

Chapter I

Introduction

I am married and I have no other concern but to please the man I love; he is the end of every care I have: if I dress, it is for him; if I read a poem or a play, it is to qualify myself for a conversation agreeable to his taste.

The Spectator

I

Willa Cather is one of the most distinguished novelists of the early twentieth century America, who has raised voice against male-supremacy and endeavored to place women in the position of men. She is known for her advocacy of women's rights and their higher social dignity. She challenges men for their exploitation and domination over women and assaults on orthodox patriarchs for using their politics of power to suppress women in the society. She claims that a married woman is not a husband's puppet only to move to his couch, but his equal life-partner to drive the family. She revolts against the corrupt Victorian males for their power-seeking nature and condemns them for their snobbishness and misogyny to the women. She wants to strengthen women providing them the autonomous role of the 'heroes' in her novels. So her novels are not only the medium to entertain her readers but also the means to reform the society. In short, her novels are to reflect 'art for life's sake', and this art she has substituted to the study of women, particularly with a focus on the difficult life of the new American women.

It was the spring of 1883 that a family from Virginia, loaded with bags and baggage into the wagon and headed by a fair-haired, tall, handsome gentleman with his smart beautiful wife in Virginian fashionable dress, entered Nebraska, a newly settled prairie of the United States. It was Willa Cather's migration to Nebraska with her father Charles Cather, mother Mary Virginia Cather and her siblings, Roscoe, Douglass and Jessica. Their destination was to the farmhouse of her grand-father William Cather in

Webster County, about 20 miles mid-west of Red Cloud. In 1884, the family crossed the Republican River and permanently settled in Red Cloud, a small town existed only thirteen years back. Nebraska, which has now got so much popularity in the United States because of Cather's novels, was not her actual birth place. But it was a frontier land of her childhood experience, which could help her to shape her best feminist novels, *O Pioneers!* (1913), *My Antonia* (1918) and lots of other novels and short stories, leading her at the peak of greatness.

Willa Cather was born on December 7, 1873 at her maternal grand-mother's house in the village of Back Creek valley, Virginia. Her father Charles Cather was an Irish descent gentleman of Virginia and her mother Mary Virginia Cather, an Alastian. She looked active, independent and self-willed from her very childhood, and some traces of maturity could be marked in her habit. She was a very smart girl with white fine skin, reddish-brown curls and dark-blue eyes, which witnessed her positive personality indicating some purpose for future. Her real life began when she moved to Red Cloud, Nebraska.

Cather got no opportunity to go to school at her early age in Virginia. It might be either by her mother's poor health or by her father's financial difficulty or by not having schooling facility in Virginia that she was prevented from her formal primary education in school. "But in the evenings, she read aloud to her grand-mother from the English classics, *The Bible* and *Pilgrim's Progress*."¹ She was very close to her maternal grand-mother Rachael Boak who loved her very much and told her stories about the old Virginian men and women. In Brown's words: "Willa Cather's Virginian childhood is a prelude to her years of experience and preparation, not a part of them."² If her birth place works as a 'prelude' to her future life, Red Cloud soil and its pioneer women have acted as the actual materials and fictional characters in her novels. She herself says: "The ideas for all my novels have come from things that happened around Red Cloud when I was a child."³ She had entered Mid-west Nebraska at the age of nine

¹ Dorothy McFarland, *Willa Cather* (New York: Frederick Unger Publishing Co., 1972) 8.

² E. K. Brown, *Willa Cather: A Critical Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953) 5.

³ Quoted by Mildred R. Bennett, *The World Of Willa Cather* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska

and settled permanently in Red Cloud at ten. It was the formative period of her life.

Her father Charles Cather (1848-1928), the son of William and Caroline Cather, was a farmer raising sheep in Virginia and a Real Estate businessman in Red Cloud. He married Mary Virginia Boak, the daughter of William Lee Boak and Rachael Seibert Boak from Back Creek Valley, Virginia on December 5, 1872. They had seven children, among whom Willa was their eldest daughter. She loved her tender-hearted father rather than her mother. In James Woodress's analysis:

Charles Cather, Willa Cather's father, was an amiable young man, soft spoken and tender hearted. He was tall, fair-haired, gentle....He was handsome in a boyish southern way and never hurt anybody's feelings. Willa Cather loved him dearly and was always much closer to him than to her mother....He appears....an easygoing businessman who hates to press his debtors: 'His boyish, eager-to-please manner, his fair complexion and blue eyes and young face, made him seem very soft.' ...But his appearance was deceiving.⁴

Her beloved father's physical and mental beauty as such naturally surpassed in child Cather to build up her feminist career to help the poor and oppressed women of the frontier.

Again, Cather's encounter with her father's clients from different walks of life widened her horizons and provided her opportunities to study human nature as a preparation for her novels. She regularly visited her father's office in Red Cloud and helped him dealing with his business letters and discussing with him regarding his Real Estate business problems. It made her very close to her father as well as his customers, who admired her for her frank dealing and helpful nature. When her father praised her about the loveliness of her nature and beauty of her heart with such phrases as 'just as good as pretty', she humorously answered him: "Father is a very modest man and he wants me to be modest."⁵ Cather, who was much upset by his death in 1928, has

Press, 1961) 77.

⁴ James Woodress, *Willa Cather: A Literary Life* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska, 1987) 19-20.

⁵ Quoted by Bennett, *The World Of Willa Cather*, 27.

dedicated *April Twilights* paying a tribute to her father “Of my gentle father to whom this book is dedicated.” (27)

Her mother Mary Virginia Cather (1850-1931) possessed a strong will and stubborn nature, on the contrary to her easy-going husband Charles. But she had a talent of carrying out all the traits of the sophisticated Virginian women. She revealed an unchallenging skill to enjoy life by arranging parties and other entertainments, through which she once succeeded to reconcile some of her family members who had left their contacts since a long time. In fact, Mrs. Cather was a smart, vigorous and practical woman. She was helpful to the poor and cared for the sick people. In Red Cloud, Mrs. Cather seemed such a benevolent woman who took more interest in social works than to her family. But “she had good sense to let her children develop their own personality” (20) and allowed them to be individual. Again, Mrs. Cather frequently fell ill, and her oldest daughter was left to run with her own devices. It helped Willa Cather to visit her neighbors' sod-houses freely and contact with them. Such free atmosphere developed her individuality and provided her chances to study the things and persons of her surroundings for the preparation of her novel writing.

Though Cather was living in Willow Shade, a comfortable house in Shenandoah Valley, Virginia, different circumstances led her to move to Nebraska. There was a growing need of schooling Willa Cather and her siblings in a comfortable school of the town, not having satisfactory schooling facilities in rural Virginia. Again, Cather's was the tuberculosis inherited family, and the moist climate of Virginia was not suitable for TB patients. So the dry climate of Nebraska was expected to be a safe place for them. Moreover, there was no good hospital facility in Virginia for the treatment of the children. Furthermore, Virginia was a Civil War affected area. So her father needed a new safe place to live in, for the betterment of his children. More than this, her father, being a modern gentleman with kind nature, perhaps wanted to get rid off the southern genteel society (as Willa Cather, at her visit to Virginia in 1913, had also criticized the southern people for their superfluous attitude to life). Eventually Willow Shade, in which she was living, was being sold by her grand-father to a business-man.

A star started to shine on Cather's brow after her permanent settlement in Red Cloud. In spite of the lack of her physical facilities there, she got chances to develop her personality through her contacts with the other pioneer women from various nationalities. She was sent to Red Cloud High School for her formal education at eleven. "She had good teachers in Red Cloud, and she was fortunate in finding several unusual adult friends whose intellectual or artistic interests stimulated her own developing mind."⁶ She was highly motivated by her kind teachers in the school. Her unbelievable talent and unusual class-room performances impressed her teachers and made her near and dear to them. As a tribute, she has converted them into the characters of her novels with different names. Professor Shindelmeisser, her piano teacher in the school, stands for Professor Herr Wunsch in *The Song Of The Lark*.

Cather's difficult life in Nebraska must have reminded her Willow Shade in Virginia as she had to share a room with her siblings in Red Cloud. Charles Cather had a big family to support, and children's beds stood side by side. So Cather, a studious student, could not concentrate so much in such a crowded atmosphere. But she realized the importance of empty Nebraska soil and took its advantage as a novelist when she achieved maturity both in her age and experience. "Nebraska had been a state only sixteen years old; when they moved to Red Cloud in 1884, the town had existed only fourteen years."⁷ It hid such treasure which she could excavate, later on. Red Cloud was a new town where the immigrants from different ethnicity had settled. She frequently visited them and mixed up especially with the old women, who told her stories about their former homes. It helped her to store the knowledge and experience of those immigrants to pour out to her future novels. So Doren, the first critic assessing her works, says: "If she had grown up in Virginia, where her people had been long settled, she would have known only the older American stocks."⁸ But in the New Country, she could earn her reputation as a greatest novelist of the United States.

⁶ McFarland, *Willa Cather*, 8.

⁷ Susan J. Rosowski, *The Voyage Perilous: Willa Cather's Romanticism* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska, 1986) 3.

⁸ Carl Van Doren, "Willa Cather", *The American Novel* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957) 28.

Cather's family lineage indicates that her great grand-father James Cather, the son of Jasper Cather, had immigrated from Ireland to Winchester, Virginia with his wife Ann Howard. James Cather, who was a reformer, became the dominant figure of Virginia. Though he was loyal to the rights of the State, he opposed slavery as he became the member of the Virginia Secession Committee. He had eight children: Perry (died of TB), Sidney Gore (married Mahlon Gore), Amanda (died early), William (Willa's grand-father), John (died of TB), Howard (died of TB) and Clark (died of TB). "Willa Cather's family had inherited tuberculosis from generation to generation, and moist climate of Virginia proved more dangerous for the Cathers."⁹ So her grand-father was forced to migrate on the Divide to recover his children's health as suggested by his daughter-in-law Francis Smith.

Her grand-father William had married Caroline Smith whose female strength and humanistic approach to the poor and oppressed influenced Cather to mould her feminist spirit. The couple had six children: George (married Francis Smith), Charles (Willa's father), twins - Alverna and Alfretta (died of TB), Virginia (died of TB) and Wilella (died of Diphtheria). Willa was baptized 'Wilella' after her deceased aunt to console her grand-mother at her daughter's loss. Her parents called her 'Willie', but she herself baptized 'Willa' as a bond of her two (maternal and paternal) grand-fathers, William Cather and William Boak. She also added 'Seibert' for the time being, such as, 'Willa Seibert Cather', borrowing her maternal great grand-father Jacob's surname, 'Seibert'. But in the University, she used her pseudo name 'William Cather' to conceal her female identity for defending herself from the Victorian romantic boys.

William Cather had bought land at Shenandoah Valley and built 'Willow Shade', a three storey brick house, where infant Cather grew up. "This house and its surroundings are the center of all of Willa's early memory." (8-9) She remembered its kitchen very much. It is said that he had built it to protect his family from the threat of the Civil War (1861-1865). He, like his grand-daughter Willa, was a great feminist and reformer of his time. He educated his neighbors' younger children at his own home and sent older

⁹ Mildred R. Bennett, *The World Of Willa Cather* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961)

ones to Baltimore High School, where his son Charles and neighbor's daughter Mary also studied. There, they fell in love to each other and married. William, a religious Baptist, was appointed Sheriff for Frederick County by the Military Government after the Civil War. As a Sheriff, he maintained peace and harmony in the Civil War affected area of Virginia. Cather inherited such a reputed family background from her ancestors to build up her career as a feminist writer.

Her maternal family lineage is also equally important to identify Cather as a feminist novelist as she was born at her maternal house and affectionately cared by her maternal grand-mother Rachael Elisabeth Seibert Boak (1816-1890). From her very birth, she heard about her great grand-mother Ruhamah's domination over her grand-mother Boak. It developed her feminist characteristics, which proved to be very fruitful for her future novels. Cather has poured out Ruhamah's domination over Jacob and Mrs. Boak into her *Sapphira And The Slave Girl (1940)* presenting them in identical fictional characters, Sapphira, Henry and Mrs. Blake. Her maternal grand-father William Lee Boak (1805-1854) came from Berkeley County, and her grand-mother from Back Creek, Virginia. He was a Justice of the Berkeley County Court, a member of the Virginia House of Delegates, and an official of the Department of the Interior resident in Washington. After his death, Mrs. Boak came back to her paternal house in Back Creek with her six children: Sarah Ellen, William Boak, Mary Virginia (Willa's mother), Bettey (died in childhood), Jacob and Clarence, and lived at the neighborhood of William Cather who patronized her. Among her children, William Boak, who had entered the military service and was killed in the Civil War, is survived by Cather's poem *The Namesake (1902)*.

Mrs. Boak had also migrated to Nebraska with the Cathers and stayed with them. Then she took much interest in her grand-daughter's personal development by all means. Child Cather was also much impressed from her grand-mother's generosity to the poor and oppressed. Her grand-mother was not only active and efficient in handling social activities but also remained always busy with her household works. "Many a

child and many a woman she had laid out and got ready for the grave.”¹⁰ Such legacy of her feminist grand-mother, which had direct impact on sensitive child Cather's developing mind, has been explored for her novels.

Willa Cather was the eldest sister of her six brothers and sisters. Among them, Roscoe Cather (1877-1945) married Elizabeth (Meta) Schaper and had three daughters, Virginia and twins, Margaret and Elizabeth. He got teaching for the time being and worked as a banker for last 40 years. Douglass (1880-1938), who was her most affectionate brother, remained unmarried. He worked as a railway stationer at Cheyenne, but prospered in oil business. Jessica (1881-1964) married James Auld and had three children, Mary Virginia, William Thomas and Charles. But she got divorce from her husband. James (1886-1966) married Ethel and had three daughters, Mary, Helen and Ella. Elsie (1890-1964) also kept herself bachelor and worked as a teacher in the public school. John (1892-1959), who was also called Jack, married Irma Wells and had two daughters. "Willa had twin aunts (Alverna and Alfretta), twin cousins (Frank and Oscar) and twin nieces (Margaret and Elizabeth)."¹¹

Cather joined Latin school in Lincoln to run her preparatory classes after the completion of her matriculation from Red Cloud High School in 1889:

*Lincoln was an instant city built like a movie set. It had been empty prairie in 1867 when Nebraska became a state, and it was a thriving city twenty three years later, nearly tripling in size between 1880 and 1890....with a railroad centers....on the direct route between Chicago and Denver....The fact is important for Miss Cather's career because it made Lincoln a convenient stop for the theatrical and musical companies on the way to Denver and San Francisco.*¹²

It proved very fruitful for her future career to review important plays and musical events when she became a dramatic critic for *The Nebraska State Journal* (1896) and

¹⁰ Brown, *Willa Cather: A Critical Biography*, 15.

¹¹ Bennet, *The World Of Willa Cather*, 4.

¹² Woodress, *Willa Cather: A Literary Life*, 65.

wrote critical literary articles for the journals. She studied Latin and Greek for a year in Lincoln, which helped her to translate Greek, Latin and Roman books into English at her University days. She had intended to take science course with a view to specialize in medicine, but she changed her mind as the imagination of the innocent insects' dissection and possible bloodshed out of them upset non-violent feminist Cather's mind. So she was inclined to the study of literature.

Mostly the pioneer neighbors' love and affection won Cather's heart and gave different directions to her life. Among her nearest neighbors, Norwegian Miners motivated her for music, and German Wieners encouraged her to develop her writing career. The Miners' children, Mary, Margie, Irene, Carrie and their hired girl Annie Sadilek were her dearest childhood friends, whom she has converted into her novel *My Antonia* with different names. She was surrounded by many sincere and devoted friends, both young and adult, who loved and accompanied her whole life. Dorothy Canfield Fisher, the daughter of the then Vice Chancellor in the University of Nebraska, Isabelle McClung, the daughter of a Judge in Pittsburgh, Sarah Orne Jewett, a very popular story teller of New England, and Edith Lewis, a great writer in New York, were her long devoted friends. They remained as prominent forces to her personal life as well as her writing career. Louise Pound was also her intimate friend in the University, but this friendship could not prosper as her brother stood to block it charging her as a lesbian to his sister.

Again, Cather's closeness to the young generations of her family also cannot be ignored. Being the eldest sister of her brothers and sisters, she led them very fondly, telling them the stories of her Old Home, Virginia, dancing and rejoicing with them and visiting several places with Roscoe and Douglass. They were dearest to her. She thought herself lost if she could not visit them, at least, twice a year while studying in the University of Nebraska. Later on, when she came home from New York, her nephews and nieces, Mary, Helen and Ella surrounded her. She has reflected this sort of feeling in her *O Pioneers!*. Alexandra's love of her brother Emil and nieces, Milly and Andre, is Cather's love of them. Cather was greatly shocked at Douglass' death in 1938

and Roscoe's in 1945, and this shock she has expressed in *O Pioneers* through Alexandra's shock at Emil's death. Shocked by the gradual death of her dearest brothers, parents and her beloved friend Isabelle McClung (1938), Cather felt bitterness and solitude in the latter part of her life. To forget her pain, she kept herself very active either by travelling or by writing novels. After the long experience of the reality of Life and Death of her kith and kin, she died of a massive brain hemorrhage on April 24, 1947.

II

Cather, as a woman, met several difficulties during her life. Her writing life started when she entered the University of Nebraska (1890) for her higher education. To run her study in the University, she was forced to write articles for the journals to earn money. Again, Nebraska was an empty prairie without good crops. As there was no production at all, her family in Red Cloud was facing a very sharp food problem. About her struggle in the University, Edith Lewis writes:

*...Ever since her college days, when the crops failed in Nebraska, and her family were struggling along on very little money; when in order to complete her college course she began writing copy at a dollar a column for the 'Nebraska State Journal'. She had known how hard and humiliating poverty can be. Her first years in Pittsburgh were years of constant worry about money; and she was not very confident of ever being able to make her living successfully.*¹³

Anyway, she devoted herself to the study of literature. About the aim of her study, E. K. Brown says: "She had no intention of becoming a scholar....What she desired from the classics was the experience of great literature and the knowledge of great civilization."¹⁴ For first two years, she studied very hard. But by third year, she worked as a full time journalist to meet her expenses in the University.

¹³ Edith Lewis, *Willa Cather Living: A Personal Record* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953) xv.

¹⁴ Brown, *Willa Cather: A Critical Biography*, 52.

The inspiration from her teachers and the experience from her own journalistic writings also strengthened her for her class-room performances. Though she could not devote her time for her study, she passed her examinations with good marks. Her University teacher Prof. Hunt, as impressed from her class-room essay on Thomas Carlyle, published it in *The Hesperian* (1891), the University journal. It inspired her to develop her journalistic career rapidly. She became the Managing Editor of *The Hesperian* and also worked as a joint-associate Editor of *The Lasso* (1893) with Louise Pound. But as a woman journalist, she was insulted by Roscoe Pound, Louise's brother, at an issue of her article in the Journal. She has poured out this bitter experience into her novel *The Song Of The Lark* (1915) through the episode 'Darcey's attack on Thea'. She had met novelist Dorothy Canfield Fisher in the University days, and this meeting proved to be very fruitful for Cather's writing life as Fisher has lighted on her novels as a critic, later on.

The male-domination of the Victorian society was another difficulty she met as a woman in the University. At that time, Nebraska had been a State with only one University where Cather studied. The number of students in the University was very small, but the boys' domination over the girls was still there. So it was not easy for Cather to live alone outside her home. She had rented a room in Mrs. Westermann's house at S Street, Lincoln. Her hostess was good and charming, but her brother Dr. Tyndale ironically chased her, causing her downhearted. But, when he, at a party, found her in the boy's dress with male voice, he told: "That was the last straw."¹⁵ Such bitter experiences of her life must have inspired her to write novels on the miserable women of the pioneer country. But her anger to Dr. Tyndale has been poured out at his sister Myra Tyndale who has been replicated as Myra Henshawe, the quarrelsome woman, in *My Mortal Enemy* (1926).

After her graduation from the University of Nebraska (1895), Cather faced a 'double life' problem - she wanted to be a writer, but she had to earn her bread for her living. Woodress says: "This was a real question for an aspiring writer who had to hack

¹⁵ Quoted by Woodress, *Willa Cather: A Literary Life*, 84.

out a living in a journalism.” (100) To solve her economic problem, she wanted a full time job, but she could not get it immediately. So she felt a bit depression from her poverty-stricken life. She also could not expect any money from her father because he had to support his large family and run other six children’s education. Then she continuously wrote for the journals and worked for Sarah Harris’s *Courier* (1895), and *Overland Monthly* (1895) in Lincoln. In 1896, she moved to Pittsburgh as an Editor for *The Home Monthly* and became very popular as a journalist. She worked as an Editor for *The Sombrero* (1894), *The Cosmopolitan* (1896), *The Leader* (1897), *The Library* (1900) and *Saturday Evening Post* (1902), one after other. She published her short story *The Fear That Walks By Noonday*, which was awarded a prize of ten pound.

Cather took a teaching job in Pittsburgh Central High School as a full time teacher and taught Latin and English for two years. Then she shifted to Alleghery High School to replace her friend Preston Farras, with whom she was expected to marry. But she missed it, thinking that her writing life might be hampered by her marriage. So she decided not to marry but to devote herself to art.

In 1899, Cather met Isabelle McClung, the daughter of a rich Judge in Pittsburgh, who provided her a comfortable room at her own home (1901) to continue her writings. She lived there until she worked for *McClure’s Magazine* (1906-12) in New York. Since then, they had been too close friends to each other. Though James Woodress, her male biographer, vainly charged her as a lesbian to Isabelle for her closeness, her journalistic life in Pittsburgh remained very fruitful. During this period, she published her numbers of poems, short stories and articles in *McClure’s Magazine* and other periodicals and also collected them in the volumes, *The Bohemian Girl* (1892), *On The Divide* (1896), *April Twilights* (1903), *The Troll Garden* (1905).

The most fruitful event of Cather's journalistic life was her meeting to Miss Sarah Orne Jewett, a most popular story teller (1908), who suggested her to leave out her journalism and write novels finding free time and quiet place to perfect her writings. Following her advice, she resigned from *McClure’s Magazine* (1912) and extended her pen to the novel writing, along with the collection of short stories and critical literary

essays, such as, *Uncle Valentine and Other Stories* (1915-1929), *Youth And The Bright Medusa* (1920), *Obscure Destinies* (1932) and *Not Under Forty* (1936).

III

'Feminist Concerns In Willa Cather's Novels' comprises of two important terms, 'feminism' and 'Willa Cather's novels'. The assessment of the concept of feminism and the theme of Willa Cather's novels have clearly indicated that they share common traits and are complementary to each other.

The word 'feminism' refers to the principle of asserting women's rights, independence and authority. In other words, it advocates the rights and claims of the women. It means that women should enjoy similar legal, economic, social and political rights which men have been enjoying since a long time. The main theme of Cather's novels is also to advocate rights for the women in proportion to men. In the mean time, she also wants that women should have similar job opportunities outside their homes as men. She has advocated such views in her novels through the lips of her women characters of the pioneer country, where her women cannot get jobs because of their gender though they are educated and qualified. Her Thea Kronborg in *The Song Of The Lark* expresses male proprietors' domination over women singers in the field of music.

Cather believes in the balance of power between men and women in her novels. She wishes that neither men nor women should be given extreme power to exercise. Otherwise, they will dominate opposite sex in her view. She has proved this fact including two types of male and female characters in her novels. On the one hand, there are excessively powerful men who dominate gentle women of common birth. For example, powerful Frank Shabata tortures his wife Marie Shabata and kills her (*OP*), and Larry Donovan exploits Antonia's sex and quits off (*MA*). On the other hand, Cather meets extremely power seeking rich women's exploitation over men. Dominant Marian Forrester exploits Daniel Forrester's resources (*LL*), Myra Henshawe revolts against Oswald Henshawe for the pursuits of the material world (*MME*), and Sapphira Colbert capitalizes on Henry Colbert's earning from the mill (*SSG*). Such corrupt women, whom Cather meets in the upper class families, are sternly criticized for their misuse of power. In fact, the theme of Cather's novels is to raise voice against the male or female supremacy in the society and to keep men and women in equal footing. Her

attack on both power seeking genders and her efforts to bring men's togetherness with the women are very helpful to estimate Cather as a liberal feminist novelist.

The 'feminist' concept, which refers to the 'supporter' of the feminism, and which is relevant to the women's sensibility, is originated from the women's awareness. This concept had been popularized since the Women's Liberation Movement of 1960s in America. Analyzing the participation of the women and their commitment to this movement, De Hart says:

*The feminist revolution of the 1960swas begun largely by educated, middle class women whose diverse experiences had sharpened their sensibility to the fundamental inequality between the sexes,stepped in a commitment to equality and the techniques of protest.*¹⁶

The Feminist Movement was launched by two active feminist groups of women in America: (a) Women's rights advocates consisting of experienced professional women demanding for women's equal rights outside the home. (b) Women's liberationists consisting of less-experienced young women motivated by politics and violence. Though both of these feminist groups were organized with two different purposes, their main objective was to protect women from the male-domination and provide them social, political and legal rights. Cather neither showed any interest in such political movements, nor the new climate of the feminist solidarity or New Women had any effect on her. Still her strong protest against the male supremacy and her voice for women's rights take her closer to the liberal feminist group of women. Through her novels, she has attacked the powerful males for their suppression and oppression to the women since a long time.

Though there is no difference between two sexes in the process of their biological creation and birth, men have always taken themselves superior to women and treated them as weak and ineffectual beings. In the United States, women were not given any franchise rights up to 1920, and the feminists had to launch several feminist movements

¹⁶ Jane Sherrom De Hart, "The New Feminism And The Dynamics Of Social Change", in *American Studies Today: An Introduction To Methods And Perspectives*, eds. A. Singh, Max J. and Isaac

for women's voting rights. The domination of men over women and their discriminating attitude to them had given birth to the feminists who started to revolt against men for the guarantee of women's rights and authorities. But the word 'feminist' got worldwide popularity only after the International Women's Year, 1975.

The 'feminist' concept had come into existence since a long time, but the 'feminist ideology' generally popularized with the feminist critics' theories on feminism during 1970s and 1980s as an outcome of the feminists' advocacy of women. The Feminist Theories, such as, Virginia Woolf's *A Room Of One's Own* (1929), Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1970), Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* (1977) and Toril Moi's *Sexual/Textual Politics* (1985) and *Feminist Literary Criticism* (1986) have heralded a new era in women's literature raising their voices for women. These feminist critics' views on women are different, but the aim of each critic is to awake women and support them by attacking men. Literary critical theories propounded by men focus only on men, without giving any space for the women. Even woman critic Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, 1949 undermines women treating them as 'secondary' or 'other sex', while man to her is the first sex or self or autonomous being. Elaine Showalter in her *A Literature of Their Own* strongly objects her for her treatment of women as 'second sex' and satirizes her that if the women on earth are second sex, the women readers are also the second readers. Kate Millett nick-names such male-centered theories as patriarchal theologies for providing extreme power to men and attacks such theologies for their dominating attitude to women and demanding more purity and femininity from them. Femininity vice versa feminism as 'femininity' is a cultural word sought by anti-feminist men, and 'feminism' is a political connotation acknowledged by the feminist women.

Besides these feminist theories, the feminist novelists like Jane Austen (1775-1817), Emily Bronte (1818-1848), George Eliot (1819-1880), Willa Cather (1873-1947), Virginia Woolf (1882-1942) and Margaret Drabble (1939) have also highly contributed to the feminist literature through their women-centered novels. The main

Sequeira (New Delhi: Creative Books, 1995) 349.

objective of all of these novelists is to focus on the pathetic life of the women resisting men, but Cather's contribution to the feminist literature is of great importance. On one hand, she has opened a new era for the women identifying them as the most autonomous 'heroes' and highly supporting the 'women in jobs' in her novels; on the other hand, she has rebelled against the males for their corrupt attitude to the women. She has wholly focused on women questing for women's rights, equality and justice. In fact, she has discouraged class, race, sex and ethnic discrimination in the American society through her revolutionary ideas in her novels.

Cather has pleaded for the freedom of an artist keeping art and freedom in the same line. In her views, the success of art lies in artist's freedom. The joy of her heart knows no bounds when she finds Thea Krongborg (*SL*) professionally perfect in her song showing freedom of her heart. She says that domination suppresses artist's mind and prevents them from their achievements. Thea under the domination of her teacher cannot achieve anything, but she achieves everything when she enjoys the freedom of her heart in the free atmosphere of Arizona.

'Feminist' is defined by various critics in different senses. As it is originated from the political movements of the women, Toril Moi, the British feminist critic of 1980s, has used the term 'feminist' or 'feminism' in political sense. She classifies the words 'feminist' 'female' and 'feminine' in different senses and says:

*I will suggest that we distinguish between 'feminism' as a political position, 'femaleness' as a matter of biology and 'femininity' as a set of culturally defined characteristics....The words 'feminist' or 'feminism' are political levels indicating support for the aims of the new women's movement which emerged in the late 1960s.*¹⁷

Toril Moi, as motivated from the feminists' political movements, weighs feminism with the machine of politics. It is true that the feminist concept has come into existence as a reaction to the patriarchy and male misogyny to women. But it is Moi's mistake when

¹⁷ Toril Moi, "Feminist Literary Criticism", in *Modern Literary Theory: A Comparative Introduction*, eds. Ann Jefferson and David Robey (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1986) 204.

she uses 'feminism' or 'feminist' concept only in the political sense. Being critical to Moi's feminist concept of politics, Sushila Singh says: "If feminist criticism is a political discourse, the mere fact of being a female does not guarantee a feminist approach."¹⁸ In her belief, a feminist can politically defend a woman as a woman to protect her from the patriarchal order of the society and misogynists, but it is not a feminist critic's responsibility to make a political study on a woman writer.

Cather's attack on the powerful males for their suppression to the women resembles with that of Toril Moi. Both of them intend to curtail men's excessive power with a view to make women powerful and happy. But Moi's feminist concept is totally tied with the politics, which Cather denounces. Again, Moi intends to create a big gap between men and women, while Cather wants to see men and women together. In this sense, Cather is closer to K. K. Ruthven, the liberal male feminist critic of *Feminist Literary Studies* (1984) when he talks of the need of the harmony between men and women. In his view, feminist concept on literary criticism is not totally a political one but only one part of feminism; and men, not being totally disqualified for the feminist criticism, can share with the women critics for this task, hand in hand. Cather, like Ruthven, realizes that men's support for the women is equally important. She also thinks that neither all men are totally evil nor all women good. She makes a profile of good and evil men and women in her novels and says that men's good qualities also should not be totally ignored. So she has projected the principle of the 'good' and 'evil' in her novels, in which the 'good' men like Carl Linstrum (*OP*) and Anton Cuzak (*MA*) can also be the feminists, working for the rights of the women and guarding them from the male domination. Feminist Carl Linstrum pleads for Alexandra and accepts her as his wife to rescue her from her cruel brothers, Oscar and Lou. Then she makes Carl and Alexandra enter a room together with a promise to make further joint efforts. It indicates her faith on the compromise between two rival genders and her optimism as well.

Generally, the feminist is one who takes the favor of women advocating for

¹⁸ Sushila Singh, "Outlining Feminist Literary Criticism: Woman As Reader/Writer

women's rights. In this sense, a woman as well as a man can be a feminist if she/he supports women. But a woman occupies more authority to be a feminist novelist because she, being herself a woman, knows more about women's inner problems than the male novelist. A novel, which is the mirror of the society, is to voice for women's consciousness for their self-identity and to focus on the real life-situation of the men and women living in the society. So the function of a feminist novelist is to find out women's real life-problems that come out of the male-domination and other circumstances and bring them out before the eyes of the readers. Ultimately, the novelist intends to find out the solution of these women's problems by winning her readers' sympathy towards them and rousing their anti-feelings against the corrupt males. In this sense, Cather is a successful feminist novelist who has efficiently presented the real life-picture of the wretched pioneer women and taken evil men as the cause of these women's trouble.

Cather's credit goes to write twelve interesting novels, which have widely popularized her. She has written her new women-centered novels with the internal 'known' materials and familiar autonomous women protagonists of the pioneer countries after her realization of the failure of her first novel *Alexander's Bridge* (1912). It fails because she has written it in imitation to the traditional novelists' theme of the 'external' young man's love and tragedy. Though male protagonist Bartley Alexander dies due to his wooing to his beloved Hilda Burgoyne, the novelist's feminist concern does not die as she shows sympathy towards his older wife Winifred and condemns him for his betrayal to her.

The series of her frontier novels begins with the opening of her *O Pioneers!* (1913), and then appear *The Song Of The Lark* and *My Antonia* (1918) with the pathetic tales of the pioneer female protagonists, Alexandra Bergson, Thea Kronborg and Antonia Shimerda respectively. She has written these novels to sympathize the wretched women like Alexandra, Thea and Antonia for their courage to counteract the dominating males. She has also highly admired these women for their creative power, which is very

Perspective", *Feminism: Theory, Criticism, Analysis* (Delhi: Pencraft International, 1997) 74.

helpful to establish them in their new soil. Thea Kronborg is a creative woman who struggles against the male-domination to achieve the goals of her life as a singer. Though almost all of her novels are feminist, her feminist approach is more effectively elaborated in these women-centered novels.

Through her feminist novels, Cather has depicted the evils of the Victorian society, which has left evil impacts on some weak-minded women. *A Lost Lady* (1923), *My Mortal Enemy* (1926) and *Sapphira And The Slave Girl* (1940) are also with the female protagonists, Marian Forrester, Myra Hanshawe and Sapphira Colbert respectively. But they represent the money-minded and power seeking women of the industrial age. It is because of the commercialization of the Victorian society that these heroines try to copy the social and economic values of the age, crave for money and meet tragic death. Though the protagonists of these novels are activists, some of the minor women characters, like Rachel Blake, are liberal feminists as they protect helpless girls, like Nancy, even at the risk of their lives.

In the novelist's view, a romantic artist's artistic approach without devotion is a great disease in artist life. *Lucy Gayheart* (1935) is also with artist woman protagonist Lucy Gayheart, but her romantic spirit draws her back from her music lessons and causes her failure in her life. Finally, she meets her tragic death as depressed from the loss of her second lover Clement Sebastian. *Shadows On The Rock* (1931) is written with the pioneer girl protagonist, Cecile Auclair migrated from France to Quebec, the French colony.

Cather is forced to write some of her novels, *One of Ours* (1922), *The Professor's House* (1925) and *Death Comes For The Archbishop* (1927) with the male protagonists, Claude Wheeler, St. Peter and Bishop Jean Marie Latour respectively in different circumstances. But her feminist concern is still functioning, one way or the other, in all of these novels. She has sympathetically described the pitiable lives of Magdalena, the wretched wife of degenerate American murderer Buck scales, and Dona Isabella, the miserable wife of Antonio Olivaere, in *Death Comes For The Archbishop*.

Cather has broken the Aristotalian concept of 'hero' and 'hero-worship' as she has

created the women of lost character as the protagonists in some of her novels. In Aristotalian principle, only a man of valor with exceptional moral character can be the hero of a piece of art. But Cather has written *A Lost Lady* (1923), *My Mortal Enemy* (1926) and *Sapphira And The Slave Girl* (1940) with the immoral activist women protagonists, Marian Forrester, Myra Henshawe and Sapphira Colbert respectively breaking the heroic conception of Aristotle. Through her feminist novels, Cather has compared her courageous feminist pioneer protagonists of the Mid-west America with the power-seeking activist women of the American west.

Cather's novels are written in her different circumstances and different moods, but the main theme of these novels is to pour out her female experience to portray the true picture of women's life. From the review of her novels, it can be inferred that these factors have influenced her to write novels: (a) Her insight of the frontier soil and its new American women and her urge to write something about them. (b) To advocate her philosophy of feminist cult through her feminist women characters. (c) To expose the domination and corruption of males over women. (d) To pour out her autobiographical elements, the drama of her own life, through her own personae. (e) To expose her own artistic taste and her struggle for its achievements. (f) Her close friendship with Red Cloud women and her desire for immortalizing them. (g) To fulfill her commitment to the pioneer farm-women of the frontier that she had made earlier. (h) Inspired by her friends and supporters and motivated from her own journalistic writings. (i) To raise women's status in the American society. (j) To explore her ancestors from feminist perspectives. But the most outstanding feature in the novels is the novelist's unlimited love of the frontier land and its pioneer women. Her frontier novels, *O Pioneers!* and *My Antonia* are written with this theme. Alexandra (*OP*) works on the farm not for capturing it but for making it rich and productive. The pioneer women's happiness depends upon the prosperity of their soil.

Cather has taken two types of women for her novels: Liberal feminist pioneer women with the lure of the land and desire for art, and radical feminist women with the temptation of the material world and luxurious life. But she has supported liberal

feminist pioneer women for their consciousness, creativity and non-violent attitude to life. If the pioneer heroines, Alexandra (*OP*) and Antonia (*MA*) are admired for their love of, and devotion to the land, the artist's heroine, Thea is the subject of her admiration for her hardwork, sincerity and devotion to music. Cecile (*SR*) also can change her hard life into the happiest one through her selfless services to Quebec. She converts it into the prosperous country. But the extremist women like Marian Forrester (*LL*), Myra Henshawe (*ME*) and Sapphira Colbert (*SSG*) are under the novelist's attack for their materialistic spirits, romances and violent activities though they are inwardly sympathized by her. Their over-consciousness for money and power instigates them to conspire against their opponents, but it brings their collapses. But the tragedy of Lucy Gayheart (*LG*) is her romance and lack of devotion to her assigned tasks.

Cather's novels are to express 'feminist cult' through her experiences as a female novelist by making women conscious for their upliftment. In *Are Women's Novels Feminist Novels?* (P.225), Rosalind Coward insists that the responsibility of a feminist novelist is not to entertain her readers with the serious political message, but to make women conscious, through woman novelist's own experience as a woman, to raise the status of the women. Cather's feminist approach to her novels resembles with Coward's as her feminist novels are influenced by 'feminist cult', and not by the political movements. Here, 'feminist cult' refers to the women's consciousness for women's rights and duties, and a feminist novelist's effort is to raise the status of the women by making them conscious about their authorities and responsibilities and placing them in equal footing to men.

Cather's autobiographical novels, like those of George Eliot (1819-1880) and Margaret Drabble (1939), are to depict the drama of her own life. George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss* and Margaret Drabble's *The Millstone* are said to be the most autobiographical novels for presenting the novelist's own life-events in these novels. Cather's *The Song Of The Lark* and *Shadows On The Rock* are most autobiographical as the life-events of the protagonists are very close to the novelist's life in these novels. Thea is said to be her objective co-relative to tell the truth about her own life. Cecile,

her persona, is to delineate her own affectionate relationship to her deceased father, Charles Cather. But the heroines of these novels are converted into the feminists when they are dominated by males.

Cather's nihilism in politics has been expressed in *One Of Ours*. Her great hatred of politics had been caused by her own bitter experience of the bloody scene of the First World War that she had witnessed through her own eyes. In this novel, she has also hated the materialistic spirit of her age and its worshippers, namely politicians, for inviting such hot climate in the world. She regrets for the division of the world in two Great Powers, i.e, America and then Russia, due to the materialistic spirit of the political leaders.

Cather has clearly given her views on art, love, marriage, culture and religion through her novels. She, being herself an artist, has advocated for art and artist's life taking woman as a source of creativity. From her judgment, she has found artistic power only in the women, and not in men. She has expressed this view through her persona Thea Kronborg, the artist heroine of *The Song Of The Lark*. But she talks of these factors very essential for the woman-artist: (a) Her desire and enthusiasm for art. (b) Her strong devotion to it. (c) The freedom of her heart and her independent life with her own income and identity. (d) No marriage and no male-domination over her.

On the contrary to the Victorian's demand of women's domesticity, Cather makes her women's involvement in the works of art, without any involvement in the household works. But she offers two options to her women, either marriage or art. In her view, marriage entraps a woman to the domesticity; so the artist woman should remain a bachelor for its good achievements. About the problem of a woman artist, Elaine Showalter says: "Part of the problem was tension between the novelist's life as a woman and their commitment to literature....if they then chose marriage, they often felt trapped."¹⁹ Cather's concept of marriage resembles with Showalter's as both of them take marriage as a barrier for an artist's life. Such profound revolutionary ideas of

¹⁹ Elaine Showalter, *A Literature Of Their Own* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977) 244.

Cather on art and marriage have ranked her in the category of the feminist novelist. She coins 'second-self' to the artist's desire for art and philosophizes it through her artist heroine Thea Kronborg, who can be a devotee of art postponing her desire for marriage. But romantic Lucy Gayheart cannot get success in art as she has more involved in love-affairs with her male friends than to her study.

Cather has also philosophized on 'love' and 'marriage', saying that love-marriage cannot keep conjugal life stable. As she sees danger and destruction in love-marriage, she has exemplified its ill-impacts on the marriage-partners, presenting amorous Marie Shabata (*OP*), Myra Henshawe (*MME*) and Sapphira Colbert (*SSG*), and their tragedy. They love and hastily marry the boys of their choices and regret in leisure taking it as a mistake. Consequently, their conjugal life cannot succeed. In Cather's belief, the age-difference between the marriage-partners also is not effective. She has shown it through aged Captain Daniel Forrester's marriage with young Marian in *A Lost Lady* and its failure due to their age differences. As an indication to her feminist concern, she rejects arranged marriage as it is based on the parental domination over the girls. Similarly she hates marriage of convenience as it takes place for the benefit of one or both married partners. So she emphasizes that the marriage which takes place between two long acquainted friends of equal status, similar age and similar aspiration makes conjugal life very happy and prosperous. In fact, the marriage bond tied for friendship, and not for sex and money, is found strong and stable.

Cather's faith on Catholic religion is expressed through her women characters' devotion to the Catholic Church. Though a Protestant by birth, she has shown a great reverence to the Catholic religion as influenced by Dorothy Canfield Fisher, her close friend. She has provided Catholic Church as a shelter for her male-dominated women. But she has adorned these women with the feminist cult by encouraging them to revolt against the dominating males. Even simple-minded Nancy resists against corrupt Martin Colbert when he tries to exploit her sex. So the Catholic Church becomes the symbol of love and shelter in her novels.

Cather's denial of the Puritanic ethical values also witnesses her feminist approach

to the women. Though she expects that her women should preserve the culture and order of the Old Countries to the New Ones for their stability, she does not blindly demand such purity and morality which conservative puritans anticipate from the women. Quoting Cather's non-conservative view from her own words, Menchen says: “ ‘Old moral molds’ are broken.”²⁰ Cather intends that the pioneer women like Alexandra and Cecile should take the responsibility of flourishing their Old Home culture and religion at their New Ones. But she makes these women feminists and insists them to stand against the males when she finds them cooking food items for men without their help in the kitchen works. So Cecile angrily tells her father that she has done everything for him not as a devotion to him but out of her own pleasure.

The most remarkable feature that places Cather on the line of most genius feminist novelist is that she has created most autonomous ‘women heroes’ in her novels giving higher priority to the women. Her whole attention is centered to the women protagonists, ignoring the concept of ‘male hero’ and ‘female heroine’. These principal women characters are called ‘heroes’ because they play double role in her novels -- the role of both male ‘hero’ and female ‘heroine’. As there are no other male heroes in her certain novels, these major women characters are themselves ‘heroes’. Her Alexandra Bergson, the earth-mother (*OP*), Thea Kronborg, the artist (*SL*), Antonia Shimerda, the mother of races (*MA*), and Cecile Auclair (*SR*), the dutiful heroine, occupy such a significant position in their families that the male figures look insignificant. Again, these heroines are themselves feminists because they are strong enough to resist against their rival brothers and other evil males at their surroundings. When opponent Oscar and Lou try to seize land from Alexandra’s hand, she strongly refutes them:

*Listen, Don’t talk wild. You say you ought to have taken things into your own hands years ago. I suppose you mean before you left home. But how could you take hold of what wasn’t there ? I’ve got most of what I have now since we divided the property, I’ve built it up myself, and it has nothing to do with you.*²¹

²⁰ Quoted by H. Z. Menchen, “ ‘American’s Coming-of-Age’ Criticism: Early Views”, in *Willa Cather And Her Critics*, ed. James Schreoter (New York: Cornell University, 1967) 3.

²¹ Willa Cather, *O Pioneers!* (New York: A Signet Classic, 1989) 126.

Alexandra's voice against her upstart brothers is Cather's voice against all dominating Victorian males.

Cather has elevated even her minor women characters to the higher level presenting them as the most attractive characters in her novels. Her attention to these minor characters and her strong support to them are also the factors to designate her as a feminist novelist. She has beautifully presented Marie Shabata, the most wretched minor woman character in *O Pioneers!*, whose attractive personality has been the cause of her readers' admiration. She condemns Frank Shabata for his misbehavior to his gentle wife Marie and shows much approval of her. Similarly Lena Lingard and Tiny Soderball, the hired girls in *My Antonia*, are adorned with their feminist powers to resist against the male-dominated society of the frontier. The minor women characters like Mrs. Evangeline Wheeler and Mahiley (*O*) are treated with much affection and sympathy. Augusta, the poverty-stricken sewing woman (*PH*), is highly admired by her readers for saving frustrated Peter's life from the accident. Alec Ramsey (*LG*) and Rachel Blake (*SSG*) are such fair characters who take risks to protect the helpless women like Lucy and Nancy from their ruin. Jim Burden (*MA*) and Henry Colbert (*SSG*) are the feminist males, as the former is sympathetic to wretched Antonia, and the latter to Nancy even at their thunders of life.

Cather is really an exceptional novelist who has witnessed her power to keep herself aloof from the influence of her contemporary male-dominated society. Rosalind Coward regrets that years of male-domination over women has left such an ill-impact on the women novelists that they have not been able to express their views freely on their women. But Cather has fully crossed the line set by the Victorian males as she has succeeded to give new dimensions to the women even presenting them as autonomous protagonists of her novels. Alexandra (*OP*), Thea (*SL*) and Antonia (*MA*) are some of her charming female protagonists, to whom her whole attention is centered. No other novelist has ever been so successful in delineating women characters so truly as she has done in her novels. In *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Emily Bronte fails to give so much attention to her heroine Catherine Earnshaw as she has given to her hero Heathcliff

because the male-domination is behind her. Her focus, as a whole, is on Heathcliff, the male hero, and his revenge to his rival Hindley for his failure to win Catherine's hand.

Though Cather, being herself an unmarried woman, has lightly treated about sex, she has taken immoral sex as a huge crime. So she has violently attacked sexy males like Larry Donovan and Ivy Peters for exploiting women's sex without her women's will. Her approach to women and sex is quite different from her contemporary male novelists, whose only aim is to adorn sex in their novels. Toril Moi is absolutely right when she says that a male novelist has no right to write novels on women because he, being a male-sex, can neither designate women in good position nor is able to make correct study of them. So only the themes of masculine adventures and adventure of sex can be felt in the novels of male-artists. Again, the male novelists have treated woman as a 'second sex' or 'subordinate' to men. But Cather, being a woman novelist, has correctly studied about women's creative power rather than sex and given higher priority to the women in her novels.

Cather has succeeded to deal with the available materials of her own surrounding as perfectly as Toril Moi expects from a female novelist. Moi, annoyed by the bitter experiences of her contemporary male-dominated society, dreams of Rosalind Coward's 'pluralistic ideology' which, she thinks, could function purely in a particular situation: "Feminists have to be pluralistic: there is no pure feminist or female space from which we can speak. All ideas, including feminist ones, are in this sense contaminated by patriarchal ideology."²² In her belief, a pure feminist theory cannot work correctly in such impure environment of male-domination even though it is originated by a woman. So Moi is forced to say that an ideology itself is not a great thing but: "What is important is whether we can produce a recognizable feminist impact through our specific use (appropriation) of available material." (205) In Cather's novels, one can find such an approach to the selection of the materials what Toril Moi expects from a feminist novelist. She picks up these characters and materials for her novels, which are available at her own surroundings. As a woman artist, she is much

²² Moi, "The Feminist Literary Criticism", in *Modern Literary Theory*, 204.

interested to the pioneer women's stories of their Old and New Homes, which she has transformed into her novels from the feminist perspectives.

Androgyny, which is one of the properties of the feminists, strongly occupies its strength in Cather's novels. Virginia Woolf, the feminist critic of *A Room Of One's Own*, insists that woman writer's independent income, a room of her own and her androgynous mind are the most essential elements of a woman novelist for writing her novels. Cather, who is herself an androgynous woman with her male-countenance and woman's heart, creates androgynous characters in her novels. She adorns her characters with androgynous traits, exchanging men's character to women and women's to men, to keep opposite forces in balance. Showing agreement to Virginia Woolf's view of 'balance', Showalter says: "Woolf's androgyny was a struggle to keep two rival forces in balance without succumbing to either. Full 'maleness' and full 'femaleness' were equally dangerous."²³ Like Woolf, Cather also thinks 'full maleness' or 'full femaleness' very harmful to the opposite sex. So she has selected androgynous heroines like Alexandra and Cecile for her successful novels *O Pioneers!* and *Shadows On The Rock* respectively. But they exhibit their androgynous character at the time of their difficulties. Alexandra becomes androgynous when she faces some sharp problems at her home or on her farm, and Cecile converts herself into androgyny when her father strongly shows his masculinity towards her.

Cather's view on the balanced power between two rival genders resembles with Elaine Showalter's. Showalter wants to adorn both sexes with androgyny to keep these two forces in balance as she thinks that excessive power in a single hand is very dangerous. Cather also thinks that a woman also becomes as tyrannical as powerful man and intrigues against her husband if she is extremely powerful in the family. She has exemplified it by presenting excessively powerful heroines, Marian Forrester (*LL*), Myra Henshawe (*ME*) and Sapphira Colbert (*SSG*) and dangers brought by them. Most powerful Marian exploits her husband's resources, invites her lovers at his eye-witness and causes him to death. Excessive power makes Myra violent and tyrant. She always

²³ Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own*, 284.

suspects her husband and gets suicide as revenge to him. Power-centered Sapphira conspires against her slave-girl Nancy at the suspicion of her husband's affair with her. So Cather thinks that these extremely powerful women are also as evil as powerful males like Frank Shabata (*OP*) and Wick Cutter (*MA*), who vainly suspect their wives and kill them. As she insists to maintain the family norm by keeping men and women together, these activist women are also the targets of her abuses.

Justice is a key-word in Cather's dictionary of her feminist concerns. She intends that justice should not be suppressed even by the women. She knows that excessive power in any hand is a great hindrance to the path of justice. So she wishes to tie both sexes within the limit of power for their fair behavior to the opposite sex. As a feminist novelist, she forces John Bergson to hand over his resources to his daughter Alexandra to present women as capable beings and to witness a daughter's right to her parental property. But as a justifiable woman, she gets him to appoint her as a trustee to his land, which she has to divide among her brothers, any time.

Cather's attempt to keep women aloof from the active politics of men resembles with Coward's as both of them think that such politics invites only destruction for the women in the society. Sternly criticizing active feminist movements, Coward says:

*Yet it has been frequently recognized within feminism that consciousness-raising is never sufficient in as a politics. Consciousness-raising groups frequently run into trouble themselves, where women find themselves experiencing antagonism and rivalries which has been assumed to be the private property of men....They have difficulty in transforming this into any kind of effective politics. In fact, politics ... has been a politics ... They are inevitably different from and antagonistic towards women.*²⁴

Both Cather and Coward are aware of the delusion of any of such political movements launched by men. They foresee the misleading role of men instigating women for their involvement in the stereotyped movements, which, in the long run, may be very

²⁴ Rosalind Coward, "Are Women's Novels Feminist Novels ?" In *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays On Women Literature And Theory*, ed. Elaine Showalter (New York : Pantheon Books, 1985)

harmful and problematic for the women. So Coward is of the opinion that the task of the feminist novelist is not to invite any aggressive political movements, but to work for the women to protect them from the male-domination and guard culture and order in the society.

Terminologically also, 'feminist' itself is not the single property of politics, but the combination of biology, culture and politics. It is a biological word because the term 'feminist' is derived from 'female'. So it retains some traces of its 'mother' biological word 'female'. *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'feminism' as "the quality of women"²⁵, which is the property of culture. Cather thinks that culture and order should be maintained by the feminist pioneer women for the existence of their 'new' nation and also of their own. 'Feminist' has also to play a political role to protect women from the politics of men. Here, 'male-politics' differs from the 'female-politics' as the former is based on the power, materialism and intrigue, while the latter is linked to the women's awareness and precaution that they need to protect themselves from the possible attacks of the corrupt males.

Cather's conception of social order resembles with Stuart Mill's. Sushila Singh says: "Mill was inspired by the vision of a replacement of social order based on the principle of equality."²⁶ Cather also wants to maintain social order in the New Countries on ground of the principle of equality. That is why she emphasizes on the balance of power between two genders.

Cather thinks that male-politics co-exists with their power, and men use their coercive tactics for the submission of the women's worlds to serve their own ends. So Cather angrily rebukes Ambrosch using 'surly Ambrosch' to demoralize him for his powerful domination over the powerless women sex. In this sense, her view coincides with that of feminist critic Kate Millett as both of them assault on orthodox patriarchs for their power-politics to supersede the women's world. In Millett's words: "The

237.

²⁵ *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary On Historical Principles*, 3rd ed., prep. William Little, et al, rev. & ed. CT Onions (London: Oxford University Press, 1973) 739.

²⁶ Sushila Singh, "Utopian Element In Feminist Thought", *Feminism: Theory, Criticism*,

essence of politics is power, and the task of feminist critics and theorists is to expose the way in which male dominance over females constitutes perhaps the most pervasive ideology of our culture and provides its most fundamental concept of power.”²⁷ She regrets that men, being the rulers, dominate women, and women are ruled by them. Like Millett, Cather also weighs politics with power, which she detects mostly in her male-characters. Lou Bergson (*OP*), as instigated by his power, tries to use his politics to intrigue against his sister Alexandra. If Alexandra were not powerful, Lou could extremely dominate her. So Cather’s approach as a feminist novelist is to oppose men for their patriarchal approach to the women and rescue them from the unnecessary control of men.

Cather roams into the world of ‘past’ to search out the materials for some of her latter novels. As she experiences minus points in the wary environment of her current time, she takes materials for her *Shadows On The Rock* from 1770^s France, and from her own ancestors of 1850^s Virginia for *Sapphira And The Slave Girl*. But for these novels, she has quested feminist women like Rachel Blake and Cecile Auclair to replace her feminist ancestor Rachael Boak and herself respectively.

Cather, as a feminist novelist, has inwardly supported even the activists women like Marian Forrester and Myra Henshawe creating them the protagonists of some of her novels though she shows anguish at them for their violent activities and calls them ‘lost ladies’ for the loss of their values of life. In this sense, she is closer to John Milton who outwardly rebukes Satan for his satanic rites, but inwardly favors him. He makes him indirectly the ‘hero’ of his epic *Paradise Lost* to challenge God for His excessive tyrannical nature.

The approbation of Cather’s novels lies in the correct study of her materials and characters. Her novels reveal her intimate knowledge of the country life and the women who have immigrated from various nationalities. Her themes are varied, but the dominant theme of her novels is to delineate the pioneer women's painful life in the

Analysis (Delhi: Pencraft International, 1997) 50.

²⁷ Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (New York: Double Day & Company, Inc., 1970) 25.

new soil and their struggle to overcome hardships over there. The novels are based on the foundation of her own familiar materials and persons of her own observations. In the words of Woodress: “She could only write successfully when she wrote about the people or places she loved.”²⁸ She was more familiar with the pioneer women of Red Cloud because she also belonged to the same group. She grew up in the heterogeneous society of the immigrant women of Red Cloud. So these affectionate women who loved her so much have been the characters of her novels. Generally, she was much interested to the farming women of Red Cloud. About her love of the Red Cloud people, Edith Lewis says:

*Certainly the people of Red Cloud were not more interesting than those of any other small American town. But she was more interested in them. Perhaps she was more interested in them ever than they were themselves. It is they, for the most part, who make up the great gallery of characters in her books. They and their lives become the symbol of her own understanding of life.*²⁹

As Cather knew her characters better than herself, she also knew their multidimensional personality and greater strength of their lives. She has included these pioneer women of multidimensional personality as the characters of her novels. Her most successful frontier novels, *O Pioneers!* and *My Antonia*, are written with the pioneer women of Red Cloud with different names and different places, Hanover and Black Hawk.

Generally, Cather’s women characters in her novels are from the actual women of the agricultural background with great love of their land. As a conscious woman of the pioneer country, she had carefully observed the troublesome life of the frontier pioneer women, who actually worked hard, day and night, on the farm, but could grow very little. About Cather’s feelings towards these women and their hard life in the dry, empty soil of Nebraska, Doren says:

In frequent rides over the prairie on a pony she grew very fond of the immigrants, particularly of old women who told her about their former homes.

²⁸ Woodress, *Willa Cather: A Literary Life*, 289.

²⁹ Lewis, *Willa Cather Living*, 24.

*Imaginative and generous, she was stirred by the difficult lives of the new Americans, and anxious to make them understood as human beings.*³⁰

She has included these hardworking agricultural women with their scythes and spades as her fictional characters in her novels to fulfill her commitment about the frontier women. About Cather's interest to the lives of the common farm-women of the pioneer country, Grumbach says: "She could write of the common people on whom the burden of labor rested, who planted the corn and cut wheat."³¹ So these women's painful lives in the New Countries and the stories of their Old Homes constitute the materials of Cather's frontier novels.

Cather has acted as a fore-runner of the modern day feminist by depicting the world-wide domination and corruption of males over women through her novels. As a sensitive woman, she has felt heart-break at the pioneer women's pain and suffering taking it as her own. In her actual life, she saw nothing except corruption, domination and exploitation of men over women. She found the wives suppressed by their husbands, hired girls dominated by their landlords and sisters exploited by their brothers even in the pioneer communities. She saw neighboring Miners' ill-treatment to their innocent hired girl Annie Sadilek and her dismissal from the Miners' home. She also encountered with the hostile brothers like Ambrosch Shimerda and Oscar-Lou Bergsons, showing demonic dealings to their gentle sisters like Antonia and Alexandra. Such pathetic scene enroused her bitter feelings against such males and led her to write novels with the episodes of the oppressed women. Her heroines like Alexandra and Antonia are her mouth-pieces to tell the truth about the oppressed women. Through her novels, she wants to bring forth the actual position of the male dominated women to her general readers and make them aware of such villains. In her view, the readers' sympathy can strengthen these women's moral power to resist against the dominating males in the American society.

Another outstanding characteristic that recognizes Cather as a popular novelist is

³⁰ Doren, "Willa Cather", *The American Novel*, 281.

³¹ Doris Grumbach, Foreword, *My Antonia*, by Willa Cather (Boston: Houghton Mifflin

her skill to make her round characters in her novels. They move from one action to another and are very pleasant and attractive to look at. But their beauty lies in their hearts as they never show flattery to anyone. Instead, they always take happiness at other people's success and prosperity. They are very lovely in appearance and affectionate to others. Alexandra is always affectionate to her brothers and friendly to her neighbors. Though Oscar and Lou are serpents in the grass, she never thinks of anything wrong of them. Antonia wants to see Jim Burden a kind doctor to serve the sick people.

The women in Cather's novels are very conscious about their fields of works and very bold at their difficult time. Her women meet social, economic, educational and political problems in the new soil, but they are never afraid. Instead, they try to solve their problems patiently. Again, these women are also conscious even about the outer world. They know that there is also another field of study, such as, music, law and painting, besides farming. So her Alexandra selects 'law' for her brother Emil, and Thea selects 'music' for herself.

Her women are also humorous, talented, courageous, rational and intelligent. Alexandra's humor, Antonia's courage, Thea's talent and Cecile's intelligence can never be forgotten. More than that, they defend the weak and helpless. Alexandra's support for wretched Marie Shabata and Cecile's devotion to helpless Jacques are Cather's feminist approaches to defend women. But she neither intends to see her women as free as Marian Forrester nor allows them to return to the stone age for their freedom of sexuality that D. H. Lawrence prefers to his women.

The feminist novelist does not intend that men should be given more opportunities than the women. So she revolts against Victorian snobbishness by wearing men's dress and allowing her women to go out of their homes to sing songs for the audiences. She takes her Thea to the Art Institute of Chicago and Germany as a revolt against the Victorian society, which uses women only for the kitchen works and keeps them at a distance to music.

Cather has covered wider horizons of earth for the materials and characters of her novels. She has selected men and women from various fields. They start their life as house-wives and run to their farm under the open sky to work for their families. Her women occupy various professions, such as, farmers, dress-makers, singers, hotel-keepers etc. and also visit the international stadiums either to take part in music-contests or to enjoy theaters and dances. Mrs. Gardener visits London Auditorium Hall from Black Hawk a week earlier before the play of Shakespeare starts. Her treatment of nature is closer to William Wordsworth as both of them take the objects of nature as living things. Cather's Antonia waters trees of her orchards taking them as her own children.

Cather is categorically a realist for presenting vivid picture of women's life and a naturalist for her beautiful description of nature. But more than this, she is the feminist novelist for her strong support to the women and truthful accounts of the reality about women's life. Besides her advocacy of women's rights, she has also talked about their duties as well as their limitations. Though she intends to restrict extremist women for their destructive works and loves liberal feminist women for their creativity, she is still a feminist novelist for pouring out her anger at the privileged gender for their cruel ruling over the impoverished women. Mostly she has used psychology to study the pioneer women's problems and psycho-analytical technique to study the activist women's complex personality and their inner problems. In fact, Cather looks much impressed from Virginia Woolf's Stream of Consciousness technique and Edmund Freud's Psycho-analytical Theory.

About Cather's style, she herself answers: "Style is how you write, and you write well when you are interested. A writer's own interest in a story is the essential thing. If there is a flash of warmth in him it is repeated in the reader. The emotion is bigger than style."³² Her deep love of the new American women and their hard life in the New Countries rouse her emotions, which excite her to write her best novels. She gives more

³² Interview by Flora Merrill, "A Short Story Course Can Only Delay", in *Willa Cather In Person: Interviews, Speeches & Letters*, ed. L. Brent Bohlke, (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1986) 78-79.

importance to the emotion than sentimentality. She thinks sentimentality as the cause of her characters' tragedy. Her pioneer women with 'existential philosophy' are emotional, but the lost ladies of love and romance are sentimental. The abruptness and suddenness of her sentences in her novels are caused by the choking of her breath due to her emotional feelings at her pioneer women's miseries. She looks much impressed from the Classics as there is lucidity of her thought, precision of her expression, brevity of her presentation and simplicity of her style throughout her novels. Praising Cather for her beautiful style, Brown and Crone say:

*Willa Cather's art --- her style ---..... Intangible as style is, there is ample evidence that hers can be termed fine, artistic, beautiful and even classical. It is economical, controlled, and disciplined, refined and fastidious, clear and sharp.Her style is never an end in itself, but always a fitting implement.*³³

Cather has taken novel in qualitative term and continued to work for its perfection. Novel to her is primarily a matter of selection and simplification of the materials to bring out the desired effects in the realm of her characters and situation. To her aim, she is more aware of the characterization and action of the novel than its plot. As a matter of fact, she is an expert in managing the situation and presenting the characters of her novels. She has elaborated the point of view technique to her novels, and the tales of the women's life problems are narrated by the narrators in some of her novels. In fact, her novels are the narratives, and first person narrators, such as, Jim Burden (*MA*), Neil Herbert (*LL*) and Nellie Birdseye (*MME*), are used to narrate the women's stories more effectively.

Cather has made appropriate use of all literary tools, such as, symbols, metaphors, similes, alliteration, allegory etc. very carefully to bring out the desired effects in her novels. She takes the 'land of past' as a symbol of happiness and 'present land' as problematic. Like Jane Austen, she is also a satirist and humorist, and her satire, which is mild and gentle, goes together with her humor. She has delicately presented her

³³ Marian Marsh Brown and Ruth Crone, *Willa Cather: The Woman And Her Works* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970) 152.

humor rather than irony in her novels. In fact, her optimistic pioneer women use humor to run their life-existence, while her pessimistic 'lost ladies' use irony to express their despair in life.

Cather has presented revolutionary views in all of her novels. She always takes the favor of her helpers and treats hired girls very sympathetically in her novels. Though Lena Lingard (*MA*) shows something roughness in her behavior, works only for money and exploits simple-minded males like Jim Burden through her seductive nature, Cather shows much sympathy for her. Again, her women characters are themselves feminists who favor hired men or hired girls attacking the dominating persons. The novelist herself hates to call 'servants' to her helpers. It is she who has baptized 'hired girls' for her servants. Clarifying this view, she says: "Where I lived in the west, we didn't talk about 'servants' or maids: if we needed help and could afford it we hired girls."³⁴

Fearlessness, which is one of the possessions of the feminist women, is strongly occupied by the novelist herself and her women characters. About the novelist's fearless nature, Edith Lewis says: "She was naturally a very fearless person, fearless in matters of thought, of social convention; people never intimidated her; and she was extremely self-possessed in the presence of physical danger."³⁵

In fact, Cather's novels reveal pedagogic concerns having their great instructive strength. Her readers can experience exactly the similar didactic tone in her novels what William Shakespeare's readers have experienced in his plays. Like feminist Shakespeare, Cather wants to voice for the humanity for the betterment of all human beings in the cosmos through her novels.

Cather's revolt against the Victorian males for their monopoly to the women's world, her endeavor to provide social dignity to the pioneer women of the farm and her sympathetic treatment to the hired girls are the indications of her feminist concerns in her novels. She has fought for the miserable women in many ways. Her revolutionary

³⁴ Quoted by Menchen, "'American's Coming-of-Age' Criticism: Early Views", in *Willa Cather and Her Critics*, 3.

³⁵ Lewis, *Willa Cather*, xiv.

ideas on 'cross-culture', her socialistic approach to the underprivileged women and her emphasis on women's independence and freedom resemble with the modern day feminists' outlooks on women. Though she has no intention to support the aggressive women of violence, her novels are not devoid of the activist feminist women. What undoubtedly ranks Cather as the most sincere novelist of the women is her selection of the women protagonists from both of the worlds – the good women of the common birth and the women of lost character from the upper class – for her novels. She has shown her strong support to the male dominated women of the pioneer communities in her novels. So Masilmani rightly says: "Willa Cather does not impress one as a militant, nor was she in the vanguard of the women's movement in her time. Yet her novels are strongly feminist."³⁶

³⁶ E. H. L. Masilamani, "Interrogation Of Life: Willa Cather's My Antonia", in *Feminism And Literature*, ed. Radha (Trivendrum: Institute of English, University of Kerala, 1987) 1.

Chapter II

Willa Cather In The Tradition Of Feminist Writing

Willa Cather as a woman novelist identifies women and successfully writes her feminist novels on them. Most of her novels reflect her female consciousness, which is one of the characteristics of feminism. O Connor praises Cather for her perfect reflection of her female consciousness and its impacts in her novels with the phrases: "...A consciousness of the femaleness of the novelist and the effects of this femaleness on the image, landscapes, characters, mythic and narrative structures, and even critical reception of her works."³⁶ In fact, she seems to be the first woman writer who creates a world of women in her novels and sincerely writes about the ordinary women of the farm, kitchen, field of art and other professions with much insight on them.

Cather uses her female experience to delineate women's vices, virtues and shortcomings from the depth of her heart as truly as Toril Moi expects from a woman novelist. In Moi's belief, only the women novelists possess such dominating power of studying women's soul, which the male artists lack. Though D. H. Lawrence (1855-1930) extends his pen to portray the femaleness of his female characters in his novels, he misses something as he has no heart or experience of the woman. Though he is Cather's contemporary novelist, he treats his women characters as tools of his males. His heroines, Constance Chatterley in *Lady Chatterley's Lovers* and Ursula in *The Rainbow* are only to fulfill the sex desire of his heroes, Mellons and Birkin respectively. He leads his women to the prehistoric land and presents them nakedly outside their homes, even allowing sons to have sexual intercourse with their mothers. Cather, though personally impressed with D. H. Lawrence and his wife Freida at her several meetings to them, is totally against such savage sex-affair, which Lawrence highlights in his novels. But Cather, as a woman writer, feels at the bottom of her female characters' heart and finds 'mine of life' in her women characters like Alexandra Bergson in *O Pioneers!* and Antonia Shimerda in *My Antonia*.

Cather emerged as a leading writer from such an age when women's world had already been collapsed due to the maximum domination of males over women. In Donovan's words:

Women writers who began their careers in the 1890s and whose major production came in the early twentieth century --Edith Wharton, Willa Cather..--came of age in a context radically different from that of their predecessors. They wrote in and about a world where the women's community no longer cohered, where the 'mothers' gardens' had been destroyed, where women's cultural traditions--including the literary--were problematic, where, in short, an ideology of male supremacy had gained hegemony.³⁶

So Cather's women-centered novels are a reaction to the male-dominated world to bring back the women's world. Though the materials and characters chosen for her novels might have not been acceptable to the patriarchal standard readers of her time, they are definitely the subjects of full enthusiasm to the readers of the current age. Her novels, which are the fruits of her own thorn-pricked hard life of Nebraska, speak highly of the painful life of the new American women of the United States.

In fact, Cather had been destined to make unending struggles against the traditional spirit of the time, strong prejudice of men and unfavorable climate of place since her childhood. It must have been the bitter experience for a sensitive girl like Cather to put her feet into the newly built empty, withered land of Nebraska. About Cather's child-psychology of this place, Doren says: "One thinks of that great faceless prairie stretching empty to the jumping off places of the earth, where the nine year old child was thrust to find its identity."³⁶ Child Cather, who had descended from the bountiful soil of Virginia, must have been shocked at the sight of the dry land of the frontier as she, later on, has expressed:

Whenever I crossed the Missouri River coming into Nebraska, the very smell of the soil tore me to pieces. I could not decide which was the real and which the fake 'me'. I almost decided to settle down on a quarter section of land and let

*my writing go. I loved the country where I had been a kid, where they still called me Willie Cather.*³⁶

But the hardship of Nebraska, which taught her a lesson of self-consciousness and self-confidence, led her to be the greatest novelist of the century contributing richly to the growth of the creativity in her and providing her inspiration to write novels with its subject-matters and characters. About Cather's advantage of the prairie, Edith Lewis says: "Perhaps these are certain advantages for an artist in growing up in an empty country; a country where nothing was made and everything is to be made."³⁶ Her frontier novels like *O' Pioneers* and *My Antonia* are shaped on the hard soil of Nebraska, dealing with the hard lives of the pioneer women like Alexandra and Antonia respectively. They are to tell her own hardships as a pioneer woman in Red cloud. But her continual effort to overcome her hardships makes her a greatest feminist novelist.

O' Brien thinks Cather's Nebraskan life both as a curse and a boon for her: "The new land (Nebraska) was a blessing as well as a curse, and Cather was later glad that her parents had taken her to Nebraska....as separation from the mother (land Virginia) brings independence as well as loss."³⁶ It was a great loss for Cather because she unfortunately missed her birth place, Virginia. But the soil of Nebraska is a boon for her because the strength of its hidden treasure has been proved as a 'divine-gift' to exercise her tools as a novelist to bring forth her frontier novels. Again, the new environment of Nebraska has provided her more freedom to think over her creative works, and Nebraskan hard life made her more laborious to search out the materials for her pioneer novels from its depth. Only her last novel *Sapphira and The Slave Girl* (1940) has been based on her Virginian ancestors.

Cather's identity as a greatest feminist writer has been disclosed through her feminist novels, *O Pioneers!*, *The Song Of The Lark* and *My Antonia* though she has written many poems, short stories and novels from her own experience as a woman writer. She starts her novel writing with the imitated theme of her contemporary novelists, Henry James and D. H. Lawrence. The selection of masculine heroes and the

theme of love and sex between the heroes and heroines have been the dominating disciplines of those male novelists of her time. Her first novel *Alexander's Bridge* (1912) is based on this theme. It is the story of Bartley Alexander, a bridge engineer, who involves in an unsuccessful love-affair with Hilda Burgoyne, a distinguished actress of Ireland. He represents the moral division of two worlds --his desire for Hilda Burgoyne and his responsibility for his wife Winifred. This division ends when the bridge built by him across St. Lawrence collapses causing his tragic death. This novel fails as she follows the traditional discipline of masculine hero and his love-affair as adopted by her contemporary novelists. But she is not such a coward woman to lie down her head under her arms at her failure. She is such a bold woman who learns more from her failure. So she thoughtfully looks at the frontier land and its immigrant pioneer women for the subject-matters and characters of her further novels.

To achieve success as a novelist, Cather searches out the language, style and voice of her own for her novels discarding the discipline adopted by the male novelists. Her most popular novel *O Pioneers!* (1913) is written with the new theme of the new frontier land and new life style of the new heroine, Alexandra Bergson. The materials and characters of this novel are taken from the novelist's familiar frontier land and her familiar women of the pioneer community. Alexandra Bergson, the heroine of *O Pioneers!*, is free from romance and cosmetic world. She is the gentle daughter of Swedish immigrant John Bergson and Mrs. Bergson in Hanover. She is the pioneer woman with the lure of the land. She is simple, sincere, kind-hearted and creative. As a dutiful woman, she never forgets her responsibility to the land, which is entrusted to her by her dying father for its prosperity. The land is very rich, beautiful and dear to her. In spite of the jealousy of her cruel brothers, Oscar and Lou, she goes on working on the farm for the fulfilment of her father's dream. Her boy friend Carl Linstrum is insulted and driven away by her cruel brothers. But she stays at Hanover to make the land productive.

Though Alexandra is a feminine woman having excessive love for her family members, her querulous brothers' domination over her makes her a feminist. She wants to maintain peace in the family, but her money-minded brothers, Oscar and Lou always destroy the clam and quiet atmosphere of the family. So she struggles against them for her right to the land and social justice to the woman. Still she worries

about their future and laments at the accidental murder of her youngest brother Emil. But she has such a good heart for human being that she consoles even Frank Shabata, the murderer of her own brother, and tries to release him from the prison. At maturity, she marries Carl Linstrum, the feminist male, to fulfill her commitment to her Hanover land and its miserable women from his co-operation.

The title *O Pioneers!* may have been borrowed from Walt Whitman's *Pioneers! O Pioneers!* (1865), but the originality displayed in this novel is her own. In fact, the title *O Pioneers!*, which is beautifully drawn from the pioneer women of the frontier, signifies all the pioneer women with the lure of the land. So Alexandra, the heroine, is the true representative of all pioneer women with hard works and hardships.

Cather has deep love of music in her heart. *The Song Of The Lark* (1915), which is written to express her love of music, is the story of Thea Kronborg, a Swedish pioneer girl with musical taste. In this novel, Thea is identified with the lark, a songbird with sonorous voice, for her powerful voice of her song. Musical art is possible for her because of her natural voice as gifted by God and her own devotion to music. Cather's love of Opera Theatre and music was borne out of her friendship with her musician neighbor Mrs. Julia Miner, but it fully developed in her from the impression of German singer Olive Fremstad's Opera Song. She has poured out this impression into *The Song Of The Lark* through her music-talented heroine Thea, who moves from Moonstone to Chicago and Chicago to Germany to pursue it. Finally, Thea makes her own destiny by herself and becomes a very popular Wagnerian singer of the Metropolitan Society in New York.

The novel is Cather's autobiographical in this sense that Thea has desire for art as Cather has. Thea gets success in music because she is helped by everybody, even from her teachers as Cather does. She has an understanding mother of seven children and queer aunt like Cather's. But Thea has selfless friend Ray Kennedy who leaves his life insurance for her study of music. Her adult friend Dr. Archie's contribution to the development of her artistic career is very great. Born in Moonstone, Colorado in poor crowded family, she gets chances to learn music and be a successful Opera singer because Dr. Archie supports her like a dutiful father. If he has not supported her, she

can never fulfill her dream. As Cather, Thea also understands her life for art's sake. *The Song Of The Lark* is dedicated to Isabelle McClung, Cather's most helpful friend in Pittsburgh.

Most of Cather's characters in her novels are not actual, but drawn from the novelist's familiar people. Her close friendship with her neighboring pioneer women of various ethnicity and her sympathetic observation over their life-struggles in the hard soil have helped her to study human nature and collect information of her women characters. Her deep friendship with the Miners' children and their hired girl Annie Sadilek constitutes *My Antonia* (1918). Almost all of the characters of this novel are drawn from the Miner family with different names. Its heroine Antonia Shimerda is Annie's persona, a girl from Bohemia, and musician Mrs. Harling is Julia Miner. The suicide of Annie's father due to the hardships of Nebraska is the suicide of Antonia's father.

Cather's whole attention is centered to Antonia, to whom she sees the image of whole nation, the symbol of pains and struggles. She is the symbol of all miserable pioneer women of the frontier. Her life is full of hardships and struggles in Black Hawk. She faces her father's suicide, gets ill-treatment from her brother Ambrosch and works as a hired girl for wolf-like land-owners. She encounters with various wrong urban males who rob her virginity. But she succeeds to change her fortune when she marries Anton Cuzak, a good-natured Bohemian farmer, and becomes the mother of many children. She establishes a sweet home with her gentle husband and obedient children in Black Hill. She buys land, works very hard on the farm, grows more crops, makes grand building and keeps herself in the warm family background. Ultimately she succeeds to redeem her lost prestige, along with her lost property and happiness, in the latter part of her life.

It is the beauty of Antonia's heart and gentleness of her behavior that the title of the novel *My Antonia* is given under her name. She is a hard-working woman with warm heart and affectionate dealing. She is Cather's Antonia, the symbol of all pain and

pleasure in the new soil. She struggles and tolerates her pain and suffering boldly. She protects Jim from his ruin, wishes goodness of others, keeps her husband so happy and trains her children so well. In Cather's words: "She (Antonia Shimerda) was a rich mine of life, like the founders of early races."³⁶

My Antonia is ranked with the finest novel for its unforgettable central character and rich details of the pioneer's life in Nebraska. Cather has used Jim Burden, a male narrator, to narrate Antonia's story to attract her readers keeping herself out of the novel. As she has given more importance to the characterization of her novels, her characters in *My Antonia* are as lively as Shakespeare's in his dramas. Heroine Antonia is as adventurous as Cordelia in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Praising Cather's skill in handling the novel, Rosowski says: "With *My Antonia*, Cather introduced into American fiction what Wordsworth had introduced to English Poetry a century earlier—the continuously changing work."³⁶ Here, Cather is compared to William Wordsworth who has successfully treated the simple-minded rural women like Lucy Gray and the solitary reaper with the simplicity of manner and language of common folk in *Lucy Gray* and *The Solitary Reaper* respectively. They are the rural girls of smiles and tears, who have left deep impact on Wordsworth's career. Similarly Cather has also dealt with the rural girls like Alexandra and Antonia with their pathetic lives, who have left much impressions on her mind.

Cather thinks that war, as influenced by politics, destroys peace and harmony in the society. She condemns materialism because it evokes politics, which brings war, death and disaster in the world. *One Of Ours* (1922) penetrates the dangers of the First World War. The hero of this novel is soldier Claude Wheeler, the son of migrant father Nat Wheeler and teacher mother Evangeline in Nebraska. He appears as a University student. When he is fired from the University, he finds whole human society against him. He loves Enid Royce and marries her, but fails to win her love. His father vainly tries to tie him to the soil, and his wife, whose mind is set for the missionary works, tries to bind him with Christian theology. As she deserts him and goes to China, depressed Claude Wheeler joins the First World War army, goes to France for the battle

and is killed in war.

About the theme of *One Of Ours*, Grumbach comments: "It is a book about despair and ageing, the misery of a marriage in which all passion is spent, the trails of family life, the ugly face of ambition, and the deep sadness of a love that has passed away without ever being realized."³⁶ In fact, *One Of Ours* is an allegorical story of G. P. Cather, the novelist's cousin, who dies in the First World War causing unbearable shocks to her Uncle George and Aunt Frank. So Claude Wheeler is G. P. Cather's objective co-relative to tell the factual events of his life. Why should a feminist writer of the women create the 'male hero' for this novel? About her circumstance, the novelist herself says: "I came to know that boy better than I know myself,....because I was to pay so much to write about this boy..."³⁶ So *One Of Ours* is written with a view to console her uncle and aunt for the loss of their son; to pay a tribute to her cousin at his heroic death and immortalize him; and to fulfill her assurance to G. P. Cather's parents to write on his life.

Cather has deep love of France for the French people's open-heartedness and less-materialistic attitude. As she is disillusioned by the American people's more materialistic attitude, she takes France as a country of aesthetic order. The title, *One Of Ours*, signifies one of the members of the novelist's own blood, i.e., G. P. Cather, in France. So Claude Wheeler, the persona of one of her kin, is sent to France to take part in the First World War for his heroic death like that of G. P. Cather. In Unger's words: "Claude finds in France the aesthetic order of which he had dreamed in ignorance (in America), and dies heroically without disillusionment."³⁶ Thus the title of the novel is justified. Though this novel is condemned for its bulky size and unimpressive war events, it has won Pulitzer Prize in 1923.

Cather, who is an angel of mercy for the poor and depressed, is the feminist novelist of the downtrodden and ordinary people of Nebraska. She has always defended the hired girls in all of her novels. Her family hired-girl Marjory, who was her greatest friend at her home, has occupied a significant role as Mahailey in *One Of Ours* and

Sada in her historical novel *Death Comes For The Archbishop*. In the former novel, Marjory is presented in the guise of Mahailey, the dutiful hired girl of the Wheelers. So Cather succeeds to cover the areas of the common people what Shakespeare, the dramatist of the kings and heroes of the town, fails to pick up in his dramas.

Cather is the only first woman writer who has shown her capability to bring out the real distinction between the good and evil men and women in the American society. She attacks not only to the males for their corrupt nature but also to the aristocratic women for their power-seeking and money-minded nature. She angrily calls ‘lost ladies’ to such upper class sophisticated women for the loss of their prestige and money due to the loss of their sincerity. *A Lost Lady* (1923) presents Marian Forrester as an activist woman in Sweetwater in the form of Eve in the Paradise. She is the wife of Captain Daniel Forrester, a devoted pioneer in Red Cloud, working as a railroad contractor from Lincoln to Denver. As she is twenty-five years younger than her husband, the marital relation between them cannot prosper.

Mrs. Forrester is presented as a beautiful, charming and benevolent woman in the beginning of the novel. As the novel proceeds, she is found dishonest to her husband, being attracted to the young boys. Mr. Forrester’s grown-up age, his poor health and bankruptcy as an impact of the Great Depression of 1890s are the causes of Marian’s decline of love and loyalty to her husband. When he becomes invalid as a patient of stroke, she starts flirting sometimes with Frank Ellinger and sometimes with Satan-like Ivy Peters. Though she pretends to nurse him, Neil Herbert, the nephew of Mr. Forrester’s friend, discovers her insincerity to him. When Mr. Forrester dies of his second stroke, Marian enjoys excessive freedom. In Neil’s words: “Now she’s after the young ones....She’s getting childish.”³⁶ In fact, Mrs. Forrester gets remarriage with cranky Henry Collins, a rich old English man she meets in California.

Daniel-Marian Forrester story, which is an allegory of Mr. Silas Garber, the founder-member of Red Cloud and Governor of Nebraska, and his wife Lyra Garber, is narrated by Neil Herbert. In McFarland’s words:

*Governor Garber's loss of his money, his stroke, his death, the departure of his widow and his eventful remarriage provided the outline of the story.....presented through a series of significant episodes, which are seen largely through the eyes of young Neil Herbert.*³⁶

Cather's dislike for materialism which takes its root in *One Of Ours* still continues to *The Professor's House* (1925). It focuses on St. Peter's symbolic rented Old House, where he has spent most part of his life with his wife Lilian and daughters, Rosamund and Kathleen, and where he has carried out his research works as a Professor of History. St. Peter mourns for the loss of his favorite student Tom Outland due to his tragic death. His wife Lilian's aspirations for the material world grows stronger when her older daughter Rosamund gets Tom Outland's property after his death and marries Louie Marsellus, a Jew engineer. She prefers to follow her son-in-law's life-standard. So she uses St. Peter's prize money to construct her New Building, where she hurriedly shifts from the Professor's rented house. But St. Peter refuses "to move out to her New House which he thinks a vanity, a desire for materialism, totally different from the Old House- the house of youth, the house of life, the house of artistic creation,the house of success."³⁶

The Professor's House is also Cather's another autobiographical novel to express her anti-materialistic feelings. Annoyed by the materialistic spirit of her contemporary age, she aspires for the idealism of the past. She has expressed such feelings through her persona St. Peter, the protagonist of the novel. It is the story within another story - partly the story of St. Peter, an ideal scholar aspiring for the past, and partly that of Tom Outland, St. Peter's favorite student with research mind, discovering a cliff city in New Mexico. About Tom Outland's love of the old place, like that of his Professor, James Woodress says: "When Tom Outland discovers the silent city in Book Two, he is enraptured by the houses the ancient people have built. Their beauty arises from the harmony of their surroundings."³⁶ Tom is now only a memory for St. Peter.

Though Cather herself is an unmarried woman, she emphasizes on the happy

conjugal life of the married couple. She does not intend that any unhealthy atmosphere should occur in the family. She is a feminist and takes women's side, but she cannot blindly accept women's wrong side. So she blames Mrs. Peter for not being aware of her responsibilities to her family. She regrets that the happy conjugal life is not possible for the Peters because the aspirations of the couple are at two different poles. St. Peter quests for the idealism of the remote past, and Lilian for the materialism of the present. So the clashes of their interests result in the clashes of their personalities, which bring disruption even to their family background. In Leonard Unger's words: "His two married daughters loathe each other, the two sons-in-law are at swords' points, his wife (who had been deeply jealous of Tom Outland's relationship with St. Peter) carries on a curiously sinister flirtation with a son-in-law."³⁶ So Cather says that the compromise between husband and wife is equally important to set up the warm family atmosphere in the society.

The title, *The Professor's House*, which refers to Prof. St. Peter's Old House of research and knowledge, suits to the scene of the novel. The Old House, which is dearer to St. Peter, is avoided by his miserly wife for her extreme love of her New House. St. Peter is frustrated with his wife and his children for their dry heart and for their lure of the material world. That is why he determines to be alone in his Old House. In despair, he says: "In great misfortunes, people want to be alone. They have a right to be. Surely the saddest thing in the world is falling out of love."³⁶

Cather neither believes in power nor has any faith on romantic affair. In her view, the marital relation does not prosper in the love-marriage as it fails to create the warm family atmosphere between the couple. *My Mortal Enemy* is written with the power-seeking, amorous heroine, Myra Henshawe. She is an adopted heiress of John Driscoll, a wealthy Irish Catholic in Parthia, Illinois. She falls in love with Oswald Henshawe, a poverty-stricken German Protestant, whom her rich uncle, John Driscoll, sternly dislikes. Condemning Oswald, he says: "It's better to be a stray dog in this world than a man without money."³⁶ So he threatens Myra that if she marries penniless Oswald, he will disinherit her and donate his property to the Catholic Church as a charity. But

Myra marries him even without his consent.

Feminist novelist shows much sympathy towards Myra when her uncle, as guided by his materialistic spirit, bangs her for her interest to marry poor Oswald. But she cannot blindly support her when she dominates him throwing his old clothes out of her room and cursing him as her enemy. Myra, who is brought up in rich Driscoll family at a big house, craves for money like her uncle and fails to adjust in her husband's small income. So she regrets that she has ruined her life by marrying penniless Oswald and leaving her rich uncle's villa. She has married Oswald by her own will. But she frowns at him for his limited income and laments all the time for not being able to keep up her life standard. At last, she falls ill, suffers from the incurable disease malignancy and takes her husband as a cause of her disease.

Myra's violent nature turns against herself and stirs her up to commit suicide. So she is also another 'lost lady' like Marian Forrester, the protagonist of *A Lost Lady*. Like Marian, she aspires only for materialism and curses Oswald for not getting sufficient money from him. So her curse 'my mortal enemy' on her husband constitutes the title of the novel. Nellie Birdseye, a fifteen year old girl-narrator, is used to narrate 'Myra-Oswald' love-story and its ill-impacts. In D. Hart's words: "*My Mortal Enemy (1926)* is a short novel concerned with a selfish and strong willed woman who brings about her own downfall."³⁶

Cather's desire for the past and her reverence to the Catholic religion inspire her to write *Death Comes For The Archbishop* (1927). It is her religious novel regarding the religious tours of two actual saints, Archbishop Lamy of Santa Fe in the guise of Jean Marie Latours, and Father Machebeuf in the guise of Father Vaillant. Like Christian in Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Latour makes a religious tour from Santa Fe to Canada and New Mexico to find out the transcendental reality. Like Christian, he faces ups and downs on the way to reach his goals. "In New Mexico, he always awoke a young man; not until he rose and began to shave, did he realize that he was growing older."³⁶ Each episode exhibits Latour's experiences in relation to his religious mission and the habit of the people living in the land, with special reference to the landscape. In the words of Aithal and Harrell:

*'Death Comes For The Archbishop' dwells mostly on the themes of the brotherhood and love- on how two missionaries win the people over by the goodness and purity of their heart. As the two complete their mission, different ethnic groups reconcile and quietly settle down to live their different lives.*³⁶

Death Comes For The Archbishop, which is based on Cather's own experience of

her tour to New Mexico, is the novel of superb quality in the opinion of the authoress. About her Faith on the Catholic church, D. Hart says: “The author’s idealism and love of the past reach a climax in ‘Death Comes for the Archbishop’ (1927), her celebration of the spiritual pioneering of the Catholic church in New Mexico.”³⁶ It has nine books, and each book concerns with the movement of pioneer French Archbishop Latour’s missionary works, with the celebration of the Catholic Church in New Mexico.

Cather herself realizes that the novel is without woman. So the question arises whether the novel is feminist or not. Though Magdalena and Dona Isabella are the women characters in the novel, they appear in the middle of the novel without any distinctive roles. But the novel is feminist in this sense that these women characters are highly sympathized by the novelist. Magdalena is presented as a most unhappy wife of Buck Scales, a murderer of her three children and other four travelers. She is protected by the missionary people and taken to the Catholic Church as a manager of the Sisters' kitchen after her corrupt husband is hanged. Again, Dona Isabella, the widow of Antonio Olivares, who is deadly troubled by her husband’s brothers, has been converted into feminist to defend herself from her cruel brothers-in-law. So the novel is feminist in spite of its male protagonist.

There are many controversial opinions about Cather’s religion. Reviewing *Death Comes For The Archbishop*, Michael Williams says:

*Miss Cather is not a Catholic, yet certainly no Catholic American writer that I know of has ever written so many pages so steeped in spiritual knowledge and understanding of Catholic motives and so sympathetically illustrative of the wonder and beauty of Catholic mysteries, as she has done in this book.*³⁶

As a matter of fact, Cather is a Protestant by blood. But her utmost inclination to the Catholic religion, as an impression of her friend Dorothy Canfield Fisher, signals her as a Catholic. The phrases - “Mary, Mother of Jesus, have pity upon me!”³⁶ - Cather uses throughout her novels also presents her as a Catholic. James Woodress, Cather's biographer, talks of her conversion of religion from Protestant to Catholic. He says:

*Cather had become a Catholic. She began receiving letters from Catholics asking about her conversion. One in particular was a student at Mount St. Mary's college in Maryland, who was writing a senior thesis and wanted to know how her conversion influenced her writing...She complained, that anyone should admire and reverence the Roman Church as a great organization and spiritual power without being a Catholic.*³⁶

Only a Catholic can have such an expression. Again, her great interest in the Catholic characters like Cecile Auclair (SR) and helpless Nancy (SSG), also link her to the Catholic religion. These miserable women have been escorted to the Catholic Church to rescue them from the masculinity and corruption of the wrong genders.

Cather could never recover from the shocks of her nearest persons' death. *Shadows On The Rock* (1933) has been written at her dark mood to release herself from the shocks of her affectionate father's death and her mother's fatal illness. So the theme of this novel is to quest for clues about her own personal life to keep her gentle father's memory fresh for ever. She has selected affectionate father Euclide Auclair and his dutiful daughter Cecile as the characters of her novel to tell her own father-daughter relationship. The novel moves round Cecile's life at lonely island Quebec, and several incidents follow behind her. After the sudden death of her mother, Cecile looks after her apothecary father who makes treatment to his patients in his apothecary shop in Quebec. She manages domestic affairs very efficiently and assists her father at his clinical works very carefully to please him as Cather helps her father at his Real State business. She meets Jacques, the son of Canadian-born prostitute Antonette Gaux, whom she keeps at her home and gives him motherly love. Mr. Auclair's treatment to his patients seems very selfless, and his devotion to the Governor, the Count de Frontenac, looks praiseworthy. When the Count asks him to go to France for the future of his daughter, Mr. Auclair makes him silent by saying: "I have made my choice, patron. I remain in Quebec until you leave it."³⁶

The novel is rich with the androgynous characters, Euclide Auclair and Cecile. Mr.

Auclair, a male, seems dependent on his master, but Cecile, a female, is independent. It makes them androgynous characters. At the Governor's death, her father nearly loses his sense, but bold daughter Cecile gives him courage. Pierre Charron, the fur-treader and son of her father's patient Madame Charron, comes at the right moment to give him spirit. Cecile is to engraft French tradition into the new soil of Quebec. In Mc Farland's words: "Charron represents the new type of man, the true Canadian who is a product both of the culture of the Old World and of the Canadian forests. Cecile, too, embodies the tradition of France engrafted onto a new life in Quebec."³⁶ In fact, Cecile is to maintain order and tradition of France in Quebec, but her androgynous mind and independent soul signal her as a feminist.

Cather's life-long concern to music and her emphasis on the artist's long devotion to art for its perfection are reflected in *Lucy Gayheart* (1935). It is the story of another artist heroine Lucy Gayheart comparatively written to *The Song Of The Lark*. Like Thea, Lucy also goes to Chicago to study music. But she fails because she remains passive in her study and active in love-affairs. At first, she flirts with Harry Gordon, a banker, but betrays him when she loves Clement Sebastian, the male-musician in Chicago. Unluckily, Clement dies of drowning in Lake Como, Italy, and Lucy becomes totally helpless. Then she becomes an activist and fights with her sister.

In this novel also, Cather criticizes that romance is a disease for the success of an artist. According to her, a romantic artist's life without devotion to art is a failure. Lucy, who involves herself in love-affairs with the boys, dies of drowning in the river exactly like her lover.

Cather turns back to her native village Shenandoah Valley, Virginia, for the subject-matter and characters of her last novel *Sapphira And The Slave Girl* (1940). It is written not only to redeem her ancestors but also to prove the fact that some of the ill-willed women are also as dangerous as corrupt males for equally poisoning the simple-minded women's world. Through this novel, she wants to reveal her ancestors governed by both evil and good characteristics.

Sapphira and The Slave Girl, which is the story of the evils of slavery of the 1850s United States, moves round the relationship between slave owner Sapphira Dodderidge Colbert and her slave girl Nancy, the daughter of her slave Till. Sapphira, who is the wife of Miller Henry Colbert, the Negro employee at her own estate, inherits her father's property with twenty slaves in Shenandoah Valley. She manages her farm, while her husband manages her mill. Her widowed daughter Rachel Blake, who is much shocked at her husband's death, lives in the village with her two small daughters. As Henry Colbert treats Nancy as a human being, Sapphira suspects him and plans to badly ruin her. Henry knows the truth, but remains passive before the power of his wife. In the question of rescuing the girl, neither the host nor the girl's mother Till can do anything to save her daughter's virginity. Sapphira plots against Nancy by providing raping opportunities to Martin Colbert, her husband's ill-reputed nephew. But feminist Rachel Blake, Sapphira's own daughter, saves Nancy by taking her to the Canadian Church. It brings clashes between the mother and daughter, but the death of Rachel's daughter brings reconciliation to them.

Feminist Cather makes an attack on cruel Sapphira for her misuse of power and conspiracy against her innocent slave girl. She also blames her for her false charge to her gentle husband, Henry, adding his name to the affairs with Nancy. Supporting Cather for her assault on activist Sapphira and showing sympathy for wretched Nancy, another feminist Meyer says:

A husband was suspected of lusting after the slave girl; to forestate the husband she offered the another man; the girl's mother could only remain passive in the face of her daughter's danger; her owner could find nothing in his Bible or his conscience interacting him to save her..... It was Sapphira who indulged in the most uncontrolled fantasies, conspired to expose the slave girl to ruin.³⁶

In Leonard Unger's words: "Sapphira and the Slave Girl (1940) is Willa Cather's personal quest for her Virginia ancestors."³⁶ In *Sapphira*, Cather has drawn her characters from her own ancestors of the similar traits. Sapphira's daughter Rachel

Blake is the fictional character of her beloved kind grandmother Rachael Boak, and Henry and Sapphira are the prototypes of her maternal great grand-parents, kind Jacob and cruel Ruhamah Seibert respectively. Till and Nancy, the slaves of Sapphira, are real Blacks from Virginia working as slaves for Cather's great grand-parents. Mary Blake, the child daughter of Rachel Blake, is the prototype of Cather's mother Mary Virginia at her childhood.

To refer to Toril Moi's words, feminist novels are those which are written for the women, of the women, by the women. Cather is a woman artist and her novels are the feminist novels for her great feminist concern to the downtrodden women of her age. As she sees wretched women as exploited and dominated by men, she writes feminist novels to voice for these women. So her feminist novels are to sympathize the wretched women and support them from the feminist point of view. As she herself is a woman of female consciousness, she has successfully written her feminist novels on women.

Cather has adopted the socialistic view even using the word like 'comrade' in her novels. As she wants to break the discrepancies between the rich and poor, she shows the same respect and humanistic approach to the women of all ethnicity and all social groups. Whether they are the landlords' daughters or their hired girls, she shows no discrimination at all. In *My Antonia*, she has highly approved of poor Mrs. Shimerda's attack on rich Mrs. Burden for not supporting hungry Shimerdas with food-stuffs. Even in her actual life, Cather had highly supported Annie Pavelka, the hired girl of her neighboring Miners, in spite of her close intimacy with their children. She has projected hired girl Antonia as the protagonist of this novel to raise the status of such disadvantaged woman.

Cather shows her whole feminist concern to her women and dreams of their heavenly life on earth. So she believes that the happiness of her women lies in their right selection of their professions/ways of life. A woman who wants to be an artist as well as a housewife at the same time cannot be happy in the family. In her view, a married woman is a 'great woman' whose responsibility goes to her family, and not to

her art. Again, she neither sees women's happiness on their arranged marriage based on the patriarchal standard, nor prefers their love-marriage as it innocently takes place between the teen-aged boys and girls. In her view, the marriage of convenience also is equally harmful for both parties because such marriage is not for life's sake but for the personal benefits of one or both married partners. So the novelist stresses on the 'marriage of good match' that takes place between the good matched men and women of the similar age, status, aspiration and experience. But she advises her artistic women not to marry but to remain sexless for the maturity of art.

Personally Mrs. Julia Miner, the music-loving mother of her friends, was very good to Cather. She inspired her to learn music. Again, German Mr. Charles Wiener and his French wife inspired her to learn German and French languages providing their own Library for her personal use. About Cather's advantage of those neighbors, Woodress says:

Red cloud may have been an instant prairie town, but it contained a fair share of cultivated people. Cather was lucky in having the Wieners next door, and apparently they realized her extra ordinary talent and encouraged her to go to college."³⁶

She has poured out such 'Cather-Miner-Wiener' experience into 'Thea-Kohler-Archie' episode in *The Song Of The Lark*. Again, Dr. Archie gives her fatherly love, sees Thea's talent for music and inspires her to go to Chicago to pursue it. Inspired by these two cultivated families at her neighborhood, she has written *The Song Of The Lark* (1915) and *Lucy Gayheart* (1935) with the music-loving protagonists, Thea Kronborg, and Lucy Gayheart respectively. Through these two novels, Cather exhibits her philosophy about life, love and art. To achieve success in life, the artist must be laborious and romance-free in her view. Otherwise, it leads its partners to the mouth of hell inflicting misery to their lives.

Besides her immigrant neighbors, Cather was also much influenced by A. K. Goudy, her Principal in Red Cloud High School. He and his wife were the first scholars

to provide her intellectual background for the first time. About the impact of these scholars' lives on her, Lewis says: "She owed to them for the early ideals of scholarship and art that gave direction to her own life and work."³⁶ She was also much impressed from her teachers like Mrs. Eva J. Case and William Ducker. Her close friendship with them also excited her to write novels on Red Cloud people. But Lewis says: "These legends are less a reflection of Willa Cather than of the neighbors and fellow towns folk." (26)

Cather makes slight use of satire in her novels to correct the vices of the Victorian society. Through this device, she wants to change men's attitudes towards women for improving women's status in the American society. In *My Antonia*, she has satirized even Mrs. Miner presenting her in the guise of Mrs. Harling, the savage landlady of Antonia. Mrs. Harling who cruelly drives away Antonia from her house is nobody except Julia Miner, Annie's landlady. Annie has been highly sympathized through her persona Antonia. Her hard works at the Harlings's kitchen and her troublesome life are Annie's. As Antonia takes part in Vannis Tent dances like Annie, Mrs. Harling dismisses her as Mrs. Miner does to Annie. Presenting similar 'Antonia-Harling' episode, Cather wishes to correct Mrs. Miner's dealings towards her hired girl through her satire.

Cather has begun a new genre of American fiction by writing successful novels on women from her own female experience and treating them as the 'heroes' in her narratives. She has challenged her contemporary novelists like Henry James and D. H. Lawrence, who subscribe to the subjugation of women through their writings and present women as inferior beings to men. They have treated women as 'secondary' providing them the supportive role of the heroines, the wives of the heroes, without autonomy. Cather has broken such male-dominated tradition creating women as the 'heroes' in her novels. Alexandra (*OP*), Antonia (*MA*) and Cecile Auclair (*SR*) are her autonomous female protagonists who are successful to carry out their responsibilities more perfectly than the 'male' heroes in the traditional novels. In spite of displaying herself as a man through her male dress and male's voice, Cather has shown her deep

love for the women giving more prominence to them in her narratives.

But Cather, being the novelist of the women, fails to handle her male characters when she traditionally writes novels with male protagonists. Bartley Alexander in *Alexander's Bridge* (1912), St. Peter in *The Professor's House* (1925) and Claude Wheeler in *One Of Ours* (1922) vainly suffer at her hand and meet tragedy. This perfunctory treatment to her male characters and the failure to tackle their psychological problems on her part is perhaps due to the lack of her knowledge of male experience. All of these male heroes meet tragic death for not being able to face challenges with their wives. Bartley Alexander collapses with the collapse of the bridge because he, being a romantic fellow, cannot match with his wife's fair personality. St. Peter and Claude Wheeler cannot compete with their wives as the couples are from two different poles. The wives aspire for the material world and the husbands reject it. St. Peter, the Professor of History, meets his tragedy because he rejects the comfortable New House built by his wife Lilian. He prefers to live in the Old House, which his wife totally rejects for ever. Claude Wheeler is killed in the First World War because he cannot challenge with his wife's missionary zeal.

In fact, Cather has shown more capability and sensitivity to handle the women's problems than men's in her fictions. In O' Brien's words: "Cather was able to write novels that speak from a woman's experience."³⁶ She has presented women as the most impressive characters insightfully decorating them with the feminist traits. These women are more capable to make their life-struggles than men. As compared to her masculine heroes, her women protagonists are more courageous, in this sense that they never lose their courage even at the calamities of their lives. Again, her women protagonists are fixed at their aims, which the male protagonists lack. Her Alexandra (*OP*) and Antonia (*MA*) have special missions to their soil, which they never stop. Alexandra remains associated to the land to fulfill her father's wish in spite of her cruel brothers' obstruction to her. To torment her, they humiliate even her well-wisher Carl Linstrum and try to seize her own land. But she continues her efforts to achieve her goals. Similarly Antonia never gets disheartened at her misfortunes but goes on facing

every crisis of her life very easily.

Cather's satisfaction lies in giving foremost position to the women as Virginia Woolf has done in *Mrs. Dollaway*. Her heroine Mrs. Dollaway is more powerful than those of the male-novelists. She manages her domestic affairs without the domination of her husband. Like Cather, Woolf also strongly criticizes those male critics who try to dominate women through their patriarchal theologies saying: "Cats do not go to heaven; women can not write the plays of Shakespeare."³⁶ Cather's objection to such dominating male writers is as strong as Woolf's. As a challenge to them, Cather declares that only women, and not men, are gifted with the creative power. When Fred Ottenburg starts to sing a song with Thea, the audiences are annoyed at his dull voice. Again, Cather has persistently attacked on power-centered males like Mr. Cutter and Larry Donovan for their domination over Mrs. Cutter and Antonia. She would heartily accept Millett's view of women if she were alive to see the publication of *Sexual Politics* (1970), offering vociferous attack on men who consider women only as means to bear children saying: "Women were not born to be free, they were born to have babies."³⁶

Cather was brought up in the culturally affected Victorian society of nineteenth century America with a dividing line between men and women - a culture premature prudery, which was very difficult to deal with. It was an age marked by the moral tone, and the women had to move on a tied-rope lying between the dramatic changes occurring in the American society and tough environment of the new territory. Basically, more morality was demanded from the women. Whether in her dressing or walking, she was expected to be morally good. Otherwise, she would be sternly criticized by the male-dominated society. As a revolt, Cather opted for masculine cult wearing male dress and acting as a male character in the guise of 'William', a boy. When the boys in the University discovered 'Willa', a girl, she became the subject of 'talk' and 'laugh'. Amidst her severe financial and social inconveniences, she encountered several catastrophic events of her own life. But it had no effect on bold Cather. About her compulsion to adopt masculine cult, Domna says:

*While Willa Cather exploits the cultural definition of manhood in order to delineate the identity of the lady-killer, she questions the viability of the masculine paradigm by exposing the dangers of the traditional hetero-sexual love hunt. Cather may have not been a militant feminist, but her imagination was undoubtedly gendered.*³⁶

In Sharon O' Biren's view, Cather's difficulty in reconciling her gender with the Victorian dominating males must have forced her to adopt the male values at her youth.

Cather was imbued with the feeling of novel writing sensibilities from the fresh knowledge she had imbibed from her journalistic writings. It was the time of Great Depression of 1890s in the United States that caused failure of crops and banks due to the continual blow of hot wind for three days throughout the country. Though her father, a poor land-broker, had no direct impact of bank failure in his profession in the monetary sense, the failure of crops had serious impact on his business. He found no way to pay interest and taxes for the land he had bought in credit. So he was in a very difficult position to make financial support for his children's education. Such climatic catastrophe not only taught Cather to stand in her own income by selling articles for the journals but also adorned her with the journalistic strength.

Cather never showed any selfishness during her life. So no work of her had been written to earn her name and fame. Instead, she wanted to conceal her real identity baptizing her several fake names. Again, she never wished to be a scholar in her life as she says through Jim Burden's lips: "I know that I should never be a scholar."³⁶ So she strictly prohibited making films out of her novels that the film producers wanted. She had taught her fan Edith Lewis to lie about her age and other personal clues so that people might not easily discover about her real identity. Her faith on simple living and higher thinking might have kept her aside from selfishness. Her desire for simple living has been expressed through the lips of her heroine Thea Kronborg in *The Song Of The Lark*. In spite of her high income as a musician, Thea is committed to lead a very simple life. Cather's simple living in her Grand Manan cottage is also an evidence to it.

Sarah Orne Jewett's strong advice for the development of her artistic career had a magical impression on Cather's artistic mind. Observing her writing caliber, Miss Jewett had suggested her:

*You must find your own quiet centre of life and write from that to the world.... to the human heart, the great consciousness that all humanity goes to make up.....He is the only artist who must be solitary, and yet needs the widest outlook upon the world.*³⁶

From Miss Jewett, she also learnt: "To write about the Parish, one must know the world."³⁶ Cather had already gained broad knowledge about the pioneer women of different ethnicity. But the emotion and imagination that excited her to write novels about their lives came to her mind from the age of twenty. As advised by Miss Jewett, she equally realized about her devotion to her novel writings. So she has written her feminist novels with the universal theme of the pioneer women's life problems of the international importance.

Though Cather's novels are the fruits of Sarah Orne Jewett's warm personality and her strong advice to her, she differs from Jewett in the selection of her materials and characters. Jewett is a storyteller who takes her materials and characters generally from the girl-child and outside the human beings. The heroine of her story *A White Heron* is Sylvia, a girl of nine, whose life is connected to the white heron and its urban ornithologist, the bird's hunter. But Cather is a feminist novelist who has selected the world of women with worldly affairs as the characters and their life problems on earth as the materials for her novels. Jewett prefers silence for the solution of her characters' problems. Sylvia shows her feminine character as she remains silent to protect the bird from the ornithologist. But Cather prefers feminist strength to solve her characters' problems. Her feminist protagonists, Alexandra and Antonia are the true representatives of the hard working women of earth, having much power to struggle against the male dominated world. All of her heroines can resist against such corrupt urban males as they are the women of feminist concerns.

Cather's far-sightedness could be witnessed from her clever decision to remain bachelor for the perfection of her works. Her bachelor-life set her free to produce so many novels and other works of art more conveniently. If she had married, she would be captivated by her family responsibilities. If so, it would block her path to her writing as it had done to Margaret Drabble, the present British novelist of maternity. Despite her interest in artistic work, Drabble could not devote her time for the work of art after her marriage with Clive Swift, the leading actor in Royal Shakespeare Company. Her initial aspirations for writing novels were to be forcibly converted into the acting. Captivated by her husband's family life, she got no private life of her own for her writing. As she had to wait for her husband's arrival up to midnight, she secretly wrote her autobiographical novels to pass her time easily and to quest for her identity as a novelist. But clever Cather knew it earlier and remained unmarried to run her novel writing.

There is somewhat similarity and difference between Willa Cather and Margaret Drabble (1939) regarding their personal life and novel writings. Both of these novelists endeavor to identify woman as a woman in their societies and see marriage as a barrier for an artist's life. Through their novels, they equally attack men for their domination over women and plead for women's freedom. Again, both of them have told their own painful life-stories through their autobiographical novels. Cather has expressed her love of music through her artist heroine Thea (*SL*), and Drabble has told her painful family life through her persona Rosamund Stacey in *The Millstone*. The heroines like Clara, Emma, Lucy and Jane are Drabble's personae who, like Drabble, are trapped in the maternity rooms with pain and exhaustion. But Cather's voice for the women is wider and stronger than Drabble's. She has dealt with the problems of all types of women occupying various professions - farm women, hired girls, singers, musicians, dancers, hotel-keepers, laundry women, dress-makers, house-keepers etc. - to make women as independent beings. But Drabble has dealt only with the domestic problems of the women as sisters, wives, mothers or daughters in keeping with established domesticity. Her women are trapped in the domesticity and maternity, from which they cannot

escape.

Again, Cather explores the life-struggles of the various groups of women from different ethnicity and nationalities, instead of sorting out a typical class of women. Her women like Alexandra, Thea, Tiny and Lena come from multifold horizons of earth. They not only make their journey of life from their Old Houses to the New Ones to try their fortune but also visit the outer world to achieve something else. But Drabble explores the painful experiences of the married women in relation to their husbands and their complex feelings of pregnancy, delivery and motherhood. Her heroine Rosamund Stacey in her domestic novel *The Millstone* is to tell this truth. Furthermore, Drabble identifies 'woman' as a woman. Her women depend upon their luck for the result of their works. But Cather identifies 'woman' as a feminist woman. So her women believe in action rather than luck.

As Cather's whole attention is centered to the characterization, she gives no prominence to the plot of her novels. So her novels lack structure or form in the manner of Shakespeare's dramas. Shakespeare's attention to his plays moves round his characters, and not to his plot. Like him, Cather has also created round characters giving equal attention to both of her major and minor characters. Her skill specially goes to decorate female characters, shutting one eye to the males. Alexandra (*OP*), Augusta (*PH*), Rachel Blake (*SSG*), Thea (*SL*) and Cecile (*SR*) are some attractive and moving characters who pass from bad to good or from good to bad fortune like Shakespeare's heroines, Portia (*The Merchant Of Venice*) and Rosalind (*As You Like It*). Most of her female protagonists, like Rosalind, face ups and downs during their lives, but their courage and patience help them to get what they like. It brings their happiness at the final part of their lives.

Cather has made use of objective correlative to tell the pioneer women's painful stories more objectively. Defining 'objective correlative', T. S. Eliot says: "The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding a chain of events which shall be the formula of that 'particular emotion' and which will evoke the same emotion

from the reader.³⁶ Marian Forester (*LL*) and Myra Henshawe (*MME*) are used as the 'objective correlatives' to tell the stories of Lyra Garber and Myra Tyndale respectively, while Louis Marsellus (*PH*) and Rachel Blake (*SSG*) are the 'objective correlatives' of Jan Hambourg and Rachael Boak. About the theme of her last novel (*SSG*), Cather herself says: "To recover the ancestors, to redeem them from their forgotten places, to make them speak."³⁶ Her purpose of using the 'objective correlative' device in her novels is to convince her readers on what she says.

The women characters in Cather's novels are neither ethereal like those of P. B. Shelley nor too violent criminals like those of Shakespeare. Shelley, one of the greatest poets of the Romantic era, invites his beloved to the lonely sky, where he and she may freely roam faster than cloud. Shakespeare's Hamlet and Macbeth kill numbers of their kiths and kins to conquer the crowns. But Cather's women are simple human beings working hard with their tools on earth. They take heavenly pleasure in earthly works and enjoy in the human society. They love earthly fellow human beings and seek to exchange their happiness and sorrow with one another.

Cather was very selective to her friends in her life. James Woodress says: "Choosing her people she wanted and ignoring the rest, and her friendships she made were lifetime relationships. Her friends recognized her qualities and devoted to her."³⁶ She made friendship with only those friends who were most devoted and sincere to her. She formed close relationship mostly with the women. She had thousands of sincere friends who always helped her by all means. It is they who changed her life. But Cather loved women, worked with the women, got inspiration from the women and wrote novels about them discarding the Victorian conception about men. Sarah Harris, Elizabeth Sergeant, Isabelle McClung, Sarah Orne Jewett and Edith Lewis were the women of genius, who were closely attached to her personal and writing life. Though James Woodress vainly charges Cather as a lesbian to Isabelle for her closeness to her, there is no evidence to support the point. As Cather sees tragedy in romance and presents its catastrophic consequences through the fruitless married life of her lovey-dovey heroines, Marian (*LL*) and Myra (*MME*), there is no question of her lesbian

relationship with Isabelle.

In fact, Cather's friendship with her devoted friends was purely academic and sincere. Her companionship with Isabelle McClung is not of less importance to collect materials for her novels. Cather herself says that almost all of her novels are the outcome of her close friendship with Isabelle. She and her husband accompanied her at several tours to England and France to search out the materials for her novels like *Shadows On The Rock* and others. Her shock at Isabelle's marriage with Jan Hambourg, a French Pianist, has settled in the form of 'Lilian-Marsellus' episode in *The Professor's House*. Louis Marsellus, the poisonous son-in-law of Prof. St. Peter, is Jan Hamborg who becomes an escapegoat of Cather's anger for snatching away her friend from her. She has attacked him taking him a wrong male to spoil Lilian, St. Peter's wife. About Cather's reaction at Isabelle's marriage with Jan Hambourg in 1916 and her death in 1938, her friend Elezabeth Sergeant notices: "Her face - I saw how bleak it was, how vacant her eyes. All her natural exuberance had drained away."³⁶ But Cather could exchange her tears into smiles when she found him very good and helpful. She has dedicated her favorite novel *The Song Of The Lark* and her story *Troll Garden* to Isabelle as a tribute to her.

Cather's closest friends were never men but women of genius like herself. Though she worked for *McClure's Magazine (1906-1912)* and was close to its proprietor S. S. McClure, she had only official or formal relation with him, and not so much cordial as she had with Isabelle and Edith Lewis. Again, he was a married fellow and had age difference to Cather. It was Edith Lewis who accompanied her in the same apartment for forty years and provided her family background. In O'Brien's words, Lewis accompanied Cather:

Sharing with her at her tears and smiles.Without Edith Lewis, Cather might not have been able to fashion such a nourishing and harmonious domestic environment,Lewis helped in many ways by taking care of(and) served as a buffer between Cather and the outside home.³⁶

Even after Cather's death, Edith Lewis was handed over half of her property under her will. But Lewis converted it into 'Willa Cather's Fund' for the publication of Cather's novels and other works. Lewis, after her death in 1972, was buried in Jeffry at Cather's feet.

The materials and characters of Cather's novels are drawn from both of the world of 'past' and 'present'. If *Shadows On The Rock* and *Sapphira And The Slave Girl* are connected to the world of past, *A Lost Lady* and *My Mortal Enemy* are totally based on her current world. She evokes the theme of the past in *Shadows On The Rock* (1931) to take relief from the hot climate of the current world after she has presented the horror of war and death in her novel *One Of Ours* (1922). If the 'world of past' stands for the idealism and happiness in her novels, the 'present world' stands for the problem and difficulty. So she seeks the land of past to explore the women of true friendship, great devotion and affection for other helpless people in her novels. *Shadows On The Rock* (1931) is based on this theme, and its protagonist Cecile Auclair, a French pioneer girl of seventeenth century Quebec, is said to be a 'divine girl' and an 'image of human continuity' under the shadows of the rock. She is found dutiful and affectionate towards her father and a sincere friend to homeless Jacques Gaux. She is the symbol of feminist frame of mind, embodying all French women's love and sympathy towards the oppressed. It is the French land of past and happiness engrafted into a new life in Quebec.

Even the male characters of her novels are haunted by the memory of the past as they take the 'present' world not cozy to live in. The dying Count feels remorse for not being able to die in France, a land of his happiest 'past', and regrets for taking his supposed last breath in Quebec, a country of his 'industrial present'. Through the mouth of the Count, Cather says: "Many of my family are buried there (in France); a sister of whom I was fond. I shall be buried here (in Quebec)." ³⁶

Though the feminist novelist intends to bring vast changes in the then conservative American society through her revolutionary ideas in her novels, she shows her

disapproval of the unnecessary changes that the politicians and capitalists try to bring to serve their ends. In her view, the 'extravagant' change brought by the politics and industrialization cannot sustain the social norm of the newly built pioneer community of the frontier. So she says from the Count's words: "He was indeed fortunate to spend his old age....where nothing was changed." (280) She has also opposed the concept of 'extremely liberated woman' in her novels. In *A Lost Lady*, she has attacked Marian Forrester for her dream to enjoy 'absolute' freedom by her husband's possible death. Such ill-will prompts her to shut down her eyes for the treatment of her sick husband, and it becomes the cause of Daniel's death. Is it not really a violent disruption of the society?

Cather's preference for the Arcadian 'theme of past' in her novels is caused by her ill-impression of the industrialization of her age. It is the capitalization that has made her women's life very difficult in her current society. So Cather says: "Our present is ruined- but we had beautiful past."³⁶ The predominance of corruption is seen even in the women as an impact of the materialistic spirit of the current world. She has depicted this fact in her novels *A Lost Lady* and *My Mortal Enemy* presenting the money-minded heroines like Marian and Myra respectively and their corruption in the society. If the former has ruined her husband's life by exploiting his resources and leaving him to die, the latter has killed herself by emptying her husband's purse. For the extreme love of the past, the novelist is said to be an escapist by some of her critics. But it is not true because she has beautifully drawn the materials and characters even from her current world for these two above novels.

But some of her novels like *O Pioneers!*, *The Song Of The Lark* and *My Antonia* are the fusion of the 'past' and 'present'. Though problematic, the present land becomes the dearest of all other prosperous lands for the heroines of these novels. Her women's life starts from the prosperous land of their Old Countries, but they are doomed to face the difficulties of their current worlds. Alexandra (*OP*) rises from prosperous Sweden, but meets hardships in Hanover, the land of her choice. Still she chooses Hanover farm, Thea (*SL*) selects her father's old house in Moonstone and Antonia (*MA*) prefers Black

Hill to run their occupations. But they adopt feminist approaches to overcome the hardships when they experience that the world they have chosen to make their destiny is extremely problematic to live in. Finally, they become prosperous from their own efforts to their lands.

Cather who keeps much faith on existential philosophy looks life from optimistic point of view. She faces the great upheavals of wars at her time and tolerates so many losses of her dearest people during her life. The death of her parents must have been a great shock for her. But she always looks hopeful and expects for better future. She says: "Never fear,.....Tomorrow will bring better luck."* Cecile marries Pierre Charron and gives birth to her four sons for the existence of human races in Quebec. From the words of St. Vallier, she says: "I shall have the pleasure of confirming your (Mr. Auclair's) grandsons (Cecile's sons in Canada), I hope? They will live to see better times than Ours." (279)

Unlike Catherine Mansfield, Cather is humorous in nature and expressive in her view. But Mansfield is serious and pessimistic in the treatment of her characters. Her interest particularly goes to birds, children and old women exhibiting weariness and frustration of life. Mansfield's *The Canary* depicts her interest to the bird like canary for her companionship as she is frustrated from the human beings. On the contrary, Cather meets high pioneer spirits cum multidimensional personality in the young women. Her women characters like Alexandra and Cecile are optimistic to life and look happy and gay in spite of their hardships in their New Homes. The novelist's humor makes her women optimistic. So they want to see even their generations happier and more prosperous in future. But Mansfield's irony, which soaks her characters' smiles and laughs, takes them to the gloomy clouded horizon of earth.

Cather is much influenced from Virginia Woolf's stream of consciousness technique, which she uses to make the psychological study of her characters. When Alexandra visits the University of Nebraska, her mind becomes very conscious about her deceased brother Emil who has studied there. She feels in such a way that she has

seen Emil through her own eyes in the class-room with his pen and paper. When she returns to her lodge, she starts to monologue with Emil. Again, Cecile understands Jacques' desire for his mother's love after she studies his child psychology. But the psychoanalytical technique has been used to study the internal feelings of her complex character like Myra (*MME*).

But there is somewhat difference between the techniques of Cather and Woolf in the treatment of human life. In Murphy's words, Woolf's is "an out spoken critic of patriarchy and a radical experimental in form, the other (Cather) a steadfast adherent to tradition whose novels often began with an emphatic assertion of time and place".³⁶ Woolf, being an aesthete, directs her women to take delight in aesthetic aspects of life and avoids the ugliness of life. But Cather, who gives more importance to the inner beauty of her women, thinks their external beauty as a symbol of destruction. She treats both beauty and ugliness as equally essential parts of human life. If she takes Antonia (*MA*) to represent the beautiful aspect of life, there is Marian Forrester (*LL*), who is to pollute the pioneer women's community of the frontier.

Cather has covered wider vision of human life in her novels, while novelists, Jane Austen (1755-1817) and Virginia Woolf (1882-1942) have taken things and persons for their novels from the limited range. Woolf's *Mrs. Dollaway* is also about woman protagonist, Mrs. Dollaway, and Austen's *Pride And Prejudice* is about its heroine Elizabeth Bennett. But Cather's view in her novels differs from that of Woolf or Austen. Woolf has taken the subject-matter for *Mrs. Dollaway* only from London street and her characters from rich families, while Cather has dealt with the varied subject-matters and women of multidimensional personality as her characters. For Woolf, a flower is only a flower to decorate her drawing room. But it has a very deep meaning for Cather. She appreciates a flower for its inner beauty. To her, a flower is the symbol of peace and happiness.

Jane Austen has also tied her characters within the limit of home, such as, love, marriage, ball dance, etc. So her novels are known as domestic novels. Her characters

like Elizabeth Bennett and Darcy belong to the upper class society of England. But Cather covers the wider range of the pioneer women's society where her Alexandra (*OP*) and Thea (*SL*) can move. The area of these women is as wide as the earth itself. She has taken her women from the kitchens to the international programs. Her Thea participates in the musical programs that take place from New York to New Mexico. But she knows the kitchen very well. Marie (*OP*) and Antonia (*MA*) are excellent cooks who can bake tasty Bohemian cakes in Black Hawk kitchens and work under the hot sun.

Cather's landscape description of the frontier land in *O Pioneers!* and her ancestral land Shenandoah Valley in *Sapphira And The Slave Girl* resembles with George Eliot's description of the country side in *The Mill On The Floss* (1860). Both of them love country life and pick up the familiar characters and materials from their own surroundings. Eliot's *The Mill On The Floss* is also an autobiographical novel like Cather's *Song Of The Lark*. Eliot has used her heroine Maggie Tulliver to tell her own childhood story as Cather has used Thea to express her love of music. The presentation of the surroundings of their Mills is exactly alike, and the owners of the Mills are also equally quarrelsome. But the Mills of these two novelists lead their owners in two different directions. Eliot's Dorlcote Mill makes Mr. Tulliver, the stupid owner, bankrupt and sick as his Mill falls on the hand of lawyer Wakem, his enemy, due to the lack of his managing ability. But Cather's Shenandoah Mill makes its owner Sapphira rich and prosperous because it is managed by Henry Colbert, the skillful hand, and not by the tricky owner.

Cather can be taken as the greatest feminist novelist of the twentieth century United States as William Shakespeare is the feminist dramatist of the sixteenth century United Kingdom. She has elaborated the universal theme of the good and evil in her novels as Shakespeare has done in his plays to depict the good and evil nature of human beings in the world. Shakespeare has given equal importance to both of his good and evil characters in his dramas. If Cordelia is the goddess of mercy in his *King Lear*, Goneril and Regan are the worst characters with their tyrannical nature. Still Shakespeare is regarded as a 'first feminist' dramatist. Similarly Cather also can be judged as a feminist novelist though she abuses some of her women for their vices and shortcomings. But she feels sympathy for them as she knows that it is the commercialized American society that has victimized them.

Again, Shakespeare finds both good and evil traits in the women of the same rich upper class family. His evil Goneril and Regan are from the same royal family, from which good Cordelia is born. But Cather finds these opposite forces in the women of two different types of families. She meets 'good' women generally in the poor families,

and 'evil' in the upper class rich families. The women whom she abuses for their lost nature are the women from the upper class with the silver spoons in their mouths. Cather's Marian, Myra and Sapphira represent such rich women in her novels who are as cruel as Goneril and Regan in Shakespeare's drama. These lost ladies are to trouble their powerless husbands in the similar manner as Goneril and Regan do to their aged father King Lear at the loss of his power.

Like Shakespeare, Cather writes on what she sees through her eyes, and what she feels through her heart. She thinks that life out of tears and smiles is a real life. In this sense, she is closer to Shakespeare whose credit goes to include the women of multidimensional personality in his dramas. In his predecessors' works, women are given very low dignity treating them as prostitutes. The dramatist Aeschylus has judged all women as immoral and crook as Helen. But Cather makes good judgment of her women and sees wider visions of life in them. Alexandra, Thea, Antonia and Cecile, the poor pioneer women, are rich with their higher virtues in her novels. They are as good, helpful, plain speaker and courageous as Shakespeare's Cordelia in *King Lear*.

Edith Wharton (1862-1937) and Willa Cather are the contemporary novelists of America and both of them deal with the women's problems. They are equally critical to their contemporary capitalistic society and have taken it as a cause of trouble for the women. But they differ from each other in many respects. Wharton comes from the rich family with golden spoon in her mouth and creates the world of rich women in her novels. So she never imagines writing as a woman's profession for her earning. But Cather who comes from the hand to mouth existence family takes writing as a good profession for herself and her women. So she takes poverty-stricken women for her novels and encourages them to take suitable jobs for their survival.

Again, Wharton is the novelist of urban people and talks of Paris and New York. So her women are limited to the four walls of their urban houses and talk only of their kitchens. But Cather, being the novelist of the rural women of the farm, loves the wide and open frontier land of Nebraska. So she allows her Lena and Tiny (*MA*) to roam freely at its wilderness and encourages Alexandra and Antonia to talk about agriculture, literature and music. In fact, the protagonists she creates for her novels are broad-minded, highly intellectual and talented. Wharton enjoys in the beauty of things what she has found at the home-towns of her parents (Paris) and husband (Boston). But Cather finds freshness in the persons and things what she has discoursed herself in the New Countries. Moreover, Wharton's novels echo males' voice, while Cather's novels sound for women. So Wharton loves to wear women's traditional

dresses accepting the patriarchal values of her society. But Cather uses gent hat, shirt and pant as a revolt against the conservative Victorian males.

Cather's maximum contributions to the feminist writings have been the magnificent boons in rendering the social change in the women's lives. She has presented the most conscious women with the real knowledge of internal and outer world. They are too knowledgeable to identify problems and their solution. They are entirely sympathetic, plain speakers, justifiably cautious, active and creative. All of her fictional women, except lost ladies, display wider range of their abilities, being all-round, all-important, all-powerful and all-conscious. Though Cather has knowledgeably spoken on the music and agriculture, there is no display of John Donne's scholarly learning in her writings. She has enriched her women with the feelings of co-operation and co-ordination, which non-feminist males lack. Her women can smile at other's happiness and weep at their misery. So Krishnamoorthy rightly says: "In Cather's America, no matter of what origin is first a human being. Her concern for primary human values comes ringing through in all her novels and short stories." 36 She has advocated for women's rights, duties and jobs with a view to make them as independent as men. She has imagined of such a balanced world of men and women, where her women may have equal chances of jobs, social position and other rights as men.

Chapter III

Women As The Heroes

The heroines in Willa Cather's novels are neither the 'second sex' nor heroes' wives, but they are themselves heroes. About the autonomy of her heroines, Carl Van Doren says: "They are not the darlings but heroes themselves."³⁶ Her heroines are said to be the 'heroes' as they display their capability to play the perfect role of the heroes in the novels. On one hand, they are highly competent and consistent in their duties, on the other hand, they are appealing, delightful, lovable and pleasing to look at. Their faithfulness, reliability, exactness and allegiance revealed in their character echo their grand personality as 'heroes'. More than that, they are adorned with the feelings of love and tenderness to the poor, affection and sympathy for the miserable women and loyalty and sacrifice for others, which are the unique characteristics of the feminist protagonists in the feminist novels. No other male protagonist has ever been so much successful to perform his assigned task as adventurous women protagonists, Alexandra Bergson (*OP*), Thea Kronborg (*SL*), Antonia Shimerda (*MA*) and Cecile Auclair (*SR*) have been in Cather's novels. They are very conscious about their responsibilities and too compassionate to the helpless in the society.

The autonomous female protagonists in Cather's novels are a break from the existing tradition of the masculine heroes of early 20th century novels. The women in her women-centered novels are the 'heroes' of new kind with new life history having right to exercise full power and strength. But the women in her contemporary novelists' novels are only the heroines, the wives of the heroes, without any autonomy. Even Cather's male protagonists, Bartley Alexander (*OP*), St. Peter (*PH*) and Claude Wheeler (*O*) are neither adventurous like Alexandra and Thea nor effectual like Antonia and Cecile. In comparison to those male protagonists, these women protagonists display their greater strength in the course of their action, valor and behavior than those males. That is why Doris Grumbach rightly says about Cather's

heroines: “She has created heroines who are larger than life and stronger than the men around them; her male characters seem to me weak and ineffectual in contrast.”³⁶

The women protagonists in Cather’s novels come from various backgrounds and professions. Majority of them, who belong to the pioneer group of women from simple birth and growth, have taken farming as their professions. They are surrounded by many problems in their New Countries, but they have ability to tackle them. Alexandra Bergson, the protagonist of *O Pioneers!*, and Antonia Shimerda, the protagonist of *My Antonia*, are the pioneer women with the lure of the land. Both of them gain reputation as earth-mothers for their much affection to the land. But Thea Kronborg, the protagonist of *The Song Of The Lark*, gains popularity from her sincere devotion to the music, while Cecile Auclair, the protagonist of *Shadows On The Rock*, deserves her position as a culture-bearer in the lonely island of Quebec. Lucy Gayheart is also the artist protagonist of *Lucy Gayheart* like Thea, but her romantic attitude to her life and inconstancy in her study prevent her from being a successful singer. Marian Forrester, Myra Henshawe and Sapphira Colbert, the protagonists of *A Lost Lady*, *My Mortal Enemy* and *Sapphira And The Slave Girl* respectively, represent the evil forces of life.

Alexandra Bergson, the dutiful heroine of *O Pioneers!* comes from the Swedish immigrant farming family settled in Hanover. She is known as an earth-mother for her deep love of, and devotion to Hanover land. Her father John Bergson appoints her as a trustee to his land recognizing her strength to its management. He thinks that his dutiful daughter Alexandra, and not his notorious sons, Oscar and Lou, has practical ability to fulfill his dream of converting his wild land into productive farm. From his death bed, he says to his stupid sons: “I want you to keep the land together and to be guided by your sister....Alexandra is the oldest and she knows my wishes....Alexandra will manage the best she can.”³⁶ After John Bergson's death, she goes on looking after her family sincerely, enriches her father's land and buys new land.

Alexandra is the most innovative woman of the pioneer country. She makes new Land Plan of her own and initiates new cultivating techniques with new seeds for her

farm. In fact, she meets unfavorable climate of the years and unfair dealings of her brothers, but she does not like to separate herself from the soil. The expansion of Alexandra's land in Hanover, even after their partition, makes Oscar and Lou most envious at her. So they shamelessly claim for the ownership of her farm. When they find themselves defeated, they drive away Carl Linstrum, her well-wisher, from her home with much insult. But Alexandra, a pioneer woman with the love of the frontier soil, thinks her loyalty to her farm greater than to her lover. So she bids Carl farewell with tears in her eyes and goes on working on the farm until she fulfills her father's dream of the land.

Alexandra truly bears a sense of responsibility to the land and guardianship to her orphan brothers. All the time, she is found either to be associated to the frontier land for its enrichment or working for the betterment of her brothers to make them independent beings. But, when Oscar and Lou vainly criticize her at the question of her relation to Carl Linstrum, she shows her feminist look at them to set them right.

As Alexandra is a wide-hearted woman, she behaves all of her neighbors in a friendly way and wins their hearts. But she specially appreciates Bohemian farmers for their skill to tame cattle and grow more crops on the farm. She says: "Bohemians certainly know how to make more kinds of bread than any other people in the world." (144) She appreciates Bohemian Marie Shabata for her skill in baking cake. In turn, Alexandra gets much support from her neighbors. Their support and good wishes prove to be a divine power for her to grow more wheat in the farm and be a manager of her big farm. Carl, her close friend at her neighborhood, selflessly supports her giving good advice for carrying out her duties to her family and providing his helping hands to hers. In need, he is found to add his smiles and tears to hers. Though shattered by Emil's murdering, she goes to prison to set his murderer Frank Shabata free. She presents herself guiltier for the event than him because she has stopped Emil to marry Marie. She assures Frank: "I am never going to stop trying until I get you pardoned. I'll never give the government any peace. I know I can get you out of this place." (216) It shows the greatness of Alexandra's heart.

Carl Linstrum, the son of a German Pioneer mother in Hanover, seems to be her 'mystic lover' who remains like a dream at Alexandra's life. But she feels his great need for her life when she is tired and frustrated. So she is tied to him with the marital

relation at forty for his assistance to her farm works.

Antonia Shimerda is a Bohemian girl immigrated to Black Hill, Nebraska. She is the daughter of ill-fated Mr. Shimerda, a weaver in Bohemia, who is forced to take farming as his profession in Black Hill. Her life becomes terribly painful when her loving father commits suicide for the failure of crops in the new soil. Her life becomes most pathetic when her elder brother Ambrosch becomes a most powerful person in the family. About his domination to Antonia and other women in the Shimerda family, feminist Jim Burden says: "Since the father's death, Ambrosch was more than ever the head of the house, and he seemed to direct the feelings as well as the fortunes of his women-folk."³⁶ He makes Antonia work so hard on his farm from sun-up to sun-down that some traces of bloodshed could be noticed to her fingers. So feminist Mrs. Burden, Jim's grandmother, bangs Ambrosch pleading for Antonia: "Heavy fieldworks spoil that girl. She'll lose all her nice ways and get rough ones." (81) But foolish Ambrosch becomes more foolish and uses his child sister to earn wages for himself forcing her to work for others. In the words of Jim Burden: "When fall came she was to husk corn for the neighbors until Christmas, as she had done the year before; but grandmother saved her from this by getting her a place to work with our neighbor, the Harlings." (95)

Antonia's life is a tale of great suffering and struggle at the new soil of Black Hawk. It is the poverty of Bohemian immigrant Mr. and Mrs. Shimerda in the New Country that their daughter Antonia suffers much. Immigrant Antonia cannot economically compete with migrant Jim Burden and other native Americans at her neighborhood. So she gets a small job as a hired girl at Mrs. Harling's house in Black Hawk town. But her land-lady dismisses her when Antonia presents herself as a dancer. Then she is employed by Wick Cutter, a money-lender, a womanizer, who tries to rape her. Though she is protected from his brutal act by feminist Jim, she is entrapped by Larry Donovan, another lady's man, who makes her pregnant, empties her purse and deserts her.

Antonia's life is a metamorphosis from bad to good. She meets several crises during her life. She meets her father's suicide due to his animal-like life in the prairie. Though a Catholic, his dead body is not allowed to bury in the Roman Catholic Church, and her mother has to dig a hole at her own terrace. But she tolerates every misfortune very patiently. Betrayed by scoundrel Larry, she is forced to have an

unwanted pregnancy, which adds fuel to the fire to her cruel brother. When she goes to her brother's farmhouse at pregnancy, he treats her very badly driving her to look after his sheep not caring about her pregnancy. Even at her serious illness, he makes her hard work on his farm up to her delivery hour. This is the fatal flaw in Antonia's life. Then she secretly gives birth to her illegitimate child, without a sound, at her lonely room for fear of her brother and brings her up very affectionately. This is the heroic act of Antonia, which leads her life to turning point signaling for her happiness. Finally, she marries Anton Cuzak, a good-hearted gardener of her own nationality, and changes her fortune being a loving wife and a successful mother. It is possible for her because she has a feminist's courage to struggle against such forces.

Antonia represents the true pastoral life of the farm-women in Nebraska. She is adorned with her physical and mental beauty. She always looks happy and gay though she faces sharp food problems in her life. In both of her costume and behavior, she presents a true picture of a pastoral girl. She has very simple living with simple dress and sincere behavior and walks with her bear feet. She never shows any dismal appearance. Instead she always exhibits fearless look. So she is warmly observed through her neighbors' eyes. Mrs. Burden and Mrs. Steavens are never tired of praising Antonia for her warm-heart.

Antonia is the most attractive heroine in Cather's novels. Though her unfavorable circumstance makes her a feminist and fights against the Harlings for her rights to dance, she is the mine of all noble qualities. She is the good manager of household works and a good cook at Mrs. Harling's house. She loves Harlings' children Nina and Charley very much and cooks best food items of their choices for them. After her marriage with Cuzak, she manages her kitchen, dining hall and drawing room very efficiently. She teaches her children the best lesson of domestic life, good discipline and nice manners and trains her gardener husband for farming techniques. Her daughters' skill in cooking food items in the kitchen and her sons' harvesting on the farm are the gifts of her good training. She is very active and makes her children also active. She never thinks of any revenge even to her betrayers, Mrs. Harling, Wick Cutter and Larry Donovan. Instead, she praises Mrs. Harling for the household training she gets from her and wishes to serve Donovan if she could meet him again.

Alexandra and Antonia are the dearest of all other heroines for the novelist for their great devotion to the

new soil and unbelievable courage to struggle against the hardships of their lives. About feminist Cather's favor of the farm women, Krishnamoorthy rightly says: "Back on the farm, Antonia engages herself in hard work and undergoes a process of shedding American influences.....In the outside world, Antonia's life may appear to be a failure. But to Cather, through Jim, Antonia remains special."³⁶

Thea Kronborg, who comes from the poorest family of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Kronborg in Moonstone, is a dedicated artist with great artistic aspirations. She is always busy with her artistic performances as she knows that the secret of art lies in her dedication. So she does not have any private life outside her work. About her busy life as an artist, she says to Dr. Archie: "My dear doctor, I don't have any (personal life). Your work becomes your personal life.....It's like being woven into a big web you can't pull away."³⁶

Thea, as a reasonable woman, knows that a married woman, who has to make great sacrifices for her family, cannot be a greatest artist. So she, as a committed artist, rejects marriage, avoiding the concept of 'great woman' that Linda Pannill coins for a 'married woman': "A great woman can not be a great artistThere was no doubt for Cather that a woman has to choose between devotion to family or to art and that only the exceptional woman could dedicate herself to art."³⁶ Thea is an exceptional woman who dedicates herself to art, denying even her personal life. Again, there is also a parental insistence to make her a greatest singer. Defending his daughter, Mr. Peter Kronborg openly says that Thea is not for marriage but for art. So Doris Grumbach rightly says:

*From the men who support her, Thea acquires a vision of her destiny. Dr. Archie asks her not to marry and settle down in Moonstone. Thea's father knows that his daughter is not the marrying kid. In his observation lies Cather's deep-seated conviction that women who are artists destroy themselves if they marry.*³⁶

But Thea's art does not suffer at her husband's hand because she marries Fred Ottenburg at the age of forty-six for friendship, and not for sex. Again, Fred himself is an artist who knows the secret of art and artist's life. He always congratulates her for

her artistic mind and creative ability. Thea is really the luckiest woman who finds such a husband.

Cecile, the twelve year daughter of French apothecary Euclide Anclair, is lotted to lead a very lonely and hard life in Quebec - a life very different from France. She finds the ways of living very difficult in Quebec. She meets no friend to play with and gets no good food to eat. After the death of her mother, her life becomes more troublesome. She works as a house-wife and lives no stone unturned to carry out the responsibilities left by her mother:

*Your father has a delicate appetite and the food here (in Quebec) is coarse. If it is not very carefully prepared, he will not eat and will fall ill 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.*³⁶

Cecile looks so loyal to Euclide that no father can expect so much love and devotion from his daughter. But what makes Cecile a divine heroine is that she appears as a life and a protector to every one living in Quebec. In the words of Woodress: “Cecile’s great friend is little Jacques for whom she is both mother and playmate, and he is devoted to father and daughter.”³⁶ But she shows her feminist look at her father to protect this discarded boy from his wrath.

Sometimes Alexandra, Thea, Antonia and Cecile look too much emotional when they remember their Old Countries. So they dream of their ‘past’ land and soak in its memory taking it as a land of happiness. In fact, these new heroines bear a sense of responsibility to run their Old Home culture and order in the New Country. Cecile is committed to perpetuate French social culture in Quebec, while Alexandra wishes to nourish Swedish farming culture in Hanover. It is not because these heroines are too traditional, but it is their negative feeling of their current world for its capitalistic spirit that they look committed to bring back the culture of their Old Countries to the New Ones. Though Cecile is always conscious about her responsibilities to Quebec and worries about its future, she extremely loves France, her Old Country, and brings its

cultural seed to her new soil. Still she is equally devoted to her New Home. Her good management of her father's apothecary shop in Quebec makes it a place of attraction. In the narrator's words:

*Once having taken your seat in the close air by the apothecary's fire, you can't explode into military glory, any more than you can pour champagne into a salad dressing....And really, a new society begins with the salad dressing more than the destruction of Indian villages.*³⁶

Lucy Gayheart, another artist heroine of *Lucy Gayheart*, comes from the town of Haverford. But she cannot develop her music career because she offers herself to the momentary charm of romance with the boys, one after another. Her flirtation - first with Harry Gordon, a rich banker with athlete taste at her home-town, Haverford, and then with Clement Sebastian, a singer in Chicago - hampers her study. About her romance and its impact on her part, James Woodress comments: "Lucy's tragedy is that she has the desire but not the will or talent for an artistic career. She is made for love."³⁶ So she can neither be a reputed singer like Thea nor succeeds to win her lovers' hands. When Clement dies of drowning in Lake Como, Italy, she feels totally void.

As a matter of fact, Lucy Gayheart is a silly heroine with nymphomania. She is all for love, without any commitment to her study. She goes to Chicago for the pursuit of knowledge, but is lost in the quest for the amorous man of fifty - romantic Clement Sebastian. So Rider rightly says: "She is not a Thea Kronborg who struggles against conflicting desires to achieve greatness. She (Lucy) is insisted, a dreamer to whom things happen in chance."³⁶

Lucy meets Clement Sebastian, an unfortunate French musician with unhappy conjugal life in Chicago and falls in love with him, avoiding her first lover Harry Gordon in Haverford. In the mean time, Harry Gordon proposes her for marriage, but Lucy, who is blind in love with Sebastian, strongly refuses him: "It's no use. Everything has changed this winter. My life is tied up with somebody else. I love another man."³⁶ 'Somebody else' or 'another man' is Clement Sebastian who influences young Lucy with his romantic love song - "When We Two Parted" (126) - with the pathetic tone hinting something tragic for Lucy's life. It spoils her psychology and detracts her from her

study. In anger, Harry Gordon makes his heart very rigid for Lucy and immediately marries Miss Arkwright, the daughter of St. Joseph Arkwright at St. Joe.

Lucy becomes absolutely lonely and void when her second lover unfortunately meets his tragic death at a boat accident. At her helplessness, she comes back to her home at Haverford, but fails to adjust even with her family members. She behaves quite differently with her elder sister Pauline Gayheart, occasionally quarreling with her even at insignificant issues or aimlessly loitering, here and there, in confused and disordered mood. Though she extends her hands to her first lover Harry to lift her from her ruin, he cannot help her because he is not a bachelor now. Finally, Lucy meets her tragic death, like her lover clement, drowning in the river. So Ruth Ryder rightly says: “Lucy’s romance begins in winter, the lovers separate in summer, her beloved dies in autumn, and she, in winter.”³⁶

Cather’s two types of female protagonists presented in her novels reveal two different worlds of women - the good and evil. If the pioneer protagonists, Alexandra (*OP*), Thea (*SL*), Antonia (*MA*) and Cecile (*SR*) are the embodiments of good women for their constructive feelings, Marian, Myra and Sapphira, the lost protagonists of *A Lost Lady*, *My Mortal Enemy* and *Sapphira And The Slave Girl* respectively, are the symbols of destruction. The aim of these shallow women is to invite disasters for themselves and their husbands through their romance and money-minded nature. As compared to the lives of the successful pioneer heroines, these lost heroines are good for nothing. Still both types of these protagonists are feminists because they know how to resist against males.

But the lost heroines like Marian, Myra and Sapphira, who have lost their fidelity flirting with the dishonest young boys and running after their husbands’ property, have not been able to win success in their lives. Marian’s age difference from her husband causes her depression. So she flirts with several young boys before her husband’s eyes and takes Daniel Forrester’s death as a great relief for her. Well-to-do heroine Myra’s lack of reasonable power leads her to make romance and marriage with poverty-stricken Oswald from anti-religious German family and causes failure of their conjugal life. Whether good

Alexandra and Antonia or bad Marian and Myra, they are to tell the truth that the result of good action is always good and the impact of badness is always bad.

The male protagonists in Cather's novels are the traditional masculine heroes who, like those of other contemporary novels, involve in the love-affairs and meet tragedy. Bartley Alexander in *Alexander's Bride*, Claude Wheeler in *One Of Ours* (1922) and St. Peter in *The Professor's House* (1925) are the male protagonists who represent the romantic Victorian males of early 20th century. In fact, it is an age when males are inactive and non-productive. As they lead a lazy life, they spend their time chasing young women and ignoring their married wife. The reason is that the male protagonists have grown up in the existing trend of love and romance of their time. So they display their inner feelings and behaviors in the similar ways. That is why the male protagonists like Bertley Alexander, Claude Wheeler and St. Peter cannot stand on Cather's world. But Jeane Marie Latour, the male protagonist of *Death Comes For The Archbishop* (1927), comes from the religious world and goes on celebrating religious rituals.

The main causes that have invited the tragedy of male protagonists are their romance and non-creativity. In Cather's belief, the failure of the male protagonist's life is the failure of her first novel *Alexander's Bridge*. She says: "The sadness of this book is the sadness of real life. A love story, told with great power and restraint, and tragic with the tragedy that is unalterable."³⁶ The life of Bertley Alexander is a failure because he is neither serious to his profession nor loyal to his wife Winifred. He flirts with his Irish mistress Hilda Burgoine forgetting any thing else in his life.

Again, Claude Wheeler meets his tragedy as he loves Enid Royce, a self-possessed girl, and marries her all of a sudden. But there is no harmony between the couple. He feels remorse for marrying her, but does not realize his weakness. Furthermore, St. Peter's tragedy also occurs from the same reason as he loves Lilian Ornsley, a girl from France, and marries her immediately. As a husband, he neither understands his wife's desire for physical facilities nor approves her interest. Consequently, he dies of separation from his wife. But the pioneer female protagonists' creativity, romance-free

life and enlightened personality are the chief characteristics that have differentiated them from these romantic males.

The male protagonists lack working spirit and struggling power in life. In comparison to the adventurous female protagonists, Alexandra (*OP*), Thea (*SL*), Antonia (*MA*) and Cecile (*SR*), the male protagonists, Alexander, Claude Wheeler and St. Peter witness their ineffectual personality. They lack courage to make life-struggles and fail to carry out any productive works. They possess neither the creative power of Alexandra and Thea nor the endurance of Antonia and Cecile. So they fail to survive on the dry land of the frontier. So far as Archbishop Latour (*DCA*) is concerned, he is to convey the religious message of the Catholic Church to his readers.

The male protagonists are the novelist's puppets used to serve her own ends. In other words, they are the victims of the novelist's own circumstances and her personal weaknesses. Bartley Alexander happens to be the hero of her first novel *Alexander's Bridge* (1912) because she has been immature in her novel writing. Again, Claude Wheeler, the male, occupies the role of the hero in *One Of Ours* (1922) because a woman's participation in war cannot be expected from the moral point of view. Archbishop Latour becomes the hero of *Death Comes For The Archbishop* because the novelist is too much impressed with his missionary life in New Mexican Church. But neither the novelist's masculine appearance inspires her to make false praises on male protagonists' personality nor her male dress makes her a misogynist towards her women protagonists. Instead, she buys male dresses even for her female protagonists to protect them from the misogynists of the Victorian society. It proves the novelist's excessive love of the women protagonists, and not of men.

So far as the feminist women protagonists are concerned, they are the achievements of the novelist's maturity in both of her age and writing experience. These protagonists are selected totally from the world of women. So Jeane Harris rightly says:

As Willa Cather matured, she eventually abandoned the male values she once associated with art, thereby reconciling the opposing roles of woman and

artist..... For whatever reason, during her adolescence Willa Cather admired male behavior and even adopted male dress, her apparent identification with males is evident from her self-imposed nickname.... 'William Cather' that she used well into her college years at the University of Nebraska.³⁶

The heroines who come from the poor common group of the pioneer communities are rich with unique characteristics. But the heroines who come from the upper class families exhibit their poor and shallow character. To hint out the universal predomination of the 'evil' forces over the 'good', the novelist either makes the division of family characteristics of her major and minor characters of the same novel or compares the heroines of her one novel to another. If her heroine Alexandra represents the 'good' in the Bergson family, her brothers, Oscar and Lou from the same family stands for the 'evil'. Though these evil forces annoy Alexandra at her agricultural plan, she succeeds to stand herself in the male dominated Hanover society. But the lost heroines, Marian and Myra only run after the young boys and money and meet their tragedy.

To be happy or not to be depends upon the fictional heroines' reasonable power, steadfastness and perseverance in the face of their extreme hardships. Among Cather's female protagonists, Alexandra, Thea, Antonia and Cecile make themselves prosperous by dint of their hard labor as they believe that: "Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God."³⁶ Antonia's boldness to tolerate every pain and suffering without disappointment and depression even at the risk of her life brings her happiness and prosperity at her adulthood. Cecile has no childhood, no youth, no romance, no joy, no happiness and no personal life of her own in lonely Quebec. Still she decides to live in Quebec to give birth to new generations with a view to make the rock green through the existence of human races. It is her power of thinking that makes her a leading figure there. Alexandra's continual efforts for the perpetuation of farming culture and human strength in Hanover society and Thea's endeavor to establish music culture in Moonstone have universal appeals to all hard working women of the world. Thea's success from her great devotion to her music lessons and Lucy's failure as a singer due to the lack of her devotion are to tell the truth that the devotion is the most essential factor to reach the goals of life.

The conflict in the lives of the pioneer heroines arises sometimes from the opposite nature of the major and minor characters of the same family, like that of Shakespeare's heroines, and sometimes from the outside forces. There is a clash between gentle

Cordelia and her cruel sisters, Regan and Goneril in Shakespeare's *King Lear* because Cordelia speaks plain words to protect her old father Lear from their flattery. Selfish Regan and Goneril lie to their aged father mainly to take over his crown, and Cordelia objects them. Similarly jealous Oscar and Lou always trouble Alexandra because she is committed to fulfill her father's wish of enriching his land. Alexandra's mercenary brothers succeed to drive away Carl Linstrum, Alexandra's well-wisher, in the similar manner as Regan and Goneril banish Earl of Kent for his direct support to Cordelia. But Alexandra's father John Bergson is not as foolish as Cordelia's father King Lear who distributes his kingdom to his cunning daughters during his life, preventing his selfless youngest daughter Cordelia from it. Consequently he suffers much at their hands, and even Cordelia's defensive warfare also cannot save him, in spite of the fact that she loses her life at the battlefield for his sake.

Unlike King Lear, Alexandra's father has reasonable power to make right judgment of his sons and daughter. So he rightly declares from his death bed that only his oldest daughter Alexandra, and not his foolish sons, is capable to take the leadership of the Bergson family and his farm. In this sense, he is a male feminist who sincerely defends his daughter. In the Shimerda family, heroine Antonia represents the 'good' for her good nature, while her brother Ambrosch from the same family is the symbol of evil. If cruel Ambrosch has not forced simple-minded Antonia to work as a hired girl for the Harlings, she should not suffer so much.

The female protagonists are borne out of the novelist's deep friendship with the feminist women of high caliber. The adventurous women are searched out as the 'heroes' of her novels as influenced from her adventurous female friends. Though Cather is charged of a 'lesbian' for her sincere friendship with Isabelle McClung, her friendship with her never ends. Instead, she goes on writing novels living together with her and having tours together for the collection of her fictional materials. So many female protagonists of her novels come out of the novelist's deep influence of her friend Isabelle. About the impact of Isabelle's life on Cather's writing life, Edith Lewis rightly says: "Her friendship with Willa Cather gave her life the direction and

absorbing interest it had lacked.”³⁶

Alexandra and Cecile, the female protagonists, are as generous and adventurous as Isabelle herself. Furthermore, Isabelle is the feminist who revolts against her father to protect Cather at her home. Feminist Alexandra’s protection of wretched Marie Shabata has been picked up from Isabelle’s protection of Cather at her distress and woe. Again, feminist Cecile’s struggle for homeless Jacques at the disposal of her father is feminist Isabelle’s revolt against her father to provide a room for Cather. Isabelle’s interest in Cather’s artistic spirit and her kind help for her life are Alexandra’s interest in Carl Linstrum’s painting and Emil’s study of law. If Isabelle McClung is the only inspiration and source of Cather’s novel writings, she must have been the ‘unseen’ or ‘indirect hero’ of all of her ‘new’ novels on the new American women.

Most of the female protagonists are naturally free from selfish motives and tricky behavior as they come from the pen of the gentle woman novelist. They are as gentle, honest, sincere, true in habits and loyal to their duties as the novelist herself. There are not any heroines as selfless, honest, dutiful and active as Alexandra, Thea, Antonia and Cecile. They meet disasters in their lives, fall in the hands of some scoundrel males and suffer much even within their own surroundings. It is their feminist strength that has perfected them to overthrow such tricky males and take precaution of them.

The irony of fate in the lives of the female protagonists is that a woman is exploited and betrayed even by another woman. Antonia suffers as a victim of woman’s exploitation and misbehavior when she starts to work as a hired girl for the Harlings in Black Hawk town. She is extremely exploited by Mrs. Harling, a woman with power and pelf. She makes her hard works in the kitchen as well as to the kitchen garden from morning to evening. She orders Antonia to cook each separate food items for each of her kids. If she bakes cake for her son Charley, she has to prepare chocolate for her daughter Nina. Again, Mrs. Harling always makes comments on her food preparation. Finally, Antonia is dismissed from cruel Mrs. Harling’s house on a charge of her participation on Saturday night dances.

The most unfavorable atmosphere at their own homes or land-owners' makes these protagonists feminist as the bitter circumstance teaches them the lesson of self-defence for the first time. When land-owner Mrs. Harling ill-treats Antonia, she attacks her and threatens that she will never stop her dance but will take further risk at her life. She makes a long protest against her and abandons her house for ever. But she meets many womanizers like Wick Cutter and Larry Donovan, who set their eyes at her youth. But clever Antonia exercises politics provoking feminist Jim Burden to set lady-killer Cutter right, and Mrs. Steavens to protest against rapist Larry and her tyrannical brother Ambrosch. The former rapes Antonia and runs away, and the latter deadly troubles her at her pregnancy and child-birth. She is in a hurry to tell Larry's betrayal to her daughter and remains waiting for her physical growth. Her feminist strength helps her to change her fortune by marrying Cuzak and being the mother of dozens of obedient children. Heartily admiring Antonia, Woodress says:

*Antonia Shimerda is the mother of races. She is the most heroic figure of all.....The suicide of her father, the hard toil on the prairie farm, the desertion by her lover -- these things have receded into the past.... 'She was a rich mine of life, like the founders of early races' **

The heroines are conscious and revolutionary both in their views and actions. Alexandra brings drastic changes in her agricultural activities through her innovative Land Plan and its implementation to her farm. She accepts the 'cross man' culture rejecting the concept of narrow-minded ethnic culture. Thea presents herself as a professional singer to revolt against the male dominated society, which disdains the singers outside their homes. Antonia revolts against the Harlings for her rights to dance in the Italian Club. Cecile goes to the Harnois family in the company of her male friend breaking the narrow-minded concept of 'male' and 'female'. Though these pioneer heroines' revolutionary ideas are helpful to bring co-operation, co-ordination and integration among the people of the pioneer communities, these heroines do not want to bring unnecessary changes in their personal lives. Alexandra wishes that she should not

cross the certain line of her family life. So she does not want to make excessive use of her freedom. She says: "Perhaps they (Alexandra's brothers, Oscar and Lou) think me too independent. But I have had to think for myself a good many years and am not to change."³⁶

The pioneer women protagonists do not come from the Royal families with silver spoons in their mouths, but from the hardworking groups of common people earning their bread from the sweats of their brows. Thea and Antonia suffer much because they come from poverty-stricken families. Thea, a music-talented girl, comes from the poorest Kronborg family of Moonstone and struggles much to make herself an artist. Alexandra always makes hard work with her scythes and spades on the farm. Antonia, bound by economic problems, works as a hired girl at rich peoples' houses, where she suffers much. She is dismissed by the corrupt owners, and her chastity is looted by the immoral males. Still she is very honest and punctual to her duties. Though Cecile is aware of her father's patriarchal approach towards her, she is found in the kitchen of Quebec to cook best food items for her father.

In fact, the female protagonists in her novels represent the everyday life of the common women living in the American society. As the farm-women, they simply involve in harvesting and reaping crops on the farm, and as the hired girls, they work in the land-owners' kitchens cooking food-items and cleaning utensils. But they are also interested to take various other professions, such as, dancing and singing for their survival. When they run such and such professions, they meet many problems. In short, these heroines are surrounded by their everyday life-problems, which may arise from any of these reasons: i. The poverty of the family leading them to debt. ii. The jealousy and betray of selfish corrupted males. iii. The ill-fate of the married or unmarried women. iv. The misunderstanding between husband and wife. v. The unsuccessful marriage of the married-partners. vi. The long waiting of the unmarried women for marriage or doom. vii. Women protagonists' too much loyalties to their duties. In fact these women meet ups and downs,

smiles and tears, success and failure as the living women do during their working life.

Antonia's problems differ from Alexandra's though both of these heroines' problems arise from the family background and dryness of farm. Both of them struggle for fulfilling their responsibilities to their farm works and bettering their siblings' future, and both of them face the climatic problems as well as family problems created by their own brothers. But Alexandra's problems arise from her leadership to the Bergson's family and her commitment to the land, while Antonia's problems are from her own helplessness and the poverty-stricken life of the Shimerdas. Alexandra, as a leader of the family, works for her brothers to raise their living standard, but Oscar and Lou take her each step negatively and move against her. Still her strong position in the family helps her to retain her identity. But Antonia is suppressed by her brother Ambrosch as well as her land-owners because of her powerless and poverty-stricken life. She works as a hired girl for wolf-like land-lords to eliminate her family's poverty and faces rape cases and even dismissals from their houses. Still she gladly accepts such problems as usual phenomena of human life and goes on working for them. But she blooms when she takes farming as her profession by marrying Anton. So she promises she will inspire her daughters to work on their own farm, never allowing them to work as hired girls for others.

All of the women protagonists from the pioneer communities are for life's sake as they have real understanding of life. Alexandra and Antonia are not from the fairy-land experiencing the joys of heaven, but from the poverty-stricken group of the pioneer communities working hard on the farm. As their working area is very wide and large horizon of earth, they have true knowledge of the realities of life. So they realize that the real enjoyment of life comes from the exchange of sorrow and happiness, pain and emotion, and pathos and joy. They also know that the crops stored from the continual hard works and success achieved from long efforts are the real sources of happiness and satisfaction. As they are more familiar with the pain and suffering of human life, they are the true representatives of all other downtrodden women of the world.

The female protagonists from the non-privileged pioneer groups are identified with their self-confidence and heroic spirit, which lead them to achieve 'wholeness' to their worlds. Though Antonia and Cecile

attain 'wholeness' fulfilling their conventional roles as wives and mothers, their role in the pioneer communities is more than this. Antonia suggests her friend Jim to achieve wholeness serving the sick being a doctor. Cecile dreams to stuff lonely Quebec with the growth of population and flourish of French culture for its rapid development. In the words of Jinghua:

*The striving of all female heroes involves a long and often harsh process of transcending conventional roles for women and overcoming setbacks, but their exertions are not invented; each succeeds in unfolding an inner-self and bears witness to Cather's own realization of an autonomous, integral and continuous selfhood.*³⁶

They are the most sincere feminist heroines who sacrifice themselves for the poor and helpless.

The pioneer heroines are neither too sexy like D. H. Lawrence's heroines nor too violent criminals like Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth. Neither Alexandra nor Antonia is ferocious criminal like Lady Macbeth who commits one crime after another as tempted to be a queen. She instigates her husband to kill King Duncan and seizes his crown. Though Thea and Antonia are poor, they neither kill any king nor break into any merchant's house to loot valuables to eliminate their poverty. Instead, they are kind-hearted women and hate bloodshed and other exciting events of war. There are activist heroines like Myra and Sapphira, but they are not as evil as Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth. Myra's suicide and Sapphira's suspicion at her husband for Nancy-affair are common events that occur day to day life of human beings.

In fact, Alexandra, Thea and Cecile are sexless. They, being rational and creative, love to engage themselves in the creative works avoiding sex. But Lawrence's heroines, Ursula and Constance Chatterley adorn sex and celebrate it as a ceremony at the eye-witness of their lovers, Birkin and Melons respectively. About Alexandra's sexless nature, her amorous brother Emil comments that she cannot understand his longing for his beloved Marie because she has no experience of sex. Again, it is not Antonia's sexy nature that she becomes pregnant, but it is sexy male Larry Donovan who forcibly fathers her child. These heroines have their boy-friends who accompany them at the time of their difficulties. But neither Alexandra's Carl nor Thea's Ray Kennedy attempt to have affairs with these girl-friends.

Alexandra and Thea take sex as a dream or only as a memory. These heroines remember their boy friends when they need their assistance. So they marry them at maturity not for sex but for friendship. Neither Alexandra's boy friend Carl Linstrum nor Thea's Ray Kennedy is loyal to his girl-friend for sex. They support these heroines for the good achievements of their assigned tasks. Carl helps Alexandra because she is in need of his support as she misses her father earlier and finds her younger brothers, Oscar and Lou, always disobedient to her. So Carl is used even to pull out the pillar of her farmhouse. Thea's gratitude to Ray Kennedy is for the six hundred dollars he insures for her study because he wants her to be a good singer. It proves to be a great boon to run her study in Chicago. Ray's dream to take Thea as his wife cannot be fulfilled as he untimely meets his accidental death along the rail-road.

As marriage is a natural right to a man or a woman, no one can take it as a romance or sex. Thea's love of Fred is not for sex but for the sympathy he shows at her misery when her music teacher Madison Bowers dominates her in Chicago. Again, she accepts Fred as her husband not for sex but for companionship. In the case of Alexandra, she surrenders to Carl Linstrum and marries him at forty when she feels tired and frustrated from Emil's murdering and other two brothers' ill-treatments. Antonia's love of Jim Burden remains like a dream for ever. Jim, a passive boy deserted by his wife, comes too late to express his love for her. Though Antonia is not sexy at all, Larry Donovan exhausts her exploiting her sex and money she has earned by mending dresses for her customers. About the sexless nature of Cather's heroines, Gelfant also says:

Her characters avoid sexual union with significant and sometimes bizarre ingenuity, or achieve it only in dreams. Alexandra Bergson, the heroine of O Pioneers! finds in recurrent reveries the strong transporting arms of a lover; and Jim Burden in My Antonia allows a half-nude woman to smother him with kisses only in unguarded moments of fantasy. Their dreams suggest the typical solipsism of Cather's heroes, who yield to a lover when they are most solitary, most inverted, enraptured by their own imaginations. As Alexandra dispels such

*reveries by a brisk cold shower, their inferential meaning becomes almost comically clear. Whenever sex enters the real world (as for Emil and Marie in O Pioneers!), it becomes destructive leading almost axiomatically to death. No wonder, then, that Cather's heroes have strong intuitive aversion to sex which they reveal furtively through enigmatic gestures.*³⁶

Thea's success in music lies in her total avoidance of romance and sex, as her creator does to be a true novelist. In the word of Masilamani: "She (Willa Cather) herself remained single and Thea Kronborg, the main protagonist of the novel, does not marry in spite of involvement with three or four men."³⁶ Like Thea, Lucy Gayheart also is an another artist heroine who studies music in Chicago. But she cannot gain anything due to her total involvement in love-affairs with two or more boys of romance.

The success and stability of Cather's heroines comes from the happy conjugal life which is possible from the marriage with their long-acquainted mature friends, and not with the sexy boys. But the liberal feminist pioneer heroines are contrastive to the activist women of American west in this sense that the former women are romance-free and sexless, while the latter women are romantic and sexy. The pioneer heroines take marriage as an extension of friendship between husband and wife. So there is no question of extreme sex in her successful heroines. Though the novelist fails to search out suitable husband for herself, she selects mature husbands for her heroines, Alexandra, Thea, Antonia and Cecile to see them safe and happy with their friendly, but not sexy, husbands.

The heroines who marry at maturity with their childhood friends are successful to lessen their heavy burdens of life by sharing with them. Alexandra takes a breath of relief after she marries Carl Linstrum, her childhood friend. Thea can run her music classes efficiently when her mature husband Fred Ottenburg extends his helping hands to hers. Though Antonia misses Jim Burden, she gets Anton Cuzak, an understanding husband, to furnish her orchard with beautiful trees and flowers. Cecile's isolation in Quebec is eliminated from her marriage with Pierre Charron, her long devoted friend. Whether they are childless or with children, they are creative and resourceful. Though Antonia is the mother of twelve children, she is as active in farm works and as lively in her physical appearance as a girl of twenty-five. Alexandra and Thea are childless, but they are equally smart and productive, the former in the soil works and the latter in artistic performances. Though they are childless, they never regret for it.

The heroines who love immature boys and marry for sex meet disaster in their lives. They are known as 'lost heroines' for their disappearance from the earth through their tragedy. The romantic heroines, Marian, Myra and Sapphira marry for sex, and not for friendship. Marian marries Daniel Forrester and ruins him running after the sexy boys like Ivy Peters and others. Heroine Myra and Sapphira also get love-marriage to Oswald Henshawe and Henry Colbert respectively for sex, but fail to love their husbands after their marriage. When Marian cannot fulfill her desire for sex from her aged married husband, she looks too much passionate to the young boys to play the drama of sex. So Gelfant correctly says: "At best, marriage has dubious value in Cather's fiction. It succeeds when it seems least like marriage, when it remains sexless or when sex is only instrumental to procreation."³⁶ In fact, Cather's women protagonists are the simple human beings representing the dichotomic facets of life - past and present, materialism and idealism, love and hate, romance and marriage, traditional culture and modernity, passion and emotion, failure and success, barbarism and civilization, pain and pleasure, and illusion and reality. If pioneer Alexandra and Cecile have brought a new civilization in their communities through lots of their contributions to the land, art and music, Marian and Myra have invited only calamities through their despotism and sexy nature. Their sexless nature and their love of peace and harmony are the main features that raise their personality higher than that of activist Marian and Myra. If pioneer Alexandra and Cecile wish to maintain culture and order in the New Countries, Marian and Myra have done nothing except inviting violence and destruction in their community through their romance and sex. About Cather and her pioneer heroines, Carlin says: "There's no sex, there's no real violence. But she makes the everyday lives of American significant."³⁶

It is true that the pioneer heroines encounter many villains in towns, but they are not as revengeful as Emily Bronte's hero Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*. Heathcliff, failed to win Catherine's hands and craved for wealth, takes revenge on Hindley by gambling and defeating him and seizing everything from him. But Cather's Alexandra and Antonia are too kind even to the offenders who harm them. Generous Alexandra

visits prison to release Frank Shabata, the murderer of her own dear brother. Antonia, instead of taking revenge on her seducer Larry Donovan, says: "I guess my patience was wore out, waiting so long. I thought if he saw how well I could do for him, he'd want to stay with me."³⁶ Is it only Marian's fault for the failure of their conjugal life? No. It is Daniel Forrester who marries a girl twenty-five years younger than himself and invites problems. So he should also share the guilt. Myra, the heroine of *My Mortal Enemy*, commits suicide but does not kill her husband.

Besides her parents' interest to her study, Thea gets her friends' support, which Lucy lacks. Professor Hrr Wunch, her piano teacher in Moonstone, discovers her musical potentiality. Dr. Archie knows her creative abilities, convinces her parents about her talent and takes her to Andor Harsanyi, the piano teacher in Chicago. From Moonstone to Chicago and Chicago to Germany, Dr. Archie makes financial and moral support for her. Similarly Ray Kennedy, a self-made railroad man, insures his savings for her study. About the selfless support of Thea's male friends, Hermione Lee narrates:

Almost all Thea's watchers are male, but they are all carefully disqualified from being sexual partners..... In Moonstone, she is started in her journey by the derelict old German Piano teacher, Fritz (Hrr) Wunch, who teaches Lieder and Gluck's Orpheus and gives her first whiff of the great musical world; by the sensitive, unhappily married Dr. Archie, her friend and life-long admirer; and by Ray Kennedy, the self-educated railroad man, touchingly manly and simple, who has a dream of Thea's growing up to be his wifeRay is given a tragic death on the line, so that he can leave Thea his savings.³⁶

But Lucy does not have any sincere friends, as Thea's, to sacrifice for her study. Though she has male followers like Harry Gordon and Clement Sebastian, they are all for love because they are romantic in spirit. They fail to encourage her for her study. Though Clement is a singer like herself, he spoils her psychology through his romantic songs.

Besides these male friends, Thea has also lots of other admirers to her life. Her sincere aunt Tillie Kronborg always wishes for her bright future. Fred Ottenburg, a music-loving well-cultured rich man in Chicago, helps her by making her contacts with the proprietors of music studios. Andor Harsanyi, Thea's piano teacher in Chicago, discovers her vocal music ability and directs her to pursue it.

The heroines in Cather's novels are said to be her own personae. Thea is identified with the authoress as well as with Miss Olive Fremstad, a popular German singer in New York. Thea, a poor girl with artistic aspiration, struggles much in Chicago as Cather does in Lincoln. She tolerates several merciless attacks from her proud music teacher Madison Bowers and his fans in Chicago in the manner of Journal Proprietors' attack on Cather in New York. But she recovers her lost musical spirit in Arizona ranch as Cather refreshes her mind for novel writing in the Grand Manan cottage. Thereafter, she makes a plan to go to Germany for her further study of Opera Song. Finally, she comes back to New York as a successful Wagnerian singer.

About the genesis of Cather's artist novels and her interest in artist heroine Thea, the critics are of the opinion that her friend Olive Fremstad's struggles for her music lessons in Germany and her success as an Opera singer in New York have shaped her ideas within the musical framework of *The Song Of The Lark*. Thea is said to be Miss Fremstad's replica as she is framed with Fremstad's skeleton, flesh and blood. In the words of Lee:

Personally, Fremstad attracted her (Willa Cather) because of her familiarity..... Her own relationship with Fremstad replicated that transformation: she wanted to turn herself into the singer, in order to find out how the singer could turn herself into, say, Isolde. (121)

In spite of her resemblance with Fremstad regarding her countenance and struggle for music, Thea is the instrument of her own genius and experience. So McFarland is right when she says:

Thus the artist's quest is identified with the human questThea is

*temporarily lifted out of the context of own literal struggle and is able to see its deeper meanings in her growing awareness of the hard, simple life of the ancient Indians.*³⁶

Though Thea gains her reputation as a successful opera singer in New York, she never boasts of her self and position during her life. But her greatness lies in her simple living and modest behavior. Paying tribute to Ray Kennedy for his financial support, she says:

*I began the world on six hundred dollars, and it was the price of a man's life. Ray Kennedy had worked hard and been sober and denied himself, and when he died he had six hundred dollars, just as I measure high buildings by the Moonstone standpipe. There are standards we can't get away from.*³⁶

She pays tribute to those who have highly contributed for her life. She respects Dr. Archie, Ray Kennedy and Fred Ottenburg for their great sacrifices to her artistic life.

The lives and actions of Cather's women protagonists echo their universal feelings and tell something about humanity. Shakespeare's heroines wish to live and die for the humanity. His heroine Cordelia in *King Lear* wages a war against her cruel sisters, Goneril and Regan, for their suppression to their aged father and meets her heroic death for the truth and humanity. Similarly Alexandra's combat against her cruel brothers, Oscar and Lou, is the combat of all sisters against their brothers for their monopoly over their parental property preventing their sisters from it. Portia's victory over Shylock, a cruel money-lender in Shakespeare's *The Merchant Of Venice*, is the victory of whole mankind over the evil. Cather's appealing heroines, Alexandra, Thea, Antonia and Cecile also display their perfect capability to make judgment on what is right and what is wrong in the universe and equally show their commitment to make the world a suitable place to live in. Antonia advises Jim Burden to be aware of the evil girls in Lincoln and work for the helpless beings. Alexandra favors Marie, the wretched wife, and attacks Frank Shabata for his misbehavior to her. Basically, these feminist heroines love to work for the goodness of others and hate for the evil.

Cather's women protagonists, like Shakespeare's heroines, are timeless for having their qualities to represent the women of all ages and all places. They are as fresh and useful even today as they were in the past, and they will be equally significant in the days to come. A selfless person's great sacrifice for the cosmos raises his/her personality above the level of specific time and place. In this sense, artist Thea represents all music loving women of the past, present and future as she struggles against the male dominated society to identify woman as a singer. When Alexandra compares her new generations with those of her forefathers, she finds more lively feminist echoes in her bygones. She experiences that the feelings of sacrifices for the wretched and helpless women are to be found in the adventurous works of the bygones. Feminist Alexandra, looking at her deceased father's picture, appeals her younger generations to follow their ancestors' footsteps for the betterment of the weak and downtrodden people in the world. So these heroines are timeless in this sense that their voices echo not only for the particular women of the particular age but for all men and women of all ages and places.

Lucy Gayheart and Myra Hanshawe, the protagonists in *Lucy Gayheart* and *My Mortal Enemy* respectively, resemble with the heroines, Maggie Tulliver in George Eliot's *The Mill On The Floss* (1860) and Lily Bart in Edith Wharton's *The House Of Mirth* (1905) for their similar money-minded, amorous nature. Poor, young Lucy's love of rich Harry Gordon and aged Clement Sebastian is similar to Maggie's love of Philip Waken, the son of her father's enemy, and Stephen Guest, her niece's boyfriend. Both of these heroines take their love as measles - using it to win unmatched boys' hands and shifting it easily from one boy to another. Lucy worships Clement when Harry spreads his hands for marrying her. Similarly Maggie cherishes her love for Stephen when Philip heartily woos for her. Again, their tragedy also occurs in the similar manner. When Lucy fails to win nobody's hand, she dies of drowning in the flooded Haverford River. Maggie also, as defeated in love, dies of drowning in the River Floss exactly like Lucy. Similarly Myra Hanshawe, the heroine of materialistic approach, is alike to Wharton's Lily Bart who dreams to marry the richest man in her society. But she cannot marry the man she loves. But all of these heroines are feminists as they show their revolutionary nature and fight against the males. It is the impact of the 19th century commercial society that all of these heroines try to preserve their values and struggle for power and money. Consequently they die in poverty.

Lovey-dovey Marian and Myra, the female protagonists from the rich families, are very close to the passionate, impractical male protagonists in Cather's novels. The

protagonists from both genders, who are equally crooked, unprincipled and degenerated, stink in the newly built communities of the pioneers. Bartley Alexander's wooing for Hilda Burgoyne makes him blind and tyrant. He cruelly avoids his wife Winifred and forgets his engineering skill. It brings disruption to his family life as well as his bridge-construction. So he faces nothing except his tragic death from the collapse of his newly constructed bridge. Again, male protagonist Claude Wheeler ruins himself from his depression as he blindly loves Enid Royce, the girl of different desire, and marries her. Marian, Myra, and Sapphira, the fanciful women protagonists, also exhibit uniformity in their ways of life copying the trends as adopted by the male protagonists. Marian weaves her coquettish smiles with those of her ill-reputed young boys and loses everything. Myra, the sentimental, quixotic and wild heroine, disappears from her horizon, not being able to cope with her husband's economy. Sapphira, the rich White lady, gets run-away marriage with poor Black Henry Colbert. But she keeps herself aloof from the warm family background and dies in isolation.

Alexandra, Thea and Cecile are the novelist's mouthpieces to convey her message. So these heroines uphold the similar views of their life, religion and culture what the novelist vindicates. They follow Catholic religion and go to the Catholic Church to express their Faith. Cecile gets shelter and solace there at her distress. About the heroines' Faith on Catholicism, Ryder says: "The Church offers to the motherless Cecile a security in its maternal figure, a figure for whom many of Cather's earlier characters had searched."³⁶ The heroines are also the followers of the Catholic Church as they are the by-products of the novelist's Faith on the Catholic religion. The novelist takes pleasure when she soaks herself in the Catholic lore of the past. About her religious novel *Death Comes For The Archbishop*, she says:

*Writing this book was like a happy vacation from life, a return to childhood, to early memory....I followed the life story of the two Bishops (Bishops Lamy and Machebeuf in New Mexico) very much as it was, though I used many of my own experiences, and some of my father's.*³⁶

All of the pioneer heroines, Alexandra, Antonia and Cecile, including some of the minor women characters, Rachel Blake and Nancy, are to maintain culture, order and religion in the American society.

Artist heroine Thea is to flourish and nourish art in the newly built land of Moonstone. She is also to challenge the Victorian society, which uses woman only as a wife or mother for the kitchen and despises her as an Opera singer. About Cather's artist heroines, Pannill says:

Artist-heroine fiction is shaped by a perceived duality between woman's role and the artist role. In a society where no woman was allowed to escape self-consciousness about being a woman - different from if not inferior to man and destined to live for and through him - Willa Cather did not escape the sense of duality, as the writing of her apprenticeship show. She insisted on the artist's dedication to art rather than to conventional roles.³⁶

Heroine Thea, a great Wagnerian Singer from Moonstone, establishes music culture in the superfluous Victorian society, presenting an evidence that even a girl from the poverty-stricken family also can reach at the peak of success in music. It is possible for her because she is devoted to it, and her male supporters are behind her.

In fact, there is striking similarity between the novelist and her heroines as they share certain traits, one way or the other. Swedish Alexandra and Bohemian Antonia are bound to set up their fortune in the dry, wild land of Nebraska as Cather who finds it as a bare piece of iron sheet. But they are as successful as Cather to convert their fortune from bad to good through their long efforts to the new soil. They learn more from their hardships and continue their further efforts until their luck favors them. Thea Kronborg, the novelist's persona with six younger brothers and sisters, suffers at poverty-stricken family in Moonstone. She cannot get any treatment even at her serious illness for the shortage of money, and Dr. Archie has to manage for her. But she makes commitment to go on with her music lessons in the manner of Cather who takes an oath at her distress to write novels about the new American women.

Again, Cather's love of her past is her persona Alexandra's respect for the by-gones.

Alexandra says: "I even think I liked the old country better ...I think about father and mother and those who are gone."³⁶ Again, her fondling of Emil resembles with Cather's fondling of Douglass. Taking pride in Emil's love of his Old Country, Alexandra says: "I really built it (this house) for Emil.....I'm sure it was to have sons like Emil and to have them a chance. On the outside Emil is just like an American boy -- he graduated from the State University -- but underneath he is more Swedish."⁽⁸⁷⁾ Like Cather, Alexandra also disdains love marriage as well as polygamy. That is why she does not allow Emil to marry Marie, the married girl whom Emil blindly loves. The novelist also resembles with her heroine Alexandra for her challenging strength and skill to carry out her assigned tasks and holding similar views about life, love, marriage and art. So Janeway says: "In short, she (Willa Cather) was very much like her heroine, Alexandra."³⁶

Heroine Antonia's love of human being is Cather's love for humanity. As an uneducated woman, she cannot serve patients as a doctor, but she directs her friend Jim to serve the sick people being a doctor. As Cather is not tied with the particular ethnicity of Nebraska, so is her heroine Antonia, the mother of races, who shows more humanistic attitude to the people from all ethnicity. It is not for ethnic problem that Antonia tries to draw back Jim Burden from the influence of Lena Lingard, another hired girl in Black Hawk town, but it is Lena's man-hunting nature that she does so. Cather's fond of the garden with mulberry trees is Antonia's love of the orchard. Jim points out: "She would race about the orchard with us, or take sides in our hay-fights in the barn."³⁶ Antonia grows variety of trees in her garden and serves them as her own children.

Again, Cecile Auclair, the novelist's prototype heroine, is the symbol of love and loyalty. She sacrifices herself for the happiness of her father. She sincerely looks after his food and takes care of him at his ups and downs. Cecile is everything for her widower father - a mother, a sister, a daughter or a good adviser. She also looks after his medical shop and his patients as the novelist does to her father Charles, a Real Estate business-man in Red Cloud, by writing or replying his correspondences for his

clients. Cecile accompanies her father all the time and takes pleasure to be at her father's surrounding. Once, at her visit to Harnois family in the village, she weeps bitterly to find herself to be far from her father. Her leading management of her house and her arrangement of the utensils in the kitchen-rack is praiseworthy. She does things exactly as her dying mother has advised her to do: "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 the nations envy us."³⁶

In Quebec, she maintains French culture and order perfectly and carries out all domestic performances very carefully not only to please her father, but also out of loyalty to her deceased mother Madame Auclair. About Cather's portray of her own autobiographical element, Woodress says:

*Finally her (Cather's) rendering of the forests and rocky seascape of Quebec owed a lot to the five summers she spent in Grand Manan, and the loving father she created in Auclair was in a sense a fictional portrait of Charles Cather. He was much on her mind three months after his death when she conceived of the plan for her novel.*³⁶

If Cecile's loving father Euclide is Cather's affectionate father Charles, his loyal daughter Cecile also is definitely Cather herself.

The music-loving heroine, Thea Kronborg is Cather's 'Objective Correlative' to tell her own story of music more fairly to her feminist readers. Thea is Cather's instrument to flow her emotions to her readers more impersonally and impressively than herself. By using Thea as her 'Objective Correlative', the novelist intends to enrouse her feminist readers' emotions over the musician women's painful life more objectively than she can do by herself. Her love of music, which she gathers in her heart from her very childhood, flourishes at her youth when she comes into contact with Olive Fremstad, a very popular opera singer in New York. Thea is her persona who tells her creator's story of music more effectively. So Lee says: "Thea is Cather's 'Second Self. But to tell her own story, Cather had to find an 'Objective Correlative' which would

enable her to be remote as well as intimate.”³⁶ It indicates Cather’s cleverness to exclude herself from the text to be closer to her readers and to avoid the defect of subjectivity to win her readers’ sympathy.

Thea embodies all the features and incidents of Cather’s life. Thea’s poverty-stricken life in Moonstone and her aspiration for music, Dr. Archie’s inspiration for her study of music and her parents’ observation on her talent, her movement from Moonstone to Chicago and her struggle for music lessons in Chicago are Cather’s own. The only difference is that Thea’s art is relevant to Opera Song and Cather’s art to the novel writing. As gentle German Wieners mark something greatness in Cather and suggest her to write something, so do the German Kohlers to Thea. They always sing of Thea about the talent of her music. It is the memory of Kohlers’ garden that gives her first lesson of vocal song more successfully than her music teacher can do in Chicago. Charles’ contribution to make Cather a greatest novelist is Peter Kronborg’s contribution to make Thea a greatest musician of Opera Song. Charles had managed Cather’s preparatory classes in Lincoln by borrowing money at his risk. Similarly Mr. Peter always worries about his daughter’s musical instruments and buys three pianos at a time for her when he gets money from Thea’s salary.

Thea shares more details about her early life in Moonstone and Chicago with Cather’s life in Red Cloud and the University of Nebraska though she also embodies something from Olive Fremstad’s Metropolitan Opera Singer life in New York. Analyzing Thea’s similarity with, and difference from, Fremstad, Hermione Lee says:

Thea’s parents, for instance, - the fine, plain, calm, disciplined mother, and the unsympathetic Norwegian Methodist minister happy to make money out of his daughter’s piano lessons - are more Fremstad’s than Cather’s. Thea’s painful progress from Moonstone to Chicago, and her drudgery as an accompanist, is the story of the singer’s early years. But all the feelings are Willa Cather’s. Thea has Willa’s childhood double life, divided between her attic room, a secret space for reading and thinking, and the annihilating, boisterous tyranny of the

family life.(120)

Feminist Lee frowns at Peter Kronborg for his enjoyment at Thea's salary, which she earns by piano lessons. Instead of earning money by his own labor, he sends his twelve year old daughter to take tuition classes of music for wages as Fremstad's father does to his daughter. Though Cather shuts her eyes to this point, she, as a feminist, bursts out her anger at Mr. Peter through Dr. Archie for fathering seven children amidst his poverty and showing negligence to Thea's illness.

Donald Meyer finds identical picture of life in Cather and her heroine and says:

*The heroine, Thea Kronborg of 'The Song Of The Lark' grew up, as had Cather in a small town of prairie. Like Cather, she realized she was different from her siblings and friends. She had an understanding mother as had Cather. She, too, found fellow beings among settlers outside the town, as well as among a few older townsmen able to recognize her special qualities.*³⁶

Though the female protagonists are the novelist's mouthpieces in her novels, she has excluded herself from the heroism of her novels. About Cather's role in her novels, Carol says: "She is sincere, vigorous, self-centered. There is no flippancy about her. She has not made herself the heroine of any of her novels. But she is akin to her own heroines."³⁶

The heroines are not only the novelist's personae but they are also drawn from the actual women of Red Cloud. The novelist herself accepts that the people she knows well suggest her heroines. Heroine Antonia is the persona of Annie Pavelka, the hired girl of Mrs. Miner. Though loyal and friendly to each member of the Miner family, the feminist novelist frowns at them for their bitter dealings to gentle Annie. So Annie is the shower of Cather's praise for her kind nature and sweet behavior. Heroine Antonia, the hired girl of Mrs. Harling, exhibits all the qualities of Annie and wins the novelist's favor. Almost all of the heroines are the prototypes of the novelist's familiar people. So Edith Lewis rightly says:

Certain people suggested certain situations, came together in her mind in a

*composition that interested her. When it became necessary to change them in order to carry out her composition, she did so, much as a modern painter alters, modifies, suppresses certain features in his subject to suit his conception and style. 'My Antonia' and 'A Lost Lady' are closer perhaps to her remembrance of the actual people than any other of her characters.*³⁶

Marian Forrester, the Eve-like heroine of *A Lost Lady*, is nobody except Lyra Garber, the immoral wife of Silas Garber, the founder member and former Governor of Nebraska. It was the age difference of the Garber couple that young Lyra Garber lost her loyalty to her husband and looked attractive to the young boys. Aged Mr. Garber remained watching the scene silently. After his tragic death, she immediately eloped with her lover. So heroine Marian Forrester, who is Lyra Garber's persona, behaves her husband Daniel Forrester as badly as Lyra. Marian's flirtation with Ivy Peters, handing over her husband's purse to him and remarrying Henry Collins immediately after his death are exactly transformed from Lyra Garber.

In the opinion of Woodress: "The prototype for Myra Henshawe in this work has never been identified Myra's prototype may have been Myra Tyndale, a woman Cather knows in Lincoln during her college years."³⁶ Woodress is closer to the fact as he talks of Myra Hanshawe as the prototype of Myra Tyndale. For Miss Tyndale was the sister of Dr. Tyndale, who had chased Cather at her University days on one hand; and on the other hand, Myra Tyndale's relation to her husband was as hostile and violent as Myra Henshawe's. Myra sees no other way to fulfill her wish from her husband's little income and gets suicide.

Many critics of Willa Cather's works agree that Sapphira Colbert, the stupid heroine of *Sapphira and The Slave Girl* is Ruhamah Seibert, the wife of Cather's maternal great grand-father Jacob Boak. Like activist Ruhamah, Sapphira plots against her slave girl Nancy by inviting an immoral male to rape her. But she is foiled by her feminist daughter Rachel Blake, the prototype of the novelist's kind maternal grandmother Rachael Boak, the victim of Ruhamah's domination.

As Cather's heroines are her own personae and her known women, so are Jane Austen's. Elizabeth Bennet, the charming heroine of *Pride And Prejudice*, is Jane Austen herself, while Jane Bennet, Elizabeth's elder sister, resembles with Cassandra Austen, Jane Austen's elder sister. But Austen's intention is not to tie her heroines totally with her personality or other's as is Cather's. Cather intentionally takes her own familiar persons as the characters of her novels. She selects not only her heroines from the actual women closer to her memory but also their dwelling places. Her own town Red Cloud is Alexandra's Hanover in *O Pioneers!*, Thea's Moonstone in *The Song Of The Lark*, Antonia's Black Hawk in *My Antonia*, Claude's Frankfort in *One Of Ours*, Marian's Sweetwater in *A Lost Lady* and Lucy's Haverford in *Lucy Gayheart*. Still these heroines are not the actual women with flesh and blood but fictional as suggested by the actual women.

Alexandra, Thea, Antonia and Cecile are the feminist heroines in the sense that they are androgynous like Shakespeare's heroines, Portia and Rosalind in his comedies. Shakespeare's Portia, an androgynous heroine in *The Merchant of Venice*, silences Shylock, the cruel money-lender, with her bold, witty speeches as a lawyer in a lawyer's dress to protect her lover Bossanio. Similarly Rosalind, the androgynous heroine of *As You Like It*, protects her lover Orlando from the cruelty of her uncle changing herself as a brother in man's clothes and her cousin Celia as a sister. Alexandra is also an androgynous woman who plays a dual role in her family, a manly hero and a kind sister. As a manly hero, she wears man's hat and gent's coat to struggle like a man with the hard soil of Hanover and fights with her poisonous brothers like a brave soldier to keep up her rights to the land. But as a sister, she wears women's veil and looks after her brothers very carefully showing much affection to them. She is too kind even to her Satan-like brothers, Oscar and Lou, who always trouble her. She honestly divides her parental resources among her brothers like a father and educates her obedient brother Emil to see him a good lawyer. As she is more laborious than a man, she produces more crops from her sixteen years' efforts to her farm.

Antonia is another androgynous heroine who works on the farm like a man and makes noises at her home like a boy. But she has such womanly traits which even her husband, Anton Cuzak, cannot live without praising: “At first, I near go crazy with lonesomeness....but my woman is got such a warm heart.”³⁶ Again, Cecile’s sympathy for child Jacques Gaux at his suffering makes Cecile a kind woman. But her independent life and courage to struggle against the rival forces presents her as a man.

The sentimental heroines, who are known as ‘lost heroines’, are quite different from the pioneer heroines. At the time of difficulty, Alexandra and Antonia, the pioneer protagonists, look emotional like Shakespeare’s heroine Desdemona in *Othello*. But Marian and Myra, the lost heroines, are sentimental and play romance with the wrong males like Shakespeare’s heroine Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Marian, a married woman, plays the drama of love, like Cleopatra, with a number of boys like Neil Herbert, Frank Ellinger, Edmund Elliot and Ivy Peters, who exhaust her sex and property. Sentimentality, which animates these heroines’ passionate feelings towards the amorous young men, is the sign of destruction. Myra, a sentimental heroine like Cleopatra, gets love-marriage to Oswald and commits suicide. But these affluent heroines’ romantic spirit differentiates them from the pioneer heroines who are free from the cosmetic and romance. So Chang says: “Her (Cather’s) heroines were without ‘the secret of cosmetics’. They were entirely different from (those heroines) who fascinated the man around her, or Cleopatra, for whose sake Antony threw away the world”³⁶.

On the contrary to sentimental Marian and Myra, the creative power of emotional Alexandra and Cecile keeps them always busy with their productive works and stops them from their involvement in the love-affairs. Their emotion at their crises chokes their throats, as it does to Shakespeare’s Desdemona, and they weep. But their tears wipe their shocks out, and they can exchange their sorrow with happiness. Like emotional Alexandra and Cecile, Desdemona also cannot utter even a single word when Othello vainly thunders at her, suspecting that she has secret love-affair with his royal

guest. Alexandra, as shocked at her dearest brother Emil's murdering, looks so emotional that she can hardly utter her grief to her boy-friend Carl when he comes to her to express condolence at Emil's death. Leaning against his shoulder, Alexandra hardly utters: "I am tired....I have been very lonely, Carl!"³⁶ Finally, she converts her tears into smiles when gentle Carl accompanies her as a husband and shares with her tears. Again, when Cecile's father bursts out to helpless Jacques, she weeps too emotionally. But finally, Cecile also wins happiness marrying feminist Pierre Charron and giving birth to four boys. But Desdemona's emotional tears cannot prevent her from her misfortune. Her husband's false charge is a terrible shock to her, which takes away her life for ever.

Though Elizabeth Bennet and Catherine are given more priority in the novels of Jane Austen and Emily Bronte, they are not as autonomous and successful as Cather's. Alexandra and Thea are autonomous 'heroes' with their full power and strength, while Elizabeth and Catherine, being the darlings of the heroes, are dominated by the male protagonists, Darcy and Heathcliff respectively. Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway is somewhat autonomous, but she as a rich woman does not understand the corn-less women's food problems. She can buy the things she sees in the market and celebrate parties. But it is not possible for poverty-stricken Antonia who suffers much for not having wheat-flour to bake bread. Mrs. Dalloway is for beauty's sake. So she decorates her drawing room and dining room with polished furniture. But Antonia is for life's sake for her great services to the human beings. Again, Catherine, the heroine of Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, is only an instrumental tool to Heathcliff's romance and revenge. The hero intends to revenge Hindley, his rival, at an issue to Catherine's marriage. But Cather's Thea and Antonia never think of any revenge on their adversaries.

Again, Elizabeth also comes from the well-to-do family with the silver spoon in her mouth. So she can spend her time and money for the Clubs and Societies, where she dances with the rich boy like Darcy. Antonia who works as a hired girl for others to overcome her sharp food problem cannot take part even at night dances. When she continues her dances as a hobby, she faces dismissal from her job. But she has much

experience of the farm work with her scythe and spade, which rich Elizabeth lacks. +++About Cather's heroines' enjoyment at their hard work, Doren says: "They work much by themselves, contending with hard struggle and looking forward."³⁶

Cather's heroines can neither convert their warm friendship into enmity, nor can easily compromise with their rivals. Alexandra can never live without appreciating Marie Shabata, her neighboring friend, but she cannot extend her friendship to her upstart brothers, Oscar and Lou. Myra's cold relation with her husband Oswald remains always cold, and it becomes the cause of her tragedy. Neither St. Peter nor his wife Lilian compromises to each other. But Austen's heroines show compromising attitude to their opponents. Though Darcy's pride of his status and position leads Elizabeth to prejudice, she compromises with Darcy and accepts his marriage proposal when she understands something reality about his personality. Then there remains neither pride in Darcy nor prejudice in Elizabeth. In Cather's narratives, only some heroines step forward to compromise with their rivals. Heroine Sapphira Colbert (*S&S*) despises her daughter Rachel Blake for running Nancy to Canada and always hates her husband Henry for his lower origin. She shuts her door for Rachel, but her infant granddaughter's untimely death brings her reconciliation to her.

In fact, Cather's female protagonists are life-like. They possess humanistic attitude to the sufferers and understand other women's problems. In this sense, Cather can be the younger sister of William Shakespeare and Jane Austen, who have created life-like heroines studying their heroines' heads and hearts. Cather not only studies her heroines' heart entering through their skin but also keeps an eye at their bodies for the observation of their physical fitness for their manual works. Alexandra, Thea, Antonia and Cecile are as lively and memorable as Austen's Elizabeth. The heroines of both novelists have the same quality of everlasting freshness as a token of human reality. Cather's Alexandra and Austen's Elizabeth exhibit similar humanistic attitude to life, purity of their heart, delight of their mind and warmth of their personality, for which Carl spreads his hands for Alexandra, and Darcy for Elizabeth. About Darcy's approval of Elizabeth, Prabhu says: "Darcy values Elizabeth for the liveliness of her mind and

the generous warmth of her disposition, which he does not attempt to change."³⁶ Because of these qualities of their heads and hearts, in relation to their bodies, Alexandra, Thea, Antonia and Cecile come to the fore-front. About Cather's heroines' popularity, Chang says: "The heroines stood out, very impressive and familiar, with flesh and bone."³⁶

Hence, Cather's women protagonists are simple human beings with their hard works and kind hearts. Their affection to the human beings, courage at their hardships and attractive personality are the main attributes to rank them the 'heroes' of superb quality in the novels. Though they are not as humorous as Austen's heroes, they are as rational and feminist as Shakespeare's Portia and Rosalind in his comedies. As "Shakespeare has no heroes, he has only heroines",³⁶ so has Cather. Her heroines, being themselves the autonomous 'heroes' of all noble qualities, are free from the domination of the male protagonists. Though some women protagonists look willful, stubborn and riotous, they are not as fickle-minded and inactive as those male protagonists in her novels. Sapphira, though a lost heroine, has tremendously developed her enterprises dealing with her grains and livestock. But in most of her novels, there is a great line of the liberal feminist women, from which she has selected her protagonists of great compassion, high patience, unbelievable courage and immemorable endurance, which are the greatest attributes of the human beings on earth.

Chapter IV

Pioneer Women With The Lure Of The Land

Willa Cather's age of late 19th and early 20th century America has been marked by the flood of the migration of the people with the lure of the new land and politically motivated feminist movements of the women for improving the status of the women. Though Cather emerges through this age and migrates from Virginia to Nebraska as a demand of the time, she does not have anything to do with such movements. But she is the feminist novelist in a different sense as she favors the wretched pioneer women of the farm with their hardships and shows anguish to the authoritative males for their suppression and oppression to the women. These women have come to the New Countries with the attraction of the land to improve their status, but they meet only hardships and misfortunes because of the dryness of the soil and dryness of males' heart. So Cather takes these women's sides and insightfully deals with their problems. In her novels, she glorifies the immigrant women of the farm for their pioneer spirits to dig out the dry land and endure the hardships in their New Countries.

Cather can fully understand these farm-women's problems in the New Country because she herself is a pioneer woman with the lure of the frontier land. Being the daughter of a sheep-raiser father in Virginia and a Real Estate businessman in Red Cloud, she is well acquainted with the land and its problems. But she has acquired the true knowledge about the farm and farm-women's problems while staying at her grand-father's farmhouse in Webster County after her migration. She has not forgotten her own poor first-night bed with only a blanket and a white bed-sheet at her uncle's farmhouse. The scene of the prairie fire - burning her grand-father's hay-stalks and catching to his barn and forcing herself and her siblings to move off to the black-burnt earth at midnight for fear of the fire - has been fresh to her mind. Again, she has never

failed to commemorate the shortage of drinking water in Webster County, and barrels of water to be brought from Red Cloud to quench her thirst. Such bitter feelings of her own complicated life in Nebraska are poured out in *O Pioneers!* (1913) and *My Antonia* (1918). Alexandra's immigration from Sweden to Hanover or Antonia's from Bohemia to Black Hawk is Cather's own migration from Virginia to Nebraska, and these pioneer women's bitter feelings to the dry land of Nebraska are her own.

Cather's acquaintance to each plot and identification of each farm-woman's problems have been possible for her from her regular visits to her grand-father's farm on the Divide. In an interview, she says: "I know every farm, every tree, every field in the region around my home, and they all called out to me. ...My deepest feelings were rooted in this country."³⁶ So the delicious flavor emanated from the wheat fields and the echoes of the musical voice hummed by the pioneer women, while reaping and binding the crops on the farm, have held spellbound in her brain. Such deeply rooted feelings of Nebraska trees and grasslands preserved in her brain have been perfectly blown in her pioneer novels, *O Pioneers!* and *My Antonia*. About her purpose to write these novels on the frontier land and its pioneer women, she says:

I had searched for books telling about the beauty of the country I loved, its romance, and the heroism and strength and courage of its people that had been plowed into the very furrows of its soil, and I did not find them. And so I wrote 'O Pioneers!'. (37)

As no book has yet been written on the frontier farm and its pioneer women, Cather is too much interested to record the mysteries of these women's poignant life in the frontier soil. Of course, she is stirred up to write on the women dedicated to the soil, in relation to the pioneer men, with the materials available from the storehouse of Nebraska. In Bennett's words: "Of course, Nebraska is a storehouse of literary material. Everywhere is literary storehouse. If a true artist were born in a Pigpen and raised in a sty, he would still find plenty of inspiration for his work. The only need is the eye to see."³⁶ Among the pioneer women of Nebraska, only sensitive Cather's watchful eyes succeed to make the correct study of the frontier soil and pick up the materials out of it to shape her novels. Though the materials elaborated to her pioneer novels are actually drawn from the frontier land, the fictional characters like Alexandra Bergson, the

protagonist of *O Pioneers!*, and Antonia Shimerda, the protagonist of *My Antonia*, are invented to replace the actual pioneer women of Nebraska.

Cather's arrival to Red Cloud has been proved much profitable for the newly built Nebraska and its pioneer women as well as the novelist herself. She has been there at the right time when Nebraska has been looking for such creative personality like Cather to set its destiny. In fact, Cather's sharp brain has recognized the strength of Nebraska soil and her affectionate heart and soft hands have succeeded to make it as a place of global importance. Again, the pioneer women who have come over there with the lure of the land are lucky enough to immortalize themselves in the same soil where their creator Cather has been immortalized through them. More than this, Cather herself has taken more advantage of it because it recognizes her as a greatest feminist novelist providing the materials and characters out of its breast.

When Cather enters Red Cloud (1884), she finds it as a thirteen year old empty town of the pioneers with 2500 population, without any electricity or telephone cable. There she meets only immigrant farm men and women, generally from Sweden, Norway, France, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Russia, etc. and migrants from Virginia, New York and other parts of the United States, one group harmoniously mixed up with the other. These are the particular affectionate women who have inspired Cather to write her pioneer novels.

Cather has not only poured out her own experiences into her novels but also left no stone unturned to pick up the new American women's actual life-problems from the breast of Nebraska. The pioneer women's life at the new place is not only painful, hard and troublesome but also huddled up due to their economic, language, cultural, social and geographical variations. These new American women have been there for their better fortunes from the trial of their toils to the new soil, but the native Americans despise them showing more discriminating attitudes towards them: "These foreigners ain't the same. You can't trust 'em to be fair. ... They ain't to be trusted."³⁶ Again, these women are extremely exploited by the powerful males in the new environment of the new land. Such difficult atmosphere gives birth to the feminist women who struggle against the native Americans for their economic, legal and social rights in proportion to them.

It does not mean that Cather's fictions are without pioneer men. But she gives utmost importance to the pioneer women rather than men in her narratives because she sees the image of real life in the women. So the fictional pioneer women with the lure of the land are true copy of these actual new American women of Cather's 'sit down' and 'stand up'. Her friend Hilda Kron, who is immigrated from Sweden to Catherton and married to lazy Swedish pioneer E. J. Peterson, is Alexandra Bergson, the protagonist of *O Pioneers!*. Hilda comes over there to try her fortune but meets nothing except hardships. She is born with silver spoon in Sweden but spends her extremely painful life in Catherton after her immigration. She has heavy burden of works on her shoulder at the dry land of Nebraska. Her involvement in plowing land and looking after the crops, cattle and livestock proves to be unfruitful because no food-grain can be grown on the dry frontier farm. So she has to walk from Webster County to Red Cloud to buy groceries for her family's hand to mouth existence. She arrives at her home for next day's work with the bags of corn on her shoulder. Alexandra, Hilda's persona, has to make similar life struggles for the survival of her mother and siblings in Hanover after her father's death.

Antonia Shimerda, Annie Pavelka's replica, is doomed to lead a very difficult life as a hired-girl for the time being. But she, like Annie, takes her pain and pleasure as inseparable parts of life and converts her cloudy days to sun-shine when she takes farming as her profession after her marriage with Anton Cuzak. So Cather's keen insight of the pioneer women of the farm leads her to contemplate over them, and this contemplation rouses her emotions over them. So she writes her new novels with the new theme of these pioneer women's problems in the new soil.

The pioneer women of the farm have covered wider area in Cather's frontier novels though all types of women from various backgrounds are included in her novels. She does so because the traditional discipline of the masculine hero and the theme of his love prove to be the shortcomings of her first novel *Alexandra's Bridge* (1912). From this experience, she knows that she has to search out a new horizon for her writing,

with which she may write her new novels with new themes. The pioneer women with the lure of the land constitute her best novels, *O Pioneers!* and *My Antonia*. These novels are with the painful stories of the pioneer heroines, Alexandra and Antonia respectively. They attract the novelist because they are most dedicated to the soil of Nebraska. Besides these heroines, some of the minor women characters, Marie Shabata (*OP*), Mrs. Burden, Mrs. Steavens and Frances Harling (*MA*) also show their involvement to the farm works, but their participation is very rare. Particularly the women included in her pioneer novels are the European or other immigrants owning very little land or nothing at all, and the Eastern or other migrants losing their property during the Civil War and making an attempt to remake their fortunes in the prairie land. But the pioneer women of Mid-west America appear as a flesh and blood to the novelist. It is the struggle of these immigrant women in the new soil of Nebraska that gets a significant place in her narratives.

It is Cather's deepening friendship with the farm-women of Nebraska that opens her new horizon to write new novels with these multifold themes: i. Land and youth of the pioneer women. ii. Creative and destructive nature of the soil and the pioneer women's life in it. iii. Tragic love and marriage of the pioneer women. iv. Wrong males' corruption over them in the current world and their love of past. Among these manifold themes, the land and youth of the pioneer women have occupied a significant space in her pioneer novels. The prairie's dichotomic nature, with its rich soil and its dark color, its vitality and its harshness, its greenish grassy trees and its dryness, constitutes the lives and hopes of the farm-women of Nebraska.

Almost all of the pioneer women of the farm are rich mines of life - being more laborious, creative and productive. Alexandra and Antonia are said to be the earth-mothers and mines of life for their strong devotion to the land, productive nature and beauty of their hearts. These two heroines, along with their parents and other members of their families,

sacrifice their youth for the sake of their land to make it more fertile and productive. But the land gives them no crops, except depression which kills Alexandra's father John Bergson's youth and Antonia's father Mr. Shimerda's spirit as farmers. Their toils are exercised to the soil, and their youths are spent in farming, but they fail to produce grains for their existence. Consequently they are burdened with the heavy loans on their shoulders. Finally, Alexandra's father faces his untimely death, and Antonia's father gets suicide from the depression. After his death, his older son Ambrosch not only makes Antonia hard work on his own farm but also forces her to work for other people's farm to earn wages for himself. Still she is committed to the frontier land from her early age. When Jim Burden asks her to go to school for her education, Antonia answers: "I ain't got time to learn....school is all right for little boys. I help make this land one good farm."(80)

Alexandra, who is immigrated from Sweden to Hanover with her parents and three brothers, Oscar, Lou and Emil in 1890s, is the true representative of the women in farming as she possesses outstanding qualities of all farming women of the pioneer country. Physically she runs her farm works more efficiently and encourages her brothers and neighbors for the development of their land. Mentally she is too knowledgeable to understand the strength and weakness of the soil. Her first three years' efforts, after her father's death, for making the land rich and productive, turns into ashes because of the hard times of further three years' drought and its impact on the crops. It causes great depression not only to the Bergsons and Shimerdas but each American farmer, especially to the pioneer farmers of Nebraska. As a result, there is no balance between the food and labor - food being very costly and labor being extremely cheaper. The pioneer women's life becomes so difficult that they are highly burdened with the loans as an impact of the Great Depression (1890^s) of the United States. Both Alexandra and Antonia go on struggling against their hard times with a promise to convert their farms into fertile and

productive ones.

Nebraska, being the newly built area of the immigrants, has no effective infrastructure to supplement farmers for their crops. So the pioneer women in farming have to depend on their manual works with their traditional tools, not having any scientific instruments for agriculture, except some windmills. As Alexandra and Antonia are prevented from such physical facilities, they have to struggle more and more to run their farm works. Alexandra faces many obstacles to make her land fertile because the land itself is faceless, dry and withered, not fit for cultivation. Again, her Satan-like brothers, Oscar and Lou always try to disturb her Land Plan to prevent her from its implementation. That is why Alexandra needs sixteen years to change the face of her prairie-farm, and Antonia ten years. About the difficult life of these farm-women in Nebraska, Cather says:

*The homesteads were few and far apart; here and there a windmill gaunt against the sky, a sad house crouching in a hollow. But the great fact was the land itself, which seemed to overwhelm the little beginning of human society that struggled in its sombre wastes. It was from facing this vast hardness..... that the land wanted to be let alone, to preserve its own fierce strength, its peculiar, savage kind of beauty, its uninterrupted mournfulness.*³⁶

But the frontier land need not suffer so longer because it wins love and devotion of Alexandra and Antonia. Their only mission to life is to remodel their land and convert its harshness, blackness and dryness into the rich soil with its vitality and greenness.

Alexandra, who always belongs to the soil of Hanover, thinks 'land' more pious and greater than everything else in the world. She never forgets her responsibility to the soil, nor she forgets about the greatness of the soil. She takes 'land' and 'freedom' as synonymous to each other and says that freedom can be enjoyed if sacrifices can be made for the development of 'everlasting' land. Pleading for the soil, Alexandra says: "I've lived here a long time. There is great peace here, ...and freedom The land belongs to the future, ...That's the way it seems to me." (229) It shows her optimistic view as well.

True idea about the farm and farming occurs to Alexandra's mind when she deeply

meditates upon her frontier soil, in the manner of Lord Buddha who achieves Eight Truths of life, such as, True Livelihood, True Religion etc., after He deeply meditates upon the Facts of the world. Though Alexandra is fond of reading Sunday newspapers, Long Fellow's verses and other poems by heart, she always looks more thoughtful about the question of growing more wheat on the farm than reading books. The joy of her heart knows no bound when she comes across the reality, beauty and strength of Hanover soil. "It (the land) seemed beautiful to her, rich and strong and glorious. Her eyes drank in the breath of it, until her tears blinded her." (50) All of a sudden, she says to her brothers:

The rich man down there own all the best land and they are buying all they can get. The thing to do is to sell our cattle and what old corn we have. Then the next thing to do is to take out two loans on our half-sections ... and buy every acre we can... We borrow the money for six years. Well, with the money we buy a half-section from Linstrum and a half from Crow, and a quarter from Struble, maybe. That will give us upwards of fourteen hundred acres ... You won't have to pay off your mortgages for six years. By that time, any of this land will be worth thirty dollars an acre - it will be worth fifty...We'll have to strain to meet the payments. ((50-51)

Alexandra's plan of the land - to borrow money for six years to buy new land and to sell the land at a profit within six years - prospers their land and makes the Bergsons independent farmers. Though her foolish brothers always remain criticizing her, she tirelessly goes on convincing them and makes them hard work for their better life than their forefathers'.

The offence of the male-offenders makes Alexandra an ardent feminist. Carl's arrival at her home in Hanover converts her happiness into tears when Oscar and Lou show their unwelcome hands to Carl and bitterly pinch her: "Alexandra! can't you see he's just a tramp and he's after your money. He wants to be taken care of ...Don't you know he'd get hold of your property?"(124) Feminist Alexandra strongly answers them to defend herself: "When you married we made division of the land, and you were satisfied. I've made more on my farms since I've been alone." (125) But Oscar and Lou drive Carl away

from her house insulting him with the most disgraceful utterances. But bold Alexandra promptly encounters each event, while weak-minded Carl is too coward to face with any of such misfortune. So he again quits off from Hanover as before. Still feminist Alexandra, as determined not to leave Hanover cowardly, struggles against her brothers for Carl's right to stay at her home.

Alexandra's utmost love of Hanover soil does not die though the murdering of her dearest brother Emil, her helping hand at her farm works, deadly upsets her. It makes her totally lonely, void and depressed. Amidst her shocks and distresses, she is violently attacked by Oscar and Lou. They blame her that she has murdered Emil by educating him in the University. He is her most obedient brother, the center of her hope, for whom she lives. About her fondness for Emil, once she says: "Now I shall have nobody but Emil. But he is my boy, and he is tender-hearted." (41) When he comes back from the University on holidays, he goes to the farm with the spade to help his sister. She has brought him up and educated him to see him a good lawyer. Now, he is killed by Frank Shabata for his love of Marie, his wife. But optimistic Alexandra, with the lure of the land, wants to continue her agricultural life through somebody's help. So she goes to prison to release Frank and take him at Emil's place to take his help for her farm works. But sincere Carl Linstrum's arrival diverts her mind. Now, she seeks Carl's helping hands to continue her farm works and proposes him for the marriage for the development of her farm. It means that she wants to strengthen her agricultural life by sharing with Carl's hopes, tears and smiles.

Antonia Shimerda, the gentle daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Shimerda, is also the pioneer woman of the farm. She has immigrated from Bohemia to Black Hawk, Nebraska accompanied by her parents, elder brother Ambrosch, younger brother Marek and younger sister Yulka. She grows up in the poverty-stricken Shimerda family of the pioneer community at the neighborhood of Jim Burden. She, being seven years younger than her elder brother Ambrosch, is very much dominated by him. But she is extremely loved by her gentle father Mr. Shimerda. She lives at a hole-like sod-house of Black Hawk with her depressed father and poverty-stricken mother who "had on her head the same embroidered shawl with silk fringes that she wore when she had alighted from the train at Black Hawk."³⁶ Though she inherits exquisite farming qualities, she is forced to lead a hellish life as a hired girl in the kitchens of her land-owners.

It is the Shimerdas' poverty that forces Antonia to walk on bare feet on the prairie. Her

father fails to exercise agricultural tools in the new soil because he has been a weaver in his Old Country. Again, the failure of crops due to the continual dry wind of the prairie leaves the burden of loan on their shoulders. To solve the food problem of her family on Black Hill, she is brought to Black Hawk town, where she works as a hired girl for Mrs. Burden, Mrs. Harling and Mr. Cutter. After her dismissal from the Harlings, she works for Mr. Wick Cutter who vainly attempts to rape her. But she is totally ruined when she is tempted to dance with Larry Donovan, a 'lady's man' in the Owl's Club formed after the Italians' Vannis Tent at the Masonic Hall, Black Hawk. He entraps Antonia because "he was usually and distant with men, but with all women he had a silent, grave familiarity a special handshake, accompanied by a significant, deliberate look. He took woman, married or single, into his confidence." (196) His magnetic power to draw woman to his grip succeeds to win Antonia's heart. She believes in his false assurance to marry her and waits him for the marriage.

Antonia is said to be the 'rich mine of life' for her creative power, understanding nature and greater power of productivity in life. She is the mother of many laborious children and farmer of much productive land. Her extreme love of the frontier land encourages her to tame cattle for the manure and plant trees and flowers up to midnight for the natural beauty of her land. She sees mystery in the depth of the soil and continues her efforts to dig valuables out of it. She works hard on the farm to make it more productive.

Antonia, being a farmer, knows that farming and gardening are not totally different professions from each other. In fact, the union of the farming wife and gardening husband creates a harmonious conjugal atmosphere in the Cuzak family. So she always appreciates Anton Cuzak, her gardener husband. Though he does not come from the farming culture, she is much satisfied with his skill in growing fruits and trees. In her own words: "My man worked in the orange groves in Florida, and he knows all about

grafting. There ain't, one of our neighbors has an orchard that bears like ours." (219) She is proud of him for his skill in garden designing and flowering culture. It makes her garden qualitatively better than those of her neighbors. Again, both of them come from the similar economic background and social status. Like Antonia, Anton also comes from the large family of Bohemia amidst poverty. More than this, he also possesses as warm-heart and attractive personality as Antonia's.

In fact, Antonia gets the vitality of youth and looks as smart and fresh as a young woman of twenty-five though she is in her middle age with her pressed, suntanned skin due to her hard work under the hot sun. She enjoys to carry the out-of-door works on the farm. Her daughters, Martha, Nina and Anna are also very active for household works, and her sons for farm works. Now, Antonia is able to lessen the burden of her farm work as her boys are young enough to share with her. Generally, her daughters carry out the kitchen works, and her boys go to the farm for cultivation.

Antonia's grand success lies in her hard work and patience. Anton Cuzak's own words clarify how much hard works he and his wife have made, and how much patience they have taken to convert their dry land into the fertile one:

It was a pretty hard job, breaking up this place and making the first crops grow..... Sometimes I git awful sore on this place and want to quit, but my wife (Antonia) she always say we better stick it out. The babies come along pretty fast, so it look like it be hard to move, anyhow. I guess she was right, all right.
(234)

The credit 'to wait and prosper the land' goes to Antonia, a female, rather than Anton Cuzak, a male. Thus the Nebraska soil, which destroys the lives of the male-figures like Mr. Bergson and Mr. Shimerda, is converted into the rich farm by the hard-working daughters of those victims of the soil.

Alexandra and Antonia take breaths of great satisfaction at their grand success as farmers. It has been possible for them because they have taken cattle and livestock as their hobbies. Both of them have kept cattle for manure and milk and oxen and horses

for plowing the farm. Besides the cattle, both of them possess livestock, especially hens for eggs. But Alexandra earns more profit from the sale of the eggs in the market than her father has expected. Before his death, he says to his stupid sons, Oscar and Lou: “Alexandra must not work in the fields now. There is no necessary now. Hire a man when you need help. She can make much more with her eggs and butter than the wages of a man.”³⁶ Though Antonia fails to earn as much cash as Alexandra does from the sale of livestock, she keeps hens in her coops to maintain her children’s health with eggs as their best food-items.

The pioneer women show extreme love of the animals and birds they have kept at their barns. In addition to earn lots of profit out of their creatures’ sales, these women also take heavenly pleasure at the presence of these animals and birds. Alexandra feels much satisfaction from her adequate production of crops, fruits, eggs and milk. Her skill to tame buffaloes, cows, hogs, oxen and horses also cannot be compared to any other pioneer women, even to Antonia. If Alexandra enjoys to be surrounded by the chicken and ducks, Antonia feels heavenly pleasure to round her trees and garden plants. But Alexandra is fond of hearing the chirping of the birds, strange voices of the frogs and other water insects of the pond at night.

The pioneer women’s talent, creativity and skill in handling agricultural activities on the farm and taking leadership to their families can never be compared to any of the pioneer males’. Alexandra and Antonia have more challenging power of creativity and productivity than the pioneer males in their families. The male figures look too coward to face their hardships, while these women are strong enough to confront with the difficulties during their lives. Both Alexandra and Antonia have fathers, brothers, boy- friends and husbands, but these males can never compete with these women in sustaining the agricultural norms. Alexandra’s father John Bergson approaches to death when he fails to grow crops on the farm and faces many losses during his life:

One winter his cattle had perished in a blizzard. The next summer one of the plow horses broke its leg in a prairie hole....Another summer he lost his hogs from cholera, and a valuable stallion died from a rattlesnake bite. Time and again his crops had failed. He had lost two children... Now, when he had at last

struggled out of debt, he was going to die himself. (16)

But the disasters, which have taken away coward Mr. Bergson's life, cannot shake his bold daughter Alexandra. She efficiently drives the family and manages the farm. As she has more creative power and keen insight into the farm works, she produces food grains hundred times better than her father and feels much satisfaction from her toils in the soil. Comparing her farming skill with that of her father, Carl says to her: "You were only a little girl, but you knew ever so much more about farm work than your father." (39-40)

In fact, Alexandra never misuses her power to dominate her fatherless brothers. As she is trustworthy and reliable, there is no reason to doubt at her leadership. She acts as a buffer state between her father's land and her brothers, among whom she equally divides it after their marriage. As long as they stay with her, she correctly selects suitable occupations for them and makes them independent farmers. She gets Oscar and Lou for farm works and educates Emil in the University of Nebraska. But Oscar and Lou are nobody except rivals to their sister Alexandra. Sometimes they force her to quit off the land, sometimes oppose her Land Project and sometimes question at her morality. When her brothers insist her to move off, she thunders at them: "I won't move! If the rest of you go, I will ask some of the neighbors to take me in and stay, and be buried by father. I'm not going to leave him by himself on the Prairie, for cattle to run over."(45) Alexandra pleads for the prairie soil and wishes to be here to attend her father's grave. In spite of her brothers' anti-Land Plan feelings, she successfully implements her Plan and buys new land at cheaper price selling old one in profit. She grows more crops and sells surplus for cash.

Antonia's father, another weak-minded male, gets suicide out of his depression from the failure of crops and loss of two of his neighboring Russian friends, Peter and Pavel. Unlike her father, Antonia takes charm out of her misery and promises to fertile the same soil, and not to move anywhere from Black Hill. After her marriage with Anton Cuzak, she buys new land and makes unflinching struggles on her farm for ten

years to fertilize it. She, like Alexandra, tries new farming techniques and new seeds on the farm and produces more crops. She manages her home very nicely and leads her family more efficiently. It is her challenging power to struggle against her hardships that she becomes the happiest farmer of the frontier.

Though Alexandra's Carl Linstrum and Antonia's Anton Cuzak are the true feminists to support women, they show no interest in the farm works. So Alexandra pulls Carl back to the farm to make him a good farmer. Still he cannot cope with her farming techniques in Hanover. When dry climate kills crops on the farm and turns green vegetables and fruits - cucumbers, pumpkins, snake-guards, sweet potatoes, grapes - into burnt-ashes, depressed Carl makes a plight to the new land, St. Louis, to test his destiny selling his frontier land to Alexandra. His departure from her neighborhood makes her really mournful, and she feels scared to the idea of missing him. Still she makes strong determination not to leave Hanover. As Carl's farming life becomes a failure, he takes carving as his profession in St. Louis, but in vain. Finally, he comes back to Hanover to live in Alexandra's income that she earns from her sixteen years' continual hard work on the farm.

Similarly, Antonia's husband Anton Cuzak, who has been a retired gardener from Florida and a fur-trader from New York, knows nothing about the farming techniques in Black Hill. Being a city man by profession, he looks more interested to music and sport than farming. So he tries to escape from the farm and visits either to the theater hall to enjoy music and dance or to the stadium for sport like a boy of fourteen. "Yet his wife had managed to hold him here on a farm, in one of the loneliest countries in the world....This was a fine life certainly, but it was not the kind of life he had wanted to live."³⁶ As efficient Antonia trains him for agriculture and involves him in the farm works, he tries to follow his wife's farming cult to fulfill her special mission to the farm.

In fact, there are most striking similarities between Alexandra and Antonia. Both of them face similar losses of their fathers from the similar reasons of isolation and depression and have similar obstinate brothers. Alexandra's Oscar and Lou are as obstinate and foolish as Antonia's Ambrosch. But their brothers exhibit somewhat cultivating skill though they lack the management of the farm. Antonia's brother Ambrosch works so hard on the farm under the hot sun that he forgets even to eat, and Antonia has to remind him for his food. Actually Ambrosch and his wife Mary

Svoboda show remarkable skills in farming the crops and taming the cattle. Again, Alexandra's brothers, Oscar and Lou, also work hard on the farm, but Oscar has some better farming quality than his brother Lou. He is disinterested to farming works because he has married Annie Lee, a lazy foreign girl from Missouri town.

Both Alexandra and Antonia equally admire their sisters-in-law though they are good for nothing. Alexandra's Annie Lee shows no interest to farm work but to gossip with the people she meets. She is all for back-biting against the hired men and quarreling with her sister-in-law. Still Alexandra praises her and presents her daughter Milly a piano. Antonia's Mary is also a wrong wife of crooked Ambrosch. But Antonia is not tired of praising her with such words: "Mary Svoboda's the best butter maker in all this country, and a fine manager. Her children will have a great chance." (224)

Again, both of these women's brothers are always tempted to serve their evil intentions and equally jealous of their sisters. But Alexandra's Oscar and Lou are more jealous and aggressive than Antonia's brother. Ambrosch shows more dominating power over his sister than jealousy. Though skilled hand in farming, he forces Antonia to work for others to earn wages for himself and uses her as a shepherd to graze hundreds of his cattle and sheep on a narrow meadow. But Alexandra's Oscar and Lou always create problems for their sister. They fight with Alexandra at the question of her land though they have already taken their portions from her. But Lou is worse than Oscar as he involves in politics, neglects his farm works and poisons his brother. He instigates him to move against Alexandra for two reasons: Alexandra can marry Carl Linstrum, a poor pioneer fellow without a penny; and she can offer her whole land to him preventing them from its succession. Oscar and Lou never compromise with Alexandra, while Ambrosch shows friendly dealings to Antonia and visits her home when she converts her gloomy days into sunshine by marrying Anton.

Antonia, like Alexandra, never loses her heart at the failure of crops but goes on trying crops on the same

farm. Her disappointed husband asks her to leave Black Hill and move to some fertile soil, as Alexandra's Carl does. But Antonia insists him to continue their efforts for the fecundity of the same land. When they succeed to grow more crops on the farm buying further new land, Anton gives its credit to his wife. He admires her for her courage and patience at hard times, and for her creative power and hard labor to convert their dry frontier soil into productive one. He is proud of his wife because she makes him a 'settled man' with so much land and so big settled home in the prairie. Explaining the ways, how he and his wife have achieved prosperity out of the land, Anton says:

We got this place clear now. We pay only twenty dollars an acre then, and I been offered a hundred. We bought another quarter ten years ago, and we got plenty boys; we can work a lot of land....I never did think I would be a settled man like this. (234-35)

Antonia takes self-satisfaction from her success in growing varieties of fruit trees and flowers plants on her orchard during her life. She fertilizes the clover fields and waters the plants even at midnight when her husband is still enjoying dreams in his bed. She nurses every tree, every fruit and every flower very devotionally. About her love of the trees and her continual efforts to grow plants, Antonia herself says:

I love them (trees) as if they were people. There was not a tree here when we first came. We planted every one, and used to carry water for them, too- after we'd been working in the fields all day. Anton, he was a city man, and he used to get discouraged. But I couldn't feel so tired that I wouldn't fret about these trees when there was a dry time. They (trees) were on my mind like children. Many a night after he was asleep I've got up and come out and carried water to the poor things. (219)

As a matter of fact, Antonia's love of trees and flowers resembles with William Wordsworth's fondness of trees and flowers. Wordsworth, the greatest Poet of Nature, takes the things of nature as living things. In his poem *Nutting*, Wordsworth asks his

sister Dorothy not to trouble the trees and flowers in the wood by touching them. In his belief, there is life in the trees, and his sister's touching may prick them and make them painful. Similarly Antonia sees life in the trees and serves them tirelessly as if they were human beings like her own children.

If sun and shower, pain and pleasure, tear and smile are the real charms of life, Alexandra and Antonia, the pioneer women with the similar pioneer spirits, are the charming personalities. They exhibit similar courage and patience to make life-struggles and exercise their scythes and spades in the soil to earn bread for their siblings. But their brothers never show any sympathy for them at their misfortunes. Instead, they torture them by creating lots of problems. Again, both of them suffer from the similar losses of their fathers, but they go on exercising their tools for the fulfillment of their promises to the land.

Mrs. Shimerda, Antonia's mother, is also a woman with much desire for the new land of the frontier. She is the woman who forces Mr. Shimerda, her husband, to immigrate Black Hill. But her arrival at the new soil cannot be fruitful for her. She can neither earn anything from the new soil for her children nor creates warm family background to win happiness. The untimely death of her husband and the loss of her daughter's chastity are serious blows to her life. She works very hard on the farm, but always remains in poverty. So she shows her feminist anger at rich Mrs. Burden for not providing her any financial support. She criticizes her that she has not given her any utensil to cook food for her family.

Mrs. Harling, the pioneer woman from Norway, also belongs to the farming community of Black Hawk. Though she comes to Black Hawk town for her comfortable life, she, in the beginning, works in the kitchen garden with her hired girl Antonia, hand in hand, digging the ground with her spade and singing songs in the furrow of the soil. Though Frances Harling, Mrs. Harling's daughter, has no direct link with the soil in regard to food production, she cannot separate herself from the farming environment. She is a business-woman who deals with the food-grains that are grown

on the frontier farm. So she is familiar with each farmer of Black Hawk dealing with the food-stuffs.

The pioneer women's lure of the land extremely grows their love of their nation in their hearts. Thea's area of her profession is music, but she has also much love of her land. She is endowed with the national feeling for Moonstone. As it is the dearest of all land, she measures each current building by Moonstone standpipe. She starts her life from Moonstone and builds up her career as a greatest singer in Chicago and Germany. But the memory of the Kohlers' garden and her childhood movements in Moonstone remains always fresh in her heart. She says: "They save me: the old things, things like the Kohlers' garden. I try all the new things, and then go back to the old. Perhaps my feelings were stronger then."³⁶

Though Thea and Cecile are not seen with the particular scythes and spades in their hands, as Alexandra and Antonia in the frontier land, the soil of their countries throws them such a good smell as flowers do to the bees. Cecile shows unlimited love for the soil of Quebec, which she does not wish to leave. Every tree or grass is very dear to her. She wishes to enjoy the natural beauty of Quebec with the echoes of sea-spray beats and sea-birds' songs over the sea. So she feels heart break from her father's decision to leave Quebec and revolts against him to stop herself in Quebec. It shows that these women's love of their New Countries is greater than that of their Old Ones.

Thea meets many people during her artistic life and makes friendship with many, but her old friends, Dr. Archie, Ray Kennedy, the Kohlers and Fred Ottenburg are the nearest of all. After her great achievements as a singer, she says to Dr. Archie: "But you see, when I set out from Moonstone with you, I had had a rich, romantic past. I had lived a long eventful life, and an artist's life, every hour of it." (396) Even in Thea's song, there is Moonstone tone in her voice and performance. She sings *My Bonnie Dear* for Dr. Archie expressing her loving emotions about Moonstone. Finally, her father's old house becomes her permanent showroom of her artistic performances. Though she sings German songs at times, she presents Swedish movement and Moonstone spirit in

her voice.

Alexandra can be taken as a national leader for her great love of, and sacrifice for, Hanover. When Oscar and Lou insist her to migrate for any fertile land from Hanover, she says:

*Things away from home often look better than they are. You know....about the Swedes liking to buy Danish bread and the Danes liking to buy Swedish bread because people always think the bread of another country is better than their own. Anyway, I've heard so much about the river farms I won't be satisfied till I've seen for myself.*³⁶

Alexandra, with her strong determination, says that she will never leave Hanover: "I don't want to move again, out to some raw place, maybe, where we'd be worse off than we are here, and all to do over again." (45) The trees and flowers of Hanover attract Alexandra in the similar manner as the trees of Black Hawk do to Antonia. As Antonia waters each tree up to midnight, Alexandra also looks after each plant very carefully. But the mulberry tree is the symbol of both happiness and sorrow for Alexandra as it provides her pleasure at her childhood and dips her into painful shocks when she finds her dearest Emil's dead body under its merciless shadow.

If a woman works for herself or her family, she does more for the nation. When Alexandra works hard for the family and grows more crops in Hanover, it means that she has done much to enrich her nation. She goes on working on the farm with such a conviction that she can rapidly develop her farm quantitatively and qualitatively. When Alexandra, at a joke to defeated Carl, says why he has not taken her to his New Country of affluence, Carl reminds her about her commitment to Hanover soil and its people: "I think I know how you feel about this country as well as you do yourself.....You belong to the land as you have always said."(228-29) It expresses her deep-seated feelings about her New Country.

As a leading personality, Alexandra wants to bring drastic changes in the American society by abolishing the differences between the land-owners and hired men. Though

she herself is the manager of a big farm, she makes no distinction between the rich and poor. Instead, she defends the weak and helpless banging the rich and powerful beings. When Annie Bergson, Lou's selfish wife, demands a single bathroom for herself, Alexandra strongly resists that she must share the same bathroom, which her hired man Ivar has been using.

Alexandra thinks that the importance of Nebraska land is greater than its pioneer people. To her, the 'land' itself is the 'maker', and the men or women living here are only the instrumental to it. So she sees greatness in the soil of Hanover rather than the people in it. To her, it is the Hanover country that makes the fortune of each man or woman living here. She heartily praises Hanover soil for its rapid development and excitedly says to Carl:

We hadn't any of us much to do with it, Carl. The land did it. It had its little joke. It presented to be poor because nobody knew how to work it right; and then, all at once, it worked itself. It woke up out of its sleep and stretched itself, and it was so big so rich, that we suddenly found we were rich. (87)

But she is not satisfied with people's participation in the developmental activities of Hanover. In emotion, she thanks Carl for his moving to St. Louis: "You have lived where things move so fast, and everything is slow here; the people slowest of all. Our lives are like the years all made up of weather and crops and cows." (99)

Antonia is also overshadowed with the national feelings. Like Thea, she selects Black Hill village as a suitable place for her farm and looks with the full fire of life in this rural environment: "She was there, in the full vigor of her personality, battered but not diminished.... What else was gone, Antonia had not lost the fire of life."³⁶ For Antonia's pure national feeling of Nebraska and her greatest contributions for it, the authoress selects the topic *My Antonia* for her novel and praises Antonia highly with these words: "This girl seemed to mean to us the country, the conditions, the whole adventure of our childhood."(2)

All of the hired girls of the pioneer community show deep love of their soil.

Speaking highly of these girls' feelings of their countries, particularly of Antonia, Lena, Tiny and Mary, the narrator narrates: "They were handsome girls, had the fresh color of their country upbringing, and in their eyes that brilliancy which is called- by no metaphor, alas! - the light of youth." (123) These young girls not only heartily love their New Countries, the land of their luck and performance, but they also show much respect for their Old Countries, their birth-places, which they always keep in their memories.

Antonia has utmost love of the village. So she prefers village to live in, rather than town. In town, she gets nothing except lonesomeness and bitter dealings of the corrupt males: "I'd always be miserable in a city. I'd die of lonesomeness. I like to be where I know every stack and tree, and, where all the ground is friendly. I want to live and die here (Black Hawk)." (206) She feels homely in the village environment at the company of her affectionate neighbors. In town, she faces solitude, disgrace and betray of the wrong males like Wick Cutter, Larry Donovan and others. Like Alexandra, she is also committed to live and die in the same country where her father's grave remains as a guide to her life.

The frontier society is highly ethnic-group-affected area of the immigrants. So the pioneer women, who have come over there with the lure of the land, are surrounded by language, economic, geographical and social problems, which are as complex and sharp as thorns in the wood. The immigrants from various language communities living side by side face a divergent atmosphere there. The pioneer women, but not men, display wonderful power to tackle the problems that emerge from their new surroundings. Alexandra and Antonia, who are more adventurous than the males, can resist against the crooked males who try to seize their property and exploit their virginity. They can also fight with the bitter forces of nature that destroy their crops.

The pioneer society is the farmer's society, and the pioneer society's problems are the farmers' problems. The pioneer women are particularly surrounded by the social problems at their new land. Firstly, they meet adjustment problems in the new

surrounding. Mrs. Bergson, Alexandra's mother, and Mrs. Shimerda, Antonia's mother, are proved worthless even for cooking food items at the new environment of their New Homes. It disintegrates them even from their own children. So these two mothers are always found thrust in the memory of their Old Homes:

*For eleven years she (Mrs. Bergson) had worthily striven to maintain some semblance of household order amid conditions that made order very difficult. She was a good mother, but she had never quite forgiven John Bergson for bringing her to the end of the earth.*³⁶

The pioneer women feel extremely lonely in their new pioneer society, where they can meet no friend of their hearts. In fact, they miss their friends of similar tastes and aspirations to express their inner feelings. As Mrs. Bergson disapproves her neighbors for their mismanagement in house-keeping and cooking, her neighboring pioneers from another ethnicity condemn her thinking her as a proud woman. Though Mrs. Shimerda is a good housewife at her Old Home, Bohemia, she knows very little about the house-keeping and other household works at the new atmosphere of Nebraska. So her daughter Antonia, a young generation of the pioneer country, has to look after the kitchen as a house-wife. In the new environment, Mrs. Shimerda looks absentminded and spoils food by burning it to ashes. Perhaps it might have been the interference of her Old Country's system and tradition that her skill in handling things proves to be immature in Black Hill. So her daughter Antonia handles the situation at her home by guiding her mother in the manner of a teacher to his new pupil. When Mrs. Shimerda burns her bread at oven, she becomes the subject of ridicule and criticism in the pioneer community.

Again, the pioneer society is a boon as well as a curse for the pioneer women from different ethnicity. It is a boon because it equally opens its heart to all of the new comers and provides its resources to construct their fortunes on its widened horizon. But it is a curse because the wrong doers creating various problems also occupy it. So the atmosphere it creates for the new comers to set their destiny is both positive and

negative. It begets a free society which aims to be too much liberal to them. In fact, such free society, which allows its people to enjoy excessive freedom, leaves ill impacts usually on the pioneer women or girls who work on the farm or in the land-owners' houses. The Red Indians, generally males, terrify the girls grazing cows and sheep on the pastures showing their violent nature, even their naked organs, to them.

Even the pioneer girls are also found themselves rough as an impact of the mixed culture because they have been the products of the various ethnic groups melted in the same cauldron. It gives birth to a wonderful culture - neither of the Old Country nor of the New One but a different one. Such mixed culture affects the girls in the pioneer society. Lena Lingard, who has immigrated from the rural farming environment of Norway to Black Hawk town, exhibits something roughness in her character. She speaks rough words to Frances, intrudes Mrs. Harling's kitchen from the back door and stirs up Antonia to move against her land-lady for her freedom. She also provokes her to dance with the immoral boys in the various clubs, which bring Antonia's misfortune.

When Antonia works for the Harlings, she falls into the trap laid by Lena Lingard, the hired girl of Mrs. Thomas. She instigates Antonia to take part in the Vannis' tent dances with a number of rough boys. It results in such a disposition that Antonia's relation with the Harlings is spoilt, and her virginity is looted. Harry Paine, one of her dancing partners in the Italian tent, tries to seduce her. Harry, to whom Antonia believes so much, makes an attempt to rub her chastity, pretending to accompany her when Antonia comes back to the Harlings' house from the Italian dancing pavilion. One Saturday night, Mr. Harling finds:

*A pairs of long legs vaulting over the picket fence. Antonia was standing there, angry and exited. Young Harry Paine, who was to marry his employer's daughter on Monday....danced all evening. Afterward, he begged Antonia to let him walk home with her....On the back porch he tried to kiss her, and when she protested...,he caught and kissed her until she got one hand free and slapped him.*³⁶

It is Harry Paine who is also responsible for breaking Antonia's relation from the Harlings. When Mr. Harling notices Antonia kissed by rascal Harry, he becomes so angry that he dismisses her from his house. Though she succeeds to escape from him, another male-dancer, Larry Donovan, exhausts her sex by raping and deserting her. If Antonia has not been forced by Lena to dance in the Club, nobody can raise a question at her virginity. Lena, a woman, not only darkens a woman's life but also exploits Jim, a male, by playing romance with him and drawing him back from his study. So Jim Burden rightly speaks of the immigrant girls: "The girls out there usually got rough and mannish after they went to herding." (107) Lena is never under any one's control but as free as a crow or as voluptuous as a crane. She is always found under the open sky. In Jim's words:

I can remember a score of these country girls, who were in services in Black Hawk during the few years I lived there....Physically they were almost a race apart, and out of door work had given them vigor which, when they got over their first shyness on coming to town developed into a positive carriage and freedom of movement, and make them conspicuous among Black Hawk women.
(127)

Again, the pioneer society of Black Hawk town is a reward for rough, money-minded Lena because she can earn money running her dress-making profession in town. Clever Lena can make profit out of her romance with the young boys here, but it leaves no ill effect on her. But it is a curse for a rural girl like Antonia because she meets only the villains like Wick Cutter and Larry Donovan to ruin her virginity. So the simple minded rural girl like Antonia cannot take any advantage of the urban life as she suffers from the shrewdness of the villain males of the town.

The tragic events that frequently occur as an impact of the love marriage in the pioneer community of Nebraska are very harmful for the pioneer girls. The pioneer society, being occupied by the heterogeneous groups of people from different ethnicity, becomes too liberal to its people to the question of 'love' and 'marriage'. The young boys and girls are somewhat free to make love-affair with the boys or girls of their own choices and marry. But such freedom leaves its ill impacts particularly on the rural girls

rather than the boys. Frank, a mean-minded Bohemia fellow in Hanover, loves and marries Marie Tovesky, the gentle daughter of Albert Tovesky from Omaha. But he deadly troubles her. He neither loves her sincerely nor shares with her hopes and dreams. Instead, he spies at his wife even when she is in Church services to pray for him. Marie, tired of her husband, extends her friendship to Emil Bergson, Alexandra's youngest brother, and proposes for the marriage. But Alexandra stops Emil because Marie is the married wife of Frank. Finally, both of them are killed by Frank at the suspicion of their love-affair.

Alexandra also suffers from the social criticism in Hanover for her warm friendship with Carl Linstrum. Even her brothers, Oscar and Lou make strong arguments to her raising a moral question at her closeness to him. Carl is such a devoted friend at her neighborhood, who sincerely supports Alexandra even at her heavy farm works and gives her good advice for the welfare of the Bergson family after Mr. Bergson's death. Though poor in resources, he is rich in his heart and sincere in his dealing. Alexandra can choose Carl as her husband earlier if she has not been bound with a promise to her father's land. So she draws herself back to the farm letting him to go away alone. But Carl's return to Alexandra at Hanover upsets surly Oscar and Lou, who sharply criticize her:

*We thought we ought to tell you that people have begun to talk.... About you, keeping him (Carl) here so long. People think you're getting taken in....You ought to think a little about your family. You're making us ridiculous... People are beginning to say you want to marry the fellow.*³⁶

Though they violently attack her, it has no serious effect on feminist Alexandra.

It is the pioneer society which troubles simple-minded girl like Antonia giving birth to such villains like Wick Cutter and Larry Donovan, who are only to cheat women's chastity and collect money by hook or by crook. Antonia, being the simple-minded girl of Black Hill village, knows nothing about the trickery of such urban tricksters. So her happiness knows no bound when she receives letters from tricky Larry Donovan with his false promise to marry her and settle in Denver. But she puzzles when she knows about his change of mind. He lies that he is not coming over there to fetch her because the route of

his train service has totally been changed. Shocked Antonia hurries to Denver to see Donovan. But he stays with her till she has money. Thereafter, he makes her pregnant and runs away from her. At her wit's ends, pregnant Antonia goes here and there to look for him. Finally, she discovers that he is not a good fellow but a crook, a miser who has already left the country for Old Mexico for many charges from the Train Company. She clearly knows that he is fired from his job and black listed. About her tragic life in Denver, Antonia herself says: "He lived with me till my money gave out ...Then he didn't come back."³⁶ Tired of waiting him in Denver, she comes back to her parental house in Black Hill, depressed, disgraced and withered. About pregnant Antonia's terrible suffering at her cruel brother Ambrosch's farmhouse, Mrs. Steavens says:

She was out in the fields ploughing corn. All that spring and summer she did the work of a man on the farm Ambrosch did not get other hand to help him....At night she always looked dead weary afflicted with toothache; one after another, went about with her face swollen half the time. She won't go to Black Hawk to a dentist for fear of meeting people she knew. Ambrosch... was always surly. Once I told him not to let Antonia work so hard He said, 'If you put that in her head, you better stay home....' Antonia worked on through harvest and threshingfor the neighbors ... She begun to herd Ambrosch's cattle in the open ground. That very night, she got her cattle home,....went into her room behind the kitchen, and shut the door. There, without calling to anybody, without a groan, she lay down on the bed and bore her child. (202-3)

When feminist Steavens shows Antonia's baby to her devil-like brother Ambrosch, he barbarously frowns at her and asks her to throw the baby in the rain-barrel. In this sense, Ambrosch looks as cruel as Kansa, the maternal uncle of Lord Krishna in *The Mahabharat*, who cruelly kills his sister Devaky's sons and deadly tortures his sister.

Though the pioneer society creates lots of problems for the women, it also brings forth their challenging spirits promoting their creative power and dynamic personality. In fact, very little discrimination is made between the rich and poor, males and females or sons and daughters here as compared to the well-established traditional American society. Alexandra, the daughter, becomes the heiress of Mr. Bergson's property though he has been the father of three sons. Though Oscar and Lou always behave Alexandra

notoriously, she loves Lou's wife Annie, her mother Mrs. Lee and Oscar's daughter Milly very much. She never makes any discrimination to her hired people Ivar, Nelse and Signa. They are the sources of her happiness. It is only Ivar or Signa who can console Alexandra at her shock from Emil's death. She pleads for her old hired man Ivar when people tease him for his bare feet. Her treatment to her hired girl Signa is like that of a mother. She makes special arrangements for Singa's marriage to Joe and presents a cow as a financial support for the couple.

Mrs. Burden, Jim's grand-mother, and Mrs. Steavens, a widow in Mrs. Harling's rented room, never despise Antonia though poor she is. Instead, they show much love and sympathy for her at her distress and woe. It helps Antonia to tolerate every misfortune easily. Feminist Mrs. Burden pleads for terrified child Antonia when her mother cruelly forces her to take part in her father's funeral procession. She also bangs devil-like Ambrosch when he exploits her child labor for his income and shamelessly bargains with Mrs. Harling over the price of Antonia's labor as a hired-girl at Black Hawk market. When Antonia gives birth to her illegitimate daughter from Larry Donovan, it is only feminist Mrs. Steavens who morally supports her and fearlessly pleads for her to convince stupid Ambrosch.

The position of the simple-minded rural girls in the town is embarrassing one. When the pioneer farmers' young daughters like Antonia, Lena, Tiny and Mary visit towns from the village to work as hired girls to earn bread for the family, they encounter with the people of different attitudes towards them. The urban males chase the girls from the foreign parents, but they are not approved for marriage. These selfish urban males want that they should marry the girls of their own country to tie with their own culture. A Black Hawk boy always favors a Black Hawk girl to marry and live with her in a well-furnished house with polished furniture. In Jim's words:

The Black Hawk boys looked forward to marrying Black Hawk girls, and living in a brand-new little house with best chairs that must not be sat upon and hand-painted china that must not be used.The country girls were considered a menace to the social order. Their beauty shone out too boldly against a conventional background. But anxious mothers need have felt no alarm. They mistook the mettle of their sons. The respect for respectability was stronger than

any desire in Black Hawk youth. (129)

Similar communal feeling is experienced even in the immigrant pioneer groups of women who wish that their daughters should come into contact with the boys of their own nationality. Even Antonia suggests Bohemian Jim Burden to marry a Bohemian girl, and not Norwegian Lena Lingard. Swede Alexandra takes Annie, a girl from Missouri, as a foreign girl. On the contrary to their mothers' dream, the girls like Antonia, Tiny and Lena are under the attacks of shrewd urban males.

Similarly drunkard Silvester Lovett from the same town dances at Lena Lingard's youth by chasing and kissing her. Mr. Lovett secretly stands back under the tree and watches at Lena on her way to Vannis' tent to take part in the dance. About the young country girls' troubles created by the young boys in the town, the narrator narrates:

The Vannis Tent brought the town boys and the country girls together on neutral ground. Sylvester Lovett, who was cashier in his father's bank, always found his way to the tent on Saturday night. He took all the dances Lena Lingard would give him, and even grew bold enough to walk home with her. If his sisters or their friends happened to be among the onlookers on 'popular nights', Sylvester stood back in the shadow under the cotton-wood trees, smoking and watching Lena with a harassed expression....When Lena went home for a week to visit her mother..... young Lovett drove all the way out there to see her. (130)

Silvester Lovett, the scoundrel town boy, chases Lena, the country girl in town, but betrays Lena marrying a widow six years older than himself. Generally the boys who take part in the Vannis' Tent annoy young girls dropping in through the kitchen door or making noises at them. They take themselves superior to the rural women thinking that they are more civilized than these women in terms of their ways of living. Similarly villain male Wick Cutter shows strange behavior to Antonia when she works as a hired-girl for him. Leaving his valuables in a basket under her bed, "He made her promise

that she would not sleep away from the house or be out late in the evening while he was gone (to Omaha). He strictly forbade her to ask any of the girls she knew to stay with her at night.” (157) It is his trick to rape Antonia at his wife’s absence. But it makes Antonia more conscious about Mr. Cutter’s cunning plan, and she defends herself getting Jim, her friend, to face against him.

Lena Lingard also faces lots of troubles at Mrs. Thomas’s house as a hired girl. She says: “When I went to work for Mrs. Thomas, I was nineteen years old and I had never slept a night in my life when these were not there in the bed. I never had a minute to myself except when I was off with the cattle.” (186) She feels so much tired of the heavy load of works that she has no life at all, indeed. She goes to bed late night in clean night-gown, but she has to sleep with other two dirty girls whose dresses throw stinking smell round the room. These are the common social problems the poor country hired girls have to face at their rich land-owners’ houses in the town.

Migration or immigration is stimulated with the desire for one’s own good affluence and better fortunes at a new place. On the contrary to their dreams, the immigrants meet various economic problems at the new environment. Firstly, they can not find any golden pavement in the New Country. As a result, the poverty-stricken pioneer women like Mrs. Shimerda and Mrs. Lingard (*MA*), Mrs. Evangline Wheeler, Cloud Wheeler's mother, and her hired-girl Mahailey (*O*), and Mrs. Peter Kronborg, Thea’s mother (*SL*), suffer much in their New Countries because of their shortage of money.

Mrs. Shimerda is despised and ill-treated even by her mother-in-law. Before her marriage with Mr. Shimerda, she has worked as a hired girl for her mother-in-law to earn money in the Old Country, Bohemia. But Mr. Shimerda, a man of good understanding nature, marries her in spite of his mother’s obstruction. After her marriage, Mrs. Shimerda is not allowed even to enter her mother-in-law’s home in Bohemia. In Antonia’s words: “After my father married her, my grand-mother never let my mother come into her house again. When I went to my grand-mother’s funeral was

the only time, I was ever in my grand-mother's house. Don't that seem strange?" (151) Antonia also ignorantly shows contempt to her mother and takes her inferior to her father. The reason is that she has also grown up in the same environment of her grand-mother and uncles, who always criticize Mrs. Shimerda for her poverty-stricken life and force her husband to avoid her. But feminist Mr. Shimerda neither forsakes his wife nor makes any comment against her. Instead, he loves his wife and his daughter very much. Mrs. Shimerda reaches Nebraska with a hope of her better fortune owning new land. But she finds herself into a pit-fall not being able to cope with the new system of her new environment.

Mrs. Lingard meets so violent economic crisis at her New Home that she cannot provide even food-items for her children though she makes hard works on the farm. So her oldest daughter Lena has to sacrifice herself for her mother and siblings. Lena works hard for them not caring about her education in school. But her financial difficulty still persists there. Once Lena is invited by the preacher's wife to attend the Norwegian Church for Sunday services, but she has to refuse it for not having dresses of her own to wear. When she is given the preacher's wife's worn out dresses, Lena can attend the services. About the grown-up pioneer girls' worse condition in the New Countries, the narrator narrates:

Those girls had grown up in the first bitter hard times, and had got little schooling themselves. But the younger brothers and sisters, for whom they made such sacrifices and who have had advantages never seem to me when I meet them now, half as interesting or as well educated. The older girls, who helped to break up the wild sod, learned so much from life, from poverty, from their mothers, and grand-mothers; they had all, like Antonia, been early awakened and made observant by coming at a tender age from an old county to a new.
(127)

Antonia knows that she should learn English to communicate with her English speaking neighbors in Black Hawk. But her poverty prevents her from going to school

because she has to earn bread for her mother and siblings, Ambrosch, Yulka and Marek. The only persons who show much concern about Antonia's education are Jim Burden and his grand-mother. But Antonia thinks that her need to earn bread for her siblings is greater than her own education. She says: "I ain't got time to learn.... My mother can't say no more how Ambrosch do all and nobody to help him." (80) Alexandra cannot go to school because she has to look after her fatherless brothers and work hard on the farm for their betterment.

The pioneer women meet very sharp language problems in the frontier society. The United States of America is an English speaking nation, and crowds of immigrants are from different tongues. Alexandra comes from Swedish tongue but she learns a bit English. It helps her to harmonize even with her non-Swedish neighbors from other language communities. Annie, a girl from Missouri, speaks English and communicates a little bit in Swedish though she marries Swede Lou. Her children, being the second generations of the immigrants, speak English fluently. But they do not understand even a single word of Swedish. Annie who belongs to the new generations and objects Alexandra for keeping Ivar at her home, utters her anger in English: "He is a disgraceful object and you're fixed up so nice now.... My girls are afraid as death of him."³⁶ She is always critical to Alexandra for her leadership to the Bergsons and charges her of misusing her husband's parental property. Oscar not only envies at Alexandra's powerful leadership but also shows his jealousy at Lou's wife and his children.

Again, the non-native pioneer women from Czechoslovakia, Sweden and other nationalities have to use interpreters who unexpectedly exploit the new comers in the New Countries. The Bohemian Shimerdas at their New Home in Nebraska are deadly exploited by their interpreter Krajiek. He sells them his land at high price but takes an advantage of them from their weaknesses of their tongue: "They hated Krajiek, but they clung to him because he was the only human being with whom they could talk or from whom they could get information."³⁶ Antonia also makes judgment of his insincerity and condemns him when she finds him cheating Russian Pavel and Peter out of their

trade in fruits. Alexandra's father from Sweden and Antonia's father from Bohemia feel great depression as they cannot meet any friends of their own tongues to communicate their feelings. When a new immigrant comes to settle at Mr. Shimerda's neighborhood, he excitedly visits him, but feels much disappointment for not being able to talk to him. About the language problems of the pioneers, Jim Burden says:

After Mr. Shimerda discovered the Russians, he went to see them almost every evening, and sometimes took Antonia with him. She said they came from a part of Russia where the language was not very different from Bohemian and if I wanted to go their place she could talk to them for me. (24-25)

To avoid difficulty in pronouncing these Russian fellows' names, Antonia calls them 'Pavel' and 'Peter'. When Russian Pavel dies of depression and Peter migrates, Mr. Shimerda, the closest friend of the Peters, commits suicide.

The language problem of the pioneer women is as sharp as Jim Burden hears from the railway conductor of the train: "They can't any of them speak English, except one little girl (Antonia) and all she can say is 'we go Black Hawk, Nebraska'. She's not much older than you, twelve or thirteen, may be." (6) According to him, it is only Antonia who can communicate a bit in English with her English speaking neighbors and translate it for her parents and neighbors into Bohemian tongue. But Antonia's words are in broken English: "My papa find friends up north with Russian mans. Last night he take me for see, and I can understand very much talk. Nice mans, Mrs. Burden." (23)

Mrs. Shimerda, who faces a sharp language problem in the pioneer community, feels a great need of her daughter's education in English and sends Antonia to Jim Burden to learn English from him. So Antonia can translate her English speaking neighbors' expressions into Bohemian tongue for her mother. By the time, Mrs. Shimerda also picks up Antonia's English words with quick ear and tries to speak in broken English: "For cook, ... little now; be very much when cook....very good. You no have in thus country. All things for eat better in my country." (51) She and her younger

daughter Yulka can speak English in broken form long after Mr. Shimerda's death. It has been possible for them because they have learned it from Jim and Antonia.

The happiest moment of the pioneer women may be one when a pioneer woman can meet another with the similar tongue. When Swedish Tiny Soderball starts a log-hotel at Dawson City, she keeps a disfigured Swedish boy named Johnson as her helper. As she is the woman of the same tongue, she can understand his problem and support this disadvantaged boy providing him the job in her hotel. Otherwise, Johnson's life can be as useless as a dead man's there. In fact, the adjustment problem of the pioneer women arises from their language variation, and the new comers can feel ease if they learn the native language of the new place. Alexandra in Hanover, Antonia in Black Hill and Thea in Moonstone can adjust so easily because they learn English, the native language, so fast. Thea can be the greatest artist of Moonstone because she, being much talented, gains much command of English very soon. Otherwise, she may also belong to the same group of the ordinary old women who aimlessly come and go, without leaving a name in the universe.

Tiny and Lena do not have so much knowledge of English as they make no serious attempt to learn it. Among the uneducated hired girls of Black Hawk, Antonia has much knowledge of English. Marie, being an educated woman with the Bachelor degree, may efficiently adjust in the new environment of Hanover if she has not married crook Frank, a mean-minded suspicious fellow from Bohemia. Other hired girls, Tony, Tiny and Lena also can have much command of English if they have got schooling opportunities for their formal education. Instead of going to school with their pens and papers, these unfortunate girls are doomed to work as hired girls or farm-women with scythes and spades, which Lena detests. In Jim's words:

All foreigners were ignorant people who couldn't speak English. There was not a man in Black Hawk who had the intelligence or cultivation, much less the personal distinction of Antonia's father. Yet people saw no difference between her and the three Marys; they were all Bohemians, all hired girls. (129)

The pioneer women equally meet problems not having chances to exercise their talent or skill, if acquired, in specific field of New Country. If it is a girl from Virginia, she can get a job as a school-teacher. But, if she is a girl from foreign tongue having no serious knowledge of English, she is not able even to teach in the school whatever degree or position she has acquired from her Old Country. When the parents of the pioneer girls are in debt, there is no alternative for the girls except taking a low type of job as a farm-woman or a hired girl as their profession. How can Antonia then attend the school for her education like Jim Burden, the male? But these girls' long struggles against hardships ease them to change their fortune from bad to good. In Jim Burden's words:

The Bohemian and Scandinavian girls could not get positions as teachers, because they had had no opportunity to learn the language. Determined to help in the struggle to clear the home-stead from debt, they had no alternative but to go into service....The girls I know were always helping to pay for ploughs and reapers, brood-sows, or steers to fattenOne result of this family solidarity was that the foreign farmers in our country were the first to become prosperous. After the fathers were out of debt, the daughters married the sons of neighbors - usually of like nationality---and the girls who once worked in Black Hawk kitchens are to-day managing big farms and fine families of their own; their children are better off than the children of the town women they used to serve.

(128)

One of the problems the pioneer women face in the prairie is the bitterness of nature that the prairie shows to its new comers. Its climate is so dry and hot that the farm-women sleep in the hayloft feeling it cooler than at home. Sometimes, there is so strong thunder-storm under the sky that, it seems, the hayloft on the prairie is caught on fire, and sleeping women jump to the ground in crowds for life. The heavy work on the farm makes Mrs. Burden untimely older and forces her to move to Black Hawk town for her restful life.

On the contrary to the spiritless pioneer men, the pioneer women possess better farming abilities, leadership power, indomitable courage and unbelievable

tolerance, which encourage them to move forward in their own land in spite of their adversities there. Antonia is not as weak as her father, but a feminist who fights with the Harlings at the risk of her job, blows to immoral Mr. Cutter, shows special liking for her illegitimate daughter Martha and becomes the happiest farmer of Blake Hill. Mr. Bergson, a male, not being able to tolerate all the calamities of his life, meets his tragic death entrusting the legacy of his land to his creative daughter Alexandra. Jealous Oscar and Lou can never be compared to innovative Alexandra in applying new farming technologies. When Carl finds Alexandra in her big compounded building with numbers of hired girls, he looks envious of her prosperity. Her cattle, hens and ducks in her barn, and fruits and flowers in her garden attract Carl. But when he compares his depleted economy with that of Alexandra, he feels himself inferior to her. So it indicates that only the pioneer women have rights to claim for the frontier land, and not those coward males.

Chapter V

Lost Ladies: The Fallen Eves Of Earth

Willa Cather has developed a wonderful technique of the universal theme of the 'good' and 'evil' to characterize her women in her novels. If the soft natured feminist women with challenging pioneer spirits for innovative works represent the good, the unimpressive radical feminist women, without working spirit, from the upper class stand for the evil. The pioneer women who work as farm women or hired girls or singers and struggle much to fulfill their special missions to their land and art are the true representatives of the good female forces in her novels. Though they look innocent in their outward appearance and poor in economic status, they are rich with their inner beauty and feminist outlooks. In one hand, they launch co-operative and integrative movements of the new American women in the pioneer community to resist against the male-domination, on the other hand, they carry out constructive and preservative activities in the new soil for their stability. In spite of their hard struggles, the women from the common folk exhibit real beauty through their power to carry out their heroic actions in the New Countries.

The women from the rich families of the American west are known as 'lost ladies' for their corrupt character. They are lost from their worlds as they seek only for their rights and money but lack their pioneer spirits. Their money-minded nature and romance with the treacherous males invite disasters for themselves and their husbands' lives. So they are excluded from the pioneer group of women, whether they are pioneers by immigration or not. They are activists in this sense that they launch violent movements against their oppositions merely to serve their own ends, and not for the welfare of others. In fact, these women have no real virtue, no inner beauty, no creative power, no strength and no warmth of their heart that the novelist seeks from the pioneers. When Cather searches out the heroism of the pioneer women of Nebraska frontier, she creates the self-centered sophisticated aristocratic ladies of the American west as the protagonists of her novels to point out the existence of the evil forces of life in the world. So these lazy ladies are to compare with the creative pioneer women of the common folk with toils in their hands. Still she, as a feminist novelist, shows

sympathy towards them.

The activist heroines, who are designed under the title of 'Lost Ladies' are Marian Forrester (*LL*), Lilian Peter (*PH*), Myra Henshawe (*ME*), Lucy Gayheart (*LG*) and Sapphira Colbert (*SSG*), including some of the minor women with 'lost' character in Cather's novels. As these lost ladies lose their working spirits, they rebel against their husbands for the pursuit of their material world without their own labor. In fact, they lead luxurious life and play romance with the corrupt boys. When they fail to fulfill their high ambitions, they always show discontention and bewilderment during their lives. Such ladies are abuses or curses even for the newly built society of the pioneers which seeks the construction of the pioneer women, and not the destruction of these lost ladies.

These lost ladies are also said to be the 'Fallen Eves of Earth' because they embody the similar temptation and anti-male activities on earth as Eve has done in the Garden of Paradise. Eve, the activist woman with her desire for materialism, revolts against God in the Paradise and eats the fruit of the Forbidden Tree in the Garden of Eden. These lost ladies are also similar activist women who are tempted by materialism. So they rebel against their husbands on earth to seize power and money from their male partners. Generally, the Eve-like fallen heroines of selfish-motive and infidelity constitute Cather's tragic novels. Marian Forrester, the insincere heroine of *A Lost Lady* (1923), Lilian Peter, the mercenary heroine of *The Professor's House* (1925), Myra Henshawe, the power seeking protagonist of *My Mortal Enemy* (1926) and Sapphira Dodderidge Colbert, Satan-like heroine of *Sapphira And The Slave Girl* (1940), are the fallen Eves of earth. They occupy similar position in the American society as Eve has done in the Paradise and disappear from the world as Eve does from the Paradise.

The reasons of awarding these women with the title of the 'lost-ladies' are many. Firstly, they are luxurious and highly expensive as they belong to the rich aristocratic families. It makes them mercenary and ambitious in attitudes, which they wish to fulfill by force. Secondly, they neither wish to establish any good relationship with their husbands nor share with others' hopes and miseries. Instead, they are solitary and taciturn in habit, and discontented, bewildered and contradictory in nature. Thirdly, such ladies are husband-hunters as they intend to serve their ends by exploiting their

husbands. Instead of earning their bread by themselves, they run after their husbands' money and cause them to meet earlier death due to their extremely hard work. Fourthly, they are power seeking women. Their violent attack on their husbands is to take power from them. So they do not hesitate even to push them to death for power. If not, they themselves get suicide. Fifthly, they desire for utmost freedom, which they need to play romance with the unscrupulous young boys. Lastly, these ladies neither show any love and sympathy for other wretched women nor are sincere and loyal to anyone.

Though these women are feminists, their insincerity, luxurious life, showy immoral character and betraying nature place them in the rank of the 'lost-ladies'. They are called so because they lose everything what they should have. They lose money, prestige and even their neighboring pioneers' confidence in the New Country. Instead of reconstruction and preservation of the newly built community of the pioneers, these activist women destroy what they have in their grips. They do not have any sense of their responsibility in life. So they lead an unsuccessful life on earth. Finally, they are lost from its wide horizon.

Among the lost ladies, the romance of Marian Forrester in *A Lost Lady* resembles with the romance of Myra Henshawe in *My Mortal Enemy* in various aspects. Hermione Lee says: "Though Marian Forrester and Myra Henshawe are very unlike, they share certain dangerous characteristics. They are both alluring, sexual, magnetic women caught inside a marriage which began as a romance."³⁶ As a matter of fact, these are the ladies of romance, who flirt with one boy after another in different ways and different circumstances.

Marian Forrester is the second wife of Captain Daniel Forrester, a rail--road contractor from Sweetwater, who constructs millions of kilometers of road from Burlington to Denver. She comes from California and lives in Sweetwater, Colorado with her husband after their marriage. She, being twenty-five years younger than her husband, makes hearty welcome to the male-visitors at her home. She is the subject of admiration for all young boys from the neighboring towns, Omaha and Denver: "She

was always there, just out the door to welcome their visitors....If she happened to be in the kitchen,...she came out in her apron, waving a buttery iron spoon, or shook cherry-stained fingers at the new arrival.”³⁶ She is more attractive to the groups of young boys, with whom she plays romance, especially to Ed. Elliot, 'the Don Jaun of Sweetwater' and Ivy Peters, the most immoral lawyer. Why does Marian Forrester move against her husband running after the young boys? “After the Captain’s terrible fall with his horse in the mountains, which broke him so that he could no longer build railroads, he and his wife retired to the house on the hill. He grew old there, - and even she, alas! grew older.” (7)

Marian’s attraction to the young boys is due to the following reasons: Firstly, Captain Daniel Forrester grows older in age when Marian Forrester blooms in youth. Secondly, Captain Forrester's decline of health makes him disable and handicapped. So he fails to earn money to fulfill the demand of his wife. Thirdly, the failure of his economy due to his ill-health or his bank failure due to the Great Depression of the United States is the failure of his wife’s fidelity. Lastly, the extra-ordinary beauty of Marian Forrester attracts the boys.

When Mr. Forrester goes to Denver and Omaha with his wife, as usual, to spend winter, he falls ill from the attack of the stroke, and Mrs. Forrester brings him back to Sweetwater at their home. It makes Captain Forrester so weak that he can hardly stand with his stick. So he can make no further contracts for road building to earn money. It causes the fall of his economy as well as the decline of the love and fidelity of his wife. When he marries Marian Forrester, his pioneer spirit for creative works and his knightly virtues are cut off, and their marital relation cannot succeed. In the words of Lionell Trilling:

The pioneer is doomed,....the frontier has been closed.... He is defeated by the men of the new money interests and the prediction of the lost lady proceeds in the degree that she withdraws from her husband in favor of one of the sordid new men, until she finds her final degradation in the arms of an upstart

*vulgarian.*³⁶

Marian's anti-husband feeling occurs to her mind when she cannot fulfill her desire for sex from her twenty five year older husband. When she blooms in her youth, her husband fades away with wrinkles on his cheeks. Then she knows no fidelity, no loyalty and no responsibility for him. She shows him negligence even at his serious illness, and Niel Herbert, the narrator of the novel (*LL*), attends him. Her romance with the unscrupulous young boys brings her satisfaction temporarily in the physical sense. But she can never be happy even on the lovers' hands as her filthy lovers equally betray her exploiting her sex and money and deserting her. When one of her lovers succeeds to transfer her husband's whole asset under his name after Daniel's unexpected death, Marian is lost in the pioneer community, which seeks the integrity of Alexandra and Antonia.

Marian's amorous spirit is felt for the first time by Niel Herbert when he falls down from the tree at a picnic near the Forresters' house and gets treatment under her arm. Thereafter, he discovers her love-affairs, firstly with Frank Ellinger, secondly with Mr. Orville Ogden, thirdly with Adolph Blum, fourthly with Ed. Elliot, fifthly with Ivy Peters, and finally with Henry Collins. One can easily discover Mrs. Forrester's amorous nature through her flattery words to the young chaps who frequently visit her grand building of decoration and romance like bees to the flowers. She vows at them in such a way as Shakespeare's Cleopatra does to attract her lovers. Cleopatra loves Julius Ceaser and Antony, turn by turn, and meets her tragic death after the death of her lover. Like Shakespeare's Cleopatra, Cather's Marian also spends her time with her scoundrel lovers, sometimes with Frank Ellinger and sometimes with Ivy Peters and others.

Niel Herbert and his uncle Judge Pommery are invited at a party given by Marian to her first lover Ellinger: "Will you and Niel dine with us tomorrow evening? ...Probably Frank Ellinger will come on from Denver."³⁶ At the cocktail party, Niel Herbert observes Marian's love affair with Frank Ellinger, a forty year old bachelor from Denver in white waistcoat under dinner-coat. Physically, he is not an attractive fellow if

one notices his boxer's-like structure of his body with black-coarse-curly hair, strong white teeth, curly lips, long nostrils, and long straight legs. Neil finds some devil's image in his personality. He guesses that Frank can swallow an iron rod in one bite like a demon. Neil frequently finds him very close to Marian and gets either his eyes fixed at hers or her eyes at his. Sometimes Marian pours whisky to Frank's glass, and sometimes he to hers. Captain Forrester's long-sigh from his narrow iron-bed, after she bids him 'good-night' and enters next big bedroom for the affair with long-awaited Ellinger, expresses nothing except Captain's frustration to his life. Marian exhibits her love-affair to Ellinger with the action of her movement putting off her earrings and dress before the eyes of her lover. Pointing out two opposite atmospheres at the Forrester's house in a contrastive way, Niel Herbert says:

Ever since he (Mr. Forrester) was hurt,....he slept in narrow iron bed, in the alcove which had formerly been his wife's dressing room. While he was undressing he breathed heavily and sighed, as if he were very tired....She called from the big bed room, 'good-night, Mr. Forrester', and drew the heavy curtains. She took off her rings and earrings and was beginning to unfasten her black velvet bodice when, at a tinkle of glass from without, she stopped....Frank Ellinger was standing at the sideboard, taking a nightcap. (47-48)

The effect of a wrong woman's romance with the wrong male is never good. Married Marian's love affair with aged Ellinger cannot succeed. Marian's shock knows no bound when she hears about Ellinger's marriage with Constance Ogden, the spoilt daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ogden. Then she hurries up to telephone to express her outrage and scandalous feelings at him. But it has no effect on Ellinger.

Marian is a shallow woman without her reasonable power. She is not such a wise woman to learn a lesson from her failure. But she is such a weak lady who is tempted to do further worse things in her life. Her further amorous sit-down and stand-up with Mr. Orville Ogden, another short man of fifty, is to prove this fact. Mr. Ogden, though a married fellow from the town of Omaha, does not miss any chances to take an

advantage of such fickle-minded woman like Marian. He starts to dance on her youth: “His good eye twinkled and followed her, - while the eye that looked askance remained unchanged and committed itself to nothing.” (36) In spite of having a homely wife of his own, Mr. Ogden admires all beautiful women and runs after them. Mr. Ogden’s eyes fix on Marian’s beautiful earrings swung beside her cheeks. Her eyes, her lips, her laughing or mocking indicate that Marian Forrester is all for love. In her action and smiling, one can hint the fickleness of her character. The phrases ‘ring round her finger’, ‘earrings swinging through her cheeks’, ‘glittering her finger’, ‘twinkling eyes’ used in the novel describe Marian’s sexy nature because such glittering jewels worn by Marian and the movements of her twinkling eyes are to attract her lovers.

Hosts of amorous young boys are invited by Marian herself. Adolph Blum, a rich feudal, whom she meets along the street immediately after her displeasing retreat from Frank, is attracted by the charm of her witty speech and movement of her eyes. Again, Ed. Elliot amuses her with the gift of a pair of winter shoes, while Ivy Peters treats her with ‘ruffianly manners’. She flirts with Ivy Peters, a most unscrupulous lawyer with snake’s-like unblinking small eyes, rusty skin and swollen face. Physically he looks as ugly as his mental darkness. When Frank Ellinger and others enter into Marian’s life, she loses something; but she loses everything when Ivy Peters intrudes to her life and treasure. After Daniel Forrester’s disability from stroke, Ivy Peters, a most dishonest cunning lawyer from Omaha, is invited by Marian herself to dance at her property and her chastity. She hands over her husband’s whole business to Ivy with her own will. So Hermione Lee violently attack on Marian and says:

She manipulates her own image in order to manipulate others.She is the enchanting lady Forrester, to Ivy Peters she is a woman with a bucket and rolled-up sleeve, good for a few laughs. In her domestic life with her husband, glimpsed in a few touchingly mater-of-scenes, she is another person again, patient and practical.³⁶

Ivy Peters gets strong hold on Marian's life and property after Daniel's death from stroke. When Niel tells her about people's comment on her relation to him with a view to draw her back from villain Ivy, she openly resists: "But I can't bother about their talk. They have always talked about me, always will. Mr. Peters is my lawyer and my tenant; I have to see him."³⁶ But Ivy Peters betrays her transferring her whole accounts, funds, securities, business and even her abode into his own name on the basis of her written order. Finally, he drives her out of her home. Then homeless Marian, at her wit's ends, elopes with her, perhaps last, lover Henry Collins, a cranky quarrelsome English fellow in New York. Thus she is forced to leave even Sweetwater after she loses her prestige and property at the same time.

As Marian is too showy in her behavior, she shows no inner beauty at all. Her interest in extra-ordinary physical beauty kills her inner beauty. As she is a woman of beauty and decoration, she lives in the grand decorated building with well-furnished parlor and comfortable bed-rooms enriched with glass-doors and carved tops. "The floor was carved by a red carpet, and the walls were hung with large, old-fashioned engravings; 'The House of the poet.... Shakespeare Reading Before Queen Elizabeth'." (29) She has neither any affection for her disable husband nor possesses any good heart for other people. "Neil had noticed that in describing the harms of other women, Mrs. Forester always made fun of them a little." (28) What she pretends to do for her husband is to show for her neighbors. She takes care for the young fellows like Frank Ellinger or Ivy Peters, her lovers, and not for her husband. As Niel glances at her beauty, he puzzles: "How strange that she should be here at all, a woman like her among common people!Compared with her, other were heavy and dull; even the pretty ones seemed lifeless." (32)

In fact, Marian is a beautiful ghost with her glittering skin and poisonous heart. Her glittering eyes and lively magical speech with lively smiling lips are very powerful to attract mischievous boys like Frank and Ivy. As a woman's beauty is the cause of romance, and the romance becomes the cause of destruction, Marian's beauty catches

hosts of young boys in the net of romance, which helpless Captain Forrester watches from his iron bed. She neither loves him nor makes any treatment at his illness. Instead, she puts her husband's whole assets on her lover Ivy Peter's palm. Such unbearable scene bitterly pinches at Daniel's heart, and he welcomes his death after he meets several strokes in his life. But Marian, surrounded by hosts of her lovers as attracted by her beauty, gets no time to shed even a single drop of tear at his death. Instead, she remains busy in attracting another new lover, perhaps the final, Mr. Henry Collins.

Another lost lady who meets tragedy due to her love and romance is Myra Henshawe, the heroine of *My Mortal Enemy*. She is the adopted daughter of rich John Driscoll in Parthia. As she is extremely pampered by her god-father Driscoll, she becomes so obstinate that she does not obey anyone. Her luxurious life at her uncle's villa darkens her life making her very complex. Again, she is so much appreciated by her uncle that she has been the shower of his praise and happiness. Foolish Driscoll also wants that all young men should visit his house to admire her 'good looks' and high spirits. So the door is left open for all the young boys of the town to accompany Myra and praise about her beauty. It provides them opportunity to contact with her and play romance. In the words of Nellie Birdseye, the girl narrator of *My Mortal Enemy*: "All Myra's friends were drawn into the web of her romance; half a dozen young men understudied for Oswald so assiduously that her uncle might have thought she was going to marry any one of them."³⁶ As soon as Oswald Henshawe, a poor fellow from a well-reputed German mother, visits her as a tutor, she falls in love with him and proposes for the marriage at no time. It enrages her uncle, who threatens Myra to disinherit her and donate his property to the Church.

In fact, Myra is spoilt by her own uncle as he makes everything possible for her: "Myra had everything: dresses and jewels, a fine riding horse, a Steinway piano. Her uncle took her back to Ireland with him, one summer, and had her painted by a famous painter." (19) That is why she can adjust nowhere. But her uncle hates Oswald for two reasons: Firstly, Oswald, being the son of a school-master, is a poor fellow, and Myra an heiress of the

millionaire. Secondly, Oswald is a Protestant in religion, and Myra a Catholic. Though Oswald is a smart, handsome, tall, and generous man from the good German family, it is because of his differences in economic and social status that John Driscoll takes him as an unpractical and wandering person. So he stops Oswald's entrance to his house. But Myra secretly meets him either by visiting him or by sending letters. After she plays romance with him for the time being, she runs away from her god-father's house and gets marry to Oswald at the eye-witness of Oswald's parents and Myra's friends. The Henshawe couple sets for Chicago and settles in New York after the marriage.

The love marriage, which has taken place between rich Myra and poor Oswald cannot prosper. The kisses of love between Myra and Oswald turn into hard fists after their marriage. When the couple settles in New York, Oswald loses his job and fails in his business. Then Myra, a girl from affluent family, disdains her poverty-stricken husband. She, as woman of pride and beauty, throws his torn-out dresses to the beggar, thinking that his clothes have spoilt the beauty of her bed-room. She behaves him differently - avoiding him and moving with Ewan Gray, a Scotchman from a theatrical family in New York, hand in hand. He is attracted by her beauty and benevolent activities. Myra joins his Clubs and Societies in New York pretending to offer her services to the poor and helpless. So she needs lots of money for providing financial support to her boyfriend's social activities. When her husband fails to offer her money, she tussles with him. She feels remorse for marrying such a poor guy, Oswald, and leaving her rich uncle Driscoll behind.

Myra is an over-ambitious and selfish woman. God has given her beauty with her lustrous skin and shining eyes, but has forgotten to decorate her heart with the warmth of her love and affection. She flirts with Ewan Gray in the name of benevolent activities, but is not willing to elope with him. In fact, she is not a woman to settle her life so easily with Ewan Gray. In her thinking, her elopement with him may be a relief for her husband. So she extremely exploits his purse to please her lover with the gift of

money. In this sense, she resembles with Marian Forrester who exploits Captain Forrester's resources and fills her lover Ivy Peters' pockets.

Myra uses hyperbolic language to pour out her violent anger at Oswald. She forgets her part on the love affair and vainly blames Oswald taking him wholly responsible for the matter. All the time, she hates him calculating that he has prevented her from her uncle's property. So she thinks he has destroyed her life by marrying her, and not caring about her future. She says:

...It's a great cruelty. But I can't help it....He can look back on the best of those days when we were young and loved each other.... I was never satisfied.... It's a great unkindness to destroy any (flower) that are left in a man's heart...People can be lovers and enemies at the same time. (104-105)

In anger, she calls Oswald a 'sentimentalist' and takes him as the 'destroyer of her past'. Oswald, as a gentleman, never shows his contempt for Myra but tries to convince her by all means. But Myra sometimes weeps bitterly and sometimes laughs wildly in remorse. Even in her laughter, there is a terrible sigh of destruction. Her ironic laugh signals that she wants to take revenge on Oswald. As she looks more violent and aggressive to her husband, she suffers from the malignant growth in her body and pressure on the nerves. She gets sharp back pain, which pushes her to the last stage of her life.

The most dangerous lady who is lost by the cause of beauty is Myra Henshawe. Outwardly, she looks beautiful and attractive, but her physical beauty signals some possible danger for her life. She always suspects her husband and takes him as her 'mortal enemy'. Her anti-husband feeling makes her sick, and she cannot move from her bed. Still she dislikes his presence in her room and tries to avoid him. So she plainly asks him to go out of her room. But inwardly, she blames him that he is not looking after her. She murmurs: "I could bear to suffer....so many have suffered. But why must it be like this? I have not deserved it. I have been true in friendship; I have faithfully nursed others in sickness...Why must I die like this alone with my mortal

enemy.” (113) Such a negative feeling against Oswald excites her to get suicide, but not at his presence. In fact, her husband’s exit or the young priest’s entrance to her room makes her fresh and happy. She blooms up even in her death’s bed at the company of the young priest. Nellie notices: “Father Fay came to see her almost daily now. His visits were long ... He was a young man, with a fresh face and pleasant eyes, and he was deeply interested in Myra.” (110) Finally dangerous Myra takes Sacrament from the young priest, secretly hires a cab, goes far to the cliff and commits suicide over there. It is the tragedy of the young couple as the consequence of the beauty and love-marriage.

Myra is as complex and dangerous as Aeschylus’s Clytemnestra, the most dishonest wife of Agamemnon in the Greek Trilogy. Her silence is as destructive as Clytemnestra’s silence. When Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter to the goddess of War as prophesied by Apollo, his wife Clytemnestra remains silent whole day and night in a dark room and murmurs something horrible. The Trozen War is brought by Helen, the most beautiful and amorous wife of Agamemnon’s brother. As romantic Helen elopes with Paris in Troy, the Trozen War is fought by Agamemnon to bring Helen back to Greek. But Clytemnestra, at the loss of her daughter, becomes so violent and aggressive that she keeps herself in silence for a long time and murmurs with a vow to take revenge on her husband. Finally, she murders him cruelly as soon as he returns back from the Trozen war. Myra’s silence also is the symbol of violence. After her long silence, she vows in a similar way uttering something horrible. It means that she wants to torture him, any way.

Myra weighs her husband’s love with the money and thinks that he does not love her because he does not give her desired money. As Oswald is a male feminist crowned with the feminist out-look for the women, he shows much sympathy towards her and tries to convince her. But she never understands him. When Oswald fails to fulfill her demand for money, she feels dissatisfaction and unhappiness in her life. So she always remains

discontented, bewildered and contradictory to Oswald. Though she shows an extremist's eye at him, he never shows any resentment against her. The worst of all is that she leaves him with a dying curse 'my mortal enemy, intending that he may not be happy even after her death. His pathetic look to receive her last letter and his mournful expression to detect her dead body are evidences to prove his sincerity and loyalty to his wife.

If Myra resembles with Eve for her temptation to the material world and her anti-male activities, she is nearer to Cleopatra for her romance and physical beauty. As Eve's temptation annihilates the Garden of Paradise and Cleopatra's beauty extinguishes Rome, Myra's temptation and beauty break Oswald's life as well as her own. Eve, the symbol of evil, insists Adam, her only male friend in the Paradise, to taste the fruits of the Forbidden Tree in the Garden. Consequently, God angrily drives them away from the paradise. When Adam and Eve, the only human species leave the Paradise, the balance of nature in the garden is upset. Again, Cleopatra's bewitching beauty webs brave Roman king Antony to the net of love. So he, losing his heroic spirit, is defeated in the war, and Rome is destroyed by the Greeks. Similarly bold Oswald, as attracted by Myra's beauty, loses his job as a teacher and financially suffers much in his life.

If Marian is a dangerous lady, Myra is the most dangerous one. Though Marian's consciousness lies in the sense of her freedom, she, willingly or unwillingly, offers her services to her sick husband in some extent, and leaves her house only after his death. But Myra's awareness lies in the sense of her power, in addition to her romance. So Hermione Lee says: "Myra makes people come to her; she wants to attract, but she also wants to command."³⁶ Marian is somewhat inspired by her existential philosophy of life. So she decides to live by getting remarriage with another man. But Myra ends her life most tragically. Though she enters Oswald's life by force, she blames him and always creates embarrassing atmosphere to him through her suicide. She looks most dissatisfied during her life, and when she loses her life, she leaves him alone, sad and

unhappy. So Myra's story is the story of a lost lady. In Doren's words:

*My Mortal Enemy (1926), not a frontier story, was a searching story of another lady lost because she could not fit her world. Myra Henshawe, favorite of her powerful uncle in an Illinois town, has made runaway marriage against his will. The marriage does not prosper and Myra finds her life endurable pinched and dingy. No doubt she should have been submissively content to lie in the bed she had made for her herself.*³⁶

Sapphira Dodderidge Colbert is also an heiress of Captain Dodderidge in Back Creek Valley, Virginia. As she is also suspicious and romantic by heart, she disappears from the world as an impact of her love and marriage. White Sapphira flirts with poor Negro Henry Colbert and tries to elope with him, without his will. After the death of her father, she is highly benefited of his big estate. Sapphira, to whom the power of the slaves and property is concentrated, becomes the owner of the mill, including all of her father's land and other resources. When she marries Henry, a gardener and steward at her home, she shifts from Back Creek to Shenandoah Valley for fear of people's talking about her inter-caste marriage and managing her father's big farm and his Mill House in the Valley. As her marriage with Henry is the marriage of convenience taken for his assistance to her big estate in the Valley, he cannot take benefit of this marriage. Still he wins the confidence of all slaves in the Mill House due to his generous nature and fair dealing.

Sapphira is neither physically fit nor mentally attractive. She is invalid and seeks other people's help to move in and out of her room. But she treats Henry as her clerk, and not as her husband. She is all in all at her home, and her husband works in her mill. It seems that Henry has taken his birth for Sapphira's mill, where he works as a Miller and Sapphira as an owner. "Colbert drove his mill hard, gave it his life, indeed. He was noted for fair dealing, and was trusted in a community."³⁶ Her father appoints him as a steward for his sincere nature and fair dealings, and Sapphira also loves and marries him for the same reason. But she takes him as a machine to run her mill. As she

tyrannically rules her family, it brings her downfall collapsing her life. So her wrong behavior to her husband, children and slaves proves that she also belongs to the class of lost ladies.

Sapphira is the activist wife of liberal feminist Henry Colbert. As he shows sympathy towards the slaves exploited and ill-treated by his activist wife, she vainly raises a moral question at his career. She is such a narrow-minded woman that she suspects him at his relation to Nancy, a young slave girl, who assists him in the mill as a cleaner. His appreciation to the slave girl, Nancy, is for her innocent nature and good work, but Sapphira takes it on the other way. Though she tries to curtail Nancy from the mill and threatens him to sell Nancy, the feminist Miller opposes Sapphira and says: “You can’t sell her without my name to the deed of sale and I will never put it here....If you sold a girl like Nancy off to Winchester, people hereabouts would hold it against you.....But I’ll never sign for Nancy.” (8)

It is true that Henry is no match for Sapphira to the questions of her good status and affluence. But in physical appearance and inner beauty, she cannot match with him. He is the most handsome gentleman with trustworthy character, while Sapphira is a disfigured woman with mean-minded nature. But Henry finds his fair dealing and trustworthy nature against himself. If he has lacked the warmth of his heart and high personality, Sapphira, the lost lady, may not enter his life flirting with him. If so, he should not face any difficulty regarding the issue of Nancy working at her mill. But his humanistic approach to Nancy deadly spoils his relation to his wife.

Sapphira is neither a loving wife nor an affectionate mother. She has very cold relation with her husband Henry and bitter dealing to her daughter Rachel. She is the most dominating woman who mercilessly exploits her Negro husband. Henry earns much from the mill, but the earning goes to Sapphira. When Rachel asks her father for financial support to Nancy’s flight, Henry pathetically says to his daughter: “I can’t be a party to make away with your mother’s property.... I’ll have my coat hanging on a chair by the open window here.” (227) As he is a reasonable person, he knows Nancy’s

problems very well. But he can neither resist against his wife nor can arrange for Nancy's flight. Still he is a practical man. So he signals his daughter to take money out of his pocket as secretly as a thief-shot. Then he hangs his coat on a chair by the open window so that she may carry out the plan accordingly.

Again, activist Sapphira's domination over her husband can also be clarified from Henry's own words. When Rachel talks to him about Nancy's flight, he, for fear of his cruel wife, says to his daughter: "Hush, Rachel, not another word! You and me can not talk about such things. It ain't right....Nothing must pass between you and me in this matter; neither words nor ought else."(226-227) Sapphira treats her husband as a servant and sells her Negro-slaves like animals. One cannot live without shedding tears from eyes to see Henry's position at Sapphira's palace. She never permits him to enter her treasure-room nor allows him to put his legs to her late father's bed-room. About his position at his wife's palace, Cather says: "He had kept his marriage vows as he would keep any contract."(192) He cannot use his workers without her permission. If he shows good relation to his workers in the mill, she suspects him. Nancy, her slave girl, suffers for the same reason.

Sapphira is an aggressive woman who leaves no opportunity to take revenge on her opponents. She makes a secret plot to revenge Nancy and searches immoral Martin Colbert, good Henry's evil nephew, to seduce her. But Sapphira's plot fails when her feminist daughter Rachel Blake runs Nancy to Canadian Church to keep her under the security of the priests to save her from her bloody mother. After Nancy's flight, cruel Sapphira shows more aggressive dealing to her daughter Rachel threatening her not to enter her home. After Nancy's flight, she writes Rachel a letter forbidding her to put her feet at her home: "Mistress Blake is kindly requested to make no further visits at the Mill House. -Sapphira Doddridge Colbert." (245)

The lost ladies come from the world of cosmetics and romance. As they keep much faith on physical beauty, they lack spiritual beauty. The main aim of their lives is to decorate their parlors, kitchens, dressing rooms and even their toilets. They are proud of

their youth and beauty and take much satisfaction from the outward decoration of their physical body and their residence. If we follow the proverb - all the glitters are not gold-, the physical beauty of a young woman is nothing except destruction. Helen, the queen of beauty, becomes the cause of destruction by bringing Trojan War. Marian's bewitching beauty destroys the life of Daniel Forrester exploiting his purse and insulting him through her romance with other boys. Describing Marian's bewitching beauty, Niel Herbert says: "The frosty air had brought no color to her cheeks, - her skin had always the fragrant, crystalline whiteness of white lilacs. Mrs. Forester looked at one, and knew that she was bewitching."³⁶ Her muff, her long sealskin coat and cap, her crimson scarf, her little brown spotted veil and her swinging earrings with pearls are to add super-beauty to Marian's physical body. 'Crystalline whiteness' of her skin is itself an artificial shining color which signals Marian's destructive nature. Again, Myra, the queen of beauty, is dangerous as it destroys herself.

Similarly Sapphira, who takes herself as the most beautiful lady, destroys her life due to her pride of her beauty and luxury. She extravagantly decorates her kitchen and parlor. Her kitchen is well-equipped with most costly things, such as, electric lamps and other machinery equipment, while her dining-hall is furnished with the most attractive dining-table and carved chairs. In her parlor, the calling bell is fitted to call her servants in. Sapphira, physically and mentally, exhibits darkness in her life. Outwardly she is totally invalid with her lame leg, and inwardly she has rotten heart. She is always suspicious and revengeful to her husband Henry, daughter Rachel and her slaves. She plots against Nancy to demoralize her character on the suspicion of her husband's illegal affairs with her. Again, she closes her door for her own daughter Mrs. Blake for her kind protection to Nancy. As isolated from her gentle husband and kind daughter, she meets tragedy from her depression.

Sapphira, as a woman of cosmetics, spends more time in her make-up though she is lost in her own dark room due to her physical weakness. By hours, she stands, on one

leg, before the big mirror in her dressing room to examine how beautiful she looks in her costly dress and hair-style. Though her hair is all right in position and does not demand any combing, she spends more time to comb it like an actress of the theater. About Sapphira's hair-style, O' Brien rightly comments: "Even though the mother's hair seems 'in perfect order' to the daughter, 'combed up high from the neck and braided in a flat oval on the crown', Sapphira rejects being seen while she thinks her head is still 'frowzy'."³⁶ She wishes that any member of her family should not enter her dressing room until she combs her hair. So the door is always closed even for her own daughters at the time of her make-up. Once Rachel Blake is bitterly chided by her mother as she enters her room when Sapphira is at her dressing-table. About Sapphira's bitter dealings to Rachel, O' Brien says:

In 'Sapphira And The Slave Girl', Cather describes the daughter's unwelcome entry into the maternal bedroom before the mother has completed transforming herself into an object ready for public viewing. Rachel Blake intrudes on Sapphira while she is '.....before a gilt mirror'. Annoyed, Sapphira reflects that 'Rachel had come in to disturb her.....' . (37)

In the opinion of O' Brien, Cather (being always critical to her mother's Virginian genteel manners) has adopted Sapphira's hair-style and her manner at dressing-table from Mrs. Mary Virginia Cather, Willa's mother. According to O' Brien, Mrs. Cather denied Willa to enter her dressing-room while she was at her dressing-table. But Willa awfully loved her mother. To please her mother, she presented the things of her delight. In O' Brien's words: "She (Willa) chose 'jewelry, delicate lingerie, and imported perfumes, tributes to her mother's beauty as well as props for the lady's role. All the children enjoyed buying their mother extravagant things.'"(38) But Rachel Blake can never please her mother Sapphira who always shows unpleasant behavior and hostile nature to her.

As beauty or flattery is the symbol of destruction, Lena's beauty and her showy words are to destroy the careless boy like Jim Burden. He neglects his study and plays

romance with Lena as attracted by her beauty and believed in her flattery. He says: "The first time I stopped to talk to her, I was astonished at her soft voice and easy gentle ways....Even I noticed the unusual color of her eyes – a shade of deep violet - and their soft, confiding expression."³⁶ Her beautiful dress worn on Sunday ritual in Church attracts Ole Benson, the unfortunate husband of a crazy wife, Mary. Even drunkard Ordinasky appreciates her beauty: "Miss Lingard is a young woman for whom I have the utmost, the utmost respect." (183) Though Mary, Ole's crazy wife, follows her with threatening words, Lena does not care.

Lucy Gayheart, the artist heroine of *Lucy Gayheart*, also ruins her life because of her inactivity and romance. Sometimes she flirts with Harry Gordon, her childhood friend in Haverford, and sometimes with Clement Sebastian, a musician in Chicago. When she goes to Chicago for music, she falls in love with Clement Sebastian, a fifty year old married romantic fellow in Chicago, betraying her first lover Harry. Lucy's 'art' in Chicago is converted into 'romance' as Clement webs her in the net of his love. He impresses her by singing romantic songs about his tragic life with his deserted wife and expressing his love for Lucy. When he dies of drowning in the Lake Como, Italy, Lucy comes back to her home in Haverford in despair. But she can win neither the affection of her family members nor Harry Gordon's hands. So she starts her journey for Chicago to continue her study as advised by Mrs. Alec Ramsey, the widow of one of the founding members of Haverford. But she meets an accidental death in the river without fulfilling her desire for art.

Harry Gordon's shocks at his beloved Lucy Gayheart's tragic death and William Wordsworth's shocks at Lucy Gray's tragic death are exactly alike. Harry's Lucy can leave nothing expect the marks of her foot-steps for her birth-place, Haverford. Harry Gordon, a rich banker, who has bought all of her father's land in Haverford, notices some traces of Lucy's foot-steps running on her yard, exactly like Wordsworth who discovers his beloved Lucy's tragic death from her foot-steps on the moor. The memories of these deceased beloved also lead their lovers to contemplate deeply about the fire of life. The marks of Gayheart's foot-steps take Harry to the memory of his

'past' Haverford, where he and his beloved have long ago skated together and exchanged their loving emotions to each other. Similarly Lucy Gray's foot-steps on the moor lead Wordsworth on the wide spectrum of the past 'Dove', which reminds him all the secrets of his love for his beloved Lucy.

Lucy Gayheart, who loses everything for her love of the young boys, is one of the lost ladies. Firstly, she loses her study involving in the love-affairs with her lovers. Secondly, she loses both of her lovers- Harry Gordon whom she betrays denying his marriage proposal, and Clement Sebastian, whom she misses from his tragic death. Thirdly, she loses her elder sister as well as her parental house due to her conflicts and tussles. Fourthly, she loses herself as she meets death drowning in the flooded river. Lastly, as an indication of her misfortune, she loses her father even after her death. He dies of his emotional grief at the loss of his daughter. This episode can be compared with the death of King Dasharath in the oriental epic- *The Ramayana*, who dies of shocks at the departure of his son Rama for fourteen year exile in the forest. Thus the failure of her love/study becomes the failure of Lucy's life.

The mercenary attitude of the lost ladies makes them arid and desiccated. So they have neither any feminist heart to protect the poor/sufferers nor the feeling of humanity for the depressed. As most of them come from the aristocratic families, they are naturally lazy and luxurious. So they have no experience of hard work to earn their bread by themselves. That is why they are addicted to live in their husband's money. At the same time, they are also greedy, unkind and unsuccessful in life. In fact, all of the mercenary women are equally dangerous and share certain norms in common. Marian is also for money though she does not directly exhibit her greediness for money as Myra does. She neglects her husband when he fails to earn money through the railroad contract due to his ill-health. She starts to think extremely poor as she says to Neil Herbert:

I'm afraid we are staying on all winter this year. Mr. Forrester thinks we can't afford to go away. For some reason, we are extra-ordinary poor just now....At

*Colorado springs, some of my friends take coffee, like the English. But I should feel like an old woman, drinking tea.*³⁶

Mrs. Forrester takes an advantage of her husband's disability by flirting with Ivy Peters, the most dishonest chaps at her neighborhood and offering his whole resources to him with her written document. After his death, Marian spends her time playing cards with Ivy Peters and dining together with him. Neil, who is much aware of Mrs. Forrester's future, foresees some possible danger in Ivy Peter's intrusion to her fortunes and her extravagant use of money. He says: "She was one of the people who ought always to have money; any retrenchment of her generous way of living would be a hardship for her, -would be unfitting." (68) So he strongly warns Ivy Peters to be out of Marian's life and property. But foolish Marian strongly supports him not hearing Neil. Finally, Ivy Peters not only betrays Marian by seizing her husband's whole property from her grip but also throws her out of her house. About Marian's ill-reputation and helplessness, Neil Herbert says:

Mrs. Forrester's name is everywhere coupled with Ivy Peters.... She does not look happy, and I fear her health is failing, but she has put herself in such a position that her husband's friends can not help her....Of Mrs. Forrester, no news is good news. She is sadly broken. (146)

At her frustration, Marian shifts to California and elopes with Henry Collins.

Marian thus loses her husband's resources with the loss of her prestige as she tries to make excessive use of her freedom in exchanging her kisses with her lovers. She is lost in every angle. About her lost character, Hollander also points out:

*Mrs. Forrester is far from 'lost', if we take the title to denote a lady bewildered, a lady who has lost her way or her condition. It is Ivy Peters to whom she, and her state of ladyship, are lost, and he who is forlorn, while she ends life in wealth and only faintly clouded dignity.*³⁶

Lilian Peter, the heroine of *The Professor's House*, is also the most materialistic wife of St. Peter, the Professor of History in the university. When he loves and marries

Lilian Ornsley, a French woman of high ambition for money, his academic career has been spoilt:

*Because there was Lilian, there must be marriage and a salary. Because there was marriage, there were children. Because there were children, and fervour in the blood and brain, books were born as well as daughters. His histories....had no more to do with his original ego than his daughters had; they were a result of the high pressure of young manhood.*³⁶

Once, when St. Peter comes back to Hamilton by Chicago train and arrives home on foot, and not by car, from the station, showy Lilian feels disappointment. As she is not aware of the Professor's limited income, she always forces him to buy costly things. She examines his bag and looks dismal when she fails to see painted Spanish bedroom-sets she has ordered him to bring for her.

Lilian is forceful and possessive to her husband because she has inherited the income of sixteen hundred dollars from her father per year. It makes her another person in her dealing to her husband. St. Peter who aspires only for knowledge and wisdom hates materialism, which his wife worships. Her aspiration for high standard life, in the imitation of her son-in-law's, upsets him. When her daughter Rosamond marries Louie Marsellus, the miser Jew engineer, she becomes more selfish and most materialistic ever before. She constructs a new building for herself with St. Peter's research money and makes tours to Chicago and other parts of the world with her son-in-law. So he regrets for his wife's craving for money and lives alone in his Old House with his pen and paper on the desk.

Lilian is too much stubborn and selfish in nature. Her cold dealing upsets her husband and causes him depression. Her selfish motive and money-minded nature annoys her husband and forces him to stay in the company of his student Tom Outland. But she is envious of him for his good relation with her husband. So he regrets: "In great

misfortune,...people want to be alone. They have a right to be. And the misfortunes that occur within one are the greatest. Surely the saddest thing in the world is falling out of love - if once one has ever fallen in.”(250)

Myra Henshawe, the most mercenary women, regrets for marrying poor Oswald. She inherits similar pride and money-minded nature from her rich, proud uncle John Driscoll, who condemns Oswald for his poverty-stricken life: “It’s better to be a stray dog in this world, than a man without money....A poor man stinks, and god hates him.”³⁶ In spite of his threat, she marries him but always remains discontented for his little income. It cannot maintain the high demand of his luxurious wife. So she feels much difficulty in adjusting at her husband’s small rented room in New York. She also mourns for leaving her rich uncle behind and looks frustrated and unhappy. She says: “Oswald, of course, doesn’t know the extent of my resources. We’ve often needed a hundred dollars or two.”(102)

Myra’s high aspiration for money resembles with Lilian’s and Sapphira’s, rather than that of Marian. All of these three ladies are the successors of their rich parents and all of them make run-away marriage with the boys of dissimilar status. Rich White Sapphira loves and marries Henry, a Black servant of her father, and Myra, a rich Catholic, loves and marries Oswald, a poor Protestant, taking home-tuition classes of her own at her room for wages. So the marriage of both of these couples are dissimilar to the economic level and social status. Like Lilian, Myra is also a woman of dry heart due to her high aspirations for money. So she has neither any understanding about her husband’s financial difficulties nor any concern about his hard life. What she needs is a big sum of money. When Oswald’s little income cannot serve her purpose, she feels much depression and falls in bed from her serious illness.

Sapphira is also a power-seeker like Myra. But the difference between Sapphira and Myra is that Sapphira can exercise full power by herself, which Myra lacks. As Sapphira has whole resources in her own grip, she can control her husband and children with her own whip. Sapphira’s unlimited power or property leads her to be a dictator. So she dominates her Negro husband who is powerless. In fact, her

resources have made her such a tyrant that she keeps her husband at a great distance and extremely hates her own daughter Rachel. But Myra, being the wife of a poor husband and disinherited from her god-father's property, can neither capture high amount of money for her expenditure nor can suppress her husband in the manner of Sapphira. Like Sapphira, Myra also tries to exercise full power by herself, but fails. So she prefers to die. Even in her delirium, she murmurs about Oswald's poor economic status and her failure of lightening her room with any electric light. From her death-bed, she hatefully pinches him with her satiric words: "At least let me die by candle-light; that is not too much to ask." (110)

Again, Sapphira is strongly rooted at her family because she has children, slaves and a big estate with big land. But Myra is homeless and childless. So she knows no construction, no management and no preservation, except destruction in life. But Sapphira has good skill in managing her property. In fact, it makes her more powerful in the Colbert family than Myra in the Henshawe. Instead of her big farm and big mill in Shenandoah Valley, Sapphira also possesses big firms of grains and stocks, along with crowds of slaves. She deals her business with them and earns much profit selling them in the market. As she concentrates such power to herself, she consults no more with her husband about her financial affairs:

It was she who rode over the estate to see that the master's orders were carried out. She went to the public sales on market days and bought in cattle and horses....When the increase of the flocks or stables was to be sold, she attended to it with Henry's aid....She sold off some of the younger Negroes.³⁶

Furthermore, Sapphira shows some sign of humanity in her heart. She is sympathetic even to her rival daughter Rachel Blake in the later part of her life. When she hears about the illness of Mary, Rachel's child daughter, from diphtheria, Sapphira sends Henry to Rachel with her family Doctor for Mary's treatment. Finally, she reconciles with Rachel when she hears about the death of Rachel's daughter. But Myra shows no sign of compromise with her husband Oswald. Instead, she is always revengeful to him.

'Seeking' and 'finding' are Myra's key-words, for which she revolts against her husband. She seeks money from him because she wishes to have good findings of her

benevolent activities in the society. Inch by inch descends the word 'money' from her breath as she is too much conscious about the 'self' and 'money'. She measures everything with power and money. So she tortures her husband with the whip of her power, seeking money from him. When 'finding' is not possible from her 'seeking', her ambition remains unfulfilled. So she highly regrets for it.

Myra, at her wits' end, takes refuge in religion and says: "Religion is different from everything else; because in religion seeking is finding."³⁶ She means to say that the main aim of 'seeking' for other object is to get satisfaction from its good 'findings'. In the course of seeking other objects, the seeker has to confront with many unpleasant forces which can mislead him/her and prevent him/her from good 'findings'. But the seeker for religion need not struggle at all because his 'seeking' is sufficient to win its 'good findings' in religion. The seeker can fulfill his desire for religion automatically, without any struggle for its findings. In fact, Myra's erotic personality, with her most mercenary attitude and her principle of 'seeking' and 'finding', makes her most complex woman of all Cather's lost ladies in her novels. When 'finding' is not possible in the company of Oswald, she takes final revenge on him by murdering herself.

Mrs. Gardner, the minor character in *My Antonia*, tries to capture everything under her grip. She shows her stern behavior to her husband and hired girl Tiny and tries to dominate them. Her stern and uncompromising nature annoys each member of her family. She paints her name on the side of her hotel-bus engraving 'Molly Bawn'. About her materialistic spirit and dominating nature, the narrator narrates:

*Molly Bawn' was painted in large blue letters on the glossy white sides of the hotel-bus and 'Molly' was engraved inside Johnnie's ring and on his watch case doubtless on his heart too. He was an affectionate little man, and he thought his wife a wonderful woman; he knew that without her he would hardly be more than a clerk in some other man's hotel.*³⁶

The activist women in Cather's novels are exactly like those 'New' women or by-products of the extremist feminists' Movements of 1960s and 1970s. Marian and Myra

are the products of early 20th century America - the women witnessing the bloody events of the First World War. Though the destruction has not been the goal of the feminist movement, the 'New' women tend to follow the modernists' principle of the violence and blood-shed brought by the politics, which is based on the materialistic spirit of their current society. Activist Marian and Myra, who are the representatives of the modern women, are exactly like those of the 'New' women's movements. As they tend to be the most modern women, they are more aggressive in nature. Their violent activities based on the materialism, politics and romance are to disturb the creativity and integration of the pioneer community. But they seek to be free to love and marry more than one boy. Marian, a married woman, forgets her marriage-vow and loves Ivy Peters, the most unscrupulous married chap, not caring about the possible harm from her polyandry and his polygamy. It is her dissimilar marriage with Captain Forrester in terms of their age that Marian cannot establish good relationship with her husband. Still she is not aware of such evils in the society.

Cather's 'New' women resemble with T. S. Eliot's modern women in *The Waste Land*, the products of the current materialistic society. Eliot's modern women are found 'lost' by using 'pills' to hide the fruits of their romances that they play openly anywhere at a second. Cather's 'New' women are also called 'lost ladies' as they meet their tragedy through their involvement in love-affairs and violent activities. Cather's Marian Forester in *A Lost Lady*, Lilian Peter in *The Professor's House*, Myra Henshawe in *My Mortal Enemy*, Lucy Gayheart in *Lucy Gayheart* and Sapphira Colbert in *Sapphira And The Slave Girl* are exactly like those of Eliot's modern women. These women pretend to be 'New' by having love-affairs with dissimilar males and hating those males for their lower status and grown-up age.

Marian is a 'New' woman with the habit of celebrating parties by gathering people and sharing with their mocking and joking. She takes enjoyment in celebrating parties for her guests and gossiping with them. Myra and Lilian also make extravagant expenditures, like Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway, by celebrating parties for their guests with their most welcome hands. These women, being the laziest of all, are

habituated to waste their time by gossiping with their invitees, taking part in social clubs and being benevolent to the poor. Mrs. Dalloway, as a showy woman, brings a street girl to her room to show her benevolence and offers her dresses. But the girl detests it and runs away.

Marian and Myra, who are more conscious about their 'self', are very selfish. As they intend to be more individual in the manner of the most modern women, they move off their hands for their family members. Marian's negligence of her husband causes his tragic death. Myra extremely hates her husband, but spends his money for the charity to the poor and oppressed. When she cannot get it enough for her purpose, she stands herself as an activist woman and revolts against him. Lilian, as a 'New' woman in the modern society, lives separately from her husband, but uses his research money for her luxurious 'New' building and other merry-makings. She goes round world-tours with her son-in-law avoiding her scholar husband, who desires for research and knowledge. Her revolt against him is for her freedom to enjoy. As a modern woman, she loves to cherish excessive freedom in life and runs only for the material pursuits. She, like Myra, hates her husband. But their different outlooks about life and life style are the causes of their tragedy. St. Peter is doomed to meet an accidental death from the gas-stove. But Lilian's tragedy lies in breaking her relation from her husband and being devoid of his love and affection.

Sapphira is nearer to Lilian for her more consciousness about the material world. But she resembles with Myra for her love-affair and elopement to dissimilar male-partner, Henry. But she resembles with all of the three lost ladies, Marian, Myra and Lilian at the question of low dealing to her husband. Lilian's negligence to St. Peter for his idealism, Myra's hate for Oswald for his poverty and Sapphira's domination over Henry for his low status, are exactly alike. But Marian's case is somewhat different from the other three women. It is the twenty-five years' age difference between the Forrester couple that Marian shows puzzling situation to her husband and involves in the love-affairs with her lovers before his eyes.

As Lucy Gayheart also follows the modern concept of love-affairs with the unmatched boys, she meets her tragedy after the tragic death by drowning. She forgets her assigned task of music and offers herself to her lovers, turn by turn. When she fails to be united with none of them, she, in depression, suppresses everybody in her family in Haverford. Her erotic personality annoys her sister Pauline, who bangs her sternly. Then she starts for Chicago. But the flooded river, on her way, ends her life for ever. Thus Cather's lost ladies, who descend from the world of modernism, disappear at the violent outburst of materialism and romance.

Cruelty, insincerity and disloyalty are some of the features found in these lost ladies' character. They are not only insincere and unfaithful to their husbands but also unreliable to their friends and very cruel to the helpless. They, being cranky and eccentric, are devoid of love and loyalty to their families. Marian, Lilian, Myra and Sapphira are so cruel and insincere that they neither know any love and loyalty to their husbands nor are kind to their servants. They are not sincere even to their lovers whom they attract through their physical beauty, and not from the core of their heart. Though Marian tries to show her charm through her flattery speech and showy behavior, there is poison in her heart, which she injects to her husband for his extinction. She tries to push Mr. Forrester to death so that she may get absolute freedom to lie herself on the lap of her insincere lovers. Mr. Forrester moans at iron-bed alone waiting for death, but Marian enters another room to satisfy her lover.

If a woman loses her money, she loses something; but if she loses her character, she loses everything. About Marian's involvement in the love-affairs with the insincere lovers, Hollander rightly says:

The lovers emerge from the cedars, by one of the boys of the town to whom she had always behaved so beautifully. Without Neil's sensibility, and without the possessive sense of her, young Adolph Blum would never betray her, nor feel betrayed by her, nor 'lose' her in any way....Ivy Peters comes to supplement both a figure of work like Captain Forrester, and figure of play like Frank

Ellinger....Then at last she finds a final husband who, though 'stingy;' and 'cranky', has surely cared well enough for her..... Marian Forrester lived through her loses and gains.³⁶

Marian thus passes her life through losses and gains. Firstly, she loses her husband's working ability, but gains her freedom. Secondly, she loses his bank cash-money, but gains his whole resources to keep in her grip. Thirdly, she loses her morality, but gains many new faces of her lovers. Finally, she loses everything – her husband, her resources as well as her lovers. But she gains Henry Collins, perhaps her 'last' husband.

Lilian Peter is as jealous and suspicious as Sapphira at her husband's good relation with his student Tom Outland. Sapphira's jealousy of Henry Colbert is for his appreciation of Nancy for her good work in the mill. Similarly St. Peter's admiration of his creative student Tom makes Lilian jealous. If Lilian has been the loving and devoted wife of St. Peter, she should accompany him in the same abode and share with his joys and sorrows for the betterment of their future. If so, she may gain more money from her husband's research works as well as prestige from the society. But selfish Lilian runs away from him only to serve her own ends. In this sense, Lilian is nearer to Marian because both of them are escaptic in nature and seek full freedom of life in the absence of their husbands. Marian enjoys full freedom of her life after Mr. Forrester's death. But Lilian enjoys her freedom though her husband is still alive. To enjoy her freedom, she lives separately at her own separate building.

But Myra's case is different from Marian and Lilian as she happens to be the wife of poor Oswald. As Myra fails to fulfill her desire for money, she sternly frowns at her husband and promises that she will never forgive him for the harm he has done to her life. She calls Oswald a 'tyrant head' and strongly hardens her heart for him. Her long silence, after she curses Oswald with different ill-names, is the symbol of her tyrannical nature. Sometimes she is lost in some serious thought, and sometimes murmurs even from her death-bed. About Myra's bewilderment, the narrator narrates:

She slept deeply for a few hours, and the rest of the night lay awake, murmuring

*to herself...Myra kept beside her now an ebony crucifix with an ivory Christ. She talked very little after this last stage of her illness began; ...but toward Oswald her manner became strange and dark. She had certain illusions.*³⁶

Actually, her illusion towards Oswald is for two reasons: Oswald's small resources not being sufficient to raise her fund for the welfare of the Societies, and her wrong feelings about him that he does not love her by heart. So she speaks to Oswald more satirically and ironically ever before: "It's bitter enough that I should take services from you - you whom I have loved so well." (110)

Myra can be the happiest woman, like pioneer Antonia, saving her life and her husband's future if she has been an understanding woman without revengeful motive. But Myra's over-ambition and revengeful nature prevent her from being so. The cruelest of all in Myra is that she promises not to die at the presence of her 'mortal enemy'. Oswald sincerely loves Myra and asks her to share with what he has. But she thinks him as her 'mortal enemy'. Though she hates him for his limited resources, he tolerates everything without any answer to her. He takes best care of her at her illness, but she tries to avoid him, even by writing letter: "Dear Oswald: My hour has come. Don't follow me. I wish to be alone." (215)

Among these four lost ladies, Sapphira looks the cruelest of all in the earlier phase of her life. Her suspicion at her husband, her plot against her own slave Nancy by searching immoral Martin to rape her and shutting her door for her own daughter Rachel are some of the features which prove Sapphira the most dangerous of all these four women in the novels. In this sense, she is as evil as Lady Macbeth who plots against King Duncan, her guest, at her castle and murders him for the fulfillment of her ambition to be a queen. But Sapphira's plan fails because Henry Colbert, her husband, is not as evil as Macbeth.

Sapphira is too inhumane to her slaves. She treats them in such a way as if they are animals. When Nancy appeals to her for her security from sexy Martin, she sternly warns her not to enter her room with such further complains. Feminist Rachel also

knows how hard her mother Sapphira is for Nancy, and how helpless her father and Nancy's mother are under the dictatorship of her cruel mother. Edith Lewis undermines even the novel *Sapphira And The Slave Girl* for having 'cold' Sapphira as its heroine. She says: "It is a novel without a heroine - the central figure is a cold and rather repellent character."³⁶ About Sapphira's tyrannical nature, her daughter Rachel, on her way to Canada, says to Nancy: "I took a big risk to get you this far. If we went back, Mother would never forgive you - nor me, It would be worse than before."³⁶

Henry, who is a male feminist, is loved by his fellow beings for his attractive personality and his feminist strength. He is not afraid of expressing plain words for justice. As he has his own constraints, he fails to join his hands with other sufferers at tyrannical Sapphira's palace. Still he understands Nancy's problems and raises his voice against his wife for her attempt to harm her. Feminist Henry, at least, can stop cruel Sapphira from selling Nancy and protects her from this danger. More than this, what makes him a true feminist is his hate for his own nephew Martin Colbert who chases innocent Nancy as pushed by his own wrong wife. When he knows it, he fies himself for taking his birth in the same Colbert's family which has begotten Martin, the culprit.

In Cather's novels, there are some minor women characters who are lost because of their lost character. Whether they belong to the pioneer women's group or not, or whether they are good in some common sense, they also lie in the group of lost ladies. What demoralizes them in their lives is their romance with the unscrupulous boys or their high ambition for the material pursuits or their treacherous behavior towards others. The minor women characters who suffer from their weaknesses are also identified as lost ladies. Hilda Burgoyne (*AB*), an actress from Ireland, is a destroyer of her boyfriend Bertley Alexander's career as an engineer. She is as beautiful and amorous as Helen of Troy. So she attracts Alexander, as Helen does to Paris, and causes his tragic death from the collapse of the bridge.

Marie Shabata (*OP*), the daughter of Bohemian immigrant farmer Albert Tovesky,

falls in love with Frank Shabata, a moody farmer from Bohemia, and immediately elopes with him. But Marie's happiness is always marred by poisonous Frank. In Janeway's words: "Marie is the ultimate charmer, lively, gay, warm and spontaneous. Her runaway marriage to her first love has taken a dark turn and ended by tying her to a man whose only imaginative quality is suspicion."³⁶ Even in the Church, Frank carefully watches at his wife sulking behind her. Consequently, Marie suffers at Frank's hands.

Marie is good and honest, but too sexy like the kitten. In spite of her warm personality, her amorous and seductive nature becomes the cause of her ruin. She knows that her love of Frank has ruined her causing her conjugal life very unhappy. In fact, her good personality is highly praised by Alexandra. Condemning Frank for his low dealing to his wife, Alexandra says: "He is one of those wild fellows. Most Bohemians are good-natured, but Frank thinks we don't appreciate him here, I guess. He's jealous about everything, his farm, and his horse and his pretty wife. Everybody likes her."³⁶ But her weakness is that she loves and marries such a wild, crook Frank in spite of her father's objection to her. She wins her friend Alexandra's sympathy for her troublesome life with her husband. But she falls in love with her obedient brother Emil. When jealous Frank discovers Marie's love-affair with Emil, he kills both of them under the mulberry tree. Though Alexandra tries to avoid possible danger by stopping Emil to marry Marie, she cannot prevent them from the inevitable event that occurs due to their romance. It makes her character contrastive to sexless Alexandra's. That is why she meets her tragic death.

Mrs. Archie (*SL*) is the stubborn wife of kind-hearted Dr. Howard Archie in Moonstone. She always creates problems for her husband in the family. She has neither understanding nature nor the feeling of sacrifice. She always tries to befool her husband, opposes him and kills his interest. She is inspired by her ill-will and tempted to do what her husband tells her not to do. Out of her pleasure, Mrs. Archie uses gasoline, which the doctor has told her not to use. The gasoline is exploded, and the house is caught on fire. She inhales the burning gas of the house, becomes senseless

and dies. She is thus lost from the world.

Lena Lingard (*MA*), the oldest daughter of Mr. Chris Lingard and Mrs. Berthe Lingard, is an immigrant girl from Norway running a dress-shop in Lincoln. Earlier, she is found with her father's cattle at the neighborhood of the Shimerdas in Black Hill. After the loss of her father, she works as a hired girl for Mrs. Thomas, a dress-maker in Black Hawk town. But she is not serious about her work. When she drives her father's cattle to the open pasture to graze, Lena becomes a wandering girl. Even at Mrs. Thomas's home, she enjoys to roam freely with the cattle under the open sky, without tying to her domestic life. So she cannot properly carry out her household works. About her lost nature, McFarland says: "But she is still the same lazy innocently voluptuous Lena, offering a king of opium dream of sensuality, promising endless pleasure, but leading nowhere."³⁶

Unlike Antonia, Lena dislikes village for two reasons - she has to make hard manual out-of-door works in the village, and she finds village not an appropriate place to earn money. She lacks pioneer spirit which Antonia and Alexandra possess. She detests farm works and loves to run only after money. She is in the town as a retirement from the farm. As she has no hope to earn sufficient money in the village, she is in the town to have it. Even at her first meeting to Antonia, she demonstrates her very selfish and money-minded look at her. She says: "I'm through with the farm. There ain't any end to the work on the farm, and always so much trouble happens. I'm going to be a dressmaker.....After I learn to do sewing, I can make money."³⁶ She works in the town only for money, and not for the benefit of the newly built community of the pioneers.

Lena is such a type of woman who tries to take benefits from a person's weakness. When she knows about the failure of Jim's conjugal life and his careless nature, she exploits him playing romances for money. Through her romance, she attracts Nick Svendsen, Mr. Ordinsky and Jim Burden, the male figures in Black Hawk town, turn by turn. But she is a girl without the desire for marriage. She says: "I don't want to marry Nick or any other man. ...I have seen a good deal of married life, and I don't care for

it.”(105) What lowers Lena’s personality is that she empties their purse, but ridicules them refusing to marry.

In spite of her rough behavior to her pioneer neighbors, Lean is affectionate to her mother and her siblings. Being the oldest daughter of Chris Lingard, an unsuccessful farmer with large family, Lean is always found helpful to her mother. She is too conscious about her responsibility to her family. She wants to earn money holding even a low type of job like a hired girl to make financial support to her mother, brothers and sisters. She educates her siblings preventing herself from education. She is found knitting stockings and socks for them. She is more aware about her responsibilities for her mother, but not for other helpless women of the pioneer country.

Among the hired girls, Lean looks most ambitious. Comparing Lena with the four Danish laundry girls of the laundry couple at their laundry in Black Hawk, Jim says: “The four Danish girls lived with the laundry-man and his wife....were not so ambitious as...Lena; but they were kind, simple girls and they were always happy.”(141-142) Lena is not the Antonia of rural Black Hawk but an urban girl copying urban language and urban dress. She shows her shrewd personality through her cunning smile and money-minded nature. Though she tries to exhibit over-smart nature through her speech and dressing, her temptation for money, her temperamental aversion to hard work and her romance with host of boys make her character shallow. As she is the pioneer woman without pioneer spirit, she is nobody except a lost lady.

Mrs. Christiana Harling (*MA*), the wife of Mr. Harling, is one of the Eves in Cather’s novels. She betrays innocent Antonia by driving her from her house. That is why young Antonia falls in the hand of immoral Wick Cutter and villain Larry Donovan who seduces her and leaves her in a limbo.

Mrs. Shimerda (*MA*), Antonia’s mother in Black Hill, also cannot escape from the title of a lost lady. She intends to eliminate her poverty by making child Antonia hard

work on the farm and forcing her to work as a hired girl at the land-owners' houses. Again, she tries to differentiate Antonia, the daughter, from Ambrosch, the son. She never reproaches her Satan-like son Ambrosch though he extremely dominates her innocent daughter Antonia. So she is also the woman of abuses.

Mrs. Cutter (*MA*), the money-minded wife of villain Wick Cutter, is as evil as her husband. She lacks feminist strength to protect her hired girl Antonia from her dog-like husband, In fact, she is a terrifying looking personality with hysteric eyes, giant's height and raw-bound face. She is always formal in manner and an expert in decorating and beautifying things.

Mrs. Cutter is a quarrelsome woman who quarrels with her husband every night at her hell-like abode before she goes to bed. But her obstinate and quarrelsome habit becomes the cause of her tragic death. When the government passes a law for women's property, Mrs. Cutter strongly claims for one-third portion of her husband's property as designed by law. It makes Mr. Cutter so tormented that the thought of his wife's age upsets him. The reason is that his wife is younger than himself. His ill-thinking about his wife's longevity makes him jealous and violent. With his poisonous mind, he buys a pistol. With the shots of his gun, Mr. Cutter first kills his wife in the evening, and then gets himself suicide at night.

Mrs. Moly Bawn Gardner (*MA*), the wife of Mr. Johnnie Gardener, is a woman running a hotel business in Black Hawk. She is popular among her neighbors as a best-dressed woman. But her manners are cold and dark. She talks very little and shows her superior feelings to all. The visitors at her home never find her homely but unfriendly and flattering. If she opens her mouth to talk to them, she either flatters them with showy words or stops her speech for hours lost in thought for something else. They meet her decorated with diamonds and pearls. In the narrator's words:

She seemed indifferent to her possessions, was not half so solicitous about them as her friends were. She was tall, dark, severe, with something Indian-like in the rigid immobility of her face. Her manner was cold, and she talked little. Guests

felt that they were receiving not conferring, a favour when they stayed at her house. (117)

It seems that her husband is to receive and talk to her guests. He also must have been annoyed by her taciturn habit. But he is aware of his wife's cleverness at her business traits.

Enid (*O*) is one of the money-minded women in Cather's novels. She loves Claude Wheeler and marries him. But she never loves him after the marriage. The reason is that he does not have as much resources as Enid intends to have. So she makes tussles with her husband and goes to China leaving him for ever. Depressed Claude Wheeler meets his tragic death in France joining the army of the First World War as deserted by his wife. So Enid, as a husband-hunter, belongs to the group of lost ladies.

Rosamond Peter (*PH*), the wife of Louie Marcellus, is the mercenary daughter of the materialistic mother, Lilian Peter. Her crave for money doubles when she marries Louie Marcellus, an electrical engineer. In the beginning of her life, she loves Tom Outland who wills his money to her. After the death of Tom Outland, she wins this willed-money and becomes rich. After her marriage, Rosamond not only changes her ways of living but also influences her mother to imitate her life style. Similarly Mrs. Crane (*PH*), the wife of Dr. Crane, is also a miserly woman who claims for a share of Tom Outland's money left as a will to Rosamond Marcellus, the daughter of Professor St. Peter.

As Cather has given more importance to her characters' actions than their destiny, the tragedy of these lost ladies is the outcome of their ill-actions rather than that of their ill-fate. The lost ladies who keep themselves active in their evil activities to serve their ill-motives and remain passive in their assigned tasks, cannot escape from their punishments. Sapphira hates her gentle husband Henry, wrongly behaves her feminist daughter Rachel, conspires against the girl of her grip and suffers from the deformity of her foot. Her bad temper spoils her health, and she becomes so serious ill that she cannot move with her leg even in the wheel-chair. As a punishment, she dies of her leg-pain

Similarly Myra's inertia results in mania which provokes crisis to her life. Her internal conflict makes her so violent and revengeful feminist that she continuously revolts against her husband and promises to ruin him. She remains conscious only about her rights to her husband's resources, but not about her duty. She forgets about her part in the love-affair and only blames Oswald for the matter. So her fatal disease malignancy and her suicide are the right punishments that she deserves. Again, Marian's tragedy is also caused by the ill-action of her own. She should not have married Daniel Forrester if she has to be discontented with him for his age-difference. But she presents herself as an activist feminist running after the filthy young boys, revolting against her aged husband and emptying his treasure. Consequently, she loses her husband's property and becomes the subject of people's criticism. Similarly Lucy Gayheart's tragic death is inevitable for her negligence of study and involvement in romances.

All of these lost ladies are not compromising but revolutionary and violently hostile to their husbands. Their only mission to life is to take money from them, by hook or by crook. They need more money because they are ambitious, luxurious and romantic in spirit. They are married, but not friendly to their husbands. They are childless and free, but never occupy any job of their own. When they fail to get as much money as they expect from their husbands, they revolt against them and curse them. To fulfill their over-ambitions on earth, they always remain as activist and revolting as Eve in the Paradise. Eve's fall on earth is a punishment for her temptation to the material world in the Heaven. Similarly Marian, Lilian, Myra and Sapphira are lost from their worlds as punishments for their ill-wills. But their enjoyments in violence are mingled with the dust of earth as impacts of their violent activities. Consequently they are themselves scattered, dissipated, removed and vanished in the mist of their storms of life. So they are the lost ladies or Eves who disappear on earth destroying their husbands' happiness and peace of their minds and

finally facing their own tragic deaths as the result of their evil activities.



Chapter VI

Women Of Multidimensional Personality

Willa Cather's successful women, who are identified with their own unique virtues and feminist outlooks, are the women of multidimensional personality. Generally the pioneer women of the New Counties are endowed with their beauty of heart, high intelligence, simplicity of manner, hard-working habit and high degree of courage, which differentiate them from the other women of the American west. These women come from the multifold horizons of earth and are highly resourceful. They have ingenuity to find out the solution of their problems and keep deep insight into others'. They possess remarkable talent of farm works cum music and acquire skill to mobilize the resources out of the new soil.

The pioneer women are so courageous that neither the dry wind of the prairie can shake them nor any misfortune can bring tears to their eyes. Instead, they take charm out of their sorrows as they know that the beauty of life rests on smiles and tears. Alexandra Bergson (*OP*), Thea Kronborg (*SL*), Antonia Shimerda (*MA*) and Cecile Auclair (*SR*) are so courageous and broad-minded women that they attract the readers through their multidimensional personality. They are too laborious and show skill to convert their New Country soil into golden pavement. In comparison to these women, the male figures look pale and dry. The pioneer males, who are weak-minded persons, feel depression from the hardships of their New Countries and lose their life. Male Carl Linstrum moves to St. Louis not being able to tolerate the sun and showers of his Hanover farm. He vainly changes his profession from farming to painting but fails to earn his bread as a painter. But courageous Alexandra struggles with the same soil and changes its face making it more productive.

Thea, the courageous student of music, shows strong determination to achieve music in spite of her poverty. As she is too much interested to vocal-songs, she joins in the music classes of Madison Bowers in Chicago and pays him high tuition fee even singing songs for the funeral. Furthermore, she finds Bowers' personality very complex as compared to Professor Wunsch and Andor Harsanyi, her former

music teachers:

*He was different from any man with whom she had ever had to do. With her other teachers she felt a personal relation; but with him she did not. Bowers was a cold, bitter, avaricious man, but he knew a great deal about voices. He worked with a voice as if he were in a laboratory, conducting a series of experiments.*³⁶

Still her courage inspires her to move forward with her aim to achieve music. His fans, Mrs. Priest and Mrs. Darcey also try to insult her falsely charging that she has ruined their musical programs in the Orchestra. But Thea promises not to go back without specialization in music. That is why she earns a little more money from Fred Ottenburg's kind help and continuously runs her singing classes under this stern teacher. She tries to refresh her mind from her depression visiting natural places, specializes in music from Germany and becomes the greatest Opera singer of New York.

Antonia, like Thea, is creative and very active. When she reconciles with the Harlings, she starts stitching dresses with the help of Mrs. Steavens, a widow staying at the rented room of Mrs. Harling. About her creative strength in stitching dresses, the narrator narrates: "She used to sit there at that machine by the window pedaling the life out of it- she was so strong- and always singing them queer Bohemian songs, like she was the happiest thing in the world."³⁶ She runs her machine so energetically that she prepares pillow-cases, table-clothes and her customers' dresses at no time. Everything she does so happily and enthusiastically that she brings changes at Shimerdas' economy, even being able to buy silver spoons and forks for their personal use.

The pioneer women are too ingenious to have real knowledge about the village and town life. It is the non-polluted atmosphere of the village and its peoples' purity of hearts that Alexandra, Thea, Antonia and Cecile claim to have seen manifestations of divine power in the village. So they are captivated by its inner beauty. They condemn town for the domination of unscrupulous males. Antonia, who is deadly betrayed by

fortune-hunter urban males like Wick Cutter and Larry Donovan in Black Hawk, feels suffocation even at the memory of town. When she comes back to her Black Hill village farm, she feels as fresh and free as Thea does at the Ottenburg ranch in Arizona. Antonia says: "I belong on the farm. I'm never lonesome here like I used to be in town....and I don't mind work a bit." (221)

Alexandra also takes charm in the rural environment of her Hanover village and highly values it as she can meet there the affable women of pure hearts. Under her study, the urban males are more shrewd and tricky than the rural ones: "The men in town who are buying up other people's land don't try to farm it. They are the men to watch, in a new country."³⁶ So she advises her brothers to be cautious of such urban males. Cecile also feels joy of her heart when she finds herself surrounded by the sea birds and trees on the rock of Quebec. But she feels bitterness to remember how selfish and cunning her cousins, Andrea and Rachel are in Paris, the town. So she crushes down her father's wish to go to Paris and makes Quebec her permanent Home.

In fact, these pioneer women's greater feminist strength has empowered them making very conscious about their responsibilities, saturating with androgynous characteristics, bestowing power to make right judgment of the things or persons, and providing good conscience to think over humanity. As they have good hearts, they are gifted with the feelings of sacrifice for others. Their dealing to their neighbors and other suffering people is purely human. They have power to understand other people's desire and encourage them to move forward. Alexandra heartily understands her father's wish of the land and works accordingly even avoiding her marriage. Cecile treats Jacques Gaux, the forsaken son of a prostitute, as a mother to protect him from his ruin. Thea knows the problems of all miserable women who are left in a limbo as forsaken by their selfish husbands. So she sings songs for them to improve their condition in the American society. Antonia's sacrifice for her children makes them good citizen. Jim praises her sons and daughters for their special qualities in dealing with their guests and managing kitchen works. In fact, all of them are as active and laborious as Antonia herself.

Alexandra, as a great prophet of humanity, takes much favor of her hired girl Signa and gets her marry to Nelse. Offering two cows to the couple for their security as a dowry, Alexandra says: "These two will get on. They will feel safer with these cows in their own stable. ..I'm going to send for an old woman next. As soon as I get the girls' broken in, I marry them off." (170) Alexandra protects her hired man Ivar when Annie, her selfish sister-in-law, condemns him for his unhealthy looking and tries to drive him away. But feminist Alexandra strongly protests her that Ivar has as much right to stay at her house as has Annie.

The pioneer women's conscience generates consciousness in them. So they are very conscious about their future and can examine the persons or things correctly. Alexandra marries Carl only after she makes a long judgment of his career. Then she believes: "...After we are married,...I think we shall be very happy. I have not any fears. I think when friends marry, they are safe. We don't suffer like-those young ones." (230) She has learnt much from the most tragic event that has occurred from immature Marie's love and marriage with crook Frank and Emil's love-affair with her. So she selects mature and romance-free Carl as her husband. Similarly Antonia also marries Anton Cuzak only when she finds him warm-hearted. She says: "I never got down-hearted. Anton's a good man, and I loved my children and always believed they would turn out well."³⁶ She marries Anton only after she knows that he will equally love his step-daughter Martha. She is also quite confident that the children fathered by such kind-hearted person will always be good and gentle.

Thea's consciousness about her 'second-self' makes her a great Wagnerian singer. It is because of her own conscience that wakes her up for music and makes her an artist – a woman different from her mother and sisters working in the kitchen. About Thea's presentation of her song, the novelist narrates: "It was delight to see her so radiant and responsive again. She had kept her promise about looking her best...Even Dr. Archie felt, each time he looked at her, a fresh consciousness."³⁶ Her behavior towards Dr. Archie and Ray Kennedy shows that she is not an unconscious young girl of twenty.

Her close friendship with aged Dr. Archie, and not with young romantic males, is also directed by her own moral ethics.

The pioneer women inherit the novelist's androgynous characteristics, which they exhibit through their dresses and boyish manners. As androgynous Cather presents herself exactly like a boy in her shot-cut hair and military cap with a view to overthrow the lady-killers, her fictional women also imitate her androgynal traits to overcome the various difficulties of their new land. But the pioneer women favor men's dresses mostly to get physical strength at the time of their hard manual works and overcome the bitterness of the weather and other obstacles. Marie appeals Alexandra to wear her gent-coat to protect herself from the cold: "Better put on your coat, Alexandra. It's cold up there,"³⁶ Alexandra shows androgynous character physically and mentally. When she works on the farm, "she wore a man's long ulster and a round plush cap, tied down with a thick veil." (5) She uses partly of man's clothes and partly of woman's while at work. But the average pioneer women in favorable atmosphere generally appear in ladies' costumes.

Principally, a woman is expected to be tender-hearted, calm, gentle, less energetic and disinterested to out-of-door works, while a man is supposed to be strong enough to carry out manual labor and more courageous and aggressive in nature. But Cather's men and women, generally from the pioneer countries, display their opposite characteristics -- men being weak, coward and escapist from the physical works and women being the embodiment of creativity, courage and strength to out-of-door works. The word 'androgyny', which derives from the French word 'androgynie', means 'a being of both sexes', i.e., a person's combined male and female characteristics. 'Androgynous' is the adjective of androgyny. In Heilbrun's words: "Androgyny suggests a spirit of reconciliation between the sexes...a full experience open to individuals who may, as a woman, be aggressive as man, tender."³⁶ But Cather's pioneer women's androgyny cannot be judged through their aggressive nature as Heilbrun imagines, but through their boldness and greater strength of creative power than that of those males.

Alexandra's innovation to propound a new 'Land Project' justifies her male characteristics and farsightedness to develop her farm as well as her Real Estate business. Her strong scheme to the land development improves her economy. Still she exhibits her womanly love and tenderness to Oscar and Lou when they display their displeasure at her Land Plan through their unhappy looks. As a kind sister, she says to them: "Don't do anything you don't want to do...I won't say any more about it, if you'd rather not. What makes you so discouraged?I don't want you to have to grub for every dollar."³⁶ But innovative Alexandra has skill to convince them. About her androgynous character, Lee says :

*Alexandra (who like all Cather's main character first appears being admiringly watched, like the heroine of the play) is at once androgynized. She is a young soldier and a fierce Amazon, a striding hero and a kind sister, wearing a man's coat and a woman's veil, with a severe look and a shining hair.*³⁶

Alexandra's dynamic personality makes her superior to men. She, a woman, comes to be a man through her manly traits. But Mr. Bergson, a male, happens to be a woman possessing female traits. He himself realizes his own weakness of lacking manly capacity to manage his farm and speaks highly of his manly daughter's ability to run agricultural activities. That is why he awards her with his own leadership to run his farm works and control his coward 'female' sons. If Mr. Bergson has been a man of creativity like that of his daughter, he should not meet his untimely death for fear of the dry land of Hanover.

Marie Shabata, Alexandra's friend, also possesses androgynous trait: "In the cart sat a young woman (Marie) who wore driving gauntlets and a wide shade hat, trimmed with red poppies"³⁶ Like a man, she moves her hat round her head with the movement of the wind. Her horse riding also witnesses her male character. But as a woman, she takes a shawl out of her trunk to cover herself and speaks so soft that Alexandra always praises her for it. Marie is also clever at fortune-telling like that of a male astrologer. But as a feminist, she uses her astrology to protect the girls from the corrupt males. Once she plays a trick at Brunet, an old miser in Hanover, and stops him from his ill-will cleverly foretelling that he will marry a sixteen year old girl and lose his whole resources as well as his prestige. Though Marie shows such manly skill and boldness at

her distress, her romance with Frank and Emil makes her a weak woman.

Antonia is also characterized by her androgynous traits. She works on the farm as energetically as a man does. She either digs her brother's cornfield or threshes her neighbors' wheat. She says to Jim: "Oh, better I like to work out-of-doors than in a house! I not care that your grand-mother say it makes me like a man. I like to be like a man."³⁶ As a strong man, she digs each turf on Mrs. Harling's kitchen garden, with perspiration on her brow and swelling muscles on her legs, to grow vegetables. In the mean time, she also exhibits womanly characteristic, such as, affection, generosity, creativity and kindness, which recognize her as a tender-hearted woman. So she bitterly weeps and laments at her father's death and hesitates to take part at his funeral procession, in spite of her mother's insistence to her. As a woman, she sometimes lets her hair fly in the air, throwing her sunbonnet that Jim's grand-mother has given to her.

Mrs. Shimerda also shows her androgynal feminist face to Mrs. Burden and quarrels with her when she finds her rich with food-stuffs and herself extremely poor and hungry. Frowning at her, she claims that she must have rights to share with Mrs. Burden's food-grains and utensils for cooking food-items. Anton Cuzak, Antonia's husband, also portrays his androgynous features as he, like a woman, intends to fly from the farm for fear of the hot sun and dry weather. But his manly wife Antonia stops him with her confidence to the soil and makes him a 'settled man', constructing a grand house for him and plotting a big farm of wheat and paddy on Black Hill.

Thea's androgyny makes her very strong to stand even at her most unfavorable situation in Chicago and helps her to achieve the goals of her life. Neither her cruel teacher's demonic behavior shrinks her artistic enthusiasm nor her poverty stops her to achieve it. She, born in non-privileged class but gifted with music, completes her study as she, being an androgynous woman, can face with many obstacles in Chicago.

Frances Harling, Mrs. Harling's oldest daughter, also carries out some androgynous qualities possessing the characteristics of both men and woman. She shows so strong business ability in Black Hawk town that her father cannot compete with her.

Describing about her androgynous character, Jim Burden says:

Frances was dark like her father, and quite as tall. In winter she wore a seal skin coat and a cap. She and Mr. Harling used to walk home together in the evening, talking about grain-cars and cattle, like two men Frances Harling was as good as a judge of credits as any banker in country. Two or three men who had tried to take advantage of her in a deal acquired celebrity by their defeat. She knew every farmer for miles about: how much land he had under cultivation, how many cattle he was feeding, what his liabilities were. Her interest in these people was more than a business interest. She carried them all in her mind as if they were characters in a book or a play. (97-98)

Again, Charley, her brother, though a boy in his physical feature, portrays a female character, being too lazy and non-productive at all. He runs after his sister's income and eats the food of his choices that he orders Antonia to cook for himself. His father buys him the guns or tools or the things of his choices with the money his daughter earns for him. Even at his grown-up age, Charley shows female traits, being as sedentary, inactive and luxurious as Mrs. Forrester, the heroine of *A Lost Lady*, and as expensive and non-productive as Myra Henshawe in *My Mortal Enemy*. Again, Sally, Mrs. Harling's youngest daughter, shows rough noisy nature like a boy and possesses keen interest in boys' sports. She is as strong as a boy and takes part in a race round Black Hawk town in a minute. In her appearance and dress, she is as ugly as a wild man with her yellow short hair, suntan skin, big moving ears and quick shot-eyes. But she never wears a hat like a boy. She also does not hesitate to take part in the ball dance with the boys.

Lena Lingard, a demure and pretty girl, appears before Jim with her androgynous traits. She looks like a glittering toy in her suit, jacket and blouse inside the shirt. In fact, she presents herself just like a picture of an urban dancing boy in her little blue hat with a beautiful shawl drawn up to her shoulder and a pocket book in her hand. By appearance and dress, she pretends to be a man, but actually she is too coward. She

lacks pioneer spirit when she says: "I never did like out-of-door work....I don't think a hotel is a good place for a girl." (105) But like a man, she stitches suits and pants and walks freely along Lincoln Street to run her dress-making business. As a woman, she covers her face with a veil, enters a candy store to enjoy sweets and plays with her pet dog. She perfectly maintains her androgynous character as Jim notices: "Sometimes after my morning classes were over, I used to encounter Lena downtown, in her velvet suit and a little black hat, with a veil tied smoothly over her face, looking as fresh as the spring morning." (179)

Marian Forrester, a pioneer woman not by spirit but by migration, also signals some androgynous traits as she loves to be in man's costume:

*She (Mrs. Forrester) stood beside his desk in her long seal skin coat and cap, a crimson scarf showing above the collar, a little brown veil with spots tied over her eyes. The veil did not, in the least, obscure those beautiful eyes, dark and full of light, set under a low white forehead and arching eyebrows.*³⁶

Though Mrs. Forrester lacks woman's heart and exploits her gentle husband Daniel Forrester, physically she is a pioneer woman by her migration from California to Moonstone. But she prefers to wear the male dress like seal skin coat and a cap to hide her corrupt nature.

*Rachel's androgyny can be judged through her feminist and feminine traits. As a feminist, she combats with her mother for her conspiracy against the slave girl. Her protection of wretched Nancy is definitely her feminist approach. But as a feminine, Rachel feels too sorry for hurting her sick mother Sapphira snatching away Nancy, her property from her hand. Her feminine feelings makes her more conscious about her mother's prestige and her poor health. With tears in her eyes, Rachel regrets: "I hate to mortify her. May be I ought to have a thought about how much she suffers and her poor feet.... May be I ought to have thought and waited."*³⁶ *In spite of such feminine nature, she is a bold feminist with her strong determination to her life. So she willingly helps the sufferers and downtrodden women.*

The pioneer women are highly gifted with the ability of music and dancing.

Alexandra's deep love of music in her heart has been expressed through her dialogues with her friends and relatives. She says to Milly:

I'll tell you when I first thought I would like to give you a piano, Milly, and that was when you learned that book of old Swedish songs that your grandfather used to sing. He had a sweet tenor voice, and when he was a young man he loved to sing. I can remember hearing him singing with the sailors down in the ship-yard, when I was no big than Stella here.³⁶

She praises her deceased father taking him as a man of genius in singing. So she wishes that the coming generations of her family also should follow her father's trend of music in the days to come.

Both major and minor women characters exhibit similar taste for music and great devotion to take it up. Marie, the minor character of *O Pioneers!*, who comes from similar singing culture of Bohemia, possesses keen interest in dancing. In spite of her longing for it, she cannot openly take part in the dances for fear of her cranky husband Frank. She says to Emil: "Frank is cranky at me.....and I'm terribly afraid he won't take me to the dance in the evening.... If once I get Frank to the supper, I'll see that I stay for the dance...Emil, you mustn't dance with me but once or twice." (62)

At Mrs. Harling's house, there is no woman who might have not been interested to music or dance. Jim says:

The Harling's house was never quiet. Mrs. Harling and Nina and Antonia made as much noise as a houseful of children, and there was usually somebody at the piano. Julia was the only one who was held down to regular hours of practicing, but they all played. When Frances came home at noon, she played until dinner was ready. When Sally got back from school, she....drummed melodies that Negro minstrel troupes brought to town. Even Nina played the Swedish Wedding March.³⁶

Mrs. Christina Harling's love of music arises from the inspiration of her piano school-teacher in Norway. In Black Hawk, she is not only being fixed at her piano but also wants to see her daughters, Frances,

Julia, Sally and Nina perfect in music. Even in her kitchen, her children give menu to Antonia, the cook, with musical words:

“I won’t have none of your weevily wheat, and I won’t have none of your barley. But I’ll take a measure of fine wheat flour, to make a cake for Charley.” (103)

The Harling girls choose rhyming words ‘barley’ and ‘Charley’ to make their speech more musical and tease Antonia for preparing wheat-cake only for Charley, the male. All the members of the Harling family, including their hired girl Antonia, are dedicated to music, except Mr. Harling. They always make their room noisy with their drums and pianos. About the Harling family’s dedication to music and dance, Jim says:

Frances taught us to dance that winter, and....that Antonia would make the best dance among us. On Saturdays nights, Mrs. Harling used to play the old operas for us- ‘Martha, Narma, ‘Rigoletto’- telling us the story while she played. Every Saturday night was like a party. The parlour.... and the dining were warm and brightly lighted , with comfortable chairs and sofas...(113)

Mrs. Gardner, a hotel business woman in Black Hawk, is also found with her piano. She, as an audience, visits Omaha and even England to enjoy the play *A Winter’s Tale*. It is not only Mrs. Gardner who has deep love of music and drama in her heart, it is also her husband Mr. Johnnie Gardner who “could rise from the grave if he heard someone’s sweet musical voice to the piano over his cemetery.” (118)

All of the hired girls in Black Hawk kitchens create whimsical sense of humor through music while cooking food and cleaning utensils. Mrs. Thomas’s hired girl Lena Lingard, Mrs. Harling’s Antonia Shimerda, Mrs. Gardner’s Tiny Soderball, Mr. Cutter’s Mary Svoboda are always found singing in the kitchen rooms. In spite of their owners’ objection to night dances, Antonia, Tiny and Lena take part on Saturday nights, Vannis’ Tent and Owl Club dances not caring about their jobs. The notable event at Antonia’s life is that her deep longing for music and dance becomes the cause of her trouble. Though Mrs. Harling gladly accepts Antonia as a singer even singing

together with her, she cruelly dismisses her, and wolf-like Wick Cutter chases her. But Anson Kirkpatrick, Marshal Field's man-pianist in Black Hawk, secretly approaches to the Harlings' kitchen and pulls Antonia by her elbows, asking her to dance with men. The hired girls, alarmed for fear of Antonia's land-lady, try to escape from his grip. Like Wordsworth's solitary reaper's melodious song, the sweet singing voices of the hired girls can be heard even from the kitchen and garden rows. The solitary reaper's song sung while reaping and binding the harvest on the farm attracts William Wordsworth, the poet. Showing great love of the theatrical art in Black Hawk, Lena Lingard says: "I'd be willing to work like a slave,....to live in a place where there are theaters." (172)

Thea Kronborg reserves the foremost position in the field of art with her utmost devotion to music. She starts her artistic career with a piano from Moonstone, Colorado, as a student of Professor Herr Wunsch who teaches her piano lessons and discovers her talent in piano. Though simple by birth, she possesses high caliber of music. Even at her childhood, she possesses double lives - her life from the biological birth as the oldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Kronborgs amidst poverty, and her artistic life, 'her second-self', possessing the desire for vocal-song and her hidden potentiality for it. But Andor Harsanyi, her piano teacher in Chicago, discovers it and advises Thea to keep it up by herself: "Every artist makes himself born. It is very much harder than the other time, and longer....That you must bring into the world yourself."³⁶ He suggests her to explore the secret of art hidden within herself and bring it out from her continual efforts. Then she enters into its soul to explore its secret avoiding everything else in her life. In the words of Rosowski:

But though she has sacrificed her personal life, Thea's artistic life is.... happy, free and real. She realizes her potentiality.....and she enters the kingdom of art.....like Michaelangelo's God giving life,.....cutting through common places about her performance.³⁶

Thea's childhood emerges from Moonstone, Colorado, as an unburned candle in

Kronborgs' darkroom, where she is found by Dr. Archie as a bundle of rags thrown at a corner of the street. When Dr. Archie makes Thea's diagnosis of pneumonia, he frowns at her father Peter Kronborg for fathering seven children amidst poverty and neglecting sick Thea: "The idea ! to be such an ass at his age about the seventh! And to feel no responsibility about the little girl. Silly old goat...But a nice little girl like that - she's worth the whole litter."³⁶ Thea, the highly reputed singer, comes from such a poverty stricken family of the Krongborgs. When he looks at her exercise book on piano by her side, childless Dr. Archie sees a light of flower in her brain and promises to bloom her art, anyway.

Thea becomes impersonal to her private life to achieve 'wholeness' in music for her life. In Harsanyi's words: "The life in there was rooted deep. She was going to have a few things before she died." (197) As a talented girl, she knows that her piano may serve her only as a wage-earner, while her vocal-song lessons can develop her 'sense of wholeness' providing wider knowledge of music for her life. So she determines to deny her private life for her 'second-self' and explores all the possibilities of music working hard to achieve it wholly. During her vacation, she makes additional research works on songs from the various ethnic groups at her neighborhood in Moonstone. She visits her neighbors especially to Spanish Johnny to learn Spanish song words and meets Mexican Mrs. Tellamantez and other pioneer women to pass on the knowledge of Mexican dances. She highly admires the Mexican Waltz song sung by the dancers' own voices and takes keen interest to listen to Mexicans' tenor, soprano and baritone. So Rosowski rightly says: "Thea Kronborg has become such an artist- pure energy or passion, so emptied of a personal self that she can take into herself others' desires and convert them into song."³⁶

The pioneer women's feminist strength makes them muscular to struggle against the male-supremacy and protect themselves from the male-barbarism in the society. It helps them to win success in the long run. Alexandra can be strongly dominated by her notorious brothers if she has lacked feminist strength to resist against them. Though sincere Carl is driven away from Alexandra, it is her feminist strength that unites her

with him. Though Oscar and Lou try to dominate Alexandra at the issue of her resources, they are not as powerful as Ambrosch to dominate their sister because Alexandra is empowered with the leadership of the family. Ambrosch's domination over child Antonia, after her father's death, is for her helplessness. Antonia is so much exploited by him that he seizes even her salary and additional pocket money earned by her at her land-owners' houses. But when she blooms with her good fortunes exchanging her tears into smiles, Ambrosch changes his behavior and visits her home several times.

Mr. Harling's domination over his daughters and his exploitation to his wife in the mid-west America is not less stern than that of an Eastern father or husband to his daughter or wife. In the Asian countries, a father or a husband is said to be the most dominating person in the family. The Harling girls are so much dominated by their father Mr. Harling that they have to remain silent stopping their breath and hiding their pianos and drums at the corner of their rooms when he enters the gate. Mrs. Christina Harling can amuse with her kids, Julia, Frances, Charley, Sally, Nina and other jolly neighboring pioneer women by singing with her piano and dancing in the parlor when Mr. Harling is out. In the narrator's words:

Mr. Harling not only demanded a quiet house, he demanded all his wife's attention. He used to take her away to their room in the west all, and talk over his business with her all evening. Mr. Harling had a desk in his bedroom and his own easy chair by the window, in which no one else ever sat....Mr. Harling paid no heed to anyone else if he was there. Before he went to bed, she always got him a lunch of smoked salmon or anchovies and beer. He kept an alcohol lamp in his room, and a French coffeepot, and his wife made coffee for him at any hour of the night he happened to want it.³⁶

Again, Frank's domination over his gentle wife Marie in the pioneer community is three times stronger than an Asian husband does to his wife. So wretched Marie can never enjoy her conjugal life with her fraudulent husband. She shows her feminist look

at him switching over her friendship with another male Emil before his eyes. Similarly Enid, not being happy with her husband Claude Wheeler, moves to China leaving him for ever. Again, Mahailey, the Wheelers' hired woman, cannot enjoy her life so much because she always finds Claude Wheeler stern and taciturn at his home in Webster County, Nebraska. Though she prepares his lunch and dinner very carefully, he cannot take any good taste out of her preparation. Antonia is extremely exploited by Charley Harling, the pampered son of Mr. and Mrs. Harling, who wildly orders her to prepare new dishes every day.

Antonia always looks fresh and vigorous in spite of the male domination over her. She never loses her spirit though she loses her teeth being untimely aged due to the male domination. Not only the barbarous males like Ambrosch and Mr. Cutter exploit her labor, but even her husband Anton escapes from the farm works leaving heavy load of works on Antonia's shoulder. So she looks relatively older than her similar aged husband and her childhood friend Jim Burden. Still she makes further efforts for the development of her children's future career. Reflecting about the male exploitation over women, she says to Jim:

You've kept so young, yourself. But it's easier for a man. I can't see how my Anton looks any older than the day I married him. His teeth have kept so nice. I have not got many left. But I feel just as young as I used to, and I can do as much work. (216)

She changes her fortune being prosperous from her hard work, but she is as warm-hearted, friendly and reliable as before, without any change in her personality and behavior. When Jim meets her after the interval of twenty years, he finds her as strong, sturdy, loyal and dependable as earlier.

In spite of the male domination over women, all major and minor women characters in the novels display their more constructive power than that of men. Lilian (*PH*) constructs a New House what her husband fails to do. She also cannot fully enjoy her conjugal life with her obstinate, bookish husband St. Peter whose only approach to life

is to acquire knowledge through reading his books, and nothing else. He has no understanding of his wife's wishes and aspirations. A good housewife always seeks a good house, and an understanding husband fulfills her requirements. But St. Peter prefers to live in his rented Old House denying his wife's company in the New House. He may create heavenly atmosphere for himself and for his family if he has accepted his wife's desire and lived together with her. Lucy Gayheart can be a successful singer like Thea and never meet her tragic death if banker Harry Gordon and unimpressive musician Clement Sebastian are not to follow her wearing the 'mask of love' in Chicago. So the exploitation of women-hunting male-figures is the main cause of women's painful life in the New Country. In fact, men are the hunters, and the women are hunted. So the hunted women like Marie and Antonia can never be happy at the company of their hunter-males like Frank and Larry.

The domination of Euclide Auclair makes Cecile a feminist. In Quebec, he demands more devotional care from his motherless daughter. Wherever he goes, his daughter is there. On one hand, he wants his daughter to be in the kitchen to prepare best food items for himself; and on the other hand, he demands special attention from her to his apothecary shop. When she appeals him not to force her to go to France leaving lonely boy Jacques in Quebec, he thunders at her: "...I have the Count's perplexities and my own, - I can not arrange a future for your little protégé."³⁶ Cecile can be separated from helpless Jacques Gaux if she has not launched feminist protest against her father. She claims that she has not done anything for him out of her devotion but for her pleasure.

Mr. Cutter's betrayal to his wife Mrs. Cutter makes her an activist. Making a plan to rape Antonia at his home in Black Hawk in his wife's absence, Mr. Cutter takes his wife to Omaha. On the third day, he leaves Omaha with his wife for his home, but pretends to stay overnight for his business and asks his wife to go home alone by Black Hawk train. When he arrives at Waymore Junction, he buys a ticket for her, makes her seat in the train, shows ticket to the conductor and slips it into her bag. By midnight, Mrs. Cutter discovers that she is making a journey to Kansas City, and not to Black Hawk. When she comes back to her home catching the fast Black Hawk train from

Kansas City, she knows “...that her husband had played this trick to get back to Black Hawk without her”³⁶ to carry out his plan to seduce Antonia. Mr. Cutter, the villain, wants not only to betray his wife but also takes pleasure in playing such tricks to any young woman in the town. So the novelist rightly uses the word ‘devil’ to demoralize Mr. Cutter for his devilish character. Finally, cruel Mr. Cutter kills Mrs. Cutter charging her as an extravagant woman in the use of money.

Thea’s song comprises of male domination over female artists, miserable women’s pathetic life stories, Dr. Archie’s affection, Ray Kennedy’s dream and Tillie Kronborg’s longing to see her a greatest singer, Fred Ottenburg’s support and Bowers’ cynicism. When Thea works as an accompanist in the Studio to solve her economic problem, she is attacked not only by Madison Bowers but also by his fans, Mrs. Priest and Miss Darcey. These Mexican pioneer women in Chicago are dull in singing but enter into the kingdom of art only for their professions. When the Chicago Press vehemently attacks them for their artless concerts and praises Bowers’ Studio, these artless ladies sharply criticize Thea and annoy her:

*The glowing press notices admiring comments that floated about Bower’s studio, caused Thea bitter unhappiness. It was not the torment of personal jealousy. She had never thought of herself even a possible rival of Miss Darcey. She was poor music student.*³⁶

Thea’s feminist spirit grows three times stronger when Bowers makes wrong judgment of her in the issue. As instigated by these ladies, he takes her wholly responsible for the matter and roughly tells her that he is not willing to work with a girl like her. Feminine Thea prepares her mind to quit off the Bowers’ Studio, but feminist Thea seeks her right to work in the Studio and strongly clarifies him about the matter. But the irony of her fate is that both of these ladies are warmly appointed by Madison Bowers, the boss of the Studio, as employees for his Studio to run its further programs. In such circumstances, Thea, like a modern feminist, feels a need to advocate for women to rank them at par with men. So she

starts to sing song for the miserable women as feminist Fred Ottenburg, the son of Brewery Factory owners, Mrs. Catarina Frust and Otto Ottenburg from St. Louis. He helps her including her at his own singing Club and making her contacts with the other Studios in Chicago. Thea sings for Mrs. Nathanmeyer, the music programmer in Chicago, who pays her fifty dollars per program. When she sings songs about the pathetic story of the male dominated women, it gives utmost satisfaction to her ever before.

Again, the Chicago music teacher's domination over Thea can also be compared to Eton College teachers' domination over William Wordsworth. Thea fails to contemplate on music and achieves nothing at Bowers' presence as William Wordsworth fails to run his study at his stern teachers' presence at Eton. But she achieves wisdom when she roams as freely as Wordsworth on the lap of nature. Her spirit leaps up to the beautiful roses of the Kohlers' garden, which gives clue idea to her song. Comparing Thea's current development of her voice with that of her Chicago past, Fred Ottenburg says:

You were too timid. Your whole tone was too low...You were fumbling and awkward. Since then you've come into your personality....You were a sullen little drudge eight months agoAnyhow, you couldn't look as you do now....You were clumsy. And whatever you do now, you do splendidly....You've let yourself be beautiful. (317-18)

Thea's refreshment on the lap of peaceful Navajo-forest in Arizona can be compared to William Wordsworth's. He regains his lost spirit when he visits the lakes, mountains and forests of England. The hallucination that he perceives from the memory of the bloody scene of the French Revolution is swept away, and the peace of his mind is regained from such visits in the natural places. Similarly Thea inhales her wounds hurt by Madison Bowers and his two ladies by presenting herself in the pure environment of Navajo Reservation, Panther Canon, Cliff-dwellers and Indian water-trails to the stream, the natural resources of Arizona. Still she cannot feel as fresh as

Wordsworth because the question of her specialization in music is still in her mind. Such consciousness leads her to the memory of her childhood, and her mind flies to Kohlers' garden and their pigeons in Moonstone. When she starts to sing over these things, she finds it easily:

Music had never before come to her in that sensuous form. It had always been a thing of struggle with, had always brought anxiety and exaltation and chagrin – never content and indolence....The roses she used to see in the florists' shops in Chicago were merely roses. But when she thought of the moonflowers that grew over Mrs. Tellamantez's door....,the grape leaves and the mint bed in Mrs. Kohler's garden, which she would never lose. These recollections were a part of her mind and personalities. (269-70)

In Chicago, she is pleased with Andor Harsanyi's personality, but not with his piano. Again, she loses everything when she presents herself as a student of suppressive music teacher Madison Bowers. Her freedom in Arizona opens her heart to contemplate over these persons and things, which stimulate her to sing successfully on them.

Like Wordsworth, Thea sees mystery in the things of nature. She gets a new meaning of 'song' when she takes a bath in the Panther Canyon beyond the cottonwood in Arizona. When she thinks over the history of the Canon, she takes 'stream' as a drama of life of the 'Panther Canyon', the pool, played long-ago. Then she substitutes the drama of 'pool' to the drama of 'song' in connection to an artist's life. After her deep meditation of the stream-water, like Wordsworth's contemplation of the spring of the Dove, Thea discovers the reality about the song: "In singing, one made a vessel of one's throat and nostrils and held it on one's breath, caught the stream in a scale of natural intervals." (273) To Thea, this is the life of the song - a drama played in the vessel of a singer's throat and nostrils through the blow of breath he inhales. She realizes that she has achieved perfection in her song as she herself feels her voice more interesting than ever before. Musical phrases come to her as naturally as leaves to a tree. Nature not only gives her spirit to the presentation of her song with action but also gives her new idea about the specialization of her vocal-music course in Germany.

Thea intends to maintain her entity by identifying herself as a feminist artist. Though she needs money to go to Germany for the specialization of music, she does

not like to take an obligation of a young man like Fred Ottenburg by borrowing money from him That is why she seeks cash-loan from Dr. Archie, her god-father, avoiding Fred's offer. She says:

Fred, I should have a different feeling about it if I went on your money. In a way I shall feel freer on Dr. Archie's, and in another way I shall feel more bound. I shall try even harder.....He is almost like my father.....I know you're generous.....but this will be the best way. (315-16)

When Thea presents herself as a conscious Opera Singer in New York, she becomes people's admiration for her successful presentation of her national and international musical programs after the completion of her study in Germany. It provides her an opportunity to earn her name and fame as well money. Dr. Archie also visits New York and excitedly listens to her song. But being a male audience, he feels himself inferior to Thea as he sees musical power only in women, and not in men: "I want to hear her; but I'm afraid it will be rather wasted on me. I'm no judge of music....I don't suppose her voice will sound natural to me. Probably I wouldn't know it." (347) Finally Thea identifies herself as a singer of Moonstone by selecting her deceased father's room for her music room. She repairs it very carefully for the suitability of her musical purpose and presents all of her further programs here.

But all of Thea's supporters are feminist males who readily rescue her from her shocks and depression. When Mrs. Johnson disgraces Thea at the question of her daughter Grace, Ray Kennedy shares with her tears, and when Ray Kennedy is killed from the railroad accident, Dr. Archie is in the front-line to protect her from her shock. In Chicago, she meets kind Andor Harsanyi, who takes the responsibility of her study. He sends her to Madison Bowers, when he thinks that she is fit for the throat-music, and not for his piano. Again, Fred Ottenburg, the rich Brewery industrialist from St. Louis, appears before her to soak her tears. He makes her green bringing her to his Ottenburg ranch, a beautiful natural place with the wood and green trees in Arizona and presenting her in free atmosphere. In this sense, Fred plays the role of kind Dorothy,

Wordsworth's sister, who takes her depressed brother Wordsworth to the springs of Dove, lakes and mountains of England to eliminate the bloody scene of French Revolution from his mind. So Doris Grumbach makes a joke out of her male-friends and says that Thea is:

*....A glamorous princess whose career is furthered by Dr. Howard Archie, professor Fritz (mistaken of 'Herr') Wunsch, roughneck railroad brakeman Ray Kennedy and Andor Harsanyi, her Chicago music teacher- four fairy princes or, perhaps better, four chivalric knights who serve the enchanted lady.*³⁶

But Thea can never be a 'glamorous princess' as she comes from the poorest Kronborgs' family and starts her career as a home-tuition piano-teacher at twelve to earn wages for her crowded family. Grumbach might have used this phrase to hint at Thea's luck for winning support from so many males to reach her goals.

Thea is the feminist artist, and her voice is the feminist's voice. She sings *Elsa*, the pathetic song of wretched Elsa, who is deserted by her rascal husband. But Elsa is inspired by her own courage to start a new life of an abbess, instead of getting suicide. So Thea's '*Elsa*' speaks of all wretched women of the world and encourages them to stand at their distress. After Thea's presentation of 'Elsa', one of her audiences in New York speaks, with tears in eyes, about Elsa's life-problems and expresses his impression in these words: "She becomes an abbess, that girl, after Lohengrin leaves her. She's made to live with ideas and enthusiasms, not with husband.....she left me with the distinct impression that she was just beginning."³⁶

There is a universal tone in Thea's song, which tells the pathetic story of all miserable women of the world. She weaves her neighboring women's stories of their hard-lives and struggles into her songs. What raises Thea's personality is her understanding of other women's nature and desire, which she converts into her song as perfectly as her creator. Cather who sees creative power only in the women of Red Cloud wonders why God has bestowed such power only in women, and not in men. Similarly Thea also finds power of music merely in the women of Moonstone as she

says that the singer is only a woman, and not man. So she criticizes male singer Fred Ottenburg when he joins his voice to hers and disturbs her audiences through his dull sound. If Alexandra is the genius of Hanover for her creative power to the soil, Thea is the genius of Moonstone for her creative voice. In short, Thea is a woman artist, and her voice is women's voice. In her song, there is a natural tone and natural development of the ideas. Though 'Elsa' is based on the legendary, Thea gives full originality to the idea of her song with the originality of tune, which succeeds to draw the attention of her audiences. Admiring the originality of Thea's voice, Fred Ottenburg says:

There's the voice itself, so beautiful and individual, and then there's something else; the thing in it which responds to every shade of thought and feeling, spontaneously, almost unconsciously. That colour has to be born in a singer, it can't be acquired; lots of beautiful voices haven't a vestige of it. It's almost like another gift- the rarest of all. The voice simply is the mind and is the heart. It can't go wrong in interpretation, because it has in it the thing that makes all interpretation. (365)

Thea's voice is so sonorous and perfect that it suits to the scene of the song and touches the hearts of the audiences. Her skill goes on simplifying a character, along with the idea of her song, which is consistent to her tune. As a greatest artist, she is endowed with the original notion to her song. She further endeavors to naturalize her tune to the idea of the song as she has much enthusiasm for vocal-song. Next to it, her great devotion to it makes her a perfect singer. At her forty^s, she always finds her apartment in New York crowded with her audiences, and looks busy with her piano, drum and other musical instruments at her paternal home in Moonstone. She welcomes her old friends, Dr. Archie and Fred Ottenburg, with the piano in her hand. When she serves them tea in her music-room, the doctor remarks how animating and independent Thea has been in both of her manner and musical performance.

Thea is also conscious about the limitations to art and artist's life. She looks disappointed to herself if she fails to carry out her musical performances satisfactorily.

But she makes further practices by several rehearsals for her next programs, instead of losing her courage. So the rhythmic sound poured out of her beautiful heart is always beautiful and lyrical. Pouring out her long-existed feelings about art and its limitations, she says that she has to face unhealthy atmosphere even in the field of art. She is critical even to her New York audiences for the differences in their choices and evaluations of the songs. If one of her audiences perceives her song in one sense, the other takes it on the other way and shows his resentment at her performance. Expressing her difficulties in her musical life, Thea says: “In New York everything is impersonal. Your audience never knows its mind, and its mind is never twice the same.” (374)

Another difficulty she meets during her artistic life is the male-domination over women artists. The males, either singers or audiences, judge women’s song from the male’s point of view. She finds women singers more criticized by the males. When Necker, the successful woman singer in New York, sings ‘*Elizabeth*’, the male audiences huddle up and make noises calling her a ‘poor vocalist’. About the complexity of an artist woman’s life, Thea says to Dr. Archie:

If you love the good thing vitally, .. you must hate the cheap thing just as hardYou see, voices are accidental things. You find plenty of good voices in common women, with common minds and common hearts....You can’t try to do things right and not despise the people who do them wrong. How can I be indifferent? If that doesn’t matter, then nothing matters. (394-95)

Thea further complains about the studio proprietor’s discriminating attitude to his selection of the singers. A woman singer is not free to sing the song that she wants to sing. She must sing what the proprietor asks her to sing. So Thea wittily says: “The old singers are too old, and the new ones are too new. They might as well risk me as anybody. So I’m asking good terms. The next five or six years are going to be my best.” (398) So she wittily says that a singer should neither be too old nor too young, but always should bloom in youth.

Even within these limitations, feminist Thea is inspired to go on with her musical voices singing the songs of the women and for the women. But she gets inspiration from her feminist husband Fred Ottenburg, whom she marries at forty-six. Besides sharing with her household works, he creates musical atmosphere for her either by joining his voice to hers or by arranging her next program.

Art has no boundary and artist has no nation. So Thea, as an artist, is a cosmopolitan personality. Dr. Archie rightly uses the word ‘cosmopolitan’ to characterize Thea’s international personality: “She was born a cosmopolitan, and I expect she learned a good deal from Johnny when she used to run away.” (329) She achieves grand success in the field of art and builds up her cosmopolitan career from the inspiration of her neighbors, German Kohlers, Spanish Johnny, Dr. Archie and lots of other friends. As a cosmopolitan personality, Thea belongs not only to her own country but also to the world. In short, she is a world-citizen and always remains busy with her national and international musical programs that take place in America and other parts of the world. As an artist, she makes herself born by her own efforts to music, and through her melodious voice, she contributes to the whole cosmos. If Michael Angelo of Italy, Lata Mangeskar of India and Michael Jackson of America have rights to belong to the world, why can’t Thea Kronborg of Moonstone be a cosmopolitan personality?

Thea is also a charismatic figure because she has a talent of music as gifted by God. Though she makes herself a successful singer from her great devotion to art, her musical power is partly a divine gift. Her enthusiasm for the work of art, her struggle for its achievement and her faith on simple living and higher thinking are the unique parts of her personality which inspire others for their continual efforts to achieve ‘second self’ in life. In Thea, Dr. Archie detects the freshness of her mind, independent feeling of her soul, freedom of her movement and consciousness of her brain, which are the unique virtues of the feminist artist.

The most distinguished feature that differentiates Thea from Alexandra and Antonia

is that she is highly supported by her male friends. Though Alexandra is supported by Carl Linstrum, and Antonia by Jim Burden, these pioneer heroines are mostly backed by their neighboring women at their crisis rather than their boy-friends. It is because of these male-friends' passive nature that they remain only as a dream for these heroines' lives. Antonia is always backed by Mrs. Burden and Mrs. Steavens, her neighboring women, even at the risk of their lives. Though Jim Burden combats with Mr. Cutter to protect Antonia from the danger, it is his grand-mother Mrs. Burden who forcibly sends him to the Cutters to lie in Antonia's bed.

Sensibility and emotion, which are the two strong wheels of creativity, are prevalent in the pioneer women of the New Countries. Alexandra looks so much emotional at Carl Linstrum's migration to St. Louis that her eyes are filled with tears and her hands drop in her lap at her nervousness. Wiping out her tears, she says to Carl: "I can't help feeling scared when I think how I will miss you.....Since you have been here, ten years now, I have never really been lonely."³⁶ In her emotions, each event of her life moves through her brain like a chain of events in a movie. Heartbreakingly, she utters how helpful and supporting hand Carl has been at her creative works on her Hanover farm. Similarly Antonia also exhibits her emotional feelings when Jim Burden appreciates her expressing his deep-seated longing for her to take her as his wife or sweat heart or mother or sister. In her emotion, tears fall from her eyes as a sigh of her guilty feelings because she cannot wait for him. Now, she happens to be the mother of her illegitimate child Martha as betrayed by Larry Donovan. But emotionally, she assures Jim that she will always keep him in her memory:

Of course it means you are going away from us for good...But that don't mean I'll lose you. Look at my papa here; he's been dead all these years, and yet he is more real to me than almost anybody else. He never goes out of my life. I talk to him and consult him all the time. The older I grow, the better I know him and the more I understand him...But.. you're here, like my father. So I won't be lonesome.³⁶

Alexandra's emotion at Carl's departure is exactly like that of Antonia's at her separation from Jim Burden. Alexandra's emotion begets her creative mind, and she advises Carl to be a painter:

*You are wasting your life here. You are able to do much better things....., and I wouldn't have you stay. I've always hoped you would get away.I think you are about the only one that ever helped me. Somehow it will take more courage to bear your going than everything that has happened before.*³⁶

On the eve of starting her journey for Germany, Thea weeps so bitterly to the idea of leaving Fred Ottenburg behind that she cannot sleep whole night:

*Thea went quickly into her bedroom. She brought out an armful of muslin things, knelt down, and began to lay them in the trays. Suddenly she stopped, dropped forward and leaned against the open trunk, her head on her arms. The tears fell down on the dark old carpet. It came over her how many people must have said good-bye and been unhappy in the room.*³⁶

All of these pioneer women want that their boy friends should stay with them and support them for ever. But they fail because their different circumstances separate them from these boys. Antonia is separated from her boy friend Jim because of his passive nature, while Alexandra's separation from Carl is the lack of his farming skill and losing faith on Hanover soil. But Thea is separated from Ray because of his accidental death. Alexandra and Antonia convert their tears into smiles when they hear about their boy friends' desire for acquiring new skills for their future lives. Alexandra's Carl dreams of being an engraver, and Antonia's Jim a lawyer. So they ask their boys to go for their missions to their lives. Though Antonia fails to be united with Jim Burden, and Thea with Ray Kennedy through their marriage, both of them succeed to brush off their tears by marrying the most understanding husbands - the former with Anton Cuzak and the latter with Fred Ottenburg. But Alexandra wins Carl's hands when she faces unbearable loss of her dearest brother Emil. Her sorrow reminds her long-acquainted friend Carl to whom she surrenders and emotionally asks him to wipe off her tears by

marrying her.

Nancy, on her way to Canada, looks so much emotional for fear of being separated from Mrs. Rachel Blake and other familiar people of Virginia that she cries loudly and wishes to come back to Sapphira even at the risk of Martin's hand. Similarly, the idea of leaving Quebec for Paris makes Cecile so emotional that she cannot control herself:

*Once giving way to tears, she wept so bitterly for all that she had lost, and all that she must lose so soon. Her mother had had the courage to leave everything she loved and to come out here with her father; she in turn ought to show just that same courage about going back, but she could not find it in her heart.*³⁶

As the pioneer women suffer from the dryness of their new generations' hearts, they take enjoyment from the memory of their bygones. Deceased father's memory makes Alexandra happier when she feels absolutely bitterness from her notorious brothers' ill-treatment. John Bergson's picture, which is hung on the wall as a legacy to the future generations, gives joy and comfort to Alexandra. To her, the picture represents the peace-loving people of the past, and Oscar, Lou and their wives symbolize the complex new generations of her materialistic age. She is also comforted by the memory of her deceased brother Emil and uttering soliloquy: "I don't think I ever heard a nicer voice than that boy had. I hope he will get on well here."³⁶ It seems that she has just seen deceased Emil before her own eyes. Mrs. Bergson also fails to adjust with her new generations and feels utterly lonely in Hanover. So she is consoled by the memory of her past country Sweden: "She wanted to be let alone to reconstruct her old life in so far as that was possible. She could still take some comfort in the world if she had bacon in the cave." (23)

The good fortune of the pioneer women also makes them too much emotional in their lives. Unlike Alexandra, Antonia's present happiness evokes her past sorrow. It reminds her dead father, breaks her heart and chocks her breath making her speechless for a long time. Her happiness in summer at Mrs. Burden's warm atmosphere reminds her poverty-stricken father's wretched life and his death in winter. In emotion, she

wishes that her father should have lived to this day to share with her joy and happiness. She says to Jim: "I like your grand-mother, and all things here...I wish my papa live to see this summer. I wish no winter ever come again."³⁶ Here the 'summer' stands for Antonia's happiness, and the 'winter' for 'death' and 'hardships'. In winter, she has lost her dear father and in summer, she is brought to the Burdens' house where she gains joy and happiness under the shadow of the kind Burdens. So she wants that she should never meet 'winter' again. It forces Antonia to compare her father's troublesome life in the New Country with that of his prosperous Bohemia. So she wishes that her father's spirit should go to the Old Country to regain his lost happiness: "You think, Jimmy, that may be my father's spirit can go back to those old places." (150) When Jim sympathetically asks her about its reason, Antonia says:

It makes me homesick, Jimmy, this flower, this smell. We have this flower very much at home, in the Old Country. It always grew in our yard and my papa had a green bench and table under the bushes. In summer, when they were in bloom, he used to sit there with his friend that played the trombone. When I was little I used to go down there to hear them talk- beautiful talk, like what I never hear in this country. (150)

The sweet smell of the beautiful flower in the New Country also brings forth the memory of her Old Country, where her loving father has been very happy and prosperous.

Cecile's mind is stuffed with the memory of France, her Old Country of affluence and happiness, when the peace of her mind is disturbed by the disordered atmosphere of her present world 'Quebec'. She imagines that she may be as happy and prosperous as her cousins, Andre and Rachel, if she has not left Paris. When Cecile visits Madame Harnois and sees their disordered kitchen and mismanaged bed rooms, "she thought a great deal about her mother....how her mother had always made everything at home beautiful.....She tried to think about the buttercups in the marsh, as clean as the star-white daisies."³⁶

The pioneer women are free from romance and immoral sex though they are surrounded by the male friends. Alexandra marries Carl not for sex but for friendship. Thea is accompanied by Herr Wunch, Andor Harsanyi, Ray Kennedy, Dr. Archie, Fred Ottenburg and Landry, but her warm friendship with them is purely academic and sincere. All of these males serve Thea without any sex-motive. Ray is expected to marry her after the completion of her study, but accidentally he dies. Dr. Archie takes care of her because he sees an image of his own daughter in her. When he touches her arms as a doctor to her treatment at her infancy, he feels warmth of his heart. Thereafter, he takes much interest in Thea's education taking her as his daughter, and not as his mistress. She herself speaks of him like her own father. To pour out his loving emotions to Thea, Dr. Archie excitedly says:

*As for me, life would have been a pretty bleak stretch, with you left out....I guess I'm a romantic old fellow, underneath. And you've always been my romance. Those years when you were growing up were my happiest. When I dream about you, I always see you as a little girl.*³⁶

Though he calls himself a 'romantic old fellow', he is neither romantic nor passionate to Thea. He speaks so because he has unlimited fatherly love for her. He finds no other words to express his unbearable pain at Thea's absence in Moonstone and exposes utmost joy of his heart at her presence. She marries Fred Ottenburg when she gets maturity in both of her age and experience, and when Dr. Archie, her guardian and well-wisher, forces her to marry him: "He's the right sort, Thea...I've always hoped you'd make it up with Fred." (391) When Dr. Archie jokes her if she has been in love with Fred, Thea wittily answers him: "I've never been able to find out. I think I was in love with you when I was little but not with anyone since then. There are a great many ways of caring for people. It's not, after all, a simple state, like measles or tonsillitis." (392)

Thea's love and respect for Dr. Archie is for his kind treatment to herself as a best doctor at her infancy and for his sacrifice to her study. So she loves him as a gratitude

to him, and not as a coquette. Again, she marries Fred not for his physical love but for his kind help to herself. He has highly contributed to her life providing her food at her starvation, saving her life from drowning in the lake at a boat journey and making her contacts with the owners of other music studios. Even after their marriage, Fred not only helps Thea sharing with her night shows but also looks after her sick aunt Tillie as a most sincere son-in-law.

The case of Antonia is different from other pioneer women like Alexandra and Cecile. Antonia spends her childhood in the company of Jim Burden but misses chances to marry him. Though he protects her from savage Wick Cutter, he never shows any romantic attachment to her. Instead, Antonia sets him right when Jim exhibits amorous behavior to Lena as attracted by her beauty:

*You are going away to school and make something of yourself. I'm just awful proud of you....You're a kid I'm awful fond of, anyhow! You can like me all you want to, but if I see you hanging round with Lena much, I'll go to your grandmother, as sure as your name's Jim Burden!*³⁶

Jim Burden also likes Antonia as much as she likes him. Though he extremely wants her and calls her 'My Antonia', to express his longing for her, she can never be his. It is not her sexy nature that she is seduced, but it is Larry Donovan who makes her pregnant and betrays her. When Antonia knows Jim's longing for her to take her as his wife, she feels heartbreak. Otherwise, there is no trace of Jim's chasing after Antonia anywhere. But Jim is always thoughtful about Antonia because she, being four year older than him, always treats him very affectionately as her own younger brother. Antonia marries Anton Cuzak when her pain lessens a bit, and when gentle Anton proposes for her.

The pioneer spirit is found in such pioneer women who have gained stability and happiness through their marriage, at maturity, with not sexy but well-acquainted, understanding males. Cecile marries Pierre Charron, her long-acquainted friend, at maturity not for sex but for the fulfillment of her special mission to Quebec. So she

succeeds not only to be the happiest wife of Charron but also to establish human existence in Quebec through her new generations. Her father Euclide Auclair is also well contented with her marriage. He says: “She is married, to our old friend Pierre Charron of Ville-Marie. He has built a commodious house in the Upper Town beyond the Ursuline Convet. They are well-established in the world.”³⁶

Antonia and Thea can never win their old friends’ hands. Still they are lucky to win real love and special care of their understanding husbands - Anton Cuzak by the former and Fred Ottenburg by the latter. Antonia, the most wretched pioneer heroine, meets utmost happiness in her life when she finds good matched husband Anton in terms of age and status. When Fred Ottenburg proposes Thea for marriage, she makes him clear that she, as an artist, is always busy with her works of art, and she cannot be a great woman to attend him as a husband. But she marries him and experiences herself as the happiest wife when she finds him the most understanding, independent and co-operative man. So these women’s marriage with the mature boys is for their life’s sake, and not for romance and sex.

The pioneer women love to maintain punctuality and regularity up to their last breath in their New Countries. So they expect their generations to be punctual and regular at their works. Dying Mrs. Auclair bids her daughter Cecile to keep up the French culture and order at her New Home in Quebec and carry out her responsibilities to her kitchen perfectly. In her view, irregularity in carrying out actions and mismanagement in doing things will not make anybody happy and civilized. She says to her daughter: “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.” (24) Mrs. Auclair wants that her daughter’s regularity in carrying out household works will make her husband healthy and happy even after her death. Thea also tries to maintain her former position and status in Moonstone. Though she becomes a reputed singer of the Metropolitan society, she never forgets the level of her earlier position at her Kronborg family. She is more conscious about what she was in the past and what she is in the present. She wants to

maintain the norm of her past life to the current one. Millions of dollars Thea as a singer has earned now and millions of bank-balance she has saved. But as a well-cultured woman, she judges Ray Kennedy's six hundred dollars more valuable than millions of dollars she has earned now. So she says that she can not surpass the level of her earlier standard whatever position or money she has earned at current time.

The pioneer women also love to run their traditional trend of their profession though they are modern in their outlooks. It is their great respect for their parents that they love to follow their parental line of professions. Alexandra pursues her father's agricultural trend and maintains its norm in Hanover as her dying father asks her to do: "Try to break a little more land every year; sod corn is good for fodder. Keep turning the land, and always put up more hay than you need."³⁶ Cecile takes culture and order as the symbol of civilization as advocated by her mother. So she arranges utensils on the kitchen-shelf so nicely, keeps things so orderly at her parlor and accompanies her widower father so devotionally that Mr. Auclair should not feel any bitterness and lonesome at his wife's absence in Quebec. She prepares each food item of her father's taste and helps him to keep up his health and happiness as wished by her mother. Besides keeping her kitchen in perfect order, she regularly visits her father's clinical shop and maintains each medicinal herb at its right place. Similarly Alexandra also keeps cows and livestock as advised by her father and enriches his land with the manure and grows more food grains than the demand of the Bergsons. So she raises the Bergsons' status as a farmer dealing with her surplus grains in the market.

Mrs. Kronborg, Thea's mother, is also equally conscious to maintain order in the Kronborg family by setting her husband at right position and keeping everything at right place:

She had profound respect for her husband's erudition and eloquence. She sat under his preaching with deep humility, and was as much taken in by his stiff shirt and white necktie as she has not ironed them herself.She looked to him for morning prayers and grace at tableShe expected him...to supply parental

*sentiment here in the house, children moral and patriotic ideals. It was her work to keep their bodies, their clothes, and their conduct in some sort of order.*³⁶

Antonia, like Alexandra and Thea, is a woman of good understanding and great consciousness. She knows how to maintain the family and appreciate other people. But there is no trace of flattery at her words when she admires others. Even at her childhood, she admires Jim and feels gratitude to him for the selfless protection he gives her by killing rattlesnakes on her ways to Peter's house when she goes to fetch a spade for Ambrosch. Jim always praises her for her well-cultured behavior amidst her poverty. She, like Cecile, continues Bohemian culture and order in the New Home of Black Hill. Her skill to change her wandering husband into a well-cultured farmer is really praiseworthy. She has kept her children well disciplined. She has a sweet family with well established home in Black Hawk. When Jim sees Antonia's well-ordered kitchen and dining room with wash basins and well-furnished drawing room and bedrooms with attached bathrooms in Black Hawk, he becomes more conscious about his family life.

Antonia is a woman with extraordinary qualities. She is a gentle woman with much tolerating power and compassionate nature. She is neither quarrelsome nor stern. Instead, she is always calm and warm to her husband. For her compassionate nature, her husband also highly praises her:

Yes, she is a good wife for a poor man. She ain't always so strict with me, neither. Sometimes maybe I drink a little too much beer in town, and when I come home she don't say nothing. She don't ask me no questions. We always get along fine, her and me, like at first. The children don't make trouble between us,

...

Anton overwhelms with joy to find his wife so warm-hearted and active. In spite of Mrs. Harling's humble dealing to herself at her home, she bakes the cakes of Charley's choice, cooks the food of France's order and makes toffees and chocolates of Nina's

preference so tastily. She feels gratitude to Mrs. Harling for the training she gets from her. She thinks this training very useful for her life to keep her kitchen and parlor in order. Mrs. Harling drives Antonia from her house warning her not to put her feet at her home again, but she is never tired of praising Mrs. Harling with such words:

O, I'm glad I went ! I'd never have known anything about cooking or house keeping if I had not. I learned nice ways at the Harling's If I hadn't been for what Mrs. Harling taught me, I expect I'd have brought them (her children) up like wild rabbits. No, I'm glad I had a chance to learn. (221)

Mrs. Harling cannot protect another woman like herself from her risk. In this sense, Antonia may show her feminist anger at Mrs. Harling taking her as an enemy. But she takes her as an angel or a true guide to her life. As a gentle woman, she only sings of her good aspects of life but forgets the pain of her wound hurt by Mrs. Harling. Herein lies Antonia's greatness of her personality. This is why the novelist calls her 'my Antonia' or 'the rich mine of life' for her extraordinary qualities. She is the mine of courage, toleration, productivity and widened heart.

Antonia, who is a good mother, brings up her daughter Martha with much care, loving her from her very birth as a 'ring on her finger'. She is very happy because her husband also shows special favor for Martha rather than to his own daughters Nina, Yulka and others. Anna says she does not have any idea about Martha's real identity as her half-sister till her marriage with Joe. She promises she will never allow her to work for others, but will try her best to sacrifice everything for the betterment of her daughter. She loves all of her children very affectionately and brings them up very carefully. She trains her daughters Nina, Yulka, Anna and Lucie to maintain her house in order in Black Hawk as Mrs. Auclair trains her daughter Cecile in Quebec. If Nina washes plates in the sink, Anna orderly keeps utensils in the cupboard. In the words of Jim Burden:

Two long rows of restless heads in the lamplight, and so many eyes fastened excitedly upon Antonia as she sat at the head of the table, filling the plates and

starting the dishes on their way. The children were seated according to a system; a little one next an older one, who was to watch over his behavior and to see that he got his food. Anna and Yulka left their chairs from time to time to bring fresh plates of kolaches and pitchers of milk. (223)

Even in the parlor, the chairs are rowed in order for guests and blank space for young kids, Anton and Leo, who play with their violin left by their grandfather Mr. Shimerda, rhythming their little sister Nina to dance into the middle of the floor.

For her warm-hearted nature, Anton calls her ‘my woman’ to express his deep love for his wife, and Jim affectionately calls her ‘my Antonia’ or ‘Tony’. Again, Antonia also expresses her love for her husband calling him ‘my man’. In spite of her devil-like brother Ambrosch’s animal-like dealings to her, she always appreciates him. It is Antonia’s warm heart that Jim tries to win her hands in any form. Before her marriage to Anton Cuzak, he comes to pour out his deep-seated feelings to her:

Do you know, Antonia, since I’ve been away, I think of you more often than of anyone else in this part of the world. I’d have liked to have you for a sweetheart, or a wife, or my mother or my sister-- anything that a woman can be to a man. ... you influence my likes or dislikes, all my tastes. You really are a part of me (206)

Antonia is always conscious about her husband’s comfort and works for his joy and happiness. She makes him forget his earlier misfortunes easily. Her support and sympathy for him at his distress are the factors to change his luck. Now, Anton is no more a poverty-stricken man but a rich farmer owning big farm and huge building. His wife’s loving nature helps him to forget his earlier depression and lonesomeness. He says: “At first I near go crazy with lonesomeness, ...but my woman is got such a warm heart. She always make it as good for me as she could. Now it ain’t so bad; I can begin to have some fun with my boys, already!”(235)

The pioneer women's beauty lies in their broad thinking about human life, and their happiness lies in doing good works for others. Though Antonia is an uneducated woman having no opportunity for her education, she advises Jim, the privileged boy, to be a doctor and serve the sick people: "I've set my heart on Jim being a doctor. You'd be good with sick people, Jim. Your grand-mother's trained you up so nice." (138) Antonia sheds tears of happiness to know Jim's success as a student of Nebraska University. She wishes that she should see him a good lawyer in New York. She knows that her unconscious mother and upstart brother Ambrosch have destroyed her luck by using her as a bread-earning tool. But as a broad-minded woman, she has no complain against them. If Mr. Shimerda has been there to educate his intelligent daughter, Antonia's life can be different.

Alexandra's widening vision to the world opens a new horizon for her youngest brother Emil. As she has broader view about life, she raises herself above the level of Nebraska soil. So she is not satisfied only with her father's farming culture because she finds a farmer's life very 'hard' and 'heavy'. She appreciates Carl for taking 'engraving' as his profession which she thinks more reputable than farming. Then she wishes that Emil also should follow his trends and be a lawyer. She says to Carl:

And yet I would rather have Emil grow up like that than like his brothers. We pay a high rent, too, though we pay differently. We grow hard and heavy here. We don't move lightly and easily as you do, and our minds get stiff. If the world were no wider than our cornfields, if there were not something beside this, I would not feel that it was much worth while to work. No, I would rather have Emil like you than like them.³⁶

If she is only a farming woman with her scythe and spade, she can never think over such and such things.

Cecile's foresight is farther and wider than Alexandra's as it extends to the new horizon of the nation crossing the family line. If Alexandra's foresight is limited to her younger brother Emil's future, Cecile wishes that Quebec should exist through the

existence of human beings. In this sense, her marriage with Pierre Charron is not only the question of her private life but also the matter of national importance. She makes Quebec her permanent home and works for its cultural development. Such widening vision of Cecile raises her personality above the level of the average women of Quebec.

The pioneer women have skill to use wit and humor as their weapons to exchange their happiness and sorrow during their lives. To overcome difficulties in the New Countries, the pioneer women share laughing and joking with one another and take enjoyment out of the thorns of their lives. As they use humorous and witty speeches, they are neither pessimistic nor taciturn in nature. Though they are surrounded by problems, they try to forget their pains through their laughs and humors. Alexandra playfully pinches Marie's cheeks when she visits her in the company of Annie and Mrs. Lee, Annie's mother. She humorously says to Marie: "You don't look as if the weather ever froze you up. Never have colds, do you? ...She had dark red cheeks like this when she was a little girl, Mrs. Lee. She looked like some queer foreign kind of a doll." (143) Though Marie is full of tears at cranky husband's hand, she forgets her pain at jolly Alexandra's company. She also joins herself with Alexandra's humor and welcomes her with humorous talk and tasty food items. She offers her delicate cream-rolls stuffed with stewed apricots and coffee as a hot drink. Then she jokes out of her Bohemian food items saying that she will prepare coffee-cake for Alexandra if she dislikes her Bohemian food.

Antonia is too much pleasant and humorous at her whole life in spite of her most painful life in the New Country. When childless Jim Burden looks embarrassed at her question about his family and children, Antonia tries to make him laugh through her humorous utterances: "Oh, ain't that too bad! May be you could take one of my bad ones, now? That Leo; he's the worst of all ...And I love him the best."³⁶ Antonia's daughters also do not miss their opportunities to make jokes out of their brother Joe. One of them humorously utters: "Mother....Maybe it's because he came on Easter Day." (216) It means that Leo cannot be a nuisance in spite of his bad habit because he has taken his birth on the Easter Day, the most pleasant day of the Christians.

Though Alexandra and Antonia use humorous utterances to digest their tears in their New Countries, Thea uses humorous utterances at her smile and prosperity. After her night-show on Saturday evening, Thea dines with her old friends, Dr. Archie and Fred Ottenburg, and orders coffee for them at her own apartment. Talking to her guests, she unconsciously breaks Mr. Laundry's amber elephant, which Laundry carelessly puts on her piano table. When Fred makes a joke out of Laundry's broken elephant, Thea wittily says to him: "He has me. I'm a great deal of diversion for him, all he needs. There. ..I shouldn't have said that before the elevator boy."³⁶ Mr. Laundry, her friend and supporter in Germany, is the elevator boy who becomes the target of Thea's humor in New York.

Again, when Dr. Archie suggests Thea to marry Fred, she wittily answers him that Fred is not in the marriage-market anymore like herself. It means that Fred Ottenburg has already got married to a woman - though there is no harmony between the couple. So she jokes that she, being an unmarried woman, has right to be in the marriage-market, but not married Fred. When Fred Ottenburg manages Andor Harsanyi's meeting with her in New York, she humorously picks up a flower from the bouquet of the piano-table and hangs it up to Fred's coat saying: "I shall be walking in the park tomorrow afternoon,..... if you care to join me. After Harsanyi, I'd rather please you anyone else. You know a lot, but he knows even more than you." (391)

The minor women characters also possess multidimensional personality having good hearts and courage to struggle at different circumstances. Mostly they suffer at the hands of corrupt males generally of the town. Still they move forward and plead for the miserable women. The following are some of the minor women characters, whose voice is the voice of all living common women with their virtues and vices in the universe:

Mrs. Burden (*MA*) is the most generous and helpful grand-mother of Jim Burden in Black Hawk. At first, she migrates from Virginia to Black Hill. But later on, she moves to Black Hawk town not being able to run farm works on the hill due to her old age.

She is very kind to Antonia and backs her at her all misfortunes. She prevents her from the planned seduction of immoral Wick Cutter befooling him by sending her grandson to lie in Antonia's bed.

Mrs. Steavens (*MA*) is the feminist in this sense that she is a plain speaker, good hearted and fearless woman. She is a widow and runs tailoring as her profession in Black Hawk town. She is the only person who knows each clue about Antonia's life and tells her story to Jim Burden, the narrator of the novel. She is the feminist who readily faces cruel Ambrosch's disgrace to plead for wretched Antonia at her childbirth. She boldly shows her illegitimate baby to merciless Ambrosch. She feels much satisfaction when she observes Antonia's great devotion to her illegitimate baby. She says: "It's a year and eight months old now, and no baby ever better cared for. Antonia is a natural-born mother. I wish she could marry and raise a family, but I don't know as there's much chance now."³⁶

Frances Harling (*MA*), who is the woman of good understanding, is the oldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Harling in Black Hawk town. She is highly appreciated by her neighboring pioneer women for her sincere support to them at their prosperity and adversity. What makes her a dominating figure is her extraordinary skill in handling the things at Mr. Harling's house as well as in the Black Hawk society. As she handles her father's business office more efficiently than Mr. Harling even on holidays, he pays her a good salary.

Tillie Kronborg (*SL*), the last Kronborg in Moonstone, is Thea's aunt who predicts about Thea's talent of music and takes much interest in her study. She overjoys at Thea's success as a perfect singer. Finally, Tillie is cared by feminist Thea and her husband Fred at her illness and helplessness due to her old age. Mrs. Anderson (*SL*) also is the widow of Oscar Anderson in the Swedish Catholic Church of Chicago. She gives good protection to Thea when she lives in her attic room. She is the first and best adviser who suggests Thea to go to the Art Institute in Chicago and study vocal-song. Similarly Paulina Kohler (*SL*), the wife of German-born Fritz Kohler, is the first settler

in *Moonstone* taking sewing as her profession. She is the first warm-hearted woman who welcomes Thea into her home and passes on her the knowledge of European culture. Her less materialistic attitude leaves such an impression on Thea that she judges all European men and women as less materialistic people in the world.

Mrs. Alec Ramsay (*LG*) is a seventy year old widow of one of the founding members of Haverford. She teaches frustrated Lucy Gayheart about the reality of life. When Lucy looks deserted from the accidental death of her lover Clement Sebastian, Mrs. Ramsay, as a good and warm-hearted woman, motivates her to continue her study of music in Chicago. But she cannot save Lucy as she, on her way to Chicago, dies of drowning into the river.

Augusta (*PH*) is a practical and loyal sewing woman who stays at the rented room of the same house where Professor St. Peter lives. She is also such a feminist woman who shares with St. Peter's hopes, joys and sorrows, and saves his life from the burning gas, which causes him faint.

Magdalena is the only distinct woman character in *Death Comes For The Archbishop*, which is the 'novel without heroine'. Among Cather's women characters, she spends most troublesome and pathetic life as an impact of the male corruption. She is a Mexican woman who suffers much by marrying Buck Scales, a degenerate American murderer. After her marriage, she discovers that he has been a professional robber and habitual murderer who has already killed four travelers and looted thousands of houses. She faces such a low dealing from her husband that she is tied on her hands and legs and beaten to her unconsciousness. He creates such a horrible atmosphere at his wife's surrounding that he cruelly kills all of his children one by one. Such loss of her children makes heartbroken Magdalena a strong feminist. So she knocks at the Church door, takes help from Priest Kit Carson and gets her devil-like husband murdered for her self-defence. Finally, she offers herself to the Church services and provides feminist support for all other Mexican wretched women.

Dona Isabella, the wife of Anton Olivære in New Mexico, also suffer after her

husband's death. She is troubled by her husband's brothers seizing her property and trying to drive her out of her home. But she shows her feminist look at them and revolts against them to take her property back. Dona Isabella is a more active feminist woman than Magdalena in the novel (*DCAB*). She fights against her brothers'-in-laws for her rights to her husband's resources. She also knocks at the door of the Catholic Church to take her rights back.

Rachel Blake (*SFG*), the widow of late Michael Blake in Virginia, is also a feminist woman of multidimensional personality. She shows unbelievable courage to struggle against corruption, kind nature to sympathize the wretched woman and revolutionary ideas to overthrow slavery. By birth, she comes from very rich mother Sapphira Doddridge Colbert who is the millionaires with a large number of slaves, lots of land, along with her cattle, and a Mill in Shenandoah Valley, Virginia. But her mother extremely hates her for two reasons: Firstly, she is the daughter of Negro father, Henry Colbert. Secondly, she takes a feminist approach to protect helpless Nancy, the slave girl of her heartless mother. When her mother plots against Nancy, bold Rachel ventures to move against her mother and stands as a rival to Sapphira.

Rachel Blake is a practical woman with reasonable power. As she is herself a wretched daughter of merciless mother, she knows Nancy's problems well and steps forward to tackle it. Like a strong politician, she evokes her father to move against her ill-willed mother and demonic Martin who chases Nancy: "You surely know.... Mart Colbert is after Nancy day and night....He'll catch her somewhere and force her....Then why don't you do something to save her?"³⁶ Rachel feels too sorry to find her Black father extremely suppressed by her White mother. As a reasonable woman, she knows her mother's domination over her father and her suppression to her slave-girl Nancy. Sapphira never allows her husband even to enter her father's room.

Rachel is the most merciful woman ever born on earth. She has humanistic approach to the poor and oppressed. She is also rational and intelligent. When helpless Nancy spreads her hands for her protection from culprit Colbert, she cleverly makes

secret arrangements to fly her to Canada through various channels. She writes letters to her friends in Martinsburg and Pennsylvania to assist her to reach Nancy to Canadian Church safely. To carry out this risky plan, Mrs. Blake needs money, which she expects from her kind father Henry. So she tells her secret-plan to her father and asks for money:

I may be overstepping my duty,... but I could not sit with my hands folded and see what's going on here, and I couldn't hold back. I'm going to get Nancy away from here and on the road to freedom.... In a day and a night I can get her into safe hands... I come to you because we need money.... (225-27)

When Rachel takes away Nancy to Canada for her security, Sapphira's resentment to her daughter is beyond limit. She is threatened not to enter her home. As a feminist, Mrs. Blake takes much satisfaction for saving a woman from her ruin without any harm.

Rachel is doomed to tolerate many losses in her life. But she is gifted with the power to tolerate each loss very boldly. By physical relation, she has mother Sapphira, but she loses mother's love as her mother's door is shut for ever. Still she tolerates everything and shows sympathy to her mother. It has not been so long of her husband's death that she loses her dearest daughter Mary Blake, who dies of terrible flu in winter. Anyway, she tolerates each and every misfortune very boldly.

Nancy (SSG), an innocent daughter of Jeff and Till, is a slave girl, by birth, in Sapphira's palace in Shenandoah Valley. She works in the mill where Sapphira's husband Henry Colbert works as a Miller. But Sapphira, a serpent in the grass, tries to get relief from her at the suspicion of her affairs with her husband. When she invites Martin to seduce her, Nancy becomes a feminist and runs at Sapphira's door for justice. But Sapphira thunders at Nancy saying: "You go right back to your own bed, and control yourself properly. I won't have such crazy behavior." (195) Then she shows her feminist look at her and knocks at Rachel's door for her protection from dishonest Martin.

Nancy startles and revolting feeling occurs to her mind against the Colberts when she knows that a devil-brother of divine Henry Colbert is her actual father, and not Jeff. It makes her more conscious about villain Martin. Nancy is the most unfortunate woman dominated by the woman. Her early life is full of horror and uncertainty. Though born from human species, she, as a slave, is taken as a thing or an animal to be sold. She is a hard-working girl who keeps the mill very clean and wins her Miller's favor. But Sapphira finds faults with this innocent girl. Still she becomes the subject of admiration for feminist Henry Colbert and Mrs. Rachel who regrets for her misfortune: "She is a good-girl but.... wrong doer-Colberts never let anything get way." (224) When Nancy comes back to Back Creek ten years later, she has already married to a gentleman and has three children. She meets Mrs. Blake and her mother Till to welcome her, but not villains like Martin and Sapphira.

Mrs. Harsanyi (*SL*) is the wife of pianist Andor Harsanyi in Chicago. She shows special attention to Thea, a poverty stricken student of music. She takes her as the best student of her husband. When she hears about her husband's decision to send her at Madison Bowers' Art Institute in Chicago, she revolts against him and asks him to stop her: "Sent Miss Kronborg away? Andor, what is the matter with you? She was at least, the best you had.... I am sure she would have made an impression.... She had so much individuality."³⁶ Perhaps she, as a genius woman, may have heard about Madison Bowers' stern personality. So she worries about Thea's future in his Institute and shows feminist face at her husband. Again, she is a feminist in this sense that she backs miserable women of their poverty and hardship. So she wishes that Thea should stay at her home until she builds up her career as a best musician of the New Country.

Mrs. Harsanyi is a feminine woman at the same time. Her heart aches if she pinches somebody's heart. In emotion, she stands motionless and begs excuse for her mistake. She speaks against her husband at an issue to Thea. But her feminist look melts in the cauldron of her feminine appearance when she knows about the hidden truth behind Thea's talent for vocal music. "She knew him. It wounded her, of course, but that hurt

was not new. It was as old as her love for him.” (193) Perhaps she realizes that Thea’s whole concern is linked to her musical classes and music career, and not to her teacher’s personality. So she feels tenderness to her husband and realizes her mistake. She is very friendly to her husband and his students. She invites Thea at her home even after she joins Bowlers’ classes. When Thea knocks at her door, she embraces her very warmly and talks to her about her progress in music. She also takes much interest in her husband’s artistic performances and shows special favor for his students.

The pioneer women are rich with their physical and mental beauty. They exhibit their optimistic view, thoughtful brain, resourceful heart, bright face and smart appearance. Generally the pioneer women of ordinary birth show such attractive personality. They are adorned with their imaginative and creative power, which differentiates them from the activist aristocratic ladies of the American west. These women’s optimistic view to their life, strong resolution to their aims and much devotion to their works lead them to the peak of their success. As optimistic laborious women, they bear their pain with great fortitude even at their failure. Instead, they seek to enter into the heart of their problem piercing through its surface to dig out the gold from its depth. Thea’s failure in her study of music in Chicago inspires her to move to Arizona forest in the manner of Indian sages. As these sages see no prospect in their family life due to the misbehavior of their new generations, they choose forest as their dwelling place to regain the vitality of their youth. Similarly the green forest of Arizona builds up Thea’s artistic career. Antonia gives up her job, but dance never. In spite of her brothers’ obstruction to the land, Alexandra launches her Land Plan and fully develops her land through her continual efforts. The pioneer women judge their life in terms of their works. Thea, as a creative woman with much faith on hard work, says that one’s personal life is embedded with high responsibilities to one’s hard works, from which one cannot escape.

The pioneer women know how to make self-evaluation. Alexandra asks her brother Emil to know himself before he knows the world. Like a philosopher, she says: "I ought to have known better myself."³⁶ She herself knows what she is, and what she has done during her life. She realizes that she has broken Emil's heart not allowing him to marry his beloved Marie. So she takes herself guiltier than Frank at the question of Emil's murdering. Such a feeling of self-realization shocks her much, and she feels remorse.

The women in Cather's novels are the mines of love and affection to the younger generations and downtrodden people. Alexandra loves Oscar, Lou and Emil equally, but she is more devoted to Emil for his loyalty and obedience to herself. Though Oscar and Lou always act as antagonists to her, she is fond of their children. She loves Lou's daughters, Sadie, Milly and Stella very much and heartily welcomes them at their week-end visits at her home in Hanover. If the problem arises from the question of the owners and hired men/girls, she takes the favor of the hired men/girls. Her father also is quite confident about his daughter's ability to carry out works when he says: "...If she makes mistakes, she will not make so many as I have made." (20)

The fictional pioneer women are devotees to the Catholic religion, which they express through their devotion and loyalty to the Catholic Church. They think it as a secure home for the helpless women. Magdalena comes to the Catholic Church to take shelter when she is tortured by her criminal husband Buck Scales. Similarly Rachel Blake sees the Canadian Church only a secure place for her Nancy. Whenever Cecile feels bitterness at her father's masculinity, she enters Catholic Church to take solace.

Some of the women characters like Marian Forrester and Myra Henshawe are assigned the activist women protagonist's role in some of Cather's novels. But they have also exhibited beauty by honestly performing their assigned tasks on their parts. If Alexandra and Antonia exhibit their positive personality bearing responsibilities to their family and showing great compassion to the miserable women in the society, Marian and Myra have also beautifully done their tasks from their parts to bring out the tragic

flaw to the novels. Marian who is married to the twenty-five year old husband cannot be expected to be a loyal wife. Mrs. Cutter, an unhappily married wife of the wrong miser husband, Mr Cutter, is forced to fight with him for her rights to his property. Such circumstances have forced them to play activist Eve's role in their families, which they have honestly done. The novelist has outwardly shown anguish to these activist women, but it seems that she has inwardly supported them assigning them the heroes' roles in the novels and analyzing their inner problems with much insight.

Cather has not only adorned her women with the feminist traits that stern feminist critic Toril Moi expects from the woman novelist but has also created male feminists to sympathize the disadvantaged women that liberal feminist critic Ruthven favors. Rachel Blake sacrifices herself to protect Nancy's chastity, while Mrs. Burden shows kindness to save Antonia from her ruin. Again, Mrs. Steavens supports helpless Antonia with her sewing machine even at her small rented room and blesses her for her better future. Alexandra fights against her sister-in-law to give justice to her poor hired man Ivar and protects him from her jealousy. Cecile devotes to forsaken Jaques to make him a human being, and Antonia wishes Jim to serve the sick and sufferers from his selfless services for mankind. Mrs. Harsanyi is much sympathetic to Thea at her teacher's misbehavior to her in derelict Chicago. Similarly Henry Colbert's moral and financial support for Nancy's flight is a great support of the male feminist. These are also the women's voices for humanity. In fact, the pioneer women, having widening vision to life, are to voice for whole humanity.

Thus these women's multifold characteristic features that they have naturally displayed through their high personality in Cather's novels designate them as 'The Women of Multidimensional Personality'. If their androgyny makes them laborious and bold to struggle against the hardships, their charismatic personality inspires others for the further development of their career. Their less materialistic approach to the world and warm-heartedness to the poor and sufferers and their creativity in the areas of their professions have enhanced their cosmopolitan personality. But what makes them more feminist and most distinct from other women is their revolt against the deceitful urban

males to defend the miserable women of the common folk. Though Cather's pioneer women come from various backgrounds and constitute heterogeneous society in America, they have displayed primarily the human values, which are very useful to be followed by all. If so, the present dryness of human-hearts can be easily converted into the green ones, and the feelings of sisterhood and fraternity can be blown to all men and women living today.

***₊₊₊₊ Thea, the courageous student of music, shows strong determination to achieve music in spite of her poverty. As she is too much interested to vocal-songs, she joins in the music classes of Madison Bowers in Chicago and pays him high tuition fee even singing songs for the funeral. Furthermore, she finds Bowers' personality very complex as compared to Professor Wunsch and Andor Harsanyi, her former music teachers:

*He was different from any man with whom she had ever had to do. With her other teachers she felt a personal relation; but with him she did not. Bowers was a cold, bitter, avaricious man, but he knew a great deal about voices. He worked with a voice as if he were in a laboratory, conducting a series of experiments.*³⁶

Still her courage inspires her to move forward with her aim to achieve music. His fans, Mrs. Priest and Mrs. Darcey also try to insult her falsely charging that she has ruined their musical programs in the Orchestra. But Thea promises not to go back without specialization in music. That is why she earns a little more money from Fred Ottenburg's kind help and continuously runs her singing classes under this stern teacher. She tries to refresh her mind from her depression visiting natural places, specializes in music from Germany and becomes the greatest Opera singer of New York. ₊₊₊₊₊

Conclusion

Thea knows the problems of all miserable women who are left in a limbo as forsaken by their selfish husbands. So she sings songs for them to improve their condition in the American society. Antonia's sacrifice for her children makes them good citizen. Jim praises her sons and daughters for their special qualities in dealing with their guests and managing kitchen works. In fact, all of them are as active and laborious as Antonia herself.

Chapter VII

Conclusion

Feminist literature, which has become the crucial subject of great discussion to the feminist critics today, is the outcome of the elderly writers' feminist concerns in their writings. Cather might never have thought of the feminist cult that had so tremendously developed in America and abroad during 1960^S. Still the sparks of feminism that she has ignited throughout her novels has established the foundation of modern feminism, on ground of which Cather has been judged as a feminist novelist. From the overall study of her novels, it can be concluded that her utmost concern is centered to the women in relation to men and the society they live in. Her women-centered novels are written to verbalize her commitment to the frontier pioneer women from different walks of life and fulfill an urge to the empty prairie soil, which has no written history up to her entrance. Great compassion has been shown to these wretched pioneer women even giving compassionate title *My Antonia* to one of her novels. The heroine is the novelist's Antonia and all wretched pioneer women's Antonia in the prairie.

Cather has highly contributed to the women's issues taking the favor of the women and waging a war against the Victorian conservative males in both literary background and social milieu. In her novels, she has focused on the common theme of the common pioneer women genuinely analyzing their life problems. In fact, she has said on the theme of the professional women what seems to be unsayable to the conservative males of her age. By presenting herself as a wage-earner through journalism and sending her artist Thea Kronborg (*SL*) and Lucy Gayheart (*LG*) outside their homes for music, she has rebelled against the conservative males who disdain writing or music as a woman's profession regarding it socially disreputable. As a revolt against the Victorian concept of domesticity, the women in various professions are highly approved. Mrs. Gardner and her hired girl Tiny Soderball are presented as hotel-keepers, Mrs. Thomas and her hired girl Lena Lingard as dress-makers in *My Antonia*, Cecile Auclair as an assistant to her father's apothecary shop in *Shadows on the Rocks* and Thea as a singer in *The Song Of The Lark*. Lena's longing for her free open-air life, without tying to the marriage bond and domesticity, has been heartily accepted.

Cather's arguments for the women's realm are very strong and unforgettable. Through her novels, she has forcefully argued about different facets of women. An attempt has been made to depict women's entity with their own professions, without depending on the graces or fortunes of men. Thea's determination to live in her own income and Alexandra's confidence to earn her bread from the same prairie soil prove this fact. Women are presented as powerful beings with the provision of their

leadership to drive the family. Alexandra's effective leadership to the Bergsons justifies it. It has been strongly argued that women are not the instruments of men's entertainment, but their co-partners with equal status. It has been exemplified by retaining Antonia's higher status in the Cuzaks' family in *My Antonia*.

More attention has been given to the characterization and characters' action than their lot and plot of the novels. The pioneer women characters introduced in the novels are most adventurous, innovative, creative, punctual and helpful, while the males are very weak and unadventurous. The autonomous female 'heroes' have displayed their hidden potentiality to work as a 'hero' in her novels. Though some of the male characters are designated as the heroes in some of her novels, they are not as effectual as these female protagonists. The women characters are not highly educated, but they are witty in speeches and talk humorously even at their difficult moment. In fact, the creative women's charismatic and cosmopolitan personality inspires all other living women in the cosmos for their hard work and perseverance.

Cather has witnessed a wonderful caliber to delineate the things and persons of dichotomic nature in her novels. She has analyzed the women of juxtapositional nature: pioneers and non-pioneers; liberal-feminists and radical feminists; poverty-stricken and affluent; common-folk women and aristocratic ladies and creative and non-creative etc. Though she is not a radical feminist, she has perfectly dealt with her activist women. She is not a Catholic, but she has successfully woven the Catholic lore of the pioneers to her novels. She is not a reformist in the actual sense, but she has lighted a lamp for the social change of the pioneer women. She is neither a singer nor a married woman, but she has successfully dealt with the problems of the artists and married women. Though she is not a socialist in the political sense, she has forcefully pleaded that the discrepancy between the rich and poor should be removed.

The materials have been picked up from both of the worlds of 'past' and 'present' in Cather's novels. The materials for *A Lost Lady* and *My Mortal Enemy* have been collected totally from the novelist's current world to depict the evils of the current capitalistic society. The weak minded heroines of these novels are presented as the true representatives of the imperialistic society of the industrial capitalism. As they surrender themselves to the social and economic ethics of the commercial society applying its values and norms to their lives, they meet their tragic death. But the subject-matters and characters for *Shadows On The Rock* and *Sapphira And The Slave Girl* have been borrowed from the 17th century Quebec, and the novelist's own ancestral Virginia respectively. But the materials and characters for *O*

Pioneers!, *My Antonia* and other novels have been borrowed from both of her 'past' and 'present' worlds. She has gone to her past Webster County when she is in Red Cloud, and when she is in New York, she has gone to her beloved Red Cloud. Whatever time or material may have been searched out for these novels, the women of multidimensional personality from various backgrounds have been selected for her women-centered novels.

Cather has taken men and women as two phases of the same coin. As an indication of such feelings, she has written four novels, *ie.*, *OP*, *SL*, *MA*, and *SR*, on the successful pioneer protagonists, four, *i.e.*, *LL*, *MME*, *LG* and *SSG*, on Eve-like fallen ones and other four, *i.e.*, *AB*, *O*, *PH* and *DCA*, on the male heroes. Among the male protagonists, Bartley Alexander (*AB*), Claude Wheeler (*O*), and St. Peter (*PH*), like lost heroines, Marian (*LL*), Myra (*MME*) and Sapphira (*SSG*), have followed the modern trends of romance and love marriage, which have brought their tragedy. Though some of the male characters have taken themselves superior to women in all of these novels, they are not as capable as pioneer women to carry out their creative performances. If Thea's musical voice (*SL*) has been presented as sonorous resounding triumph over her audiences, Fred Ottenburg's voice is ridiculed by his audiences for his artless presentation. But Jean Marie Latours (*DCA*) has shown his missionary zeal advocating the philosophy of life and Catholic Church and making religious tours to find out the transcendental reality.

The advocacy of women's rights along with their responsibilities and her insistence on nurturing both adversary genders together designate Cather as a liberal feminist novelist. Her hesitancy in handing over excessive power on either sex is to keep two rival genders in balance. If powerful, he dominates her, and she dominates him. Her insistence on women's dutiful life is of great importance because duty has generated beauty to their lives. These women's great consciousness about their responsibilities has helped them to keep their rights up because right and duty go together. If Alexandra works hard not only to fertile her land but also to recognize her entity as an independent farmer, Antonia is the goddess of fertility, a mine of life, with her power of productivity.

The feminist novelist has sought to express her feelings and convictions on the persons and things she has experienced and loved most. Their true love for their frontier land and their appreciation to the country life disdaining town have really been the matters of great inspiration for the people living in this dry metropolitan world. Antonia's exaltation to take a breath of relief in Black Hill village being back from Black Hawk town is definitely the exaltation of all rural girls.

In fact, Cather is the first novelist who has concentrated so much on the national life of the American

people. The vast panorama of untamed land, which becomes the meeting place of her pioneer women, has been the major symbol in her novels. So the wilderness of the new land and emotional aspect of the pioneer women have been the symbolic manifestations of the divine power in her novels. In fact, the empty soil of Nebraska, the pioneer women's hard life, her neighbor's music, her friend's Catholic religion and her neighboring pioneer women's culture and the stories of these women's Old Countries have become the plot of her novels. Besides them, the degradation of fraudulent males, the covetous women's love stories and her powerful ancestors' domination over the weak ones have also been given higher priority in her novels. As most of her novels are the forceful assertion of time and place, she is mistakenly charged of a 'historian of the frontier'. In fact, Cather is not the historian but a leading American feminist novelist who has sincerely delineated the impoverished women's life and their true national feelings for their New Countries.

The theme of good and evil people and the struggle between them has been successfully elaborated in all of her novels. The women's problems in the novels have been universalized with those of the actually living women today with a view to generalize their problems. The fictional women, being the simple human beings working hard on earth with their pains and pleasures, joys and sorrows, are the true representatives of all living women in the cosmos. They emotionally weep at their distress and laugh in happiness as the living women do today. So the problems they meet in the journey of their lives resemble with ours. Alexandra's tussle with her foolish brothers in Hanover, Antonia's suffering as a hired girl in Black Hawk and Thea's struggle at the Bowers' Studio in Chicago are all living women's problems in the universe. There are many Donovans and Shabatas who have been betraying many Antonias and killing many Marias in the current world.

The predomination of good and evil characteristics is found in both genders though abundant proof of guilt is seen in the urban males. But in average, there are many good women like Alexandra and Antonia on one hand, on the other hand, the readers can encounter with evil males like Lou, Ambrosch, Wick and Larry causing lots of problems for the women. Again, there are also some evil women like Marian and Myra who have been extremely exploiting the gentlemen like Daniel and Oswald. Mostly, the women from the rich families look deceitful, and those from the poverty-stricken families are found good and honest. But what makes Cather a true feminist novelist is her sincere support for the most dejected farming women, deep affection for the poverty-stricken rural girls in towns and true reflection of the hired girls' problems at corrupt males' hands.

Cather has very efficiently handled the situation of her novels to universalize her women's problems with the problems of living women on earth. Her feminist novels, though written for the women of early 20th century, are more fresh and useful even for the women today. But the novelist's theme in her novels is also to depict the victory of the good over the evil. Frank kills Marie and laments for her in the prison

as a remorse. Mr. Cutter kills his wife and gets suicide. Myra troubles her husband and is killed by herself. But her Alexandra, Thea and Antonia, the good, finally have taken the breath of peace and harmony winning good men's hands in the marriage. This is the poetic justice of her novels.

In Cather's novels, women are given full authority to maintain American civilization continuing social order, culture and religion in the society. The wholeness of these three ingredients constitutes civilization in the novelist's view, which is expected to be preserved by the devoted heroines. According to her, to maintain it is civilization, and not to maintain it is barbarism. This view has been expressed through the mouth of her pioneer woman Mrs. Auclair (*SR*). Alexandra has succeeded to sow her Swedish farming culture in Hanover soil, and Cecile the seed of French culture in savage Quebec. But the novelist has neither accepted puritanic values nor blindly followed Victorian culture, which tends to restrict women only to the kitchen.

'Wholeness', which comes from the two parts, has been the 'key-word' in Cather's fictions. 'Wholeness' has been possible for her women protagonists from the integration of their mind (desire) and body (physical endeavors). Alexandra is identified as a successful earth-mother as she achieves 'wholeness' at her frontier land through her heroic desire and bodily struggle for it. The 'wholeness' of Thea's song is the fusion of her artistic desire and her physical efforts.

Human life has been taken both as a comedy and a tragedy in Cather's novels giving equal importance to both sides. So smiles and tears, marriage and funerals, shouts of joy and sighs are melted in the same cauldron. Life is presented as a comedy to those who work hard, and tragedy to those who spend their luxurious life involving in love, sex and material pursuits. But her characters are allowed neither to make loud laughter at their opponents in her comical novels nor to use too much irony in her tragic novels. Irony and satire are slightly elaborated in her tragic novels like *My Mortal Enemy* and *Sapphira And The Slave Girl*. But the wit and humor elaborated in the novels has led the pioneer women characters to their happiness and prosperity. Though her comical novels come out of her delightful mood and tragic novels out of her dark mood, she has shown great skill in converting the elegiac elements into comical ones in the long run. *Shadows on the Rock*, which is an elegiac novel written on the memory of her own deceased father, has happy ending with its heroine's marriage of the national importance. Generally, her novels are poetic, and her women characters are creative.

Cather's novels are marked with many distinguished features regarding the characterization and dramatic presentation of the events. Still some traces of short-comings also can be felt in them. Firstly, she is not careful about the plot construction of her novels. Secondly, there are several repetitions in the use of her sentences and characters' names. The same name is repeated several times even in a single novel. For example, there are four Marys in *My Antonia* - Mary Savoboda, Mr. Cutter's cook, Mary

Dusak, the laundry girl, Mary Soderball, Mrs. Gardener's hired girl, and Mary Benson, Mr. Ole Benson's crazy wife in *Black Hawk*. Thirdly, some of her novels are disappointing for their bulky sizes and unnecessary details. In *One Of Ours*, the detail account of the First World War events irritates its readers. The novelist herself has accepted her defect for the bulky size of *The Song Of The Lark* and the elaboration of details in it. Fourthly, there is more reflection of the problem than its solution. For example, the problems of unhappy married couple Frank and Marie Shabata have been beautifully presented in *O Pioneers !*, but no attempt has been made to reconcile them. Larry Donovan rapes Antonia and quits off. Daniel Forrester silently watches his wife's amorous scene with her scoundrel lovers through his eyes, but does not protest against them. In spite of these drawbacks, she has introduced a new genre of feminist concept to raise the status of the women in the American society.

Generally Cather is static rather than a visionary, and her novels are the narratives of the life-like fictional men and women of the New Countries. But more than this, she is a psychologist who has studied her women's problems through the psychoanalytical and stream of consciousness techniques. She is taken as a modernist novelist as the form and content of her novels have been molded in the modern context. Her life and art are intermingled, and her style is simple, precise and nostalgic. Her novels exhibit her exquisite workmanship, which perpetuates her dignity as a feminist novelist. But what makes her the successful modernist novelist is the elaboration of the modernist's theme of feminist concerns in her novels and use of the language of common women in the dialectal form.

Though no specific theory on the feminism has been formulated by her, the revolutionary ideas that she has formulated through her novels work as antidotes to bring changes in the American society. Her appeal may have been a Utopian impact on her contemporary Victorian society, but it has come to be absolutely fruitful to the feminist readers today. As she herself is a woman of smiling face in her military cap, she has pleaded for her married women's happiest life in the family through their spiritual union with the long-acquainted understanding husbands. She has neither approved the concept of polyandry nor polygamy nor arranged marriage nor any dissimilar marriage. But she has highly emphasized on the marriage that nicely matches between the co-partners in terms of their age, status and aspiration. If this concept of marriage is considered, the new generations may succeed to establish 'sweet home' avoiding the tragic consequences of the love/dissimilar marriage. The novelist's intention to separate an artist woman from the marriage is not to break the family norm but to develop her artistic career. A married woman trapped in the family cannot run her artistic performances perfectly. So the option altered by her- either a married 'great woman' or an artist woman- is reasonable for the successful life of a woman.

Cather's novels are not only to flash out the hidden truth behind women, they are also to teach something. Urban males are presented as immoral as dogs and as evil as wolves, and the women, as hunted by these powerful males, are forced to lead a hellish life on earth. So they are instructed to be



aware of these deceitful males in the society and strongly resist against them. They are suggested to work hard to earn their bread for their independent life and free thinking and retain their own identity and entity as a woman not depending on males. Again, she has ventured to control such evil males by diminishing their power and giving more autonomy to the women.

Thus Cather has shown great feminist concerns to her women to promote them from their general status. Though she is not an outspoken feminist to lead a feminist movement, she has tactfully undermined the gender-based patriarchal ideology challenging the existing social norm that has mastered men to dominate women. She has also shaken the power-centered western males by creating the world of women 'heroes' in her novels. She has thus shattered these males' dreams to monopolize the territory of the protagonist. She has stood herself as a feminist critic of the masculine conduct snatching away their clothes for herself to delineate it as a vanity and to mock at them. She has attacked sex-exploiters as lady-killers or womanizers. In short, her fearlessness to speak the truth behind women, her hate for the powerful males' politics towards women, and her advocacy for women's social, legal and economic rights are the matters of great feminist concerns which have placed Cather to the circle of the modern feminists. As a feminist novelist, she has intended to change her women's destiny by changing American males' outlook towards them.
