

MAKING A CAREER OF PLAY:  
WILLA CATHER AND THE RECREATION MOVEMENT

by

Mark Alan Robison

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PREVIEW

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Mark Alan Robison  
University of Nebraska, 2008

Adviser: Guy J. Reynolds

Throughout her career Willa Cather engaged in a national conversation about play, depicting current practice, reflecting contemporary moral debates, and revising theoretical stances. Cather's writing career commenced just as the US recreation movement began in earnest to advocate for access to play facilities and activities, not only for urban children but also for factory laborers, office employees, and rural families. In turn-of-the-century journalism and short fiction, stories such as "The Prodigies" and "The Treasure of Far Island," Cather illustrates play theory and promotes play movement initiatives. In later stories, such as "Ardessa," "The Bookkeeper's Wife," and "Her Boss," Cather reflects how recreation theory and praxis were carried out in offices resembling the editorial department at McClure's Magazine where she worked from 1906 to 1911. The author not only integrates the phenomenology of play into her fiction but incorporates the recreation movement's central trope of renewal: recreation revitalizes those whose mental, physical, and spiritual reserves have become depleted. Engaging in play helps humans maintain vitality but also develops elasticity, as Cather demonstrates in "Coming Aphrodite!" and "The Old Beauty." Furthermore, recreation (especially restful repose and playful activity within natural landscapes) generates and sustains creativity in Cather's fictional artists such as singer Thea Kronborg in The Song of the Lark and composer Valentine Ramsey in "Uncle Valentine." Cather herself discovered this salutary effect on productivity when rest and exercise in the quiet town of Cherry Valley, New York helped launch her novel-writing career. Cather's engagement with play also manifests in the unlikely setting of World War I. In One of Ours the author demonstrates that recreational benefit can be derived even in a war theater. In

later works such as Sapphira and the Slave Girl and “Before Breakfast” Cather claims recreation’s value for aging characters as they resist a decline of vitality. A study of Cather’s novels, short stories, letters, and non-fiction reveals a life-long interaction with play that enlivens her writing even as it sustains the writer.

PREVIEW

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## **Dedication**

To Linda Robison:  
beloved spouse,  
best friend,  
my recreation partner.

## Acknowledgments

Susan J. Rosowski for instilling a passion for Cather's work, for her example of kindness to all, for teaching me to cast sentences in the positive, for encouraging me to work on something big—I hope this qualifies. Guy Reynold for taking over as chair of my committee at a difficult time, for providing invaluable advice on all aspects of this dissertation, and particularly for calling my attention to structuring issues. Charles Mignon for teaching me to pay close attention to contextual reading field. Maureen Honey for encouragement to persevere. Melissa Homestead and Ben Rader for providing feedback on early drafts of my chapters. Andrew Jewell at the Cather Archive for his always helpful conversations about Cather and her works, for facilitating access to Cather resources at the Archive, for initiating and maintaining the 5BankStreet List Serve which proved a valuable resource for sussing out obscure data on Cather's career and writing. Kari Ronning for her willingness to provide supporting data from Cather's life and writing, especially the author's early years in Lincoln. Timothy Bintrim for providing data on Cather's Pittsburgh years. Josh Dolezal for exemplifying the merger between work and recreation, for calling my attention to William Gleason's work on literature and the play movement. Joseph Urgo for sharing data on Cather's Cherry Valley experience. Steven Trout for encouraging me to contribute a chapter on recreation and One of Ours to Cather Studies 6. Dorothy for her assistance at the Willa Cather Foundation archives. Colleagues and administrators at Union College in Lincoln for their support—financial, social, spiritual—in pursuing my doctorate. Ed Allen and Tanya Cochran for providing helpful feedback on chapter drafts as well as collegial support and friendship. Chris Blake for friendship and humor. My family for their support throughout a long process.

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## Introduction

Willa Cather demonstrates an intense interest in play throughout her career as editor, journalist, and fiction writer. In this dissertation I examine Cather's relation to recreation from 1896, when she arrived in Pittsburgh to edit The Home Monthly to which she contributed short fiction such as "Tommy, the Unsentimental," to 1945, when she was busy composing stories such as "The Best Years" that would find their way into print posthumously. Cather's fifty-year career spans a period of tremendous growth in American recreation practice, and her writing shows that the author was paying attention to this phenomenon. In studying her connection to recreation, I treat all twelve of Cather's novels and explore more than twenty of her short stories from every decade of her career, more than forty letters, and several non-fiction articles from her early days in magazine work.

The idea for an exploration of Willa Cather's work through the lens of recreation arose in a serendipitous moment with old volumes of the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature. While conducting a search on the US Reclamation Service from 1905 to 1912, I happened to notice, because the listings for both fell on the same page, that the number of articles written on recreation steeply grew during this time period. This fact bumped up against a realization that, with the publication of The Troll Garden in 1905 and Alexander's Bridge in 1912, Cather's writing career was getting under way at the very time when national interest in recreation was burgeoning. Were the two events connected? A brief survey of articles on recreation and a quick inventory of recreational

acts in Cather stories led me to believe that they indeed were linked. When I broached this connection as a potential dissertation topic to my committee chair at the time Susan J. Rosowski, her initial response was little more than tepid. So, I gave the topic a trial run in a conference paper on One of Ours, figuring that if Cather's war novel could sustain a study of recreation, perhaps other works would also. I found my explorations rewarded with new insights into the novel and the play movement. With Rosowski's encouragement I conducted deeper and broader reading into the literature of the recreation movement, soon moving on to US Army documents and histories of World War I. As a result, my originally slim conference presentation grew into an essay (published in Cather Studies) that now forms the bulk of Chapter Five of this dissertation. Subsequent reading in Cather's journalism has uncovered an early interaction with recreation while my re-readings of her fiction have revealed that the author's interest in play never flagged. What began as a modest question about an author's link to a historical moment has bloomed into an intriguingly fresh approach to reading Cather's oeuvre.

As Janis Stout suggests, "At one time Cather's critics tended to see her as being rather otherworldly, both in a moral sense (because she did indeed strongly disapprove of some of the trends she saw in her society) and in an aesthetic sense." Stout reminds scholars, however, that "When we elevated Cather to the status of the ideal and idealizing artist, as if she had no interest in the realities of the world around her, we overstated the case." Stout views a "historicized or cultural studies approach to Cather" that emerged in the last decade of the twentieth century and has continued to grow in the present century as a corrective ("Relics and Things" 67). Steven Trout in his

introduction to Cather Studies 6: History, Memory, and War also notes this shift in approaches:

Now fading is the once widely held view of Cather as a writer who separated herself from the historical present [. . .] and who remained aloof from the ideological pressures and preoccupations of her day. Over the past two decades, scholars equipped with the methodologies of New Historicism and cultural studies have [. . .] replac[ed] the solitary, indifferent artist with a cultural *participant* whose works embrace, reject, or redefine, by turns, the dominant values and beliefs located in her cultural milieu. (xi-xii)

My purpose in this dissertation is to reveal how Willa Cather, in the very ways Trout suggests above, actively participated over the length of her career in the recreation movement's discourse(s) on play. As Trout has written, when Cather's texts are "[n]o longer sealed away from politics, ideology, and material culture," they "*say* much more than they once did" (xii). When juxtaposed with play theory and its numerous applications, when the depth of their author's involvement in play is brought into the light, Cather's stories indeed speak much more.

As I have employed a New Historical approach to Cather's work, I have kept in mind the constraints of this method as well as my own limitations and those introduced by the objects of my study. Throughout this dissertation I demonstrate correspondences between Cather's fiction and play theory's precepts and applications without being able to trace precisely where and when Cather picks up on these. Describing New

Historicism's application within literary studies, Brook Thomas notes how "[t]exts and contexts are always in a relation of reciprocal determination" (490). In my exploring of recreation movement rhetoric, I have consciously (though not religiously) practiced a naive reading of primary source materials. That is, I have taken at face value what those within the movement are saying about themselves and their cause. I have chosen to follow this manner of reading, not just to stabilize one side of the equation in what Thomas calls "the interplay between text and context" (though that stabilizing makes my writing task somewhat easier); I have chosen this manner of reading because it provides a starting place for considering how Cather might encounter unfiltered contemporary discourse in newspapers, magazines, and conversations with her acquaintances (490).

Though potentially Cather may have come into contact with any artifact I have encountered in my exploration of recreation movement literature, I have not taken as my goal the identifying of "smoking gun" sources. Rather I believe that Cather occupies the position of a general recreation enthusiast who incorporates play into her own life, who occasionally lends her voice to the cause, and who finds an embedded personal interest in play seeping—sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously—into her art.

Accordingly, I have read widely the literature of the recreation movement in order to discover broad patterns of recurring tropes and rhetorical conventions, patterns that coalesce into a generally acknowledged discourse on play prevalent during the time Cather was composing her fiction. Cather would, of course, bring to her reading of this discourse attitudes and beliefs that I will never be able to access fully, and, certainly, she would herself have engaged the ideas presented by the recreation movement in a lively interplay of acceptance and doubt. Indeed, it is this sort of lively interplay that interests

me the most.

While my reading of recreation movement rhetoric and play theory remains straightforward, my reading of Cather's writing is more nuanced. Jane Gallop, in her essay entitled "The Historicization of Literary Studies and the Fate of Close Reading," critiques the use of cultural history by literary professionals because "we don't do cultural history nearly as well as our colleagues in history departments." Gallop suggests an antidote of close reading, "the most valuable thing English ever had to offer" (183). The reader of this dissertation will encounter many close readings in the chapters to come: close readings of Cather's journalism, close readings of the reading field within magazine issues that Cather helped to construct and in which her articles and stories appeared, close readings of her letters, close readings of stories and novels stretching over a five-decades-long career. While examining her texts for signs of her interaction with recreation, I have attempted to follow the terrain of those texts, to neither overstate nor understate what emerges from close readings. Those who study Cather's work know that her fiction resists particular interpretation as often as it rewards. I have found myself at times having to refrain from imposing a recreational reading on a text where I at first think such a reading ought to obtain. At other times, I have been surprised by the ways her texts unfold to reveal insight into play theory.

To use the phrase *play theory* may lead 21<sup>st</sup> century readers accustomed to a culture of literary theorizing to expect something this dissertation will not deliver. The theory of play will seem uncomplicated and familiar. Play is a deeply embedded human trait; humans have always played and always will play. Recreation activities are so familiar to modern Americans that we think little about their significance. One thing a

study of the recreation movement teaches, though, is that an intense interest in play blossomed during Cather's lifetime and led to a renewed and earnest emphasis upon this basic human activity. Writers theorized on what drives humans to play, about what conditions are necessary for play to occur, and on what benefits play activities could accomplish for humans individually and corporately. In his 1999 book The Leisure Ethic: Work and Play in American Literature, 1840-1940, William Gleason sets a goal of taking "play as seriously as the reformers did themselves" (xii). Taking play seriously in my dissertation has involved committing myself to pursuing the relatively uncomplicated trope of renewal that informs recreation advocacy: depletion of physical and mental resources is ameliorated through play; human energy is restored and even supplemented through recreation. This simple concept was embraced by the recreation movement and promulgated through an astonishingly diverse web of applications.

Gleason writes that play theorists "looked on literature itself [. . .] as a powerful instrument of instruction and invoked it as the common culture that in part made possible what they called 'corporate consciousness'" (viii). Because I have come to believe Cather is one of the "powerful narrative imaginers of the meanings of work and play in American culture" (Gleason 23), my study of Willa Cather's relationship to the play movement has been propelled by three goals related to this belief: first, to make the case that Cather indeed engages with a contemporary national conversation about play; second, to show the depth, breadth, and longevity of that engagement; and third, to explore how the manifestations of Cather's engagement with the ideals of the recreation movement produce fresh readings of her texts and revise understandings of her life and career.

In my study of Willa Cather's involvement in recreation, I use the term *recreation movement* to indicate an extensive complex of concepts, rhetoric, and activities dealing with play, leisure, and conservation of human resources that captured the popular imagination of American writers, thinkers, social activists, and entrepreneurs at the turn of the twentieth century with sufficient potency and geographical extension that those persons most consistently and deeply involved with its practice and promulgation began to self-identify as belonging to a movement, a label that came to find acceptance among historians both inside and outside the field.<sup>1</sup> The practice of recreation itself, along with rhetorical strategies that maintain and enhance this practice, has in following years become so ubiquitous that when twenty-first-century readers brush up against recreational activities and recreation rhetoric within the fiction they read, such encounters garner so little attention from readers conditioned to expect their presence that recreation in effect has become invisible. While this overlooking may be understandable, especially in reading the fiction of one's own time, it is less excusable in the study of literature composed in that earlier era when recreation was still very much in flux.

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<sup>1</sup> I beg the reader's indulgence in allowing this definition of the recreation movement suffice for the moment without immediately defining its differentia, i.e. recreation concepts, activities, and rhetoric. These items will gain more clarity as I discuss the history of the play/recreation movement more concretely in Chapter One. It may be especially noticeable that I use certain words such as *play* and *recreation* interchangeably. Richard Knapp has noted this interchangeability in his 1971 dissertation on the history of the National Recreation Association: "At the turn of the century the word 'play' was used with much the same connotation that 'recreation' had come to hold by the 1930's by which time 'play' came to have in popular usage a connotation equating it with playgrounds and activities for children. The switch from children's 'play' to 'recreation' for all ages is indicative of the broadening of the concept which took place over the first three decades of this century" (5). I undertake a more complete defining of play and recreation near the end of the first chapter.

At this point, we might borrow a page from Marilee Lindemann's Willa Cather: Queering America, a book in which the author demonstrates the value of maintaining fluidity in two of her key terms: "both terms achieved new salience and ideological power in the same moment," she writes, and "[b]oth 'queer' and 'America' were, then, sites of contestation, up for grabs in the game of the nation's emergence as a modern industrial, imperial, and cultural power in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" (2, 4). As Lindemann suggests in her book, America itself at this time is a far-from-stable conceit. Recreation in this same time period is also "up for grabs." Paying attention to recreation markers in texts of that day will tell us things about Americans, about literary texts and authors, as well as about recreation itself. In the cases examined by this dissertation I will treat recreational acts and recreation talk as artifacts that shed light on Willa Cather, who herself was coming of age as writer and person while the recreation movement was securing a place in American culture.

This dissertation is divided into six chapters. In Chapter One I familiarize readers with the scope of the recreation movement as well as ground them in its basic ideals by outlining a history of the movement's inception, its tenets, and the various expressions of its influence while providing instances of Cather's participation in these elements. Subsequent chapters examine Cather's career in a generally chronological order though as I disclose distinct strands of the author's involvement with recreation discourse at a particular moment, I take the liberty to slide backward and forward in time to see how a particular theme arises and how it continues to play out in her works. In Chapter Two, I look at Cather's time in Pittsburgh from 1896 to 1906 and unearth the author's early engagement with the play movement as she managed and contributed to magazines and



newspapers, finding that she assumes at times a stance of advocacy. In Chapter Three, I not only focus on Cather's work at McClure's Magazine from 1906 to 1911 but examine stories written after 1911 that arise from her experiences with the application of play theory in office settings. I complicate a prevailing view that Cather found social reform to be anathema in the chapter but also explore Cather's transition from editorial work to full-time writing, showing how instrumental her vacation to Cherry Valley, New York was in breaking from journalism. Because I follow a theme of artists at play within natural spaces in Chapter Four, its structure relies less on chronology than other chapters: the first half centers on The Song of the Lark (1915) and "Coming Aphrodite!" (1920), a middle section turns to Cather's 1905 Troll Garden, while a final section examines "Uncle Valentine" (1925). I provide in Chapter Five an in-depth study of how a single work—Cather's 1922 novel, One of Ours—interacts with multiple aspects of the play movement on the home front and in the war theater. In Chapter Six I look at the author's career from 1922 onward, accounting for Cather's negative representations of recreation in the context of her growing perception of disruption and decline before demonstrating her ultimate affirmation of the power of play.

Only a handful of scholars has studied the connection between the play movement and late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century authors. William Leslie Brown's 1989 dissertation on the economy of play in Stephen Crane's writing, which very slightly overlaps the time period I cover in my study of Cather, is the only single-author treatment of which I am aware. Between their two books William Gleason (The Leisure Ethic) and Christian K. Messenger (Sport and the Spirit of Play in American Fiction: Hawthorne to Faulkner) explore the recreation movement in relation to more than two dozen authors

though only Gleason mentions Willa Cather—in a footnote that ignores her connection to recreation entirely. In his introduction to History, Memory, and War, Steven Trout has graciously stated that my contribution to the volume “represents New Historicism at its best and breaks entirely new scholarly ground” (xx-xxi). I leave it to readers to decide whether Trout has overstated the importance of my work on Cather and recreation. If readers of this dissertation discover significance in little-read texts and new ways of thinking about familiar stories and novels, I will have accomplished a great deal.

Describing how New Historicist Stephen J. Greenblatt employs “a technique of montage” in his essays, Brook Thomas writes, “The point is not to show that the literary text reflects a historical event, but to create a field of energy between the two so that we come to see the event as a social text and the literary text as a social event” (490). My hope is that readers will find just such a field of energy develops in this dissertation. Juxtaposing Cather’s stories with play has allowed me to revisit key moments in her writing that others have interpreted through Cather’s extraordinary capacity for seamlessly embedding Classical myth, allusions to works of high art, events from history, and religious devotion in her work. Taking a look at Cather stories through the lens of recreation reveals another force at work in her writing. I believe that focusing attention on play’s profound effect on Cather’s life and fiction will allow scholars to recognize recreation as one of the author’s great influences.

## Chapter One

### Tracing History, Sketching Definitions: Play's the Thing

In “The Best Years,” Willa Cather’s story of young teacher Leslie Fergusson, the author describes a rural Nebraska school’s makeshift play area: “There was a yard, but no fence—though on one side of the playground was a woven-wire fence,” covered with rose vines and enclosing a cemetery (80). When the Wild Rose school children are dismissed for recess, they cheerfully troop out of the schoolhouse, “the boys to the ball ground, and the girls to the cemetery to sit neatly on the headstones” (87). Conspicuously absent from this 1899 school ground are any signs of play equipment—no see-saw, no swings, no merry-go-round.<sup>2</sup> Supervision for safety or for encouragement to play is absent. The boys simply initiate a baseball game in the open yard while the girls converse among the grave stones.

Twenty-first century Americans may find it difficult to envision public schools devoid of play apparatus. Curricula have diversified over the last half century while federal demands to improve test scores have crammed the school day with academic tasks, sparing little time for physical education and sheer play at recess; nevertheless, playground equipment, playing fields, and gymnasiums persist as fixtures of the school landscape. To be sure, the size, shape, and construction of play equipment have changed

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<sup>2</sup> Cather looks back nearly a half century in “The Best Years.” Set in the last year of the nineteenth century, Cather’s story first appeared in 1948’s posthumous collection The Old Beauty and Others. Both Janis Stout and James Woodress date the writing of this story to 1945 (Stout, Willa Cather 253, Woodress 500).

over time. The steel and wood equipment on which Baby Boomers played—towering swing sets, polished metal slides, boxy jungle gyms—have given way to squat and brightly-colored plastic and plastic-coated-steel play structures painstakingly designed to reduce lawsuit-inducing injuries. Whatever their configurations, the play facilities we have grown so accustomed to seeing in schoolyards, city parks, and suburban backyards are legacy to a Progressive social movement that gained prominence in the final decade of the nineteenth century and the initial decades of the twentieth. Operating under various labels—the play movement, the playground movement, the recreation movement—a coalition of social reformers, civic and religious leaders, educators, and politicians worked to improve the physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being of individuals and communities by advocating wholesome and pleasurable activities to occupy American bodies and energy. By the 1920s, and certainly by the 40s when Cather wrote “The Best Years,” even rural play areas would have been touched by the recreation movement’s call for well-equipped play areas. Cather acknowledges this influence by creating an absence. She erases all playground equipment that might have been introduced subsequently, reverting to turn-of-the-century conditions before the play movement had gathered force.

As early as 1902 Chicago sociologist Charles Zueblin was championing “the value of rational recreation which has its application in both city and country.” In the first edition of American Municipal Progress Zueblin predicts, “Regularly equipped playgrounds with apparatus and the direction of skilled teachers or attendants, to encourage both individual and organized play, will soon doubtless be a part of the public-school system throughout the land.” Zueblin’s work with Chicago settlement houses

may have prompted his hope for these improvements to occur initially within urban settings: “In the populous quarters of the cities, the playgrounds may take the form of open spaces in the midst of crowded tenements, of school yards, or, as a device of despair in New York, space on the roofs of school buildings” (276-77).<sup>3</sup> But, optimism alone, even hope as strong as Zueblin’s, could not produce playgrounds at will. As late as 1914, Henry S. Curtis was still bemoaning a lack of recreational facilities in rural districts resembling Cather’s nineteenth-century school yard:

In a hundred-mile drive in most sections one will scarcely see anything else that looks so utterly forlorn as the little patch of often uneven and nearly always unimproved and unmowed ground, on which the children are supposed to play. It is perfectly evident from the sites selected, from the amount of land purchased, and from the condition in which it has been left, that the school directors have not even considered the play of the children, or, if they have, they have put it aside as unimportant. (Play and Recreation 35)

The tone of lament in this passage arises from a key assumption undergirding the thinking of the recreation movement: Humans, especially children, require play. On the strength of this premise, a reform movement sprang up during the time Cather was launching her writing career.

In this chapter I orient readers to a matrix of activities, personnel, and ideas that

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<sup>3</sup> Mary Jo Deegan identifies Zueblin as a former Hull-House resident and the first head resident of the Northwestern University Settlement founded in 1892 (xcviii).

constitute the core of the recreation movement. Conversance with its essence will pay dividends in subsequent chapters where I analyze in greater detail Cather's life and work as they relate to this movement. After presenting, in the following section of this chapter, a brief survey of the theoretical underpinnings of the play movement, I move on to show how theory came to be applied and how Cather illustrates certain of these practical applications in "The Best Years" and three of her early stories. In the middle five sections of the chapter, I set Cather temporarily aside to plunge into the milieu of precepts and concomitant activities that mark the emerging play movement. While grounding my descriptions in movement literature of the first two decades of the twentieth century, I also look to historical studies published in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s to flesh out a picture of the play movement because these histories represent prevalent views accessible to Cather. In addition, I corroborate and elaborate on these primary and quasi-primary sources by employing histories and re-evaluations from the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. My goal in these middle sections of the chapter is not so much to pinpoint when specific components of the movement appear as to flesh out a conceptual framework of what was being promoted as recreation during Cather's time. In the seventh section of the chapter, I discuss problems that complicate the task of presenting Progressive Era history. While working throughout the chapter to establish a distinct picture of the play movement, I argue in the eighth and final section for open-endedness in defining recreation, this to match the sprawling applications of practice and theory one encounters in the movement itself.

### **Recognizing A Need for Play**

Recreation proponents considered play essential for the balanced training of physically healthy, socially capable, mentally acute children, and they believed American children had too little of this requisite activity. In a 1914 essay in The American Journal of Sociology J. L. Gillin writes that play is made up of “biologically and socially useful” activities that indirectly prepare one “for later life by promoting a sound physical development, [. . .] mental quickening, [. . .] and social co-operation” (828). In a series of lectures—published in 1900—John E. Bradley told his students at Illinois College, “Play lays the foundation for strength by exercise which calls it forth,—strength of body, strength of mind,—and then it trains and invigorates the directive power which is to use it” (58). In his 1917 book The Play Movement and Its Significance Henry S. Curtis writes, “It has been through play that children have always acquired their motor coördinations, trained their judgements, and formed social habits” (2). Blaming increased school time and reduced play space in cities, Curtis claims that “[p]lay has probably reached the lowest ebb during the last half century that it has ever reached during the history of the world” (3). These and other writers earnestly remind readers that recreational play meliorates what Albert Wegener terms “an inseparable trinity” of body, mind, and spirit (21).

As serious as a deficiency in recreational play may be for individuals, play advocates felt this lack carries with it a much wider impact. Philosophers, sociologists, and psychologists theorized on play’s importance for the human race as a whole with

several hypotheses (ranging from biological to psychological) vying for prominence.<sup>4</sup>

The surplus-energy theory formulated by such thinkers as Friedrich Schiller and Herbert Spencer posits that play results from excess energy and youthful exuberance. Karl Groos added that play also helps to restore exhausted physical powers. Groos went on to postulate that play reenacts instinctual human conduct and that play's function is to develop skills essential to human life. Preceding Groos, Friedrich Froebel, who "understood that to little children play is life itself," had put theory into action in founding the kindergarten movement (Miller and Robinson 106). G. Stanley Hall refined Groos's point of view to say that in their imitative play children reiterate the history of the human race.<sup>5</sup> Psychologically based theories of play emphasize relaxation and renewal of the mind as well as rejuvenation of the body. One theorist in this vein, Hall disciple George T. W. Patrick, highlighted the pleasurable aspect of recreation—play is self-rewarding.<sup>6</sup> Neumeyer and Neumeyer state that the "relaxation theory points to the importance of recreation as giving rest to the parts of the body and mind that are

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<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise documented, the brief summary in this and the next paragraph comes from two chapters on the theories of play and recreation ( Chapters IX and X, 126-61) by Neumeyer and Neumeyer found in Leisure and Recreation, their 1936 book that provides a representative and comprehensive scope of play theory in the first third of the twentieth century. A chapter on the theories of play in Miller and Robinson's 1963 book The Leisure Age reiterates Neumeyer and Nuemeyer's analysis and extends it to include the play theories of two recreation movement pioneers, Joseph Lee and Luther Halsey Gulick (Chapter 4, 103-43).

<sup>5</sup> Gleason identifies Hall as "the developmental psychology professor under whom many of the play theorists studied" (109). I return to Hall's recapitulation theory in Chapter Four to see how Cather interrogates a division of play along gender lines.

<sup>6</sup> The year after bringing out The Song of the Lark, Cather's publisher Houghton Mifflin issued Patrick's 1916 book The Psychology of Relaxation which examines the psychologies of play, of laughter, of profanity, of alcohol, and even of war.