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Throwing the Furniture out of the Window:
Ulster Protestant Plain Style and Cather's Aesthetic

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“as we grow old we become more and more the stuff our forebears put into us” (98)

--*My Mortal Enemy* (1926)

ABSTRACT

Willa Cather's distinctive plain style is generally understood in terms of the Modernist movement towards simplicity. Her aesthetic desire to “throw the furniture out of the window” resonates not just with Modernist aesthetics, however, but with events in Early Modern Europe: to throw the furniture out of the window is a deeply *Protestant* gesture, echoing the Defenestrations of Prague. While many critics have noted the presence of Catholic content and sympathies in Cather's novels, Cather's work can be better understood in terms of a Protestant aesthetic, and more specifically an *Ulster* Protestant one. Her ghostwriting of the autobiography of Ulsterman S.S. McClure offers a lens for exploring their mutual values of home, hard work, hygiene and perspicuity. Cather's interest in print culture can be understood in terms of this Protestant aesthetic, whereby unruly physical bodies and sensations are translated into fixed typographical images. Her celebration of the Great Plains is another example of her attraction to blank spaces emptied of the pictorial. This clean well-lighted style is a stay against a disordered world. In moments of uncertainty, Cather evokes the aesthetic of her Ulster Protestant heritage, and reaches for the familiar shape of the word.

Willa Cather's aesthetic manifesto “The Novel D meubl ” (1922) ends with a violent image of defenestration, the act, that is, of throwing someone or something out of the

window. Contemptuous of the clutter of much contemporary fiction, with its heavily upholstered accounts of feelings, manners, dress, and interiors, Cather declares:

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 the Pentecost descended. (6)

This passage is of course quite familiar to Cather scholars and critics, and has been used to explore the author's connections to certain strains of Modernism. Phyllis Rose argues that Cather's "hard-won simplicities" can be read as part of "a modernist urge to simplify". For Rose, Cather's Great Plains novels allow readers to experience "the exhilarating potential of clear blank spaces. Few novels," she insists, "are less cluttered than these" (Rose 124). Modernism in its various forms is among other things a crisis over language, a tension between its possibilities and its limits, an anxiety over what it can and cannot do.¹ Modernist responses to this crisis veer from the expansive, devouring style of, say, Joyce to the leanness of Hemingway. The later Beckett is, arguably, the logical extension of this linguistic sparseness. Cather's commitment to plain style is frequently understood in terms of this movement towards simplicity and distillation.²

What is equally striking about Cather's image, however, is its resonance not just with Modernism but with events in Early Modern Europe: to throw the furniture out of the window is a deeply *Protestant* gesture, echoing the Reformation's stripping of the altars, and the Defenestrations of Prague. With its allusion to the Pentecost, the passage shares something in common with the Protestant impulse to break the image, to cleanse the world of Popish clutter and corruption, to return to the plain and simple

spirit of the gospel. This is not, of course, to suggest an anti-Catholic agenda in Cather. As many Cather scholars have demonstrated, a Catholic sympathy and spirit of ecumenism is present in her novels, which, at the level of content, articulate a deep fascination with the culture of Catholicism.³ But to dwell on the presence of missions and miracles, bishops and the Blessed Virgin, in the pages of Cather's texts can sometimes lead to a too-easy equation between the furniture of Catholic devotion and whatever it might mean to be a "Catholic writer." Content analysis only gets us so far.

Rather, this essay will explore Cather's distinctive plain style and its affinity with a Protestant aesthetic, and more specifically an *Ulster* Protestant one. Cather's ancestors emigrated from the Irish province of Ulster, planted by Scottish Presbyterians in the seventeenth century, and the source of much violence and political unrest in past and recent history.⁴ Cather never visited Ireland and, except for correspondence with a distant cousin in County Donegal, showed no sustained interest in her Ulster heritage.⁵ Indeed, the word 'ulster' mainly appears in her work to describe a type of long double-breasted overcoat.⁶ But she did spend her early childhood in an area of Virginia largely settled by Ulster Protestants (Presbyterians who often, like the Cathers, became Baptists in America), and her novels show a deep familiarity—and sometimes irritation—with this low church Protestant atmosphere.⁷ This essay will explore the persistent presence of an Ulster Protestant sensibility or aesthetic in her work, beginning with her ghostwriting of the autobiography of Ulsterman S.S. McClure, her mentor and the Editor of *McClure's Magazine*, where she worked from 1906-1912.⁸ Cather's defenestrating aesthetic finds a counterpart in the culture of Protestant Ulster expressed in the *Autobiography*.

Robert Thacker describes the relationship between Cather and McClure "a complex one, even a symbiotic one" and insists that her ghostwriting of the

Autobiography (1914) deserves further critical attention: “Cather’s work on the autobiography,” he argues, “advanced her movement toward the writing that would make her famous. It allowed her to experiment with voice, form, and the presentation of a particular construction of character” (Thacker vi, ix). Reviews of the *Autobiography* repeatedly remark on its style, “so vigorous and simple in the telling”, said the *Chicago Tribune*, “that in reading it one is transported . . . as if it were a living thing enacted before the eyes.” The *Tribune* goes on to call it “classic in its directness, its simplicity, its complete actuality” (Qtd in Thacker xii). The *Washington Star* describes it “as clean-cut, as simple, as symmetrical, as classic as an elm tree”; *The Spectator*, “a plain and unvarnished record of a life of ceaseless effort” (xii). If the *Autobiography* helped to develop Cather’s writing in terms of character and voice, it also offers another lens through which to view her commitment to a distinctive plain style. With its elevation of order and simplicity, and its rejection of metaphor or excess matter, the *Autobiography* points to an aesthetic of plainness and perspicuity that is to be found also in Cather’s fiction.

Samuel McClure was born in County Antrim, and after the death of his father his mother moved the impoverished family to America in hopes of a more secure life. His is the great American story of the poor, barefoot immigrant boy turned self-made man, whose boundless energy and work ethic find a natural home in a young, expanding country. Arriving in Hebron, Indiana on the Fourth of July and amidst all the pageantry of that day, the young McClure is moved by the unchecked vastness of the American Midwest, in contrast to the cramped fields and limited lives of his native Ulster:

I could see off across the country, as far as the eye could reach, a great stretch of unfenced prairie in placed of the little hedged-in fields I had always known.

My heart swelled with the swelling periods of the orator. I felt that, as he said, here was something big and free— that a boy might make his mark on those prairies. (34)

Country Antrim, McClure's birthplace and the setting of the early chapters of the *Autobiography*, might be described as the heartland or epicenter of Ulster Protestant culture, and in particular that culture's association with a Plain Style of preaching and worship. Even today Antrim is referred to as "the Bible Belt of Ireland," the most densely Protestant region in the North, thick with Presbyterians, evangelicals, and Pentecostals.⁹ It was the site of the famous 1859 Revival (Ulster's version of the Second Great Awakening), when the province, bursting with charismatic preachers and outdoor revival meetings, was the scene of emotional conversions and an explosion of new sects.¹⁰ McClure's parents were caught up in the movement, as the *Autobiography* explains:

My father and mother had once been Presbyterians, but in 1859 a revival swept over the northern part of Ireland, and they were converted to the new sect, which had *no name* and which strove to return to the simple teachings of the early church and to use the New Testament as a book of conduct, *abolishing every sort of form*. These believers had no houses of worship. Our congregation met sometimes in an upper chamber of the minister's house in Ballymena. (19, emphasis added)

The "new sect" McClure refers to here is the Plymouth Brethren, formed by a group of disaffected Church of Ireland clergy in the 1830s, who tried to shake off the rituals of the established church and return to the type of worship they read about in the New Testament—that is to say, no church buildings, no clerical class, no set liturgies nor forms of words, no infant baptism. Meeting in the "upper chamber" of a house was a

clear invocation of the energies of Pentecost. The 1859 revival gave a great boost to the Brethren, who were, in the words of McClure's biographer Peter Lyon,

a joyless group, stern and exclusive, abjuring even the simplest forms of service, condemning dancing or music, and wholly persuaded that those who had not found their particular salvation were doomed to the eternal torments of a quite literal Hell. It was a faith to match their toilsome life. (Lyon 5)

H. L. Mencken's famous quip about Puritanism—the suspicion that someone, somewhere, might be happy—could be usefully applied to this sect that formed the backdrop to McClure's early life.

My Autobiography, particularly in its early chapters, is a fascinating articulation of Ulster's low church Protestant culture, which makes a virtue of plainness and simplicity in all aspects of living. "It was no hardship to use the kitchen as a sitting room," he explains, "The cooking was so simple that, after the meal was over, there was no smell of food" (6). The text also calls attention to the virtues of domestic order and cleanliness: "the house was warm and comfortable, and my mother kept it exceedingly neat. The yard about the house and the stable was paved with stone, so that even in the wet, soggy winters the place was never muddy, and the barnyard was always kept clean." (6). This emphasis on cleanliness is evident again in the young Sam's "distress at being put next to some very dirty children" at the National School. Indeed, the young McClure associates studying with an escape from dirt and disorder: "I saw that if I learned my letters fast I would soon be able to get away from the dirty children with whom I had to sit" (11). Later in the text, when Sam returns to Antrim, now a young nineteen-year-old American, we get a fascinating description of the landscape also in terms of hygiene:

It was a beautiful day late in June, with brilliant sunshine and a sky intensely blue, and everywhere the wonderful green of Ireland, like no other green in the world. I could see, as it were, the *cleanness* of the grass, *washed* by so many rains. The whole countryside presented the look of *neatness* and *tidiness* that I had always missed in Indiana or Illinois. (73, emphasis added)

This passage quite remarkably transforms fertility into sterility, so that even the rain is understood as participating in the project of national sanitation. Ireland is so green, in other words, because it's so *clean*. Here also we find an interesting reversal of the younger Sam's celebration of the boundless American prairie. The hedged in fields of Ireland are now a sign of neatness rather than narrowness. Tidiness is next to godliness in this culture, and Sam describes his family as "poor, but . . . of the well-to-do poor. We were always properly dressed on Sundays" (8). The allergy to anything cluttered, excessive or ornamental extends from Samuel's lack of a middle name ("Sidney" was added later, when he realized his American schoolmates all had three names), to the McClure's household library, which consisted of just three books—the Bible, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* (18).¹¹ This standard library of the Ulster Protestant home was to be found in the Cather home too, and formed part of Willa Cather's early reading.¹² *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, it is worth remembering, contains extensive woodcuts of the Reformation's purification of the corrupt Roman church. McClure's attraction to the world of publishing, and his idea for syndicating fiction came, he tells us in the *Autobiography*, through remembering his "hunger, as a boy, for something to read" (42).

With its rejection of "forms," "names," metaphor or excess matter, the culture of evangelical Ulster expressed in the *Autobiography* offers a compelling counterpart to Willa Cather's own aesthetic project. Accounts of Cather's relationship with

McClure describe a deep affinity and mutual understanding: “he believed”, wrote Edith Lewis, “absolutely in her integrity” (71); and almost instantly after their first meeting, according to James Woodress, she became “his captive for life” (Qtd in Thacker vi). Thacker has argued that McClure was the model for several characters in Cather’s fiction (xiv), and Charles Johanningsmeier has revealed McClure and his wife Hattie to be the models for Oswald and Myra Henshawe in *My Mortal Enemy*.¹³

Cather’s fiction might also contain models of the kind of symbiotic relationship Cather experienced with McClure. Fr. Latour’s first meeting with Kit Carson in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, for example, is described in terms of an immediate and mutual sense of recognition and trust:

The Bishop felt a quick glow of pleasure in looking at the man. As he stood there in his buckskin clothes one felt in him standards, loyalties, a code which is not easily put into words but which is instantly felt when two men who live by it come together by chance. (60)

The deep understanding between McClure and Cather may find its source, in part, in their common Ulster heritage and its values of order, plainness, and perspicuity. Jim Burden’s phrase for the shared knowledge of those who have grown up on the Great Plains—“a kind of freemasonry”—might usefully be applied to this mutual set of Ulster values and codes. I began this essay by talking about “The Novel D meubl ,” and I would like to return to that text, with its declaration that “Whatever is felt upon the page without being specifically *named* there—that, it seems to me, is created. It is the inexplicable presence of *the thing not named* . . .” Such an anxiety over “naming” and “forms” is evident also in the introduction to *My  ntonia*, when Jim Burden comments on his manuscript, “I suppose it hasn’t any *form*. It hasn’t a *title*, either.” It

is difficult not to hear echoes of the description of McClure's upbringing in a sect "which had no name" and which strove to "abolish every sort of form."

The design historian David Brett has explored the existence of a "protestant aesthetic," meaning "a characteristic attitude toward materials and language and workmanship" (9) which produced a manner of building, furnishing, speech and music, based on plainness and perspicuity. This aesthetic, with its commitment to hard work and independent inquiry, has been linked with the development of Capitalism and technology. But Brett considers another legacy: "what is the effect upon cognition of the destruction of pictorial memory and its replacement by habits of abstract and diagrammatic memory, which was one of the main aims of Reformation education" (11). If images are replaced by the word, *sola scriptura*, if one's only image is, as it were, textual, what is the effect on a culture? In his 1597 text *The Golden Chain*, William Perkins calls for the destruction not only of physical forms and images, but mental ones too: "All reliques and monuments of idols, for these (after the idols themselves) must be razed out of all memory" (Qtd in Brett 54). Idols are to be thrown not only out of the window but out of the mind, what John Calvin called a "factory of idols" (Calvin 8). We might well remind ourselves here of Cather's story "Paul's Case" (1905), in which the disturbed would-be dandy attempts to run away from the flavorless, colorless mass of his low church upbringing, epitomized by the portrait of John Calvin looming above his bed. But when he throws himself in front of a speeding train, the description of Paul's death contains echoes of Calvin's conception of the human mind as a factory of idols: "then, because the picture making mechanism was crushed, the disturbing visions flashed into black, and Paul dropped back into the immense design of things" (*YBM* 234).

The Protestant Plain Style of preaching is a linguistic counterpart to the breaking of the image or idol: for the Word to be heard clearly it must be spoken clearly. Or, as John Jewel in 1548 states, “Truth is indeed clear and simple; it has small need of the argument of the tongue or of eloquence. If it is perspicuous and plain, it has enough support in itself; it does not require flowers of artful speech” (Qtd in Brett 52). Jewel became the model of the reformed style of preaching and writing, rejecting eloquence as obfuscation, poetry as dangerous overindulgence. The aim of the Plain Style of preaching was transparency, “so that the idea could come, like light, clear through the utterance into the recipient’s mind.” (51). We find a similar model of transparent communication in Cather’s story “Two Friends”: “perhaps whatever is seen by the narrator as he speaks is sensed by the listener, quite irrespective of words . . . [a] transference of experience” (CS 326). This passage resonates with Cather’s belief in the presence on the page of the thing not named, and both find parallels with the logic and assumptions of Plain Style preaching.

The transference of ideas, irrespective of words, finds an interesting parallel what Charles Mignon calls Cather’s “fields of reading”, that is, her interest in typography, typeface, margins, and spacing as sites of meaning and interpretation. What is felt upon the page, in other words, is as much about the white space and typeface as it is about the words themselves (Mignon 140). In addition to her strong views on the importance of print design, however, Cather makes repeated use of print metaphors in her fiction. Such images, I believe, can be usefully connected with the Plain Style aesthetic and its replacement of the image with the word.¹⁴ In the Christmas episode in *My Ántonia*, when Mr. Shimerda kneels before the colors and lights and images of the Christmas tree, the Baptist Burden family becomes uneasy at this Catholic gesture. Significantly, Cather reaches for a typographic image to

describe the Bohemian's sensuous, ritualized behavior: "his long body formed a letter 'S'." Moments later Grandfather is described as "Protestantizing the atmosphere." The flesh is made word here, as Mr. Shimerda's picture-making faith is transformed into a typographic sign. Earlier in the novel, Jim describes the rattlesnake he and Antonia encounter as "lying in loose waves, like a letter 'W.'" For Jim, the snake is "a monstrosity . . . his abominable muscularity, his loathsome, fluid motion, somehow made me sick. . . . He seemed like the ancient, eldest Evil." Again, at a moment of anxiety, in the face of this excessive flesh, Jim reaches for a letter, a non-pictorial image, comforting perhaps in its black-and-white clarity and simplicity. Similarly, in *One of Ours*, Claude Wheeler, distressed by the traumatic news from the Western Front, comforts himself with the idea of the letter "r" in Marne: "The fact that the river had a pronounceable name, with a hard Western 'r' standing like a keystone in the middle of it, somehow gave one's imagination a firmer hold on the situation" (76).

It might be helpful here to recall the way young Sam McClure associates learning his letters with escaping from the dirty children at school, another example of the non-pictorial text providing security in moments of anxiety and disorder. And it is worth looking again at another passage quoted earlier, describing McClure's arrival in a strange new land after weeks of hard travel over sea and land: "My heart swelled with the swelling periods of the orator." Here, McClure, or Cather's version of him, aligns and expresses his feelings with the punctuation marks on the pages of a political speech. Indeed, Cather's interest hieroglyphics, emblems, and masonic symbols might be further understood in terms of this Protestant aesthetic, whereby physical bodies and sensations are translated into letters, or images from print culture.¹⁵ In such moments in Cather's texts, flesh becomes word.

If the simple, definite shape of a typeface letter or punctuation mark can offer a stay against confusion and disorder, so too, in Cather's fiction, can a clean, well-ordered space. Mrs. Wheeler, "when the war news was bad . . . set to cleaning house or overhauling the closets, thankful to be able to put some little thing to rights in such a disordered world" (77). In *The Song of the Lark* Thea Kronborg's retreat to Panther Canyon is described in similar terms: "All the houses in the canyon were clean with the cleanness of sun-baked, windswept places" (191). The phrase "clean with the cleanness of" performs what it pronounces, sweeping away complex metaphors to offer instead simplicity and plainness, the repetition of "clean" reproducing the structure of a biblical idiom. In this cleanest of clean places Thea's mind is similarly cleared out:

Here everything was simple and definite, as things had been in childhood. Her mind was like a ragbag into which she had been frantically thrusting whatever she could grab. And here she must throw this lumber away . . . her ideas were simplified, became sharper and clearer. (196)

"Tom Outland's Story" in *The Professor's House* offers a similar elevation of tidiness: the ancient pueblo is described as "open and clean" with "little rubbish or disorder" where "wind and sun are good housekeepers" (437). The mesa itself becomes for Tom "a religious emotion" and his piety is expressed in "tidying up the ruins" after the mess left behind by the German relic dealer.

In Father Latour of *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, Cather creates a Catholic priest with what might be described as an Ulster Protestant allergy to disorder, and an elevation of the plain style in all things. Repeatedly throughout the novel, Latour is impressed with the order and cleanliness of the landscape, the "clean sand hills" and the rock mesas that are "not crowded together in disorder, but placed in wide spaces"

(75). Such spaces have their domestic counterparts. At Hidden Water, “From the moment he entered this room with its thick white-washed adobe walls, Father Latour had felt a kind of peace about it. In its bareness and simplicity there was something comely” (21). He remarks on the pueblos that are “washed white and clean”. In Snake Root, at Jacinta’s house, “The room into which he descended was long and narrow, smoothly whitewashed, and clean, to the eye, at least, because of its very bareness” (96). Latour becomes most anxious and disturbed when he finds himself in untidy, chaotic spaces. The relaxed household management of Father Martinez horrifies the bishop:

The disorder was almost more than his fastidious taste could bear. The Padre’s study table was sprinkled with snuff, and piled so high with books that they almost hid the crucifix hanging behind it. Books were heaped on chairs and tables all over the house—and the books and the floors were deep in the dust of spring sandstorms. Fr. Martinez’s boots and hats lay about in corners, his coats and cassocks were hung on pegs and draped over pieces of furniture. Yet the place seemed overrun by serving-women, young and old, and by large yellow cats with full soft fur . . . their master fed them carelessly from his plate. ()

It is worth noting that this is a house with many more than three books, and the passage dwells nervously on the excessive and disordered volumes in Martinez’s cluttered study. Fr Latour is uneasy in the house, or as the text has it, “uncertain,” and is kept awake by the excessive giggling of women and the snoring of the Padre. The choice of the word *uncertain* here is worth considering. If truth is clear and simple, plain and transparent, uncertainty is far from godliness. The clutter of Martinez’s household suggests a correspondent obscuring of the meaning, not a situation Latour

is comfortable inhabiting.¹⁶ The scene climaxes with the exasperated Bishop getting up to shut the Padrés door, but

As the night wind blew into the room, a little dark shadow fluttered from the wall across the floor; a mouse, perhaps. But no, it was a bunch of woman's hair that had been indolently tossed into a corner when some slovenly female toilet was made in this room. This discovery annoyed the Bishop exceedingly.

(118-19)

Latour's conflation of disorder, excess, and the female body is telling. The "little dark shadow" is an unreadable, slippery sign, alarmingly uncertain and changeable. That the shadow turns out to be "a bunch of woman's hair" only increases Latour's anxiety and annoyance, presenting him with yet another experience of excessive physicality, liminality and ambiguity. I began with Cather's violent image of throwing the furniture out of the window, and "The Legend of Fray Baltazar" offers another defenestration of sorts, in which the extravagant, corrupt and tyrannical priest, suggestive of the fleshly excesses of Rome, is thrown off the Rock by the Acoma people: "They . . . swung him out over the rock edge and back a few times . . . and after a few feints, dropped him in mid-air." "So did they rid their rock of their tyrant." Here again, in this Catholic novel, we find a deeply Protestant gesture.

Cather's love affair with the blank spaces of the Great Plains also finds parallels with the Protestant plain style aesthetic. These landscapes without detail, without image, blank as sheet iron, seem to offer the mind a space emptied of the pictorial. It is almost as if Cather is moving towards an aesthetic emptied out even of the word itself. The description of Kit Carson moving ever Westward suggests such a post-print landscape: he "had got ahead of books, gone where the printing press could not follow him." The blank page, the unwritten landscape, seems the logical extension

of Cather's almost zealous commitment to plain style. If for Modernism art itself becomes a religious experience, a kind of order amidst a disordered world, a momentary stay of confusion, it has something in common also with the Calvinist God, best described perhaps by Perry Miller:

It is the essence of [Calvinist] theology that God, the force, the power, the life of the universe, remains to men hidden, unknowable, unpredictable. He is the ultimate secret, the awful mystery. . . . This system of thought rests, in the final analysis, upon something that cannot really be systematized at all, upon an unchained force, an incalculable essence. (51-52)

Cather's move away from the picture-making mechanism of the mind towards what is nameless, without form, a matter of feeling over expression, shares something in common with this immeasurable essence of Calvinist belief. Art is that unchained force that refuses names and forms, and Thea Kronborg's epiphany at Panther Canyon articulates this vision:

what was any art but an effort to make a sheath, a mould in which to imprison for a moment the shining, elusive element which is life itself, . . . The Indian women had held it in their jars. In the sculpture she had seen in the Art Institute, it had been caught in a flash of arrested motion.

And Art, like that unknowable, demanding Calvinist God, allows the believer to find a second, secret self, or become a new creation.¹⁷

Cather's clean well-lighted style can be understood in part as a response to what she increasingly took to be a broken, disordered world in decline. Across the Atlantic, the sinking of the Titanic—among whose victims were people Cather and McClure knew--and the coming slaughter at the Somme would lead many Ulster Protestants to similarly equate modernity with a collapse of order, and a need to cling

onto past certainties.¹⁸ In moments of distress and uncertainty, Cather, like some of her characters, and evoking the Plain Style aesthetic of her Ulster Protestant heritage, reaches for the familiar shape of the word.

Notes

1. See Raymond Williams for a discussion of the modernist bending, breaking and reshaping of language (45-47). See also Fredric Jameson for a discussion of Modernism's linguistic crises, and its concern with endowing "the aesthetic with a transcendental value" (162).

2. For further discussion of Cather's connections to Modernism, see *Cather Studies* 11, 2017 and *Willa Cather and Aestheticism: From Romanticism to Modernism*.

3. ¹ See, for instance, Bennett (1988), McLay (1975), and Murphy (1992, 2002, 2012).

4 See Woodress for a discussion of Cather's Ulster ancestry. For a history of the Plantation of Ulster and its aftermath, see Colm Lennon (196-219).

5. Edith Lewis claims, "A distant cousin of Willa Cather, Mrs. Annie Cather Darragh, was still living in Donegal County up to the time of Willa Cather's death, and the two often corresponded" (3). In a 1908 letter to her father, Willa Cather asks for information on her great grandfather, and discusses her correspondence with other Cathers on the family connection to Ulster. <https://cather.unl.edu/letters/let1900>.

6. In "The Sculptor's Funeral", for example, "The express messenger appeared in the doorway, accompanied by a young man in a long ulster and travelling cap" (*YBM* 198).

The only exception to this is in *My Mortal Enemy*, where Oswald Henshawe is described as "the son of an Ulster Protestant" (11—check page number).

7. See Mark Noll, Chapter 3, “The Churches Become American,” for an account of the Baptists’ successful ministry to local populations, and its “wildfire” growth in the new republic (62-71). James Woodress describes the people of Back Creek, Virginia, where Cather was born and raised until the age of nine, as “predominantly Protestant, a mixture of Calvinists from Northern Ireland [sic] and German Lutherans”, and insists that the “orderliness and continuity” of her early life “left their mark on her values and personality” (Ch. 1).

8. See Robert Thacker’s introduction for an account of the circumstances of Cather’s ghostwriting.

9. A good example of contemporary Pentecostal culture in Antrim is Green Pastures Church, modeled on American pentecostal Megachurches.

<http://www.gpastures.co.uk/>. See also Fiona Meredith, “The church that helps you fall in love with Jesus”. *The Irish Times*. Nov 25, 2017.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/the-church-that-helps-you-fall-in-love-with-jesus-1.3299728>. Accessed 13 October 2018.

10. For further discussion of the 1859 Revival see A.R. Holmes.

11. Willa Cather was not given a middle name either, and added “Sibert” later, after various experiments with the name “Love” (Woodress Ch. 1).

12. Cather’s early reading, points out Janis P. Stout, “included such religious standards as *Pilgrim’s Progress* and the Protestant Bible” (Stout 9). Woodress insists that Bunyan’s allegory made a deep impression on Cather, and Cather interestingly describes *Pilgrim’s Progress* as a book where “little is said but much is felt and communicated” (qtd in Woodress, Ch 1).

13. Deborah Lindsay Williams has also explored the Cather-McClure connection.

14. Walter Ong has explored the transformation from a culture based on speech and hearing to one based on typography.
15. Joseph C. Murphy has explored Cather's interest in hieroglyphics.
16. Cather comments in one of her letters, "so cleansing to read Virgil at the end of a cluttered day!" (Qtd in Stout 18).
17. Stouck and Shively have explored Cather's conflation of religion and art. A letter of August 4 1896 articulates the author's conviction that "the one God was Art" (Stout 11).
18. See Joe Cleary for a useful discussion of the way modernity "gave rise to a cultural posture of defensive siege, to a sense of the need to hold on to the glories of the nineteenth century-past" in unionist Northern Ireland and Britain more generally (87).

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