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A study of the evidences of local color in Willa Sibert Cather's stories of the Midwestern plains

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A STUDY OF THE EVIDENCES OF LOCAL COLOR
IN WILLA SIBERT CATHER'S STORIES OF THE MIDWESTERN PLAINS

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of English
Indiana State Teachers College

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Charles Thomas Keller
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The thesis of Charles Thomas Keller,
Contribution of the Graduate School, Indiana State Teachers
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"A Study of the Evidences of Local Color in
Willa Sibert Cather's Stories of the
Midwestern Plains"

is hereby approved as counting toward the completion of
the Master's degree in the amount of eight hours'
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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITION OF LOCAL COLOR

Literary critics have generally agreed that Willa Sibert Cather, whose writings have been most often associated with the Midwestern plains, was far from being a local colorist. If local color had been her primary aim, she would not have been concerned with character delineation.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It is the purpose of this study (1) to trace in Miss Cather's novels and short stories of the Midwestern plains all evidences which show the use of local color and (2) to show in what manner and to what extent Miss Cather employed local color.

Importance of the study. No study has been made on Willa Cather's actual use of local color in her stories of the Midwestern plains. In this study an attempt is made to evaluate such usages. The findings of this study may assist scholars to determine with exactness the manner in which and the extent to which Miss Cather used local color; for example, the statement in The Literary History of the United States by Robert E. Spiller et al. that Miss Cather

was "the summerup of our long tradition of local color"¹ could be elaborated to explain the manner and extent of her usage. If any researchers study Miss Cather's theory of the novel démeublé and writing simplification, they may also find this study an aid in comparing Miss Cather's writing theories with her actual practice.

II. DEFINITION OF LOCAL COLOR

American local color has been identified under four major representations. If a writer adheres to the four representations, he easily is classified as a local colorist. These representations are expressed by Thomas Dickinson in The Making of American Literature. They include:

- (1) natural background of scenery, whether of city, village, mountain, or rural life;
- (2) typical characters of the community;
- (3) characteristic activity of the community (hence the novel of industrial life, the railroad novel, the cowboy novel, etc.), and
- (4) dialect and speech [characteristic of a particular region or character type].²

Robert E. Spiller et al. in The Literary History of the United States write that "local color emphasizes the setting as characteristic of a district, region, or era, and reproduces the customs, dialect, costumes, landscapes, and other peculiarities."³ An April 7, 1934, editorial in The

¹Robert E. Spiller et al., The Literary History of the United States, Volume II (New York, 1948), p. 1215.

²Thomas H. Dickinson, The Making of American Literature (New York, 1932), p. 559.

³Spiller, op. cit., Volume III, p. 304.

Saturday Review of Literature distinguishes local color as "a pursuit of dying idiosyncracies of character and dialect in a country rapidly becoming standardized."⁴ Russell Blankenship in American Literature describes local color as "a pleasant and often sentimental presentation of typical life in a certain definite locality that had characteristics of manners and customs peculiar to itself."⁵

Based upon the four major representations expressed by Thomas Dickinson in The Making of American Literature, local color is interpreted in this study as meaning the distinctive characteristics or peculiarities of a place or period represented as follows: (1) in characteristic speech and dialect of a region or character type; (2) in characteristic setting or topography; (3) in typical characters as distinguished by costume and occupation; and (4) in characteristic activity of a district, region, or era as shown in homely sentiment, folklore, legends, traditions, customs, manners, and superstitions.

Percy Holmes Boynton writes in Literature and American Life that "the general trait of the earlier local-color output is that the superficial idioms of speech and modes of life which characterized the various districts were recorded

⁴"The Boom in Regionalism," (Editorial) The Saturday Review of Literature, 10:606, April 7, 1934.

⁵Russell Blankenship, American Literature (New York, 1931), p. 435.

therein."⁶ Realism in the 1880's, which was the period of the most outstanding local color writing, meant no inflated diction. Variations in a dialect from formal English or the standard language included "provincial words, peculiar speech turns involving unfamiliar sentence patterns and fresh imagery, and lapses from standard grammatical form."⁷ Russell Blankenship comments that "an absolutely accurate ear for local peculiarities of speech is not essential, but the main liberties with good English must be presented, preferably in a horribly garbled spelling."⁸

Alexander Cowie in The Rise of the American Novel points out that "the sense of locality may be revealed by the shape of vowels quite as definitely as by the contour of mountain, valley, or cave."⁹ Mr. Cowie further remarks that "much of the folklore and superstition that characterize the local-color story is delivered orally in the special idiom of the region."¹⁰ Many critics, however, find that heavily apostrophized contractions, barbaric misspellings, and other desperate linguistic expedients employed in local color

⁶Percy Holmes Boynton, Literature and American Life (Boston, 1936), p. 867.

⁷Harry R. Warfel and G. Harrison Orians (eds.), American Local-Color Stories (New York, 1941), p. xiii.

⁸Blankenship, op. cit., p. 435.

⁹Alexander Cowie, The Rise of the American Novel (New York, 1948), p. 537.

¹⁰Ibid.

stories comprise dull reading. Critics term such a predilection for dialect to be amateur phonetics.¹¹ The criticism seems to me valid. I believe that character and story should never be sacrificed to linguistic expedients. Often, interest is not maintained when dialect is heavily presented.

Stress upon speech and dialect, however, will give a story local color flavor. Willa Cather's fictional interpretations depended little upon dialect.¹² Yet, she did frequently employ it. Dialect and unusual speech usages in Miss Cather's stories of the Midwestern plains are noted in this study.

Characteristic setting and topography are often positive forces in local color action and characterization. A local color setting is most often a pocket in the hills, a village remote from railroad or central highway, an outpost, a river hamlet, a seaport town beyond its prime, or a settlement begun in hope but finally bypassed by materialistic development. The characteristic setting most often has an illustrious past and appears to have no future. The local colorist, who probably lives in such an environment, generally has a special affection for it and often expresses his feeling in a note of nostalgia.

Attention to relief features or surface configurations

¹¹Spiller, op. cit., Volume II, p. 860.

¹²Blankenship, op. cit., p. 488.

of a district, region, or locality is vital to depicting local color. Often a detailed description of flora or fauna of a setting detracts from the plot movement but characterizes the picturesqueness of the local scene. An excerpt from "A New England Nun" by Mary E. Wilkins Freeman will demonstrate how a local colorist may lose himself in recreating the topography. A writer expressing the same idea with less attention to the setting is not a local colorist.

Mrs. Freeman writes:

About nine o'clock Louisa strolled down the road a little way. There were harvest fields on either hand, bordered by low stone walls. Luxuriant clumps of bushes grew beside the wall, and trees--wild cherry and old apple trees--at intervals. Presently Louisa sat down on the wall and looked about her with mildly sorrowful reflectiveness. Tall shrubs of blueberry and meadowsweet, all woven together and tangled with blackberry vines and horse briers, shut her in on either side. She had little clear space between them. Opposite her, on the other side of the road, was a spreading tree; the moon shone between its boughs, and the leaves twinkled like silver.¹³

Mrs. Freeman's detailed description of the trees and shrubs merely serves to develop an interest in the local scene. When Miss Cather includes a description of the flora or fauna that was obviously not intended as a purely descriptive passage, I have classified such a description as an evidence of local color.

In the July 20, 1935, issue of The Saturday Review of

¹³Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, A New England Nun and Other Stories (New York, 1920), p. 12.

Literature, an editorial states that any author who describes quaint details of dress is incapable of grasping the real characteristics of his people.¹⁴ Russell Blankenship believes that flesh and blood and spirit of characterizations are of slight importance to the local color writer.¹⁵ I cannot agree with Mr. Blankenship's statement. No type of story maintains its interest if characters do not have life or personality. Representation of typical characters by costume, however, is an obvious device in achieving local color.

Occupations, as well as costume, create distinguishable character types, such as miners, shepherds, cowboys, hermits, lumberjacks, rivermen, and plains farmers. Their opportunity for individual improvement is scant, and escape from personal problems is difficult. The many qualities necessary for gaining a livelihood in such regions form no small part in local color development.

Oddity, whimsicality, and idiosyncrasy are character traits which lend themselves nicely to local color. Generally, characters possess stubborn, inbred traits. Often, character types are old settlers who occupy their minds with thoughts of the past. Crushing burdens are borne

¹⁴"The Pulse of the Machine--I," (Editorial) The Saturday Review of Literature, 12:8, July 20, 1935.

¹⁵Blankenship, op. cit., p. 436.

patiently for years. The spirit of a local color community subtly discourages initiative; however, a few youngsters sometimes slip out of town to establish themselves in a more progressive community.¹⁶

A passage from "The Flight of Betsey Lane" by Sarah Orne Jewett will indicate how a local colorist gives detailed attention to typical characters distinguished by costume and occupation. Miss Jewett classifies the "town charges"¹⁷ of a poorhouse in the following manner:

The three bean-pickers were dressed alike in stout brown gingham, checked by a white line, and all wore great faded aprons of blue drilling, with sufficient pockets convenient to the right hand. Miss Peggy Bond was a very small, belligerent-looking person, who wore a huge pair of steel-bowed spectacles, holding her sharp chin well up in air, as if to supplement an inadequate nose. She was more than half blind, but the spectacles seemed to face upward instead of square ahead, as if their wearer were always on the sharp outlook for birds.¹⁸

Without continuing the plot development of Miss Jewett's story, a reader knows that Miss Peggy Bond is among the town's oddities. Miss Jewett achieves an immediate characterization for her readers through detailed attention to Miss Bond's spectacles. Any similar minute or detailed description of costume in Miss Cather's stories of the Mid-western plains is recorded in this study as are any specific

¹⁶Cowie, op. cit., p. 536.

¹⁷Sara Orne Jewett, The Country of the Pointed Firs and Other Stories (New York, 1954), p. 172.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 172-173.

classifications of characters by occupations or types. It is generally agreed among scholars that Miss Jewett's influence is to be found in the stories and early novels of Willa Cather.

Just as local colorists stop to portray costumes and occupations, so do they stop to contemplate the results of long-continued influences on the characters of people. Time and place generally shape the destinies of characters. Home-ly sentiment, folklore, legends, traditions, customs, manners, and superstitions chisel the very features of characters in local color stories. Early local colorists portrayed such characteristic activity with quaintness and distinction.

Loyalty, response to duty, and personal integrity are also virtues upheld in a characteristic local color activity. "A Kitchen Colonel" by Mary E. Wilkens Freeman, for example, relates a story about a man who, having always been made to help his wife with the housework, bravely gives up his one chance to take a trip, and thus helps his granddaughter find happiness. This study includes any such representations of characteristic activity in Miss Cather's stories as evidences of local color.

Carl Van Doren in The American Novel 1789-1939 comments that local color looks for picturesqueness and prefers idyllic to epic dimensions in its stories.¹⁹ Percy Holmes

¹⁹Carl Van Doren, The American Novel 1789-1939 (New York, 1940), p. 537.

Boynton in Literature and American Life writes that the plots which carry these idyllic dimensions are made after a formula which involves the old romantic assumptions about rewards and punishments and the dispensing of poetic justice.²⁰

Furthermore, most local colorists do not excel in dramatic interpretation. In scenes of violence, such writers frequently seem more theatric than dramatic.

In general, local color writing is an expression of the life of a region. The colors are likely to be sombre; bright interludes occur, but they serve only to contrast with seriousness which is more characteristic of local color form. Decline and decay are often a central theme. Long-continued influences on the characters of people shape their destinies. Such environmental influences in the form of speech and dialect, characteristic setting or topography, typical characters, and characteristic activity are sometimes of exquisite beauty, of bizarre interest, or of stupid conformity.

Today, scholars refer to local color writing by the designation of regionalism. Regionalism involves the local. The local scene becomes a medium for the understanding and characterization of the universal. The past becomes material for the study of the present and the future. Allen Tate writes that literary regionalism is often "a conscious program, but it is turned in upon itself; a cultivation of the

²⁰Boynton, loc. cit.

local color, the local characters; the local customs of their community for their own sake."²¹ Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, Jesse Stuart, and Damon Runyan, for example, typify the modern local color writer.

III. ORGANIZATION OF REMAINDER OF THE THESIS

Much has been written about Willa Cather's life. All available materials about her life were read and studied closely. A separate chapter in review of her life is not included in this study since such data were deemed more applicable for inclusion in the chapters concerned with the local color evidences in her short stories and novels of the Midwestern plains. Scholars, however, will be aware of Miss Cather's firm belief that a writer's true self can only be discerned through a study of his writings. Her life, moreover, may be described in a few sentences. She was brought up in a native and homely traditionalism which characterized the Middle West. She soon became and remained during her lifetime "a conscious traditionalist."²² In her writing, she knew what to retain of the past and at the same time how to adapt to the present and the future.

Evidences of local color usage by Miss Cather are

²¹Allen Tate, "Regionalism and Sectionalism," The New Republic, 69:158, December 23, 1931.

²²Alfred Kazin, On Native Grounds (New York, 1942), p. 248.

compiled for this study in two chapters. Chapter II is concerned with local color evidences in her short stories about the Midwestern plains; Chapter III is devoted to local color evidences in her novels of the Midwestern plains. The summary and conclusions concerning the manner and extent to which Miss Cather made use of local color are related in Chapter IV. The complete bibliography of materials used in this study follows Chapter IV. An appendix consisting of a listing of Miss Cather's writings is included with this study.

CHAPTER II

EVIDENCES OF LOCAL COLOR

IN WILLA CATHER'S SHORT STORIES OF THE PLAINS

"Lou, the Prophet" was Miss Cather's first published story concerning the Midwestern plains. It appeared in the October 15, 1892, issue of Hesperian, a publication of the University of Nebraska.

The reader senses how Miss Cather utilized superstition to develop this story. The plainspeople believed that Lou's earnest prayers to God to save His children before destroying the world were indications of insanity. Miss Cather remarks that an old Danish woman had told people that Lou's "weak head"¹ was caused by his mother's dancing before his birth. Even the fact that Lou chose to farm and lived alone on the Nebraska prairie was a subject of derision by the plainspeople, and only the youngsters were compassionate toward him. After Lou's mysterious disappearance, the children continued to remember his wild cry about the sword of the Lord and of Gideon and to believe that he "was translated like Enoch of old."²

¹James R. Shively (ed.), Writings From Willa Cather's Campus Years (Lincoln, 1950), p. 48.

²Ibid., p. 53.

Only uses of superstition are obvious local color elements in "Lou, the Prophet." Miss Cather draws no complex portrait of the plains. Her emphasis is basically the character delineation of Lou as seen through the eyes of his superstitious neighbors.

"Peter" appeared in the November 24, 1892, issue of Hesperian. Peter's death was later transferred almost directly by Miss Cather into her account of Mr. Shimerda's death in My Antonia.

In a southwestern Nebraska setting, Willa Cather drew an obvious line of demarkation in character types. In Peter's son, Antone Sadelack, we have an early glimmer of the avaricious Wick Cutter in My Antonia and Ivy Peters in A Lost Lady. Antone typifies the heartless, greedy man who wasted no sympathy on anyone or anything unless he could gain money by so doing. Peter is a direct contrast to his son. Peter represents the sensitive elderly immigrant who still loved the Old World more than the New. When Antone insists that Peter sell his violin, Peter staunchly determines to resist until he realizes that he can no longer lift his bow to play. In despair, Peter determines to commit suicide. He breaks his violin through the middle, then shoots himself.

In her conclusion, Miss Cather describes Antone carrying the bow which Peter had forgotten to break into town to sell. She directs her final protest toward the Antone Sadelacks of the Midwestern plains: "Antone was very

thrifty, and a better man than his father had been."³

In the October 26, 1893, issue of Hesperian appeared a third Cather story with a Midwestern plains setting. Entitled "The Clemency of the Court," it is also highly suggestive of the themes and settings of O Pioneers! and My Antonia. In retaliating for the brutal slaying of a dog by killing the dog's slayer, Serge Povolitchky does not understand that he has committed a crime. At his trial, Serge is found guilty, but his sentence is commuted from death to life imprisonment by the clemency of the court. In a prison cell, he dies of strangulation caused by punishment meted to him because of his inability to do barrel-hooping properly.

Miss Cather criticizes society for not affording the educational opportunity to the orphaned Russian youth, Serge. Her characterization may be overly dramatic; however, it is the first indication she offered in print of her deep sympathy for the unloved, lonely prairie youth. "The Clemency of the Court" also contains Miss Cather's first attention to depiction of the Midwestern plains. She describes Serge's loneliness each evening by referring to his "staring across the brown, windswept prairies that never lead anywhere, but always stretch on and on in a great yearning for something they never reach."⁴

³Ibid., p. 45.

⁴Ibid., p. 74.

"On the Divide," which was published in the January, 1896, issue of Overland Monthly, contains Willa Cather's first mention of the laundry girls who are characterizations in My Antonia. Miss Cather mentions several girls who leave farms and go into town to work in a steam laundry. Such activity was typical among immigrant farming families.

The setting of "On the Divide" is Rattlesnake Creek, Nebraska. The principal characters are a Norwegian farmer, Canute Canuteson, and Lena Yensen; the plot concerns Canute's decision to end the unbearable isolation of living alone on the plain by carrying off Lena for a forced wedding. Canute succeeds, only to learn that Lena really loves him. Both Canute and Lena are well-drawn characters. Miss Cather describes Canute as having lived ten years on the Nebraska plain "digging and plowing and sowing and reaping what little the hail and the hot winds and the frosts left him to reap."⁵ Lena is the simple farm girl to whom rebellion toward her abductor was useless. Through Lena, Miss Cather once again lashes out against the pathos of the uneducated children of immigrant families.

More local color evidences exist in "On the Divide" than in Willa Cather's first three stories concerning the Midwestern plains. She relates how the Norwegian people always tried to build their homes close to any timber that

⁵Willa Cather, "On the Divide," Overland Monthly, 27:67, January, 1896.

could be found. She states also that men generally feared winters on the Divide as men in the North Seas feared the still dark cold of the polar twilight.⁶

She carefully describes Canute's shanty home which was built of logs split in halves, the chinks stopped with mud and plaster. The shanty roof was covered with earth and was supported by one huge beam curved in the shape of a round arch. On the inside door hung thirty or forty rattlesnake skins.

She also mentions Lena's mother blacking the coal stove, a traditional chore of the prairie family. Another account is indicative of imaginative folklore. Canute supposedly was referred to by people as the "Holder of the Heels of Horses"⁷ since he had once been kicked by a horse and in retaliation had wrapped his legs around the horse for a long time as punishment.

In the April, 1900, issue of The Cosmopolitan, Miss Cather published "Eric Hermannson's Soul," her first longer story about the Midwestern plains. Her imaginative setting for this story was again Rattlesnake Creek on the Nebraska Divide. The plot concerns "the wildest lad on all the Divide,"⁸ his conversion to Gospellism which threatens to de-

⁶Ibid., p. 66.

⁷Ibid., p. 68.

⁸Willis Cather, "Eric Hermannson's Soul," The Cosmopolitan, 28:633, April, 1900.

stroy his pleasing personality, his sudden deeply felt love for the rich and spoiled Margaret Elliot from Boston, and Eric and Margaret's moment of passion which is "all the more intense for Eric because he believes, quite literally, that his feeling is condemning him to Hell."⁹ Willa Cather describes in her plot how such frontier religions killed all joy in living except religious exaltation.

She emphasizes the drudgery and loneliness of prairie life. According to her, the women of the Divide country were "usually too plain and too busy and too tired to depart from the ways of virtue."¹⁰ In a scene at the dance which Margaret Elliot energetically sponsored, Miss Cather describes quite well the life of the women who lived on the prairie when she writes:

The girls were all boisterous with delight. Pleasure came to them but rarely, and when it came, they caught at it wildly and crushed its fluttering wings in their strong brown fingers. They had a hard life enough, most of them. Torrid summers and freezing winters, labor and drudgery and ignorance, were the portion of their girlhood; a short wooing, a hasty, loveless marriage, unlimited maternity, thankless sons, premature age and ugliness, were the dower of their womanhood.¹¹

Interesting representations of local color center in Miss Cather's criticism of the Free Gospellers. She dis-

⁹Curtis Bradford, "Willa Cather's Uncollected Short Stories," American Literature, 26:539, January, 1955.

¹⁰Cather, "Eric Hermannson's Soul," op. cit., p. 634.

¹¹Ibid., p. 642.

tinguishes Asa Skinner, the Free Gospeller preacher, as "a converted train gambler who used to run between Omaha and Denver."¹² The depiction of the Free Gospeller religious ceremony at the Lone Star schoolhouse is a characteristic activity; for example, a hymn, sung in a dozen dialects, voiced all the loneliness of the plainspeople who "had starved all the passions so long, only to fall victims to the basest of them all, fear."¹³ In discussing Margaret's dance, Mr. Lockhart confessed that most of the Free Gospellers would rather "put their feet in the fire than shake 'em to a fiddle."¹⁴

Willa Cather indicates that moneyed Eastern gentlemen adhered to the custom of sending "their scapegrace sons to rough it in the sagebrush of the Black Hills."¹⁵ Often, such men remained to live on the plains. Eric's belief that the coiled rattlesnake at Lena Hanson's door was ample warning that he should never return to Lena's home again is an evidence of Miss Cather's employment of superstition. Miss Cather also describes in great length the trip by Wyllis Elliot and his sister. She captures in a kaleidoscopic manner the Midwestern setting of the story.¹⁶

¹²Ibid., p. 633.

¹³Ibid., p. 634.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 636.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 635.

¹⁶Ibid.

Near the conclusion of "Eric Hermannson's Soul," a short passage occurs in establishing the characteristic setting. Miss Cather writes:

South of the town there is a stretch of road that runs for some three miles through the French settlement, where the prairie is as level as the surface of a lake. There the fields of flax and wheat and rye are bordered by precise rows of slender, tapering Lombard poplars. It was a yellow world that Margaret Elliot saw under the wide light of the setting sun.¹⁷

Of the Norwegian immigrants on the Divide during the nineteenth century, Miss Cather praises their art of silence and laments that adhering to such a narrow religion killed their charm. She says that the Northmen of the Divide "are dead many a year before they are put to rest in the little graveyard on the windy hill where exiles of all nations grow akin."¹⁸ She also indicates a similar attitude in an article entitled "Nebraska: The End of the First Cycle."

When Willa Cather's family left Virginia and came to Red Cloud, Nebraska, in 1883, she literally began losing herself for years in studying "the exceptions, the dreamers, the nonconformists, the questioners"¹⁹ such as her fictional Eric Hermannson. One Red Cloud merchant described her as "a young curiosity shop."²⁰ Her curiosity during these years displays itself later in her stories. She ardently believed

¹⁷Ibid., p. 639.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹E. K. Brown, Willa Cather, A Critical Biography (New York, 1953), p. vii.

²⁰Ibid., p. 25.

that the basic source of a writer's material is derived from his experiences before the age of fifteen.

Her most imaginative characterizations in her next short story of the Midwestern plains, however, might well have been composites of people she had seen or known in Red Cloud. The story, entitled "El Dorado: A Kansas Recessional," appeared in the June, 1901, issue of The New England Magazine. The locale for her story is western Kansas in the Solomon Valley. She views El Dorado from its mediocre growth to its assumption of ghostlike proportions.

She typifies Colonel Bywaters, the principal character, as "a sort of 'Last Man'"²¹ who, in this particular case, "was living where the rattlesnakes and sunflowers found it difficult to exist."²² In all nine of the adult Gumps, she creates characterizations of scoundrels on the Midwestern plains. She describes the harm done by speculation in the following passage:

He [Colonel Bywaters] hated Western Kansas; and yet in a way he pitied this poor brown country, which seemed as lonely as himself and as unhappy. No one cared for it, for its soil or its rivers. Everyone wanted to speculate in it. It seemed as if God himself had only made it for purposes of speculation and was tired of the deal and doing his best to get it off his hands and deal it over to the Other Party.²³

²¹ Willa Cather, "El Dorado: A Kansas Recessional," The New England Magazine, 24:358, June, 1901.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., p. 364.

In a longer passage, she directs her attention to the characteristic setting:

Across the river stretched the level land like the top of an oven. It was a country flat and featureless, without tones or shadows, without accent or emphasis of any kind to break its vast monotony. It was a scene done entirely in high lights, without relief, without a single commanding eminence to rest the eye upon. The flat plains rolled to the unbroken horizon vacant and void, forever reaching in empty yearning toward something they never attained. The tilled fields were even more discouraging to look upon than the unbroken land. Although it was late in the autumn, the corn was not three feet high. The leaves were seared and yellow, and as for tassels, there were none.²⁴

She uses a Missouri dialect to develop the characterization of a penniless widow; for example, note the following quotation:

'Law me, boys, this must be the sto' that man told us on. Yo' see our meat and stuff give out most a week ago, an' we been a livin' on pancakes ever since. We was all gittin' sick, fur we turned agin' 'em, when we met a feller on horseback down the valley, a mighty nice lookin' feller, an' he give us five dollars an' told us we'd find a store someers up here an' could git some groceries.'²⁵

In September, 1902, Miss Cather's next short story about the Midwestern plains appeared in The New England Magazine and was entitled "The Treasure of Far Island." The theme is a search for lost youth. Douglass Burnham says to his fiancé Marjorie Van Dyck, "It was really our childhood that we buried here [on the sandbar], never guessing what a

²⁴Ibid., p. 357.

²⁵Ibid., p. 365.

precious thing we were putting under the ground."²⁶ On the sandbar, they had rediscovered a chest they had buried when they were youths playing at being pirates.

"The Treasure of Far Island" interests readers because of Miss Cather's presentation of character types. At the reception which Mrs. Burnham holds in Douglass' honor, Miss Cather sketches the old deacon, the president of the W. C. T. U., Douglass' old Sunday school teacher, the village criminal lawyer, and the rich banker. Of the village criminal lawyer, for example, she says that he was "one of those brilliant wrecks sometimes found in small towns."²⁷ Douglass speaks kindly of Mrs. Govenor, who taught Empire City inhabitants all the manners they ever knew. Miss Cather distinguishes the costume of old Skin Jackson, furthermore, as consisting of "gold nugget shirt studs that he dug up in Colorado."²⁸ She characterizes Rhinehold Birkner as being immersed in the problems involved in supporting an invalid wife and ten children, who were "all colorless and narrow chested like himself."²⁹ Rhinehold employs the only colloquialism in the story when he calls himself "jest the same old coon."³⁰

²⁶ Willa Cather, "The Treasure of Far Island," The New England Magazine, 27:247, September, 1902.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 239.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 240.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 235.

³⁰ Ibid.

Not until 1909 did another Cather story about the Midwestern plains appear. "The Enchanted Bluff" was printed in the April, 1909, issue of Harper's Monthly Magazine. The story itself was reworked later as a brief sketch in My Antonia. The plot also marks her first use of the New Mexico Indian mesas so important to the plot development of The Professor's House, The Song of the Lark, and Death Comes for the Archbishop.

Miss Cather writes "The Enchanted Bluff" in the first person and pretends that she is one of six boys whose childhood was spent in Sandtown, Nebraska. The plot concerns the unachieved illusions of the youth. She relates how six boys had vowed to climb an enchanted bluff in New Mexico. She indicates why, twenty years later, the youths did not achieve their ambition to climb the enchanted bluff.

Percy Pound became a pompous stockbroker in Kansas; to Percy, the prospect of desert travel was out of the question since he went nowhere that his red touring-car could not carry him. Arthur Adams "sat about the sleepy little town all his life--he died before he was twenty-five."³¹ Fritz and Otto Hassler buried themselves in the humdrum problems of being town tailors, and Tip Smith married, became much tied to a perambulator, and grew stooped and gray from irregular meals and broken sleep caused by worry about how

³¹Willa Cather, "The Enchanted Bluff," Harper's Monthly Magazine, 118:781, April, 1909.

to support his family.

The following passage from "The Enchanted Bluff" is a local color evidence of characteristic setting:

The river was brown and sluggish, like any other of the half-dozen streams that water the Nebraska corn lands. On one shore was an irregular line of bald clay bluffs where a few scrub-oaks with thick trunks and flat, twisted tops threw light shadows on the long grass. The western shore was low and level, with corn fields that stretched to the sky-line, and all along the water's edge were little sandy coves and beaches where slim cottonwoods and willow saplings flickered.³²

In Willa Cather, A Critical Biography, E. K. Brown indicates that "The Enchanted Bluff" was the first sure evidence Miss Cather gave of the effect Sarah Orne Jewett had upon her. Miss Jewett showed to Willa Cather the possibilities of the simple rural subject and how to view such material as a writer. When many of her contemporaries became lost in twentieth-century materialism, Miss Cather seceded with dignity. She remained interested in a revival of more heroic days when "the competitive attitude, the instinct of self-preservation, and the traits of the pioneer were consecrated to the necessary ideals of the race."³³

Miss Cather's next short story about the Midwestern plains was "The Joy of Nelly Deane," which was published in the October, 1911, issue of The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine. The plot development has a slight resemblance to

³²Ibid., p. 774.

³³Lloyd Morris, "Willa Cather," The North American Review, 219:643, May, 1924.

Lucy Gayheart. In "The Joy of Nelly Deane," Miss Cather develops a plot around Riverbend, Colorado. The plot concerns a "talented, color-loving girl"³⁴ who falls in love with a traveling salesman who jilts her. She marries Scott Spinny, a very colorless, stern merchant in Riverbend, bears him two children, and dies young.

Nelly Deane is brilliantly drawn. All the townspeople loved Nelly for what she was; at the same time they were always trying to change her. Miss Cather presents her story from the viewpoint of Nelly's friend, Peggy, who comments early in the story:

They [the women] were always making pretty things for her, always coaxing her to come to the sewing-circle, where she knotted her thread, and put in the wrong sleeve, and laughed and chattered and said a great many things that she should not have said, and somehow always warmed their hearts. I think they loved her for her unquenchable joy.³⁵

Peggy expresses the attitude of people toward traveling men in the following comments:

I knew nothing definite against Guy [Franklin] but in Riverbend all 'traveling-men' were considered worldly and wicked. He traveled for a Chicago dry-goods firm, and our fathers didn't like him because he put extravagant ideas into our mothers' heads.³⁶

³⁴Bradford, op. cit., p. 543.

³⁵Willie Cather, "The Joy of Nelly Deane," The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine, 60:860, October, 1911.

³⁶Ibid., p. 862.

Mrs. Deane speaks on a colloquial level probably common at that time; however, only Mrs. Deane's characterization indicates a local color evidence of characteristic speech. When Jud Deane gives Nelly a short sealskin jacket and round cap for Christmas, Mrs. Deane says:

'Ain't he worse than any kid you ever see? He's been running to that closet like a cat shut away from her kittens. I wonder Nell ain't caught on before this. I did think he'd make out now to keep 'em till Christmas morning; but he's never made out to keep anything yet.'³⁷

In Scott Spinny, Miss Cather portrays a frugal aloof plainsman such as Antone Sadelack in "Peter." Scott's coldness and concern for money are in direct contrast to Nelly's gaiety and joy. Scott is as responsible for Nelly's death as is Antone Sadelack for Peter's. Harry Gordon, in several respects similar to Scott Spinny, is also to a degree responsible for Lucy Gayheart's death. Through such a type of man, Willa Cather presents a portrait of the hard, new men of the Midwestern plains.

Her next story, "The Bohemian Girl," appeared in the August, 1912, issue of McClure's Magazine. Nils Ericson returns to Sand River Valley in Nebraska after having spent twelve successful years with a shipping line in Bergen, Norway. During Nils' visit, he convinces Clara Vavrika, the Bohemian wife of Nils' brother Olaf, to return to Norway as his wife. The characterization of Nils Ericson is strangely

³⁷ibid., p. 861.

the most interesting in the story. He is an Eric Hermannson who managed to break away from his family.

Miss Cather characterizes Big Joe Vavrika, Clara's saloonkeeper father, with a Bohemian dialect. The following passage denotes his type of speech:

'You know dis, Tokai? A great friend of mine, he bring dis to me, a present out of Hongarie. You know how much it cost, dis wine? Chust so much what it weigh in gold. Nobody but de nobles drink him in Bohemie. Many, many years I save him up, dis Tokai! . . . De old man die what bring him to me, an' dis wine he lay on his belly in my cellar an' sleep. An' now, . . . an' now he wake up; and maybe he wake us up, too!'³⁸

The farmer who drives Nils to the Ericson homestead says in the local vernacular:

'Whew! I sometimes say I'd as lief be before Mrs. Ericson as behind her. She does beat all! Nearly seventy, and never lets another soul touch that car. Puts it into commission herself every morning, and keeps it tuned up by the hitch-bar all day. I never stop work for a drink o' water that I don't hear her a-churnin' up the road. I reckon her darter-in-laws never sets down easy nowadays. Never know when she'll pop in. Mis' Otto, she says to me: 'We're so afraid that thing'll blow up and do Ma some injury yet, she's so turrible venturesome.' Says I: 'I wouldn't stew, Mis' Otto; the old lady'll drive that car to the funeral of every darter-in-law she's got.' That was after the old woman had jumped a turrible bad culvert.'³⁹

Miss Cather describes the custom of barn-raising with emphasis on the elaborate decorations and food preparations

³⁸Willis Cather, "The Bohemian Girl," McClure's Magazine, 39:436, August, 1912.

³⁹Ibid., p. 422.

so vital to a successful Nebraskan party. The customary barn dance occurs after the barn-raising, and Miss Cather mentions the popularity of the waltz and schottische at such dances. A cookie contest for the children and a pickle eating contest were also popular games at such events.

She characterizes older women at the barn-raising in the manner of local color activity. Of the women, she says:

The older women, having assured themselves that there were twenty kinds of cake, not counting cookies, and three dozen fat pies, repaired to the corner behind the pile of watermelons, put on their white aprons, and fell to their knitting and fancy work. They were a fine company of old women, and a Dutch painter would have loved to find them there together, where the sun made bright patches on the floor and sent long, quivering shafts of gold through the dusky shade up among the rafters. There were fat, rosy old women who looked hot in their best black dresses; spare, alert old women with brown, dark-veined hands; and several of almost heroic frame, not less massive than old Mrs. Ericson herself.⁴⁰

Loneliness and boredom on the prairie farm are evident in Clara's statements about the monotonous pattern of days on the Divide. Once Clara utters aloud that she'd almost be willing to die in order to have a funeral as some variety in the daily events. Clara further chastises the pettiness of plainpeople for believing that a girl should marry out of consideration for the neighborhood.

One final evidence of local color in "The Bohemian Girl" is Mrs. Ericson's "old-world"⁴¹ custom of knitting.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 437.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 424.

Such a reverence for the old way of doing things was a detail to occur again and again in Willa Cather's later writings.

She includes three published short stories pertaining to the Midwestern plains in a volume entitled Youth and the Bright Medusa in 1920. The stories were republished under the same title in 1938; the stories are "A Death in the Desert," "The Sculptor's Funeral," and "A Wagner Matinée."

Cheyenne, Wyoming, is the setting of "A Death in the Desert." Miss Cather draws a contrast between two brothers, Adriance and Everett Hilgarde. The attitude of each toward Katherine Gaylord's slow death from tuberculosis is the plot interest. In addition to the Midwestern setting, only one local color evidence exists in the story. As Katherine and Everett are talking in one scene, Miss Cather interrupts to give a very brief description of the Wyoming desert, "a blinding stretch of yellow, flat as the sea in dead calm, splotched here and there with deep purple shadows."⁴²

Sand City, Kansas, is the setting of Miss Cather's next story of the plains, entitled "The Sculptor's Funeral." The story begins after the death of a famous sculptor, Harvey Merrick. When Harvey's body is brought back to his home town, the townspeople refer to Harvey Merrick as a failure. Jim Laird, the town lawyer and Harvey's only friend,

⁴²Willa Cather, "A Death in the Desert," Youth and the Bright Medusa (New York, 1938), p. 286.

speaks glowingly of Harvey's success. Henry Steavens, a young art student, who accompanied the coffin to the Kansas town, realizes as he listens to Jim's denunciation about the townspeople in "the bitter, dead little Western town"⁴³ that the genius of Harvey Merrick was unappreciated where it should have been most esteemed.

Miss Cather makes use of local color in several of Jim's denunciatory speeches. She classifies the people at Harvey's wake as "the financiers of Sand City."⁴⁴ Typical characters included in Miss Cather's grouping are the minister, the Grand Army man, the real estate agent, the coal and lumber dealer, the cattle shipper, and the two bankers. To Jim Laird, the group comprised "sick, side-tracked burnt-dog, land-poor sharks."⁴⁵

Local speech is used in several characterizations. The spare man remarks to the group at the depot that "Jim's ez full ez a tick, ez ushel."⁴⁶ At the wake, the Grand Army man titters, "Seems like my mind don't reach back to a time when Harve wasn't bein' edycated."⁴⁷ Martin Merrick, the father, laments over the bier that Harvey "was ez

⁴³Willia Cather, "The Sculptor's Funeral," Youth and the Bright Medusa (New York, 1938), p. 271.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 250.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 264.

gentle ez a child and the kindest of 'em all--only we didn't none of us onderstand him."⁴⁸

Miss Cather mentions the many infamous lawyers on the plains during the later nineteenth-century. The person who could twist the law to suit his client's needs was esteemed by many. She also relates that hatred as a quality was prevalent among such townspeople; for example, the townspeople hated Harvey Merrick because he found success without personal grief.

In "A Wagner Matinée," Georgiana Carpenter represents a person who never surrendered to her environment. She had been a music teacher at the Boston Conservatory before she met and married Howard Carpenter, a Nebraska farmer. She had never really felt genuine happiness in the life of Red Willow County, Nebraska. Years later, when she returns to Boston, she recaptures fond memories of her old way of life at a Wagnerian concert which she attends with her nephew Clark. Local color exists in only one brief descriptive passage in which Miss Cather compares the empty Boston concert stage to a winter cornfield in Nebraska.⁴⁹

Published in 1932, Obscure Destinies was Willa Cather's third volume of collected short stories. Of these, "Neighbour Rosicky," "Old Mrs. Harris," and "Two Friends"

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 257.

⁴⁹ Willa Cather, "A Wagner Matinée," Youth and the Bright Medusa (New York, 1938), p. 246.

have Midwestern plain settings.

"Neighbour Rosicky" has a Nebraskan setting; it represents a Bohemian farmer's sacrifice for those whom he loves. Fearing that his eldest son's wife, Polly, will become dissatisfied with farm life and perhaps force her husband Rudolph to seek city employment, Rosicky lavishes much love and kindness on her and by so doing hopes to convince her that the land can afford her and Rudolph their only happiness. While tenderly caring for Rosicky as he suffers a heart attack, Polly realizes the truth in Rosicky's philosophy of the goodness of the land. A few days later, Rosicky dies. Through Anton Rosicky, Willa Cather excellently personifies the kind-hearted immigrant and his adjustment to Divide life.

Bohemian dialect flavor is displayed in Anton Rosicky's speeches, typified by the following:

'I washed up de kitchen many times for my wife, when de babies was sick or somethin! You go an' make yourself look nice. I like you to look prettier 'n any of dem town girls when you go in. De young folks must have some fun, an' I'm goin' to look out fur you, Polly.'⁵⁰

Doctor Ed Burleigh typifies the idealistic country sage, revered by all. His advice is followed devotedly by patients who offer him homely advice in return; for example, Mary Rosicky counsels him to brush black tea in his hair each morning to keep his gray hair from showing. His final

⁵⁰ Willa Cather, "Neighbour Rosicky," Obscure Destinies (New York, 1932), p. 37.

evaluation of Anton Rosicky's life is a meditative tribute to the immigrant on the Divide:

[Nothing could be more undeathlike than this place
[the cemetery]; nothing could be more right for a
man who had helped to do the work of great cities
and had always longed for the open country and had
got to it at last.⁵¹

Skyline, Colorado, is the setting of "Old Mrs. Harris," and the plot concerns the Templeton family, which moved from Tennessee to make Colorado their new home. Hillary and Victoria Templeton have five children. Victoria's mother, Mrs. Harris, manages the children and the household as was her custom in Tennessee. In the new Colorado environment, the neighbors sympathize with Mrs. Harris for carrying such a burden. What the neighbors don't realize, though, is that Mrs. Harris does not consider herself burdened. In her old way of life, a mother did handle the household duties for a married daughter. The plot conflict concerns Vickie's insistence that the family finance her schooling at the University of Michigan. Mrs. Harris asks and receives the aid of Mr. and Mrs. David Rosen in endorsing a note to send Vickie to school. As Mrs. Harris lies dying in her small room, Vickie is busying herself in preparing to leave for college, and Victoria remains in her room in dejection over the bitter news that she is going to have another child. Neither Vickie nor Victoria realize that Mrs. Harris is close

⁵¹Ibid., p. 71.

to death. Miss Cather criticizes them for wanting things too much.

She draws a contrast in ways of life in "Old Mrs. Harris." Of the distinction between Tennessee and Colorado life, she writes:

Mrs. Harris was no longer living in a feudal society, where there were plenty of landless people glad to render service to the more fortunate, but in a snappy little Western democracy, where every man was as good as his neighbor and out to prove it.⁵²

Evidences of local color appear in the dialogue.

Mrs. David Rosen speaks with a slight accent which affects her "th" and "v" sounds. A comment is further made that Mr. David Rosen "always used the local idioms though his voice and enunciation made them altogether different from Skyline speech."⁵³ Mandy, the bound servant, uses the typical language of the Southerner; for example, Mandy remarks to Mrs. Harris, "Deed, ma'am, you look awful porely."⁵⁴

"Two Friends" is cast in the form of a reminiscence. The setting is Singleton, Kansas, "a little wooden town in a shallow Kansas river valley."⁵⁵ Robert Emmet Dillon is, according to Singleton standards, a very wealthy banker, and

⁵²Willa Cather, "Old Mrs. Harris," Obscure Destinies (New York, 1932), p. 133.

⁵³Ibid., p. 123.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 171.

⁵⁵Willa Cather, "Two Friends," Obscure Destinies (New York, 1932), p. 194.

J. H. Trueman is a rich cattleman. They are very good friends. Miss Cather uses the campaign of William Jennings Bryan as the incentive incident of her story. When Bryan is nominated as the Democratic presidential candidate, Mr. Dillon, a Democrat, argues with Mr. Trueman about Bryan's presidential qualifications. The argument becomes so heated that they part enemies and never speak to one another again. Bryan, of course, loses the election, and before the next election Mr. Dillon dies of pneumonia. Nine years later, after having sold out everything in Singleton, Mr. Trueman dies a lonely man in San Francisco. The point Willa Cather makes is that Dillon and Trueman, both men of above-average intelligence, should not have allowed politics to break a deep friendship.

"Two Friends" contains a complete description of a smalltown business district in Kansas during the late nineteenth century. Gambling was the favorite pastime among the men; traveling shows which reached Singleton were also popular. Miss Cather classifies the characteristic speech of the town as consisting of abbreviated words and slang expressions.

"The Best Years" is the last story Willa Cather wrote before her death in 1947. The setting is MacAlpin, Nebraska. She depicts a family's realization of the happiness that was theirs in the past. Lesley Fergusson leaves her family to take a teaching position at Wild Rose School. In a

blizzard, she rather heroically brings her students to safety. Lesley, however, succumbs to pneumonia. Years later, Evangeline Knightly Thorndike returns to visit the Fergusson family. Mrs. Thorndike had been Lesley's superintendent. Mrs. Thorndike finds the Fergusson family financially prosperous because of the father's early acceptance of modern farming methods. Mrs. Fergusson confesses to Mrs. Thorndike that as a family they aren't happy; the family longs to return to the happiness they had known in the past. Mrs. Fergusson laments "our best years are when we're working hardest and going right ahead when we can hardly see our way out."⁵⁶

Reaction of the Nebraskans to the experimental farm of James Fergusson stresses a common thinking pattern in the year 1899. He was laughed at by the other farmers; he was admired as a person, however, since he gave everyone so much to talk about. In James Fergusson, Miss Cather typifies the progressive plains farmer of the new generation. There are no further evidences of local color in "The Best Years."

Miss Cather's short stories of the Midwestern plains display her passion for the process of living and conquering, for preserving the past; her short stories arise from her own feelings about Midwesterners.⁵⁷ In her later years, she

⁵⁶ Willa Cather, "The Best Years," The Old Beauty and Others (New York, 1948), p. 136.

⁵⁷ Brown, op. cit., p. 331.

disliked being reminded of many short stories she had written. E. K. Brown states that she compared her attitude to that of an apple-grower careful of his reputation: "the fruit that was below standard must be left forgotten on the ground; only the sound apples should be collected."⁵⁸

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 145.

CHAPTER III

EVIDENCES OF LOCAL COLOR

IN WILLA CATHER'S NOVELS OF THE PLAINS

Six of Willa Cather's novels pertain to the Midwestern plains: O Pioneers! (1913), The Song of the Lark (1915), My Ántonia (1918), One of Ours (1922), A Lost Lady (1923), and Lucy Gayheart (1935). Red Cloud, Nebraska, is actually the setting of each novel; Red Cloud is the Hanover, Nebraska, of O Pioneers!, the Moonstone, Colorado, of The Song of the Lark, the Black Hawk, Nebraska, of My Ántonia, the Frankfort, Nebraska, of One of Ours, the Sweet Water, Nebraska, of A Lost Lady, and the Haverford, Nebraska, of Lucy Gayheart.

In O Pioneers!, Miss Cather recaptured childhood memories of people and places she loved. She began the writing of this novel with the intention of calling it Alexandra; however, as she wrote, she began to think about working several other plot ideas into it. Eventually, of course, the plot ideas did come together in her mind under Walt Whitman's title O Pioneers! She sincerely believed that no one but herself would find the novel interesting; however, to her surprise it was acclaimed.¹

O Pioneers! is chiefly the story of Alexandra Bergson, a Swedish woman who brings her family from a life of penni-

¹Edith Lewis, Willa Cather Living (New York, 1953), pp. 83-84.

less Nebraska farming to a life of wealth. In the characterization of Alexandra, Miss Cather indicates the type of person in whom the history of every country begins.²

Miss Cather entitled the first section of the novel "The Wild Land"; it opens with the following sentence establishing the characteristic setting: "One January day, thirty years ago, the little town of Hanover, anchored on a windy Nebraska tableland, was trying not to be blown away."³ Throughout this section of O Pioneers!, she creates her characteristic setting through a study of the land itself; for example, in presenting a picture of the homesteaders' living quarters, she comments that the land itself was the all-important part of life. When the immigrants settled on the Divide, the countryside was a wild land which possessed ugly moods. She classifies only a few growing plants and flowers as local to the region: the shoestring, ironweed, snow-on-the-mountain, ground-cherry, and buffalo-pea. Common also to the region were the cottonwood and dwarf ash trees.

She describes typical immigrant houses on the Divide as having been small sod-constructions, only the unescapable earth in another form. Crazy Ivar's home, for example, could be mistaken for the earth itself but for a piece of rusty

²Willia Cather, O Pioneers! (Boston, 1950), p. 56.

³Ibid., p. 3.

stovepipe that stuck up through the sod.

She portrays her immigrant characterizations in this section of the novel as non-farmers, many of whom had never worked on a farm until they took up their homesteads. John Bergson, for example, had worked in a Swedish shipyard. During the unproductive years on the Divide, many immigrant families surrendered, as did the family of Carl Lindstrum, and moved to cities where their skills as handworkers⁴ were better utilized. During the lean years on the Divide, the immigrant families lived much like coyotes.⁵

The business district of Hanover is realistically pictured and is a local color use of characteristic setting. Miss Cather gives attention to costume in a description of Marie Tovesky's dress. Marie dressed in the Kate Greenaway manner which gave her the look of a quaint little woman. Marie's dress was typical of the city child; the country girls wore their dresses to their shoetops. Part One concludes with Alexandra's silent expression of love for the vast Divide. This is perhaps symbolically Willa Cather's who herself once said, "I loved the country where I had been a kid, where they still called me Willie Cather."⁶

"Neighboring Fields," Part Two of O Pioneers!, pictures the Divide country sixteen years later. The Bergson's

⁴Ibid., p. 22.

⁵Ibid., p. 60.

⁶Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, Willa Cather, A Memoir (Philadelphia, 1953), p. 219.

lives during this long period have been "made up of weather and crops and cows."⁷ Miss Cather pictures now the richness of their heavy wheat harvests for which "the dry, bracing climate and the smoothness of the land make labor easy for men and beasts."⁸

She presents characteristic speech in four instances. Nelse Jensen remarks to Alexandra that Lou believed the feed "outen it [the new silo] gives the stock the bloat."⁹ The plainspeople describe in the country phrase Oscar's pregnant wife as "not going anywhere just now."¹⁰ Miss Cather remarks that Nebraska farmers seldom address their wives by any other names except you or she.¹¹ Frank Shabata says to Marie in Bohemian dialect, "I go to take dat old woman to de court if she ain't careful, I tell you."¹²

A reference to the weeds, herbs, and flowers in the Shabata orchard denotes attention to the Nebraskan flora; Miss Cather also mentions larkspur, hoarhound, wild cotton, foxtail, and wild wheat. In this same category, a folklore reference is apropos. Marie Shabata tells Emil Bergson that the Bohemians were tree worshippers at one time. Trees were

⁷Cather, op. cit., p. 131.

⁸Ibid., p. 76.

⁹Ibid., p. 89.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 98.

¹¹Ibid., p. 111.

¹²Ibid., p. 140.

revered by most Bohemians on the Divide.¹³

Crazy Ivar's explanation of Peter Kralik's stomach ailment demonstrates Willa Cather's use of superstition. According to Crazy Ivar, Peter Kralik years before had swallowed a snake when he drank from a creek. Crazy Ivar cites Peter's story as an indication that a person's strange actions can be frequently due to circumstances beyond his control.

Miss Cather says that the nineteenth-century custom of placing farmers' daughters into service no longer existed in Nebraska during the twentieth-century. A prosperous farming family, therefore, often got its hired girls from European countries. Alexandra, for example, got her hired girls from Sweden by paying their passage. These girls stayed until they married and then they were replaced by their sisters or cousins in Sweden.

Part Three of O Pioneers! contains but two local color uses. The characteristic setting is delineated during the winter as "an iron country."¹⁴ Swedish dialect is evidenced in Mrs. Lee's speeches to Alexandra and Marie:

'No, yust las' night I ma-ake. See dis tread; verra strong, no wa-ash out, no fade. My sister, send from Sveden. I yust-a ta-ank you like dis.'¹⁵

¹³Ibid., pp. 152-153.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 187-188.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 191.

Part Four and Part Five contain only characteristic speech and dialect evidences. Signa, Alexandra's hired girl, says of her groom, "I ta-ank I better do yust like he say."¹⁶ Emil's French friend, Amédée, speaks with a slight French accent as evidenced in his words "it's gotta grand full berries."¹⁷ In Frank's pathetic confession to Alexandra, the Bohemian dialect is discernible. Frank tells Alexandra, "I never mean to do not'ing to dat boy [Emil]. I ain't had not'ing ag'in' dat boy. I always like dat boy fine."¹⁸

The Song of the Lark, Miss Cather's second novel with a Midwestern setting, is a portrait of a Colorado girl's early life and later adult success as an operatic star. Thea Kronborg as a child and a young girl resembles in thought, in feeling, and in spiritual development Miss Cather herself.¹⁹ Thea, as a singer, however, and particularly in the latter part of the novel, is directly suggested by Mme. Olive Fremstad, an opera singer whom Willa Cather knew. Mme. Fremstad herself could see her own characteristics in the opera career of Thea.²⁰ Miss Cather expresses her primary purpose in creating the characterization of Thea Kronborg in a preface to a 1923 edition of the novel.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 228.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 245.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 293.

¹⁹Lewis, op. cit., p. 39.

²⁰Ibid., p. 93.

Her purpose was to show "an artist's awakening and struggle; her floundering escape from a smug, domestic, self-satisfied provincial world of utter ignorance."²¹

She divides The Song of the Lark into six books and an epilogue which is principally concerned with Tillie Kronborg, Thea's "addle-pated aunt."²² In "Friends of Childhood," Dr. Archie ably distinguishes Moonstone as a railroad town. The large Spanish population in Moonstone refer to their part of town as Mexican Town. Moonstone itself is not adequately pictured. Miss Cather stresses primarily the parochialism of this smug little town of the 1880's.

She states that the town doctor of the 1880's was younger than the doctors in New England villages.²³ Two customs of the Moonstone citizens recorded by Willa Cather are the custom for each of the different Sunday Schools in Moonstone to give a concert on Christmas Eve²⁴ and the custom of a local dramatic club to perform once a year such plays as "Among the Breakers" and "The Veteran of 1812."²⁵

Other mannerisms or ways of thinking expressed include Miss Cather's remarks that Mrs. Kronborg was the only person in Moonstone who knew that the word "talent" meant practicing daily on the piano and not playing regularly in

²¹ Willa Cather, The Song of the Lark (Boston, 1937), pp. viii-ix.

²² Ibid., p. 83.

²³ Ibid., p. 4.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 74.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 84.

public, that many Moonstone youths deserted to go to larger cities when they were old enough, that the fear of gossip was the terror of the town, that the proper young lady and gentleman did not associate with the Mexicans, and that the people from European countries possessed abilities "to tell fortunes, to persuade a backward child to grow, to cure warts, or to tell people what to do with a young girl who has gone melancholy."²⁶

Willa Cather sketches a view of the area setting as Thea rides through the Divide country on her return to Colorado from her first stay in Chicago. On this trip, Thea visits Mexican Town to see her good friend, Spanish Johnny. Through Spanish Johnny's words, Miss Cather creates a feeling of the Mexican dialect: "In the City of Mexico they ain't-a sit like stumps when they hear that, not-a much!"²⁷

There are no evidences of local color usage in "Stupid Faces," which concerns primarily Thea's initial meeting and impressions of Fred Ottenburg. "The Ancient People" concerns Thea's summer vacation on Henry Biltmer's ranch in Flagstaff, Arizona. Since "The Ancient People" pertains to a Southwestern setting, it is not relative to this study.

²⁶Ibid., p. 83.

²⁷Ibid., p. 293.

"Doctor Archie's Venture," though, contains two evidences of local color usages. Miss Cather characterizes through Captain Harris her conception of the typical Western bluffer who managed to convince people that he was a wealthy man. The following passage presents an excellent depiction of the Denver, Colorado, setting in view of typical characters:

A wild northwester was blowing down from the mountains, one of those beautiful storms that wrap Denver in dry, furry snow, and make the city a loadstone to thousands of men in the mountains and on the plains. The brakemen out on their boxcars, the miners up in their diggings, the lonely homesteaders in the sand hills of Yucca and Kit Carson Counties, begin to think of Denver, muffled in snow, and full of food and drink and good cheer.²⁸

"Kronborg," the last section of The Song of the Lark, occurs ten years later and pictures Thea as the famous operatic star. No local color evidences occur in this last section. The epilogue concerns Tillie's great pride in Thea's success. Moonstone citizens now talk about Thea as an example of their enterprise.

In 1938, Willa Cather said that the best thing she had ever done was My Ántonia,²⁹ a novel requiring the reader to make comparisons and to perceive superiorities in the Midwestern immigrants. The central character is Ántonia Shimerda, a Bohemian girl whose family settles on a farm near

²⁸ Ibid., p. 429.

²⁹ Mildred R. Bennett, The World of Willa Cather (New York, 1951), p. 203.

Black Hawk, Nebraska, and endeavors to subsist on only the bare essentials. Miss Cather tells the story in first person from the viewpoint of Jim Burden, a very dear friend of Antonia.

Homely sentiment is the first evidence of local color in Jim Burden's comments to a New York friend:

We were talking about what it is like to spend one's childhood in little towns like these, buried in wheat and corn, under stimulating extremes of climate: burning summers when the world lies green and billowing beneath a brilliant sky, when one is fairly stifled in vegetation, in the colour and smell of strong weeds and heavy harvests; blustery winters with little snow, when the whole country is stripped bare and grey as sheet-iron. We agreed that no one who had not grown up in a little prairie town could know anything about it.³⁰

Willa Cather shows the characteristic speech and dialect of the Nebraska region through several characterizations in "The Shimerdas," the first section of the novel. Jim Burden reflects how the phrase "down to the kitchen" struck him as an unusual way to say "out in the kitchen."³¹ Antonia's utterances create Bohemian flavor; for example, when Jim kills a huge snake, she states, "Nobody ain't seen in this kawm-tree so big snake like you kill."³² When Jake, a hired hand of the Burdens, strikes Ambrož, Jim hears Jake confess, "These foreigners ain't the same. You can't trust

³⁰ Willa Cather, My Antonia (Boston, 1937), p. 1x.

³¹ Ibid., p. 9.

³² Ibid., p. 46.

'em to be fair. It's dirty to kick a feller."³³

Willa Cather describes the Christmas tree which the Burdens decorated during the Shimerdas' first year on the Divide as "the talking tree of the fairy tale; legends and stories nestled like birds in its branches."³⁴ She also refers to the customs of popping corn or making taffy on Saturday nights; she expresses superstition in Emmaline Burden's voicing about the Shimerdas that "Bohemians have a natural distrust of Austrians."³⁵ Mrs. Shimerda's belief that Mr. Shimerda's burial place would never be disturbed by the road building project also exemplifies superstition.

Krajiek, who brought the Shimerdas to America, typifies the nineteenth-century sponger of the Midwestern plains. The Shimerdas kept him because they did not know how to get rid of him. Wick Cutter further typifies the merciless money-lender of the Midwestern plains.

Miss Cather again describes sod houses and dugouts as the typical homes of the early immigrant settlers. She notes the scarcity of trees, and she comments how tenderly people cared for the few trees that did grow on the plains. She also labels "Kansas and Nebraska the best corn country in the world."³⁶ She praises extensively the red prairie

³³Ibid., p. 130.

³⁴Ibid., p. 83.

³⁵Ibid., p. 21.

³⁶Ibid., p. 137.

grass.

In the second section entitled "The Hired Girls," she basically presents Jim's views about Antonia Shimerda, Lena Lingard, and Tiny Soderball. Whenever these hired girls attended the local dances, their popularity was indeed most evident. The young men of Black Hawk felt the attraction of the "fine, well-set-up country girls who had come to town to earn a living."³⁷

Miss Cather employs much use of custom in "The Hired Girls." She indicates that during the nineteenth-century a single girl was not to be seen alone with a married man. If she were, it was a most shocking thing. Black Hawk fathers did the customary domestic duties and had no other personal habits. Young ladies who had to walk more than a half mile to school were customarily pitied since physical exercise was thought improper for the daughter of a socially prominent family. She further cites the custom of leaving May-baskets at doors. She also relates that the Pennsylvanian or Virginian in Nebraska did not allow his daughters to go into any type of service except teaching. If the family needed money and a daughter could not secure a teaching position, she sat at home in poverty. Miss Cather ably states that "the respect for respectability was

³⁷Ibid., p. 197.

stronger than any desire in Black Hawk youth."³⁸

She writes that the pink bee-bush, cone-flowers, rose mallow, and milkweed are fairly common to the Divide. She also discusses winter on the prairie and its effects upon the townspeople. The winter bleakness made people crave scenes of animation.

She indicates that jealousy, envy, and unhappiness dominated people's speech. She portrays characteristic speech in a portrait of the sensitive mulatto, Blind d'Arnault. Blind d'Arnault once remarks: "Who's that goin' back on me? One of these city gentlemen, I bet! Now, you girls, you ain't goin' to let that floor get cold."³⁹

"Lena Lingard" is the third section of the novel; it contains no evidences of local color. The fourth section, "The Pioneer Woman's Story," is concerned with Antonia's ill-fated love affair with Larry Donovan. Antonia returns to the Shimerda farm and sets about doing the rigid physical labor of a field farmer. Jim Burden sees her as she works in the field and admires her pluck and courage. Jim's thoughts concerning "the old pull of the earth, the solemn magic that comes out of those fields [Nebraska] at night-fall"⁴⁰ denote homely sentiment.

³⁸Ibid., p. 202.

³⁹Ibid., p. 258.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 322.

"Cuzak's Boys," the last section, depicts Jim's visit twenty years later to Antonia's family. Through Antonia's expression of family happiness, Jim realizes that she truly represents "a rich mine of life, like the founders of early races."⁴¹

One of Ours, Miss Cather's fourth novel of the Midwest, received the Pulitzer Prize in 1922. The plot concerns Claude Wheeler's discontent in his life on the farm. His sensitivity to events in Europe induces him to enlist in the American army at the outbreak of World War I. Commissioned as a lieutenant, Claude goes to France where he dies in a heroic skirmish with German soldiers.

One of Ours consists of five books. "The Voyage of the Anchises" and "Bidding the Eagles of the West Fly On" contain no direct references that represent local color of the Midwestern plains. The first three books of the novel, however, do contain evidences of such local color.

"On Lonely Creek" contains several evidences of characteristic speech. Mahalley's utterances are typical of a servant; for example, Mahalley once says to Mrs. Wheeler, "I ain't a-goin' to have Mr. Ralph carryin' off my quilts my mudder pieced fur me."⁴² Mrs. Voight, owner of a restaurant, displays her heavy German accent in the follow-

⁴¹Ibid., p. 353.

⁴²Willa Cather, One of Ours (Boston, 1937), p. 86.

ing comment: "'Ja, all de train-men is friends mit me. Sometimes dey bring me a liddle Schweizerkässe from one of dem big saloons in Omaha what de Cherman beobles batronize."⁴³ Dan, the hired man, relates his work philosophy to Claude and uses the following characteristic language: "I figure that I've only got about so many jumps left in me, and I ain't a-going to jump too hard at no man's corn."⁴⁴

Miss Cather points out that wild grapes, wild plums, and bittersweet were common to the region. She also describes in detail the Wheeler living room and mentions the characteristic interior setting of the times. Superstition is obvious in Mahalley's belief that she should wear her old jacket only during catastrophes. Miss Cather further notes that a good Nebraska farmer thought and acted according to one particular pattern in which one formed the habit of not thinking.⁴⁵

"Enid," the second section of the novel, presents two evidences of local color. Willa Cather describes a scene in which the people group together to help one another during threshing time. She cites through the character of Gladys Farmer that only three Frankfort citizens possessed imagination and generous impulses. An emotional old maid

⁴³Ibid., p. 43.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 92.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 53.

who couldn't tell the truth, a lawyer without clients but with a deep love for Shakespeare and Dryden, and an effeminate drug clerk who wrote free verse and movie scenarios are Gladys' choices.

"Sunrise on the Prairie," the third section of the novel, also contains evidences of local color. Willa Cather indicates through her characterization of Enid that many people of the plains actively participated in Anti-Saloon leagues. The prevalence of gossip in a small town is noted in Miss Cather's comment that "in a place like Frankfort, a boy whose wife was in China could hardly go to see Gladys without causing gossip."⁴⁶ Miss Cather portrays the harsh attitude toward Germans in America during World War I through her treatment of Mr. Yoeder, Mr. Oberlies, and Mrs. Voight. She makes characteristic speech distinction on the Midwestern plains with the word "literature" which meant to the plainsmen either Prohibition literature, Sex-Hygiene literature, or Hoof-and-Mouth literature.⁴⁷

In Willa Cather, A Memoir, Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant identifies A Lost Lady as Miss Cather's novel dénoué.⁴⁸ Miss Cather portrays Marian Forrester through the eyes of Niel Herbert, who found that whatever Marian Forrester chose

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 262.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 230.

⁴⁸Sergeant, op. cit., p. 185.

to do was lady-like simply because she did it. Niel never fundamentally forgets her influence on him even though she fails to hold fast to their warm friendship. Louis Kronenberger in Bookman calls Marian Forrester's deterioration painful and pathetic because she could not accept her role in life.⁴⁹

Part One of A Lost Lady contains several evidences of local color. Miss Cather points out that during the late nineteenth-century there were two distinct social strata in the prairie states. She classifies the social strata as "the homesteaders and hand-workers who were there to make a living, and the bankers and gentlemen ranchers who came from the Atlantic seaboard to invest money."⁵⁰ She shows homely sentiment in Captain Forrester's expression that the railroads were dreamed across the mountains.⁵¹

She directs her criticism in Part Two toward Ivy Peters, a crafty lawyer who delights in having Marian Forrester gradually become dependent upon him. Miss Cather comments that the Ivy Peters generation rooted out "the great brooding spirit of freedom, the generous, easy life of the great land-holders."⁵²

⁴⁹Louis Kronenberger, "Willa Cather," Bookman, 74:136, October, 1931.

⁵⁰Willa Cather, A Lost Lady (New York, 1939), pp. 9-10.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 55.

⁵²Ibid., pp. 106-107.

Ivy Peters most certainly symbolizes the decline of the West. Another typical character in Part Two is Mrs. Beasley, the switchboard operator and dispenser of town gossip. When Marian makes her phone call to Frank Ellinger on his honeymoon, Mrs. Beasley, who had a short, plump figure "like a boiled pudding sewed up in a blue kimono,"⁵³ immediately carried the news to a neighbor. Willa Cather shows characteristic speech through the words of another local Sweet Water gossip. In talking about Marian's glassware, Molly Tucker states to Mrs. Elliott that "she [Marian] 'll never sell 'em, unless she can get the saloons to take 'em!"⁵⁴

Percy Boynton in the June, 1924, issue of The English Journal criticizes the complete portrait of Marian Forrester. He feels that Miss Cather's best creative work was with "creative and colorful people."⁵⁵ If Marian Forrester is an uncolorful person, she is still well-drawn for she was of an age that nothing can ever bring back.

Willa Cather originally intended calling her tragedy of Lucy Gayheart Blue Eyes on the Platte. The plot concerns Lucy's love for Clement Sebastian; however, the affair ends

⁵³Ibid., pp. 10-11.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 139.

⁵⁵Percy Boynton, "Willa Cather," The English Journal, 13:379, June, 1924.

unhappily when Clement is drowned while boating on Lake Como. Ironically, Lucy herself dies later by drowning as she skates on thin ice near her Haverford, Nebraska, home.

Book One of Lucy Gayheart contains but two evidences of local color. Most of the action occurs in Chicago. In writing, however, of Haverford, Miss Cather depicts the characteristic setting by saying that "wherever one looked, there was nothing but flat country and low hills, all violet and grey."⁵⁶ She also points out that willows and scrub-oaks were common in the Haverford area.

In Book Two, she notes that the Platte women of 1902 wore the popular cloth tailored suits with a fur piece for the throat. She mentions the custom of making formal calls on new neighbors. In writing about Lucy's haste to prevent the apple trees in the Gayheart orchard from being cut down, Miss Cather shows how precious trees were to people living on the Divide. In her mind, the trees symbolized the pioneers.

Lucy's elder sister, Pauline Gayheart, symbolizes the typical self-suffering spinster who spends her days earnestly attempting to "keep up the family's standing in the community."⁵⁷ Miss Cather ably describes typical characters of Haverford in the following passage about a

⁵⁶ Willa Cather, Lucy Gayheart & My Mortal Enemy (Boston, 1938), p. 10.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 171.

regular daily activity:

. . . then the older people came along, going to the post-office for their morning mail; Doctor Bridgeman's plump wife, who walked to reduce; Jerry Sleeth, the silent, Seventh-Day Advent carpenter; Father MacCormac, the Catholic priest; flighty little Mrs. Jackmann, who sang at funerals--and on every possible occasion.⁵⁸

In characterizing the activity of small Midwestern towns, Miss Cather points out that love and hate were most prevalent. She displays this truth as follows:

In little towns, lives roll along so close to one another; loves and hates beat about, their wings almost touching. On the sidewalks along which everybody comes and goes, you must, if you walk abroad at all, at some time pass within a few inches of the man who cheated and betrayed you, or the woman you desire more than anything else in the world.⁵⁹

The action of Book Three occurs in 1927, twenty-five years after Lucy's death. Both Jacob Gayheart and Pauline Gayheart are dead. Miss Cather's study concerns Harry Gordon's reflections about Haverford, which had decreased in population during the twenty-five years. Two evidences of local color occur. Flora mentioned as common to the Midwestern area are sunflowers and vetch. Harry's concluding thoughts express homely sentiment. Harry says to himself that "he would never go away from Haverford; he had been through too much here ever to quit the place for good."⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 146-147.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 169.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 234.

In conclusion, it is noted that Miss Cather's six novels about the Midwestern plains seem to me ably classified as writings concerned with neiges d'antan: phrased poetically by E. K. Brown into--"Where are the loves that we have loved before when once we are alone and shut the door?"⁶¹ In her novels, Willa Cather produced masterpieces about the art of living on the vast Divide.

⁶¹E. K. Brown, Willa Cather, A Critical Biography (New York, 1953), p. 111.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Miss Cather's use of local color in her stories of the Midwestern plains may be summarized as follows:

1. She employs characteristic speech and dialect primarily to portray a Bohemian or Norwegian pioneer who still clings to his fond memories of the Old World. She does not employ heavily apostrophized contractions even in her portraits of the elderly people. She pictures natural oral growth in acquisition of the American language by the immigrant children; Antonia Shimerda's speech growth, for example, befits her characterization. The lesser characters in Miss Cather's stories more often utilize local idioms. At no time does a reader feel engulfed in horribly garbled spelling. The reader should only sense the pleasure in speech flavor befitting the type of characterization.

2. Miss Cather consistently uses characteristic setting and topography. The most evident use is in praise of the Midwestern scene. Her settings are often small villages begun in hope but finally bypassed by materialistic development. The land itself receives her undivided attention with an obvious love for flowers and trees. Structures, however, are more often overlooked. Few passages exist in describing homes from the exterior or interior. Only shanties and sod houses warrant her detailed interest.

3. She seldom gives attention to costume in characterizations. However, she does ably distinguish typical characters by occupation. Her most frequent characterizations are kindly village doctors, railroad men, hermits, dedicated artists (singers or pianists), teachers, money-lenders, immigrant farmers, bankers, politicians, religious fanatics, laundry girls, seamstresses, swindlers, and small proprietors. Opportunity for individual improvement is difficult. She often uses oddity, whimsicality, and idiosyncrasy in such characterizations. Only a few of her characters manage to break away and assert their initiative.

4. Miss Cather frequently employs customs and homely sentiment in her stories. Superstition plays a vital part too. She occasionally uses folklore, legends, traditions, and manners.

5. She frequently intermingles childhood memories with her vivid imagination. Her area of historical interest conflicted with twentieth-century materialistic growth; therefore, decline and decay concerning the old way of doing things are often her central theme.

Local color evidences exist chiefly in passages concerned with characteristic setting and topography, characterizations distinguished by occupations, and characteristic activity as shown in customs, superstitions, and homely sentiment. These evidences are always of exquisite beauty.

In Willa Cather's stories of the Midwestern plains, the actual evidences of local color are so few in number that the scholar should not label her simply a local colorist. She denies identification simply as a local colorist because she never allows dramatic interest to lag in her stories. The picturesqueness of a setting interested her only if its depiction heightened each dramatic situation. She wrote to entertain her readers with the action of characters and not with a mere look at them in a certain environment.

Compare Sarah Orne Jewett, for example, with Willa Cather. Miss Jewett concerned herself principally with creating the picture of her New England. The reader recalls essentially the New England settings; seldom do Miss Jewett's characters live in the memory of the reader except as quaint character types. Furthermore, recalling dramatic situations in her stories is difficult. What one does recall is the pleasant memory of the Jewett country.

Willa Cather's characters, however, linger in the mind since she relates dramatic situations of her invention to her characters. After reading Miss Cather's stories of the Midwestern plains, what one recalls are vivid scenes of drama; for example, Ray Kennedy's death in The Song of the Lark, Eric Hermannson's futile expression of love to Margaret Elliott in "Eric Hermannson's Soul," Marian Forrester's frantic telephone call to Frank Ellinger in A Lost Lady, Lucy Gayheart's tragic drowning in Lucy Gayheart, Nelly Deane's

pathetic marriage to a colorless man in "The Joy of Nelly Deane," the poignant farewell between Claude Wheeler and his mother in One of Ours, and the heartbreaking death scene beneath the mulberry tree in O Pioneers!

Miss Cather's characterizations are real to her since she knows them intimately as a Midwesterner, but the reader knows her characters and her Midwest only as she presents them in dramatic situations. She uses her childhood memories to build her stories. Her expressions of local color stem from her own feelings about the Midwest and from her desire to keep things as they are. Her use of local color exhibits itself in nostalgic reminiscences of a country she knew extremely well. She is too much the artist to content herself with mere picturesqueness; she is a dramatic story teller.

In her stories, she praises the individuals who maintained their culture against the encroachments of present-day materialism. She writes glowingly of the artist in society. She praises the individuals who could love the world of music and art. She also writes with burning conviction of the land. In describing the land, she never becomes flowery or extravagant in expression. Her praise of the land in honest, simplified style is, perhaps, her major contribution to the world of letters.

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APPENDIX

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WILLA CATHER'S WRITINGS

A. Books

Alexander's Bridge (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1912); a new edition with preface by Willa Cather appeared in 1922. The story appeared originally under the title of "Alexander's Masquerade" in McClure's Magazine, February-April, 1912, issues: 38:384-395, 23-536, 658-668. A British edition was entitled Alexanders Bridges.

A Lost Lady (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1923); the story appeared originally in Century Magazine.

April Twilights (New York: R. G. Badger, 1903) is a book of poetry; a new edition with twelve additional poems appeared in 1923 entitled April Twilights and Other Poems (New York: Alfred A. Knopf).

Death Comes for the Archbishop (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927).

Lucy Gayheart (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1935).

My Antonia (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1918); a new edition by the same publishing company appeared in 1926.

My Mortal Enemy (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926).

Not Under Forty (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1936); this book has been retitled Literary Encounters in the Library Edition.

Obscure Destinies (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1932) consists of three short stories entitled "Neighbour Rosicky," pp. 3-74, "Old Mrs. Harris," pp. 75-192, and "Two Friends," pp. 193-230.

One of Ours (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1922).

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Sapphira and the Slave Girl (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1940).

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B. Short Stories Not Collected

"A Night at Greenway Court" appeared in the Nebraska Literary Magazine and The Library. James R. Shively includes this story in Writings From Willa Cather's Campus Years (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1950), pp. 80-92.

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