THE PATTERN OF ORDER AND SECURITY: A STUDY OF THEME AND FORM IN CATHER'S NOVELS

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PREFACE

The following study examines the pattern of order and security in Willa Cather's novels. This pattern appears as a recurrent motif of the search for order and security by the characters and in the use of a number of formalistic devices which help unify the works.

I gratefully acknowledge appreciation to my thesis director, Dr. G. W. Bleeker, for his guidance and helpful suggestions, and I also thank my second reader, Dr. Green D. Wyrick.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Willa Cather's works consist of twelve novels, several volumes of short stories, a few essays, a small book of poetry, a considerable amount of dramatic criticism, and accounts of travel experiences initially written for newspaper publication then later assembled in book form. The time span for composing these works begins during her college years in the 1890's and continues until her death in 1947. Because she lived in a number of places, earned her living working at several occupations, and travelled extensively, she has a variety of experiences to draw upon in writing her fiction. In fact, most of the settings are locations she knew from having resided or visited there, some of the characters are based upon people she knew, and certain incidents from her own experience appear in her works. Since she draws upon her own experiences in her fiction, a brief sketch of her biography will provide background for a discussion of her novels.

Willa Cather was born in Virginia, December 7, 1873, the eldest of seven children of Charles and Virginia Boak Cather. In the spring of 1883, when she was nine years

old, the family moved to a homestead near other members of the Cather family who had earlier settled in an area named Catherton (the Cathers were prominent in the affairs of the region) on the Divide, a plateau between the Little Blue and the Republican Rivers, northwest of Red Cloud, Nebraska. After a little more than a year on the farm, Willa Cather's family moved into Red Cloud where her father engaged in the business of farm loans, abstracts, and insurance.

One of three graduates of the Red Cloud High School in 1890, Willa Cather went to Lincoln in the autumn of that year to attend the University of Nebraska. While a student there, she wrote dramatic criticism for the newspaper and served the college paper, The Hesperian, as an editor and as a contributor of short stories and poems. Her lifelong career as a writer seems to have been launched when her English instructor at the University, Professor Ebenezer Hunt, published, without her prior knowledge, her theme about Carlyle in the local newspaper, March 1, 1891.[1]

Following graduation from college, Cather worked in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, on the staff of a magazine, for a newspaper, and as a high school teacher. In 1906, she joined the staff of McClure's Magazine in New York. She took a leave of absence from this position in 1911 to devote

[1]E. K. Brown, Willa Cather, A Critical Biography, pp. 50-1.

more time to writing. Sales of her works increased, and she was able to devote full time to writing for the remainder of her life. Throughout her years as a college student and thereafter while working in Pittsburg and New York, she wrote short stories and poems, many of which appeared individually in magazines. Her one volume of poems, April Twilights, was originally published in 1903; her first book of short stories, The Troll Garden, appeared in 1905. However, all twelve of the novels and the later short stories were published after 1911, the date she began to write full time.

During the years after she finished college, she travelled to Europe, Canada, Mexico, and many areas of the United States. She was especially fond of the Southwestern section of the United States. Because her parents continued to live in Red Cloud, Nebraska, she visited there many times and ceased to return only after the deaths of both parents. Although Nebraska figures prominently in her fiction, she chose Jaffrey, New Hampshire, for her own final resting place.

The event of Cather's childhood which, no doubt, influenced the overall direction of her fiction is the family's moving from Virginia to Nebraska. This migration allowed her to compare two widely different geographic and social situations and to observe first hand the development of a

pioneer community. Dorothy Van Ghent sees the move from Virginia to Nebraska as "undoubtedly the determinative event in Willa Cather's life."[2] Mildred R. Bennett observes that Cather's "feeling for the earth, the grasslands and the trees of Nebraska was responsible for the flavor of her best novels."[3] She further states:

> The impression of Nebraska which engraved itself so deeply on the young Willa may have been more sharp and enduring because in Virginia she had been more or less protected from seeing the actual struggle for survival. But in this new land of the '80's there was no hiding the poverty, the worry, the necessity of heart-breaking labor.[4]

The Virginia climate was mild, and the landscape was filled with many trees and lush vegetation. In Nebraska, there were extremes of both heat and cold, violent storms, few trees, few roads, few houses--just miles and miles of unbroken prairie sod with here and there a farmstead and a few acres under cultivation. Jim Burden comments in My Antonia concerning his reaction upon moving from Virginia to Nebraska: "There was nothing but land: not a country at all, but the material of which countries are made."[5] Willa

[2]Dorothy Van Ghent, Willa Cather, Pamphlets on American Writers, p. 6.

[3]Mildred R. Bennett, The World of Willa Cather, p. 138.

[4]Bennett, p. 139.

[5]Willa Cather, My Antonia, p. 8. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

Cather's move from Virginia to Nebraska was made at approximately the same age as was the fictional Jim's.

Different as the climate and physical features were between Virginia and Nebraska, the social difference was greater. Virginia was a well-established white-black society based upon the experiences of several generations. The white people shared a common language and, for the most part, similar backgrounds. The Nebraska homesteaders were from many countries including Bohemia, the Scandinavian lands, France, and Russia as well as other sections of the United States. Many spoke only their native language, making communication between neighbors difficult. Those, like the Cathers, who formerly lived in another area of the United States were a minority. The homesteaders had been lured to Nebraska by cheap land, and their reason for coming was the only common bond between them. Many had no prior farming experience and, consequently, possessed so little basic knowledge of proper agricultural techniques for this particular region that survival was difficult at first. Willa Cather's parents were in a more favorable position than most of their neighbors: other members of the Cather family preceded them to Nebraska and were already established there.

Willa Cather's parents allowed her considerable freedom to ride her pony about the Red Cloud area, and she took

advantage of this opportunity to learn about her neighbors whose backgrounds were so different from her own. Much of the knowledge she acquired during these years about people and their customs appears in her fiction. The themes of pioneer living and acceptance of and appreciation for diverse social customs appear in her fiction.

As an adult, Willa Cather stated that the "years from eight to fifteen are the formative period of a writer's life, when he unconsciously gathers basic material."[6] Cather spent her years from eight to fifteen in the Red Cloud, Nebraska, area. The town of Red Cloud serves as the model for the small towns in six of her twelve novels: "Hanover" in O Pioneers!, "Moonstone" in The Song of the Lark, "Black Hawk" in My Antonia, "Frankfort" in One of Ours, "Sweetwater" in A Lost Lady, and "Haverford" in Lucy Gayheart. Mildred R. Bennett notes the use of Red Cloud in these six novels and further observes that Red Cloud "has probably been described more often in literature than any other village its size."[7]

Cather's biographers and critics have noted in detail how she uses her own background and experience in her works for settings, characters, and incidents. The six

[6]Brown, p. 3.

[7]Bennett, p. 94.

novels set in a small town which is a counterpart of Red Cloud, Nebraska, have already been cited.[8] Cather resided in and visited many places, and her fictive characters too move from place to place. A part of the action for the works using a small Midwestern town usually takes place in Chicago, New York, Denver, Europe, or the Southwestern section of the United States. This Southwestern section of the United States with the cliff-dweller ruins is the partial setting for Death Comes for the Archbishop, The Professor's House, and The Song of the Lark. Shadows on the Rock uses Quebec, and Sapphira and the Slave Girl, the final novel, returns to Virginia, the site of Cather's early childhood. Sometimes Cather revisited an area serving as setting for a work while that work was in progress; she made a trip back to France before finishing One of Ours and revisited Quebec during the composition of Shadows on the Rock.

Cather's biographers have compiled long lists of her

[8]Visitors to present day Red Cloud, Nebraska, may view many of the places that appear in the Cather novels by following the readily available tours. The Cather family home is restored using either the original or authentic period furniture. It serves as the model for the Kronborg home in The Song of the Lark. The restored depot is a replica of the original which figures in My Antonia, Lucy Gayheart, and The Song of the Lark. The rural Divide area, northwest of Red Cloud, is described in O Pioneers!, My Antonia, and One of Ours. The former George Cather home appears as the Wheeler's farmstead in One of Ours. There is also the site of the burial plot at a crossroads where the prototype of Papa Shimerda of My Antonia was originally interred.

characters whose prototypes she knew. After noting many characters who seem to suggest someone Cather knew, Mildred R. Bennett adds a note of caution by quoting a statement Cather made in an interview with Eleanor Hinman in 1921 regarding her method of characterization. "They are all composites of three or four persons. . . . I believe most authors shrink from actual portrait painting."[9] This statement verifies Cather's use of fictional people with characteristics of those she knew, but it also states that the characters differ in some respects from their prototypes so that their fictional personality is a product of her own artistry, although they may retain enough characteristics of their prototypes to be recognizable by those who knew them.

Incidents from her own experience also appear in Cather's works. In Shadows on the Rock, there is a scene in which little Jacques, the prostitute's son, gives his toy beaver to be a part of the Creche; Cather's nephew, Charles, offered his toy cow in a parallel incident one Christmas season in Red Cloud. The suicide of Mr. Shimerda in My Antonia is based upon an actual suicide which occurred near Red Cloud. The biographers record numerous examples of her use of incidents based upon her own experience in her works. Here again, however, as in her treatment of characters, she changes certain aspects to produce the

[9]Bennett, p. 22.

desired fictional situation.

Cather's twelve novels were published over a period spanning almost thirty years, beginning in 1912 with Alexander's Bridge and ending in 1940 with Sapphira and the Slave Girl. Her works use times of action which include the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries. The settings cover a large part of the United States, Canada, and points in Europe. The activities in which her characters engage are diverse. There are artists struggling for success, pioneers seeking to tame the frontier, missionaries spreading their gospel in a foreign land, and families maintaining the basic cultural patterns of their own ethnic background in a changing era. The cultural, national, and religious backgrounds of her characters are varied.

These factors offer adequate reasons for Cather's novels to demonstrate quite different qualities and characteristics from the early works to the late ones, and certain differences are noted when comparing the early and the late works. A study of the criticism of Cather's works soon leads to a reference to her frequently quoted statement in the "Prefatory Note" to her book of essays, Not Under Forty: "The world broke in two in 1922 or thereabouts."[10] She concludes this "Note" by stating that she is one of the

[10]Willa Cather, Not Under Forty, p. v. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

"backward" who belong to the era before the change in the world which she sees as occurring in or near 1922. This statement has initiated a considerable body of critical speculation that her personal viewpoints, based upon her perception of the changing panorama of American life, affected her later works. Death Comes for the Archbishop, Shadows on the Rock, and Sapphira and the Slave Girl reach further into the past for their times of action than do the earlier pioneering works or the works dealing with the struggles of the artist. The critical speculation tends to conclude that during the later years she preferred the sanctuary of the unchanging past to the uncertainty of the constantly changing present. Also, critics argue that A Lost Lady and The Professor's House reflect Cather's disenchantment with the world following World War I.

The differences of time of action, setting, and activities of characters lend variety to Cather's works. The changing subjects and tone of presentation seem to reflect a changing viewpoint by Cather herself which may be explained by her statement regarding the world breaking in two. Nevertheless, there exists throughout her novels a common denominator or a unifying quality which takes the form of (1) a motif of a search for order and security and (2) recurrent formalistic features which give structural unity and order to the works. This common denominator

feature permeates the works, stamping them with the distinctive Cather trademark; yet it is so judiciously used that it does not diminish the individuality of each work. It is somewhat like a recurring passage in a musical composition, serving to unify as it is repeated and to enhance as it is expanded into variations by the skillful artistry of the composer whose variations are never so far from the original theme as to lose their identity with it.

The unifying, common denominator quality of Cather's works is the motif of order and security. All Cather characters are searching for order and security for their lives. The desire for order and security by the characters is primarily an individual matter. The character is searching for an order that produces the security of knowing that he has chosen the proper course for his life. This order and the resulting security provides motivation for the character to continue to attempt to maintain this state of order. It supplies its own reinforcement in the form of the security that results from the order. Although it is primarily an individual quest, the characters also feel a responsibility to seek order and security for society, since ultimately even a pioneer living many miles from his nearest neighbor can only retain order and security in his own life if his society is somewhat orderly and secure.

An incident from The Professor's House illustrates

the motif of order and security which is the unifying theme of Cather's works. Tom Outland and his partner discover and subsequently explore the long abandoned, but remarkably well preserved, ruins of the homes of cliff-dwellers on a mesa in the Southwestern part of the United States. The local mission priest, Father Duchene, who has considerable knowledge of Indian culture because of having lived among the Indians for nearly twenty years, visits the ruins and, after a careful and thorough investigation of them, draws certain conclusions about the long departed residents:

> I am inclined to think that your tribe were a superior people. Perhaps they were not so when they first came upon this mesa, but in an orderly and secure life they developed considerably the arts of peace. . . . Your people were cut off here without the influence of example or emulation, with no incentive but some natural yearning for order and security.[11]

Father Duchene attributes a "natural yearning for order and security" as the motivating factor enabling these ancient peoples to attain a state of superior civilization. In their "orderly and secure life" they were able to develop the arts of peace and become superior. All Cather characters possess an innate or intuitive desire for order and security which motivates them to seek to make their lives worthwhile.

[11]Willa Cather, The Professor's House, pp. 219,221. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

Cather defines this desire for order and security in her characters' lives as the "unaccountable predilection of the one unaccountable thing in man."[12]

> Hundreds of years ago, before European civilization had touched this continent, the Indian women in the old rock-perched pueblos of the Southwest were painting geometrical patterns on the jars in which they carried water up from the streams. Why did they take the trouble? These people lived under the perpetual threat of drought and famine; they often shaped their graceful cooking pots when they had nothing to cook in them. Anyone who looks over a collection of prehistoric Indian pottery dug up from old burial-mounds knows at once that the potters experimented with form and colour to gratify something that had no concern with food and shelter. The major arts (poetry, painting, architecture, sculpture, music) have a pedigree all their own. They did not come into being as a means of increasing the game supply or promoting tribal security. They sprang from an unaccountable predilection of the one unaccountable thing in man. (OW, 18-29)

The order and security that Cather characters desire requires that life be beautiful as well as utilitarian. The order and security which produces this state of being is not fully attained by legal, military, financial, political, religious, or educational means, although some or all of these may contribute to it for a given character. It is only attained by the character who can order his life by understanding and following the pattern which he finds somewhere within his own self. To attain this order and

[12]Willa Cather, "Escapism," in On Writing, pp. 18-29. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

security, it is helpful to follow Thoreau's admonition:

> Let every one mind his own business, and endeavor to be what he was made. . . . If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away.[13]

The order and security which Cather characters seek is firmly based upon the solid foundation of the past. The fullest achievement of order and security is for a character to be able to conceive of himself as a part of a society which has a past and a future in addition to the present in which he is living. This provides a kind of historical perspective whereby the character identifies with something which began long before his individual lifetime and will continue after that lifetime. It is like a religious experience, but it also involves the total mores of a society. It is ritualistic with traditional customs and manners being retained even when one moves to another region where such customs and manners are not practiced by one's neighbors.

The quality of life which Cather characters seek is both order and security together; they do not seek one without the other. An individual may, conceivably, achieve order by means of routine or habit without gaining security. Conversely, one may have one or several forms of security--financial, religious, occupational--without having order in

[13]Henry David Thoreau, Walden in American Poetry and Prose, pp. 553-92.

his life. However, in Cather's works the two qualities are yoked together. Achieving order is not nearly so difficult as is the achievement of security with that order. The order tends to pertain to the physical conditions; whereas the security is primarily a mental state. Ultimately, the anguish which certain characters sometimes suffer may be traced to their inability to achieve an order and security in their lives which satisfies their longing for these two qualities.

In addition to this motif of a search for order and security serving as a theme, certain formalistic features give structural unity and order to the works. These formalistic features include: epilogues, prologues, named divisions within a work, and random shifts of the verb tense from the past to the present in the descriptive passages. Additional order in the works is provided by Cather's drawing upon her own past experiences for characters, settings, and incidents; by placing the times of action for certain works in the past; and by the large number of deaths which occur in the works. Also a subject may be treated in two separate works with a different resolution offered in each work, or one work may present two views concerning a given problem. Finally, order and unity are achieved by the recurrent portrayal of nature as a haven and a sanctuary; by the use of such poetic devices as exact description,

images, and alliteration; by a ritualistic manner of performing routine actions; and by the performing of all tasks, large or small, in the manner in which a true artist does his best work.

The fact that Cather experienced the vast difference between the settled, secure life style of Virginia and the uncertain, insecure life style of frontier Nebraska during her childhood seems an adequate reason for her use of the theme of man's search for order and security. In Nebraska, the adult settlers had to make their own order. There were no guidelines to follow because their forebearers and they themselves had, until they migrated to Nebraska, lived in different circumstances. Thus, many people retained the social customs of their former homes because that was the only order they knew. Nebraska society was so new and so heterogeneous that orderly patterns had not had time to develop. Cather observed this situation at the age which she states to be the "formative period of a writer's life, when he unconsciously gathers basic material."[14] Thus, the move from Virginia and the experience of living on the frontier may be one reason for her use of the theme of order and security throughout her works.

[14]Brown, p. 3.

CHAPTER II

A SUMMARY OF THE CRITICISM RELATING TO THIS STUDY

Cather's critics agree as to the themes which appear in her fiction. Frequently an assessment of the works is accomplished by dividing the works into groups and then noting the themes within each individual group. The works included in a group vary somewhat with the individual critic, but there is general overall agreement so that the works considered together tend to be the same regardless of the criteria for designating groups. The groups or categories of the works may be determined either by the subjects of the individual works or by chronological divisions of the total body of works. Categories based upon the subjects usually include the following: the pioneering works, O Pioneers! and My Antonia; the works about the artist or sensitive individual, The Song of the Lark, One of Ours, and Lucy Gayheart; the decline of the pioneering virtues, A Lost Lady and The Professor's House; and the works based upon the historical past, Death Comes for the Archbishop, Shadows on the Rock, and Sapphira and the Slave Girl.

Those who employ categories reflecting a division of the works chronologically note evidence in the subjects and themes which indicate a changing point of view by Cather. Quoting her statement that "The world broke in two in 1922 or thereabouts" (NUF, v), they observe that the early pioneering novels, O Pioneers! and My Antonia, and the early novel about an artist, The Song of the Lark, are essentially forward looking and optimistic. Following these works, A Lost Lady and The Professor's House deal with the decline of the virtues and values of the pioneers. Finally, Death Comes for the Archbishop, Shadows on the Rock, and Sapphira and the Slave Girl are set back into the past away from the twentieth century problems which followed World War I. By thus dividing the works into categories, often only cursory attention is given to those works which do not specifically fit within the main groups or which the individual critic esteems less highly than the others. Alexander's Bridge, My Mortal Enemy, and Lucy Gayheart frequently are exempted from the critical assessment or given but slight consideration.

Regardless of the basis for the division into categories, the general overall themes noted as appearing in the works include: (1) life in the pioneering era, (2) the decline of the virtues of the pioneering times, (3) the unique nature of the artist, and (4) a fictional recreation

of the historic past. After identifying the broad general themes, critics usually note the specific themes appearing in individual works which run concurrently with the general overall theme of that work.

Three major themes are listed by Edward A. and Lillian D. Bloom: "the spirit of the frontier in both modern and ancient times; the threat to that spirit in the encroachments of materialism and selfish acquisitiveness; and the nature of the artist."[15] In the prairie novels, they observe the theme of "man's ineluctable pilgrimage toward an ethical ideal" or "the frustrating conditions that circumvent his attainment of that end."[16] In all the novels, they observe the theme of a "philosophical interpretation of life as a gigantic tug of war in a conflict between the ideal and the material."[17] Regarding the theme concerning the artist, they note that both the artist and the pioneer undergo "crises of self-discovery, struggle, and ultimate spiritual triumph."[18] The artist and the pioneer share similar motivations. A successful artist transcends obstacles; a mediocre artist fails because the "spirit is

[15]Edward A. and Lillian D. Bloom, Willa Cather's Gift of Sympathy, p. x.

[16]Bloom, Willa Cather's Gift of Sympathy, p. 12-3.

[17]Bloom, Willa Cather's Gift of Sympathy, p. 24.

[18]Bloom, Willa Cather's Gift of Sympathy, pp. 116-7.

turned aside by adversity, or because the will is not in harmony with the incentive."[19]

John H. Randall III assesses the Cather themes by placing them into four groups which equate with the four periods into which he divides her works: (1) escape from the family and Red Cloud, (2) acceptance of the family and Nebraska, (3) a second rejection of her surroundings, and (4) departure from the present to return to the past.[20] For the first period, he lists two dominant themes: "the rejection of life . . . on the Divide, and the pursuit of the ideal."[21] Themes of the second period include: (1) the triumph of art, (2) art as sanctuary, (3) the frontier and the natural aristocrat, (4) the establishment of the garden, and (5) the conflict between country and town.[22] In the third period, the world of art is not included, and money becomes a theme. Other themes of this period are (1) failure of the hero, (2) the modern waste land, (3) the triumph of greed, (4) the decline of the West, (5) failure of the will, (6) the decline of civilization, (7) the problem of the aging artist, (8) sanctuary, ritual, and retreat as the

[19]Bloom, Willa Cather's Gift of Sympathy, p. 117.

[20]John H. Randall III, The Landscape and the Looking Glass, pp. 18-20.

[21]Randall, p. 21.

[22]Randall, p. 42, et passim.

way out, and (9) negation.[23] Randall comments that the third period of the fiction "closed with her completely rejecting what she regarded as the sordidness of the present for what she considered to be the beauties of former times."[24] In the fourth period, he sees the values expressed as quite different from those of the earlier periods. In the early works, heroes and heroines leave their family to seek fulfillment for their lives; in this period, they find fulfillment within the family structure. Themes here include: (1) the past as a safe harbor, (2) the Catholic past, (3) the triumph of order, (4) tradition for its own sake, (5) the rock as sanctuary, (6) order overcoming the pioneer spirit, and (7) the substitution of landscape and local color for conflict.[25]

Themes specifically pointed out by David Daiches include: (1) the relationship between the Old and New Worlds, (2) the situation faced by uprooted Europeans in the young country of America, (3) the development, self-discovery, and decline of the heroine or the artist, (4) the struggles of the pioneers, (5) a conflict between generations, (6) the decline of the pioneering age, and (7) the plight of the imaginative hero in an increasingly narrow and

[23]Randall, p. 151, et passim.

[24]Randall, p. 245.

[25]Randall, p. 253, et passim.

self-satisfied civilization.[26]

Maude Eugenie Lambert equates the themes with the values presented in the novels: "virtue and morality, feeling and taste, reason and judgment."[27] Cather is primarily concerned with the inner life of her characters, but these themes and values concern both the inner nature of man and the outer aspect of his relationship to society.

In summary, critics tend to see in Cather's novels broad general themes based upon either the subjects of the works or on Cather's own changing views which are reflected in her works. Then, they note the more specific themes appearing in individual works. Some of the works frequently receive greater attention than the others either because they portray the overall features of the category in which they are placed or because they are considered aesthetically better than other works. Her works have a number of characteristics in common with other American writers of her era, yet she also moved away from the mainstream of the then current literature into the directions that she determined were artistically right for her. In noting the similarities her works show to those of her contemporaries, Marcus Klein observes, as the Cather biographers reiterate,

[26]David Daiches, Willa Cather: A Critical Introduction, p. 16, et passim.

[27]Maude Eugenie Lambert, "Theme and Craftsmanship in Willa Cather's Novels," p. 75.

that she was not desirous of following patterns set by others:

> Nothing would have pleased Willa Cather less, certainly, than to have found herself part of a literary movement. Or she would have found the fact irrelevant. Her way was absolutely independent devotion to her art.[28]

Previous critics, however, fail to find a theme which permeates and unifies all her works. Randall sees a unity in what Cather herself was doing throughout the years in which she was writing fiction. He states: "My search for a unifying factor in Willa Cather's work led me to conclude that she herself was engaged in a search, a lifelong quest for value."[29] He further notes that he chose the name for his book, The Landscape and the Looking Glass, because she most often sought value in these two places. He concludes that the "search she made for value is the search we all make," and that "if she does not emerge [from his study] as incredibly great, she does emerge as believably human."[30] Randall concludes also that Cather was involved in a lifelong search for value and that she sought this value both in her surroundings (the landscape) and within herself (the looking glass). Certainly the value she was

[28]Marcus Klein, "Introduction," My Mortal Enemy, p. xi.

[29]Randall, p. xi.

[30]Randall, p. xii.

questing for was, perhaps, a combination of order and security in her life because all of her fictional people are seeking it.

Daiches states that a literary work has an "emotional pattern" which he defines as

> . . . one of the most significant aspects of a fully realized work of fiction, and discussions of style and structure which ignore this basic element are mere academic exercises. The emotional pattern might be described as the implicit sense of value and significance which makes it possible for a novel to show some things as more worth selecting and recording than others. It provides the mold in which the novel is shaped and is, indeed, the original reason for the novel's being written in the first place.[31]

He further argues that critics tend to "fight shy of recognizing the significance"[32] of the emotional pattern in a poem or novel. He fails to ascertain an "emotional pattern" in Alexander's Bridge and finds the one in O Pioneers! inadequate. Perhaps the motif of order and security in the Cather works serves as the "emotional pattern" as defined by Daiches.

John Hinz notes a theme in Cather's first two poems which also appears in her later fiction. He sees the "twin themes of her later writing" which he defines as "idealizations of the artist and pioneer"[33] in these two early

[31]Daiches, p. 21.

[32]Daiches, p. 21.

[33]John P. Hinz, "Willa Cather, Undergraduate--Two Poems," American Literature, XXI (1949-50), 111-16.

poems and in some of the works which were written many years later. He states that the two themes "fuse into one."[34]

> The astonishing thing is that this oneness of the artist and the pioneer, this singleness of their yearning and obstinate struggle, that gives unity to such diverse books as O Pioneers!, The Song of the Lark, The Professor's House, and Death Comes for the Archbishop, should be manifest there in the theme and imagery of the author's very first two poems. . . .[35]

The "yearning and obstinate struggle" of the artist and the pioneer which Hinz notes as giving unity to the Cather works hints, no doubt, at the search for order and security motif which this study traces through these works.

In an article published more than ten years prior to their book, Willa Cather's Gift of Sympathy, in which they list three major themes noted heretofore, Edward A. and Lillian D. Bloom discuss the matter of overall unity.

> Very few of Miss Cather's critics have attempted to see the over-all pattern of her novels, their profound basis of moral values which gives them universality of theme, their classical unity and selectivity of details which enable the writer to co-ordinate structure and moral meaning.[36]

They state that in all the novels of the frontier, Cather has one lofty theme and that she always arrives at "her

[34]Hinz, pp. 111-16.

[35]Hinz, pp. 111-16.

[36]Edward A. and Lillian D. Bloom, "Willa Cather's Novels of the Frontier: A Study in Thematic Symbolism," American Literature, XXI (1949-50), 71-93.

ultimate moralistic goal."[37] They define this theme as "man's perpetual pilgrimage and struggle to find an ethical ideal, or . . . the barriers that circumvent his attainment of that end."[38] This definition of a theme appearing in all of the frontier novels is basically the same definition quoted above from their book, Willa Cather's Gift of Sympathy, for a theme they note in all of the works, namely "a philosophical interpretation of life as a gigantic tug of war in a conflict between the ideal and the material."[39] Thus, the Blooms seem close to noting an overall theme in Cather's works of a "conflict between the ideal and the material."[40] This paper will argue that the "conflict between the ideal and the material" in Cather's works takes the form of a search for an ideal order and security that will withstand the vicissitudes of life, although material things contribute much to that order and security.

Maude Eugenie Lambert notes, in all the Cather novels, "a consistent concept of the nature of the world and

[37]Bloom, "Willa Cather's Novels of the Frontier," pp. 71-93.

[38]Bloom, "Willa Cather's Novels of the Frontier," pp. 71-93.

[39]Bloom, Willa Cather's Gift of Sympathy, p. 24

[40]Bloom, Willa Cather's Gift of Sympathy, p. 24.

of the nature and meaning of human life."[41] She does not see identical values emphasized in all the works, nor all of the values in any one work; yet, considered together, the values from all the works are not incompatible. Further, she sees the values as operating within the Cather fiction and in the outside world so that the characters and the values are convincing. The values which appear in the works are "virtue and morality, feeling and taste, [and] reason and judgment."[42] These values are consistent with the theme of a search for order and security by Cather characters. Virtue and morality are adjunct to religious faith which serves as the basis for order and security for many of the characters. Feeling and taste are synonymous with the order and security found in the performing and professional arts of music, theater, architecture, and engineering; and, further, feeling and taste also are synonymous with the more mundane activities which are elevated to the realm of art, such as cooking, dining, and gardening. Reason and judgment contribute to the order and security of all characters. Cather characters who attain order and security employ some or all of these values; those who do not attain order and security lack some of these values.

Although the Cather criticism offers little comment

[41]Lambert, p. 67

[42]Lambert, p. 75.

concerning a unifying theme or even unifying formalistic features which permeate all of the works, there is considerable mention of order in connection with her works. Connolly notes that order is important to her and concludes that her passion for order may have kept her from being a better writer in that she did not fully understand "the struggle for spiritual perfection."[43] Consequently, he concludes:

> To say this is simply to say that her immense and imperishable contribution to American literature is not the most perfect one can imagine. . . . had she, . . . felt fire as well as seen it, she might have been the greatest novelist of her time.[44]

The Blooms state that the "natural order and harmony"[45] of the pioneer's world is, for Cather, a proof of a divine will which she may base upon classical Stoicism or the Bible. An orderly arrangement whether of forests, prairies, mountains, or the constellations in the sky indicates a divine power at work. Her views regarding this order are consistent with those of Cicero, Seneca, the Psalmist, and Christian thinkers.[46] The Blooms note a "natural" order and harmony

[43]Francis X. Connolly, "Willa Cather: Memory as Muse," in Fifty Years of the American Novel: A Christian Appraisal, pp. 69-87.

[44]Connolly, pp. 69-87.

[45]Bloom, Willa Cather's Gift of Sympathy, p. 34.

[46]Bloom, Willa Cather's Gift of Sympathy, pp. 34-5.

in the pioneer's world; this study sees a "natural" order and security as the goal of Cather characters.

E. K. Brown notes that "continuity and stability were values that Willa Cather cherished, and the older she grew, the more she cherished them."[47] Further, she "wanted life to be an arranged garden, she liked an achieved order; and this inevitably meant the conquest of disorder."[48]

Cather was concerned with order and security during her first trip to Europe in 1902. She wrote accounts of her travels which were published in the Nebraska State Journal. One of these articles gives an account of the canal people in England. Concerning them, Cather reports, "They have neither the consolation of education nor religion."[49] Certainly education brings order to life, and religion brings security. In his "Incidental Notes" to these articles written during Cather's first European visit, George N. Kates observes that she sees the "order" and "beauty"[50] of pre-Reformation Europe and medieval Catholic life. He further notes that the values that she sees here will appear later in Death Comes for the Archbishop and

[47]Brown, p. 4.

[48]Brown, p. 335.

[49]Willa Cather, "The Canals of England," in Willa Cather in Europe: Her Own Story of the First Journey, p. 46.

[50]George N. Kates, Willa Cather in Europe: Her Own Story of the First Journey, p. 14.

Shadows on the Rock. Both of these works are exceedingly concerned with an order and security based upon retaining the cultural values of one's ancestory and the solace of one's faith.

Cather's friend and biographer, Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, notes Cather's preoccupation with order. Sergeant recalls that Cather envied the "tranquillity of an old, ordered, comprehensible civilization,"[51] such as that of Paris, at the time Sergeant was in Paris and Cather in New York working at McClure's.

Most previous Cather critics agree in their overall assessment of the themes appearing in her novels. These viewpoints regarding themes are well supported in the works themselves, and they have been an invaluable aid for a study of the Cather novels. This paper posits, however, that there exists along with, and in addition to, the themes herein noted by the critics another theme which appears consistently in all of the novels. This is the theme of a search for order and security by the characters throughout their entire lives. It initially appears in the earliest novels and remains a part of all of them through the last one. It is not diminished by the various subjects of the novels--pioneering, the special nature of the artist, or

[51]Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant. Willa Cather: A Memoir, p. 45.

events from the historical past.

CHAPTER III

THE THEME OF ORDER AND SECURITY IN THE NOVELS

The theme of a natural yearning for order and security as a motivating force in the lives of the characters appears in Cather's first novel, Alexander's Bridge. The critics tend to ignore this work, dismissing it as a Jamesian imitation which does not fall into one of the standard categories of Cather works. Cather herself deemed it inferior to her later works saying it was "like what painters call a studio picture," that after she began writing the prairie novels, it seemed "unnecessary and superficial."[52]

The theme of an individual character's struggles to achieve order and security in his life permeates this work. Bartley Alexander, the protagonist, searches for but does not find a satisfactory order and security. His life is orderly; he is successful as a bridge building engineer; he has a happy marriage; yet his desire to return to the freedom of his youth deprives him of the security which his

[52]Willa Cather, "My First Novels," in On Writing, pp. 91-7.

present situation offers. The resolution of his problem lies only in death as he is unable to reconcile the passing of youth and accept security that is not based upon youth. He expresses his frustration to his wife, Winifred:

> I'm tired of work, tired of people, tired of trailing about. . . . life runs smoothly enough with some people, and with me it's always a messy sort of patchwork. It's like the song; peace is where I am not. How can you face it all with so much fortitude?[53]

Winifred knows Bartley better than he knows himself. She replies that she faced the problem long ago when she and Bartley first met by deciding that she wanted to go with him even though she knew his way was not peaceful. Therefore, she has found order and security for her life in the identical situation in which Bartley cannot find it.

Hilda also has found order and security for her life. She is successful in her chosen occupation--the theater--but not so successful as Bartley. She enjoys Bartley's companionship despite the clandestine nature of their relationship, but Bartley is unable to reconcile what he is doing. Hilda eventually plans to marry one of her other suitors, not because she loves one of them but because she loves Bartley and feels that her marriage will make it easier for him to give her up.

Bartley's wife, Winifred, represents the present;

[53]Willa Sibert Cather, Alexander's Bridge, pp. 90-1.

his mistress, Hilda, represents the past. Both Winifred and Hilda have found order and security because neither faces the dual situation as Bartley does. His frustration results from the belief that he must choose one or the other. He is still undecided which choice to make at his death. He writes a long letter to Winifred, knowing this will end their life together, but he places the letter into his pocket. By either action, he feels destined not to attain order and security in his life; therefore, death offers a way out of his dilemma. Bartley did not have to go out onto the weakened bridge; he was fully aware of the structural problem when he viewed it from the safety of the river bank.

Winifred and Hilda retain their order and security after Bartley's death. His letter to Winifred is illegible when his body is recovered from the river. Both Winifred and Hilda are sustained by their memories of their separate lives with Bartley, and they find an order and security in their lives which Bartley can not find for himself.

The theme of a search for order and security appears early in Cather's next novel, O Pioneers! Mrs. Bergson, Alexandra's mother, is a minor character mentioned only briefly; yet most of the information about her concerns her desire for order. During the years the Bergson family has been in Nebraska, "she had worthily striven to maintain

some semblance of household order amid conditions that made order very difficult."[54] Further, her efforts to retain the order of their former life in Sweden are credited with keeping the family "from disintegrating morally and getting careless in their ways" (OP, 28-9). The order she has diligently worked to retain has produced the security which a Cather character desires in addition to order. The security in this instance is both the morality of the family and their retention of some of the orderly ways of routine household life in Sweden. For Cather characters, the optimum order includes the retention of some of the life style of one's ancestors. If one is French, one retains certain French ways; if one is Swedish, one retains certain of the customs of that land.

Alexandra orders her life in such a manner that she attains the security which is satisfactory for a Cather character. She is appointed by her father, just prior to his death, to be head of the household. Since Mr. Bergson was not a farmer but a shipyard worker in Sweden, the family has no prior agricultural background. They must learn the ways of this new land; therefore, Alexandra is free to utilize new techniques in the farming operation with no necessity of retaining Swedish farming customs. It is in

[54]Willa Cather, O Pioneers!, p. 28. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

the order of the household that they retain the old ways.

Alexandra's brothers, Lou and Oscar, also want order and security in their lives, but their manner of seeking it differs from Alexandra's. They want to retain the security of the land which Alexandra owns for an inheritance for their children; consequently, they advise Alexandra not to marry Carl. The two principal concerns of their lives are politics and what the neighbors think. They are basing the order and security of their lives upon the ever changing concepts of their local rural society. Alexandra is more concerned with doing what she feels is right regardless of the viewpoints of the neighbors. This difference is illustrated by the divergent views held toward Crazy Ivor. Lou and Oscar think he should be confined to a mental institution because he builds a pond where wild migratory birds may land without danger of being molested by hunters and because he goes barefoot in winter. Alexandra is strong enough to resist her brothers' efforts to make her conform to the views of the neighborhood.

Alexandra's life is a series of difficult situations, but each blow that strikes leaves her more firmly convinced that she must order her life in the way she believes to be right. She invites Crazy Ivor to live on her farm when he grows too old to live alone, although her brothers, Lou and Oscar, strongly disapprove. The most crushing blow to

the order and security of her life is Emil's tragic death. Ultimately, she triumphs over each stumbling block which she encounters in her life, although her perceptions of the situation around her are not so keen as those of others. She is completely oblivious to Emil and Marie's relationship, yet Carl notes it during his brief visit. She is not a dedicated, single-minded artist as is Thea Kronborg of The Song of the Lark; nor has she the sunny, extroverted disposition of Antonia of My Antonia; her formal education is minimal; nevertheless, she orders her life by making decisions based upon her own convictions. Her orderly life brings her security and the confidence to face the future.

Emil, Marie, and Frank do not find order and security for their lives; yet each struggles to attain it. Emil is still seeking vocational security when he dies as he is preparing to leave for Lincoln to study law. He is frustrated because the woman he loves has married another man. Marie does not find security with Frank. She likes people and enjoys all of the community activities, but Frank distrusts everyone and is jealous of the enjoyment Marie finds in her life by such simple things as helping with a church social event. Death by Frank's bullets ends the struggle for an elusive order that will produce security for Emil and Marie, but Frank still suffers as he continues to live with the memory of his fury. When Alexandra visits him in prison,

he appears to be a defeated man for whom the future holds little hope of finding order and security.

Cather's third novel, The Song of the Lark, concerns the struggles of the artist. Thea Kronborg, one of seven children of the Methodist minister of Moonstone, Colorado, becomes a successful opera star. As she struggles to attain proficiency as a singer, Thea also struggles to achieve order and security in her life. As a child, she knows that she is different, that she is an artist who must develop her talent. After she becomes famous, Thea comments to her old friend, Doctor Archie:

> When I went with you to Chicago that first time, I carried with me the essentials of all I shall ever do. The point to which I could go was scratched in me then. I haven't reached it yet, by a long way.[55]

Each time Thea succeeds in achieving a measure of order in her life, her talent forces her into a new situation where she must again struggle to regain the order she desires.

Thea and her mother play dual roles representing the struggles of both the artist and the non-artist for order and security. Not only do they look alike, but Mrs. Kronborg is the only family member who understands Thea. Ray Kennedy notices the similarities and the differences:

> He [Ray] was thinking that Mrs. Kronborg had in her face the same serious look that Thea had; only hers

[55]Willa Cather, The Song of the Lark, pp. 551-2. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

> was calm and satisfied, and Thea's was intense and questioning. (SL, 153)

Mrs. Kronborg has achieved the calm, satisfied state of mind by a deterministic viewpoint. She believes "that the size of every family was decided in heaven. More modern views would not have startled her; they would simply have seemed foolish" (SL, 15). Further, Mrs. Kronborg is "a fatalist, and as she did not attempt to direct things beyond her control, she found a good deal of time to enjoy the ways of man and nature" (SL, 125). Shortly before Mrs. Kronborg's death, Doctor Archie travels back to Moonstone from Denver, where he is now a rich mine owner with political influence, in an effort to help restore her to health. He notes:

> how much she looked like Thea. The difference was one of degree rather than of kind. The daughter had a compelling enthusiasm, the mother had none. But their framework, their foundation, was very much the same. (SL, 490)

Thea and her mother possess similar personalities except that Thea is an artist and her mother is not. Their individual searches for order and security allow Cather to present a contrast between the artist and the non-artist.

Thea overcomes the cultural handicap of growing up in a small, Midwestern town. She sacrifices the things that contribute to her mother's orderly, secure world to become an artist when she does not marry until after she

is established as a successful artist. Ray Kennedy's untimely death provides the initial financing for her musical education away from Moonstone. His death removes the possibility that he and Thea will marry, and his stipulation that she study in Chicago assures that she will not marry a local man. Fred Ottenburg's wife refuses a divorce, so he and Thea cannot marry until later. While in Germany, Thea considers marrying Nordquist until he asks her to buy his freedom from his wife and two children. Thus, each possible marriage is averted by circumstances beyond Thea's control until much later in her life.

Although many of Moonstone's residents share a Philistine attitude toward Thea, the order and security she relies upon is founded, ironically, in her memories of Moonstone. She confides to Doctor Archie that she measures the value of things by the six hundred dollars Ray Kennedy left her, and she measures high buildings by the Moonstone standpipe. On the night before she sings Sieglinde, she falls asleep by imagining herself back in the family home in Moonstone. The cliff-dweller ruins in Arizona provide another basis for order and security for Thea; they represent the security to be found by one's continuity with the past. Thea's visit there is like a spiritual rebirth. The secluded spot where she bathes out-of-doors among the cottonwood trees makes this a ritual of rebirth and baptism.

Thea finds order and security that is satisfying for her, just as Alexandra Bergson finds order and security that satisfies her need for these qualities. Although their personalities and their modes of living are vastly dissimilar, Thea and Alexandra are alike in that both desire, search for, and eventually attain order and security in their lives.

Other characters in The Song of the Lark also strive for order and security. Doctor Archie seeks it, but he does not find it in Moonstone. Only after he is in Denver does he achieve the order and security he desires. In Moonstone, the order his wife wants deprives him of the order he desires. Mrs. Archie wants the house closed, free of dust, and unused. She conserves everything: cream for the strawberries and money to hire domestic help. Her conservative nature causes her death; she is cleaning the parlor upholstery with gasoline to save the expense of hiring someone to clean it when the explosion occurs which takes her life. After his mining ventures prosper, Doctor Archie lives in a manner that would shock her. He serves sumptuous dinners and hires domestic servants, including a butler and Japanese boys to perform the routine household tasks.

Thea's mentally retarded Aunt Tillie Kronborg finds order and security for her life. She is the unmarried sister of the minister, dresses like a girl, and always gives

a recitation at church programs. Years later when she is the only Kronborg still residing in Moonstone, she lives in a little house surrounded by flowers, reading the New York newspapers about Thea's success, meeting her financial obligations with the aid of money Thea sends, and basking in the unique position of having a famous niece. She has order and security particularly suited to her mentality. Cather treats her with the unique sympathetic understanding that she gives to the exceptional individual whether his performance level is above or below that of society generally.

Fred Ottenburg seeks order and security for his life. Money is not a concern for him because his family operates a well established brewery operation. His unfortunate marriage leaves him with the need for the order and security of friends who will accept him as a person, and he turns to the world of art. The musicians are his friends, and he can enjoy their life without becoming emotionally involved until he meets Thea. Eventually Fred and Thea do marry, as briefly noted in the Epilogue, but this novel is a story of the struggles of the artist and offers only a meager account of the final resolution of matters.

Ray Kennedy attains order and security in his life by travelling, reading, enjoying the friendship and culture of the Mexicans, and helping Thea. The Kohlers and Wunsch

live their lives by following patterns learned in their native Germany. Wunsch fails to achieve lasting order in Moonstone, and eventually he travels elsewhere. The Kohlers are content to retain their traditional German ways without trying to adopt the ways of their American neighbors. After Wunsch leaves, Fritz Kohler is sorry to lose his friend, but the order of his and Paulina's life is not destroyed thereby. Fritz has "learned to lose without struggle" (SL, 123).

The effort to achieve order and security in their individual lives is shared by all of the characters in this work, although some are more successful than others. Those who achieve an order which produces security do so by being individuals who are not afraid to be different from the majority. Thea dares to seek a career as an artist at a time when most small town girls consider marriage and a family the only proper life. Ray Kennedy differs from other railway employees; his interests go beyond girly pictures and a card game with plenty of whiskey at the end of the run. Thea's mother does not allow Moonstone opinion to set the pattern for her family's actions even though her husband is a minister, the occupation probably most likely to cause a family to operate safely within the limits set by the overall opinions of the community. Mrs. Kronborg allows Thea to take music lessons from Wunsch and, further, to go to

the Kohler's home for the lessons, although most Moonstone mothers are upset because Wunsch drinks and requires a high level of musical performance from his pupils. To achieve order and security for their lives, characters in this work find identification with the past an aid. Thea finds a type of rebirth in the Southwest among the ruins of the cliff-dwellers. Ray Kennedy and Fred Ottenburg also find these ancient ruins stimulating. The Kohlers and Wunsch order their lives by maintaining a link with their German heritage. Spanish Johnny and the other Mexicans retain their native customs also.

Cather's next novel, My Antonia, is a happy story about pioneer life in Nebraska, even though tragic events occur. Although the story primarily concerns the lives of young people, the theme of order and security is well developed. Despite circumstances that threaten the order and security of his life, Jim Burden, the narrator, is able to maintain an orderly, secure life. Jim moves to Nebraska when he is ten years old following the death of both his parents in Virginia. He is accompanied on the long train ride by one of the employees of his parents, and a friendly conductor watches over them on the train. Finally, his grandfather's hired man meets the train with a farm wagon for the final part of the journey. On this ride from the train to the farm, Jim drops the security of his orderly

Virginia life and quickly accepts the order and security which Nebraska, different as it is from Virginia, offers. He observes:

> I had the feeling that the world was left behind, that we had got over the edge of it, and were outside man's jurisdiction. I had never before looked up at the sky when there was not a familiar mountain ridge against it. But this was the complete dome of heaven, all there was of it. I did not believe that my dead father and mother were watching me from up there. . . . I had left even their spirits behind me. The wagon jolted on, carrying me I knew not whither. I don't think I was homesick. If we never arrived anywhere, it did not matter. Between that earth and that sky I felt erased, blotted out. I did not say my prayers that night: here, I felt, what would be would be. (MA, 9)

Jim soon finds ample order and security because of the love and understanding of his grandparents. He learns to love the vast prairie.

> I was entirely happy. Perhaps we feel like that when we die and become a part of something entire, whether it is sun and air, or goodness and knowledge. At any rate, that is happiness; to be dissolved into something complete and great. When it comes to one, it comes as naturally as sleep. (MA, 15)

Jim makes this comment in autumn as he sits in the sunshine in the center of the garden with his back against a pumpkin. This section of the garden is in a draw where he is sheltered from the wind and surrounded by the order of the lives of small animals and insects. The happiness he finds here in the garden is based upon the order of the garden and the larger order of the natural world. It is a symbolic return to the order and security of Eden.

Jim's grandparents lead orderly lives. During his first day in Nebraska, he notes that his grandmother desires "that everything should go with due order and decorum" (MA, 10). Under his grandmother's management, the affairs of the house run smoothly. At the same time, his grandfather keeps the farm operating in an orderly manner. The Burdens work together, and they share a religious belief that supports them in the vicissitudes of their lives. Jim never mentions grief for his parents; the security he feels in the orderly world he finds with his grandparents in Nebraska seems to satisfy him completely.

In contrast, the Shimerdas do not find order and security upon arriving, although they are on the same train with Jim. The children and their mother are less frustrated by the change in their life style than is Mr. Shimerda. The one oasis where he finds "the atmosphere of comfort and security" (MA, 59) is during his Christmas visit to the Burdens. Mr. Shimerda's failure to find order and security on the Nebraska prairie results in his suicide.

Like Jim, Antonia finds enough security in their new life to be happy and to learn, as does Jim, to love that vast untamed Nebraska prairie. Jim experiences the frustrations of adolescence, but he continues to enjoy order and security after his grandparents retire from the farm and move into Black Hawk. Antonia also goes to Black Hawk

to work as a hired girl. She suffers certain unpleasant experiences. While working for the Cutters, she escapes Mr. Cutter's carefully planned unexpected return during the night by enlisting the aid of Mrs. Burden who has Jim stay at the Cutter's house rather than Antonia. Her planned marriage to Donovan results in disappointment, but she brings order back to her life, and she is able to care for her illegitimate daughter. Her marriage to Anton Cuzak results in the order which produces security for her--a farm and a family.

Antonia's order and security are enhanced by her friendship with the Burdens. The Widow Steavens tells Jim that the Burden home was always a refuge for Antonia. Antonia's success in finding order and security for her life is aided by the good friends she finds in Nebraska. The Burdens, the Harlings, and the Widow Steavens help her to adjust to this new life; and Antonia's own character enables her to survive, at first, and to thrive, later, in that frontier setting. Antonia possesses the best characteristics of both her parents: she has enough of the gentle, artistic spirit of her father to appreciate beauty, and she has the determination and will to overcome almost impossible obstacles of her mother. Blended together with her own unbounded enthusiasm, the best qualities of both parents come through so that she has the stamina to overcome obstacles and to

survive in the rigorous frontier setting and, at the same time, appreciate the beauty of the land and the beauty of gentle manners and an ordered way of life. She is a symbolic earth mother and a warm human being. In Antonia, Cather has created a character who plays a dual role of archetypal goddess and next-door-neighbor. Her final triumph would not be possible had she been unable to bring order to her life. Her father could not achieve enough order to survive the first winter. Her mother is satisfied that her sane son is achieving financial security. She envies the order in her neighbors' lives and compensates for her own lack of order by self-pity and resentful attitudes. Antonia's orderly, secure life results from adapting to pioneer life and also learning from others who have achieved order and security.

The next novel, One of Ours, won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction. Claude Wheeler, the protagonist, searches unsuccessfully for order and security while he is living in Nebraska. Eventually, he enlists in the army in World War I and finds, in his war experiences, the circumstances wherein he can achieve order and security for his life temporarily. He dies "believing his own country better than it is, and France better than any country can ever be."[56] His death on

[56]Willa Cather, One of Ours, p. 390. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

the battlefield saves him from the disillusionment which he would have suffered had he returned from the war.

The frustrations of Claude's life prior to the war are almost overwhelming; he is only able to perceive the unpleasant, irritating aspects of his situation. He is aware of the problem: he knows "that his energy, instead of accomplishing something, was spent in resisting unalterable conditions, and in unavailing efforts to subdue his own nature" (OO, 90). He in one of the Cather characters who are special in that they are endowed with a personality which differs from others. Gladys Farmer defines this attribute in Claude as "that finer strain in his nature" (OO, 135).

Claude occasionally has an experience that seems to make life worthwhile for a short time. One evening he watches the moon and thinks of it as having come from the "historic past" and of "having taken part in human life in other ages" (OO, 178). He always perceives the sun as rotating above the wheatfields, but the moon seems to him to understand the secrets of "people whose hearts were set high . . . whose wish was so beautiful that there were no experiences in this world to satisfy it" (OO, 179). To Claude, the children of the moon are "a finer race than the children of the sun" (OO, 179). Such thoughts provide the small amount of order and security which Claude achieves in

his life; and this order and security, even though it is slight, helps him to bear the frustrations of his life.

Another haven of order and security for Claude is the Erlich family in Lincoln. He visits this family many times during his college years. This German family embodies all the qualities Claude feels that his own life lacks. Although he enjoys their friendship, knowing them causes Claude to be more acutely aware of the cultural values that he lacks. He must attend a church college rather than the state university; his father makes jokes that irritate him; and his brothers and his friends in Frankfort do not understand him.

Claude's marriage to Enid Royce fails to bring order and security to his life. Enid is a cool, religious vegetarian who shuts him out of the bedroom on their wedding night because she does not feel well. After the honeymoon, she is busy with church and anti-liquor activities before she goes to China to nurse her missionary sister through an illness.

The war provides a way to escape from the tribulations of his life in Nebraska. In the war, Claude finds a cause in which he believes. Among the French people, he finds an orderly life style that appears to him to be far superior to the life style of Nebraska. His war experiences provide an ever increasing amount of order and security for his life. He sits for an hour looking up at a rose window in a church

in Rouen. Here he recalls his astronomy lessons about light travelling through space for thousands of years before it reaches the human eye on earth. The light from this window has been shining a long time before he sees it. He is, thus, able to identify with something permanent, and the experience is a kind of rebirth for him. Later, in the war zone, he concludes that life is meaningless unless it is "continually reinforced by something" (OO, 345) that in enduring. The "shadows of individual existence" (OO, 345) must have a background that holds together. In the final moments of his life, Claude experiences the ultimate triumph with ample order and security as he commands his troops in a maneuver in which they hold their position until the reinforcements arrive. Because he dies, Claude is able to retain the vision which many veterans lose in the drab lives to which they must return.

One of Ours has been attacked as an idealistic presentation of war. It is not a grim description of the horrors of the battlefield; however, it certainly does present the search for order and security by a frustrated young man. The theme of Claude's search for order and security permeates the work, yet the other characters are also seeking order and security. Enid seeks it in her religion first; then she maintains an orderly house with everything in its place. Claude's mother enjoys visits to Enid's house because the

curtains are so nicely ironed and everything is neat. Claude's father finds order for his life in his many friends and in his place as a community leader. Leonard Dawson, the young farmer who is Claude's neighbor, finds order and security in following the patterns established by other farmers. Gladys Farmer, who understands Claude, finds order and security for her life by conforming to the standards of the community just enough to retain her teaching position in the local high school.

Cather's next novel, A Lost Lady, belongs to the works which portray the decline of the pioneering era and lament the passing of the life style of that era. The story is presented from the point-of-view of Niel Herbert, who is twelve years old as the work opens and who observes Marian Forrester's life as he is growing to manhood. He is not an "I" narrator, but, for the most part, the work presents his conceptions of the action. He sees Marian as beautiful and fascinating, as exemplifing the charm and conventions of a past era. He is bitterly disappointed when he learns that she has men friends who visit when her husband is away from home.

As the work opens, Marian Forrester, the lost lady, has order and security in her life. She is the young, beautiful, extroverted wife of a well-to-do retired railroad builder. The Forresters are the most important people in

Sweet Water. They live in a lovely home, entertain railroad executives and other dignitaries, and spend the winters in Colorado Springs. Money is the basis of the order and security of Marian Forrester's life. She tells Niel that money is a "very important thing."[57] She does not see herself as a lost lady because of her actions after the Captain loses his money; this is Niel's viewpoint. Marian accepts the order and security that is available at any given time by conforming to the changing times. Her order and security are not based upon moral values. She retains Captain Forrester's values only so long as he has money; after they are poor, she embraces the values of the new era when men like the shyster lawyer, Ivy Peters, are in control.

Niel is more concerned with maintaining order and security in the lives of Captain and Mrs. Forrester than Mrs. Forrester is. Niel saves the order of their reputation by severing the telephone wire before the local operator, who eavesdrops, hears Marian's bitter words for Frank Ellinger upon the occasion of his marriage. Niel again saves the order and security of their lives following the Captain's stroke. Because the Forresters are now poor, they cannot hire nursing help, and the local women come into the house to assist with the care of the Captain. Niel takes charge

[57]Willa Cather, A Lost Lady, p. 114.

of the nursing duties and firmly removes the gossiping women from the premises, even though he loses a year of school in doing so.

As Niel attempts to help the Forresters to retain order and security in their lives, he is also searching for these values for his own life. As a boy, he admires the order of the Forrester household and contrasts it with the disorder of his own motherless home. He is happy to remain in Sweet Water in the ordered world of his uncle, Judge Pommeroy, when his father leaves because of the depressed economic situation. Niel sees the passing of the pioneer era and the decline of the values which he feels were important in that time as a tremendous loss to society; Marian does not see this. She is primarily concerned with her own comfort. Niel, rather than Marian, appreciates the values which she is so willing to sacrifice for financial gain. His view of the proper basis for order and security differs greatly from hers.

Captain Forrester orders his life by adhering steadfastly to the values in which he believes. Even though he loses his financial security, he retains the security of knowing that he has acted in the manner which he believes to be right. He retains the order in his life, although he knows that his young wife is unfaithful. He continues to observe the manners which have been traditional in his

ordered life. His order, like Niel's, is based upon the practice of a way of life that he believes to be right; whereas Marian's order is based upon obtaining what she wants by any means that is available.

The Professor's House skillfully blends together two separate stories which are divided into three sections with Sections I and III primarily devoted to the story of Professor Godfrey St. Peter and Section II the story of Tom Outland. The theme of how to cope with advancing age, which was presented in Alexander's Bridge, reappears in this novel. Professor St. Peter faces the same problem as did Bartley Alexander, but the resolution differs.

St. Peter is concerned with order and security. His work habits are orderly, and this ordered life style allows him to accomplish a great deal. He carries a full teaching load during the years he is writing his eight volume history of Spanish Adventurers in North America for which he receives the Oxford prize for history, yet he also sets aside a regular amount of time for his wife and two daughters. After receiving the cash prize for his books which prize money provides a lovely new home, he finds it impossible to leave the old uncomfortable work room where he formerly did his writing. He cherishes the old order of this attic room with the accustomed surroundings including the dress forms.

The order and security of St. Peter's life is

reinforced by having known Tom Outland. In Tom, St. Peter finds a student who makes all the effort of teaching worthwhile. Conversely, the order and security of St. Peter's life is undermined by the events which occur in his family's life as a result of Tom's relationship with them. Prior to coming to college, Tom and his partner discover some cliff-dweller ruins in the Southwestern United States. Tom and Rosamond, St. Peter's older daughter, are engaged to be married when Tom enters the service in World War I. Tom is killed in the war, and Rosamond inherits all of his possessions including the plans for a scientific discovery. Rosamond's husband, Louis Marsellus, develops and markets this discovery making considerable money therefrom. The money which Rosamond and Louie realize from Tom's discovery threatens the order and security of the family because the younger daughter and her husband envy the good fortune which has brought wealth to Rosamond and Louie. St. Peter dislikes to accept gifts which have been purchased with that money; but his wife, Lillian, does not share his feeling. The money from Tom's discovery causes Professor Crane, who aided Tom somewhat with his early research, to feel that he and his family should share this fortune.

St. Peter's order and security gradually disappear after he and Lillian move into the new house. He withdraws from family functions whenever possible, and he refuses to

go to Europe with Lillian and the Marselluses because the trip is being financed with the money from Tom's discovery. While the family is in Europe, St. Peter spends most of his time at the old house. One evening, he falls asleep, and a wind storm blows out the gas burner on the stove as it blows the window shut. He awakens to perceive the situation, but he does not shut off the gas and open the window. The next moments of consciousness reveal that Augusta, the family dressmaker, has arrived in time to save his life. Lying there resting after his near brush with death, he is able to face the future with fortitude, although he believes that he must henceforth live without delight. The experience is a kind of rebirth which restores his confidence in his ability to regain order and security for his life.

St. Peter faces a problem similar to that faced by Bartley Alexander. St. Peter, however, is able to conquer the problem, with the help of Augusta who saves his life, and to regain order and security. His order and security will now be based upon the things that Augusta stands for. Augusta's positive qualities are now important to him.

> Seasoned and sound and on the solid earth she surely was, and, for all her matter-of-factness, and hard-handedness, kind and loyal. He even felt a sense of obligation toward her, instinctive, escaping definition, but real. And when you admitted that a thing was real, that was enough--now. (PH, 281)

Augusta's steadfast goodness and the obligation he feels to her give him something to live for again. Also these things

provide a foundation to begin to rebuild order and security.

Augusta is a minor character in this work, but she has attained a lasting order and security based upon her Catholic religion. Although St. Peter is cognizant of the child-like nature of her beliefs, he is also aware that the order and security she receives from them are constant. St. Peter is amused when Augusta tells him that the Blessed Virgin composed the Magnificat. He immediately conceives a picture of the Virgin sitting down and composing it. Yet, he gains a greater awareness of the order and security which Augusta's religion provides after she saves his life.

The middle section of The Professor's House treats Tom Outland's story about the discovery of the cliff-dweller ruins. Tom also is a searcher for order and security, and he finds both order and security in the ruins. At first, the mesa is an adventure, but it later becomes "a religious emotion" (PH, 251) for Tom. He describes his experience:

> Every morning, when the sun's rays first hit the mesa top, while the rest of the world was in shadow, I wakened with the feeling that I had found everything, instead of having lost everything. (PH, 251)

Tom suffers disillusionment when he goes to Washington in an unsuccessful attempt to interest government officials in the mesa, yet the total cliff-dweller ruins experience gives order and security to his life. He dies before reaching middle age which brings a sense of the loss of order and security for St. Peter and Bartley Alexander.

Lillian St. Peter, Godfrey's wife, also seeks order and security. She frequently finds order and security in things which destroy it for her husband, such as their new home and the family activities. Her order and security are threatened by Tom Outland's relationship with her husband. Whereas St. Peter finds Tom's friendship builds the order and security of his life by allowing him to feel that the effort of teaching is worthwhile, Lillian feels that Tom, and now Tom's memory, comes between Godfrey and her. The whole matter of Tom's relationship is, for Lillian, an "old wound, healed and hardened and hopeless" (PH, 94).

The future offers hope for order and security for both Godfrey and Lillian. Godfrey has safely recovered from his near asphyxiation; Lillian is returning from a pleasant vacation in Europe; and the Marselluses are expecting a baby, who will be the first grandchild. The new baby will, possibly, help Godfrey to restore the order which his anti-Semitic feeling toward Louie has destroyed.

My Mortal Enemy is Cather's shortest novel. The narrator, Nellie Birdseye, is the niece of a girlhood friend of the protagonist, Myra Driscoll Henshawe. Throughout her life, Myra searches for order and security with little success. Her disposition or personality is such that an ordered, secure life alludes her. She is incapable of appreciating her blessings or of looking on the bright side

of a situation. Her habitual treatment of those near and dear to her is caustic when they do something that displeases her.

As a young woman, she defies her uncle's ultimatum by marrying Oswald. In so doing, she is determined to order her life as she pleases; therefore, she rejects her uncle's wealth to marry the man she loves. This decision to order her own life gives the immediate security of popularity. In the small town of Parthia, Myra is a celebrity. Indeed, years later her story is the most interesting one told at family dinners.

By middle age, Myra strives for order and security in a variety of ways. She is still quite attractive, so that smart clothes, erect posture, and witty, though often sharp, conversation still draw admiring glances. She also engages in matchmaking. Since she does not have control of her uncle's fortune, she turns to a form of control over the lives of her friends. If, by her manipulations, she can change their lives by influencing their choice of a marriage partner, she will achieve a feeling of power which is a form of security for her.

After she becomes ill, she tries to retain the order she desires by neatly manicuring her hands, by using proper tea service, and by pretending that things are still as before. Oswald cautions Nellie, when he initially meets

her in San Francisco, neither to speak of nor seem to notice Myra's illness. As her health further deteriorates, she seeks the order and security to be found by returning to the Catholic faith of her youth. She states that "religion is different from everything else; because in religion seeking is finding."[58] Her religion is the only source of order and security for her at this time.

The order of her early life based upon her decision to live her life as she pleased no longer sustains her. The popularity and the attention given to her by friends because she defied her uncle's wishes are no longer meaningful. Oswald faithfully attends to her needs and tries to smooth the way for her, but Myra is bitter because she gave up wealth to marry him. His presence during her terminal illness certainly does give order and security to her life even though she does not appreciate him. He is the breadwinner, does the housework, and serves as her nurse. Moreover, he does all this without complaining; he accepts the situation as a sacred duty and as a privilege.

A provision in her uncle's will offers security for Myra. She can go to a home for aged women in Chicago, which home was established by her uncle, and live there without

[58]Willa Cather, My Mortal Enemy, p. 94. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

charge for the remainder of her life. She feels that her uncle was thinking, as he dictated this provision of his will, that she would "roll herself into the river" (MME, 82) rather than accept this source of security. Apparently she gives no serious consideration to availing herself of this privilege, yet she says that if her uncle were still living, she would "go back to him and ask his pardon" (MME, 82). She believes that she and her uncle share a common nature by virtue of blood relationship. Rather than being grateful that Oswald provides a way for her to reject her uncle's final offer of security, she continues to feel that Oswald has separated her from her uncle although the initial decision was hers, as is the present decision to remain in San Francisco.

Myra climaxes her violent displeasure with her situation by asking herself as Nellie and Oswald are watching beside her bed: "Why must I die like this, alone with my mortal enemy?" (MME, 95). This brings one of the rare instances in a Cather work wherein she does not specifically order the reader's perception of a situation. Nellie assumes that Myra is referring to Oswald as her mortal enemy. Nellie is an unreliable narrator at this point; the evidence in the work indicates that Myra is referring to herself as her own mortal enemy. Nellie notes the contrast between Oswald's loving care and Myra's lack of appreciation and sees Oswald

in a better light than Myra. She, therefore, concludes that Myra is adding yet another insult to the many she has already hurled at Oswald. Myra is her own worst enemy, her own mortal enemy, and she must die with herself. Her pride has always stood between her and the order and security that, as a typical Cather character, she needs so desperately.

Myra displays a consistent character to the end--proud, unpleasant, demanding. Only in the matter of her religion does she reverse her earlier position; she does return to the order and security of her childhood faith. Even in the practice of her faith, she retains her habitual characteristic of a desire to have the best for herself. During her illness and in death, she has the solace of an ebony crucifix with an ivory Christ. Myra Driscoll Henshawe does not rely upon the comfort of an ordinary, inexpensive crucifix; she has the best.

Myra does order her death. She slips out while Oswald is at work and Nellie is sleeping, takes a cab to a cliff overlooking the sea, and dies there alone at dawn with the crucifix in her hands. Myra does not achieve an order and security that she can live with as she grows older. Only in her religion does she achieve order and security that sustains her in death.

In Cather's next novel, Death Comes for the Archbishop, the two main characters have no problem attaining

order and security. Both enjoy, throughout the work, an order and security based upon their religious faith; yet the theme of the value of order and security is presented as completely in this work as in the others. The Archbishop of the story is Jean Marie Latour, Vicar Apostolic of New Mexico and Bishop of Agathonica. His episcopal residence is Santa Fe, New Mexico, and his Bishopric covers New Mexico, Arizona, and parts of Colorado. He is ably assisted by his friend, Father Joseph Vaillant. Both priests are Frenchmen from Auvergne, having attended the same Seminary there before coming to America as missionaries.

The work is an episodic chronological narrative of events in the lives of these nineteenth century missionaries. The two men present a contrast as to physical appearance and personality, and they reinforce the order and security of their lives in contrasting ways. Father Latour is handsome, refined, and scholarly; he retains order and security for his life by a series of orderly moves which successfully establish his position as Bishop (later Archbishop) and allow him to reform certain aspects of local religious practice. Finally, he is able to build a cathedral in Santa Fe. Father Vaillant is homely, extroverted, and makes friends quickly. He is quite willing to speak like a peon to win the peons to the church. He retains the order and security of his life by working directly with the common

people. The architectural beauty of the cathedral is not so important for him as taking the comforts of religion to the people in their daily lives.

In the prologue to this work, three Cardinals and a Bishop in Rome discuss the need for a Bishop in the Southwestern part of the United States. One of them states that the man chosen must "be a man to whom order is necessary--as dear as life."[59] Order is both necessary and dear to Father Latour. Because of the orderly way he approaches his duties, he is able to accomplish his goals in a systematic manner. He considers the most pressing problem, and, after deciding upon a course of action designed to solve that problem, he begins to carry out his plan, even if it means a journey of many days on horseback through unmapped country. He appreciates order wherever he finds it. When he visits Benito and his family at Hidden Water, he notes that the subterranean river which is released here makes possible the "grass and trees and flowers and human life; household order and hearths from which the smoke of burning piñon logs rose like incense to Heaven" (DCA, 31). He values the orderly way the Indians treat the environment:

> . . . just as it was the white man's way to assert himself in any landscape, to change it, make it over

[59]Willa Cather, Death Comes for the Archbishop, p. 8. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

> a little (at least to leave some mark of memorial of his sojourn), it was the Indian's way to pass through a country without disturbing anything; to pass and leave no trace, like fish through the water, or birds through the air. (DCA, 233)

As Father Latour appreciates order, he finds the lack of it unpleasant. His visit to Padre Martinez is difficult, not only because the Padre does not believe in nor practice celibacy, but also because of the way his household functions:

> The disorder was almost more than his [Father Latour's] fastidious taste could bear. The Padre's study table was sprinkled with snuff, and piled so high with books that they almost hid the crucifix hanging behind it. Books were heaped on chairs and tables all over the house,--and the books and the floors were deep in the dust of spring sand-storms. Father Martinez's boots and hats lay about in corners, his coats and cassocks were hung on pegs and draped over pieces of furniture. (DCA, 144)

Father Joseph also lives his life in an orderly way. He can adapt easily to conditions; he rebuilds run-down churches or, if no church is available, celebrates Mass out-of-doors. He finds order and security in serving the church as he feels a missionary should. Both he and Father Latour plant and tend a garden; both like to partake of the kinds of food which they knew in France in their youth. Thereby, they base some of the order of their lives upon retaining the ways of their native land. But, for both men, the order and security of their lives is primarily anchored in their faith. As Father Joseph prepares to go to Colorado to serve as a missionary in the mining camps, he remarks: "To fulfil the dreams of one's youth; that is the best that can

happen to a man. No worldly success can take the place of that" (DCA, 261). Both men have the order and security which results from being able to fulfill the dreams of their youth. Both retain the order and security of their lives until death. As Father Latour so aptly phrases it, they "die of having lived" (DCA, 269).

Shadows on the Rock is similar to Death Comes for the Archbishop in that the characters do not search for something upon which to build the order of their lives. They know that for them order and security will result from the practice of their religion and the maintenance of a way of life like that of their native France. The death of the Count threatens their orderly, secure life style temporarily, but they soon find help to regain order and security. Euclide Auclair, with his wife and daughter, Cécile, move from France to Quebec eight years prior to the beginning of the action of the novel. Because Auclair is an apothecary and physician to the Count de Frontenac, they are able to bring all the personal possessions they desire to the New World. Madame Auclair brings all of her household goods. Shortly before her death, she tells Cécile the value of order:

> After a while, when I am too ill to help you, you will perhaps find it fatiguing to do all these things alone, over and over. But in time you will come to love your duties, as I do. You will see that your father's whole happiness depends on order and regularity, and you will come to feel a pride in it. Without order our lives would be disgusting, like

> those of the poor savages. At home, in France, we have learned to do all these things in the best way, and we are conscientious, and that is why we are called the most civilized people in Europe and other nations envy us.[60]

Auclair and Cécile retain their French ways even though their neighbors follow local customs. The Auclairs dine at six o'clock in winter and seven o'clock in summer as they used to do in Paris. Dinner is important to Auclair. He regards it as "the thing" that keeps "him a civilized man and a Frenchman" (SR, 17). He and Cécile take a walk each evening before going to bed. Cécile retains the custom of giving food each evening to Blinker, their physically deformed neighbor, as her mother used to do. Life in the Auclair household follows the French manner even after Madame Auclair's death because of "the mother's unswerving fidelity to certain traditions, and the daughter's loyalty to her mother's wish" (SR, 26).

Religion contributes much to the order and security of the Auclairs. The church not only ties them to the ways of their homeland, it also serves as a vital force in their lives. The nuns provide inspiration for the lay people who are often homesick for their loved ones so far away in France. The nuns are always cheerful and pleasant, and they

[60]Willa Cather, Shadows on the Rock, pp. 24-5. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

find ample order and security in the New World, which they share with the laity:

> When they [the nuns] came across the Atlantic, they brought their family with them, their kindred, their closest friends. In whatever little wooden vessel they had laboured across the sea, they carried all; they brought to Canada the Holy Family, the saints and martyrs, the glorious company of the Apostles, the heavenly host. (SR, 96-7)

The church in Quebec, which brings order and security to the lives of the people, has certain internal problems. There is a feud between Count Frontenac and both old Bishop Laval and the new Bishop Monseigneur de Saint-Vallier. Also, the two Bishops quarrel between themselves with church members taking the side of one Bishop or the other. However, these matters do not prevent the church from providing order and security for the people. The order and security which the church provides is larger than the human disagreements.

> When an adventurer carries his gods with him into a remote and savage country, the colony he founds will, from the beginning, have graces, traditions, riches of the mind and spirit. Its history will shine with bright incidents, slight, perhaps, but precious, as in life itself, where the great matters are often as worthless as astronomical distances, and the trifles dear as the heart's blood. (SR, 98)

Cécile becomes aware of how much the order and security of her life mean to her when she takes a trip up the river with Pierre to visit a country family. Everyone washes in a common basin using the common towel. Cécile must share a bed with the four daughters of the family. The bed linens

are not clean, and the daughters do not wash before going to bed. Cécile stays in bed only until the girls are asleep; then she sits by the window for the rest of the night. After two nights, she begs Pierre to take her home. She is so happy when they see Quebec on the river that she sheds tears. As they step on shore, she remembers a nun who kissed the earth in a similar situation. Had Cécile been alone, she would have done this also. Her father expresses surprise that they have returned home so soon, but Pierre replies that they were both a little bored in the country. When they are alone, Cécile tells her father the real reason they came home. He asks if the people did not have kind ways. Cécile replies that they did indeed. Upon pondering the matter, she realizes that "kind ways" are "not enough," one must have "kind things about one, too" (SR, 197). Later as she prepares dinner for her father and Pierre, Cécile comprehends the situation more fully:

> As she began handling her own things again, it all seemed a little different,--as if she had grown at least two years older in the two nights she had been away. She did not feel like a little girl, doing what she had been taught to do. She was accustomed to think that she did all these things so carefully to please her father, and to carry out her mother's wishes. Now she realized that she did them for herself, quite as much. . . . These coppers, big and little, these brooms and clouts and brushes, were tools; and with them one made, not shoes or cabinet-work, but life itself. One made a climate within a climate; one made the days,--the complexion, the special flavour, the special happiness of each day as it passed; one made life. (SR, 197-8)

Throughout the years in Quebec, Auclair looks forward to one day returning to France. Eventually the death of the Count makes that course of action not feasible. Initially the Count's death threatens the order and security of life for the Auclairs, but Pierre returns to them as soon as he hears the news. His presence gives Cécile a feeling of security again at the moment when both she and her father need it most. As she goes to sleep on the night of Pierre's return to be with them in the difficult days immediately following the Count's death, Cécile considers what it is about Pierre that gives security to their lives:

> He [Pierre] had not a throne behind him, like the Count (it had been very far behind, indeed!), not the authority of a parchment and seal. But he had authority, and a power which came from knowledge of the country and its people; from knowledge, and from a kind of passion. His daring and his pride seemed to her even more splendid than Count Frontenac's.
> (SR, 268)

Cécile and her father regain order and security in their lives. They retain their French ways and the solace of their religion, but they now accept Canada as their home rather than France. Cécile and Pierre marry and are the parents of four sons--the Canadians of the future.

Cather's next novel, Lucy Gayheart, is the story of Lucy Gayheart's struggle to become a musical artist. There are parallels between this work and The Song of the Lark. Both Lucy Gayheart and Thea Kronborg are small town girls who aspire for a career as a musician. Thea is successful

in becoming an artist, but Lucy is not. Lucy's early life offers more order and security than Thea's. Lucy is pretty and popular; Thea is neither. Both Lucy and Thea are encouraged to develop their talent by a parent who has found order and security in life. Thea's mother has found order and security in her deterministic view of life; Lucy's father has found order and security by managing "to enjoy every day from start to finish."[61]

Lucy is aware of something special about herself. One evening she sees the first star and experiences a flash of something which she does not completely understand:

> That point of silver light spoke to her like a signal, released another kind of life and feeling which did not belong here. It overpowered her. With a mere thought she had reached that star and it had answered, recognition had flashed between. Something knew, then, in the unknowing waste: something had always known, forever! That joy of saluting what is far above one was an eternal thing, not merely something that had happened to her ignorance and her foolish heart. (LG, 11-2)

Lucy has a great deal of order and security as she goes to Chicago to study music. At first, she is able to retain an orderly, secure life; but soon these qualities slip away. She falls in love with Sebastian, a middle-aged singer for whom she plays practice accompaniment. Then she refuses to marry the home town banker's son, Harry Gordon.

[61]Willa Cather, Lucy Gayheart, p. 6. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

She places the order and security of her life upon her relationship with her married lover and rejects the order and security offered by marriage to Harry. When Sebastian drowns, Lucy returns home to try to rebuild her life. She makes some progress toward regaining order and security but drowns while ice skating on the river. Thus, her life ends before she achieves order and security.

The critics note the tired, somber tone of this work and attribute it to various causes, especially to Cather's disillusionment with the world after it "broke in two in 1922 or thereabouts" (NUF, v). This may be the reason for the dark, sad tone of this work; however, all people are not successful artists, pioneers, or missionaries. There are those whose lives end in failure. Since Cather is using the theme of a search for order and security throughout her novels, this work portrays the failure of an individual to achieve order and security. Even the tone reflects the lack of enthusiasm which accompanies failure.

Cather's final novel, Sapphira and the Slave Girl, is analogous to Shadows on the Rock in that both are about a family seeking to base the order and security of life upon the maintenance of traditional cultural patterns. Sapphira Dodderidge Colbert orders her life by doing as she pleases with her slaves. Her husband, Henry, seldom interferes with her management of the slaves, but he does refuse to sign so

that Sapphira can sell Nancy, the half-white, half-black daughter of Sapphira's personal maid, Till.

Sapphira seeks order and security, and, for the most part, finds it. She controls her household and orders matters there. Her attempt to manipulate the situation so that Martin will seduce Nancy is the result of her desire to control affairs in her household. Her request that her daughter, Rachel, cease to visit at the house is a further attempt to order life in her house. Despite her ill health, Sapphira retains control of the house. Till can manage many of the slaves, but only Sapphira can control Lizzie, the cook.

Henry also searches for order and security. His religion is an important source of order and security for him. He manages the mill in an orderly manner even as Sapphira manages the house. He does not always agree with Sapphira's decisions, but he seldom interferes in her affairs. An orderly life for both Henry and Sapphira depends upon each allowing the other freedom to manage his own particular domain.

Rachel Blake, Sapphira and Henry's daughter, seeks order and security in her own way, and she finds it. Her religion is a source of order and security for her. Caring for the sick and poor of the community also provides order and security for her. Rachel assists Nancy to escape by

the underground railroad because she feels that this is the morally right thing to do. For Rachel, a social order that is based upon the institution of slavery is wrong.

This work ends with the Colberts reconciling their differences. Henry and Sapphira offer the order and security of their comfortable home to Rachel and her surviving daughter. Sapphira makes a considerable concession in doing this. She tells Rachel that she needs help to manage the household. Sapphira does this because she knows that Rachel's pride will not let her accept the security of their home unless she feels that she is doing it because she is needed. Sapphira, thus, sacrifices certain of the order and security she feels by managing the house herself in order to add to Rachel's order and security.

The critics usually rate this work below the quality of many of the other Cather works. Like Lucy Gayheart, it lacks the enthusiasm of the earlier works; nevertheless, it does treat ordinary people in ordinary situations with understanding. Further, the characters in this work are just as concerned with securing order and security as are the characters in the other novels.

The theme of order and security appears in each of Cather's twelve novels. It is not lessened by the time of action or the geographic setting: the seventeenth century Auclairs in Quebec and the twentieth century Wheelers in

Nebraska share this need for order and security. The occupation of the protagonist--pioneer, artist, missionary, soldier, or individual building a meaningful life for himself--does not affect his need for order and security. All Cather characters are working to achieve their own unique goal, and they are not content to let circumstances provide the pattern for their lives. As they strive to attain their goal in life within the framework of their individual talent, they also strive to attain an orderly, secure life. One characteristic which all Cather characters share is the belief that successful living is predicated upon an orderly, secure life.

CHAPTER IV

THE FORMAL DEVICES REFLECT ORDER

In addition to dramatizing the theme of a search for order and security, Cather uses formal devices which demonstrate order and pattern in her works. The Blooms observe the fusion of form and theme and compare Cather and James in their handling of this facet of their fiction. For both Cather and James, an attitude "of moral sobriety" toward their art is important; their "esthetic sensibility . . . transfigures ethical responsibility into organic narrative situations."[62] Both "believed that without appropriately conceived shape the novel fails to represent in true essence the inner experience which is the only justifiable substance of fiction."[63] For Cather, the moral concept of the need for order and security fuses with an ordered aesthetic form.

One ordering characteristic of Cather's works is the use of an epilogue presenting a final scene or scenes which take place after the ending of the main body of the work.

[62]Bloom, Willa Cather's Gift of Sympathy, p. 243.

[63]Bloom, Willa Cather's Gift of Sympathy, p. 243.

The epilogues briefly summarize events that have transpired after the main action. In Shadows on the Rock, the epilogue takes place fifteen years after the main part of the work, and it tells selected significant facts about the lives of the main characters. The concluding section of A Lost Lady completes the story of Mrs. Forrester's life with a scene of a chance meeting between Niel Herbert and his boyhood friend, Ed Elliott. One of Ours ends with a glimpse into the lives of Claude's mother and Mahailey at home where their memories of Claude provide sustaining strength for their lives.

The epilogues help order the works by providing a final glimpse into the fictional world created by the novel. No new material is introduced; they are sequels providing the kind of subsequent information that one who is away desires to know about affairs in his home community. The epilogues allow the author to order the world of the novel beyond the apparent ending of the work. This formal device provides a kind of security for both author and reader in that the results of the actions of the characters are stated so that the reader does not assume a sequel to the work other than that given by the author. This is a way of ordering the work based upon the aura of reality which results from reporting later events in the manner that such events are reported for a documentary newspaper or television presentation.

A parallel ordering device to the epilogues is the prologue of Death Comes for the Archbishop. This introductory section is set in Rome; the two principal characters of the novel do not appear, although the name of the Archbishop is mentioned. This background scene allows the reader to begin Book I of the work with some basic knowledge of the plot to be developed. As the epilogues allow the author to continue to order the world of the work after its apparent end, this prologue orders or sets a pattern for the ensuing events of this work prior to its apparent beginning.

Another ordering feature of Cather's works is their division into sections with each individual section having a title. These named sections are further divided into the regular numbered chapters. O Pioneers! has five such sections: "The Wild Land," "Neighboring Fields," "Winter Memories," "The White Mulberry Tree," and "Alexandra." There are nine such sections in Sapphira and the Slave Girl; One of Ours has five; The Professor's House has three; and even My Mortal Enemy, the shortest of the novels, is divided into two parts, although these parts are not given specific titles. The titles of individual sections describe the material presented in these sections and order the work by offering a descriptive phrase concerning the material covered within a section. Without this specific order provided by the author, the reader would be free to impose an order

of his own choosing upon the works.

Cather usually follows literary tradition by using the past tense for verbs in the descriptive passages and the present tense for the dialogue. Occasionally, however, the verb tense will be changed to the present in the descriptive passages. Such passages suggest that the matter being described exists at the time the author is writing (or even as the reader is reading) in the state in which it existed at the time ascribed to the work of fiction. The opening sentence of O Pioneers! states that the time is thirty years ago. The time covered by the events of the work is nearly twenty years; thus the end of the work occurs ten or more years prior to the time of composition. Yet, the first three paragraphs of Part II contain present tense verbs:

> It is sixteen years since John Bergson died. His wife now lies beside him, and the white shaft that marks their graves gleams across the wheat-fields. Could he rise from beneath it, he would not know the country under which he has been asleep. The shaggy coat of the prairie, which they lifted to make him a bed, has vanished forever. From the Norwegian graveyard one looks out over a vast checker-board, marked off in squares of wheat and corn; light and dark, dark and light. Telephone wires hum along the white roads, which always run at right angles. (OP, 75)

Later in O Pioneers! a shift to present tense occurs within a paragraph describing a family dinner at Alexandra's house:

> Oscar sat at the foot of the table and his four tow-headed little boys, aged from twelve to five, were ranged at one side. Neither Oscar nor Lou

> has changed much; they have simply, as Alexandra said of them long ago, grown to be more and more like themselves. Lou now looks the older of the two; his face is thin and shrewd and wrinkled about the eyes, while Oscar's is thick and full. Oscar makes more money than his brother. . . . (OP, 98)

The use of present tense continues for the remainder of the paragraph and into the next before returning to the past tense as abruptly as it began.

At the end of Chapter III in the first section of One of Ours, there is a tense shift to present from past for a paragraph describing Claude.

> Claude is on his way back to Lincoln, with a fairly liberal allowance which does not contribute much to his comfort or pleasure. He has no friends or instructors whom he can regard with admiration, though the need to admire is just now uppermost in his nature. He is convinced that the people who might mean something to him will always misjudge him and pass him by. (OO, 31)

Such tense shifts give the order of verisimilitude to the works by suggesting that this particular fictional world is duplicated in the real world if the reader were to travel to the described location. If this fictional world can be presented so that the reader accepts it as authentic, perhaps the didactic themes conveyed will be accepted also; and the beliefs of the reader will be ordered thereby.

Order is achieved in a number of the works by setting the action in the past. Because history provides the social, political, and economic situation for a past era, fiction

set in past time has order insofar as it portrays the era in a manner consistent with the historical record of that era. Cather's works which take place in the past adhere closely to the historical picture of that time in the presentation of the life style of the characters. Farming procedures of O Pioneers! and My Antonia are those of the nineteenth century; the Wheelers of the twentieth century novel, One of Ours, have automobiles and a cream separator. Strict observance to the actual practices of the time of the works gives order to the works. The author creates a fictional world based solidly upon the order of the unchanging past.

Then, too, Cather uses the past to give order to her works by drawing upon her own past experiences for her characters, settings, and incidents. By including people she knew, places she had been, and incidents which she had observed, she was using the order of her own past as her memory supplied it. The people, places, and events so used have the order of the real world coupled with the order which Cather gives them as she modifies them to serve in the fictional world of the works.

The many deaths which occur in Cather's fiction also give order to the works. Only a character who has achieved order and security in his life, or who has promise of achieving order and security, remains alive at the end of a work. Not all of those who die have failed to achieve

order and security; some die because death is the ultimate climax for all beings, fictional or corporeal. Whether a character who dies has, or has not, gained order and security for his life, death provides an orderly resolution for his story. Reporting the character's death takes the story of that character as far as possible; the total life has been ordered. Bartley Alexander, Claude Wheeler, Myra Henshawe, and Lucy Gayheart are protagonists who die without being able to gain and maintain order and security for their lives. They are unable to solve the overwhelming problems they face. Their futures seem to promise only increasing tribulations for them. The deaths of these protagonists allow an orderly resolution, without a solution, for their problems. The death of the Archbishop is a totally different kind of ordered ending for his orderly, secure life. He observes, "I shall die of having lived" (DCA, 269). In those works in which the deaths are reported in the epilogues, the emphasis is not upon death but upon the life of that character as portrayed in the main part of the work. The reported death in the epilogue is merely an orderly conclusion for the novel.

An order that encompasses more than one work is to deal with a similar situation in two works offering two different approaches to the matter. Randall notes Cather's ability to perceive the "real struggle between two reasonable

positions."[64] This technique allows more than one solution to a problem to be offered in an orderly manner with each solution being given in a separate work. Alexander's Bridge and The Professor's House present the theme of the difficulty encountered in accepting approaching old age. Bartley Alexander finds no solution except in death; Godfrey St. Peter finds the strength to face the future after Augusta rescues him from asphyxiation. Thea Kronborg and Lucy Gayheart are artists striving for success. Thea achieves her goal, but Lucy fails. Alexandra Bergson and Antonia Cuzak demonstrate two roles for the pioneer woman. Alexandra is a successful business woman managing her farm better than her brothers manage theirs; Antonia is equally successful in her role as wife and mother. Death Comes for the Archbishop and Shadows on the Rock show that French people in the New World may bring the values of their native culture to their new homes whether they serve as officials of the church or live their lives as ordinary citizens.

An ordering device which parallels this one is the combination of two opposite viewpoints in one work and the portrayal of both with understanding. Sapphira and the Slave Girl shows both sides of the slavery question. Both viewpoints are portrayed so that the reader feels empathy

[64]Randall, p. 219.

for those on each side. One of Ours attacks the social system of the early twentieth century in the rural Midwest by offering abundant description of Claude's feeling that he is trapped in a cultural waste land; nevertheless, it also clearly points out Claude's own inability either to accept the situation or to break away from it. Gladys Farmer shares Claude's frustrations with the small town society, but she is able to adjust to the demands of the local school board and, at the same time, retain her integrity as an individual. Thus Cather offers themes that demonstrate in an orderly way that, in certain situations, more than one point of view is defensible. As much as she orders events in the lives of her fictional people, she recognizes that the complex problems of life may be met in more than one way.

Superbly beautiful passages of description also give order to the works.

> The mill stood on the west bank of Back Creek: the big water-wheel hung almost over the stream itself. The creek ran noisily along over a rough stone bottom which here and there churned the dark water into foam. For the most part it was wide and shallow, though there were deep holes between the ledges. The dam, lying in the green meadows above the mill, was fed by springs, and a race conveyed the water to the big wooden wheel.[65]

> These cloud formations seemed to be always there, however hot and blue the sky. Sometimes they were flat terraces, ledges of vapour; sometimes they were

[65]Willa Cather, Sapphira and the Slave Girl, p. 46.

> dome-shaped, or fantastic, like the tops of silvery pagodas, rising one above another, as if an oriental city lay directly behind the rock. The great tables of granite set down in an empty plain were inconceivable without their attendant clouds, which were a part of them, as the smoke is part of the censer, or the foam of the wave. (DCA, 95)

> There were no clouds, the sun was going down in a limpid, gold-washed sky. Just as the lower edge of the red disk rested on the high fields against the horizon, a great black figure suddenly appeared on the face of the sun. We sprang to our feet, straining our eyes toward it. In a moment we realized what it was. On some upland farm, a plough had been left standing in the field. The sun was sinking just behind it. Magnified across the distance by the horizontal light, it stood out against the sun, was exactly contained within the circle of the disk; the handles, the tongue, the share--black against the molten red. There it was, heroic in size, a picture writing on the sun. (MA, 159)

Descriptive passages such as these--Henry Colbert's mill in Sapphira and the Slave Girl, the clouds above the mesas in Death Comes for the Archbishop, or the plow against the sun in My Antonia--are to be found throughout all of Cather's novels. They suggest the order and security which the characters find in the landscape. The beauty of a landscape, its symmetry of line and color, suggests an orderly universe. Nature is a haven and a sanctuary amid life's problems; it is not hostile. Even the blizzard in Death Comes for the Archbishop does not suggest terror, although the Archbishop and Jacinto lose their mounts and spend an hour clambering over rocks, fallen trees, and deep holes before reaching the shelter of a cave.

> A little after mid-day a burst of wind sent the snow whirling in coils about the two travellers, and a great storm broke. The wind was like a hurricane at sea, and the air became blind with snow. . . . Pine trees by the way stood out for a moment, then disappeared absolutely in the whirlpool of snow. Trail and landmarks, the mountain itself, were obliterated. (DCA, 126)

This passage reflects the manner in which the Archbishop and Jacinto react to the storm. They do not panic: the Archbishop has the security of his religion; Jacinto has the security of his knowledge of the local terrain. In this description of the blizzard, it is the air, not the men, that is blind with snow. The trees and other landmarks, not the men, are obliterated. The order and security with which these men face this severe storm is portrayed in the description of the storm so that this blizzard seems quite orderly.

Myra Henshawe finds order and security for her life by returning again and again to the cliff overlooking the ocean which she chooses as the location for her death. Even Claude Wheeler, who is tremendously frustrated with his life in Nebraska, finds comfort in plowing and planting a new field. Alexandra Bergson, Antonia Cuzak, and Thea Kronborg all find strength to continue to search for order and security by spending time out-of-doors close to nature. The disenchantment with life in the rural Midwest which is a theme in certain of the Cather works, such as The Song of

the Lark, One of Ours, and Lucy Gayheart, is not the fault of the geographic features of the region. Nature here is just as much a contributing factor for order and security in the lives of the characters as it is in any other part of the world. The dissatisfaction with rural Midwestern life stems from the actions of people, not from the land itself.

Certain poetic devices add order to Cather's works. These poetic qualities of her works, like the beautiful descriptive passages, reflect the need for order which the characters feel. Poetry demands a disciplined ordering of words and phrases so that ideas are conveyed clearly and concisely using a minimum number of words. Poetry conveys its message without wordy explanatory passages; every word must serve a useful purpose. Descriptive passages which paint a picture in a few words, images, and alliteration add order to the works.

The description of the Acoma mesa in Death Comes for the Archbishop illustrates Cather's ability to make every word serve a useful purpose.

> The top of the mesa was about ten acres in extent, the Bishop judged, and there was not a tree or a blade of green upon it; not a handful of soil, except the churchyard, held in by an adobe wall, where the earth for burial had been carried up in baskets from the plain below. The white dwellings, two and three storeyed, were not scattered, but huddled together in a close cluster, with no protecting slope of ground or shoulder of rock, lying flat against the flat,

> bright against the bright,--both the rock and the plastered houses threw off the sun glare blindingly. (DCA, 99-100)

Poetic imagery contributes to the aesthetic order by presenting ideas in this manner. The images frequently also serve as symbols. The image of light appears in all of the works. If a night scene is used, it is almost certain to be a night when the moon is shining. Probably the most famous image in the Cather works is the plow against the background of the setting sun witnessed by Jim and the girls in My Antonia. In My Mortal Enemy, there is an image of winter "tamed, like a polar bear led on a leash by a beautiful lady" (MME, 25). Death Comes for the Archbishop provides the image: "Elsewhere the sky is the roof of the world; but here the earth was the floor of the sky" (DCA, 232).

Like the images, the alliterative passages present an idea in an aesthetically pleasing manner. In Shadows on the Rock, the parrot "saw a servant steal silver spoons" (SR, 215). Professor St. Peter "sauntered along slackly through the hot September sunshine" (PH, 54). Lillian St. Peter's old wound is "healed and hardened and hopeless" (PH, 94). An author who uses the formalistic devices of alliteration, imagery, and descriptive passages that give a sharply clear picture in a few words reflects order in the manner in which he composes his works.

The performance of certain routine acts in a

regular manner provides order as these acts become ritualistic. Doctor Archie engages in a ritualistic set of actions when visiting the bedside of a patient by always taking a fresh, clean, scented handkerchief from his pocket just as he sits down to talk with his patient. Fathers Latour and Vaillant make a ritual of meals served in the French manner. Cécile Auclair follows an exact household routine that makes brooms and brushes important items in the maintenance of one's cultural heritage. These orderly repetitions of one simple act give order to the lives of the characters and also give order to the works.

Order is evidenced by the authentic descriptions of a variety of arts. Cather characters and narrators enjoy, appreciate, and demand quality craftsmanship in everything. Music and the theater receive major emphasis both from the viewpoint of the performer and the spectator. The subject of two novels, The Song of the Lark and Lucy Gayheart, is the development of a musical artist. A list of characters who earn their livelihood as musicians or actors would be long; a list of those who regularly attend performances of the opera or theater would be even longer. Music and the theater, however, are not the only arts represented. Claude Wheeler finds beauty and inspiration in the architecture of the French churches. Father Latour brings an architect from France to Santa Fe so that the cathedral will be a beautiful

structure. Bartley Alexander is a bridge building engineer; Professor St. Peter is the author of prize winning history books. In addition to the professional arts, such routine everyday functions as cooking, dining, and gardening are elevated to the level of art. Joseph X. Brennan notes Cather's use of many arts:

> [Cather is] concerned with all the forms and marks of civilization--with the art of homemaking and the art of cooking, with the rituals of dining and the fashions of dress, with fine glass and pottery and furniture, with architectural design and composition, with the aesthetics of color and light and harmonious setting, with the theater and poetry and foreign literatures, and above all else with the whole scope of western music, whether sacral or secular, orchestral, instrumental, or vocal.[66]

For a Cather character, it is important to have all things beautiful and orderly. They strive to excel in whatever they do, whether the task is large or small; therefore, they elevate simple functions to the level of art. The emphasis upon the arts, great and small, adds order to the works.

The form of Cather's novels follows an orderly pattern. The formalistic devices of epilogue, prologue, named divisions within a work, and random shifts of verb tense from past to present in the descriptive passages contribute to the ordered pattern. Further, Cather gains order by drawing upon her own past experiences for characters, settings, and incidents. She also uses a time for certain

[66]Joseph X. Brennan, "Willa Cather and Music," University Review, XXXI, No. II (Winter, 1964), 175-83.

of the works that is in the past. The large number of deaths occurring in the works allows the total life of a character to be ordered. A subject may be treated in two different works with each work offering a different resolution to the problem presented, and one work may present two viewpoints about a given situation. Finally, the descriptive passages which portray nature as a haven and a sanctuary; the poetic devices of exact description, imagery, and alliteration; a ritualistic manner of performing routine acts; and emphasis upon all other arts--professional, performing, and household--complete the ordered patterns in the works and fuse theme and form.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

An examination of Cather's fiction reveals that she uses the motif of order and security as both a thematic and formalistic unifying device in her twelve novels. Although her short stories and poetry do not fall within the purview of this study, perhaps a brief look at them will demonstrate how pervasive this element is in Cather's works.

The short stories span a much longer period of composition than do her novels. She began writing short stories while a college student, and her last collection was initially published in 1948. This motif of a search for order and security is present throughout the short stories. "Lou, the Prophet," originally published in the Hesperian in 1892, portrays this theme. Lou is a simple-minded, young, Danish immigrant to Nebraska who seeks an orderly, secure life by working hard on his homesteaded land. Circumstances thwart his efforts. He loses his cattle during the winter; his girlfriend marries a more prosperous young man; his mother dies; and the drought is ruining his crops. At this point, he turns to religion, but his particular

practice of religion causes his neighbors to consider him mentally deranged. His only sympathy comes from the younger boys of the neighborhood. The story ends ambiguously with Lou's disappearance. The grownups believe that he drowns and that the quicksand pulls his body under because dragging the river fails to produce his body. The little Danish boys believe that he was translated like Enoch of the Bible. The theme of order and security is presented in this early short story; Lou's entire energy is devoted to his search for order and security. Although his efforts do not result in an orderly, secure life based upon the order of which his neighbors approve, the ending offers the suggestion that in daring to order his own life in a way that differs from the socially sanctioned way, Lou has gained his own unique kind of order and security.

The theme of the need for order and security is still important in the late short stories. "Before Breakfast" is a stream of consciousness report of the before breakfast thoughts and actions of a highly successful, self-made business man, Henry Grenfell. Henry likes the order of his vacation cabin which he alone occupies. He is pleased to find his eiderdown bathrobe hanging on the same hook where he left it two years ago. This late short story repudiates the view that during the closing years of her career, Cather turned away from the present to seek sanctuary in the

unchanging, orderly past. Grenfell finds order and security in the present. His disagreeable frame of mind is not allayed by the sight of a giant spruce tree which he has named, "Grandfather," and which the local residents of the island believe was struck by lightening at least one hundred years previously. He is reassured, however, by a glimpse of the visiting geologist's daughter taking an early morning swim all alone in the cold ocean water while he himself is dressed in wool sox, a flannel shirt, and a leather coat. He admires her spirit. Seeing her, he regains the order and security which he hopes to find on this vacation trip. Returning past the "Grandfather" spruce on his way for breakfast, he observes, "Plucky youth is more bracing than enduring age."[67]

Not only do the short stories convey the theme of order and security, the poetry does also. The poetry employs the order of rhyme; alliteration; repetition; and regular meter, including iambic tetrameter, iambic pentameter, and ballad meter. The themes and subjects of the poems include the beauties of both Nebraska and other places about the world which Cather visited, narratives about the pioneers, and death. All of the poems reveal an orderly pattern.

[67]Willa Cather, "Before Breakfast," in The Old Beauty and Others, p. 166.

The unifying, common denominator motif of order and security also appears as an intangible quality in the works. Cather describes this quality in her essay, "The Novel Démeublé":

> Whatever is felt upon the page without being specifically named there--that, one might say, is created. It is the inexplicable presence of the thing not named, of the overtone divined by the ear but not heard by it, the verbal mood, the emotional aura of the fact or the thing or the deed, that gives high quality to the novel or the drama, as well as to poetry itself.[68]

Cather again describes this method of presentation in an essay about the works of Katherine Mansfield:

> She [Mansfield] communicates vastly more than she actually writes. One goes back and runs through the pages to find the text which made one know certain things about Linda or Burnell or Beryl, and the text is not there--but something was there, all the same--is there, though no typesetter will ever set it. It is this overtone, which is too fine for the printing press and comes through without it, that makes one know that this writer had something of the gift which is one of the rarest things in writing, and quite the most precious.[69]

Cather is stating in these two essays that an author may communicate a concept in such a manner that the method of presentation defies specific description. This is the situation in the matter of her motif of order and security. As a theme and as a formalistic device, this motif may be

[68]Willa Cather, "The Novel Démeublé," in Not Under Forty, pp. 43-51.

[69]Willa Cather, "Katherine Mansfield," in Not Under Forty, pp. 123-47.

traced through the works and specifically noted, and it is further presented by this intangible method of presentation which Cather describes. Each Cather character desires to succeed in his chosen occupation, and running parallel with his desire for success is the persistent desire for order and security in his life. Everything that a character does contributes to the reader's understanding that order and security are essential if that character is to fulfill his destiny.

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