of the modern metropolis to flow through himself, even though these impressions devour him, shatter and parcel out his soul, and even though he may condemn them to the abyss. (cf Scaff 115)

Scaff glosses this by saying that, for Weber, "This portrait of the artist is a paradox: a mirror of the times, yet a rebellious figure; a defender of l'art pour l'art, but a proponent of art in the service of personal redemption and social criticism" (115).

Cather's early stories, which deal with the urban, the modern, and the alienated individualism of the fin de siècle, have seemed superficial and limited to many critics, especially as contrasted with her later work in the broader American and even mythical landscape. But Cather attempts to contain the contradictions within the culture, to answer them; in the early stories she is "mirroring the metropolis," not through poetic lyricism, but through a realism which attempts to essentialize the materialistic culture without sacrificing her own art to excessive "material investiture." She tries to at once defend the role of art as protest in modernity, and yet in doing so betrays her need for personal redemption in and through art. Cather's defense of art and culture in an attempt to keep them "disinterested," to divorce art from what she terms "economics," coupled with the desire for art to fill a space vacated by the spiritual retreat necessitated by modernity (and a space she recursively writes into several of the early stories), brands her as an

antimodern paradox. Just as Caroline both flees from and actively seeks out the "shadows" that "were the reality" in "The Garden Lodge," in "Flavia and Her Artists" Cather writes an emptiness into Flavia's consumerism while still suggesting that art may have a contribution to make in filling that lack. While Flavia has no real conception of the power of art, and is therefore "false" in her approach, this is not a dismissal of art's power to transform.

"Art, it seems to me, should simplify," Cather writes in her essay "On the Art of Fiction." She also seems to address the modern need for further and constant stimulation:

> I should say the greatest obstacles that writers today have to get over are the dazzling journalistic successes of twenty years ago . . . The whole aim of that school of writing was novelty — never a very important thing in art. They gave us altogether, poor standards — taught us to multiply our ideas instead of to condense them. . . . their work, when one looks back on it, now that the novelty upon which they counted so much is gone, is journalistic and thin. (102)

The alternative aesthetic to novelty and enumeration, however, is the stripping down of life to its "essentials," which leaves room for what Cather feels is "real": the "shades of sweetness and anguish" that simply cannot emerge among a cluttered, superficial accounting of material reality. "The higher processes of art are all processes of simplification," Cather claims in "The Novel Démeublé." "The novelist must learn to write, and then he must unlearn it" (40). Cather's description

of her intent in The Professor's House, "to open the square window and let in the fresh air of the Blue Mesa," shows her ambivalence towards modern American culture, stuffed with "proprieties," stifling in its obsession with the "new." Yet the book, like many of her stories, contains another rarefied landscape, a separate space which still holds both the promise and the relics of art for art's sake: the pottery made by the Anasazi, not for utility, but painted for the sake of beauty. "Hundreds of years ago," Cather writes in an article entitled "Escapism," "before European civilization had touched this continent, the Indian women in the old rock-perched pueblos of the Southwest were painting geometrical patterns on the jars in which they carried water. . . Why did they take the trouble?" She continues:

> These people lived under the perpetual threat of drought and famine; they often shaped their graceful cooking pots when they had nothing to cook in them. Anyone who looks over a collection of prehistoric Indian pottery dug up from old burial-mounds knows at once that the potters experimented with form and colour to gratify something that had no concern with food and shelter. (19)

Art — poetry, painting, architecture, sculpture and music — Cather claims, "did not come into being as a means of increasing the game supply or promoting tribal security. They sprang from an unaccountable predilection of the one unaccountable thing in man" (19). Just as Imogen asks Jimmy in "Flavia and Her Artists," "why does she bother?" Cather, here, asks a similar question. But the answer is very different, as is the context. Art, considered in a sphere separate from consumer

culture, in the fresh air off the mesa, divorced from economics, serves a clearer, even spiritual, purpose.

Later in the "The Novel Démeublé," Cather describes the "high quality" of "the novel or the drama" in opposition to the more "journalistic" forms of modern writing:

> How wonderful it would be if we could throw all the furniture out of the window; and along with it, all the meaningless reiterations concerning physical sensations, all the tiresome old patterns, and leave the room as bare as the stage of a Greek theatre, or as that house into which the glory of Pentecost descended; leave the scene bare for the play of emotions, great and little — for the nursery tale, no less than the tragedy, is killed by tasteless amplitude. (42-3)

Perhaps the most significant distinction Cather draws in this essay is signaled by the term "tasteless" and points to her belief in the very different qualities of types of art. There is art which is "mass produced" for "amusement," as things are produced for consumption and subsequent disposal, and there is "art" which can be "enjoyed," playing upon the bare stage, evoking emotion. Her descriptive language is here infused with a spiritual connotation, suggesting transcendence, even an allusion to the descent of the Holy Spirit. The latter art, playing upon a bare stage, exemplifies the characteristics of her new approach to realism; when the material objects are "fused" with the emotions of the characters, "literalness ceases to be literalness — it is merely part of the experience" (40). Cather implicitly conflates art with "experience" here, and in the process differentiates the representation or

consumption of material reality from "real life," from "the emotional penumbra of the experience," in a way which mirrors the split between matter and spirit, between this world and the next, of religious belief.

The spirit versus matter trope is found again in another discussion of Cather's sense of realism in fiction: "One does not wish the egg one eats for breakfast, or the morning papers, to be made of the stuff of immortality." But, again, Cather's theory belies a contradictory position: art is transcendent, "immortal," but also serves the very modern purposes Weber identified as "personal redemption and social criticism." Cather continues her statement:

> The novel manufactured to entertain great multitudes of people must be considered exactly like a cheap soap or a cheap perfume, or cheap furniture. Fine quality is a distinct disadvantage in articles made for great numbers of people who do not want quality but quantity, who do not want a thing that "wears," but who want change, — a succession of new things that are quickly threadbare and can be lightly thrown away. Does anyone pretend that if the Woolworth store windows were piled high with Tanagra figurines at ten cents, they could for a moment compete with Kewpie brides in the popular esteem? Amusement is one thing; enjoyment of art is another. (36)

Cather insists that "one must make it clear whether one is talking about the novel as a form of amusement, or as a form of art; since they serve very different purposes and

in very different ways" (35). And, again, in "On the Art of Fiction," in 1920, she emphasizes the point:

> Writing ought either to be the manufacture of stories for which there is a market demand — a business as safe and commendable as making soap or breakfast foods — or it should be an art, which is always a search for something for which there is no market demand, something new and untried, where the values are intrinsic and have nothing to do with standardized values. The courage to go on without compromise does not come to a writer all at once — nor, for that matter, does the ability. (103)

The "courage to go on without compromise" implies resistance to "standardized values," and is an implicit social criticism of a consumer culture which finds "safe" literature or art making up the "market demand." The "enjoyment of art" and social criticism, despite Cather's adherence to the notion of transcendence, are inseparable.

In "Flavia and Her Artists," Cather furthers this distinction between art and business, using the trope of the artist him or herself as proof of the modern obsession with conspicuous consumption. The artists, and implicitly the art they produce, become products for Flavia's consumption, part of "standardized values" and business as safe as making soap or breakfast foods, and as easily bought. This is evidence of the intrusion of modern consumer behavior and market values into the realm of art: the artist no longer functions independently of market forces and is dependant upon consumer "taste." Cather's nouveau-riche character, Flavia, becomes the arbiter of "tasteless amplitude," collecting artists and celebrities around

her like Kewpie dolls, without any basis for discernment than their popularity. Since she has, as Pierre Bourdieu might argue, no "legitimate way of appropriating culture," Flavia needs to consume, and to consume conspicuously. Bourdieu claims that "to the socially recognized hierarchy of the arts, and within each of them, of genres, schools or periods, corresponds a social hierarchy of the consumers. This predisposes tastes to function as markers of 'class'" (2).

Flavia's point in collecting artists who are well-recognized is to further her own status, certainly not to "enjoy" art. As a fledgling bourgeois, Flavia needs all the cultural capital and legitimation she can get. Literally "buying into" the consumer ideology of fame, Flavia believes that her association with celebrity artists will further her claims to cultural legitimacy (class) and reputability (as an individual). As Flavia "enumerates" her collection to her guests as they arrive:

> Imogen realized the completeness of Flavia's triumph. They were people of one name, mostly, like kings; people whose names stirred the imagination like a romance or a melody. With the notable exception of M. Roux, Imogen had seen most of them before, either in concert halls or lecture rooms; they looked noticeably older and dimmer than she remembered them. (12)

The celebrities — "Schemetzkin," "Maidenwood," "Wellington," "Schotte," "Martel," Roux"— signify to Flavia a kind of cultural distinction; their celebrity status accords them, and thus by association herself, a distinction among other consumers.

Flavia's collection is a manifestation of what Bourdieu has termed "the ideology of charisma." Flavia's taste is informed by her social origins, and, as Bourdieu claims, "the manner in which culture has been acquired lives on in the manner of using it," including the ability (or inability) to "decipher" the codes of "taste." Bourdieu claims:

> Consumption is . . . a stage in a process of communication, that is, an act of deciphering, decoding, which presupposes practical or explicit mastery of a cipher or code. . . . A work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded. . . .A beholder who lacks the specific code feels most in a chaos of sounds and rhythms, colors and lines, without rhyme or reason . . . He cannot move from the "primary stratum of the meaning we can grasp on the basis of our ordinary experience" to the "stratum of secondary meanings" . . . unless he possesses the concepts which go beyond the sensible properties and which identify the specifically stylistic properties of the work. (2)

While Flavia is notable in her attempt to commodify aesthetic and intellectual pleasure, her lack of discernment leads her to infer that the mere presence of a celebrity artist, a type of window-dressing, means that she is on the same level intellectually and aesthetically, and this provides her with "consolation" if not counsel. Consolation here means that she has found some reputability, at least in her own mind, for Cather will not allow art to provide "redemption" without a full

understanding of it. For the guests this means, among other things, their confinement to what Jimmy ironically terms "the cages" (6). As Flavia's wealth and leisure has increased, her desire for cultural reputability drives her so that now her guests are "less and less . . .those mysterious persons with mysterious obstacles in their paths and mysterious grievances against the world," for "she had now the few, the select, the 'best'" (6).

Cather writes that in homage to her own success at seducing artists to join her company, "Flavia's [new] house was the mirror of her exultation; it was a temple to the gods of Victory, a sort of triumphal arch" (6), through which there is an endless procession of the newest "arrived" celebrity artists and intellectuals. As the line between celebrity, commodity culture and art becomes more diffuse and illegible, the nouveau-riche asserts "taste" in its "amplitude" of acquisition. In her assertion of "taste" in her consumption, Flavia distracts herself, but she also betrays her need for cultural acceptance and for the cultural capital she hopes to acquire through her association with those "of one name, mostly, like kings" (12).

In noting the effects of mass marketing on manufacturing, Walter Benjamin comments on the development of "taste" in the consumer. In "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire," Benjamin claims that:

> Taste develops when commodity production clearly surpasses any other kind of production. The manufacture of products as commodities for a market ensures that the conditions of their production — not only societal conditions, in the form of exploitation, but technological ones as well — will gradually vanish from the

> perceived world of the people. The consumer, who is more or less expert when he gives an order to an artisan . . . is not usually knowledgeable when he acts as a buyer. Added to this is the fact that mass production, which aims at turning out inexpensive commodities, must strive to disguise bad quality. In most cases, mass production actually benefits when the buyer has little expertise. The more industry progresses, the more perfect are the imitations it offers on the market. . . . As the expertness of a customer declines, the importance of his taste increases proportionately — both for him and for the manufacturer. For the consumer, it serves as a more or less elaborate masking of his lack of expertness. For the manufacturer, it serves as a fresh stimulus to consumption . . . (64-5)

Art as a commodity, and celebrity artists as producers or manufacturers, coexist in commodity culture as perpetrators of fraud.

Flavia, Cather writes, has a "note" which is "manifestly false" (11). Her face was "a perfect scream of animation," "created and maintained by sheer, indomitable force of will" (11). As she throws herself into heated discussion with a novelist who "had fallen into the hands of a great American syndicate . . . which had guaranteed to make him famous before he was thirty" and another artist arguing for the censorship the syndicate insisted upon, another semi-famous person, a chemist, "demanded the attention of the entire company for exposition of his devices for manufacturing ice-cream from vegetable oils, and for administering drugs in bonbons" (13). And yet Flavia pretends that they are all "the artists." As the line between commodity and

artist has dissolved, the line between taste and acquisition for the sake of status has also disappeared, and Flavia is no "expert" despite her assertions of "taste" for "only the best." Since Flavia cannot understand the "significance of any work of art" and since "all Flavia's artists have done . . .means exactly as much to her as a symphony means to an oyster," Flavia shows herself incapable of moving beyond Bourdieu's "primary stratum" to the signifying stratum, and hence, is unable to "decipher the code" of the expert, or for that matter, of the imitator. Her consumption of culture is as crude as her apprehension of it; and just as she confuses reputability with pecuniary worth, she confuses the primary stratum of celebrity with the "art which is to be enjoyed"— which, for Cather, still offers personal redemption.

Flavia is self-deluded of course, but is also rather frightened. The sense of unease Lears has identified as attendant upon modern life is, as in "The Garden Lodge," written into this story. For instance, Cather writes that "For all her sparkling assurance of manner, Flavia was certainly always ill at ease, and even more certainly anxious." Further:

> She seemed not convinced of the established order of material things, seemed always to conceal her feeling that walls might crumble, chasms open, or the fabric of her life fly to the winds in irretrievable entanglement. At least this was the impression Imogen got from that note in Flavia which was so manifestly false. (11)

Flavia lacks the moral commitment and firm spiritual grounding that Lears has noted in the bourgeoisie of the fin de siècle. Her moral commitments are, as Lears says, "hazy" and vague, and conspicuous consumption will help to displace this unease, at

least temporarily. And, like so many faced with the enervation of modern life, Flavia will look to the realm of aesthetic culture, or what she perceives to be aesthetic culture, as an antidote to the sense of unreality.

But Flavia's artists are rather understandably obsequious and resentful, depending upon their history with her. As if to underscore the predatory aspect of Flavia's needs, Cather shows that Flavia treats those artists who have not paid back her attentions with fame as expendable. As her economic and pecuniary reputability has increased, she can now afford to have only "the few, the select, 'the best'" and of all those she had first started with, "of all that band of indigent retainers who had once fed at her board like the suitors in the halls of Penelope, only Alcée Buisson still retained his right of entrée." This is because:

> he alone had remembered that ambition hath a knapsack at his back, wherein he puts alms to oblivion, and he alone had been considerate enough to do what Flavia had expected of him, and give his name a current value in the world. (6)

As Jimmy puts it, "he was her first real one"; and "Flavia, like Mahomet, could remember her first believer" (7). The reference to belief is significant since Cather represents in this story, as in "The Garden Lodge," the sense of unease attendant upon modern life. Lacking moral commitment and firm spiritual grounding, thus looking for conspicuous consumption and aesthetic culture to alleviate the sense of her own weightlessness, Flavia will take her protégés as evidence that her life has purpose.

While "Flavia and Her Artists" only warrants one paragraph in Loretta Wasserman's study of Cather's short fiction, where she claims that the story

"introduce[s] a number of psychological crosscurrents — so many that the reader wearies of following them" (27), it is those very "crosscurrents" that I find most interesting in light of Cather's antimodern stance. Susan Rosowski, in her book The Voyage Perilous: Willa Cather's Romanticism, claims that while Cather's "technique" in the early stories is "often quite good," what is "missing" is "conviction" (29). Rosowski seems to hold that Cather's primary intention in writing the story was to parody an acquaintance (Dorothy Canfield Fisher's mother), who, like Flavia, entered the "world of art," as Rosowski puts it, "falsely." While this parodic intent is of course true, it nonetheless misses the answer Cather gives to consumerist modernity. Rather than lacking conviction, Cather holds strong convictions: the key point being that there is more than one "conviction." Based as Cather's convictions are on a commitment to American individualism that is itself inherently contradictory and therefore, like most antimodern strategies — as Lears argues throughout No Place of Grace — has unintended consequences, there are in fact, as Wasserman claims, many "crosscurrents" in the story. However, they aren't particularly "psychological" as she asserts, but rather sociological and historical. Cather's dual commitment is strong: to individualism and to the antimodern impulse to protest modernity's effects on the realm of art, especially as it manifests through consumption.

Cather's contradictions or conflicting commitments may be understood as a dialogic relationship which can be located in her texts. As Bakhtin claims in "Discourse in the Novel":

> Language — like the living concrete environment in which the consciousness of the verbal artist lives — is never unitary. It is unitary only as an abstract grammatical system of normative forms, taken in isolation from the uninterrupted process of historical becoming that is characteristic of all living language. Actual social life and historical becoming create within an abstractly unitary national language a multitude of concrete worlds, a multitude of bounded verbal ideological and social belief systems; within these various systems (identical in the abstract) are elements of language filled with various semantic and axiological content and each with its own different sound . . .Thus at any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, school, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form. These "languages" of heteroglossia intersect each other in a variety of ways, forming new socially typifying "languages". . . (33-34)

Cather's antimodern aesthetic maintains commitment to at least two strains within American culture: the antimodern yet "progressive" strain of American individualism and the work ethic, and the fear of and critique of hedonistic excess, most clearly

manifest in consumerist culture, which is of course itself dependant on the ideology of radical individualism.

In her ambivalence towards the individual, and perhaps rooted in her own sense of the loss of authenticity of modern "unreal" life as she begins her writing career in the city, Cather posits the nouveau-riche consumer against a figure of what Weber termed ascetic rationalism, Arthur, "the pillar of law," but also against the true artist, Jimmy, still uncontaminated by market forces and immune to Flavia's attempts to appropriate her. In this story the "crosscurrents" can be more usefully understood as a multitude of "languages" competing for validation, for the right to "answer" the conditions within which a language must function.

Bakhtin claims that "concrete socio-ideological language consciousness, as it becomes creative — that is, as it becomes active as literature — discovers itself already surrounded by heteroglossia and not at all a single, unitary language, inviolable and indisputable." Art as "answerability" then is inherently dialogic, even, one could say, multilingual. In "Discourse in the Novel," Bakhtin also claims:

> The actively literary linguistic consciousness at all times and everywhere . . .comes upon 'languages,' and not language. Consciousness finds itself inevitably facing the necessity of having to choose a language. (295)

Cather does not resist but rather participates in this heteroglossia of language, representing this multiplicity through the various characters and their responses in the story. However, as Bakhtin claims,

> With each literary-verbal performance, consciousness must

> actively orient itself amidst heteroglossia, it must move in and occupy a position for itself within it, it chooses, in other words, a "language." Only by remaining in a closed environment, one without writing or thought, completely off the maps of socio-ideological becoming, could a man fail to sense this activity of selecting a language and rest assured in the inviolability of his own language, the conviction that his language is predetermined. (295)

One of the striking things about Cather's story is the multiplicity of points of view and "languages" spoken in the house, and — more importantly — Flavia's distinct obliviousness to this. Coupled with her own glaring assurance of the "inviolability" of her own language, that is, her strength of will in attempting to bend all "her artists" to her intentions, she in effect requires that they submit to her "language" of acquisition. Cather's answer to the heteroglossia of the socio-ideological moment is here figured in the variety of characters populating Flavia's "closed environment," where Flavia appropriates without much thought, much less artistic or intellectual endeavor of her own. Flavia's house is significantly described by Jimmy as an "asylum for the arts," "where" as Imogen observes, "people stalk about with a sort of mad-house dignity, each one fancying himself a king or a pope" (27). In addition to housing the "languages" of ascetic rationalism, consumerism and aesthetic culture, there are frauds, pedants, pseudo-scientists, and pseudo-musicians. For example:

> After dinner the guests took their coffee in the music-room, where Schemetzkin sat down at the piano to drum rag-time, and give his

> celebrated imitation of the boarding-school girl's execution of Chopin. He flatly refused to play anything more serious, and would practice only in the morning, when he had the music-room to himself. Hamilton and M. Roux repaired to the smoking-room to discuss the necessity of extending the tax on manufactured articles in France . . . After Schmetzkin had grimaced and tortured the keyboard with malicious vulgarities for half an hour, Signor Donati, to put an end to his torture, consented to sing . . . (15)

And, as Arthur notes, "the tenor," is "a shaken reed," "pathetic" (17). In addition, as Jimmy notes, "Chaos has already begun in the servants' quarters. There are six different languages spoken there now," and, when asked what Arthur must think of it all, she replies, "what would any man think of having his house turned into an hotel, habited by freaks who discharge his servants, borrow his money, and insult his neighbours? This place is shunned like a lazaretto!" (19) Flavia is clearly a transgressive character, but Cather's depiction of her behavior as transgressive calls into question not only the progressive, bourgeois values of reputability, but the modern access to cultural capital and aesthetic culture through the market and conspicuous consumption.

"Language," as Bakhtin argues, "is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated — overpopulated — with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process"; and, further,

> not all words for just anyone submit equally easily to this appropriation, to this seizure and transformation into private property; many words stubbornly resist, others remain alien, sound foreign in the mouth of the one who appropriated them and who now speaks them; they cannot be assimilated into his context and fall out of it; it is as if they put themselves in quotation marks against the will of the speaker. (35)

Cather signifies this difficulty of appropriation of language, and most especially her disdain for the appropriation of the language of the artist, in Flavia's attempts to mimic the artists whom she hosts in her house. Flavia literally cannot discern between artistic, literary intention and the popularized version of the artist, available to her through legendary accounts of their celebrity. For instance, one of the guests, Martel, has told Flavia of his own admiration for another guest, the celebrated Roux. Of him Martel:

> had enthusiastically declared, "There are schools and schools, manners and manners; but Roux is Roux, and Paris sets its watches by his clock." Flavia had already repeated this remark to Imogen. It haunted her, and each time she quoted it she was impressed anew. (13)

As her cousin Jimmy Broadwood notes, Flavia could, "on occasion, utter things simply incomprehensible for their banality — at her feats of this sort Miss Broadwood was wont to sit breathless with admiration" (14). The most notable time this occurs in the story is when Flavia addresses the novelist, Roux, attempting to

elicit from him a compliment for her "appreciation" of artists (those she terms "the best"). In order to impress Roux with her worldliness she will repeat the clock comment to his face as well. M. Roux responds with utter disbelief and astonishment at her attempts to appropriate his status, and at her lack of dignity in doing so; her attempts to draw him into conversation as she asserts herself, practically begging for recognition of her intelligence and perceptiveness only betray her lack of either. Roux clearly thinks of her as aggressive and self-serving, as he will show in the published article on American women which makes no attempt to disguise the particular prototype for his contempt. Despite his having accepted her invitation to stay at what Jimmy calls "an hotel, inhabited by freaks" Roux will betray his hostess in the most public way, in the resistant language of newsprint (20).

Cather's characters in "Flavia and Her Artists" not only compete with each other for what Bourdieu terms "distinction" through their assertion of their own "language" — of fiction, of sculpture, of song, of science — but some, like Roux, also resist the appropriation of their languages by Flavia's language of conspicuous consumption. The dialectic within the story is figured through the characters who resist and those who accommodate to this language of acquisition and appropriation. Cather's crosscurrents are thus figures of competing discourses within an ambivalent antimodern moment, not mere psychological conflicts which the "reader wearies of following."

One point of resistance to Flavia's acquisitiveness is, ironically, the person closest to her, her husband Arthur. This figure of ascetic rationalism is figured as a "magician." Arthur is a reluctant industrialist who manages however, with "quiet

perseverance" and "without any demonstration of enthusiasm," to add to his inherited fortune. Arthur Hamilton is a "self-sufficient, rather ascetic man of thirty" and, though "wholly negative in all other personal relations," inexplicably loyal to his wife. Arthur, who funds the entire ridiculous enterprise and ultimately sacrifices himself to his wife's reputation, is, according to Jimmy, "a pillar of sanity and law in this house of shams and swollen vanities" (27). Besides initially resisting the move to New York and the building of the house in the first place, Arthur maintains a critical distance now that he's been worn down. While he sees exactly what is happening, at his own expense, he nevertheless exhibits a kind of self-denying moral discipline, a very Protestant stoicism in enduring and even indulging his wife's whims. But Flavia finds it impossible to understand him; her theory is that he is "stupid, bigoted, blinded by middle-class prejudices," lacking in "aesthetic sense," and that the artists have "tolerated" him despite this (27). Flavia has no idea that she is describing herself instead. On the other hand, Arthur sees himself, as he sees Jimmy, as an "old cynic" and sees the young, scholarly Imogen, who stands to be disillusioned if she stays any longer, as "brim full of dates and formulae and other positivisms, and is so girt about with illusions that she still casts a shadow in the sun" (28). An interesting description to be sure from the one who is described as "rather ascetic." However, Cather offers us a clue about Arthur's cynicism early in the story:

> Arthur Hamilton was born, and had spent his boyhood in the West Indies, and physically he had never lost the brand of the tropics. His father, after inventing the machine which bore his name, had returned

> to the States to patent and manufacture it. After leaving college, Arthur had spent five years ranching in the West and traveling abroad. Upon his father's death he had returned to Chicago and, to the astonishment of all his friends, had taken up the business — without any demonstration of enthusiasm . . . (7)

Cather offers a hint of what has made Arthur the way he is later in the story in a scene in which Arthur responds to his small boys' recounting of their dreams the night before. William has dreamed of fireworks hidden in a basement, and "Arthur reflected sadly" that "If little boys dream things, they are so apt not to come true." When his son asks "But do things vanish just because they have been dreamed?" Arthur answers, "Generally that is the very best reason for their vanishing" (18). Perhaps Arthur's childhood in another country, or his experience in the west, "the fresh air off the Blue Mesa," has given him a vision of other dreams which for some reason he has been denied. While Flavia, despite her colossal ego, is depicted as someone lacking the ability to experience intensity or authenticity either in her personal life (her relations with her husband and especially her own children) or in her relationship to art, Arthur has seen more of the world and has become (consciously it would seem) "rather ascetic" and, now, even cynical as a result.

Weber's description of the "ideal capitalist"— a type rarely realized but first described by Benjamin Franklin — is eerily close to the representation of Arthur Hamilton:

> The ideal type of the capitalistic entrepreneur . . . avoids ostentation and unnecessary expenditure, as well as conscious enjoyment of his

> power, and is embarrassed by the outward signs of the social recognition which he receives. His manner of life is, in other words, often . . .distinguished by a certain ascetic tendency, as appears clearly enough in the sermon of Franklin. . . It is, namely, by no means exceptional, but rather the rule, for him to have a sort of modesty which is essentially more honest than the reserve which Franklin so shrewdly recommends. He gets nothing out of his wealth for himself, except the irrational sense of having done his job well. (71)

Arthur seems to have resigned himself to conforming to the ideal-type of bourgeois, to have accepted his literal and figurative "inheritance" from his father as his purpose in life, after having tried various other avenues.

Imogen, who remembers Arthur from her childhood as a friend of her family, cannot understand what Arthur sees or ever saw in Flavia, and the descriptions of Arthur's reaction to Flavia imply that it must be a simple sexual attraction. Imogen remembers, twelve years ago, Arthur's investment in reading her fairy tales, in "pulling her up to the river to hunt for fairy knolls" or reading her Alice in Wonderland (16). As she sees him for the first time upon arriving at his home, she barely recognizes him, his manner is so indifferent, he seems so bored among the "chaos" that reigns. Arthur, as Jimmy says, does not understand what Roux does: that Flavia really doesn't understand the art or the artists. Perhaps this is one reason he defends Flavia by attacking Roux's article in front of the other guests. Arthur, in

the end, has given up fairy tales, dreams, and taken on the role of defender of bourgeois values.

But, regardless of the wealth available to her from her husband's success in manufacturing, in spite of his devotion to her despite her lack of discernment, taste, or proper behavior, Flavia finds something missing. Cather writes that:

> Flavia had, indeed, quite an equipment of epigram to the effect that our century creates the iron genii which evolve its fairy tales: but the fact that her husband's name was annually painted upon some ten thousand threshing machines, in reality contributed very little to her happiness. (7)

In this description the reader is given the clue to Flavia's insecurity, and also one key to Cather's antimodernism. Like many at the turn of the century, when, as Lears claims, republican moralism began to give way to the pressures of industrial life and urbanity, Flavia embarked on what seems a rather desperate quest for "real life" — for a type of "authentic experience" that offers a sense of structure, solidity and meaning. Flavia has begun to doubt the solidity of her own experience, the potential of her wealth to provide happiness, and perhaps even her choice of husband. On the other hand, Cather alludes to the possibility that Arthur may have had "authentic" experience elsewhere. It seems to have been duty or the loss of a dream which brought him back to Chicago, to "take over the business," and to Flavia. It seems to be duty which keeps him with her.

In addition to the search for authenticity in aesthetic culture, the disenchantment of everyday life inherent in progressive ideology and rationalized

existence, and the fading of ascetic rationalism in favor of hedonism and greed which Weber outlines, Lears traces an antimodernist obsession with "eclecticism" which reaches "for the legitimacy conferred by traditional symbols." Lears claims that the reappropriation of anachronistic symbols reached new proportions in fin de siècle America, and that by "uprooting once-sacred symbols from their appropriate time, place, and purpose, the eclectic approach trivialized them — reduced them to commodities in the marketplace of taste." But it also signified "the impoverishment of a culture which lacked sources for creating its own symbols," intensifying the feeling that "the urban environment was somehow artificial and unreal" (33). Some hint of this is found in "Flavia and Her Artists." For example, as Flavia leads Jimmy and Imogen to the smoking room, the description alludes to the appropriation of exotic symbols of status and power:

> The June evening was chilly, and a fire had been lighted in the fireplace. Through the deepening dusk the firelight flickered upon the pipes and curious weapons on the wall, and threw an orange glow over the Turkish hangings. One side of the smoking-room was entirely of glass, separating it from the conservatory. . . . There was about the darkened room some suggestion of certain chambers in the Arabian Nights, opening on a court of palms. (9-10)

Juxtaposed to what Lears calls the "crumbling Protestant culture of the late nineteenth century" and the "sterility of nineteenth-century positivism," such symbols (often medieval or exotic in character, but still mixed with a fading Victorianism) intrude upon the architectural and decorative forms of the bourgeoisie

(Lears xv). As Lears explains, even somewhat extreme forms of antimodernism were not simple escape, but, as they often coexisted with a belief in material progress, represented an odd "complex blend of accommodation and protest" which persists even today. Cather's allusions to the exoticism of the Arab world, to fairy tales, and to the symbols of status and predatory power appropriated from other cultures, only highlights the nouveau-riche obsession with status. By displaying such symbols, the bourgeoisie can both lay claim to ancient (or at least older) cultural capital and protest the rationalization and "iron cage" of mechanical, bureaucratic life by reaching toward an "other." This is especially important to those groups which lack cultural legitimacy.

Underlying the various antimodern reactions at the end of the nineteenth century were the outmoded, hackneyed banalities of progressive rhetoric accompanying the second Industrial Revolution, all of them undergirded by a belief in "progress" and implicitly or more obviously justifying all manner of excess and superficiality. The industrial revolution in America, according to Lears, was itself "entwined with the shift from the disorganized entrepreneurial capitalism of the earlier nineteenth century to the organized corporate capitalism of our own time." This particular story represents this shift overtly. Arthur is now the head of a large corporation, which he has consolidated into a nationwide industry after his father's original patent of the machine which originally made their fortune in what was presumably a small business or cottage industry in the West Indies. Utilizing Max Weber's notion of the rationalization of everyday life, Lears notes that "the rationalization of economic life — the drive for maximum profits through the

adoption of the most efficient forms of organization — was moving into high gear, especially in the United States" (9). The banalities, spoken at the banquets, written in self-help pamphlets, preached in the watered-down WASP pulpits of the late nineteenth-century, helped to fuel the search for meaning. And the search often triggered more "banal" approaches to the complex problems of modernity: a turn to medieval aesthetics, to utopian or mythical archetypes, to therapeutic culture, to fairy tales, to militarism. There was an urgent need to displace the angst of the period, often involving a search for a sense of order, which these approaches often seemed to meet. Some of these solutions Cather depicts in her fiction.

Lears claims that though "popular rhetoric spoke of 'subduing nature,' business leaders embraced the functional rationality and technological innovations of organized capitalism for more precise reasons: to stabilize production and consolidate control over a national market" (9). He also points out that this rationalization is not an impersonal process but was furthered by "dominant social groups who stood to benefit . . . from corporate expansion." He continues:

> While old inequalities of wealth and power persisted, the growing ascendance of larger corporations brought to prominence a more nationally oriented bourgeoisie. The Marxist idiom, shopworn though it may be, is inescapable: rationalization promoted many interests but primarily those of an emergent national ruling class — still embryonic, torn by tension, sometimes barely cohesive, but an incipient ruling class nonetheless. (9)

Arthur's "quiet perseverance, marked ability, and amazing industry" has served him well, but "why or how a self-sufficient, rather ascetic man of thirty" should have been attracted to Flavia is a mystery no acquaintance has yet solved (7). Cather suggests that Flavia's aspirations may have contributed to Arthur's attraction, despite his reserve and tendencies towards asceticism. In fact, the complementary aspects of his relatively new wealth and her social status aspirations are inseparable. If Arthur's "dream" has vanished, simply because he dreamed it, perhaps he has substituted something in its place.

Flavia saw herself stifled among the Midwestern "traditions," which she associates with the milieu of Chicago and "the Michigan woods" which her husband much preferred to the Hudson valley. Flavia felt that those traditions stood in the way of her "ambition," which had, Cather tells us, "long ago outgrown the dimensions of her house on Prairie Avenue" and of which she had "bitterly complained." The traditions —afternoon clubs with other businessmen's wives, the literary societies — have yielded up all their possible status. But "the establishing of a New York office had at length overthrown Arthur's last valid objection to quitting the lake country for three months of the year; and Arthur could be wearied into anything." Hence, we begin to see the compromise involved. While Arthur is unwilling to indulge Flavia's whims full-time, she at least believes she has convinced him of "the value of such friendships on the children's account, if for nothing else! What an advantage for them to grow up among such associations" (26). Flavia's project of attracting the "aves rares" who could not be "lured so far away from the seaport," after she "declared herself for the historic Hudson and knew no retreat" is

now an accomplished fact, and her new house is a "mirror of her exultation," even if just for three months a year (6). Her contention is that she herself has made "concessions" to Arthur's businesslike indifference towards art and artists, and that "this much Arthur owed her" (7). It would seem that he accepts this premise as well.

This story posits one additional aspect of the dilemma of modern culture for an artist: that artists in America also have a stake in a functioning elite, despite their personal distaste for the commodification of culture. But the story primarily seems to suggest that the new bourgeoisie has a stake in cultural capital to displace the angst of a "vocation" without spiritual underpinnings. Cather's early stories consistently wrestle with issues of class, and, in doing so, seem ambiguous in their stance, even indeterminate. The ambiguity is real: Cather both promotes and resists the European, Arnoldian notion of culture as the province of an aristocratic class, and as something to which an American artist should have access; and she both promotes and resists the American creed of individualism and the culture of consumerism it furthers. As an artist committed to the notion that art is the most authentic form of individual experience, yet aware of the process of rationalization involved in the promotion of celebrity culture, Cather could not help but be wary of modern celebrity culture's effects. The problem of the place of art and the artist in American culture in the face of encroaching consumerism is not easily solved.

As an American artist seeking validation and a kind of access to cultural capital of her own, Cather will write into her own fiction the problems of class, nationality, and morality associated with the artist in an increasingly consumer-oriented and hedonistic culture, and, associated with these issues is the search for

legitimacy in American letters, the attempt to claim a part in the cultural heritage of a tradition that is just barely established. One way Cather approaches these problems is to differentiate between the "true artist" and the "celebrity," what might be termed "high" and "low" ("popular," or "mass") culture: but these categories are becoming increasingly difficult to separate and the tenuous separation is difficult to maintain. In her attempt to answer the cultural contradictions she faces, Cather blends ascetic rationalism and consumer culture in one marriage: Arthur's attempt to maintain a work ethic and Flavia's attempts to appropriate art complement each other in a messy, difficult way. But their marriage beautifully represents the blend of accommodation and protest inherent in the culture. As Cather shows the two coexisting, even comingling, she addresses the impossible contradictions of capitalism. As she distinguishes the celebrity artist from Jimmy's "real" art, she not only interrogates market culture, but reserves a space for the art one can "enjoy." In her consignment of celebrity art to that category of a "business, safe and commendable as the making of breakfast foods or soap," Cather inscribes her own commitment to a culture, or at least the notion of a culture, free from the dictates of the market and the arbiters of "taste." As an artist seeking authentic cultural validation herself, Cather seeks distance between herself and the Flavia's and the Roux's of the world: the tasteless amplitude of the "snob," and the assumed cultural superiority of the European artist.

As Benjamin says in "Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century":

> The art that begins to doubt its task and ceases to be "inseparable from . . .utility" (Baudelaire) must make novelty into its highest value. The

> arbiter novarum rerum for such an art becomes the snob. He is to art what the dandy is to fashion. (41)

Cather's "utility" is actually an art for art's sake, but a qualified one. The next chapters will examine Cather's theory of art further, and then, her depiction of the dandy.

Chapter Three *The Rhetorics of Pleasure: Problems and Protest in Cather's Aesthetic*

"Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end." Walter Pater, "Conclusion" to Studies in the History of the Renaissance, 1873.

Part I. *Introduction*: "His dearest pleasures" and "sense of power": protest and Cather's excess of seeing in "Paul's Case"

In perhaps the most famous of Cather's early short stories, "Paul's Case," the vicarious experience of aesthetic culture provides a respite from the ugliness and asceticism of Cordelia Street, a place populated by people who believe devoutly in the work ethic, by people who are "as exactly alike as their homes, and of a piece of the monotony in which they lived" (175). Cather overtly contrasts the Protestant ethic of those who "had a worthy ambition to come up in the world" with artistic ambition, "something akin to what churchmen term 'vocation'" (179). Cordelia Street, "where business men of moderate means begot and reared large families of children, all of whom went to Sabbath-school and learned the shorter catechism," exacts from Paul, a seventeen-year old boy, a shuddering repulsion for the "flavourless, colourless mass of every-day existence" (175). In contrast, Paul feels he "lives" only at the theatre, where he works as an usher, but Cather shows that his experience of the theatre is really only "Paul's fairy tale" with "all the allurement of a secret love." Paul escapes to the theatre as a protest to his monotonous life at home and at school. While he doesn't understand art, and is actually more interested in the celebrities associated with it and what they represent, nevertheless, at the theatre he "breathed like a

prisoner set free, and felt within him the possibility of doing or saying splendid, brilliant things" (179).

Cather writes that as the "cracked orchestra" of the local theatre "jerked at the serenade from Rigoletto, all stupid and ugly things slid from him, and his senses were deliciously, yet delicately fired" (179). For Paul, the theatre represents "the actual portal of Romance." Paul, like Flavia, is not really moved by the music itself or the paintings he "lost himself in"; he had "no desire to become an actor, any more than he had to become a musician." Paul experiences art vicariously, through the sensations which surround artistic production, and is never stirred to become an artist in his own right. "He felt no necessity to do any of these things; what he wanted was to see, to be in the atmosphere, float on the wave of it, to be carried out, blue league after blue league, away from everything" (180). Cather is clear that, in Paul's case, the sphere of art serves another purpose than art for art's sake: it signifies an escape from the conditions of modernity. Paul's pleasure in simply "being in the atmosphere" is, like Flavia's experience, "false," but is nonetheless a gesture of protest towards the ascetic rationalism of modernity.

Paul's teachers and father agree that "Paul's was a bad case," and Cather does as well, but for a different set of reasons (181). As Paul sits in his hotel room after embezzling money from his father's company and running away to New York, he sees the "rumble and roar, the hurry and toss of thousands of human beings as hot for pleasure as himself," and felt "the nerve stuff of all sensations" "whirling about him like the snow flakes." Paul, as he watches the "pageant" of wealth on Fifth Avenue, "burnt like a faggot in a tempest" (184). Cather's allusion to Pater's famous sentence,

"To burn always with a hard, gem-like flame" as "success in life" is clear: but her application of this philosophy to Paul is tempered by her antimodern commitments, including a republican suspicion of excess. This suspicion is coded in Paul's confusion of art with consumption. "He knew now, more than ever, that money was everything, the wall that stood between all he loathed and all he wanted," and "his dearest pleasures were the grey winter twilights in his sitting-room; his quiet enjoyment of his flowers, his clothes, his wide divan, his cigarettes and his sense of power" (186). He had "never lied for pleasure," only to "assert his difference from other Cordelia Street boys," and felt "a good deal more manly . . .now that he could . . . dress the part" (186).

In his "Conclusion," Pater writes that "the whole scope of observation is dwarfed to the narrow chamber of the individual mind. Experience, already reduced to a swarm of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on it way to us . . . . Every one of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world." Paul's dream is very much the dream of a modern individual: solitary, alienated, and driven by the fleeting impressions which Pater outlines, and their effects on identity. Pater writes, "it is with this movement, with the passage and dissolution of impressions, images, sensations, that analysis leaves off — that continual vanishing away, that strange, perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves" (157). Paul's attempts at re-inventing himself through sensational impressions, especially those which he can purchase, will succeed only for the briefest of moments. In New York, for example:

> He had no sooner entered the dining-room and caught the measure of the music, than his remembrance was lightened by his old elastic power of claiming the moment, mounting with it, and finding it all sufficient. The glare and glitter about him, the mere scenic accessories had again, and for the last time, their old potency. He would show himself that he was game, he would finish the thing splendidly. (187)

Pater writes that "while all melts under our feet, we may well grasp at any exquisite passions . . . to set the spirit free for a moment . . . . With this sense of the splendor of our experience and of its awful brevity, gathering all we are into one desperate effort to see and touch, we shall hardly have time to make theories about the things we see and touch." This is at least partly because we are all, as Hugo said, "condamnes"—sentenced to death but "with a sort of indefinite reprieve . . . we have an interval, and then our place knows us no more." Pater continues: "Our one chance lies in expanding that interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time" (159). Paul's attempt at living for the moment is understandable, given his "real" life and misery on Cordelia Street, and Cather shows her very real empathy for this.

But Cather's empathy with Paul's escape from conformity is rooted in her particularly American faith in individualism: the very thing which, ironically, fuels the progressive rhetoric and the world of big business which in turn creates both grimy Cordelia Street and the glittering world of Fifth Avenue. With progress comes the ultimate conflation of consumption with cultural distinction and a debasement of art. With progress comes the need to escape from the monotony of Cordelia Street, and the need to seek refuge in the pageant of Fifth Avenue consumerist distraction.

While the pageant elicits pleasure from Paul, Cather also depicts Paul's problematic "realization" — that consumer culture, wealth and the aestheticized illusion of wealth is "the plot of all dramas, the text of all romances, the nerve-stuff of all sensations." Cather writes that, as a result of Paul's confusion as to what constitutes experience, all Paul "demanded was the right to look on and conjecture, to watch the pageant. The mere stage properties were all he contended for" (185). Cather's language suggests that Paul's pleasure, while real enough, is built on illusion, like his "fairy tale," or the theatre, which for Paul is "the actual portal of Romance" — a genre of fantasy (179). Pleasure simply "floods Paul's dream with bewildering radiance" (185), preventing him from seeing that it is mere seduction, that the fire of the moment is not quite enough if not rooted in reality. The plot of the story of course bears this out: Paul is in New York on stolen money, under false pretenses. He judges himself and everyone around him through the artificial standards of taste he has appropriated from stories of the rich and famous heard on the stoops of Cordelia Street. He has made others the arbiter of his own taste, and given strangers the power to endow him with distinction. "He felt now that his surroundings explained him. Nobody questioned the purple; he had only to wear it passively. He had only to glance down at his dress coat to reassure himself that here it would be impossible for anyone to humiliate him" (185). Yet outside his hotel room is a "raging storm" which he watches from his window, and he must sleep with the lights on out of "his old timidity" (185). Paul's attempts at assuaging his own insecurities with superficial commodities are ultimately useless, despite having lived in what he takes to be the intensity of a Paterian moment. The next day finds him in despair as his money runs

out and he reads that his father is coming to find him. Paul dies after throwing himself in front of a train, but in a flash of insight in which he realized "the folly of his haste" he sees the "blue of Adriatic water, the yellow of Algerian sands" and "the vastness of what he had left undone" (189). Being caught up in the moment proves to be Paul's literal undoing.

Cather's language echoes Pater's throughout the story and her allusions to Pater's aestheticism are intriguing. Furthermore, in her own aesthetic promulgations one finds her affinity to Pater's theory of art for art's sake, which she describes as "escapism" in an essay of the same name. In addition, in a 1925 preface to The Best Short Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett, Cather writes that the one thing that should survive in all "good writing" and "clever story-making" is "inherent, individual beauty" (49). She develops her notion of aesthetic beauty when she quotes Pater, who claimed:

> That every truly great drama must, in the end, linger in the reader's mind as a sort of ballad. Probably the same thing might be said of every great story. It must leave in the mind of the sensitive reader an intangible residuum of pleasure; a cadence, a quality of voice that is exclusively the writer's own, individual, unique. (49)

Cather's adherence to this individual, unique voice in art reflects her commitment to individualism in general, and this presents a dilemma which "Paul's Case" cannot resolve. In the second part of this chapter I examine the ways in which Cather's aesthetic of sensation poses problems for this commitment. Cather is ultimately

cautious about Pater's Aestheticism, in much the same way Pater came to be in the infamous footnote he appended to later editions of his text.

Cather, like most artists in America, was clearly aware of the Aesthetic movement that had gained in influence in America by the 1880s, derivative of Pater's ideas but disseminated, with some mutations, through the likes of Oscar Wilde. Wilde's 1882 tour of the United States had been exceptionally successful, and he was hailed as "the Apostle of Aestheticism," despite heckling from journalists. Mary Warner Blanchard notes, in Oscar Wilde's America: Counterculture in the Gilded Age, that his influence was admitted as the "artistic movement" took hold. Wilde was called the "figure-head" of a "great movement," the "representative and exponent of a school of culture in art," which was expounded as a "new social movement" (Blanchard xii).

Blanchard also claims that John Ruskin and William Morris "were well known to Wilde's American audiences," and that even Whistler and Pater "were recognizable figures. Thus Wilde represented a known and valued English legacy to his American followers in 1882" (xii). But while Cather's interpretation of Pater's notion of "art for art's sake" as propounded in his "Conclusion" to The Renaissance is one of the most striking features of Cather's own critical writings, her interpretation of it in her fiction nonetheless represents the limitations of this philosophy under modern American conditions. She exhibits, through the character of Paul, a positive role for a qualified aestheticism (which she bases on impressionistic sensation) as a protest to progressive rhetoric and dreary industrialized culture, but she also simultaneously suggests the dangers and limits of a kind of "sensationalized" Aestheticism in her

portrait of Paul as a dandy, an "Aesthete"; this is a picture which draws more specifically on a type of Yellow Book or even earlier Baudelarian decadence, and is a particularly nervous answer to the anxieties present in the culture, twenty years after Wilde's sensational tour. I explore the roots of Cather's dandy figure further in chapter four.

Blanchard argues that while the "aesthetic craze" was a "brief but important interlude" in late nineteenth-century culture, by the end of the century worries about American manhood "discredited" the sense that Aestheticism might offer a "higher, finer spiritual life" (xiv). It came to be seen as "grotesque" as the backlash against "inverts" grew; especially after the disgrace of Wilde in 1895 after he was arrested on charges of "gross indecency" (xiv). Journalists who had portrayed Wilde as the leader of the "Gilded Youths" of Fifth Avenue, and who had averted their eyes from the realities of pedophilia and newsboy prostitution, had, by the end of the century, expressed anxieties about the "feminization" of American culture and American manhood. These anxieties, Blanchard argues, eventually brought down the movement (xiii). The questions began to be asked, as not only female aesthetes like Candace Wheeler, Celia Thaxter, or the potter Mary Louise McLaughlin (whose enormous 1880 vase, "Ali Baba," represented the exotic Arabian Nights), but men like Louis Comfort Tiffany began to follow the "new religion of beauty": "were the American heroes of the battlefield to be replaced by dandies and interior designers?" (xiv). While the artists (particularly the women) "recognized in aestheticism an escape from Calvinist orthodoxy, an evasion of tyrannical fathers and ineffective husbands, and an opportunity to advance in the social and business worlds of the Gilded Age," it was

"precisely this liberating power" that would bring down upon the American movement "a repressive reaction" (xiii). And, with the launching of "the imperialist adventure of the Spanish-American War of 1898, the soldier/hero returned in triumph as a cultural icon." As a result, Blanchard argues, "the female visionaries of American aestheticism faded into historical oblivion" (xv). The price of aestheticism — the feminization of public space and of men — was too heavy to pay. The reassertion of a "manly" culture (helped along by the McKinley/Roosevelt ticket of 1901 and the subsequent Roosevelt Presidency after McKinley's assassination) played its part in a new national identity constructed as the wounds from the Civil War began to heal, leaving behind the place of aestheticism as a counter to the violence and trauma of mid-century culture.

This is the context in which Cather's commitment to the inherent individualism in her own aesthetic becomes problematic. As Cather's belief in individualism plays out through Paul as Aesthete — his stylized, consumerist reaction to bourgeois culture at the turn of the century — Paul's pleasure is shown as empty and dangerous. It becomes less the symbol of manly American success and more a feminized emblem of consumerism, and may be read as the ultimate modern appropriation of the individual. Cather's vision of Paul is ambivalent and both her sympathy with his plight on Cordelia Street and her depiction of the limitations of Paul's consumerist solution can be read as Cather's dialogic answer to modernity.

Through Cather's careful differentiation of fin de siècle Aestheticism from her own qualified aesthetic of sensation (examined more fully in the second part of this chapter), Cather writes the basic dilemma of antimodernism into "Paul's Case": the

commitment to individualism, which brings both progress as the American dream, *and* the ultimate manifestation of radical individualism, the effects of industrialized, modern progress — alienation, the rationalized and "colourless mass of every-day existence," depression, consumerist superficiality, and even despair and suicide. Paul, a weak, nervous boy, given to illusions and dreams, cannot hold up in such an America. In his attempt to turn to aesthetic culture, he mistakenly finds only "nerve-stuff" and "sensation," not the spiritual nourishment Cather believes art can and should deliver.

Both Cather's aesthetic and Paul's version of Aestheticism are coded antimodern reactions. Paul's attempt to consume the pleasure art can induce codes the individualistic Protestant ethic as it plays out at the fin de siècle. Paul's attempt at purchasing pleasure and vicariously experiencing art begins as protest, and ends as pointless. The other alternative, Cather's own sensational, individual commitment to beauty outside commercial culture, is also a protest to that very form of modernity. In order to maintain her own sensational, and what I argue is an Impressionistic aesthetic, Cather must qualify her commitment to individualism. She does this through depicting the aesthetic sphere as inaccessible to mere consumer culture and in doing so, qualifies her individualistic, antimodern stance. The second section of this chapter is dedicated to understanding Cather's sensational aesthetic and its philosophical roots.

While Blanchard argues that American Aestheticism was an evasion of the "conformity of the late Victorian period which saw capitalism advance" at mid-century (xiii), by the fin de siècle, Paterian or Wildean Aestheticism and its

individualistic philosophy have become indistinguishable from consumer culture. Individual and sensational experience as codified in the figure of the Aesthete, though explored by Cather as an alternative to the repressive bourgeois culture and morality in America, is ultimately shown to be anything but viable, and is in fact complicit in the type of consumerist modernity which Cather rejects. The limitations of Paul's Aestheticism which Cather writes into the story are of a piece with the repressive reaction which greeted the proponents of the Aesthetic movement (particularly the female adherents of it) late in the nineteenth and early in the twentieth-century, after Wilde's disgrace. Cather's antimodern commitments, especially her republican fears of excess, also help to explain her retreat from a pure Aestheticism.

Critics of "Paul's Case" tend to read the story as a psychological "case study," and, while Aestheticism and neurasthenia in this period do share some common traits, this story does not seem to be, for example as Loretta Wasserman claims, about "diseased will," which, in William James's theory, often results from too much fantasy stimulated by fiction (among other things). Cather did read James extensively; however, Paul, contrary to James' theory, is clearly very much able and inclined to plan as well as to act. Further, there is a caveat by Cather herself in the story that even though Paul's teachers "had a theory that his imagination had been perverted by garish fiction," which may have contributed to his scandalous behavior, "the truth was, he scarcely every read at all" (179). Wasserman also claims that "readers must reluctantly side with Paul's teachers (voices for the best understanding his culture could provide), admitting, as each does, 'that it was scarcely possible to

put into words the real cause of the trouble'" (24). This is a superficial reading at best: Cather is most certainly not on the side of the teachers or the church; and though it can be argued Cather does point up the need for an alternative ethical code, it is most certainly not that of Cordelia Street morality or the teachers who represent it. In fact, the teachers are depicted as animals bent on tormenting the young man, not as "voices for the best understanding his culture could provide," and even the minister who lives next door is only moved to act on Paul's behalf once he has committed an actual crime. The messages from Paul's culture are indeed conflicted and contradictory, but it is up to the reader to begin to interpret them, not to dismiss them.

Though it is difficult to put into words the cause of Paul's real trouble, as Wasserman claims, it is in fact possible. Paul's dilemma is clearly that of the individual in danger of losing his identity in a conformist culture, and this threatens the very heart of progressive rhetoric and belief. But this is also a culture which is accelerating rapidly into modernity, coming face to face with the chaotic elements of it, and which has posited the impossibly contradictory solutions of individual conformity and Victorian repression with the competitive American Dream of the individualistic, self-made man. It is a culture attempting to reconcile a repressive Protestant ascetic rationalism and morality with the notion of affluence as the marker of success. It is a culture which has confused "taste," "culture," and the aesthetic sphere with the pecuniary ability to consume. The root of Paul's "trouble" is his culture's commitment to individualism, and the fact that individuals as a result increasingly bear the brunt of moral responsibility that society should share; Paul's

culture also rejects that responsibility as it moves into perpetuation of "progressive" virtues of "success" under strategies of capitalist exploitation.

Cather's dilemma is that art can and should offer pleasure, but that pleasure plays into the hands of hedonistic excess. While appearing to offer Paul the alternative of art, Cather is clear that he cannot discriminate between aesthetic and commodity experience. She believes in individualism over conformity, but the space for individualism and protest must be in art, not in the rejection of work or the assimilation into hedonistic excess. Ultimately, there is no clear path of action under such a system. The character of Paul embodies this dilemma. His mother dead, having left a hand-embroidered "red worsted" on the wall (which significantly reads "Feed My Lambs"), Paul is left with only two choices. Both are devoid of any spiritual substance. Paul can either conform to the bourgeois ethos and morality of the period, which requires him to give up his individualism (to conform to the expectations of his class), or he can follow an individualistic, hedonistic, and sensational aesthetic which imitates the higher classes. This, however, provides him with no moral direction other than consumerist values: which, as Weber argues, had already overtaken the original spiritual imperatives underlying the Protestant work ethic. Neither alternative is acceptable for Cather, as the ending of the story so clearly shows. In this sense, the indeterminacy of this text can be traced to Cather's antimodern stance, to the sheer irreconcilable differences between the alternatives.

Consequently Cather maintains her antimodern stance, in keeping with many other antimodernists at the turn of the century. Cather's contradictory commitments are, as usual, coded through her representations of art. In this case, Cather again

rejects the elision of consumer culture with aesthetic culture, and indicts modernity for its lack of moral direction. But, this has unintended consequences, which is, I believe, why Cather comes to be read so often as simply conservative and why her early work is so often misinterpreted or dismissed. Lears argues, "as at other points in twentieth-century American cultural history, the most radical critics of capitalist culture were at bottom the most conservative" (167). Cather's critique is in fact "radical," as it explores the consequences of the rhetoric of the American dream on a young, motherless boy who is smothered in fantasies of wealth, often provided to him by his very own neighbor's stories about their "chiefs and overlords," in this case the steel magnates of Pittsburgh. And since her own aesthetic corresponds to her notion of "The Novel Démeublé," as I show above, the story does not enumerate the "realities" of capitalism in the way Balzac or Dreiser do. Rather, Cather's approach is to "see" Paul's response to modernity, and to art, as the story.

As part of her critique of encroaching modernity Cather codes Paul's response to art and Aestheticism carefully and quite subtly. In the context of looking at how she differentiates Paul's Aestheticism from her own aesthetic beliefs it is possible to read Cather's own artistic practice as an answer to the very real political conditions of modernity, and to read Cather as an antimodern writer relying on the very assumptions which reinforce the individualism at the basis of the modern condition — all as an attempt at finding a way to subvert that condition. This accounts for much ambivalence, even indeterminacy, present in this particular story since, as Lears claims, "the cult of inner experience had an ironic effect: its devotees reinforced the evasive banality they had intended to escape," at least partly by easing

"the transition to a consumer culture based on the imperative of self-fulfillment and instinctual gratification. Here, as elsewhere, dissent from modernity paved the way for modernity" (167). As Cather attempts to locate a workable aesthetic for her character, Paul becomes an emblem of "inner experience" and his commitment to it indeed works to modernity's advantage, producing Paul, not as an agent of critical protest, but as yet another new consumer.

While Cather ultimately rejects Aestheticism as an alternative to bourgeois banality, she maintains her own distinctly unconservative aesthetic of sensation. Cather's affinity for Pater's individualistic "art for art's sake" sensational aesthetic, as well as the theories of "flux" and duration she assimilates into her own aesthetic from sources such as Bergson, Ford, and others, differentiates her position from those of the "evasive" moralists of her period. It also differentiates her a bit from the Modernists who follow her; the direction which will come to define canonical Modernism is much more that of Pound's aesthetic than Ford's or Pater's, as I show below. That her sensational aesthetic is a self-described "escapism" does not make the story any less an antimodern protest against bourgeois morality and notions of progress. In fact, Cather's sensational aesthetic itself belies her own rejection of bourgeois culture, even though it problematically rests on the identical notion of individualism which also undergirds bourgeois morality and progressive rhetoric.

As a result of this rather tangled interplay of contradictory alliances, Cather has often been reduced to a conservative, reactionary writer, when, in fact, her work has its roots in a far more radical and complex antimodern position. "Paul's Case" is, in its critique of the culture of industrialized modernity, an artistic, if complex,

answer to modernity and to individualist rhetoric. "Paul's Case" can be read as a Bakhtinian "excess of seeing"; as Michael Holquist notes, "everything must be approached from the point of view of — point of view. And point of view is always situated" (xxviii). To be more specific:

> We not only interrogate each other, we interlocate each other, and it is the interlocative or dialogic self that is the subject of Bakhtin's architectonics. The interlocative self is one that can change places with another— that *must*, in fact, change places to see where it is. A logical implication of the fact that I can see things you cannot, and you can see things that I cannot, is that our excess of seeing is defined by a lack of seeing: my excess is your lack, and vice versa. If we wish to overcome this lack, we try to see what is there <u>together</u>. We must share each other's excess in order to overcome our mutual lack. (xxvii)

Cather's particular excess of seeing in "Paul's Case" is the refracted image of a culture which is itself refracted at many levels: the personal, the political, the Aesthetic, the sensational, the impressionistic and the concrete, all are represented in her story, and much more. Cather's brilliance is that she sees Paul from the inside out, but also from the outside in, just as she is able to make the reader see her own "excess of seeing."

Cather does not advocate Paul conservatively returning to Cordelia Street and "respectability," and she is most certainly not sympathetic with the teachers and the ministers who commit themselves, much too late, to "reclaiming the boy." Neither is

Paul merely "a case" — any more than Charlotte Perkins Gilman's narrator is "simply crazy" or disturbed in "The Yellow Wallpaper." Paul's nervousness is consistent with the neurasthenia of the Aesthete and of the age and with the teachers claiming there is something "wrong about the fellow" (172). But, as properly orthodox instructors of official rhetoric, paid to disseminate it, what else would they say? Paul's inability to fit into the society which has produced him, to submit to the demands of modern life, is depicted not as crazy but as inevitable, and as a tragedy of uniqueness, much as Gilman's narrator is the product of the paternalistic ideology responsible for the rest cure. In this sense, the conflict in Cather's story is finally about the inherent dangers and limitations of seductive, radical individualism as much as it is about the concomitant dangers of conformity — and the articulation of these dangers is a culturally conservative yet nonetheless radically antimodern position. Cather's resistance to modernity and progress through Aestheticism is a catch-22, leaving no viable alternative for Paul. Paul's Aestheticism and, problematically, Cather's antimodern sensational aesthetic, are each ultimately subverted by their complicity with individualistic sensibility and morality. In the following section I attempt to trace the major elements of what I call Cather's sensational aesthetic.

Part II. Pater, Impressionism, and the problem of pleasure: Cather's sensational aesthetic

The young Cather's commitment to the individual and to "inner experience" persists even in her later critical writings. Cather read and traveled widely, was well

acquainted with the intellectual climate of New York and Boston, and with the debates within literary circles concerning modernism, Impressionism, Bergsonian vitalism, and post-Impressionism. In addition to Cather's notion of aesthetic quality as "exclusively" "individual," Loretta Wasserman has noted that Cather's idea of how writers come to find their ideas "stress[es] the inexplicable: A writer must depend on Bergsonian intuition. Only young writers have specific opinions that they want to defend; serious writers must let something that 'teases the mind for years' finally find its form . . . The beginning of a story lies in a 'personal explosional experience' that is allowed to wait until 'the form fixes itself.'" Wasserman notes that this has reminded some of Joyce's notion of epiphany or Woolf's "moments of being," which in themselves seem much like Wordsworth's "'spots of time'—sudden and evanescent insights into a central meaning" which grow out of commonplace experience (12-3). The "personal" experience, the individual and unique experience, like the art that emerges from it, is based on sensation, and is the key component of Cather's aesthetic. That this is rooted in a Paterian notion of experience, based on "impressions" which come from the senses — shifting, transient, and difficult to capture — is evident in Cather's belief that impressions must coalesce, that "the form" must "fix itself" eventually.

T. E. Hulme, in his essay, "Bergson's Theory of Art,"[12] describes the philosophical positions which are important to an understanding of Bergson's aesthetic, which informed Cather's own aesthetic theory. Most relevant to this

[12] This essay is derived from notes Hulme delivered in lectures on the philosophy of Bergson in London during 1913, collected and published in Speculations in 1914.

discussion is Bergson's "conception of reality as a flux of interpenetrated elements unseizable by the intellect" (146). Hulme, in his exposition of Bergson, claims that "art merely reveals, it never creates" (151). This is a passive view of the artist, quite similar to Cather's claim that "the form" which derives from personal experience must "fix itself," sometimes after years. Hulme argues that what we generally perceive, as opposed to a kind of apperception which is requisite to an aesthetic perception, is a "selection made by my senses to serve as a light for my conduct . . . no more than a practical simplification of reality." Ordinary perception then is through "moulds," through classifications of things, or "fixed types." For Hulme, as for Bergson, these moulds tend to reinforce the illusion of a stable reality which does not exist. This "reality" then, determines our conduct. In this essay, Hulme glosses Bergson:

> the creative activity of the artist is only necessary because of the limitations placed on internal and external perception by the necessities of action. If we could break through the veil which action interposes, if we could come into direct contact with sense and consciousness, art would be useless and unnecessary. Our eyes, aided by memory, would carve out in space and fix in time the most inimitable of pictures. In the center of one's own mind, we should hear constantly a certain music. But as this is impossible, the function of the artist is to pierce through here and there, accidentally as it were, the veil placed between us and reality by the limitations of our perception engendered by action. (147)

Hulme asks, then, if most perception is guided by "necessity of action," of what does the "true" aesthetic emotion consist? He answers that, according to Bergson:

> The element in it which will be found in the rest of art is not the accidental fact that imagery conveys over an actually felt visual sensation, but the actual character of that communication, that fact that it hands you over the sensation as directly as possible, attempts to get it over bodily with all the qualities it possessed for you when you experienced it. (164)

Bergson's ideas, here inflected by Hulme's modernism, describe an unmediated, untheorized experience which is ahistorical, atemporal, unclassified, and, significantly, bodily — not, "the accidental fact that imagery conveys over an actually felt" sensation. It is perception unmediated by the "necessity" of action, perception without considered consequences. It is entirely reminiscent and derivative of Pater's theory of immediate impressions. Bergson's theory of art, as he describes it in Creative Evolution, derives from experience which he describes as "duration" (durée), a kind of flux of "sensations, feelings, volitions, ideas — such are the changes into which my existence is divided and which color it in turn. I change, then, without ceasing . . ." (2). This idea of unattenuated experience has remained under attack since Bergson theorized it, beginning at least with Lukács, and most recently from deconstructionists who deny the possibility of unmediated experience and the transcendence implied by it.

Bergson's notions of experience and duration can be understood as broadening Pater's claims of experience as "intervals." Pater says, "our one chance

lies in expanding that interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time"; that "passion" yields this "fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness," and, that "art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake" (184). A multiplied consciousness, like a multiplied and accretional time, undoes the notion of a "fixed" personality, and it is, according to Bergson, only the "imagined ego" which tries to unite the flow, the duration, to perceive distinct moments as "solid" (1-7). Neither time nor identity is fixed, and art and the aesthetic sensation is therefore unmediated, pure experience — pure flux.

This notion of Impressionism will be critiqued by many early in the twentieth century, perhaps most notably by Hulme himself in another essay in the posthumous collection Speculations, when, in his "Modern Art and its Philosophy" (1914), he calls Renaissance humanism full of "flat and insipid optimism" (which begins to decay with Rousseau)[13] and links the move away from this optimism about humanity

[13] Hulme states: "In a certain sense, all philosophy since the Renaissance is satisfied with a certain conception of the relation of man to the world. Now what is this conception? You get the first hint of it in the beginnings of the Renaissance itself [...] You get the hint of an idea there of something, which finally culminates in a doctrine which is the opposite of the doctrine of original sin: the belief that man as a part of nature was after all something satisfactory. The change which Copernicus is supposed to have brought about is the exact contrary of the fact. Before Copernicus, man was not the center of the world; after Copernicus he was. You get a change from a certain profundity and intensity to that flat and insipid optimism which, passing through its first stage of decay in Rousseau, has finally culminated in the state of slush in which we have the misfortune to live. [. . .] It may seem paradoxical in view of the extraordinary emphasis laid on life by philosophy at this present day, to assert that this Renaissance attitude is coming to an end. But I think that this efflorescence is its last effort." And, later in the essay, "When I speak of a new complex geometrical art then, I am not thinking of the whole movement. I am speaking of one element which seems to be gradually hardening out, and separating itself from the

and progress with the change in perception that accompanies the modern era, which moves away from the notion of flux. The "new" art (post-Impressionism) is instead clear cut, "austere," most definitely not (as, he claims, Futurism is) the "deification of flux, the last efflorescence of impressionism" (94).

In linking a belief in "progress" with flux and the impressionistic moment Hulme articulates something similar to that which T. J. Jackson Lears calls "the pattern of evasive banality" which permeates late nineteenth-century American attempts to assimilate the new post-Industrial modernity's assaults on traditional culture. Lears, like Hulme, postulates impressionistic, aesthetic "cults of experience" as growing out of a sense of impotence in the face of modern culture. Lears explains:

> Haltingly, half consciously, Europeans and Americans alike began to recognize that the triumph of modern culture had not produced greater autonomy (which was the official claim) but rather had promoted a spreading sense of moral impotence and spiritual sterility — a feeling that life had become not only overcivilized but also curiously unreal. (4)

One "antimodern" response to this is the attempt to heighten experience, to locate "authentic" alternatives to modernity. "In both Europe and America," Lears notes,

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others. I don't want anyone to suppose, for example, that I am speaking of futurism, which is, in its logical form, the exact opposite of the art I am describing, being the deification of the flux, the last efflorescence of impressionism." "Modern Art and Its Philosophy," 1914. (80-1, 94)

> the antimodern impulse was rooted in what can aptly be called a crisis of cultural authority, which had both public and private dimensions. . . For decades republican moralists had worried that a liberal polity would be unable to contain the centrifugal tendencies in an atomized market society; the unprecedented class and ethnic conflict of the late nineteenth century intensified that worry as never before. . . . From the republican view, the ruling class required not only more guns but moral regeneration. (5)

Aestheticism is one of many possible antimodern reactions to the crisis of modernity in the United States. There are others, of course: religious extremism, fanaticism about health, obsessions with other places and historical times, just to give some examples. Each of these manifests in the art and literature of the late Victorian period, and strains of them persist well into the modern period, sometimes renegotiated and augmented or mutated. Cather will of course draw on several of these antimodern responses throughout her career.

If, during the rise of finance capitalism and the so-called Second Industrial revolution, public authority seemed to be in trouble, Lears argues "private authority seemed on the wane as well":

> The internalized morality of self-control and autonomous achievement, the basis of modern culture, seemed at the end of its tether; the chief source of that morality, the bourgeois family, seemed a hothouse of suffocating repressions and insoluble personal conflict

> . . . ultimately even personal identity seemed affected by the unreality of modern existence. (6)

Accordingly, one "cult of experience" was that which Pater's aesthetic philosophy engendered: the Aesthetic movement, and its philosophy of "the moment," in which intensified, individual "impressions" are incommunicable and of which aesthetic sensation consists. Cather depicts, in "Paul's Case," both the social problem of the bourgeois family — including its breakdown in communicating moral authority and the ethic of achievement, and the more individual problem of "personal identity"— seen in Paul's alienation, and in his posturing as a kind of flâneur, which I examine more fully in the next chapter.

Cather then posits a qualified form of aestheticism as one possible antimodern solution. It is in the picture of Paul, drawn as a would-be Aesthete and dandy, that Cather differentiates the American problem of antimodernism from its antecedents in Europe. While her aesthetic draws on European sources, Paul's Aesthetic, antimodern, and rebellious posture is interpellated by his particularly American lower middle-class status, the incipient consumer culture of the period, and his aspirations to a higher class which lead to conspicuous consumption as an ironic attempt to reject bourgeois morality.

It is misguided attempts at "aesthetic" living for the "intensity of the moment," for "passion" and expanded consciousness that lead Pater to write his curious footnote to the third edition of Studies in the History of the Renaissance. The famous "Conclusion" (originally written in 1868 and published in the first edition of The Renaissance in 1873), which advocates "burning with a hard gemlike

flame" as "success in life," was omitted in the second edition, only to be reintroduced in the later 1888 edition, with a footnote which acts as a caveat to his notion of sensational, hedonistic experience, the very kind of antimodern response, looking for "authenticity of experience," which gave rise to the Aesthetic movement. The full text of the footnote is cryptic, merely alluding to interpretative problems with his original "Conclusion." Pater writes:

> This brief "Conclusion" was omitted in the second edition of this book, as I conceived it might possibly mislead some of those young men into whose hands it might fall. On the whole, I have thought it best to reprint it here, with some slight changes which bring it closer to my original meaning . . . (233)

However cryptic the warning may seem with the "young men" left unnamed, the fallout from moralists warning against Pater's notion of aestheticism and the interpretation of it in the Aesthetic movement had already been great. Wilde's had gained many followers across Europe and America. In addition, Jonathan Freedman writes that "during the 1880s and 1890s, the Pater vogue was so intense that students wrote home for copies of The Renaissance because all the available editions had been stolen from the [Harvard] college library" (115).

Pater's footnote seems a bit prophetic when it alludes to the consequences for "some of those young men into whose hands [the book] might fall," who might take his advice on the aesthetic life too literally. This warning or admonition is not limited to "young men" either. For instance, by 1893 William Dean Howells, in The Coast of Bohemia, is clearly bothered by the forbidden and transgressive sexuality of

many Aesthetic women (women like Anna Lloyd Jones — the mother of Frank Lloyd Wright, Candace Wheeler, or Celia Thaxter, for example), some of whom question traditional marriage, wear aesthetic dress, or (like Cather herself) live with other women;[14] however, the alleged feminization of men who have become involved in the arts, including the decorative arts (often men in Aesthetic dress), is also an impetus for a powerful reaction against the Aesthetic model (Blanchard xiv). Women artists in the Aesthetic movement also compete in traditionally male decorative professions, using traditionally masculine materials — not cloth and china, but wood, for example. The Aesthetic movement, at least in the beginning, is perceived as an alternative to the pressures of incipient modernity and the bourgeois notions of success which accompany it, but quickly becomes the object of attack.

In 1895 Wilde is prosecuted for homosexuality, effectively ending the Aesthetic craze in America and his own career. Yet certain elements of the Aesthetic movement remain, though the movement itself evolves and is even coopted by much more conservative elements. However, the repercussions of it impact American culture in various ways for many years.[15] Blanchard notes:

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[14] Howells' puritanical reaction to lesbianism seems particularly odd, given his friendship with Annie Fields and Sarah Orne Jewett, who lived in a "Boston marriage" for many years after the death of Annie's husband, James Fields, editor of The Atlantic Monthly. Howells was a regular at Fields' Boston salon, where she lived with Jewett during the winter season.

[15] Interestingly enough, just this week as I write a story surfaced that in 1920, many students were expelled from Harvard for alleged homosexual activity. The concerns Wilde's influence had generated had far reaching, and apparently long lasting, implications. Blanchard has argued convincingly that the early twentieth century masculine backlash, epitomized by Teddy Roosevelt's "Rough Riders," has its roots in a response to the American Aesthetic movement.

> If Wilde could be castigated as homosexual, yet endorsed as manly, and if a workman could become a beautiful objet d'art while women received acclaim as woodcarvers, painters, and scroll carvers, then Victorian society was fundamentally adrift. The debate over aesthetic style that Wilde sparked in 1882 was only one element of the way manhood was defined both by the individual and by the state. Wilde had foregrounded aesthetic style, but this was corollary to a more important controversy in Gilded Age America — the definition of the manly citizen and his relationship to these new forms of art. (35)

Both Lears and Blanchard have documented the rise of a reactionary "soldier citizen" culture in response to the perceived "softness" and "overcivilization" of the late nineteenth century. In fact, Wilde was also "directly responsible for the proliferation" of schools of industrial and decorative arts, and for the commissioning of artists in public institutional decoration. Many newspapers and publications congratulated Wilde on this achievement, hailing the new emphasis on art and art education. Wilde, furthermore, had encouraged his American audiences to "Congratulate yourself if you have done something strange and extravagant and broken the monotony of a decorous age" (Blanchard 36). This seems to have been taken to heart, particularly by female Aesthetes, who began to work to create "substantial objects" for "prominent and public spaces" (35).

But while Aestheticism had been originally embraced as an alternative to the encroaching banality and monotony of modernity's industrialization, by the end of the century the backlash is well established, even in very public ways — for instance

in 1893, at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The conductor of the music festival at the inaugural ceremonies (which had fifty-five hundred voices and a full orchestra), John Philip Sousa, saw art as a "force for disciplined order." As Blanchard notes, this signaled new (or at least reemergent) attitudes towards both art and manhood: Sousa also said that his music was "virile," and that "Bohemianism has ruined more great minds than any one other thing in the world." He went on to proclaim that "long haired men and short haired women you never see in my audience" (Blanchard 39). It is worth noting that Sousa has become best known for his marches: the elision of moral manhood and military prowess should not be overlooked and is a kind of reclamation of a masculinity which had been sidelined rather deliberately after the Civil War.

The individualism on which Pater's theory is based and which Aestheticism attempts to assert has become problematic in other ways by the end of the century. The aestheticist notion, articulated in Pater's "Conclusion," that "those impressions of the individual mind to which, for each one of us, experience dwindles down, are in perpetual flight, [that] each of them is limited by time, and that as time is infinitely divisible, each of them is infinitely divisible also" clearly constitutes a problem for ethical and moral conduct. By 1895 this ethical problem is particularly obvious to the parents of those university students — looking everywhere for Pater's book— parents, who, unlike their children at Harvard or other universities, Freedman notes, had read Pater with "earnest moral concerns" rather than a concern for heightened and intensified sensational experience (115). The very agenda of Aestheticism has changed, first on the Continent as a result of Wilde, the fin de siècle Paris experience

of Gide, Valéry, Verlaine, and others in Mallarmé's mardistes salon, as well as Beardsley and the Yellow Book decadents.[16] In America the clash between avant-garde Aesthetes and middle-class culture is beginning to define the direction American modernism itself will take.[17]

Clive Scott, in his essay, "Symbolism, Decadence and Impressionism" notes that:

> Any view that has relativity at its center must propound an ethic and an aesthetic of the moment. This is not the narrational "moment of Truth", which is the culmination of a continuity; it is not the moment of dramatic convenience, in which can be

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[16] Jonathan Fryer recounts, in André and Oscar: The Literary Friendship of André Gide and Oscar Wilde, that Wilde influenced Gide immensely, beginning with their very first meeting, first by postulating that people should try to imitate art in their life, just the opposite of what Gide had been learning at Mallarmé's feet: the Symbolist notion was that one should "scorn life in order to devote oneself to the Symbolist work of art" (32). Gide writes to Paul Valéry in 1891 that "Wilde is piously setting about killing what remained of my soul . . .he wants me to deplore my soul. The effort to destroy it is to be the measure of it. Everything is made up only of its emptiness..."(Fryer 33). Despite Gide's ambivalence about Oscar's assault on his religious convictions, by the end of his life, in 1947, according to Fryer, he made what amounted to a pilgrimage to Wilde's rooms at Magdalen College in Oxford (237).

[17] The accounts of Wilde's exploits in Europe, his affair with Lord Douglas, rumors of Gide's (and, no doubt Wilde's) exploits in North Africa with young Arab boys, would have been publicized by the time of Cather's earliest stories. The sensational aspects of Wilde's imprisonment and subsequent debauchery after his release, his rather tragic decline and death, in 1900, would have been well-known as well in America. Perhaps more to the point are the writings which describe the philosophy of the Aesthetic lifestyle, just as one example, Gide's Les Nourritures terestres (1897), which George Painter has described as Gide's "hymn to the joy of life": "or, rather, to the life in which everything is joy; to the pleasures of the senses—or, rather, to the state of being in which everything gives pleasure to the senses" (in Fryer 138). Cather, being a connoisseur of French culture and letters, with a particular affection for Flaubert, likely would have been aware of such works, as well as the rumors circulating through literary circles.

> concentrated the momentous decisions of a lifetime. It is, rather, the moment of coincidence, of confluence, in fact any moment where the relationship between experience and time-sequence is haphazard; it is the moment of discontinuous flux, of mere and therefore pure existence; as memory destroys the present (unless it replaces it entirely), so meaning destroys sensation and the sense of an object's function destroys its reality. (222)

The Aesthete not only applies this aesthetic of the moment to artistic experience, but to all experience, and therein lies the problem. In order to function morally, much less politically, one must create categories, must classify behavior, and must regard reality as something more than an individual experience of flux and sensation: must, in other words, create meaning which runs the risk of "destroy[ing] sensation."

But the autonomous individual of Aestheticism is, paradoxically, as Lears points out, absolutely necessary to the agenda of bourgeois notions of morality which help to promote "progress" and the cultural hegemony of the bourgeois class. But the identical notion of the autonomous self as described by Pater, "the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world" is the very foundation of an Aestheticism which sets itself up as oppositional to such bourgeois morality. It is this inherent tension surrounding the notion of individual experience which is inscribed in Cather's "Paul's Case." Cather writes her first volume of short stories in 1905, just at the moment when antimodern impulses and literary modernism collide.

Pater's famous exhortation "to burn always with a hard and gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy" which "is success in life" points to the dilemma of "Paul's Case" and the problem of this sensational Aestheticism. "Paul's Case" is, at least partially, about Pater's footnote. It is Paul's refusal to conform to the bourgeois notion of success, and the attendant conventional morality on which this success relies, which leads him to escape into a dangerously hedonistic Aestheticism. Paul's dilemma, like Pater's footnote, is a cautionary tale for Cather's audience about Aestheticism; yet the story, while critiquing bourgeois morality through Paul's escapism, simultaneously reinscribes the very ideology of individualism on which that morality is based.

In 1905, Aestheticism as a formal movement had been renegotiated, but whether comprised of strains from the "decadent" aestheticism derived from Baudelaire or Symons, the "pure" "art for art's sake" aestheticism of Pater, or the more celebrity and sensationalized Aestheticism of Oscar Wilde, clearly the modernist notion of art and aesthetics relied on one principle which has come down from Pater and which persisted as literary modernism struggled to define itself. "Experience," Pater claims, has "already [been] reduced to a group of impressions . . . ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us . . . ." (235). While Pater's doctrine derives from Lockean empiricism, through a Humian skepticism, it proceeds further into a kind of solipsism when he claims: "Every one of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world" (235).

One of the hallmarks of modernist alienation and individualism is this sense of isolation, that one is alone with one's own impressions and the resulting problem of transmitting that experience. And, since each impression, according to Pater, is in "perpetual flight" and is "limited by time, and that as time is infinitely divisible," all that is actual is "a single moment, gone while we try to apprehend it." Truth, therefore, if indeed it can be apprehended at all, is in the moment, and exists without reference to "what we can only conjecture to be without"— the external world. The "actual," the external world, based as it is on subjective impressions, then ceases to objectively affect one's own reality, and, by implication, one's moral or ethical decisions. Wilde becomes the poster boy for the bad behavior which may result from such Aestheticism. Paul, in Cather's "Paul's Case," is also misled, but Cather does not go so far as to renounce the antimodern potential of aesthetic experience. As a writer who resists aspects of modern experience and modernity, Cather cannot afford to disregard the moral implications of Aestheticism, but neither can she afford to reject the possibility of individual, aesthetic experience of redeeming the alienated individual in modern, conformist, banal society. Cather's persistent belief in the value of individual experience despite its ethical implications is a particularly American commitment and encodes particularly American contradictory impulses. Elevating the individual betrays a belief in the American dream which Cather both validates and critiques in much of her work: this elevation encodes the bourgeois notions of success (and the mores that such success is built upon) despite her attempts to corral individual experience within the confines of Aesthetic experience.

The attempt to "capture" one moment's impression and to communicate it will become a hallmark of such modernist experimental forms as stream of consciousness; and the inability to communicate private experience will become a major theme of modernist fiction — the theme of alienation. Pater's theory has set the stage for the division between art and action, between experienced time and historical engagement. Cather's earliest fiction may be read as an unconscious attempt to mediate the inherent contradictions in her own aesthetic theory, based as it is on her interpretation of such figures as Pater and Bergson.

Pater, unlike his predecessor David Hume, who shared such philosophical skepticism towards the external world, does not (even skeptically, as Hume does) speculate upon moral judgment, virtue, conscience, or an external reality we might call "truth," much less the existence of God, in his most well-known theory of Aestheticism. In his "Conclusion," Pater is concerned entirely with our consciousness of impressions, which are themselves born of sensation, and which are momentary and fleeting, and, as in Bergson's model, independent of time; he is concerned with "the individual in his isolation," not the individual within a social, communal moral context. Conduct is only addressed as "a life of constant and eager observation," since it is "not the fruit of experience but experience itself" that is "the end" (236). According to Pater, unlike the philosophers to whom he is indebted for the basis of his theory, "our failure" is in forming habits, since habits of the mind — reflection, making connections, categorizing, drawing conclusions — interfere with the "stirring of the senses." This "fruit" of experience, making necessary

connections, deriving moral judgments, considering consequences, is extraneous, and in fact, is harmful to fully experiencing art in "the intensity of the moment."

The moral implications are obvious. With no objective truth, no God, no categorical imperative, one's reality and one's response to that reality is wholly subjective, momentary, and necessarily self-referential. Wilde's very public disgrace only verifies the dangers of Aestheticism to the growing American bourgeoisie. Further, Pater writes, "with this sense of the splendour of our experience and of its awful brevity, gathering all we are into one desperate effort to see and touch, we shall hardly have time to make theories about the things we see and touch" (183). Instead, the Aesthete must be "for ever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions, never acquiescing in a facile orthodoxy of Comte, or of Hegel, or of our own" since "the theory or idea or system which requires of us the sacrifice of any part of this experience. . . has no real claim upon us" (184). One can almost hear echoes of Harper's New Monthly Magazine in 1877-78 when the author of "A New Departure in American Art" claimed that "art is one thing and morality another thing" (Blanchard 35). Pater, in one fell swoop, does away with positivism, with rationalism, and indeed any quest for certainty beyond the personal, individual, impressionistic moment, and does not address issues of conscience or moral action, nor historical and political consequences.

The implications of this become crystallized in the figure of Wilde, who could proclaim that "Truth is entirely and absolutely a matter of style" by the end of the century. Cather's fiction is rife with examples of the "matter of style" and the problems it engenders. Her early obsession with celebrity culture, her critique of that

culture, is complicated by her need to project the aesthetic success of her hero/ines. In an attempt to separate the aesthete from the demands of celebrity culture, from mere "style," Cather's protagonists adopt a heroic pose in her later fiction (Thea, in Song of the Lark, for example), but in her early short stories, the question of where modern celebrity culture will lead is still an open one. While problematic, the celebrity of someone like Kitty Ayrshire in "Scandal," or Cressida Garnet in "The Diamond Mine," just like Raymond d'Esquerre in "The Garden Lodge," is both an homage to individual triumph and lament for the burdens that accompany such success. The question of what to do with such success remain unanswered, though the stories themselves hint at moral obligations that have become a necessary burden.

Both Pater and Bergson assume that language itself is an attempt to stabilize reality, and that the stability of reality is in fact an illusion. Cather's character, Paul, represents the problem of amorality in Aestheticism, and the links between it and the hedonistic, modern materialism, what develops into mass consumer culture — the "evasive banality" of the culture of expanding capital and "progressive" ideology. "Paul's Case" is, however, despite Cather's own belief in the aestheticizing of experience, a strangely "moral" piece of fiction. It is Cather's antimodern position, a resistance to modernity, that retains a qualified belief in aesthetic experience of a particular kind, one that would help to recapture authentic experience, which, I believe, accounts for this.

In a 1921 Lincoln Sunday Star interview, Eleanor Hinman relates that Cather claimed: "It happened that my mind was constructed for the particular purpose of absorbing impressions and retaining them. I always intended to write, and there were

certain persons I studied. I seldom had much idea of the plot or the other characters, but I used my eyes and my ears." In her discussion with Hinman, Cather also declares that "Everywhere is a storehouse of literary material. If a true artist was born in a pigpen and raised in a sty, he would still find plenty of inspiration for his work. The only need is the eye to see" (Wasserman 93-5). It is this ability of the "eye to see" which separates, in true Paterian fashion, the "true" artist from the perfectly ordinary person. "Art," as Cather further declaims, "is a matter of enjoyment through the five senses. Unless you can see the beauty all around you everywhere, and enjoy it, you can never comprehend art. [. . .] Esthetic appreciation begins with the enjoyment of the morning bath. It should include all the activities of life" (96-8).

Cather's own notion of aesthetics, like Pater's, is self-consciously sensual, and by extension, apolitical, and, later in her career, in a 1936 critical essay, "Escapism: A letter to The Commonweal,"[18] she claims this overtly when she says that "religion and art spring from the same root and are close kin. Economics and art are strangers." While her alignment of art and religion during a period which saw fascism gathering strength is disturbing, we should note that this essay is also, overtly, an apologia for individualism. Individualism has become by now a target of many modernist, anti-bourgeois, avant-garde artists, including Pound and other Imagists — as well as fascists. Cather claims that

[18] in Willa Cather on Writing: Critical Studies on Writing as an Art, Lincoln: Nebraska UP, 1988. 18-29

> the revolt against individualism naturally calls artists severely to account, because the artist is of all men the most individual: those who were not have been long forgotten. The condition every art requires is, not so much freedom from restriction, as freedom from adulteration and from the intrusion of foreign matter; considerations and purposes which have nothing to do with spontaneous invention. (26-7)

The "foreign matter" and purposes which she is railing against are allied with "clumsy experiments in government, futile revolutions and reforms." What survives instead of these failed and transient attempts at change through an adulterated corruption of art is art from the "individual genius," which is "fired with some more vital feeling than contempt" (26).

In this essay, Cather defends the traditional against the "new," despite her claim for "spontaneous invention" (27). For instance, in a rant against "literary radicals" who must be imagined as Pound, she writes:

> The literary radicals tell us there must be a new kind of poetry. There will be, whenever there is a new poet — a genuine one. The thesis that no one can ever write a noble sonnet on a noble theme without repeating Wordsworth, or a mysteriously lovely lyric without repeating Shelley, is an evasion .[. . .] No fine poet can ever write like another. His poetry is simply his individuality. And the themes of true poetry, of great poetry, will be the same until all the values of human life have changed

> and all the strongest emotional responses have become different — which can hardly occur until the physical body itself has fundamentally changed. (28)

The elision here between the physical sensation of the individual body and "true," "great" art is not to be missed. Emotions and even values derive from the physical sensation that experience evokes, and art springs from this in turn. A new art form will not exist until the physical body itself has different sensational responses to impressions. That which the "fine" poet writes "is simply his individuality"— which is inseparable from his or her bodily, sensational response. This is aesthetic response, what one "values" as well as what one "writes": always individual, always directly through the five senses.

Cather inherits the legacy of the Aesthetic movement, but through her own reading she expands and qualifies the Paterian aestheticism which has informed Impressionism. For Cather, Bergson's view of time affects this vision of art and aesthetics. Time accrues, Bergson says, as duration, which is never the same at any moment, can never be re-experienced in precisely the same way, and as a result "we are creating ourselves continually" through our sensations; "in reality, the past is preserved by itself, automatically" (Bergson 3). Georg Lukács articulates one problem with this idea in The Ideology of Modernism: this aesthetic theory of time will separate time from historical change and particularity of place. Lukács claims that Bergson's theory of "Experienced time, subjective time, now became identical with real time; the rift between this time and that of the objective world was complete" (37). It is only in this sense, then, that in Cather's fiction the past always

impacts the present: as an experience of the moment, a sensational experience of private time, not of history. The individual, subjective experience is no longer simply private, but transcendent: transcending history, politics, and ethical necessity.

"Paul's Case," however, quite simply subverts this notion of individual transcendence. One way in which Cather's transcendent individual is qualified is through her notion of a sensational aesthetics. That Paul's experience is rooted in sensation, rather than idealism, that it is concrete rather than abstract, is the corrective to the "dream of a world" to which Paul's aestheticism would seem to lead. His "real," bodily experience is the determining factor in the story, at least as much as his aesthetic response to sensation is.

The plot is therefore driven by the sensational aspect of material existence, more so than by Paul's aesthetic reaction to sensational impression. In this way the story points up the limitations of radical individualism, and, as an antimodern writer, Cather is simply consistently inconsistent on this point. Her story, like the resistance to modernity which informs it, is overdetermined, both conservative and radical in its critique of the very history and culture art is supposed to transcend. It is Cather's sensational aesthetic, the aesthetic of the morning bath, the cooking odors in the kitchen, which determine Paul's future. It is his response to his surround that keeps Cather's individualism from becoming truly Paterian and which forces her to comment on both economics and art.

It is clear that in Cather's 1936 essay, while distancing herself and art from history, from political agendas, and from the agenda of literary modernism, she specifically has in mind the "hard, dry," even "geometrical" aesthetic of modernists

such as Pound, (the later) T. E. Hulme and others who, by this period, proclaim artists should "make it new." This overtly pro-modernist aesthetic is not the aesthetic of the body as much as it is an attempt to recapture the rationalism and abstraction of the neo-classical or even the Byzantine age, to which Pater and the Romantics before him dealt such a blow. Cather would have been well aware, in the early years of the twentieth century, as a young writer, of the strains of early modernism. For instance, as an editor at McClure's she met William Archer, the theater critic, who arranged a seat for her in his box to view the Abbey players and also introduced her to Yeats.

Yeats in turn introduced Cather to H.G. Wells, Lady Gregory, and Ford Maddox Ford) (Wasserman 8). As Michael Levenson notes, by 1914 "competing perspectives" in the early modernist movement converge, and Hulme's last essays articulate the "new artistic demands" (102). Levenson delineates these demands, citing an insistence on "the independence and objectivity of form, value and meaning." But, Levenson claims, this strand of modernism (which will become Imagism) merges with a Fordian Impressionism which defended, as Pound put it, "direct speech and vivid impression." Ford, Levenson claims, "characterized his Impressionist method as a frank recognition 'that all art must be the expression of an ego, and if this Impressionism is to do anything, it must, as the phrase is, go the whole hog.' The Impressionist novelist 'gives you, as a rule, the fruits of his own observations and the fruits of his own observations alone,'" and — here we hear echoes of Cather in Ford — "his art therefore is a 'frank expression of personality'" (107).

In some ways the tradition that Cather looks back on and draws from is not the rationalist tradition but that of the Romantics, even, one might say, Wordsworth's "egotistical sublime." Susan Rosowski has made this argument in her book[19], but I argue that any "Romantic" impulse Cather may have is informed by Impressionistic, aestheticist developments. In her reliance on flux and duration, Cather rejects, at least at this stage of her writing career, the efforts of the post-Impressionists which attempt to "harden" the impression into an objective fact. "So far," Cather will claim later, "the effort to make a new kind of poetry, 'pure poetry,' which eschews (or renounces) the old themes as shop-worn, and confines itself to regarding the grey of a wet oyster shell against the sand of a wet beach through a drizzle of rain, has not produced anything very memorable . . ." (28). This type of "hard" image, clearly a parodic reference to such a poem as Pound's 1916 "In a Station of the Metro," or perhaps the poetry of Amy Lowell or Richard Aldington, supposedly made of the Vortex of the poem's own forces, may be transcendent on some level, but is clearly not rooted in individual experience. The "new" aesthetic, is, in fact, intended to depersonalize and objectify experience and poetry, and the essentializing of

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[19] Rosowski's definition of Romanticism seems problematic to me. She writes in her preface to The Voyage Perilous: Willa Cather's Romanticism, "The essential characteristic of romanticism concerns a mode of perception by which the imagination is used in its synthesizing or creative powers to transform and give meaning to an alien or meaningless material world. In this sense, the Romantics inaugurated modern literature: moderns and Romantics hold a common view of public official tradition as discredited and of the world as essentially meaningless . . .". Romantics such as Goethe, Keats or Wordsworth would most certainly not have found the world "essentially meaningless," though they too may have found "public official tradition" so.

experience such poetry requires is not the polymorphous, personal, sensational response that Cather espouses, which maintains its affinity to early Impressionism.

Despite Cather's own later modernist experimentations with form,[20] her theory of aesthetics seems to be firmly committed to and rooted in a kind of realism that, while being "unfurnished," as she terms it in her essay "The Novel Démeublé," maintains a determinedly sensuous relationship with her material. In "Escapism" she attacks the new aestheticism of "iconoclasts and tomb-breakers: who wish to destroy the 'false past'" (26); but she also derides the kind of investigational journalism, "collecting material for fiction" in the name of social reform movements, "hunting among the ash cans on Sullivan Street"[21]— these are the propagandists, "the Radical editor[s]," who should be "following the methods of the pamphleteers" rather than attempting to face problems as "facts presented in a coating of stock cinema situations" (23). All art, she reiterates, is "Escape." An artist who has to hunt down material in the streets in order to claim it as his experience is no true artist. A young reader, she says, may indeed enjoy Balzac (as she herself did), but will sooner or later outgrow him. It is the artist's own, private experience that matters. It is perhaps

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[20] This experimentation with form has been established by many critics, though what it means is still a subject of much debate. I examine some of the implications for Cather's narrative aesthetic in another chapter.

[21] Clearly this is a reference to the so-called "Ash Can School" of social realist painters such as John Sloan, Robert Henri, George Luks and others, known for their gritty scenes of New York City featuring the poor and disenfranchised. In 1908 they staged an exhibition to protest the restrictive academic exhibition procedures which became a symbol of rebellion in the world of American modern art. It was self-organized, self-selected, and non-juried. Despite Cather's invective, Sloan resigned as editor of The New Masses to protest the overly politicized captions that were being attached to prints in the magazine, just as many other artists resisted the reduction of their work to the service of particular political agendas.

Cather's acquaintance with Ford's ideas which help to explain her insistence on a kind of realism that a "pure" Impressionism might deny. Impressionism was, as Levenson claims, "Ford's acknowledged literary doctrine" (106), however it is a qualified impressionism, an impressionism which is moving towards a compromise with the Imagists and later modernists. While Ford's impressionism remains committed to the notion that "all art must be the expression of an ego" it is also a type of realism (107).

Levenson notes that Ford's most important statements were developed during the years 1912 through 1914, precisely the years when Hulme was lecturing, and represents a slightly different strain of modernism. In maintaining his Impressionism, Ford makes the point that it is a kind of realism — as opposed to Yeats' poetry, for example, which is deliberately focused (like many antimodernists of the period) on another time and place. Ford will claim that the "supreme literary goal" is "the rendering of the material facts of life, without comment and in exact language." Levenson terms this a kind of "civic realism":

> The artist assumes, as it were, the responsibilities of citizenship in the modern world, and according to which the artist's goal is to reflect contemporaneity, or — in Ford's credo of that period — "to register his own terms in terms of his own time." Because Yeats registered other times in other terms, he provoked Ford's jeer. (109)

It seems that Cather could have followed the antimodernism of Yeats or the strain which ultimately becomes Imagism. However, in Cather's critical essays she insists, as Ford does, on the direct treatment of the "thing" (which ultimately, and ironically,

through Pound's appropriation of Ford, becomes an Imagist tenet). Ford's praise for Pound's "rendering of the material facts of life, without comment and in exact language" is echoed in Cather's critical essays. For instance, Cather says in the Hinman interview:

> Many people seem to think that art is a luxury to be imported and tacked on to life. Art springs out of the very stuff that life is made of. Most of our young authors start to write a story and make a few observations from nature to add local color. The results are invariably false and hollow. Art must spring out of the fullness and the richness of life. (Wasserman 97)

Growing out of a sensual, experiential and private human relation to the material, rather than some objective or pragmatic service to an agenda, Cather's aesthetic is more "traditional," though sometimes deliberately "legendary" (as she herself termed it), as in her novel, Death Comes for the Archbishop; sometimes neo-Romantic, as in My Antonia or Song of the Lark; but not "hard" or "dry." In a preface to Defoe's The Fortunate Mistress Cather claims, "The book is as safe as sterilized gauze. One is bumped up smartly against the truth, old enough but always new, that in novels, as in poetry, the facts are nothing, the feeling is everything" (84). Her own theory of sensational aesthetics is essentially unpragmatic, and, in theory at least, Paterian. Cather begins the essay on escapism with an example: the Pueblo Indians of the southwest "paint geometrical patterns on the jars in which they carried water up from the streams. Why did they take the trouble?" she asks. Barely surviving drought and famine, why bother to paint when it would not increase the

food supply or help maintain tribal security? The impulse "sprang from an unaccountable predilection of the one unaccountable thing in man," which she leaves unnamed, but is clearly the aesthetic impulse to experience beauty, to nourish the senses.

But, curiously, Cather's fictional writings which deal most particularly and overtly with the questions of art and aesthetics seem to contradict, or at least qualify, the positions found in her essays regarding the politics of writing. Art for art's sake — an art committed to sensation, to individual perception, and, thus, to individualism — has an implicit position with regard to the mechanisms of the world. This position is inherently ahistorical, apolitical, transcendent, contemplative, and unapologetically escapist. And yet, in her fiction, and particularly in "Paul's Case," such Aestheticism is not the answer to the questions she herself poses regarding modernity: Paul is directly impacted by his social and economic circumstances, and falls prey to the ideology intended to transcend those circumstances. Cather's statement in "Paul's Case" is indeed about the historical realities — social, economic, political, industrial — of early twentieth century modernity.

It is imperative to read Cather's work over/against her overt theoretical statements, and to understand the conditions which produced both her theoretical aesthetic position and her rather different artistic practice. To be fair, the aestheticism of Pater, which requires the dismissal of the "fruit" of experience — the rationalizing and theorizing of experience — does not lend itself well to the type of fully articulated critical theory one would wish for in this case. It is through an

examination of her own artistic practices more than through Cather's critical essays that it is possible to locate Cather's own overdetermined responses to modernity, including her ambivalence towards the pure individualism that forms the basis of Aestheticism at the turn of the century. In "Paul's Case" in particular we find deliberate echoes of Pater's language in Cather's diction and in her descriptions of Paul's responses to art, but we also find, in the limitations of Paul's Aestheticism, a concern for the content of Pater's footnote in the theme of the story. The caveat which Pater attaches to his conclusion's second appearance seems to be foremost on Cather's mind as she herself explores the implications of a more decadent Aestheticism in 1905, post-Wilde. It is in this space which is opened up by this very ambivalence, perhaps fueled by a sense of moral loss that is coded in the story, that it is possible to locate an antimodern "political" statement. This position is a critique which resists the development of modern individualism and resulting bourgeois morality, which are products of modern capitalist hegemonic practices, while simultaneously advocating an aesthetic of individual sensation.

While Cather's fiction posits a sensational aesthetic as an antidote to a modernist crisis, the ideology of individualism which both her sensational aesthetic and Paul's Aestheticism depend upon contribute to the very modernity she rejects. This conflict points up the overdetermined message in her claim that "economics and art are strangers" (27). While art should not "comment" upon "economics" (a trope for the current historical socio-political situation), and in this sense may be a stranger to economics, it becomes clear in the story that the possibilities for "art"— or, in this case, sensational aesthetics and Aestheticism — are wholly dependent on historical

and economic circumstances. That is, the very notion of art for art's sake, the Aesthetic movement, is derivative of the ideology of individualism and its bourgeois manifestations: the politics, the institutions, the daily life from which the Aesthete desires escape.

Cather's own sensational aesthetic, perhaps closer in intent to Pater than to Wilde's Aestheticism (and Paul's), is also driven by the need to invigorate experience, to heighten it, and of course it is utterly dependent on the conditions which make sensation possible in the first place. Pater's "one chance" for "great passions" give "us this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love . . ." (238). But the very theory of either brand of "sensational" aestheticism derives from notions of the individual which have been produced by the hegemony at work during a particular period of history. Sensational aesthetics can be defined almost entirely by the need to escape from these conditions, "against" such conditions, in the sense that Wlad Godzich uses the notion "against": "both in opposition to and in the sense of resting against" (xvii). At the same time, however, as Lears argues, individualism is a necessary component of the very bourgeois morality which will both condemn aesthetic sensation as an avant-garde alternative and give rise to it in the first place.

Bearing in mind Althusser's notion of ideology as an "imaginary resolution of real contradictions," it is crucial to look at the consequences of the ideology of individual, sensational aestheticism, and the implications following from its reliance on private perception. It is possible then to locate, in Paul's individual and private perception, the transformation of such perceptions into social and institutional effects. Far from experiencing art for art's sake, Cather's interpretation of Paul's

experience exposes the ideology of the institutions which create Paul's responses. The institutions from which Paul is alienated — the public education system and its agents (the English teacher, the art teacher), his father's company and the bank from which he steals money, the police, and the church — each indicates specific hallmarks of bourgeois culture. Through Paul's private perceptions and reactions to them, these institutions represent the problem of Cather's stance on aesthetics and the limited possibility of art standing outside specific historical conditions — all of which Cather places under the rubric of "economics." The ideology of Aestheticism, with its emphasis on individual perception and impressions which create an ahistorical, atemporal reality, is an "imaginary" solution to the real contradictions within bourgeois modern culture. Like many forms of neurosis, Cather's sensational aesthetic and Paul's pseudo-Aestheticism are simultaneously symptoms of the problem and attempted solutions to the problem of modernist alienation. Put another way, Paul's attempts to be an "Aesthete" — and Aestheticism as an avant-garde approach to life in general — represents his "imaginary" resolution of the real contradictions of modernity in which he is immersed and by which he is determined. However, his ideological practice (and the results of it) represents and even helps to perpetuate the very problem aestheticism hopes to "solve": the ideology of individualism, as articulated through Cather's sensational aestheticism, is both a cause of and a perceived solution to the crisis of modernity. This story, overdetermined in this way, exhibits the tensions within modernity and within literary modernism; and also exhibits the tensions between individualism and the

morality based upon it (in the name of "progress") under late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century capitalism.

Clearly Cather's work is not that of a pamphleteer or a social reformer, but neither is it the work of an artist ignorant of the conditions of modernity. Finally then, along with Althusser, "I shall . . . suggest that ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!'"[22] While Cather's own aesthetic ideology is at work in the story, the concomitant, inextricable ideology of individualism interpellates the character of Paul, "hailing" or forcing both Paul and the reader to confront the limitations of Cather's notions of a pure aestheticism. This tension between an apolitical/ahistorical aesthetic of sensation, which is posited as an alternative to bourgeois notions of progress and conformity, and the ideology of individualism which informs such an aesthetic (which has already been interpellated in the Aesthetic movement), in "Paul's Case" can finally only be resolved, not through a manifesto on the advantages of Aestheticism, nor through a Paterian sensational aesthetic, but through the death of Paul.

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[22]Louis Althusser, Lenin and Philosophy, trans. B. Brewster (New Left Books, 1971).

Chapter Four *Aesthetic Strategies of Accommodation: Cather's American Dandy and Consuming Experience*

Part I. Icons of Ambivalence: Calvinism, class and conformity in "Paul's Case"

Paul, a seventeen-year old boy, dressed in an ill-fitting frock coat with a red carnation in his lapel, a would-be Aesthete, is yet another of Cather's poseurs. While Paul finds his power in "claiming the moment, mounting with it, and finding it all sufficient," the implications of this carpe diem and radically individualistic philosophy are clearly dangerous to late nineteenth-century bourgeois morality. Cather depicts this morality exquisitely through the "burghers of Cordelia Street," Paul's teachers, and the icons that hang over his bed at home. The Calvinist icon, the very portrait of Calvin himself, representing the work ethic and the internalization of repression propounded in Protestant ideology, hangs over Paul's bed in a bedroom with "horrible yellow wallpaper." And yet, next to it, is a needlepoint with the scriptural injunction to "Feed my lambs"— a clear elision in Paul's household of modern notions of success and religious imperative, but fundamentally irreconcilable goals. One cannot look out for others while accumulating capital in the way Weber observed. It is telling that the needlepoint was worked by Paul's mother, long dead. As a result, she represents a set of values both absent from his life and replaced by other, more immediate concerns instilled in him through his authoritarian father, his teachers and "the Cumberland minister next door." Each sets out, in their own way, to "reclaim the boy" for their oppressive brand of the Protestant ethic after he acts out (in an admittedly extreme way) the imperatives of capitalist individualism. Paul

comes by his money dishonestly, and then spends it on the best clothes, food, accommodations and flowers he can buy in New York.

Paul seeks asylum through consumerism, but not from the bourgeois class; in fact he seeks access to that class. He seeks asylum from the banal morality of lower middle class Cordelia Street, a class which has appropriated the morality of the higher bourgeois classes as a substitute for actual cultural capital. The assimilation of bourgeois morality takes the place of material access to wealth and what it can buy. Promises of an American Dream, on Cordelia Street, are therefore reiterated, but utterly qualified. As an American flâneur, who can only look out on the pageant of Fifth Avenue abundance, Paul is at the margins of the bourgeois class, and is nowhere at home.

The attempt to internalize morality within Paul's community, and more particularly within his home, is represented in an especially interesting passage. Cather describes Paul's return late one night from ushering, and in her description of Paul's bedroom is something which exemplifies Lears' notion of the evasive banality and the often confusing messages that represent the reaction to modernity. Cather writes:

> He turned and walked reluctantly toward the car tracks. The end had to come sometime, his father in his night-clothes at the top of the stairs, explanations that did not explain, hastily improvised fictions that were forever tripping him up, his up-stairs room and its horrible yellow wallpaper, the creaking bureau with the greasy plush collar-box, and over his painted wooden bed the pictures of George

> Washington and John Calvin, and the framed motto, "Feed my Lambs," which had been worked in red worsted by his mother, whom Paul could not remember. (175)

While Paul's notion of Aestheticism stands in direct opposition to the "grey monotony" and "tepid waters of Cordelia Street" and is a kind of test case for Cather's own aesthetic of sensation as found in her various critical writings, the story also exhibits her resistance to modernity in her depictions of class relations. The icons of antimodern ambivalence hang over Paul's bed: Washington, Calvin, and the actual words from the gospel, attributed to Jesus, represent the conflation of conflicting values in the culture, and the attempts to impose these on the boy.

Cather's antimodernism hinges on the very notion at the root of modern experience which drives the force of modern progress. This is of course her commitment to individual experience — itself derivative of a deep rooted belief in personal autonomy — an American individualism which intrudes upon Cather's insistence on personal morality, transcendent meaning, and the necessity for community. This insistence is traceable to Victorian or premodern influences, including Cather's own avowed literary models, Sarah Orne Jewett and, by extension, Harriet Beecher Stowe. But her faith in individualism also leads her to progressive belief in the work ethic and the accompanying ascetic rationalism necessary for success.

However, in "Paul's Case," these issues become subordinate to the lack informing the entire story: the absence of the mother and subsequent lack of a countervailing influence to progressive rhetoric. Nowhere in the story is there

anyone to "feed" Paul, the lamb who is lost, trying to find his way in the world which is inhospitable to his nervous and sensitive nature. And nowhere in the story is there anyone reinscribing this kind of compassion or sense of an alternative ethic of generosity as a cultural value, since, as Weber observed, modernity as the pursuit of wealth has "stripped" all ethical and religious meaning from everyday life, and capitalism "no longer needs the support of any religious forces, and feels the attempts of religion to influence economic life, in so far as they can still be felt at all, to be as much an unjustified interference as its regulation by the State" (72) Weber also notes that "the people filled with the spirit of capitalism to day tend to be indifferent, if not hostile, to the Church. The thought of the pious boredom of paradise has little attraction for their active natures; religion appears to them as a means of drawing people away from labour in this world" (70). Cather draws the picture of the minister next door as impotent, only called to assert an influence over Paul once has crossed the line into criminal behavior.

Lears describes the "constellation of modern values"— the "liberal faith in rationality, a Victorian commitment to decorum, a positivist belief in orderly progress through discovery of scientific laws" — as being "central to the nineteenth-century bourgeois world view" (285). Cather's reaction to Victorian repressive morality and the stifling of individuality of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is to nonetheless assert the potentiality of individual and secular achievement, a position in danger of being appropriated by the very modern ideology she wishes to confront. In "Paul's Case" the problem of individualism is highlighted by the absence of any deeper structure of meaning. Cather clearly depicts the

available forms of religion as bankrupt and meaningless. They, and the structure of positivism, rationality, and Victorian decorum, are useless against the forces of modern consumer culture which seduce Paul.

In many of Cather's stories, the structure of meaning and assertion of "personality" (through individual achievement) are inextricably linked, ultimately undercutting any resistance to modernity. The implications of individualism are, by 1905, appropriated by ministers and other standard bearers of "official conduct" in order to help link material and moral progress. This, Lears argues, helps to legitimate material progress by shifting the locus of moral authority onto the "autonomous individual, whose only moral master was himself" (12). According to Lears, a "central tenet of the modern world view" was "faith in individual autonomy. The official creed held not only that progress was inevitable but that the key to it was the disciplined, autonomous self, created in the bosom of the bourgeois family" (17). But, despite this faith in progress, and a smug satisfaction that surfaces in the "official" rhetoric, Lears claims that for the educated bourgeoisie at the end of the nineteenth century:

> authentic experience of any sort seemed ever more elusive; life seemed increasingly confined to the airless parlor of material comfort and moral complacency. Many yearned to smash the glass and breathe freely — to experience "real life" in all its intensity. Groping for alternatives to modern unreality, they sometimes clung to the shreds and patches of republican tradition, but they also turned to other cultural resources as well: the literary romantic's rejection of

> urban artifice in the name of a rustic or childlike "simple life"; the philosophical vitalist's rejection of all static systems in the name of the flux of "pure experience"; the avant-garde artist's rejection of bourgeois respectability in the name of primal irrationality. The very effort to categorize this fin de siècle cultural ferment oversimplifies its richness and variety. (5)

Paul, while not an "educated bourgeois," nonetheless turns to the only attractive option available: a search for "authentic" experience though the consumption of pleasure. And part of that pleasure is pure consumption. The desire for wealth, untempered by the bourgeois morality of Cordelia Street which Paul overtly rejects, is, while extreme, nonetheless an enactment of the progressive rhetoric he hears every day at home and in school. While Paul's Aestheticism begins as protest, as I argue above, it ends in a meaningless quest for sensation. Cather's aesthetic of sensation also represents antimodern protest, but in "Paul's Case," she interrogates its limits and seems to argue for its tempering, not through a banal Cordelia Street morality, but through something which is left undefined. "Paul's Case" is the best representation of the challenges to both accommodate and protest modernity in Cather's early stories. The contradictions in the culture require this: she has written herself into a box in much the way Paul himself has backed himself into his corner. There is no turning back from modernity, and no escape. There is only the haunting phrase over Paul's bed, suggesting a lost potential for meaning — "Feed My Lambs"; this appears both anachronistic and incomprehensible in its context.

In "Paul's Case," the lower middle class's appropriation of bourgeois morality is represented satirically in Cather's depiction of Paul's neighborhood, and less lightly in the patriarchal figure of Paul's father and the "Cumberland minister" who lives next door. The conformity to Calvinist moral pressures, which the authority figures in the story represent, buttresses emergent capitalist ideology and the concomitant rise of an elite class. This orthodoxy and the attendant notions of "progress" filled public discourse in the late nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth: not only from the pulpits, but from the banquet orators, in the civic clubs, from the bankers, in success manuals for boys, in schools, and, in Cather, on the stoops of Cordelia Street on Sunday afternoons, where the "burghers" of Cordelia street, with their stomachs protruding sit and extol the virtues of their "chiefs and overlords"— the "iron kings," as well as the "cash boys" who "made it" above their station (177). Embracing the ideology of the class above themselves, retelling stories of success, represents for the people on Cordelia Street not only their acceptance of bourgeois morality, but the aspirations of this lower middle class to maintain its distance from the working class and to identify with the upper class.

Enthusiasm for material progress is, Lears claims, often

> difficult to chart because it was omnipresent and often implicit in the emergent modern culture. It united businessmen, politicians, ministers, journalists — all the stout thought-leaders of the urban bourgeoisie. Even many labor leaders, socialists, and dissident farmers accepted the progressive faith: they attacked the maldistribution of wealth, not the fundamental beneficence of

> economic growth; they accepted the conventional link between technological development and national greatness. (8)

Furthermore, Lears argues, this rationalization of "progress" — a process which equates material with moral, even "Christian," progress — "epitomizes the pattern of evasive banality which pervaded modern culture" (12). This is a rationalization which served many interests, but, Lears says, primarily those "of an emergent national ruling class — still embryonic, torn by tension, sometimes barely cohesive, but an incipient ruling class nonetheless" (9).

As Weber has clearly shown, even the moral messages of traditional Christianity have been redirected: much of the "official doctrine" was geared towards relocating the social conflicts incited by modernity after the so-called Second Industrial Revolution onto the individual, to make those issues matters of individual moral conscience, and, according to Lears, "providing troubled Americans with an innocuous means of discharging half-conscious anxieties about the effects of expanding market capitalism" (6). The best description of this, Lears says, is not social control, but (a carefully defined) cultural hegemony:

> Modern values and attitudes served the interests of the bourgeoisie in more oblique ways as well. The cultural dominance of the bourgeoisie was partly an unintended consequence of sincere (though often self-deceiving) efforts to impose moral meaning on a rapidly changing social world — efforts led not by bankers and industrialists but by ministers and other moralists. (12)

This discourse leads not only to more responsibility placed on the individual but also to an attack on older, more external forms of moral authority. The pressure contained within the new discourse was geared towards a promotion of a "new, internalized mode" of repression, in order to locate the center of morality within the autonomous individual. Aggression, sexuality, and health all become issues linked to self-control, and are made the exclusive province of the individual conscience.

To give one outré example of this type of direction in self-control, Lears quotes from John Harvey Kellogg's Man, The Masterpiece, or Plain Truths Plainly Told, About Boyhood, Youth and Manhood (1886). In this "success manual" for boys, Kellogg (the same Kellogg of Rice Krispies' fame) argued that sensual self-indulgence was a danger whether the issue was food, sleep or sex, but especially with regard to sex. Lears explains that for many of the moralists of this period, masturbation, "the secret vice," is seen as the most dangerous of the possible exercises of the will, and must be conquered through the will. But what makes Kellogg's regime so striking, even for this Victorian period, is its insistence on the domination by the will of the unconscious; during sleep one must avoid erotic dreams in order to maintain self control. To illustrate the extremity of this it is worth quoting Lears at some length:

> The key agent in this program (as indeed in all of modern character formation) was the will. During the waking hours, Kellogg advised, young men should keep the will in fine trim by practicing self-denial: properly disciplined, the will might even be applied to unconscious temptation, snapping the youth awake and out of his dream in time to

prevent nocturnal emission. Like many of his contemporaries, Kellogg provided medical as well as moral advice. His physiological agenda included:

1. Kneading and pounding on the abdomen each day to promote evacuation before sleep and thus avoid "irritating" congestions.

2. Drinking hot water, six to eight glasses a day (same end in view).

3. Urinating several times each night (same end in view).

4. Avoiding alcohol, tobacco, and tea because they stimulated lecherous thoughts.

5. Taking cold enemas and hot sitz baths each day.

6. Wearing a wet girdle to bed each night. (13-4)

Lears notes that while Frederick Taylor's time and motion studies of the labor process promoted the scientific management of the workplace, Kellogg "yearned for the full rationalization of the human psyche. The aspirations of both men represented a high point in the development of the modern superego" (14). Similar regimens are found throughout the self-help literature of the period.

The alignment of material (whether bodily or economic) "success" with moral progress is more than simple "complacent hypocrisy," Lears argues. It represents an internalized "ethic of self control" which, by the 1880s, has become the "unquestioned norm for the middle and upper classes well as for much of the rest of

society" (13). Lears explains, in terms which echo Foucault's analysis, that the center of the new morality is the autonomous individual:

> For centuries, the internal dynamic of bourgeois individualism had been undermining all the older, external forms of moral authority — the authority of king over subject, priest over communicant, master over slave. Freed from older constraints, each masterless man needed a moral gyroscope to keep him on course or else market society might dissolve into a chaos of self-seeking individuals. The destruction of old oppressive forms created new problems of social control; in order to preserve any semblance of public order, oppression had to yield to repression. (12-3)

This type of morality and concomitant attempts at rationalization are clearly coded in Cather's stories, particularly in "Paul's Case," and her contradictory impulses are worth examining. Cather's own sensational aesthetic is essentially oppositional to late Victorian repressive morality, despite her reservations about Aestheticism per se.

The images which hang above Paul's bed recall the sometimes ridiculous efforts of someone like Kellogg to repress desire, even unconscious desire. In situating Calvin above the bed, Cather is reinscribing the Victorian morality which undergirds the values disseminated, according to Lears, by the educated bourgeoisie. This "respectability" constitutes a kind of hegemonic cultural capital for the dominant social classes, and for those like Paul's father and the lower middle class who aspire to participation in such power (who listen to the stories of the iron kings,

the Carnegies, and aspire to their wealth and privilege despite the odds against that happening), to adopt the ethos and morality of the bourgeoisie is seen as winning half the battle. To participate in this morality lends respectability to a class which has been denied access to wealth and privilege. But through having internalized the bourgeois ethic, subversion, critique, and the class consciousness which would advance such critique is effectively "evaded." Thus, "the end" has to come some time for Paul.

Not only does Cather foreshadow his eventual suicide when Paul (correctly) believes he is in danger of being delivered back to Cordelia Street by his father, but it signals the end of his individual, sensational pleasure and thus, quite literally, his individuality. Cather's ambivalence is further underscored by her direct and unmediated quotation from the New Testament which appears alongside the picture of Calvin: "Feed My Lambs." In this case the image of Calvin above Paul's bed, while connoting the Protestant work ethic, also codes the repressive morality which requires self-control and desire in order to practice the work ethic and to succeed, and indicates the shift of the locus of moral authority from the public to the private, from external forms of authority to more internalized forms of repression. The "red worsted" motto, with its exhortation to "Feed my Lambs" on the other hand, is a traditional, compassionately based religious imperative, spoken by Jesus to his disciples, and indicates a public, social and very contradictory message to the others on the wall: not one of "success" or "progress" through competition but, rather, what has become a residual (to use Raymond Williams' formulation) message of putting others first, of community responsibility. The fact that this has been "worked" by his

mother, who died when Paul was an infant and whom "he could not remember," inscribes a moral loss in this story. The old, residual messages of Christianity may be given lip service, but they are no longer emphasized. Also, the absent mother indicates a breakdown of the bourgeois family ethos, with the great expectations placed upon it: that the family, under the pressures of urban market economies, will safeguard culture and morality.

Through the absent mother, Cather in effect highlights the other messages that Lears claims the family also conveyed, that of socializing males to succeed in the competitive realm, teaching the traits of aggressive and acquisitive behavior in order to compete and "make it"(16). By placing Calvin alongside the religious exhortation the two messages are effectively conflated: the religious imperative has now become the Protestant work ethic. In addition, alongside both these images is the image of George Washington, making the Calvinist/religious ethic a patriotic one, linking economic progress and the requisite moral and bodily repression with national interest and identity. The religious imperative has now become elided with the message to "work hard, succeed," and, hung over the bed, points to the need for self-control, self-denial, and discipline in matters of work, education, and even sexuality. The icons over the bed signify the equation of morality with material success, typifying the "evasive banality" present in the culture as it confronts advancing modernity in the late nineteenth century.

Lawrence Scaff outlines what he terms the five "theses" of Max Weber's The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. One of the major points in what Scaff calls Weber's "capitalism thesis" is that:

> Modernity is characterized above all by the increasing dominance of a specific kind of rationalism which must be understood in terms of means-ends categories, purposive or goal-oriented actions, and "instrumental" standards. The notion of purposive or instrumental rationality (*Zweckrationalitat*) intruding into the everyday lifeworld and all spheres of culture, including those aspects of art and morality where claims to a protected "autonomy" had prevailed previously, is often considered Weber's most distinctive and original contribution to an understanding of modernity [. . .]. [T]his rationalization thesis maintains that the essential driving mechanism of purposive or instrumental rationality is "intellectualization" or the increasing dominance of abstract cognitive processes. Rationalization can thus include pervasive features of modern life such as standardization, commodification, measurement in terms of efficiency, cost-benefit analysis, legalistic administrative procedures, and bureaucratic coordination and rule. The last of these features — the tendency toward "bureaucratization" in public affairs, which Weber tends to characterize as "inescapable" and an "objectification of mind"— therefore becomes an exceptionally obvious example of a more general and deep-rooted cultural development. (104-5)

To deny desire is part of what it means to be a man in the reactionary republican culture which feels that a reinvigoration of manliness and morals is imperative to success, and this functions in both bolstering emergent finance and corporate

capitalism and in redressing the sins of the hedonistic, decadent Aestheticism post-Wilde. However, as Weber noted, as the pressures of capitalist acquisition increase, the imperative shifts from "saving" to "spending" and by the end of the century, "hedonism and greed" have taken the place of ascetic rationalism. Paul is coming of age in the advent of the new consumer culture. His sense of being drawn to art signifies however his rebellion towards rationalization, the efficiency of school, the internalization of "instrumental" standards: art still poses a sphere outside instrumentality, although celebrity and market culture is quickly encroaching into that space. While Paul may not understand or fully experience art as sublime, he at least recognizes the potential of it as another space in what Weber termed the "life-world."

In order for the will to be redirected, for "morality" to be internalized, the body must submit to denial, and sensation must be repressed as it too becomes an instrument of rationalism. The allusion to Gilman's "Yellow Wallpaper" in "Paul's Case" and Paul's own hunger for sensational experience is enough to suggest Cather's distaste for the coercion of a seventeen-year old boy through repressive Calvinist mores. While Cather may disapprove of some of Paul's hedonistic choices, as shown through the ending of the story, she nevertheless sides with him on this issue. Paul's resistance mirrors Cather's own aesthetic, and his antimodernism is complicated in much the way her own is. Lears argues that:

> This [self-repressive] prudery has provoked the enlightened twentieth century's contempt, but if we move beyond sneers we can begin to see the historical significance of this unprecedented extension of self-

> control. It was the strongest attempt yet made to extend the process of rationalization from the outer to the inner life; it meant that systematic methods of self-control would press beyond the workplace into the most intimate areas of daily experience — perhaps even into unconscious wishes, dreams, and fantasies. In other words, the Victorian extension of self-control meant the triumph of a modern superego, more thoroughly internalized, more systematically demanding than any of its historic predecessors. (13)

The antimodern problem is that, on the one hand, a rejection of "prudery"— such as Paul's when he defies the authorities and indulges in consumerism and perhaps even a one-night stand with a student from Yale in New York—is in fact a protest against the rationalistic ethic; but on the other hand it represents a danger to internalized rationalization since it might lead to the loss of individualism which consumer culture requires in order to function.

The modern superego, like Aestheticism, is ultimately made possible, both in theory and in practice, through modernity's focus on the autonomous individual, but it has come to serve a new end, that of the rising bourgeoisie and emergent capitalism, bolstered by internalized Protestant morality. Cather's resistant aesthetic is rooted in individualism and individual sensation, and therefore quite vulnerable to the very hegemonic structures in place she wishes to denounce. But her insistence on sensation and the sensual in artistic experience, the "experience of the morning bath" as aesthetic experience, points to her opposition to the regimentation and rationalization of inner life and a rejection of the body's instrumentality. Cather's

aesthetic demands and attempts to carve out a separate space free from these pressures in order that individual, unique art may flourish.

Though late nineteenth-century bourgeois morality and an oppositional or alternative Aestheticism seem to pursue radically different aims, in fact, both share the same root: radical individualism. And both ultimately serve the same end by contributing to the emergent capitalist modernity that Cather critiques through Paul, his neighborhood, and his family, early in the new century. It is important to look at one other effect of this intensified and internalized bourgeois morality. The family, under the pressures of urban market economies, "acquired new psychological and ideological burdens." According to Lears, "work" becomes separated from "home," women become the "guardians of culture and morality," birthrates dropped and children were more easily sentimentalized as innocent, yet more autonomous individuals. However, despite lingering notions of a separate sphere, complete segregation did not in fact take place: Lears argues that the home was still meant "to socialize people (particularly males) to succeed in [the] competitive realm." If the home officially "encouraged mutual harmony, it also taught the aggressive traits of the self-made man" (16). This conflict too is represented in Cather's piece, and her depiction of Paul's father "at the head of the stairs" deserves attention in order to understand her critique of bourgeois morality.

Early in the story, Cather describes the model to which Paul's society, including his father and the teachers at his school, his neighbors and the minister next door, think he should aspire:

> Today, Paul's father, on the top step, was talking to a young man who shifted a restless baby from knee to knee. He happened to be the young man who was daily held up to Paul as a model, and after whom it was his father's dearest hope that he would pattern. This young man was of a ruddy complexion, with a compressed, red mouth, and faded, near-sighted eyes, over which he wore thick spectacles, with gold bows that curved about his ears. He was clerk to one of the magnates of a great steel corporation, and was looked upon in Cordelia Street as a young man with a future. (178)

The expectations for Paul here are clearly delineated: the hope of the class of people on Cordelia Street is fairly constrained. The young man — a clerk — is looked up to as a "young man with a future" though Cather leaves this ambiguous: is it because he has access to the powerful steel magnate, or is it because he himself might rise above his clerk status? Alastair Hamilton, in discussing The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, explains Weber's notion of the "ideal-type of the capitalist" as possessing a "disciplined spirit of enterprise, from which all joy was absent" (155). Hamilton notes that Weber was intensely interested in the relationship between asceticism and labor. Cather's further description of the clerk alludes to such asceticism as well:

> There was a story that, some five years ago — he was now barely twenty-six — he had been a trifle "dissipated," but in order to curb his appetites and save the loss of time and strength that a sowing of wild oats might have entailed, he had taken his chief's advice, oft reiterated

> to his employés, and at twenty-one had married the first woman whom he could persuade to share his fortunes. She happened to be an angular schoolmistress, much older than he, who also wore thick glasses, and who had now borne him four children, all near-sighted, like herself. (178)

Cather's depiction of this near-sighted neighbor is allegorically satirical: the near-sightedness indicating an inability to see beyond the confines of class, and the expectations of this class, represented by the neighborhood, and, specifically, Cordelia Street, which

> was a highly respectable street, where all the houses were exactly alike, and where business men of moderate means begot and reared large families of children, all of whom went to Sabbath-school and learned the shorter catechism, and were interested in arithmetic; all of whom were as exactly alike as their homes, and of a piece with the monotony in which they lived. (175)

Cather, in this passage, draws a vivid, if dreary, picture of life under industrial capitalism and the deadening, monotonous conformity accompanying it. The expectations for the occupants of this neighborhood are low. In order to be regarded as someone with a "future" one must be self-repressed, must exercise self-denial; the near-sighted neighbor has taken his "chief's" advice, in a manner of which Kellogg would most certainly approve. The "curbing of appetite" that marriage effects is the target of Cather's critique (there is no space for being even a "trifle dissipated" in this world of regimentation), as well as the resulting monotony; the homes and

people who are "exactly alike" hint at the problem for individualism in this text. While it is clear that conformity is undesirable and that individuality is valued, ultimately, as Paul moves into a more decadent Aestheticism, Cather will be forced to qualify her belief in individualism.

Being a clerk like his neighbor is certainly not a future Paul wants any part of, despite the overt pressure from his father and the futile efforts of his teachers at school (177-78). The evasive banality of the lessons taught to Paul are fundamentally congruent with the progressive rhetoric of the American Dream, but the actual expectations of conformity attached to Paul and his classmates inscribe the impossibility of the self-made man success stories. Cather codes this irreconcilable conflict in her descriptions of Cordelia Street society and in Paul's experience at school. Paul's teachers are frustrated and at a loss, and he is suspended, not for any particular reason but for generally being insolent, for his "disorder and impertinence," a kind of "hysterically defiant manner," and a "contempt which they all knew he felt for them, and which he seemingly made not the least effort to conceal" (170). Paul, of course, represents a challenge to their own unexamined and contradictory beliefs.

As Lears notes, the "destruction of old oppressive forms" of social constraints late in the nineteenth century had created "new problems of social control" (12). The rise of standardized public education was, and of course still is, one method of imparting measures of social control, along with defining the expectations for certain classes destined for particular types of work. Paul is not amenable to such education, "in one class he habitually sat with his hand shading his

eyes; in another he made a running commentary on the lecture, with humorous intent" (171). After his conference with the principal and all his teachers, the teachers feel ashamed to have "felt so vindictive toward a mere boy"; Paul on the other hand, whistles as he leaves the building hoping his teachers witness his lightheartedness (172). Cather's tone in these passages is not especially judgmental towards Paul, but it is much harsher towards the teachers, whom she figures as wolves in a pack and compares to a "ring of tormentors" who go after Paul as a "miserable street cat" (172).

The teachers are one form of external authority which Paul adamantly rejects. But his father's authority is also at issue. The Victorian, patriarchal, traditional authority of the father "at the head of the stairs," an image in Paul's mind when he comes home late from ushering, is not a reality he faces willingly, especially since he fantasizes about his father accidentally killing him (and not regretting it). He prefers instead to spend the night in the cold, dark basement and to lie to his father the next morning rather than be confronted. Paul lies quite often, to his father and to others; in fact, he has come to find lying "indispensable for avoiding friction" (170). He tells extravagant and ludicrous stories to his classmates about trips to the Continent that are delayed for various reasons, and stories about his close relationships with famous personages.

But once he has been cut off from ushering as punishment from his father, he turns to stealing as well. After successfully embezzling money from Denny and Carson, his father's company, and fleeing to New York, Cather tells us that in that city there is "no figure" like his father "at the top of the stairs" (183). This is

especially comforting, since "Paul had done things that were not pretty to watch, he knew," but now he has "a curious sense of relief, as though he had at last thrown down the gauntlet to the thing in the corner" — his fear (183). Cather never tells us precisely what Paul fears, besides his father's authority and anger. The allusion to "sin" or "evil" is left unmarked, ambiguous, merely suggested.[23]

In Lears' discussion of antimodern reactions he notes that "yearnings for unconscious vitality" represent a "mounting challenge to the modern superego," in the attempt to internalize morality in the autonomous individual (166). He notes that:

> This rebellious impulse animated avant-garde art and literature; it also had a wider social significance. Therapeutic quests for well-being proliferated, focusing often on premodern models forming an inchoate cult of inner experience. Though they aimed to recover primal irrationality, devotees of inner experience frequently trivialized unconscious mental and emotional life by denying its darker dimensions of aggression, rage and conflict...the cult of inner experience had an ironic effect: its devotees reinforced the evasive banality they had intended to escape (166-7).

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[23] Judith Butler discusses this aspect of "Paul's Case" in her chapter, "Dangerous Crossings," in Bodies that Matter. She argues that Paul's "scandalous" behavior may be linked to his homosexuality: "here is a gesture that both covers and defers some allegedly criminal sexuality, that takes place against and through the law that produces that criminality." And, "like the gendered surface of Cather's own narrative, Paul's presentation is maddening precisely for the expectations that it defies" (165).

Paul's rebellious stance as a self-fashioned Aesthete and flâneur is not simply a teenaged rebellion, but an inability to reconcile the conflicting demands of modernity. The "darker dimensions" of this rebellion are rather brutally depicted in this piece, in Paul's crimes and particularly in his suicide. The "failure" of Paul to conform to bourgeois morality, which will place him squarely under the "waters of Cordelia street clos[ing] above his head" (174), leaves him very few options. His attempted dissent, through Aestheticism, is one imagined solution to the "yearning for unconscious vitality" Lears describes. The traditional Christian virtues are no longer an option, though they appear accessible (the minister living next door, Sabbath-school every week), but they have been elided with the Calvinist work ethic so that they are virtually indistinguishable from the pressures to be a "success." The appearance of Christian virtue counts, but the real virtues extolled are those of becoming the self-made man; in terms of status, this is what really counts. The repression through the will, as in Kellogg, has yet another function. Through ascetic denial and the repression of sensation, the stage is set for the enactment of capitalist efficiency. By turning the forces of conscience away from traditional religious concerns to the vocation of work and success, a different type of individual emerges who is much more fitted to the new system.

One reaction to this internalized pressure of rationalization is of course, neurasthenia. Charlotte Perkins Gilman had published "The Yellow Wallpaper" in 1891 in The New England Magazine, and it made enough of a stir that many, including a Boston physician, protested its publication. Gilman's story is about the repression of creativity in a woman diagnosed by men as having a "nervous

condition" or "hysteria" brought on by childbirth and exacerbated by writing. Her protagonist's dilemma is that in order to "cure" her, her very body must be controlled; she is infantalized and isolated by her husband, a patriarchal figure of authority (he is both her husband and her doctor). As Elizabeth Ammons has noted, "Denied freedom of movement, intellectual stimulus (books, friends, writing, or drawing) . . . she was transformed into nothing but body, a mass of pure passive, ostensibly desexualized flesh without self-control" (36). The regimen of S. Weir Mitchell, called the "rest cure," depended upon the doctor being in control and the patient knowing that her feelings, questions, and concerns will and must be disregarded. The end result is a desexualized, unchangingly six-month pregnant-like, "refeminized" woman. Ammons claims that the "successfully refeminized woman is at first forced and then later learns cheerfully to place her whole being in the hands of another, who, not accidentally, is a physician: the new priest, the new male authority, of the new scientific era" (36). Cather's female characters, as well as Paul,[24] refuse this male authority, and her female bodies are particularly resistant to such refeminization, maintaining a near flawless, if "masculine," self-control. Cather's aesthetic not only reaffirms the sensation of the body but reclaims its experiences for a higher purpose: that of art. But, in "Paul's Case," Paul does not have the artistic vocation or drive himself, and thus, has no means of redemption

[24] Paul seems to be a feminized male in the sense Blanchard argues Aesthetic men were by the end of the century. And Judith Butler also argues this point, claiming that "the vectors of Paul's sexuality" are impossible to determine. Butler argues that the "ban of suspension" imposed on Paul as he is expelled from school "puts into doubt to which gender and sexuality 'Paul' refers, confounding a reading that claims to 'settle' the question" (163).

available to him. He will have to find another means of protest, and he does it by emulating the Aesthete. However, as the next section demonstrates, this model has a particularly American inflection.

Part II. Paul as flâneur: the aesthetic body and "morbid desire"

In her book Gender on the Divide: The Dandy in Modernist Literature, Jessica Feldman claims that Cather uses the figure of the dandy to interrogate gender categories, but also to "solve artistic problems, chief among them the conception of a precisely modern beauty" (22). I would go further and suggest that Cather also uses the figure of the dandy to embody her antimodern sentiment, itself an irresolvable problem. The history of the dandy is instructive for understanding Cather's antimodernism since her particular use of it is necessarily inflected by the period during which she writes. Feldman has established that Cather read French literature extensively, particularly during her years at the University of Nebraska and her early years as a writer. She also notes that Cather makes mention of or alludes to a "wide range of French writers, including Gautier . . .Baudelaire; Barbey"; as well as Dumas, Flaubert, Verlaine, Zola, Daudet, and Maupassant in her literary reviews. Of course she also read English literary dandies such as Pater, Swinburne and Wilde (144). Feldman's notion of Cather's search for a "moral aestheticism" is a useful and provocative one, but her analysis of Cather remains ahistorical. Lears' notion of antimodernism in America at the turn of the century can help illuminate Cather's response.

Feldman notes that Cather's use of the dandy figure is aimed at interrogating the limitations of gender and transcending them. Her observation that "the chief rule of the brotherhood of dandies, strictly observed, is to evade conformity" and that the writers she studies, including Cather, represent the dandy figure as a figure of protest, is particularly useful. She continues in her discussion of the dandy by claiming that, generally:

> he is the figure of paradox created by many societies in order to express whatever it is that the culture feels it must, but cannot, synthesize. This dandy is neither spirit nor flesh, nature nor artifice, ethical nor aesthetic, active nor passive, male nor female. He is the figure who casts into doubt, even while he underscores, the very binary oppositions by which his culture lives. (4)

This said, there is nevertheless a history to the evolution of the dandy. Cather's depiction of the dandy, or what Walter Benjamin later calls the flâneur is, while a most particularly American one, based on ideals which can be traced back at least to Baudelaire and his own brand of antimodernism in mid-century France.

Ellen Moers argues, in The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm, that:

> With *Le Peintre de la view moderne* the dandy tradition reached its apogee. Baudelaire brought out all the capacity of the dandy figure for rebellion: for scornful, silent, unsuccessful rebellion against the mediocre materialism of a democratic era. Dickens had suggested a dandyism of failure; Barbey had expounded a dandyism of dissatisfaction; Baudelaire finally posited a dandyism of despair.

> Precisely because the dandy was, for Baudelaire, a figure apart from life, irresponsible, idle, absorbed with self, he could serve as a moral consciousness for the contemporary world. Defiant in a bourgeois society, Baudelaire's dandy admitted the originality and permanence of sin; he observed and acquiesced in the modernity of evil. (253)

But as Paterian Aestheticism and, later, the Yellow Book decadence interpellates the dandy figure, Baudelaire's figure of the dandy is inflected by a certain ironic determinism. Moers continues:

> Baudelaire's vision of the dandy as the last representative of human pride, drowning in a sea of democracy, would find ironic confirmation in the last chapter of the dandy's history. For the dandy was to go down to defeat at the hands not of decadence but of vulgarity. The *fin de siécle* made him over for a mass audience. (283)

The American flâneur is, unlike his forebears, perhaps the final product of modernity, and, ultimately, vulgarity; that is, he is a consumer. This section will trace the problem of Cather's antimodern aesthetic through her depiction of an American dandy, Paul.

Cather writes of Paul, that, "in the midst of that smoke-palled city, enamoured of figures and grimy toil, Paul had his secret temple, his wishing-carpet, his bit of blue-and white Mediterranean shore bathed in perpetual sunshine" (179). While the late nineteenth century Aesthete may wish for a place beyond ideology, beyond history, "bathed in perpetual sunshine," Cather firmly situates Paul in the industrial, modern age of the early twentieth century. The antimodern allusions to

exotic times and places firmly opposed to the "grimy toil" of "smoke-palled" urban Pittsburgh are not unusual, as Lears demonstrates. Paul, through his dreams, rejects the work ethic, but not modernity in its entirety (anymore than Cather ultimately does). On Sunday afternoons Paul and his neighbors congregate on their stoops to tell stories. Listening to plans to put in electric railway plants in Egypt, "Paul snapped his teeth; he had an awful apprehension that they might spoil it all before he got there" (178). And yet:

> he rather liked to hear these legends of the iron kings, that were told and retold on Sundays and holidays; these stories of palaces in Venice, yachts on the Mediterranean, and high play at Monte Carlo appealed to his fancy, and he was interested in the triumphs of cash boys who had become famous, though he had no mind for the cashboy stage. (178)

Paul, in rejecting the "grimy toil" of modernity, does not reject the fruits of that toil. He is seduced by the "legends" although he has no desire to participate in the work ethic. This, of course, does not differentiate him from the European dandy's history. What does differentiate him is that he has no means by which to live out his decadent dreams.

Part of what informs the Aesthetic culture of the mid to late nineteenth century, at least since Baudelaire, is the urban figure, searching for sensation, alienated and wandering; this figure Benjamin calls the flâneur who "curses 'progress,' he loathes the industry of the century, and yet he enjoys the special flavour which this industry has given today's life" (94). In his description Benjamin

notes that, unlike the dandy who perfected the art of "the cut," wit, and innuendo, the flâneur does not necessarily have the "gift of pleasing" (96). The flâneur as Benjamin reads him through Poe and Baudelaire is also closely allied with the figure of the amateur detective, furtive, anonymous, voyeuristic, on the margins of the criminal world. Benjamin, in The Arcades Project, writes: "Dialectic of *flânerie*: on one side, the man who feels himself viewed by all and sundry as a true suspect and, on the other side, the man who is utterly undiscoverable, the hidden man. Presumably, it is this dialectic that is developed in 'The Man in the Crowd'" (420). Paul, while an actual criminal who does not want to be caught in his crime, is however a very American figuration: a flâneur who does feel himself viewed as "suspect," yet who wishes, like the dandy, to be seen. In this sense, Paul is both flâneur and dandy.

While Balzac and Thomas Carlyle misconceived the dandy as someone who is more interested in appearances than ideas, comparing, as Balzac did, the dandy's intelligence to "a piece of bedroom furniture," the tradition of the dandy by the fin de siécle in Europe is in reality much more interesting and much more intellectual. The trajectory of the dandy may be traced from its beginnings in England with Brummel to the French interpretation of the figure at least from Baudelaire to the fin de siécle. Baudelaire writes that "Dandyism appears especially in transitional periods in which democracy is not yet all-powerful, in which the aristocracy is only partially weakened and debased" and, as Pamela Genova notes, "The dandy's striking silhouette on the boulevard spoke out as a vote against the ideological move of the end of the century towards the Americanization of Europe and the decadence

of French aesthetic sensibility" (76). She adds that by the fin de siècle, the dandy had "formulated a subtle, aesthetically-grounded style of cultural terrorism that attacked the foundations of art, morality, and convention by consistently questioning those very foundations, hoping to weaken them not through direct attacks, but through insinuation and innuendo" (75).

At mid-century Baudelaire writes, in "Mon coeur mis à nu":

> At a time when men allow themselves to be dulled by the sole idea of utility, I believe that there is no great harm in exaggerating a bit in the opposite direction . . . Other men are subject to taxes, made for menial work, that is, for what are called "professions" (352, 649).

While the reader has no reason to think that Paul's posturing is a deliberate intellectual position, his demeanor is described as "exaggerated," his style as affected. He has "no mind for the cash boy stage," or for the "profession" of clerk for which his father and neighbors assume he will settle. In fact, while Baudelaire's rebellion originates from the position of privilege accorded his aristocratic class, a class which does not need a "profession" or even an occupation, Paul's rebellion originates from his position in a lower class. His rebellion will take the form of mimicking the upper class, some of whom do have a profession. In America, in the age of high finance capital, having a "profession" as opposed to being lower middle class or working class will afford respectability and enable one to conspicuously consume — the most important hallmark of status. Above all, to appear "professional" distinguishes those in the middle classes from the working class, whether they have much money or not.

The carnation which Paul wears in his lapel to school (not the dyed green carnation of Wilde, but still a "scandalous red") and his other affectations are designed to deliberately provoke his teachers, not by "direct attack" but through "insinuation and innuendo" — at least partially by pointing up an imaginary class difference. Rather than truly aspiring to a "profession," Paul aspires to the luxury of leisure afforded the upper classes. Paul is not interested in "respectability" but in the ability to be identified as one opposing the lower middle class of which he is really a part. Paul mistakes pecuniary reputability, just as Flavia does, with cultural capital.

His affectations, his dress, his lurking outside the theatre at night, his late car rides to and from downtown, his voyeuristic consumption of the wealth of the upper classes in New York, all point to the characteristics of a dandy, but also to Benjamin's flâneur. The one difference is Paul's desire to be seen, and to be seen in a particular way. His flaunting of his dandyism in the face of his teachers and his peers is an act of desperation, to remove himself from the confines of lower middle class respectability, to identify and to be identified with the wealthy, the consumer culture of modernity — not, in the historical dandy tradition of exaggerating the extremity of modern decadence in order to critique it, but to participate in it, in a very American version of antimodernism. Unlike his European predecessors, Paul wants to participate in consumer culture in an attempt to subvert the conformist, repressive bourgeois morality of the lower and middle classes and their smug "homilies by which the world is run"; unlike the European dandy, Paul does not need to lose himself in the crowd to assert the decadence of his culture, he needs to lose

himself there to assert his belonging to a class to which he can never realistically ascend.

Paul's dandyism is, ironically, his participation in the marketplace as an act of protest. Any pretensions to art are simply "mere scenic accessories." Paul's adoption of "style" may show an affinity to Wildean decadence, but in America it simply works differently. No longer a subversive act, except in the context of lower middle class life, Paul's style represents the American obsession with acquisition and the appropriation of the individual by capitalism.

Of course late nineteenth century dandies like Wilde depended upon being seen in order to shock and scandalize their audiences. But even Wilde had at his disposal the wealth of his wife, and his cronies, like most European dandies, were typically aristocrats. Conspicuous consumption was not a form of protest in and of itself; though, for Baudelaire "evil" was a form of protest, as Wilde's "style" was "truth." Though Baudelaire as flâneur is seen on the boulevard, he nonetheless leads his life voyeuristically, furtively, like Poe's "Man in the crowd." As the century unfolds, as American bourgeois morality and consumer culture becomes more and more intractable, in order to be subversive the dandy must be seen. As the American "codes" of class become submerged in democratic materialism, the new dandy must develop new ways to remain subversive. His subversion must become, ironically, more and more overt and desperate.

Paul, unlike the dandy of the Second Empire in France, is a figuration of a different historical moment, the age of finance capitalism in America, that most "democratic" of cultures. For the dandy, this means that "vulgarity" has become the

order of the day. Unlike the original dandy figure, the American dandy is not of the aristocratic class. As a member of the "classless class," the lower middle class of clerks, teachers and semi-educated, with aspirations to the upper classes, Paul needs to be seen, and in order to differentiate himself from his own class he needs to be seen conspicuously consuming. In order to assert his individuality, in order to assert his independence from the bourgeois morality his own lower middle class has appropriated, Paul must reinvent himself. In a theatrical way, he performs the part of a dandy, an Aesthete, informed (in Cather's representation) by the rebellion of the dandy figure from Baudelaire on, but interpellated by the peculiar conflations of individualism, Calvinist morality, and consumer culture in America at the turn of the century.

In Paul's attempt to assert his individuality through his self-presentation he ironically makes others the arbiter of his value, and those others are those he hopes to be like — the wealthy with access to luxury, who conspicuously consume. In order to throw off conformity, Paul adopts a new mode of conformity, one which is beginning to gain currency in America as the new century begins: the consumer mentality. Paul, sitting in the Waldorf-Astoria in New York, in his newly purchased clothes with his engraved silver cigarette case:

> watched the pageant. The mere stage properties were all he contended for . . . He was entirely rid of his nervous misgivings, of his forced aggressiveness, of the imperative desire to show himself different from his surroundings. He felt now that his surroundings explained him. Nobody questioned his purple; he had only to wear it

passively. He had only to glance down at his dress coat to reassure himself that here it would be impossible for anyone to humiliate him. (185)

What Paul needs is for people to see him consuming: art at the theatre, wearing pretentious clothing in public spaces, ordering flowers for his room, dining on good food among wealthy patrons, taking better accommodations — all aimed at differentiating himself from the lower middle class from which he comes. It is Paul's consumption which is, paradoxically, his rebellion. The dandy originally, in mid-century France, was able to utilize his dandyism and what Walter Benjamin calls "the art of pleasing" as a subversive technique because he had the very access to elegance and luxury which Paul does not. Dandyism called attention to the perceived excesses of culture by simply taking what existed to an extreme, by affectations of boredom and disinterestedness. But dandyism signifies something very different as it accompanies the advent of consumer culture in America, even though many of the stylistic elements remain in place.

While dandyism was a protest in Europe against the Americanization of culture, in America dandyism becomes an assertion of the power of the very material mediocrity which has begun to constitute American modernity. It is an assertion of that which Baudelaire and Benjamin oppose. In a misguided attempt at basing his persona on a European model, Paul ironically becomes less a figure of independence and revolt and more a figure of the encroaching crassness and vulgarity of his culture which dandyism intended to protest.

"Everything was quite perfect; he was exactly the kind of boy he had always wanted to be," Paul thinks as he finishes dressing in the evening before his final night in the hotel. But Paul's desire is however perverted and even subverted in its aim: far from being a unique, autonomous individual, differentiated from the monotony of Cordelia Street society, Paul is forced to merely play out another role.

Within the context of American excess, acquisitiveness and dreams of upward mobility, Paul's dandyism, far from representing a rebellion, merely exhibits in extreme form the very progressive values the culture projects. As the lower middle class of Cordelia Street expands, its aspirations are less concentrated, as in mid-century France, on avoiding bourgeois complacency than on entering in to it, and, further, are focused at all costs on avoiding slipping into the working class. Being "exactly the kind of boy he had always wanted to be" in this case involves rising above his own class into the bourgeoisie which constitutes cultural capital for the lower class from which Paul comes. But antimodernist reaction contains two parts: and Paul in rejecting the morality of asceticism and self-denial (having no mind for the cash-boy stage) still accepts the rhetorical and practical ends of capitalism and progressive rhetoric: wealth, luxury and above all, conspicuous consumption.

As the class of clerks, teachers, and semi-educated small businessmen expands, they still remain what Arno Mayer calls a "half-class of quasi-workers and quasi- bourgeois" united in their fears of "proletarianization" and their dreams of

embourgeoisement.[25] While the dandy was perceived in Europe, as Pamela Genova argues, as a kind of cultural "terrorist," in "Paul's Case" Paul as dandy is merely viewed as aberrant, as irritating, and as someone whom the minister needs to work harder to "reclaim." His sensational excesses need to be reigned in, but not because they represent a threat to the bourgeois class (since even the teachers aspire to that), but because he is stepping out of line from his own class and its conflicted Calvinist morality of self-denial and conformity. While his lower middle class accepts bourgeois morality, that morality does not come with the luxuries of the upper and bourgeois classes. The desire to consume on Cordelia Street is assimilated but also qualified through the "virtue" of self-denial, enabling the "imaginary resolution" of its restless ambitions to partake of the American dream with its lower status of industrial labor, only one step away from the working class which it fears. Cordelia Street represents the ultimate accommodation to modernity through the impetus of progressive ideology. Believing a rhetoric which does not serve their own interests, the teachers, the minister, and Paul's father can still claim a compensatory cultural capital by adopting bourgeois values, even without the rewards that are supposed to accompany them.

When Paul goes out from his hotel in New York he is face to face with modernity, and unlike his Romantic predecessors, is not shocked by it. The artificiality of it all is what beckons, what entices:

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[25] I take this idea from Quentin Bailey's thesis, Modernism and Class: White-Collar Experiences of Education, Empire, and Economy, which outlines Mayer's ideas usefully.

> Here and there on the corners whole flower gardens blooming behind glass windows, against which the snow flakes stuck and melted; violets, roses, carnations, lilies of the valley – somehow vastly more lovely and alluring that they blossomed thus unnaturally in the snow. The Park itself was a wonderful stage winterpiece. (184)

Wilde had noted in the 1880s that being "natural" was a hard appearance to keep up. The artificial for the late nineteenth century dandy was the essence of beauty, a modern form of beauty, and therefore the only true beauty. Cather's writing here is a compact and precise example of her impressionistic and sensational aesthetic as she describes Paul's reaction to the scene on Fifth Avenue:

> The snow was falling faster, lights streamed from the hotels that reared their many stories fearlessly up into the storm, defying the raging Atlantic winds. A long, black stream of carriages poured down the avenue, intersected here and there by other streams, tending horizontally. There were a score of cabs about the entrance of his hotel, and his driver had to wait. Boys in livery were running in and out of the awning stretched across the sidewalk, up and down the red velvet carpet laid from the door to the street. Above, about, within it all, was the rumble and roar, the hurry and toss of thousands of human beings as hot for pleasure as himself, and on every side of him towered the glaring affirmation of the omnipotence of wealth. (184)

Here, in an almost ironic tone, as elsewhere in the story, Cather elides the sensational aesthetic of the modern world, the rumble and roar, the streams of carriages

converging like black rivers in a topography of the metropolis, with the "omnipotence of wealth" — skyscrapers in a particularly American figural landscape. The artificial prevails over the natural, even over the raging wind off the Atlantic.

Underscoring this point of contact between aesthetics and wealth, Cather writes in the next paragraph:

> The boy set his teeth and drew his shoulders together in a spasm of realization; the plot of all dramas, the text of all romances, the nerve-stuff of all sensations was whirling about him like the snow flakes. He burnt like a faggot in a tempest. (184)

Paul's aesthetic, bodily, sensational response to the scene before him and all it represents is clear. His aesthetic response is not about art, though wealth and what it represents is commodified, consumed, and, in a cheap imitation of Pater's "burning with a hard gem-like flame," Paul too will burn with intensity of sensation, both despite the coldness of wealth swirling around him, and because of it.

The rebellion against bourgeois morality which Paul's dandyism and his criminal behavior represent is undercut by his participation in consumer culture and his conspicuous consumption. While he rejects the Protestant banal morality of his class, he continues to aspire to the promises of consumer culture, and in fact, flaunts his contrived difference from his class. The ambiguity of this position is beautifully figured in this piece, and exemplifies the antimodern impulse Lears has described. After committing the crime which will get him to New York, Paul "wondered that there were honest men in the world at all" and, as he sees the glittering wealth

around him muses that "this was what all the world was fighting for . . . this was what all the struggle was about." As he sits in the hotel lobby, "he doubted the reality of his past":

> Had he ever known a place called Cordelia Street, a place where fagged looking business men boarded the early car? Mere rivets in a machine they seemed to Paul — sickening men, with combings of children's hair always hanging to their coats, and the smell of cooking in their clothes . . . (185)

The industry of these men — themselves represented as part of the machinery of wealth and profit — both defines the age and makes possible the pursuit of luxury. The work they do is here denigrated, yet the results of it — the wealth they make possible for the class to which Paul aspires — is utterly necessary to Paul's "protest."

And, as the passage above shows, these working men are inextricably bound up with notions of "family" and all that that represents: the self-made man, self-denial, "wholesome advice," limited expectations, and above all the notion that family makes up for the asceticism necessary in the work ethic and that the family can, somehow, mediate the negative effects of it all. As the relation between Paul and his father clearly shows, this familial connection is fatally flawed. The ideal of the bourgeois family is simply untenable as a mediating factor to counteract modernity's effects. It is not simply that Paul is motherless; his sisters are barely mentioned and he is terrified of his own father.

As Paul sits in the dining room, or in the lobby, or alone in his own room in the hotel in New York, his very identity seems hidden, even to himself, and he

remains anonymous the entire time he is there, even until the very moment of his death. He dresses carefully and yet checks himself again and again in the mirror:

> Had he not always been thus, had he not sat here night after night, from as far back as he could remember, looking pensively over just such shimmering textures, and slowly twirling the stem of a glass like this one between his thumb and middle finger. He rather thought he had. (185)

Belonging nowhere, responsible to no one, Paul represents the alienation modernity calls forth, an alienation that Baudelaire embraced as flâneur during the Paris of the Second Empire, but which will drive Paul to despair, to suicide, in twentieth century America.

Yet, Paul seems unaware of his alienation. He appears to embrace it. The reader is in fact surprised that Paul reacts so strongly at the end of the story. "He was not in the least abashed or lonely. He had no especial desire to meet or to know any of these people; all he demanded was the right to look on and conjecture, to watch the pageant" (185). Benjamin notes: "the *flâneur* is the observer of the marketplace. His knowledge is akin to the occult science of industrial fluctuations. He is a spy for the capitalists, on assignment in the realm of consumers" (427). Paul, as an American flâneur, has done his espionage well; he has learned how to dress, how to eat, how to consume, and how to consume conspicuously enough to keep from arousing suspicion that he does not belong to the upper class. The notion of double-agent might apply here, for Paul is not only a spy for consumer capitalism, he

is also spying on another class, the class to which he aspires from his position in the lower middle class.

Paul's escape to New York, his criminality, his obsession with appearances and material possessions are, in fact, perversions of the morality which he ostensibly rejects, in effect "reinforcing the evasive banality" he attempts to subvert. In "Paul's Case," we see, in Paul's posturing, the makings of a very modern consumer culture and the culture of instant gratification, values which Cather critiques. The very act of flânerie, as Benjamin reminds us, is the "epitomie of the political attitude of the middle classes" (420). Though Paul comes from a semi-educated, semi-working class — with basically no sense of class-consciousness — conventional, bourgeois morality lends a kind of status and respectability, a kind of cultural capital for the lower class. By rebelling against the "ugliness and commonness" of Cordelia Street and its monotony, Paul jumps from the frying pan into the fire. While modernity has created his dilemma, the movement of modernity is accelerating towards the consumer culture the flâneur, and the decadent, first oppose and then help to make possible. In rejecting bourgeois morality, Paul hopes to replace it with consumerism. Cather is clear that this is not enough.

Walter Benjamin writes in "Baudelaire or the Streets of Paris, "The *flâneur* still stood at the margin of the great city, as of the bourgeois class. Neither of them had yet overwhelmed him. In neither of them was he at home. He sought his asylum in the crowd" (170). Paul's immersion into the great swirling mass of New York and the affluent wealth of Fifth Avenue is, however, only an illusion: in every scene where this is described, Paul is spying on it from the window of his hotel. Paul's

flânerie is voyeuristic, like all flânerie, but whatever subversive element of cultural terror he intends is itself subverted through American consumer culture. The impressionistic scene of black lines of carriages in the snow, while a beautiful winterpiece, nonetheless serves the same function as art for Paul: he had no especial desire to meet the people any more than he had to become an artist. He is outside looking in, a spy for the capitalists in the marketplace of taste, on assignment for the realm of consumers. Paul uses the "nerve-stuff of all sensation" to propel himself away from Cordelia Street, but lacks the literal and perhaps ideological means to sustain himself as American dandy.

Paul, modeling himself on the figure of the dandy, is not a "manly" man. Since Aestheticism has been renegotiated, post-Wilde, the Aesthetic American male is equated with "feminized men." The anxiety which this provokes is clear in the responses of those in authority over Paul. Physical descriptions, as well as descriptions of his dress, call attention to Paul's dandyism and Aesthetic posturing. Cather describes Paul in the first paragraph of the story:

> His clothes were a trifle outgrown, and the tan velvet on the collar of his open overcoat was frayed and worn; but for all that there was something of the dandy about him, and he wore an opal pin in his neatly knotted black four-in-hand, and a red carnation in his button-hole. This latter adornment the faculty somehow felt was not properly significant of the contrite spirit befitting a boy under the ban of suspension. (170)

Still, despite such bravura, Paul is "always glancing about him, seeming to feel that people might be watching him and trying to detect something" (181). His constant looking over his shoulder also draws attention to the need he has to be seen, as well as to the seeming unreality his own existence has for him. He is much like an actor on a stage himself, "his eyes were remarkable for a certain hysterical brilliancy, and he continually used them in a conscious, theatrical sort of way, peculiarly offensive in a boy" (170), according to his teachers' observations. They speculate that it is belladonna, but Cather notes that that drug does not produce such an effect. Paul's drawing teacher had noticed that when looking at him, one "saw only his white teeth and the forced animation of his eyes. One warm afternoon the boy had gone to sleep at his drawing-board, and his master had noted with amazement what a white, blue-veined face it was . . . the lips twitching even in his sleep" (172). Neuraesthenia, the nervous inability to cope with modern life, often diagnosed during this period in people outside the bounds of convention, is certainly alluded to in this and other descriptions of Paul.

But while Cather's title may indicate a psychological profiling of Paul, it is, however, doubtful that she means him to be an extreme example of neurosis. If Cather is attempting to explain Paul's case in therapeutic cultural terms, she equally pathologizes the culture which has created him. The very culture which finds him aberrant and would eliminate, control, and repress all that is individual and unique in him is the same culture which promotes radical individualism in the pursuit of "progress." I find it unlikely that Cather intended for Paul to be read as an individual, psychological aberration whose situation could be managed through the

banality of therapeutic culture. Her indictment of modern culture seems clear, and the title in this light seems ironic.

Cather opposes Paul's life on Cordelia Street and at school with what seems, at first glance, to be aesthetic experience. Paul works at the theatre as an usher, and sometimes as an unpaid assistant to one of the younger male actors. But the only reason Paul is allowed to go there is that his father "thought a boy ought to be earning a little" (178). The Pittsburgh Carnegie Hall is shabby and so are the actors. Paul is not interested in the music. It is only when surrounded by beautiful things and people (not engaged in actually listening to music or gazing at a painting per se), when "everything was as it should be," that Paul's senses are truly "fired." It is when, as he sits gazing at the crowds of well-dressed people in the Waldorf-Astoria, or even in the theater in Pittsburgh surrounded by wealthier people than himself, that "the nerve-stuff of all sensations" affects him. "The lights, the chatter, the perfumes, the bewildering medley of colour" are what Paul responds to most intensely. Cather is careful to delineate this from his rather mundane response to actual art. "It was not that symphonies as such meant anything in particular to Paul," Cather tells us (173).

Despite "losing himself" in front of a painting, or fantasizing at the opera, Paul nevertheless fails to find much of any real interest in the art itself. It is what it sparks in his imagination, not a sublime experience of the art itself, which is the draw for Paul. Paul "needed only the spark, the indescribable thrill that made his imagination master of his senses, and he could make plots and pictures enough of his own. It was equally true that he was not stage-struck—not, at any rate, in the usual

acceptation of that expression." Paul does not want to be an actor, or a singer, or a musician, "He felt no necessity to do any of these things, what he wanted was to see, to be in the atmosphere, float on the wave of it, to be carried out, blue league after blue league, away from everything" (180). Cather carefully gives us the details of Paul's aesthetic response, and in this, as in her coding of Paul's dress and other behavior, she differentiates between Paul's experience of art and her own sensational aesthetic.

One way in which the reader sees Paul depicted as an Aesthete is in his obsession with the lifestyle of the actors and the imaginary glamour of their lives off stage. He finds the "world-shine" of the actors and singers irresistible. While still in Pittsburgh he hangs about pathetically outside, in the rain, voyeuristically watching the players go inside the hotel, fantasizing all the time, creating imaginary affairs between members of the cast. As he watches the singer go inside, while the door is ajar:

> it seemed to Paul that he, too, entered. He seemed to feel himself go after her up the steps, into the warm, lighted building, into an exotic, a tropical world of shiny, glistening surfaces and basking ease. He reflected upon the mysterious dishes that were brought into the dining-room, the green bottles in buckets of ice, as he had seen them in the supper party pictures of the Sunday supplement. (174)

In this passage, as in many others, the emphasis is on reflected images, on shiny surfaces, a type of aesthetic experience but an attenuated one, reflected, imaginary,

superficial, not that of direct sensation. Paul "seems" to go inside, and the exotic world is an imaginary one, a reflection of his imagination.

Paul's obsession throughout the story with the details of interior decoration is telling as well; it is not only his own appearance which matters to him, but the appearance of his surroundings. Paul's negative response to his surroundings is also telling. For instance in Pittsburgh:

> After a night behind the scenes, Paul found the school-room more than ever repulsive; the bare floors and naked walls; the prosy men who never wore frock coats, or violets in their button-holes; the women with their dull gowns, shrill voices, and pitiful seriousness about prepositions that govern the dative. He could not bear to have the other pupils think for a moment, that he took these people seriously; he must convey to them that he considered it all trivial. (180)

Or, when he goes home after a night ushering, Cather says that "in such reactions, after one of the experiences which made days and nights out of the dreary blanks of the calendar, when his senses were deadened, Paul's head was always singularly clear" (176).

This is such a night, when, after he has left the theatre:

> The nearer he approached the house, the more absolutely unequal Paul felt to the sight of it all; his ugly sleeping chamber; the cold bath-room with the grimy zinc tub, the cracked mirror, the dripping

> experience of life elsewhere was so full of Sabbath-school picnics, petty economies, wholesome advice as to how to succeed in life, and the unescapable odours of cooking, that he found this existence so alluring, these smartly-clad men and women so attractive, that he was so moved by these starry apple orchards that loomed perennially under the limelight. (179)

Contained within this passage is a description, repeated elsewhere as well in the story, of the very bourgeois and very "artificial" morality Lears describes. The "wholesome advice," the "petty economies" point to the notion of success in life, which is opposed to beauty and the appreciation of the aesthetic impulse in life throughout the story. Perhaps Paul's sense of beauty is in fact conditioned by the "petty economies" and "wholesome advice as to how to succeed," artificial values which induce an affinity for an artificial beauty.

In fact, Paul does not steal money from his father's company and flee to New York to make more money, to connive and scheme to get richer or more famous, but simply to be in beautiful surroundings, surrounded by beautiful people and fine clothes, wine and food. Authentic experience has become for Paul elided with the "artificial"— the urban, the glamorous, interior decoration and aesthetic dress: hallmarks of the Aesthetic lifestyle of someone like Wilde. The fact that in order to indulge in these things requires money is incidental, though late in the story Paul "knew now, more than ever, that money was everything, the wall that stood between all he loathed and all he wanted" (188) as he contemplates the end of his days at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York.

In fact, Paul's voyeurism, a type of sensual greed, pervades the entire story: "his chief greediness lay in his ears and eyes" (186). Even though he is worried that his father is coming to find him after reading the account of his theft in the papers, "the glare and glitter about him, the mere scenic accessories had again, and for the last time, their old potency." He is, still, a "fortunate being" and "would finish the thing splendidly" (187). "He was exactly the kind of boy he wanted to be" as he "dress[ed] the part" (186). That Paul is interested in art and sensational experience as a way of enhancing his aesthetic appreciation not in the way Pater intended, but as a consumer, is seen in his own sense of being an object of consumption. As he gets ready to leap before the oncoming train, "once or twice he glanced nervously sidewise, as though he were being watched" (189). This is not Pater's aestheticism, not intensity of the actual moment, but of an imaginary, an attenuated moment.

Earlier in the story, his imagination "became the master of his senses" when he fantasized about the prima donna: "Paul had often hung about the hotel, watching the people go in and out, longing to enter and leave school-masters and dull care behind him for ever." When he is brought up short by a gust of wind, however:

> Paul was startled to find that he was still outside in the slush of the gravel driveway; that his boots were letting in the water and his scanty overcoat was clinging wet about him; that the lights in front of the concert hall were out, and that the rain was driving in sheets between him and the orange glow on the windows above him. There it was, what he wanted — tangibly before him, like the fairy world of a Christmas pantomime; as the rain beat in his face, Paul wondered

> whether he were destined always to shiver in the black night outside, looking up at it. (175)

Here art is elided with the elite, with an upper class, or those who aspire to it. The aesthetic sphere is synonymous, for Paul, with having a glamorous lifestyle, with having money, with precisely those things which are not available to him on Cordelia Street, with its "grimy zinc tub" and "kitchen odours." But the aesthetic sphere Paul desires is artificial, a superficial simulacra of aestheticism. Paul is not equipped to tell the difference, Cather implies.

Cather does not deny a class barrier, and uses art as a trope to define the wall:

> Paul never went up to Cordelia Street without a shudder of loathing. His was next the house of the Cumberland minister. He approached it tonight with the nerveless sense of defeat, the hopeless feeling of sinking back forever into ugliness and commonness that he had always had when he came home. The moment he turned into Cordelia Street he felt the waters close above his head. After each of these orgies of living, he experienced all the physical depression which follows a debauch; the loathing of respectable beds, of common food, of a house permeated by kitchen odours; a shuddering repulsion for the flavourless, colourless mass of every-day existence, a morbid desire for cool things and soft lights and fresh flowers. (175)

Cather, the impressionist aesthete, here depicts Paul's obsession with wealth, his mistaking of glamour for aesthetic sensation, his conspicuous consumption, as "morbid desire." On his way to the train tracks, he remembered "an actual picture of

everything he had seen that morning . . . His mind, unable to cope with vital matters near at hand, worked feverishly and deftly at sorting and grouping these images. They made for him a part of the ugliness of the world . . ." Cather writes, as if to emphasize the distortion of Paul's perception, that as he stopped walking, he picked up a handful of snow to eat, "but that too, seemed hot." The "end had to come sometime," and for Paul, it is only after he buries the symbol of his dandyism, the red carnation—the one natural adornment he consistently wears — in the snow:

> The carnations in his coat were drooping with the cold, he noticed; all their red glory over. It occurred to him that all the flowers he had seen in the show windows that first night must have gone the same way, long before this. It was only one splendid breath they had, in spite of their brave mockery at the winter outside the glass. It was a losing game in the end, it seemed, this revolt against the homilies by which the world is run. Paul took one of the blossoms carefully from his coat and scooped a little hole in the snow, where he covered it up . . . (189).

As Paul kills himself rather than face the banality of Cordelia Street, Cather asserts the power of the natural over the artificial, but never manages to locate authentic sensational experience anywhere in this story. Fresh flowers, cool lights, and the glittering surfaces of American dandyism represent nothing but a "morbid desire" which cannot sustain Paul in a spiritually undernourished modern culture. Benjamin writes, in 1935, of Baudelaire, cities, and the progression of flânerie:

> Paris becomes the subject of lyric poetry. This poetry is no hymn to the homeland; rather, the gaze of the allegorist, as it falls on the city, is the gaze of the alienated man. It is the gaze of the *flâneur*, whose way of life still conceals behind a mitigating nimbus the coming desolation of the big-city dweller . . . The crowd is the veil through which the familiar city beckons to the *flâneur* as phantasmagoria — now a landscape, now a room. (40)

Cather's earliest collection of work, most of it in urban rather than the rural settings of much of her later work, is also the work of a flâneur, who, as Baudelaire writes, "Everywhere . . . sought the transitory, fleeting beauty of our present life — the character of what the reader has permitted us to call *modernity*."[28] "Paul's Case" is the record of that search, and the exhaustive excess of seeing which illuminates loss.

[28] Benjamin also comments in "Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire," that Baudelaire's "theory did not come to grips with the renunciation which, in his work, appears as a loss of nature and naivete" (49). Part of the loss of nature and the organic life encoded in modernity is what Benjamin calls "the cult of the commodity," especially, "fashion." Benjamin comments: "Fashion stands in opposition to the organic. It couples the living body to the inorganic world. To the living, it defends the rights of the corpse." And, "Fashion prescribes the ritual according to which the commodity fetish demands to be worshipped." ("Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century," 36)

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