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Willa Cather の The Professor's House における七つの大罪

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The Seven Deadly Sins
in Willa Cather's *The Professor's House*

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I

Willa Cather's *The Professor's House* consists of three parts— "The Family," "Tom Outland's Story," and "The Professor." Book I, "The Family," portrays Professor St. Peter's constant disturbance by materialism and subsequent isolation from his family and the world outside. In Book II, "Tom Outland's Story," the focus of the story changes from the world of everyday life to the mythical world, dealing mainly with Tom's quest for the mythical beauty of the past. In Book III, "The Professor," the story returns to everyday life, where St. Peter is left in a state of isolation and depression.

The plot of the novel focuses on St. Peter's growing disillusionment and isolation in the midst of materialism, and many critics point out the rise of twentieth-century materialism and its impact on St. Peter.¹ However, in this novel, Cather goes beyond the problem of materialism and deals with fundamental human nature, that is, the fundamental human flaw which leads people to commit sins. This human flaw, reflected in the seven deadly sins—the sins of pride, envy, avarice, gluttony, wrath, sloth, and lust—is clearly demonstrated in this novel as a major factor which hinders man from establishing good relationships with others.

II

Book I demonstrates melodramatic family affairs, as its subtitle, "The Family," also suggests. The traditional concept of the family is the harmonious unity of all members of the family centering on the father. However, the harmonious unity of St. Peter's family seems to be entirely broken up, and each of the family members—St. Peter, his wife Lillian, and their daughters Rosamond and Kathleen—becomes selfish and even shows hatred toward the others. This family break-up is basically brought about by Tom Outland's invention, a revolutionary vacuum tube, the patent for which Tom left with Rosamond, his fiancée, before he went to war. Louie Marsellus, who marries Rosamond after Tom's death in the war, commercializes and exploits Tom's invention, as St. Peter later says: "he's all turned out chemicals and dollars and cents."² This exploitation of Tom's invention and the subsequent wealth of Rosamond and Louie not only destroy the harmony of family but also bring St. Peter into conflict both in the university community and in society outside.

Surrounded by the depressing conditions inside and outside the family, St. Peter retreats into his old attic room and his "walled-in" garden. As David Stouck says: "With the Professor's growing recognition of the discord around him bred out of greed comes an increased sense of being continuously tired and a desire to withdraw from the vain competitive struggles of the world" (19); many critics point out that St. Peter's withdrawal from the outside world is due to his negative feelings toward materialism as well as to his uneasy feelings about his early old age. However, his retreat to his old attic room and subsequent alienation are caused not only by external factors, such as the rise of materialism, but also by internal factors, that is, his own innate human weakness—especially his pride. St. Peter believes that man has a magical

power and can control everything: "A man can do anything if he wishes to enough, St. Peter believed. Desire is creation, is the magical element in that process" (29). This is exactly the same kind of pride that Gatsby has in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* which was published in the same year as *The Professor's House*. Gatsby believes that he has a magical power to control everything and repeat the past as he wishes. This pride brings Gatsby alienation and his ultimate tragic death. St. Peter's strong confidence and pride can clearly be seen in his relationships with others, especially with Augusta, with Lillian, and with his students.

After the completion of the new house, when Augusta, a sewing woman, tries to remove the sewing forms from his old attic room to the new house, St. Peter strongly opposes it and says: "Go and buy some ones for your airy atelier, as many as you wish—I'm said to be rich now, am I not?—Go buy, but you can't have my woman. That's final" (21-22). Although, here, an employer-employee relationship exists between St. Peter and Augusta, his authoritative command goes beyond this relationship. In view of his authoritative power, Augusta feels as guilty as if a dark sin were disclosed in church.

The same authoritarian approach can be seen in St. Peter's attitude toward his students in the classroom. He pays special attention to particular students who are intelligent and ask stimulating questions. In response to an intelligent question, he eloquently delivers his answer without paying any attention to the rest of the class, as seen in his answer to Miller. Lillian blames St. Peter on this account and says: "I wish he wouldn't talk to those fat-faced boys as if they were intelligent beings. You cheapen yourself, Godfrey. It makes me a little ashamed" (70). However, St. Peter replies to this remark: "There's a fellow in that lot, Tod Miller, who isn't slow, and he excites me to

controversy" (70). St. Peter even thinks that Lillian is "less intelligent and more sensible than he had thought her" (79). All these attitudes of St. Peter toward others, especially his judgment of others, prove that he has a strong sense of superiority. David C. Stineback points out: "St. Peter's whole approach toward others is based upon the eager encouragement of superiority, rather than the self-righteous discouragement of inferiority" (326-327). This superiority, namely pride, prevents him from establishing amiable relationships with others, and subsequently he retreats to his old attic room and his "walled-in" garden.

St. Peter's attitude toward his garden reflects another aspect or form of the sin of pride. He takes excessive care of his garden. The image of the professor in the isolated "walled-in" garden becomes like the image of Hawthorne's Dr. Rappaccini who controls all nature in his garden and takes over God's role of creator. This is Rappaccini's great sin—the sin of pride. On the question of nature, St. Peter's attitude is the same as Rappaccini's. He believes that man's hand selects and controls nature: "The hand, fastidious and bold, which selected and placed—it was that which made the difference. In Nature there is no selection" (75). As Dr. Rappaccini was isolated from the outside world due to his pride, so is St. Peter in his "walled-in" garden.

St. Peter's strong attachment to his attic room and the forms in this room presents another human flaw—the sin of lust. To St. Peter, as we have already seen, the attic room (and also the sewing room during the summer) is the ideal place to retreat from the outside world; described as: "Fairly considered, the sewing-room was the most inconvenient study a man could possibly have, but it was one place in the house where he could get isolation, insulation from the engaging drama of domestic life" (25-26). In this isolated room, St. Peter exhibits a peculiar attachment to Augusta's forms, as seen in his strong opposition

to their removal from his room. He even calls one of the forms "my woman" or "my lady." This monomaniac, or rather morbid, attachment to the forms means something more than mere retreat from "the engaging drama of domestic life." Leon Edel refers to the attic room as a womb and St. Peter as an embryo:

In this attic room, tiny and snug as a womb, cradled in a warm and alive household but safe from any direct contact with the world outside, Professor St. Peter can feel taken care of and as undisturbed as an embryo. (226)

Edel also says:

The room, furthermore, is used by one other person—the motherly sewing woman, Augusta. Adjuncts to this mother figure are the two dressmaker's dummies. Seen as part of the sewing woman, the mother figure, these two dummies express opposite experiences of the mother: one is described as matronly, of a bulk suggesting warm flesh and reassuring physical possession; the other is of sophisticated line, suggesting spirit and sexual awareness and interest. So the professor has in his secluded place the beloved mother, who cares for and protects him but is also of some sexual interest to him. He wants his mother to be both a mother and an erotic stimulus, and above all he wants to possess her exclusively. (226)

Edel regards the forms as a symbol of Augusta, a mother figure, and applies Freud's ideas about infantile sexuality to St. Peter's strong attachment to the attic room and to the forms. In Edel's interpretation,

this strong attachment to the attic room and the forms comes to be not only his retreat from the material world outside but also his desire to possess Augusta as a mother figure—a mother figure who plays two roles, a protector and a source of erotic stimulation.

However, the forms symbolize not only a mother figure but also a figure of Eve as temptress. In order to make this image, Cather carefully arranges the circumstance of the forms in the old attic room. She places one of the two forms in “the darkest corner of the room” (17), and covers it “with strong black cotton” (17). This particular one is also “richly developed” (17). This circumstance of the form gives it the dark image, associated with the image of the dark lady, which Hawthorne and Melville favorably introduced in their novels as the image of Eve as temptress, who brings about Adam’s fall. In fact, Missy Dehn Kubitschek regards this form as the mummy in the mesa:

Hamilton contains many Edenic resonances, though none so conclusive as a Mother Eve. Augusta’s sewing model, however, is certainly connected not only with Lillian and Rosamond but, with “no viscera behind its glistening ribs,” to the mummy in the mesa village. (15)

Here, we remember Father Duchene’s comment on Mother Eve’s death. According to his analysis, Mother Eve was found accompanied by a young lover and subsequently killed by her husband, for in certain primitive societies the husband was allowed to punish an unfaithful wife with death.

If we accept the remarks made by both Edel and Kubitschek, St. Peter’s attachment to the form becomes symbolical of his lustful desire toward Augusta. In addition to Edel and Kubitschek, James F. Maxfield

points out St. Peter's marital problems:

St. Peter has marital problems of another kind. The new house with its separate bedrooms for husband and wife signals a breakdown in the marital relationship. In view of the fact that the professor is only fifty-two and Lillian probably somewhat younger (and both are in good physical condition, looking younger than their years) it seems rather premature for them to be retiring from sexual relations. (75)

Thus, it is safe to say that the form is, in psychological terms, the transference of St. Peter's unconscious sexual desire to Augusta. Jessie Corrigan Pegis defines the sin of lust as "a great desire for bodily pleasure" (48) leading to the sin of impurity. In this sense, St. Peter's attachment to the form can be placed in a category of the sin of lust, for it indirectly indicates his lustful desire for Augusta.

The other characters in this novel also exhibit a variety of human flaws. In particular, the conflict between two sisters, Rosamond and Kathleen, presents the sins of pride, envy, and avarice. Rosamond and Kathleen both express their rivalry toward each other, but Rosamond is always victorious. Rosamond is "brilliantly beautiful" (37), as everyone admits, and wins Tom Outland's heart, as her engagement with him indicates. Rosamond is proud of her superiority over Kathleen, and Kathleen becomes envious of Rosamond. It is one of the reflections of Kathleen's envy that she marries Scott very soon after Rosamond announces her engagement with Tom. Rosamond's later wealth further enlarges Kathleen's envious feelings toward Rosamond. With her wealth, Rosamond becomes ostentatious and begins to buy luxurious furniture,

furs, and jewels "like Napoleon looting the Italian palace" (154). Kathleen, as a result, becomes miserably jealous of her.

Kathleen's envy reaches its peak on the day when she asks St. Peter to help her choose new furs. On that very day, however, Rosamond drops by her house wearing a splendid fur. Although Rosamond's visit is accidental, Kathleen interprets it as Rosamond's intention to show off her expensive "coat of soft, purple-grey fur" (82). Having been discouraged from choosing a new fur, Kathleen tells St. Peter with a greenish face full of envy and tears: "I can't help it, Father. I am envious. I don't think I would be if she let me alone, but she comes here with her magnificence and takes the life out of all our poor little things. Everybody knows she's rich, why does she have to keep rubbing it in?" (84-85) She further says: "It's not her clothes, it's a feeling she has inside her. When she comes toward me, I feel hate coming toward me, like a snake's hate" (85). Pride, envy, and avarice surely bring the two sisters to an unresolvable separation from each other.

The fortune from Tom's invention adversely affects even the academic society of the college. Dr. Crane, St. Peter's closest colleague, claims a share of Tom's invention on account of his participation in its development. His avaricious purpose is apparent when he says: "Yes. It's the money" (147), in replying to St. Peter's question: "Then it's only since this patent has begun to make money that it does interest you?" (147) Dr. Crane is also obviously envious of Louie's wealth and ultimately of St. Peter himself, who is Louie's father-in-law. Dr. Crane says: "If he [Tom] were reaping the rewards of his discovery himself, I'd have nothing to say. ... You cannot shut your eyes to the fact that this money, coming into your family, has strengthened your credit and your general security" (148).

Professor Langtry, another of St. Peter's colleagues, also shows strong

envy. He is very much dissatisfied with the unpopularity of his American history course, while St. Peter's European history is very popular among students. Thus, during St. Peter's sabbatical year in Spain, Professor Langtry works quietly to take over St. Peter's place in European history. When he fails in the attempt, Professor Langtry, with the aid of the political power of his uncle, who is president of the board of regents, succeeds in obtaining for himself the new chair of Renaissance history.

Even Lillian was once "fiercely" envious of Tom Outland, due to St. Peter's close attachment to Tom. While Tom was a student at Hamilton, St. Peter was especially fond of him because of his intelligence and began to spend most of his time with him in the attic room, talking over his work. Lillian withdraws her conjugal favors from St. Peter, and the distance between him and Lillian is never narrowed until the end of the novel.

Louie, who commercializes Tom's invention and brings conflict to St. Peter's world, commits the sins of gluttony and sloth, as well as avarice. For *nouveau riche* Louie, the most effective way to enter high-class society is to entertain celebrities by buying expensive dinners. He grasps every single opportunity for this purpose. When St. Peter makes a trip to Chicago for his special lecture, Louie provides St. Peter with a first-rate hotel and arranges the birthday dinner, inviting St. Peter's colleagues. At a meeting of the Association of Electrical Engineering in Hamilton, Louie also entertains the visiting engineers at a luncheon, an exquisite luncheon as Scott later says: "It was some lunch! Louie's a good host. First-rate cigars, and plenty of them" (111). Louie plans to take St. Peter and Lillian to Paris for the summer vacation. Of course, to Louie, this trip is not simply a vacation but is also exploited as a good opportunity to get acquainted with the celebrities St. Peter

knows there. Louie says to St. Peter: "I want to see the intellectual side of Paris, and to meet some of the savants and men of letters whom you know. What a shame Gaston Paris is not living! We could very nicely make up a little party at Laperouse for him. But there are others" (158). To Lillian's words: "Yes, Louie, you and Godfrey can lunch with the scholars while Rosamond and I are shopping," Louie replies "...We shall want you with us when we lunch with celebrities" (158). Louie also expresses his excitement about the trip to France as follows: "We're going to France for the summer, ...and drink Burgundy, Burgundy, Burgundy!" (108)

Louie's excessive use of food and drink as tactics to promote his position in society signifies the sin of gluttony. In addition to this, depending on the fortune derived from Tom's invention, Louie does not seem to work much but rather lives in a slothful manner, paying big money for luxuries and furniture, offering expensive dinners to celebrities, and making trips to various places. When Rosamond and St. Peter make a shopping trip to Chicago, Louie also goes with them, where he is to meet his brother and go on to New York. Louie kisses his hand to Rosamond again and again from the platform of the car bound for New York, and leans out of the car's rear platform and shouts to Rosamond. St. Peter feels great disappointment with this rather childish behavior and says to Rosamond: "We must be diligent, Rosie" (152). However, Rosamond is the same as Louie in the sense that she neglects her duty in the midst of her excessive selfconsciousness. According to Pegis, the sin of sloth is the "laziness that makes one neglect his duty" (48). In fact, although Rosamond forces St. Peter to go shopping, she neglects her responsibility to pay the train fare for her father afterwards. Accordingly, St. Peter returns home alone at his own expense. Scott, happened to be in the same train, says to

him: "Outlasted you, did she?" (152) St. Peter apologetically and ashamedly answers: "That's it" (152). In this brief reply, St. Peter's great disappointment is clearly expressed. Indeed, he was "absolutely flattened out and listless" (153) on his return journey.

Even Augusta, who seems to be a humble and virtuous person and whose existence seems to be based on spiritual values, demonstrates some human flaws. In her deep commitment to Catholicism, Augusta shows a strong sense that she is a "chosen person," which is a claim to superiority over others. When St. Peter asks Augusta if the passages about the Mystical Rose, Lily of Zion, and Tower of Ivory were from the Magnificat, Augusta, much surprised, looks at him and says: "Why, Professor! Did you receive no religious instruction at all?" (99) to which St. Peter replies: "How could I, Augusta? My mother was a Methodist, there was no Catholic church in our town in Kansas, and I guess my father forgot his religion" (99). Then Augusta says: "That happens, in *mixed marriage*" (100, my italics). Through these conversations between St. Peter and Augusta, we can clearly see Augusta's sense of superiority in being a Catholic. This is especially obvious when she points out that St. Peter's lack of knowledge about the Magnificat is due to his mixed marriage, and she is implicitly blaming his father who was a Catholic but married a woman who was of another denomination—Methodist.

Augusta's sense of superiority and sense of being a "chosen person" can also be seen in the episode in which she loses five hundred dollars by a bad investment. Augusta's pride not only prevents her from allowing her folly but also does not allow her to accept any help from others. Kathleen says: "Augusta is terribly proud. When I told her that her customers ought to make it up to her, she was very haughty and said she wasn't that kind of a sewing-woman" (129). Augusta thinks

that she is not just a common sewing-woman but something different and special. Owing to her pride, Augusta is, like St. Peter, also isolated from the outside world. Her spinsterhood suggests that she cannot really associate with other people. In addition, Augusta's investment itself can even be regarded as a manifestation of avarice.

III

In the middle section of the novel, "Tom Outland's Story," Cather brings the reader to the mythical world. Compared to the other sections, which deal with materialistic everyday life, this part, as the bracelet of "a turquoise set in dull silver" symbolizes, deals with Tom's mythical quest for the beauty of the past. When Tom works with Rodney Blake as a cowboy on the New Mexico plain, he explores the mysterious Blue Mesa, which nobody had ever climbed, and discovers there an ancient cliff city, "a little city of stone" (201). Tom is amazed at the harmonious beauty of this abandoned ancient city with the tower in the middle—"something symmetrical and powerful about the swell of the masonry" (201) In sunlight and in silence and stillness, this city sits "looking down into the canyon with the calmness of eternity" (201). The image of the cliff city here becomes much like an image of Eden before the Fall. Tom thinks that this city had been "the home of a powerful tribe, a particular one" (202), and Father Duchene also believes that the dwellers in this city had been a religious and superior people. Tom and Blake excavate the ancient city and find old Indian relics and a female mummy which they call "Mother Eve." However, as Father Duchene connects Mother Eve's death to her lustful relationship with her young lover, and also as Henry's death from a snake bite in this mesa suggests, it is obvious that this Eden-like city had contained a seed of the Fall, the weakness or flaw of human nature, in its own

society. If we analyze this section of the novel from this point of view, "Tom Outland's Story" presents a variety of human flaws, centering on Tom's experience in Washington D.C. and also on his relationship with Blake.

In order to solve all the mysteries that the Cliff City contains, Tom makes a trip to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. However, Tom's trip to Washington turns out to be disappointing. After having waited for several days in the corridor of the Smithsonian Institution, Tom is advised by a stenographer to invite the secretary to an excellent lunch at an expensive hotel, the Shoreham. She says, "If you want to get attention anybody in Washin'ton, ask them to lunch. People here will do almost anything for a good lunch" (229). Tom finally takes the secretary of the Smithsonian out to lunch and entertains him to an excellent meal, with Chateau d'Yquem, a wine of which he had never heard of. Furthermore, he is embarrassed by the secretary's gluttony, as he says: "I drank only one glass, and that pleased him too, for he drank the rest" (230). The secretary also shows a strong sense of superiority. Rather than displaying any interest in Tom's mission, he shows only his pride in himself by boasting of his career. Several days later, Tom meets the director of the Smithsonian and Dr. Ripley who is an authority on prehistoric Indian remains. However, they do not pay much attention to Tom's discovery on the mesa. They are only interested in getting a free trip to the International Exposition in Europe and winning a decoration there. All these experiences of Tom's demonstrate the sinful world of gluttony, avarice, and pride in the bureaucratic and materialistic society of Washington D. C.

More disappointment comes when Tom returns to the Blue Mesa from Washington. He finds out that his partner Blake sold all the relics to

a German antiquary and also hears that the townspeople near the mesa are extremely jealous of Blake on account of his money. (Here, we see the sin of envy in the townspeople). Tom furiously accuses Blake of inconsideration, saying: "I never thought of selling them, because they weren't mine to sell—nor yours! They belong to this country, to the State, and to all the people" (242). Tom's accusation, or the "painful interview" as he calls it, continues for hours. In the midst of his fury, Tom does not hear that Blake actually sold the relics for Tom's future education. Here, we have to notice that Tom perpetrates not only the sin of wrath but also the sin of pride, for by furiously accusing Blake, Tom takes a superior position over Blake and entirely controls and dominates him. In other words, Tom judges, and plays God. Patricia Lee Yongue also points out that "Tom's sin, his loss of sympathy and compassion, is a sin of pride" (293). Due to his pride and wrath, Tom loses his temper, and subsequently cannot forgive Blake.

In addition to the sins of pride and wrath, Tom is also guilty of avarice. He shows a strong sense of covetousness of the mesa in his accusation of Blake. Although Tom says that all the relics belong to all the people, we notice a subtle change of tone in his speech. Toward the end of the argument, Tom says: "I'm not so poor that I have to sell the pots and pans that belonged to my poor grandmother a thousand years ago. I made all my plans on train, coming back" (243) and "I've learned enough from them so that I could go on with it myself." Here, he seems to be insisting that all the relics which Blake sold were his own property. In fact, Blake senses it and says in a gloomy and dark voice: "I supposed I had some share in the relics we dug up—you always spoke of it that way. But I see now I was working for you like a hired man, and while you were away I sold your property" (245).

After Blake leaves, Tom lives on the mesa alone in the quiet solitude

and feels that he possesses the entire mesa himself:

Something had happened in me that made it possible for me to co-ordinate and simplify, and that process, going on in my mind, brought with it great happiness. It was possession. The excitement of my first discovery was a very pale feeling compared to this one. (250-251)

James Maxfield comments on it: "At first the break up with Roddy does not bother Tom, for he feels he has gained something more important than a mere human friendship: exclusive spiritual possession of the mesa" (80). However, as Maxfield also later admits, we have to say that Tom lost the most important and valuable thing in the world—a human friendship, due to his pride, avarice, and wrath, for a human relationship is the fundamental thing in human society. It is proved by the fact that Tom does not choose to live in the mesa alone forever but returns to human society.

IV

Cather was much interested in Catholic culture and doctrine, as John J. Murphy says: "The interest in Catholic culture and ritual evident in all her major fiction from *O Pioneer!* to *Shadows* reflected Cather's deep personal religious concern" (58). Bernard Baum points out that "Cather regularly associated sympathetic and admirable personalities with Catholicism, as well as richness of tradition, a warm response to life, aesthetic sensibility" (598). Alfred Kazin also says that "...Willa Cather herself has always been or hoped to be—a pioneer mind, a Catholic by instinct, French by inclination, a spiritual aristocrat with democratic manners" (225). Kazin further connects Cather's Catholicism to

Tom Outland's story: "Tom Outland's desert life was thus the ultimate symbol of a forgotten freedom and harmony that could be realized only by a frank and even romantic submission to the past, to the Catholic order and doctrine" (256). In *The Professor's House*, indeed, Cather fully demonstrates the medieval Catholic idea of the seven deadly sins through the family drama of the St. Peters and Tom Outland's story. Cather shows us that there is an innate human flaw, as reflected in the seven sins, behind the main plot of the novel which focuses on the rise of materialism and its impact on St. Peter. In other words, criticizing the danger of materialism on the surface level, Cather actually, on a deeper level, illustrates the variety of human flaws and their influence on human relationships. Due to pride, envy, avarice, gluttony, lust, sloth, and wrath, most characters in this novel cannot establish a close relationship with each other. A lack of communication and the subsequent isolation are the actual things which ultimately bring about the barrenness and decay of modern society. In this sense, *The Professor's House* presents Cather's strong concern and a warning about the corruption of modern civilization, owing to the human flaws in the midst of the rise of materialism. The Tower of the Mesa and the Washington Monument, like the Tower of Babel, foreshadow this corruption as the dominant symbols in this novel.

Notes

* I wish to thank my colleagues of English Department at the University of the Ryukyus for their valuable comments and suggestions on this paper.

1. Clive Hart points out: "The most important theme to emerge from

Book I is the relationship of St. Peter to his family, and particularly to those aspects of his family's behaviour which directly reflect the pressures of the new money-minded society" (275). Philip Gerber says: "*The Professor's Horse* is among Cather's most pessimistic books; it envisions no satisfactory explanation of the materialistic fever and proposes no cure for it. Where hope is gone, escape seems the only alternative" (117). David C. Stineback, James F. Maxfield, and Bernard Baum also point out St. Peter's disturbance at materialism. Maxfield says: "Finally, Professor St. Peter feels profoundly alienated from the values of his contemporary culture. For St. Peter, true values are intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic; the values of his age appear to be exclusively materialistic" (73). Stineback argues: "St. Peter is growing less and less able to cope with the petty commercialism of his academic life in Hamilton, particularly the envy and greed by the success of a vacuum invented by Outland at the university" (318). Baum sees the Waste-Land theme in this novel and points out St. Peter's isolation in the modern world: "...Professor St. Peter, spiritually isolated from family and business associates—a man who can find no vital relationship in the modern world" (597). James Schroeter even regards *The Professor's House* as Cather's expression of her own anti-semitism, represented by Louie who is an exploiter and moneymaker. Schroeter says: "And it accounts, too, for an implied criticism of America, whose history parallels that of the Professor, consisting of a noble past and an ignoble past and an ignoble present cheapened by material things" (374). David Stouck shows that *The Professor's House* reflects Cather's distaste for materialism: "*The Professor's House* marks a crucial turning point in Willa Cather's art, and one must assume in her life as well. If the world broke in two for her in the early 1920's it was because she could no longer endorse the pursuits of a materialistic and competitive society

which reflected her own fruitless and false ambitions" (24).

2. Willa Cather, *The Professor's House* (New York: Random House, 1973), P. 132. All the page references to the text will be cited parenthetically and refer to this edition.

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論文要約

Willa Cather の *The Professor's House* における七つの大罪

平良 柗史

1925年に出版された Cather の *The Professor's House* は、科学の隆盛に裏打ちされた物質主義が人間の生き方に強いインパクトを与えた20世紀初期の社会を如実に反映した作品となっている。物質主義に抵抗しながらもその潮流に流され疎外されていく St. Peter 教授。物質主義にどっぷりとつかり互いに憎しみ、敵意さえ抱く St. Peter の家族や大学の同僚たち。*The Professor's House* は、物質主義に毒された人々が互いに真のコミュニケーションをもちえず疎外されていく悲劇的状况を描いた作品といえよう。

しかしながらこの作品では、物質主義という外的要因に加えて、内的要因、すなわち人間の内面に潜む罪を犯しがちな人間のもって生まれた弱さ (human flaw) が作品の登場人物たちの行動や生き方を規定し、外的要因以上に、内部から登場人物たちをコミュニケーションの欠如した疎外状況に落とし込んでいるかと思われる。この小論では、人間の内面に潜む弱さ (human flaw) を七つの大罪—the sins of pride, envy, avarice, gluttony, wrath, sloth, lust—に起因するファクターとしての軌軸でとらえ、それぞれの大罪がどのような形で登場人物たちの行動に現れているのかを分析してみた。