My Antonia: Jim Antonia And The Land Essay, Research Paper

In America?s Pioneering history, strong bonds between people and the land they live on have been built. From this bond, the act of colonizing land brings people together in intense relationships. In My Antonia, Willa Cather looks into these bonds between people, land, and people through the relationship between the 2 main characters, Jim and Antonia. Throughout the story, Antonia as a representation of a life very different from Jim?s and as a strong bond with the land shows us Jim?s fascination with Antonia. She is his counterpart.

Antonia represents an alternative to Jim?s life as a middle-class American boy. Unlike Jim, she?s able to move away from all the stereotypes and boundaries of her class and gender. Antonia is a lot less inhibited than Jim is and listens to her heart more. In the end, Jim?s decisions are made according to social thumbs up or thumbs downs. He goes through a rebel stage and ignores all of his responsibilities to his own class to hang out with people his family and friends don?t think highly of, but when he figures out that what he?s doing is hurting his grandparents and where they stand socially like honor wise, he stops really fast. He goes back to the whole country women feel of life when he ignores his studies and starts to hang out with Lena in Lincoln but right after Gaston Cleric, his mentor, gives him a little bit of advice, he forgets about Lena and focuses back onto his studies. After doing things like this over and over, he ends up really far away from Nebraska to the point where he can?t ever be as close again. Back to present tense, the grownup Jim regrets not being able to both stop to enjoy all the country girls, the ?Real Women? like Lena and Antonia, and at the same time, be admired for his successful professional life. He wishes he could?ve had both. In the end, he plans out lots of visits from New York to Antonia and her family back in the country.

The second thing Antonia represents to Jim is a close tie to the land. As much as he loves the land, Jim is able to give it up for the city whereas Antonia is the happiest there. The differences between Antonia and Jim almost spell out what the Nebraska prairie means to 2 really specific different types of people. Jim has a lot of harmony with the land and loves it a lot, but he never has to work it like Antonia did. She has to go through the pains of it more than him, like how when they are both cold and sick during the winter at different times, Jim is protected by his grandmother?s house and Antonia has to wait it out in the cold. He only lives there 3 years before moving to Black Hawk and he never moves back. Generally, whenever Jim sees the land, he thinks of what we can use it for, as in railroads and buildings. He?s all about progress, and he doesn?t mind when the grasslands are wiped out for railroads. He looks at the land as an instrument for progress. Antonia on the other hand thinks of the land as a divine entity driven by its own force. At the end Cather portrays Antonia in her orchard touching all of her trees that she planted and took care of like people. Antonia is much more a relative like a sister to the land and Jim is more of a master.

When Jim tells Antonia how important she is to him, he is telling her that she is his counterpart. He says, ?The idea of you is a part of my mind; you influence my likes and dislikes, all my tastes, hundreds of times when I don?t realize it. You really

are a part of me.? ( ) Jim and Antonia are never exactly the same; they were always

notably different socially and attitude wise. Her difference helped him to define himself, his own choices. He says that he might have liked to have Antonia as something closer like “a sweetheart, or a wife, or my mother or my sister” ( ), but he never went after her like that. Willa Cather?s opinion of them comes across as Antonia and Jim being better counterparts than intimates. The last thing he does in reference to this all is him writing ?My? in front of her name. She is his because he took in his image of her so much that its

part of him now. That?s why he says “The idea of you is a part of my mind.” He is saying that it?s the ?Idea? of Antonia that?s a part of him, like his own imagination of her in his head. Antonia is a big part of Jim.

In Conclusion, I think Willa Cather is very accepting of Jim and Antonia?s fate. They both represent their respective people, class and native wise. I think she?s trying to get the point across that when you don?t have much in life money and status wise, you take what life gives you and you make that everything. The connection in My Antonia is the land being all Antonia really had and Antonia being all Jim really had.