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Sources of Inspiration in Willa Cather's Work

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Sources of Inspiration in Willa Cather's Work

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Zásady pro vypracování:

1. Studentka stručně s využitím relevantní sekundární literatury uvede do literárního kontextu tvorby Willy Catherové. Stručně pojedná o adekvátnosti jejího zařazování do tradice regionální literatury.
2. Jádrem práce bude analýza a srovnání zvolených děl Catherové z hlediska jejích inspiračních zdrojů, jak literárních, tak i mimoliterárních. U literárních vlivů studentka doloží stylistickou, námětovou či jinou souvislost ukázkami z primárních textů. U zdrojů mimoliterárních pak využije spíše komparativní metody z oblasti kulturních studií. Svá tvrzení bude studentka konfrontovat se sekundárními prameny a doloží je též ukázkami ze zvolených primárních děl.
3. Závěrem studentka svou analýzu shrne.

Rozsah grafických prací:

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BENNET, Mildred R. The World of Willa Cather. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961. ISBN 0-8032-5013-4.

BROWN, E.K. Willa Cather; A Critical Biography. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953.

O'BRIEN, Sharon. Willa Cather; The Emerging Voice. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997. ISBN 0-674-95322-3

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the sources of inspiration that were used by Willa Cather in her fiction.

At the beginning, the main sources of inspiration will be established from an overall perspective. After the individual sources of inspiration are analyzed, the thesis will provide analysis of the use of these sources by comparing their importance in four novels: *My Ántonia, Death Comes for the Archbishop, Shadows on the Rock* and *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*.

The paper will conclude by determining whether some of these influences have a stronger presence in Cather's work than others and, if so, what this implies.

Key words:

Willa Cather, sources of inspiration, literary and non-literary influences, *My Ántonia, Death Comes for the Archbishop, Shadows on the Rock, Sapphira and the Slave Girl*

SOUHRN

Hlavním účelem této práce je prozkoumání zdrojů inspirace, které ve svých dílech používala Willa Cather.

Nejprve budou z obecného hlediska určeny hlavní zdroje inspirace. Po prozkoumání jednotlivých zdrojů inspirace, následuje úplná analýza použitých zdrojů porovnáním jejich důležitosti ve čtyřech dílech: *My Ántonia, Death Comes for the Archbishop, Shadows on the Rock* a *Sapphira and the Slave Girl.*

Na závěr se tato práce pokusí určit, zda je jeden z těchto vlivů silnější než ostatní a pokud ano, který je nejdůležitější v dílech Willy Cather.

Klíčová slova:

Willa Cather, zdroje inspirace, literární a neliterární vlivy, *My Ántonia, Death Comes for the Archbishop, Shadows on the Rock, Sapphira and the Slave Girl*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Willa Cather is one of the most distinguished and recognized authors of American fiction. Her works span from the period between 1891, when her first essay appeared in her university journal, to 1940, when her last novel *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* was published. This time period, especially earlier on, was not favourable for female writers. Nevertheless, Cather managed to succeed and her novels and short stories were well regarded by critics and readers.

The keys to Cather's success were certainly not only her extraordinary ability to write, but also her choice of material and subject matter. In a time when high society and sophisticated Jamesian settings and characters were popular, Cather chose to write about ordinary people from ordinary towns. She used Nebraska, which was considered uninteresting farming country at her time, as her preferred locale. Cather also focused on immigrants and their struggle in a new country and managed to present them and their stories in a way that interested the American public. This public interest remains strong today both among casual readers and academics.

As interest in Cather's work has increased over the years, so too has critical attention. Cather and her works continue to be analyzed from various points of view by biographers and critics. Most frequently, critiques have examined Cather's work from the perspective of her being a female writer in male-centred society or from the point of view of her being a lesbian in a world where such an orientation was socially forbidden. This paper, however, will not rely on the speculation depended on to defend these particular points of view. Rather, it will focus on ways in which Cather was influenced by sources of inspiration that can be easily documented from facts known of her life. The sources of inspiration that will be identified are both literary and non-literary in nature and will be tracked in Cather's works on this basis. This paper will analyze the utilization of these sources of inspiration and will examine several works in order to show the degree to which Cather relied upon them.

The first section of this paper will put Cather into literary context with regard to her works and two literary styles, realism and regionalism, common at the time period during which she wrote. The second part will focus on documenting specific sources of

inspiration that occurred in various works written by Cather. This section will be divided into two parts: the first one will focus on literary sources, including the influence of Henry James, Sarah Orne Jewett and other authors; the second one will look at non-literary ones, specifically Cather's memories and experiences, real people and real places appearing in her novels. The third section of the paper will analyze the previously mentioned sources of inspiration as they appear in four of Cather's novels: *My Ántonia*, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, *Shadows on the Rock* and *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*. At the end, it will be determined whether any of these sources of inspiration had a stronger influence over Cather's fiction than others and what this might imply.

2. CATHER IN CONTEXT

Cather was a prolific writer of short stories and novels during her career. These works were published between 1903 and 1940 and tell stories set in a variety of locations in the United States and abroad. This section will introduce some of Cather's more significant works and describe their stories and characters. It will then discuss Cather in terms of critical interpretations of her work and the literary movements she is considered to be a part of.

2.1 Cather's works in summary

Cather published her first short stories while still studying at the University of Nebraska. In 1903, she published a book of poetry called *April Twilights*. Notable in this work is the presence of many motifs and impressions seen in her later novels. Two years later, Cather completed a book of short stories, *The Troll Garden*, which includes six of her stories: "Flavia and Her Artists", "The Sculptor's Funeral", "The Garden Lodge", "A Death in the Desert", "The Marriage of Phaedra", "A Wagner Matinee" and "Paul's Case".

Cather's first novel, *Alexander's Bridge*, was published in 1911. In her 1931 essay "My First Novels (There Were Two)", Cather dismissed this novel as a "studio picture" and said she preferred *O Pioneers!* to be regarded as her first novel (Wasserman). *Alexander's Bridge* is partly inspired by the real life tragedy of a bridge collapse, but mostly it follows a formula of writing that is not yet her own.

In her next novel, *O Pioneers!* (1912), Cather found a more personal literary style and theme. The novel originated from two separate short stories, "The White Mulberry Tree" and "Alexandra". The former is about a husband who kills his wife and her lover, the latter about a Swedish girl managing a farm on the Divide. Cather put both stories together and, as Woodress observes, "made the country a hero" (141) in a novel about pioneering times and taming wild land. This was the first novel that Cather considered to be ultimately hers, meaning she wrote about her own material in her own voice. Cather claimed that this was the book she had always wanted to write (Woodress, 142). As if to mirror Cather's own feelings about her novel, reviews welcomed it with

enthusiasm and noted Nebraska as "a new country for American fiction" (Woodress, 143).

The next book Cather published was *The Song of the Lark* (1915), which is about a musically talented girl from a small town in Colorado. Even though the main character Thea Kronborg is largely inspired by Cather's friend Olive Fremstad, a famous opera singer, her life seems to paraphrase Cather's. Like Cather, Thea also moves east to fulfill her dream and comes back from the Southwest with a decision to become an artist. Similarly mirroring Cather's life is *My Ántonia* (1918). Cather started to write *My Ántonia* after she visited her old friend, an immigrant woman Anna Pavelka (Brown, 199). Although the novel's narrator is male, the story clearly draws on Cather's childhood and life on the prairie.

After *The Song of the Lark* and *My Ántonia*, Cather produced another book of short stories. Cather took four stories from *The Troll Garden*, added four new stories and published them under the name *Youth and the Bright Medusa*. Following this, Cather's only war novel, *One of Ours* (1922), appeared. It is inspired by the outbreak of World War I in Europe and the changing atmosphere on the Nebraska prairie. The story tells about a young man confused by the new, faster and more money-centred life on the prairie. The protagonist eventually finds the real meaning of life in the army and war. Willa Cather was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for this novel in 1923. The next book she wrote was called *A Lost Lady* (1923). This book also describes the change from old times to new, modern times. *A Lost Lady* is about the decline of a once important woman who loses both her husband and money in a small town.

Cather's next three novels centre around her beliefs and opinions on religion. As in her previous two works, *The Professor's House* (1925) expresses Cather's grief over the changes that the new century brought. Though not overtly religious, the book displays religious ideas through its themes, atmosphere and stance on change (Brown, 246). Cather reflects changing times through two separate houses that the professor, St. Peter, lives in: the first house is his home where he feels comfortable and where he lives through happy times; when his lease in this house ends, he must move to a second one which is new and modern. Though his wife and daughters want him to live there, the professor clings desperately to his old house and metaphorically to the old regime. In *My Mortal Enemy* (1926), Cather describes two phases in the life of a woman who first

gives up her money to marry, but later regrets how marriage detached her from religion. The last of Cather's religious novels is *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927). It tells the story of Archbishop Latour and his friend Father Vaillant, two French missionary priests bringing Catholicism to New Mexico. In this book, Cather merges her initial interest in pioneers and her more recent interest in religion.

In 1931, Cather published *Shadows on the Rock*, a novel about the original colonists of the city of Quebec. The plot of the book centres on the fictional family of a Quebec apothecary and many real-life characters and components from the colonization of French Canada in the 17th century. Cather compares the point of view of a French born father on his new life with the view of his daughter, who already considers her home to be Canada.

In 1932, Cather published a book of short stories called *Obscure Destinies*. The book consists of three tales: "Neighbour Rosicky", "Old Mrs. Harris" and "Two Friends". The next novel Cather wrote was *Lucy Gayheart* (1935). It resembles her earlier work, *The Song of the Lark*. *Lucy Gayheart* is also a story about a musically talented girl from a small town, but unlike *The Song of the Lark*, where the heroine eventually succeeds in her profession, this book ends with the tragic death of the main character.

In her last book, Cather returns to her childhood memories of Virginia. *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* was published in 1940 and describes the lives of a rich Virginian slave owner and her young slave, Nancy. The book's story tells of Sapphira, who sets Nancy up to be raped. The young girl escapes with the help of Sapphira's daughter and returns to her mother after many years apart.

2.2 Cather and realism

Hart defines realism as the "term applied to literary composition that aims at an interpretation of the actualities of any aspect of life, free from subjective prejudice, idealism, or romantic color" (625). Drabble sees the realistic movement as insistent on "accurate documentation, sociological insight, and accumulation of the details of material fact, an avoidance of poetic diction, idealization, exaggeration, melodrama, etc" (841). According to Holman, realism emerged as a "reaction against romanticism"

(365) and it protested against romantic "falseness and sentimentality" (366). Both Drabble and Holman describe realist subject matter as derived from average life, yet while Drabble claims it to be derived from "lower-class life" (841), Holman argues that "middle-class society constituted the chief subject matter" (367).

American realism was a movement of writing that was most popular in the period of time between the Civil War and the end of 19th century. During this period, social, political and economic conditions in America dramatically changed, as large-scale urbanization began, the industrial revolution shifted the national economy from agriculture to factory production and the population grew significantly due to a huge influx of immigrants (Penrose). These changes and the often-negative social conditions they brought about led authors to write "fiction devoted to accurate representation and an exploration of American lives in various contexts" (Campbell). According to Penrose, "American realists believed that humanity's freedom of choice was limited by the power of outside forces" but nevertheless, their "tone was often comic, frequently satiric, seldom grim or somber" (Holman, 367). According to Penrose, the main characteristics of realism are:

- Ethical character is more important than action and plot and is often the subject;
- Characters are in realistic relation to nature, each other, their social class and their past;
- Humans control their destinies;
- Reality is presented with an emphasis on believability, even at the expense of a well-formed plot;
- Events in realist novels are usually plausible. They avoid the sensational, dramatic elements of naturalistic novels and romances;
- Class is important; novels usually serve the interests of the middle class.

Among the most influential American realists are William Dean Howells, Henry James, Edith Wharton, Ellen Glasgow and Mark Twain.

Most literary critics place Cather among realists. Their main reason is that Cather's plots and characters are believable and her writing technique shows the characteristics described above. The article "Pioneer Opportunities in Faulkner and Cather" (www.thepequod.org.uk) supports this position, stating "Cather's [work] is essentially realist in its technique, uses the established modes of myth, epic and pastoral, but looks forward". Further supporting the idea of Cather as a realist, Norris

claims in her article "Willa Cather" that what makes *My Ántonia* so significant is also "her thoroughly realistic picture of the lives of Nebraska homesteaders". Cather often pictures her characters as ordinary and they act in highly complex contexts. The characters are often influenced by outside force, but they ultimately determine their own fate. Cather also presents reality and everyday activities in detail.

On the other hand, many critics find it difficult to include Cather strictly among realistic writers. In his article, Woodress argues that Cather herself thought about her writing as being in the romantic tradition. He states further, "Cather too is sometimes lumped among the realists by those who have not read her carefully". Similarly, Wells does not see Cather simply as a realist. In her article "Magic Realism and the Writings of Sarah Orne Jewett, Kate Chopin and Willa Cather", she classifies Cather in terms of magical realism, which differs from realism in its acceptance of the extraordinary. Nevertheless she admits that even though Cather writes about magical matter, her characters never accept it as reality. Wells concludes that Cather, "along with her characters, is too much grounded in 'this world.'"

2.3 Cather as regionalist writer

Literary scholars describe regionalism as fiction characterized by strong connections to one geographical region and "its habits, speech, manners, history, folklore, or beliefs" (Holman, 373). In *The Oxford Companion to American Literature*, Hart further describes regionalism as an "intellectual movement emphasizing a recent preoccupation with locality" and specifies that the term "is applied to a large body of realistic fiction" (630). Hart gives examples of different regions: New England, Eastern states, Prairie region, Plains region, Mississippi River, South, Southwest, and Northwest (630). In his article "American Regionalism and Local Color Literature", Royal supports Hart's opinion that regional writing is closely connected to realism when he claims "regional literature incorporates the broader concept of sectional differences, and in many ways can be directly linked to realism". Holman's *A Handbook to Literature* asserts that regionalism of the 20th century expresses "itself in literature through the conscious seeking out in the local and in the particular of those aspects of the human character and the human dilemma common to all people in all ages and places" (373).

Holman points out that the main characteristic of regional work is that its characters and plots "cannot be moved, without major loss or distortion, to any other geographical setting" (373). According to Royal, among other characteristics of regionalism is the choice of setting that is often far from accessible civilization. Moreover, in many cases, the setting may take the role of a character of the story. Also, stories are based on storytelling and center around the community and its customs. Frequently, regional writers use specific dialect of the region in order to establish the genuineness of the setting. Regional works also contain detailed descriptions in order to help the reader understand the region better. Often, the main plot includes an inserted short story about the same or another region (Royal).

Both Hart and Holman include Cather among regionalist writers. These writers point out that Cather often sets her stories in a remote region that is accessible only by primitive ways of transportation, such as horse-riding and walking. In his article "The Politics of Cather's Regionalism: Margins, Centers and the Nebraskan Commonwealth", Reynolds agrees with this perspective, suggesting that "Cather's early fiction still carries with it a strong sense of the sheer remoteness, inaccessibility and concomitant exoticism of the rural world she grew up in" (4). He gives the example from *My Ántonia* of Jim Burden's voyage to visit Antonia, which starts with the train, continues by carriage and ends on foot. Writers placing Cather among regionalists also cite examples of people and their habits, manners and beliefs. This can be seen in many of her books set in Nebraska, specifically *O Pioneers!* and *My Ántonia*. In these books, Cather often stresses the role of the landscape to the point of it being an unmovable part of the story. This point is strengthened by Cather's detailed descriptions of different aspects of community life, such as their homes, customs, or daily activities. In her books, Cather often interrupts the main plot with another story that is not overtly connected with the central one told by one of the characters from his hometown or a place he visited previously. One example of an inserted story is the tale about wolves told by Russian Peter and Paul in *My Ántonia*.

While it displays many characteristics of regionalism, it can be argued that Cather's work shows many signs of not being of a regionalist nature. The setting of many of her novels and short stories does not include only one particular geographical region. Her books are set in various sections of the United States and a number of them

take place in different settings. Throughout her career, Cather wrote novels set in Nebraska, Colorado, New Mexico, Virginia, Canada and even in France. Reynolds claims "it would be hard to say where the imaginative centre of her work is, since it ranges geographically across variety of spaces and regions" (12). Reynolds calls Cather a "pro-European American" (7), alluding to her blending of America and Europe. Furthermore, he points out that Cather transmits European culture to the Western prairies when she writes about immigrants. Cather's stories concern individuals and their development rather than the community as a whole, which is common in regional literature. If it was necessary, the plots could often be moved to a different setting without losing their meaning. The use of dialects, which is another characteristic of regionalism, is not present in Cather's fiction even though she occasionally uses foreign words in appropriate places in her books.

Overall, the question of Cather being a regionalist writer is not easily answered. Her fiction includes signs of regionalism as well as indicators of not belonging to it. Cather's novels are set in particular and significant places, but the diversity of these places is so great that it is difficult to connect her strictly to regionalism. As Reynolds states, "the desire to create an overall regionalist paradigm for her work rubs up against the sheer heterogeneity of the work" (14). According to Wasserman, Cather herself refused to play the role of regionalist writer: "For her, the sketch, the local scene, local color for its own sake, were not enough. She was always angered by being placed with the regional realists."

3. LITERARY INFLUENCES

From the beginning of her career, Cather was influenced by many literary personalities, both contemporary and historical. Traces of these influences can be found throughout Cather's writing, showing their great importance to the writer. This section will introduce Cather's primary literary influences, including the most significant ones, Henry James and Sarah Orne Jewett, and others referenced by Cather and her biographers.

3.1 Henry James

At the beginning of her career, Cather's writing was significantly influenced by the work of Henry James. James was arguably at the peak of his popularity at the time and as Cather was developing her style, she would clearly have had a great deal of exposure to his works. O'Brien's *Willa Cather: The Emerging Voice* quotes Cather speaking on James: "No one seemed so wonderful as Henry James; for me, he was the perfect writer" (297). Out of her admiration for him, Cather deliberately imitated James in her early writing. In an interview for New York World, Cather stated: "All students imitate, and I began by imitating Henry James" (*Willa Cather in Person*).

James' influence shows in many ways in Cather's early writing. One example is that Cather concerned herself with many of the same themes as James. Woodress comments on this fact, saying that while in this phase of her writing, Cather "became increasingly fascinated with the problems of artists and their relationships" (introduction to *The Troll Garden*, xiv). Similarly, a motif that can be found both in Cather's short story "The Willing Muse" (1907) and James' novel *The Sacred Fount* (1901) describes "a parasitic, vampire-like relationship in which one partner thrives at the other's expense" (O'Brien, 294). Cather and James' mutual interest in these themes, artists and parasitic relationships, appears in a number of her stories, for example "Flavia and Her Artists" (1905), "Marriage of Phaedra" (1905), "The Willing Muse", "The Count of Crow's Nest" (1896) and her first novel *Alexander's Bridge* (1912).

In addition to using many of the same themes as James, Cather imitated his settings, narration and dialogue. For example, international settings can be found in the

short stories “Eleanor’s house” (1907) and “The Willing Muse”, both of which are set entirely in Europe. Similarly, her novel *Alexander’s Bridge* is partly set in London. Examples of Jamesian observers, “[a character] outside the social circle represented in the texts, who records the foibles of those whom he is watching” (Walton), are present in *Alexander’s Bridge* in the character of Professor Lucius Wilson and in the short story “The Count of Crow’s Nest”. Similar to James’ observers, who the author uses in order to comment on relations among people, Cather’s Lucius Wilson serves as a commentator on Bartley’s intimate relationships, though he seems to be more reserved in his comments than James’ observers. Stylized dialogues, or ones that are unlike conversations that can be heard in real life (Iyer), can be found in any work in which Cather imitated James. Examples are probably the most obvious in *Alexander’s Bridge*.

Parallels can be drawn between Cather’s novel *Alexander’s Bridge* and James’ *The Sacred Fount*, which feature many of the characteristics described above. Regarding setting, both novels take place in international cities; *Alexander’s Bridge* is set partly in Boston and partly in London; *The Sacred Fount* is set in Newmarch, England. All the events of the stories happen during long talks in drawing- and dining-rooms. Also, the Jamesian observer is present in both; Lucius Wilson in *Alexander’s Bridge*, who comments on events from Bartley’s life; and in *The Sacred Fount*, the narrator serves the same function. Stylized conversations can be found in both novels. Two excerpts show examples. The first one from Cather’s *Alexander’s Bridge*:

> “I’ll do anything you wish me to, Bartley,” she said tremulously. “I can’t stand seeing you miserable.”
> “I can’t live with myself any longer,” he answered roughly.
> He rose and pushed the chair behind him and began to walk miserably about the room, seeming to find it too small for him. He pulled up a window as if the air were heavy.
> Hilda watched him from her corner, trembling and scarcely breathing, dark shadows growing about her eyes.
> “It … it hasn’t always made you miserable, has it? Her eyelids fell and her lips quivered.
> “Always. But it’s worse now. It’s unbearable. It tortures me every minute.” (44)

The second from James’ *The Sacred Fount*:

> "If I do I shall see a great deal more than I now suspect." He wanted to get off to dress, but I still held him. "Isn't she wonderfully lovely?"

"Oh!" he simply exclaimed.
"Isn't she as lovely as she seems?"
But he had already broken away. "What has that to do with it?"
"What has anything, then?"
"She's too beastly unhappy."
"But isn't that just one's advantage?"
"No. It's uncanny." And he escaped.

In these two intercourses, the degree to which they differ from common real-life talk can be noted. Their syntactic structure seems to be artificially stylized in order to serve the purpose of the particular conversation. Similarly, they sound unreal when compared to dialogue that can be heard in real life. The manner in which the characters speak seems to be overly stiff and formal. It is highly improbable that real people would produce this type of dialogue.

Another example of how Cather followed James' style is in how she arranged her first book of short stories, *The Troll Garden*. In James' book *The Two Magics* (1898), he puts a story with black magic elements full of evil, "The Turn of the Screw", next to a cheerful and bright story of white magic, "Covering End" (Brown, 114). In *The Troll Garden*, Cather's stories are divided into two similarly-themed sections. "Flavia and Her Artists", "The Garden Lodge"(1905), and "The Marriage of Phaedra" show artists' in connection to rich people; "The Sculptor's Funeral" (1905), "A Death in the Desert" (1903), and "A Wagner Matinee" (1904) tell about artists or people of an artistic disposition from the prairie who come back to it defeated. Cather precedes her two main themes by using two epigraphs; a quotation from Kingsley's "The Roman and the Teuton" describes an invasion of a beautiful and fertile troll garden (Rome) by barbarians (forest people); and a passage from Rossetti's poem "The Goblin Market" about a girl who saves her sister, who has been seduced by goblins (Woodress, 104). According to Brown, like James' *The Two Magics,* Cather's two strands in *The Troll Garden* are the baleful and the sunny, the evil-working goblins and the industrious trolls" (114).

By imitating James, Cather succumbed to pressure from a "literary culture that praised James' work and praised young writers who wrote in his manner" (O'Brien, 301). Cather's Jamesian stories show that as a developing writer, she was "not working in her native idiom but in something like a foreign language" (O'Brien, 305). Under the influence of James, Cather's characters produced long speeches, which often sounded

overly formal and made the protagonists seem unintentionally artificial. Later, Cather would claim that by imitating James "she was losing her command of language as well as her literary identity" and she became aware that "she lacked the originality and power to be a really original literary talent" (O'Brien, 308). Clearly, at this stage in her career, Cather was prepared to find new sources of inspiration.

3.2 Sarah Orne Jewett

Another writer that influenced Cather's work and career is Sarah Orne Jewett. Cather met Jewett, a great local-colour writer of the 19th century, while working in Boston in 1908. There are significant similarities in the lives of Cather and Jewett that helped to establish their friendship. Like Cather, Jewett grew up in a small town. Both writers had close relationships with older people and frequently moved around the country they loved (Brown, 139). Despite their similarities, though, the writers differed in the subjects they were writing on at the time they met. Unlike Cather, who in her early writing was preoccupied with the theme of artists, Jewett wrote about her own country and its people. Jewett was dissatisfied with Cather's Jamesian stories and felt that "these stories revealed no deepening of the author's inward life, no ripening of her talent" (Brown, 140). It was Jewett who gave Cather probably the most important advice of her career. Jewett advised Cather to write about her own material. In a letter to Cather, she wrote: "Write it as it is, don't try to make it like this or that. You can't do it in anybody else's way – you will have to make a way of your own" (O'Brien, 345).

It seems that Cather listened to Jewett's advice as she further developed her writing. Jewett was enthusiastic about Cather's story "On the Gull's Road", but she had some reservations about it. In her letter to Cather, she wrote: "if you don't keep and guard and mature your force, and above all, have time and quiet to perfect your work, you will be writing things not much better than you did five years ago" (Woodress, 122). In her next story, "The Enchanted Bluff", Cather drew on her childhood memories from Nebraska as subject matter, directly following her friend's advice (O'Brien, 349).

The impact of Jewett's advice to Cather concerning subject matter and style of writing is most evident in Cather's second novel, *O Pioneers!* (1913). In this book, she used her own theme and style. She wrote about the Nebraska of her youth and structured the story in an episodic manner, which helped to stress the important role of

the land in the novel because it enabled Cather to include the land in a natural manner. Later, Cather declared that "This was the first time I walked off on my own feet – everything before was half real and half an imitation of writers whom I admired" (Woodress, 143).

Even more particular signs of Jewett's influence can be found in Cather's fiction. Cather's story, "On the Gull's Road" (1908), in certain ways, resembles Jewett's work. Similar to Jewett's stories, the narrator of "On the Gull's Road" becomes the storyteller by chance after opening a gift from his long lost lover. The motif of giving gifts is also often present in Jewett's work, where it represents intimacy and storytelling (O'Brien, 368). Furthermore, Jewett's own illness might have inspired Cather to create the seriously ill character, Alexandra, in "On the Gull's Road" (O'Brien, 369). In "The Joy of Nelly Deane" (1911), Cather, for the first time, uses Jewett's main theme, the affection between women, and depicts a female community in which "the mother-daughter bond is the strongest affectional tie" (O'Brien, 373). Like Jewett's "Martha's Lady" (1897), this story presents a supportive female friendship. Moreover, Cather linked "The Joy of Nelly Deane" to Jewett even more obviously by reusing the name of Jewett's character Mrs. Dow from "The Flight of Betsey Lane" (O'Brien, 373-374).

Other books that can be compared from the point of view of similar elements are Cather's *Shadows on the Rock* (1931) and *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896) written by Jewett. In these books, both authors placed similarly themed stories roughly in the middle of their novels. Cather tells a story of a reclusive nun, Jeanne Le Ber, and Jewett presents a story about a voluntary hermit, Joanna Todd. Both women choose to live in solitude, but for different reasons. While Jeanne becomes a recluse to be closer to God, Joanna considers her hermit's life a punishment for her sins. When Joanna is asked to come back to live with other people, she answers:

> "I've done the only thing I could do, and I've made my choice. I feel a great comfort in your kindness, but I don't deserve it. I have committed the unpardonable sin; you don't understand," says she humbly. "I was in great wrath and trouble, and my thoughts was so wicked towards God that I can't expect ever to be forgiven. I have come to know what it is to have patience, but I have lost my hope. You must tell those that ask how't is with me,' she said, 'an' tell them I want to be alone." (*The Country of the Pointed Firs*)

Similarly, when Jeanne is confronted by her childhood friend, she refuses to retreat from her seclusion and instead she promises her prayers:

> "She told me it would be better if I left her father, and that I must marry. *I will always pray for you,* she said, *and when you have children, I will pray for them. As long as we are both in this world, you may know I pray for you every day; that God may preserve you from sudden death without repentance, and that we may meet in heaven."* (*Shadows on the Rock*, 145)

Both Joanna and Jeanne's decisions to live in seclusion are influenced by their religious beliefs. Joanna chooses her own punishment for her sinful thoughts against God and Jeanne hopes to become closer to God by her isolation from other people. Jewett and Cather, however, do not seem to put much religious emphasis on these episodes. Jewett simply tries to depict the local colour of the region and Cather uses Jeanne to stress the importance of religion to French pioneers of Quebec in 17th century.

In her article "The Hermit's Parish: Jeanne Le Ber and Cather's Legacy from Jewett", Romines observes that although Jeanne and Joanna refused to live conventional home and family lives, they are both involved in domestic work. Jeanne embroiders "beautiful altar-cloths and vestments which went out from her stone chamber to churches all over the province" (*Shadows on the Rock*, 109). Joanna dedicates her time to braid "some beautiful mats for the floor and a thick cushion for the long bunk" (*The Country of the Pointed Firs*).

Both Cather and Jewett profited from their deep but short friendship. Near the end of her life, Jewett got the chance to be a guide and mentor for a younger writer. She took advantage of this opportunity and offered priceless literary advice to Cather (O'Brien, 335). Jewett helped Cather to find more unique subject matter in her Nebraska memories and led her to stop imitating the works of other writers. The result of this relationship was Cather's book *O Pioneers!*, which is a reflection of how Cather followed the advice given to her by Jewett. Through this book, Cather established herself as a recognized fiction writer. In his book *Willa Cather: A Literary Life*, Woodress claims that the reviewers of *O Pioneers!* "recognized Cather as a new voice in American literature and her locale as a new country for American fiction" (Woodress, 143).

3.3 Other literary influences

Henry James and Sarah Orne Jewett were undoubtedly the most important influences on Cather, yet her writing was further inspired by a number of other literary sources. Another writer who had an extraordinary impact on Cather was the English poet A. E. Housman, the author of a volume of poetry *A Shropshire Lad* (1896). Cather found Housman's poetry before he became a recognized poet and considered him "genuine" and "rare" (Brown, 105-106). She admired his work so greatly that she paid him an embarrassing visit during her European travel of summer 1902 in which Housman first mistook her and her friends for his Canadian cousins. During the visit, Cather failed to involve herself in a purposeful conversation with Housman (Brown, 107-108). Despite her discouraging experience, she later imitated his style in the poem "In Media Vita" in her first poetry book *April Twilights* (Brown, 110):

Lads and their sweethearts lying
  In the cleft o' the windy hill;
Hearts that hushed of their sighing,
  Lips that are tender and still.
Stars in the purple gloaming,
  Flowers that suffuse and fall,
Twitter of bird-mates homing,
  And the dead, under all!

Compared with Housman's poem "Into my heart on air that kills", Cather's verses seem to be a close imitation of Housman's style and sentiment:

Into my heart on air that kills
From yon far country blows:
What are those blue remembered hills,
What spires, what farms are those?

That is the land of lost content,
I see it shining plain,
The happy highways where I went
And cannot come again.

In addition to Hausman and other poets such as Virgil, Rossetti and Horace, Cather drew from several more in her work. One of the most obvious is illustrated in the name of her second novel *O Pioneers!*, which is undoubtedly derived from Whitman's poem "O Pioneers! O Pioneers!" which bears a similar motif of western pioneers. An interviewer in 1913 stated "There is the wise, clean-earthed philosophy of Whitman in the selection of the book's theme." In choosing this motif, Cather expressed her "desire to represent her work as the product of indigenous American materials" (O'Brien, 422).

4. NON-LITERARY INFLUENCES

Despite being strongly inspired by great authors and their works, Cather was also importantly influenced by non-literary sources. While there are many of these sources, critics and authors of Cather's biographies often cite her sexual orientation as a primary source of inspiration for her books. Several themes used consistently in Cather's writing are used to support this perspective. Among these are the absence of happy marriages and common woman-man relationships and her persistent use of male narrators. Although these commonalities can be used as evidence to support the argument that Cather's sexuality was a primary influence on her writing, one could just as easily argue that Cather's other common themes, immigrants, artists and Nebraska prairies, bear no relation whatsoever to her sexuality. It is best, therefore, to base discussions of Cather's non-literary influences around known facts. It is obvious that her most influential non-literary sources were her memories and situations she experienced, real people she met during her life and various places she visited.

4.1 Memories and personal experience

In many of her novels and stories, Cather used memories and experiences from her childhood. In an interview in 1921, she said that the "years from eight to fifteen are the formative period in a writer's life, when he unconsciously gathers basic material" (Brown, 3). For Cather, this is certainly true. In most of her books, she deals with immigrants and their lives in Nebraska, which she had a chance to become familiar with after she moved to Nebraska with her family at the age of ten and before she left for university when she was 17. In addition, her earlier memories of Virginia also found their way into her fiction, though at a much later time in 1940, when *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* came out.

Cather's earliest memories are projected in many of her short stories in which she describes childhood play with her oldest brothers Douglass and Roscoe. In "Eric Hermannson's Soul" (1900), she lets the protagonist, Eric, and Margaret climb the windmill to look at the moon as she and her brother Roscoe once did. Unlike Cather and her brother, who got exposed to the strong wind while on the windmill and had

difficulty getting down (Bennett, 33), Eric and Margaret experienced calmer weather and a more idyllic setting, as described by Cather:

> Once at the top and seated on the platform, they were silent. Margaret wondered if she would not hunger for that scene all her life, through all the routine of the days to come. Above them stretched the great Western sky, serenely blue, even in the night, with its big, burning stars, never so cold and dead and far away as in denser atmospheres. The moon would not be up for twenty minutes yet, and all about the horizon, that wide horizon, which seemed to reach around the world, lingered a pale white light, as of a universal dawn. The weary wind brought up to them the heavy odours of the cornfields. The music of the dance sounded faintly from below ("Eric Hermannson's Soul").

Similarly, the short stories "The Treasure of Far Island" and "The Way of the World" describe one of Cather's childhood plays. Cather and her friends created a packing box town, which they called "Sandy Point" and they each obtained the role of a respectful town citizen (Woodress, 37). In the first story "The Treasure of Far Island", the character named after Cather's brother Douglass, builds a similar town of packing boxes (O'Brien, 264). In the second story "The Way of the World", the all-boy box town created by Speckle is invaded by a girl called Mary Eliza. The description of the town from "The Way of the World", which is much like Cather's, follows:

> In Speckle Burnham's back yard were half-a-dozen store boxes of large dimensions, placed evenly in a row against the side of the barn, and there was Speckle's empire. It had long been a cherished project of the boys on Speckle's street to collect their scattered lemonade stands and sidewalk booths and organize a community; but without Speckle's wonderful executive ability the thing would never have been possible. ("The Way of the World")

Other biographical traits from Cather's childhood can be found in the novel *The Song of the Lark*. At the beginning of the book, Cather describes Thea's serious illness and a doctor tending to her. Cather experienced a similar situation when their family doctor, Dr. McKeeby, cured her for a disease that may have been polio (Woodress, 34). Moreover, Cather grants Thea similar customs she had as a little girl. Like Thea, Cather also pulled her younger brother on a cart through town (Brown, 298). In the same novel, Cather also imprinted her feelings about leaving Red Cloud for studies at the University in Lincoln. Thea leaves fictional Moonstone at a similar age Cather left Red Cloud,

even though Thea is a little younger, but they both feel a kind of relief to leave the "humdrum existence" in a small town (Foreword to *The Song of the Lark*, xx).

The motif of leaving a small town for a bigger one can additionally be found in "Old Mrs. Harris", in which the daughter wants to go to university. This story also features an episode from Cather's life when the grandmother, Mrs. Harris, borrows money in order to send her granddaughter to university. In reality, it was the father who took a loan to make it possible for Cather to study (O'Brien, 27).

In addition to her childhood memories, which generally range from her tenth to her seventeenth year of age, Cather used experiences from her later life. Many events and situations in her books were inspired by her visits to the Southwest. "Tom Outland's Story" which is inserted in Cather's novel *The Professor's House*, is largely based on Cather's visit to Mesa Verde in 1915 (O'Brien, 409). Similarly, certain parts of the novel *The Song of the Lark* are inspired by Cather's experiences in Southwest, specifically her trip to Arizona in 1912. There in Walnut Canyon, Cather made a crucial decision about her future career and came back determined to become a writer. She later lent this strong emotional response to the Southwestern setting to Thea in *The Song of the Lark*:

> It was while she was in this abstracted state, waiting for the clock to strike, that Thea at last made up her mind what she was going to try to do in the world, and that she was going to Germany to study without further loss of time. Only by the merest chance had she ever got to Panther Cañon. There was certainly no kindly Providence that directed one's life; and one's parents did not in the least care what became of one, so long as one did not misbehave and endanger their comfort. One's life was at the mercy of blind chance. She had better take it in her own hands and lose everything than meekly draw the plough under the rod of parental guidance. (*The Song of the Lark*, 276)

Similarly, Cather's most famous novel, *O Pioneers!*, shows signs of being partly inspired by the Southwest. During her 1912 trip, she experienced a short love affair with Julio, a young Mexican, who showed her a completely different culture. Later Cather used this experience when she was writing *O Pioneers!*, specifically about Emil's life in the Southwest.

Like her use of trips to the American Southwest, Cather draws on her European travels of 1902. Cather drew from the feeling she had during her European trip in her

only war novel, *One of Ours*. Similar to Cather, Claude, the main character of her book, with his farming background, feels uncivilized in French culture. He, as well as Cather, is not able to communicate in French, which is illustrated in the episode with a French child who asks Claude a question but he is only able to stare at him because he does not understand (O'Brien, 250). Claude's feelings at this particular moment could be Cather's:

> A little boy in a black apron, with a close-shaved, bare head, came along, skipping rope. He hopped lightly up to Claude and said in a most persuasive and confiding voice: *"Voulez-vous me dire l'heure, s'il vous plait, M'sieu' l'soldat?"* Claude looked down into his admiring eyes with a feeling of panic. He wouldn't mind being dumb to a man, or even to a pretty girl, but this was terrible. (*One of Ours*, 265)

Unlike Claude, his companion David is well-educated, fluent in French and seems to understand French culture and people. Cather also travelled with a friend with similar features, the sophisticated and well-educated Dorothy Canfield. According to O'Brien, Cather later admitted that in the relationship between Claude and David, she described her then relationship with Canfield (249).

Some of the short stories in *The Troll Garden* are also inspired by incidents in Cather's real life. "The Sculptor's Funeral" is based on two personal experiences: the first one is a memory of the return of a body of a Red Cloud boy who died elsewhere to his parents; the second one is inspired by her presence at the Stanley Reinhart's funeral in Pittsburgh (introduction to *The Troll Garden*, xxi). Similarly, "Paul's Case" illustrates Cather's experience. This time, she was inspired by a boy she had taught and who pretended to know local actors in order to make himself interesting; and by the story of two boys who stole their employer's money and escaped to Chicago (Woodress, 105).

4.2 Real people

In her writing, Cather used fictional characters as well as characters based on real people. Although Cather's friends and family members recognize real people in many of her characters, according to Bennett, she stated that she had "never drawn but

one portrait of an actual person. That was the mother of the neighbor family in *My Ántonia*" (59). Bennett further cites Cather talking about using real people as portraits for fictional ones: "It seems so cold blooded, so heartless, so indecent almost, to present an actual person in that intimate fashion, stripping his very soul" (22). No matter what Cather said, characteristic traits of real people can be often found in her work. Some of the fictional people bear only partial characteristics of their portrayals and others show the whole personality of the real person. Furthermore, some of them Cather tended to reuse in different stories.

In many of her books and novels, Cather used members of her own family as a source for her fictional characters. Her mother, Virginia Cather, appears in the short story "The Profile", where the character even bears her first name. Also, a virtue of Cather's mother can be found in a description of Thea's mother in *The Song of the Lark*, in the way that she, like Cather's mother, recognizes the exceptionality of her daughter. Virginia Cather appears again as Sapphira Colbert in *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* and as Virginia Templeton in "Old Mrs. Harris". Cather and her siblings admired their mother for her beauty and their common admiration can be seen in passages Cather wrote about Mrs. Templeton in "Old Mrs. Harris":

> Mrs. Templeton came in with a tray of tumblers and the glass pitcher all frosted over. Mrs. Rosen wistfully admired her neighbour`s tall figure and good carriage; she was wearing no corsets at all today under her flowered organdie afternoon dress, Mrs. Rosen had noticed, and yet she could carry herself so smooth and straight,--after having had so many children, too!

Cather's father, Charles, appears in many of his daughter's books. Charles Cather is pictured in Euclide Auclair in *The Shadows on the Rock*, Hillary Templeton from "Old Mrs. Harris", and Henry Colbert in *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*. According to O'Brien, Cather used her father as a source for "the sensitive man of integrity who places aesthetic, intellectual, or spiritual values above commercial ones" (16). In "Old Mrs. Harris" Cather describes her father as a pleasant man who is always ready to help others:

> But he was naturally a cheerful man, modest in his demands upon fortune, and easily diverted from unpleasant thoughts. Before Cleveland had travelled half the eighteen miles to the farm, his master was already looking forward to a visit

> with his tenants, an old German couple who were fond of him because he never pushed them in a hard year--so far, all the years had been hard--and he sometimes brought them bananas and such delicacies from town.

Cather's grandparents also feature in her books. Her grandmother Boak appears in "Old Mrs. Harris" as the main character. When still in Virginia, grandmother Boak used to be well known and greatly valued for tending to sick people. In an article "Nursing as Profession for Women" Cather describes her grandmother as "the unofficial nurse for Back Creek residents as well as her own family, risking her own life to help the sick and comfort the dying" (O'Brien, 25). She has this quality in common with the fictional Mrs. Harris:

> Back in Tennessee, in her own neighbourhood, she was accounted a famous nurse. When any of the poor mountain people were in great distress, they always sent for Miz` Harris. Many a time she had gone into a house where five or six children were all down with scarlet fever or diphtheria, and done what she could. ("Old Mrs. Harris")

Cather's paternal grandparents are pictured in *O Pioneers!* as Jim Burden's. Like Jim's grandparents, they moved to Nebraska from Virginia and started a farm there and Charles Cather and his family later arrived to their house. Another member of Cather's family portrayed in her work is her aunt Frank, who was a model for aunt Georgiana in the story "Wagner Matinee". As aunt Georgiana gave up her career as a music teacher for the life on the prairie, so aunt Frank exchanged her life in the city for living in the country, but she never forgot what it felt like. In "Wagner Matinee", Cather described aunt Georgiana as:

> Originally stooped, her shoulders were now almost bent together over her sunken chest. She wore no stays, and her gown, which trailed unevenly behind, rose in a sort of peak over her abdomen. She wore ill-fitting false teeth, and her skin was as yellow as a Mongolian's from constant exposure to a pitiless wind and to the alkaline water which hardens the most transparent cuticle into a sort of flexible leather. (*The Troll Garden*, 96)

This description caused her a lot of criticism, especially from her own family who recognized aunt Frank in the story. According to Woodress, Cather thought that by writing this story she "was paying tribute to those uncomplaining women who weathered those times" (Introduction to *The Troll Garden*, xxv). Aunt Frank and her

husband George also appear in the novel *One of Ours* as the Wheelers, parents of the main character Claude, who is inspired by Cather's cousin and Frank and George's son, G. P. Cather, Jr., who also dies in the first World War (Bennett, 14).

Cather often based her characters on her neighbours and close friends. One of her most repeated figures is based on Marjorie Anderson, a notably unintelligent servant that the Cathers brought from Virginia to Nebraska. She appears as Mahailey in *One of Ours*, Sada in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, Mandy in "Old Mrs. Harris", and she is the subject of the poem "Poor Marty" (Woodress, 17). Marjorie was well liked by the Cathers and after she died in 1928, she was buried on the Cathers' plot (Woodress, 17).

In *A Lost Lady*, Cather pictures Mr. Silas Garber, the ex-governor of Nebraska, and his wife. Similar to the fictional Forresters, the Garbers used to entertain young people and Cather was their frequent guest (Bennett, 69-75). Other neighbours who appear in Cather's work are the Wieners. Both Mr. and Mrs. Wiener were well-educated, spoke German and French and owned a great selection of books which they did not hesitate to lend to young Cather. All these qualities certainly impressed Cather, who portrayed them in her short story "Old Mrs. Harris" as the Rosens, neighbours who encourage young Victoria Templeton to study (Woodress, 32-33). Other people Cather met in Red Cloud and who later appeared in her books are the Cathers' family doctor, Dr. McKeeby, and Cather's piano teacher, Professor Schindelmeisser. They both appear as an almost unchanged portrait in *The Song of the Lark*. Dr. McKeeby is Dr. Archie, Thea's friend, and Professor Schindelmeisser is Professor Wunsch, an extraordinary music teacher and drunkard (Woodress, 34-35). Similarly to the fictional Wunsch, Schindelmeisser came to Red Cloud from nowhere and was a heavy drinker, but also a "musician of talent such as seldom is encountered in a small town" (Bennett, 153). In *The Song of the Lark*, Cather describes Wunsch as if describing the real music teacher:

> This Wunsch came from God knew where – followed Spanish Johnny into town when that wanderer came back from one of his tramps. Wunsch played in the dance orchestra, tuned pianos, and gave lessons. (21)

One more significant person from Cather's childhood served as an inspiration for a fictional character. Evangeline King-Case was Cather's favourite schoolteacher in Red Cloud and she later became the Superintendent of Public Instruction for Webster

County. Evangeline King-Case was used as the portrait for school inspector Evangeline Knightly in the short story "The Best Years" (Brown, 32).

In later years, Cather used her new friends as an inspiration for her characters. The most significant one is Thea from *The Song of the Lark*, who is based on an opera singer, Olive Fremstad. Cather imprinted the virtues of Fremstad into Thea in such an authentic picture that Fremstad herself after reading the novel said that "she could not tell where Thea left off and she began" (Brown, 188). Cather used many of her other friends as well. In the novel *One of Ours*, Cather used the Westermanns, her friends from Lincoln, as a portrait for the Erlichs and David Hochstein, a talented musician she met in 1916, as an inspiration for Claude's musical friend David Gerhardt. Likewise, Cather's short story book *The Troll Garden* is full of characters based on real people. The character of Adriance Hilgarde in "The Death in the Desert" strongly resembles the composer Ethelbert Nevin, who Cather met during her stay in Pittsburgh. In his youth, Nevin bore girlish traits which Cather used in her desription of Adriance Hilgarde in "The Death in the Desert":

> For Adriance, though he was ten years the elder, and though his hair was streaked with silver, had the face of a boy of twenty, so mobile that it told his thoughts before he could put them into words. A contralto famous for the extravagance of her vocal methods and of her affections had once said of him that the shepherd-boys who sang in the Vale of Tempe must certainly have looked like young Hilgarde; and the comparison had been appropriated by a hundred shyer women who preferred to quote. (67)

In "The Garden Lodge", it is possible to recognize Cather's friend Ethel Lichtfield, who left her profession as a concert pianist to marry, in the character of Caroline Nobel, who also gave up her career for marriage. Cather's friend Dorothy Canfield served as a model for the educated character of Imogen in "Flavia and Her Artists" (Introduction to *The Troll Garden*, xix, xx, xxiii).

4.3 Places

Willa Cather's writing often paralleled her experiences in particular places. Therefore, in order to understand how she progressed as a writer, it is helpful first to

understand where Cather came from and where life took her. In 1883, Cather moved from Virginia to the Divide in Nebraska. This was the first and probably the most significant change of landscape for the ten-year-old. Cather remembered the movement as a distressing experience because she left everything that was dear to her. In his book *Willa Cather: A Critical Biography*, Brown counts all the things that the Cathers had to give away at that time: the property was sold, furnishings auctioned and "even Vic, the shepherd dog, was given to a farmer who lived near by" (21-22).

In Nebraska, Cather found endless prairies that gave her a sense of loneliness. Soon enough, though, she discovered something that interested her more than anything before – immigrants. She listened to their Old World stories with great excitement. Like its people, Nebraska's landscape eventually won Cather over. Its broad prairies, however imposing, came to be loved by Cather, who later drew on her Nebraska memories in a great number of works.

Cather's writing was also significantly impacted by her time later at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. She began her studies intending to become a doctor. However, in 1891 her professor, Ebenezer Hunt, arranged for her essay on Carlyle to be published in the local journal. After seeing her name in print, Cather decided to choose a career as a writer over being a doctor. From then on, Cather primarily took literary courses and in her first two years, specialized in classics and English. Also, in her sophomore year she became an editor of the university journal (Brown, 50-52).

Brown writes, "the journey of 1902 was a landmark in the formation of the novelist." (99) At this point in her life, Cather travelled to England and France. While abroad, she discovered the roots of American culture and intellect. For the first time, she encountered things and places she had only read about before (Woodress, 94). Most of all, Europe made her feel enthusiastic and excited about things new and unknown. Especially in France, Cather began exploring many notions that later appeared in her novels. Moreover, she assigned her own feelings about Europe to many of her fictional characters. This European trip certainly meant a great deal to Willa Cather and significantly influenced her later writing.

The next move that influenced Cather's writing was when her employer sent her to Boston in 1908. There she was introduced to Sarah Orne Jewett, whose influence has already been outlined. The last place that had a significant impact on Willa Cather's

writing was the American Southwest. Cather went to Arizona in 1912 to visit her brother. She loved its enchanting landscape and its people, but most of all, she was fascinated by its history.

Cather set almost all of her novels in small towns, typically based on the very same one she grew up in. She used Red Cloud, Nebraska as a model for many of her fictional towns on prairies. It can be found as Frankfort in *One of Ours*, the Haverford in *Lucy Gayheart*, Sweetwater in *A Lost Lady*, Hanover in *O Pioneers!* and Black Hawk in *My Ántonia* (Bennett, 94). The model is probably the most obvious in the case of Moonstone in *The Song of the Lark*. According to Brown, Cather described the detailed topography of Red Cloud when she described Moonstone in her book (41):

> The main business street ran, of course, through the centre of the town. To the west of this street lived all the people who were as Tillie Kronborg said, "in society." Sylvester Street, the third parallel with Main Street on the west, was the longest in the town, and the best dwellings were built along it. Far out at the north end, nearly a mile from the court-house and its cottonwood grove was Doctor Archie's house, its big yard and garden surrounded by a white paling fence. The Methodist Church was in the centre of the town, facing the court-house square. (28)

Cather also often used her Red Cloud house in her books. She described it in "Old Mrs. Harris", "The Best Years", and *The Song of the Lark*. Cather's Red Cloud house was "small and cramped, particularly for fast-growing family" (O'Brien, 77) which the Cathers' undoubtedly was. It is pictured in *The Song of the Lark* as "a low storey-and-a-half house, with a wing built on at the right and a kitchen addition at the back, everything a little on the slant – roofs, windows, and doors" (5).

In addition to the Cathers' Red Cloud house, Cather also described other houses she knew. In "Wagner Matinee", she used her memories of her grandparents' farmhouse in describing aunt Georgianna's (O'Brien, 281). The same house is also portrayed in *My Ántonia* as Jim Burden's grandparents' house (Woodress, 27). In *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, Cather described Willow Shade, the house she remembered from her early childhood in Virginia (O'Brien, 13).

In many of her books, Cather used her childhood attic room. Cather had slept together with her brothers in a large attic at a younger age, but when she grew older her mother insisted on her having a room of her own. Thus, the large attic was divided into

a small individual room for Cather and the bigger part for the other children (Brown, 31). Cather described her room in detail in *The Song of the Lark*: "It was the end room of the wing, and was not plastered, but was snugly lined with soft pine. The ceiling was so low that sloped down on either side. There was only one window, but it was a double one and went to the floor" (51).

Another attic that played a significant role in Cather's life and writing was a room offered to her by her friend Isabelle McClung. McClung remade a sewing room in her parents' house in Pittsburgh into a study for Cather and thus made it possible for her to write in a suitable environment (Brown, 97-98). Cather's room at the McClungs' appears in *The Professor's House* as the professor's study.

Another significant place Cather pictured in her fiction was a sandbar in the Republican River where Cather and her brothers, Douglass and Roscoe, used to play. She described the island in the short stories "The Treasure of Far Island", "Enchanted Bluff" and it also appears in the novels *Alexander's Bridge*, *My Ántonia*, and *Lucy Gayheart* (O'Brien, 84).

4.4 Influences drawn together

Throughout her career, Cather had various sources of inspiration in her writing: she was influenced by literary trends, such as realism and regionalism; literary personages and works she encountered; and her upbringing and the people involved in the various stages of her life. At the beginning of her writing career, Cather greatly admired Henry James and tried to imitate him while writing short stories. She used similar themes, style and even placed her stories in Jamesian settings. After meeting Sarah Orne Jewett, Cather turned away from James and to her own material and voice. In addition to these main influences, Cather was also inspired by other literary sources, such as Housman, Horace, Virgil, and Rossetti. Regarding non-literary influences, Cather mainly used her own memories and experiences as the basis for plots or episodes in her writing: people she knew, such as her friends, neighbours and other acquaintances, were often drawn on to develop portraits of her fictional characters; the places she knew were consistently used as settings of her novels and stories; and her memories are firmly imprinted in her writings.

Literary trends, literary models, her own memories and experiences, real people and places were important influences in Cather's writing and many examples of them are apparent in her novels and short stories. But which of these influences showed the most consistent influence over the full course of Cather's career? The best way to find out is to look at four of Cather's important novels from the perspective of these influences.

5. ANALYSIS

The novels that will be discussed in this section are *My Ántonia*, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, *Shadows on the Rock* and *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*. All of these books were written in different stages of Cather's career and thus they provide a good source for analyzing in closer detail the significant influences that had an impact on Cather's writing throughout her life.

5.1 *My Ántonia*

Cather spent the summer of 1916 with her family in Red Cloud. During this time, she visited her childhood friend Annie Pavelka on her farm. When Cather returned to New York after her stay in Nebraska, she had the theme of *My Ántonia* based partly on the destiny of Annie Pavelka already in her mind. The novel was first published in 1918 and remains in print today.

5.1.1 Literary influences

Cather wrote *My Ántonia* in 1918, ten years after meeting Sarah Orne Jewett and six years after writing *O Pioneers!*. *My Ántonia*, like *O Pioneers!*, seems influenced by Jewett in the way Cather uses her personal experience as the source of the novel's main material. Similarly to Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, the story of Ántonia is told in individual episodes rather than in a continuous narrative. Also the used material is similar in both books. While Jewett describes the rural countryside of Maine and its customs and Cather uses Nebraskan farm country and life style, they both make use of places and cultures they know well. As opposed to Cather's Jamesian stories where she uses sophisticated international settings she is not really familiar with, this time she works with the environment she is closely related to through her childhood and family.

In addition to Jewett's obvious influence over the novel, there are also traces of another literary source. As in many of her other books, Cather incorporated Nebraskan folk tales into the story. As a child, Cather was preoccupied with the legend of

Coronado, who was said to have gone as far as Nebraska during his search for the Seven Golden Cities. In *My Ántonia*, she attributes a similar interest in this legend to Jim Burden when he tells his version to Ántonia, Lena and two of their other friends:

> They sat under a little oak, Tony resting against the trunk and the other girls leaning against her and each other, and listened to the little I was able to tell them about Coronado and his search for the Seven Golden Cities. At school we were taught that he had not got so far north as Nebraska, but had given up his quest and turned back somewhere in Kansas. But Charley Harling and I had a strong belief hat he had been along this very river. A farmer in the county north of ours, when he was breaking sod, had turned up a metal stirrup of fine workmanship, and a sword with a Spanish inscription on the blade. He lent these relics to Mr. Harling, who brought them home with him. Charley and I scoured them, and they were on exhibition in the Harling office all summer. Father Kelly, the priest, had found the name of the Spanish maker on the sword and an abbreviation that stood for the city of Cordova. (192)

Another folk tale that appears in *My Ántonia* is a story told by the two Russians, Pavel and Peter. The story about the wolves Peter and Pavel tell Mr. Shimerda, Ántonia and Jim is, according to Woodress, "a folk tale that folklorists have collected from the oral tradition of Nebraska immigrants in the identical version that Cather uses" (174). The story tells about a wedding party travelling from one village to another by sledges. Suddenly, the sledges are attacked by wolves and all except one are overrun and their occupants killed. The last sledge is carrying Peter, Pavel, the bride and the groom. When they are close to the safety of the village, the wolves are close to overrunning them, too. The excerpt from *My Ántonia* continues the story:

> Now his middle horse was being almost dragged by the other two. Pavel gave Peter the reins and stepped carefully into the back of the sledge. He called to the groom that they must lighten – and pointed to the bride. The young man cursed him and held her tighter. Pavel tried to drag her away. In the struggle, the groom rose. Pavel knocked him over the side of the sledge and threw the girl after him. (52)

After that, Peter and Pavel are driven out of the village for inhumanly sacrificing their friends. They subsequently leave for America.

5.1.2 Non-literary influences

Evidence that Cather drew from her own memory can be seen throughout the whole book. *My Ántonia* is the most autobiographical novel Cather wrote. In his book, Woodress states that this novel "follows fairly closely the actual lives of Annie Pavelka and Willa Cather" (172). The opening of the novel when Jim Burden arrives in Nebraska from Virginia to live with his grandparents is almost identical to Cather's own arrival in the same place, with the exception that she had not lost her parents. Cather also let Jim share her early feelings about Nebraska when she wrote:

> There seemed to be nothing to see; no fences, no creeks or trees, no hills or fields. If there was a road, I could not make it out in the faint starlight. There was nothing but land: not a country at all, but the material out of which countries are made […] I had the feeling that the world was left behind, that we had got over the edge of it, and were outside man's jurisdiction […] Between that earth and that sky I felt erased, blotted out. I did not say my prayers that night: here, I felt, what would be would be. (12-13)

Jim's description of his feelings about his first encounter with Nebraska can be compared to Cather's feelings, which she expressed in an interview in 1913:

> I shall never forget my introduction to it. We drove out from Red Cloud to my grandfather's homestead one day in April. I was sitting on the hay in the bottom of a Studebaker wagon, holding on to the side of the wagon box to steady myself—the roads were mostly faint trails over the bunch grass in those days. The land was open range and there was almost no fencing. As we drove further and further out into the country, I felt a good deal as if we had come to the end of everything – it was a kind of erasure of personality. (*Willa Cather in Person*)

When both passages are closely compared, it is obvious that Cather drew significantly on her own first feelings of Nebraska when she described Jim's first sensations of his new home.

Cather as well as Jim Burden spent only one year living on the Divide and then her family moved to Red Cloud, just as Jim Burden's moved to Black Hawk. Woodress states that Jim's memories of his life on the prairie are those of Cather. Although there is no proof that Cather met Annie before she moved to town, she experienced similar activities to those of Jim and Ántonia. For example, like Jim and Ántonia, she used to

go snake hunting with her first Nebraska friends (Woodress, 28). Cather also remembered her grandmother carrying a cane to scare snakes away (Introduction to *The Song of the Lark*, ix) and she later made Jim remember the same:

> Grandmother called my attention to a stout hickory cane, tipped with copper, which hung by a leather thong from her belt. This, she said, was her rattlesnake cane. I must never go to the garden without a heavy stick or a corn-knife; she had killed a good many rattlers on her way back and forth. (18-19)

One of the most emotional memories that appears in the first part of the book is the story of Mr. Shimerda's suicide. In reality, this event was based on Annie's father, Mr. Sadilek, a homesick Bohemian, who committed the suicide. It was one of the first stories Cather came to know after moving to Nebraska (Woodress, 171) and she used it in her writing more than once; first in a short story called "Peter" and later it appeared as one of the most suggestive episodes of *My Ántonia*:

> 'I don't think he was out of his head for a minute, Mrs. Burden, 'Fuchs declared. 'He done everything natural. You know he was always sort of fixy, and fixy he was to the last. He shaved after dinner, and washed hisself all over after the girls had done the dishes. Ántonia heated water for him. Then he put on a clean shirt and clean socks, and after he was dressed he kissed her and the little one and took his gun and said he was going out to hunt rabbits. He must have gone right down to the barn and done it then. He layed down on that bunk-bed, close to the ox stalls, where he always slept. When we found him, everything was decent except' – Fuchs wrinkled his brow and hesitated – 'except what he couldn't nowise foresee. His coat was hung on a peg, and his boots was under the bed. He'd took off that silk neckcloth he always wore, and folded it smooth and stuck his pin through it. He turned back his shirt at the neck and rolled up his sleeves.'
>
> 'I don't see how he could do it!' grandmother kept saying.
>
> Otto misunderstood her. 'Why, ma'am, it was simple enough; he pulled the trigger with his big toe. He layed over on his side and put the end of the barrel in his mouth, than he drew up one foot and felt for the trigger. He found it all right!' (79-80)

Similarly, other episodes from Ántonia's life are told as they really happened in Red Cloud. Mr. Miner, Annie's employer, inspired Cather to write about an incident after which Ántonia left the Harlings, although it did not happen exactly as Cather described it. Mr. Miner had prohibited one of their hired girls from seeing her boyfriend after he found them making love on the back porch. As a response to this prohibition,

the hired girl immediately left (Bennett, 69). In the book, Mr. Harling forbids Ántonia to continue going to the dances after he sees her slap a boy who tried to kiss her though he is to be married soon. Mr. Harling reasons with Ántonia that despite her being of proper behaviour, others see her as of poor reputation because she goes dancing. When Ántonia is supposed to choose between the dances and working for Harlings, her choice is easy:

> Mr. Harling ain't my boss outside my work. I won't give up my friends, either. The boys I go with are nice fellows. I thought Mr. Paine was all right, too, because he used to come here. I guess I gave him a red face for his wedding, all right!' she blazed out indignantly.
>
> 'You'll have to do one thing or the other, Ántonia,' Mrs. Harling told her decidedly. 'I can't go back on what Mr. Harling has said. This is his house.'
>
> 'Then I'll just leave, Mrs. Harling.' (*My Ántonia*, 165)

Another event of Ántonia's fictional life was inspired by Annie Pavelka's. Annie was supposed to get married to a brakeman, but her lover left her after a short time and Annie had to return home (Bennett, 48-49). Similarly, Ántonia left Black Hawk to marry, but she also had to come back unmarried: "I replied that grandmother had written me how Ántonia went away to marry Larry Donovan at some place where he was working; that he had deserted her, and that there was now a baby. This was all I knew" (*My Ántonia*, 233).

As in many of Cather's novels, the fictional characters of *My Ántonia* were inspired by living people. The main protagonist of the book is based on Cather's childhood friend Annie Sadilek, later Pavelka. Annie, the daughter of Bohemian immigrants, at first worked on her family farm and later as a hired girl in town. Cather met Annie when she started to work for the Miners and in an interview in 1921, she said about her: "One of the people that interested me most as a child was the Bohemian hired girl of one of our neighbors, who was so good to me" (Bennett, 46). In *My Ántonia*, Cather shows her warm feelings towards Annie as well as admiration for her. These feelings are most obvious in her description of Annie after long years of hard work: "As I confronted her, the changes grew less apparent to me, her identity stronger. She was there, in the full vigour of her personality, battered but not diminished, looking at me, speaking to me in the husky, breathy voice I remembered so well" (258).

Other vivid characters in *My Ántonia*, the Harlings, are drawn from the Cathers' Red Cloud neighbours, the Miners. The Miners' children and Cather quickly formed a friendship that would last years. Later, in her writing, Cather portrayed them as the Harlings in *My Ántonia*. Mary Miner is pictured as the fictional Julia, Irene Miner as Nina, Margie Miner as Sally, Carrie as Frances and Hughie is Charley (Bennett, 44-45). Cather remained friendly with the Miners even after she left Red Cloud and *My Ántonia* is dedicated to "Carrie and Irene Miner, in memory of affections old and true" (Woodress, 35).

The liveliest character of the book, Mrs. Harling, is inspired by Mrs. Miner, the mother of Cather's childhood friends. Mrs. Miner died while Cather was working on *My Ántonia*. Cather later wrote to Carrie Miner that in Mrs. Harling she tried to recreate her mother and that "her character was a clear little snapshot of Mrs. Miner as she first remembered her" (Woodress, 35). In *My Ántonia*, Cather provided a fine description of Mrs. Miner:

> Mrs. Harling was short and square and sturdy-looking with an energy that made itself felt the moment she entered a room. Her face was rosy and solid, with bright, twinkling eyes and a stubborn little chin. She was quick to anger, quick to laughter, and jolly from the depths of her soul. (121)

In *My Ántonia*, Cather also portrayed her grandparents. Similar to Jim Burden's grandparents, they moved to Nebraska in order to start a new life at a fairly old age. Grandfather Cather was "earnest but domineering" and grandmother Cather was "mild and gentle" (Bennett, 11). In *My Ántonia*, Cather described both their personalities; first her grandmother's and then her husband's:

> She was quick-footed and energetic in all her movements. Her voice was high and rather shrill, and she often spoke with and anxious inflection, for she was exceedingly desirous that everything should go with due order and decorum. Her laugh, too, was high, and perhaps a little strident, but there was a lively intelligence in it. She was then fifty-five years old, a strong woman, of unusual endurance. (15)
>
> My grandfather said little. When he first came in he kissed me and spoke kindly to me, but he was not demonstrative. I felt at once his deliberateness and personal dignity, and was a little in awe of him. The thing one immediately noticed about him was his beautiful, crinkly, snow-white beard. (15-16)

Another real citizen of Red Cloud found his way into Cather's book. This person was M. R. Bentley, portrayed as Wick Cutter, the usurious moneylender of *My Ántonia*. Mr. Bentley's interest rates were extortionately high and it was almost impossible to pay his loans back (Bennett, 82-83). In *My Ántonia*, Wick Cutter's manners are the same.

Cather often used real locales and *My Ántonia* is not an exception. According to Woodress, Cather most likely described her grandfather's house where she spent her first months on the Divide when she gave a picture of the Burdens' house in the beginning of *My Ántonia* (27):

> This basement was divided into a dining-room at the right of the stairs and a kitchen at the left. Both rooms were plastered and whitewashed – the plaster laid directly upon the earth walls, as it used to be in dugouts. The floor was of hard cement. Up under the wooden ceiling there were little half-windows with white curtains, and pots of geraniums and wandering Jew in the deep sills. (14)

Cather again used Red Cloud, this time under the name of fictional Black Hawk, and its surroundings as a setting for *My Ántonia*. In the foreword for *The Song of the Lark*, Doris Grumbach states that while creating Black Hawk in *My Ántonia* "Cather has simply renamed Red Cloud" (xxiv). Bennett adds that Cather used her memories of Red Cloud in all of her Nebraska books (94).

5.1.3 Conclusion

Although Cather used both literary and non-literary sources of inspiration while writing *My Ántonia*, it seems evident that the non-literary ones were more important to her. The literary inspiration includes two folk tales commonly told in Nebraska. Since these are the strongest literary influences in *My Ántonia* and because they are used only as minor episodes in the story, it is obvious that they certainly do not belong among the most significant ones in the novel.

On the other hand, Cather's memories of events, people and places very clearly played a significant role while she was writing *My Ántonia*. Evidence of this, as was shown above, can be found throughout the novel. She recorded the events of her

childhood both consciously and unconsciously and her father, after reading the novel, "pointed out half a dozen different incidents that were based on things she had done, seen, or heard of with him, all of which she thought she had invented" (Woodress, 173). Nevertheless, Cather deliberately made the life of Jim Burden resemble hers as she was "gathering her memories of some persons and places very dear to her" (Brown, 199). With regard to both literary and non-literary sources of inspiration, it can be said that the influences with the most important and significant impact on Cather's novel *My Ántonia* are undoubtedly Cather's own recollections of her life on the Divide.

5.2 *Death Comes for the Archbishop*

Cather published her novel about the Southwest, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, in 1927. She believed up to her death that it was her best book (Woodress, 231). Before she died, Cather declared that she "had never intended to write a novel about the Southwest" (Woodress, 231), but nevertheless, during her visit to New Mexico in 1925, she became interested in stories about the region's first French missionaries. When she found a book by W. J. Howlett about Bishop Machebeuf and his friend, Bishop Lamy, she knew what her next book would be about (Brown, 251-252).

5.2.1 Literary influences

Cather used the short biographical book *Life of the Right Reverend Joseph P. Machebeuf, Pioneer Priest of Ohio, Pioneer Priest of New Mexico, Pioneer Priest of Colorado, Vicar Apostolic of Colorado and Utah, and First Bishop of Denver* (1908), written by Father W. J. Howlett, as her primary literary source for writing *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (Brown, 252). Although Cather renamed her fictional characters Archbishop Latour and Father Vaillant, the characters of the real Archbishop Lamy and his friend Bishop Mechebeuf as they are described in Howlett's book are portrayed in their fictional counterparts so precisely that Cather's novel is "almost biography instead of fiction" (Bennett, 133). Cather also used Howlett's book as a source of historical events that occurred in her novel, although she changed minor historical facts when it

seemed convenient for the plot of her book. The greatest alteration of history Cather made appears at the end of the book when she had Archbishop Latour outlive his friend Father Vaillant. In reality, Archbishop died first (Woodress, 237). Although Cather used Howlett's book a great deal while writing her novel, by mistake, she failed to cite it as a source when *Death Comes for the Archbishop* was published. After being reminded of her oversight by Howlett himself, she wrote an open letter where she acknowledged his book as her primary inspiration (Bennett, 132).

In addition to using Howlett's biography while writing *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, Cather also read and used many other books concerning similar themes in order to make her novel as true as possible. She completed her knowledge of the Southwest and its missionaries by reading *Soldiers of the Cross* written by Charles Loomis, Ralph Twitchell, and J. B. Salpointe, *History of New Mexico and Arizona* by H. H. Bancroft, *A New Mexico David* by Loomis, *Catholic Encyclopedia* and a number of less significant ones (Woodress, 238).

Like *My Ántonia*, *Death Comes for the Archbishop* makes use of folk tales and oral legends of the Southwest. In the early part of the novel, Cather retells the legend of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Cather's version is told in a vividly descriptive tone, but otherwise it is identical with the one that can be heard today:

> In 1531 a "Lady from Heaven" appeared to a humble Native American at Tepeyac, a hill northwest of what is now Mexico City.
> She identified herself as the ever virgin Holy Mary, Mother of the True God for whom we live, of the Creator of all things, Lord of heaven and the earth.
> She made a request for a church to be built on the site, and submitted her wish to the local Bishop. When the Bishop hesitated, and requested her for a sign, the Mother of God obeyed without delay or question to the Church's local Bishop, and sent her native messenger to the top of the hill in mid-December to gather an assorment [*sic*] of roses for the Bishop.
> After complying to the Bishop's request for a sign, She also left for us an image of herself imprinted miraculously on the native's tilma, a poor quality cactus-cloth, which should have deteriorated in 20 years but shows no sign of decay 476 years later and still defies all scientific explanations of its origin. (www.sancta.org)

Another legend that Cather included in her novel concerns Father Junipero Serra, a well-known priest who established many missionaries in California. He was strongly devoted to his religion and even today remains the subject of many legends. In

Death Comes for the Archbishop, Cather tells a story about Father Junipero Serra and his companion being saved from certain death in the desert by a poor family of shepherds. Cather continues with the account of the story:

> When the Brothers at the monastery heard this account they were amazed, declaring that there were indeed three cottonwood trees growing together in the desert, a well-known landmark; but that if a settler had come, he must have come very lately. So Father Juniper and Father Andrea, his companion with some of the Brothers and the scoffing muleteer, went back into the wilderness to prove the matter. The three tall trees they found, shedding their cotton, and the dead trunk to which the ass had been tied. But the ass was not there, nor any house, nor the oven by the door. Then the two Fathers sank down upon their knees in that blessed spot and kissed the earth, for they perceived what Family it was that had entertained them there (*Death Comes for the Archbishop*, 281-282).

This legend as told by Cather can be again compared with an identical version known today:

> "Their apostolic labors having been finished, they were upon their way back, and at the end of a few days' journey, when the sun was about to set, they knew not where to spend the night, and considered it certain that they must sleep upon the plain. They were thinking about this when they saw near the road a house, whither they went and solicited lodging. They found a venerable man, with his wife and child, who received them with much kindness and attention, and gave them supper. In the morning, the Fathers thanked their hosts, and taking leave, pursued their way. After having gone a little distance they met some muleteers, who asked them where they had passed the night. When the place was described, the muleteers declared that there was no such house or ranche near the road, or within many leagues. The missionaries attributed to Divine Providence the favor of that hospitality, and believed without doubt that these hosts were Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, reflecting not only about the order and cleanness of the house (though poor), and the affectionate kindness with which they had been received, but also about the extraordinary internal consolation which their hearts had felt there" (www.sfmuseum.org).

Cather incorporates yet another legend into her novel. It is the legend of Friar Baltazar Montoya, a tyrannical priest of Ácoma, a village built on a high mesa, who took advantage of the original inhabitants in a way that they "were sometimes at the point of revolt" (*Death Comes for the Archbishop*, 107). He made them give him their best food, their children served him, and women had to water his great garden using up

their only source of water. Once, after the priest accidentally killed one of his servants, the whole village decided to get rid of him:

> They carried him down the ladder and through the cloister and across the rock to the most precipitous cliff – the one over which the Ácoma women flung broken pots and such refuse as the turkeys would not eat. There the people were assembled. They cut his bonds, and taking him by the hands and feet, swung him out over the rock-edge and back a few times. He was heavy, and perhaps they thought this dangerous sport. No sound but hissing breath came through his teeth. The four executioners took him up again from the brink where they had laid him, and, after a few feints, dropped him in mid-air (*Death Comes for the Archbishop*, 113).

5.2.2 Non-literary influences

Although Cather admitted that she used Howlett's book as her main source when writing *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, she also stated that in the book she included many of her own experiences (Woodress, 236). Woodress gives the example of an episode in which Father Vaillant persuades a farmer to give him and Bishop Latour his two precious white mules (236):

> Father Joseph turned to him with vehemence. "If I were a rich *ranchero*, like you, Manuel, I would do a splendid thing; I would furnish the two mounts that are to carry the word of God about this heathen country, and then I would say to myself: *There go my Bishop and my Vicario, on my beautiful cream-coloured mules.*"
>
> "So be it, Padre," said Lujon with a mournful smile. (62-63)

As in her other novels, in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, Cather uses real life people as portraits for her fictional characters. In this book, though, she uses historical personages rather than her friends and acquaintances. The most significant ones are, of course, the two protagonists of the novel, Archbishop Latour and Father Vaillant. Archbishop Latour was based on Archbishop John Babtist Lamy who was a Catholic missionary in New Mexico and was an educational reformer there (Looby). Cather used Howlett's description of Archbishop Lamy for most of her material and made up information that was not provided (Woodress, 236).

Father Vaillant was also drawn from Howlett's central character, Bishop Joseph P. Mechebeuf. As she did with Archbishop Lamy, Cather followed descriptions of

Mechebeuf's personality characteristics fairly truly. Bishop Mechebeuf, a friend and important helper of Archbishop Lamy, worked in Ohio, New Mexico, Arizona and later in Colorado and Utah. Throughout his life, he helped to establish a great number of churches and schools. His good work allowed him to rise in the church to become a bishop (Muller). Like his real-life counterpart, Father Vaillant, despite playing a secondary role in the book, is defined by his good character. This can be seen, for example, in an episode concerning Sada, an old woman restricted by her master from practicing her religion freely. Before Archbishop Lamy took any action in her case, Father Vaillant "had consulted the Bishop, declaring that something ought to be done to secure the consolations of religion for the bond-woman" (*Death Comes for the Archbishop*, 216).

Another real-life person that occurs in Cather's book is Kit Carson, an adventurer and American national hero. Christopher (Kit) Carson began his career as a trapper. He later became a guide for an expedition exploring the western part of the United States, was appointed an Indian agent in Taos, and served in the army during the Civil War (Katz). In his article about Kit Carson's life, Katz states that Carson was "well known for his honesty, courage and unassuming manner". Accordingly, Cather pictures him as an honourable man when she describes an episode of Magdalena, an abused woman who is offered help by Carson after she finally leaves her husband:

> Then he turned to the Bishop. "Señor Vicario, she can come to me. I live near Taos. My wife is a native woman, and she'll be good to her. That varmint won't come about my place, even if he breaks jail. He knows me. My name is Carson." (74)

One more historical figure found its way into Cather's novel. Father Martínez is pictured by Cather as a profligate priest with a lust for women and good food. In reality, Father Antonio José Martínez did a lot of good for New Mexico and its people, but it is also true that he had a dispute with Bishop Lamy that ended with his excommunication (http://padremartinez.org/about_padremtz.php). These facts are mirrored in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* in the way Bishop Latour is disgusted by Father Martínez' manners and sinful opinions on life, but he also admits that he "had never heard the Mass more impressively sung than by Father Martínez" (*Death Comes for the Archbishop*, 150).

The only character in the book drawn from a person Cather knew personally is Sada, an old native Mexican woman who is a slave of a Protestant American family. As she had done many times before, Cather used Marjorie Anderson, the Cather family's simple-minded maid, as a model for Sada (Woodress, 17). Cather again expresses her admiration for Marjorie in the positivism and persistence of her fictional character. When Sada enters a Catholic church after 19 years of being banned from it, Bishop Latour is amazed that she remembers her prayers so well and she answers: "Ah, Padre, every night I say my Rosary to my Holy Mother, no matter where I sleep!" (*Death Comes for the Archbishop*, 216).

5.2.3 Conclusion

Looking at different sources of inspiration that influenced Cather's writing of *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, it is not possible to deny that the primary influence is of a literary nature. Unlike in *My Ántonia*, where Cather uses her private memories and experiences almost exclusively and where they create a frame for the story, here she relies mainly on facts noted in books written by other authors. In spite of Cather using her experiences even in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, they are less significant and are not important for the plot. It can be said that the most significant influence on *Death Comes for the Archbishop* is Howlett's book, immediately followed by the previously mentioned publications by Loomis, Twitchell, Salpointe and Bancroft. Important parts of *Death Comes for the Archbishop* were also inspired by widely-known legends of saints and famous religious leaders that Cather most likely encountered while visiting the Southwest. These combined influences can be found throughout the novel and they form the basis of the book's story.

5. 3 *Shadows on the Rock*

Shadows on the Rock is a historical novel set in French Canada in the seventeenth century. Cather was inspired to write her new book about colonial Canada when she was forced to stop in Quebec for a few days on her way to her cottage on Grand Manan in 1928. She was immediately charmed by Quebec's rich history and

architecture (Woodress, 244). In spite of having no significant previous experience with Canada, especially its French part, Cather decided to write a novel about French pioneers in colonial Quebec.

5.3.1 Literary influences

As in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, where Cather drew significantly from Howlett's book, here she made use of Francis Parkman's history books. Cather considered Parkman to be the best American historian (Brown, 270). As a primary source of knowledge for her novel, she used his seven volume series *France and England in North America*. She drew the most from five of the series' volumes: *Pioneers of France in the New World*, *The Jesuits in North America*, *La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West*, *The Old Regime in Canada*, and *Count Frontenac and New France under Louis XIV* (Skaggs).

Cather supported the information she acquired reading Parkman's publications by studying other books concerning the region, its history and people. In her further research, she included Abbe Henri Arthur Scott's *Bishop Laval*; *The Jesuit Relations*, documents that were annually sent by Jesuits to Paris during the seventeenth century (Lacombe); Lahontan travel book, *Voyages*; and memoirs of Saint-Simon. She also read books on the history of Quebec, such as Juchereau's, which detailed the Hotel Dieu, and a number of volumes of the "Makers of Canada" (Woodress, 254).

Cather found another important literary source that is used in *Shadows on the Rock* when visiting the Louvre in Paris. There she discovered a diary written by Count Frontenac's apothecary. She used this diary to evoke "the atmosphere of 17th Century Quebec" (Bennett, 133). Using this diary proved beneficial to Cather's fact checking. After *Shadows on the Rock* was published, a Canadian pharmaceutical agency wrote her a letter to draw her attention to the fact that certain drug she described in her book did not exist at that time. Thanks to the diary, Cather was able to prove herself right (Bennett, 133-134).

Since Cather did not visit French Canada before 1928 and later she only came for brief visits connected with writing *Shadows on the Rock*, she could not rely on hearing the region's folk tales firsthand. She therefore depended on Parkman's

descriptions. She took from Parkman incidents and facts that interested her and used them in her book. The story of Mother Catherine is one example. In *The Old Regime in Canada*, Parkman describes the story of a soldier's conversion after Mother Catherine gave him the powdered bone of Father Brébeuf to eat (Skaggs). Cather uses this same episode in her book when she makes little Cécile retell it in her words:

> "Father, did you ever hear that once long ago, when an English sailor lay sick at the Hôtel Dieu, Mother Catherine de Saint-Augustin ground up a tiny morsel of bone from Father Brébeuf's skull and mixed it in his gruel and it made him a Christian?" (101)

Skaggs further states that the end of *Shadows on the Rock* is influenced by Parkman's books. He stresses the fact that girls who were married before their sixteenth year of age were given bounty and, on the other hand, fathers of girls who did not get married at sixteen had to pay a fee. This is the reason why Cather ended her book with Cécile married and already taking care of four sons at a fairly young age. Her father proudly says: "Four sons already, Monseigneur. She is bringing up four little boys, the Canadians of the future." (*Shadows on the Rock*, 228).

5.3.2 Non-literary influences

In addition to stories based on authentic facts and events, Cather also used her memories to make *Shadows on the Rock* more interesting and its characters more believable. One of her memories is imprinted in the Christmas episode in the novel. Once when Cather was arranging crèches for Christmas, her nephew insisted on giving his toy cow to little Jesus (Bennett, 38). This story reappears in *Shadows in the Rock* when Jacques decides to contribute the only precious object he has, a wooden beaver, to Cécile's crèches:

> "I have a surprise for you" he said. "It is for the crèche, for the little Jesus."
>
> When she took off the paper, she held in her hand Jacques's well-known beaver.
>
> "Oh, Jacques, how nice of you! I don't believe there was ever a beaver in a crèche before." She was a little perplexed; the animal was so untraditional – what was she to do with him?

> "He isn't new," Jacques went on anxiously. "He's just my little old beaver the sailor made me, but he could keep the baby warm. I take him to bed with me when I'm cold sometimes, and he keeps me warm." (*Shadows on the Rock*, 89)

As in her other books, in *Shadows on the Rock*, Cather presents characters based on real people. Similar to *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, here Cather also derives her protagonists from historical figures. There are two important characters in *Shadows on the Rock* that existed in reality: Count Frontenac and Bishop Laval. Cather based her portrayal of Count Frontenac, the governor of New France, on his description by Parkman, although she softened some of his less appealing traits such as his "irascibility and contentiousness, his fiery, dominating nature, his harsh humor, his power to transmit his confidence in his invincibility" (Brown, 271). On the other hand, she decided not to follow Parkman's merciless characterization of Bishop Laval. Instead, she turned to Bishop Laval's biographer, Abbe Henri Arthur Scott for a different conception of his personality (Brown, 271-272). No matter what their descriptions in various books stated, Cather pictured both Count Frontenac and Bishop Laval as "precisely the leader the New World required" (Brown, 273).

One of the main characters of the novel, the apothecary Euclide Auclair, is drawn both from a literary source and Cather's own memory. The apothecary is partly based on Michel Sarrazín, the first Canadian natural scientist who collected botanical samples of the plants of Canada (Brown, 285). Like his real life counterpart, Auclair also engages himself collecting Canadian plants:

> The apothecary, in his shirt-sleeves, was standing on a wooden bench, taking down from the shelves of a high cabinet large sheets of paper, to which dried plants were attached by narrow strips of muslin gummed down with gum Arabic. This was his herbarium, his collection of medicinal Canadian plants which he meant to take back to France. (*Shadows on the Rock*, 182)

The rest of the fictional apothecary's personality derives from Cather's memory of her father, whose recent death had a great impact on her while writing *Shadows on the Rock*. In Auclair, Cather recreated her father's tender nature and manners and in his loving relationship with Cécile, she described the relations between her and her own father (Brown, 275).

Cather additionally used the real locations for her descriptions of different places in *Shadows on the Rock*. During her first visit to Canada in 1928, she walked around Quebec and, according to Brown, "Miss Lewis [Cather's companion] remembers the excitement with which she [Cather] described her successive discoveries – the convent of the Ursulines, the great Laval seminary, the Church of Notre Dame in the lower town, the old market place" (270). In addition to the first visit, Cather returned to Quebec several times, which made it possible for her to describe the city in such a detailed way:

> To landward, in a low, well-sheltered spot, lay the Convent of the Ursulines . . . lower still stood the massive foundation of the Jesuits, facing the Cathedral. Immediately behind the Cathedral the cliff ran up sheer again, shot out into a jutting spur, and there, high in the blue air, between heaven and earth, rose old Bishop Laval's seminary. Beneath it the rock fell away in a succession of terraces like a circular staircase; on one of these was the new Bishop's new Palace, its gardens on the terrace below. (*Shadows on the Rock*, 4-5)

In addition to her descriptions of old Quebec, Cather also used her impressions of France when writing parts of *Shadows on the Rock* that are set in Europe. Cather mainly drew on her visit to Paris in 1920 when describing its medieval streets in Auclair's childhood memories and stories of French-born Canadians (Brown, 217).

5.3.3 Conclusion

The novel *Shadows on the Rock* differs from Cather's previous works by being set in a place with which the author did not have many experiences and which she visited for the first time only shortly before its theme occurred to her. What most interested Cather about Quebec was its French origin, an element she was fascinated by from a young age. The earlier novels *My Ántonia* and *Death Comes for the Archbishop* stand in sharp contrast to *Shadows on the Rock* because when writing them, Cather was acquainted and closely related to their landscape and the ways of life of the people who lived there. This is quite opposite to the situation in which the new novel was written. This fact inevitably leads us to believe that the main source Cather used while writing *Shadows on the Rock* must have been of a literary nature. Even though Cather also

included some of her own memories and experiences in her novel, most of it is derived from books she read about colonial Canada during the seventeenth century.

5.4 *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*

In her last novel *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, published in 1940, Cather turned to her earliest memories of her childhood in Virginia. According to Brown, Cather had planned to write a book using her Virginia recollections and stories she had heard as a child in Virginia for a long time. She finally did so after the death of her parents, at a time when her earliest memories of Virginia comforted her (308).

5.4.1 Literary influences

Sapphira and the Slave Girl is composed almost entirely of Cather's memories and tales she had heard from family friends and neighbours during her childhood in Virginia. The book can thus be read as part of the "history of the manners and customs of the Shenandoah Valley" (Bennett, 7). On the contrary, Woodress considers *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* to be an allegory of a fight between good and evil, with good represented by Rachel Blake and evil by her mother Sapphira Colbert (286). In his book, Woodress states, "that Cather was thinking in terms of allegory in writing this novel is suggested by her use of Bunyan and his works" (287). Throughout the book, several mentions of John Bunyan's books can be found. For example, when Henry Colbert, Sapphira's husband, sees Mercy, a character from Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, in the title character of slave girl, Nancy: "As she grew older he came to identify her with Mercy, Christiana's sweet companion. When he read in the second part of his book, he saw Nancy's face and figure plain in Mercy" (*Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, 67).

5.4.2 Non-literary influences

As a primary source for her last novel, Cather used her recollections of Virginia from her childhood. In a letter, Cather wrote that "not very much of it [*Sapphira and the*

Slave Girl] was actually fiction" and that the book was "made so largely of old family and neighborhood stories that she scarcely knew where her contribution began" (Woodress, 283).

The most significant event that appears in *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* occurred when Cather was just a little child. Cather had heard the story of a young slave girl, Nancy Till who, with help of Cather's grandmother, managed to escape to Canada. When Cather was five years old, she witnessed the reunion of Nancy with her old mother (Woodress, 19). According to O'Brien, Cather insisted that the story of the reunion she described in an epilogue for *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* was "literally true, every word of it" (44). The event evoked strong feelings in little Cather and its impact is evident when she retells it years later:

> Till had already risen; when the stranger followed my mother into the room, she took a few uncertain steps forward. She fell meekly into the arms of a tall, gold-skinned woman, who drew the little old darky to her breast and held her there, bending her face down over the head scantily covered with grey wool. Neither spoke a word. There was something Scriptural in that meeting, like the pictures in our old Bible. (*Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, 283)

In addition to using her memories, Cather also used many of her family members and friends from Virginia as portraits for her fictional characters in *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*. The protagonist, Nancy, and her mother, Till, were pictured according to real women who worked for Cather's family. Cather even used their real names in the novel (Woodress, 284). The daughter of Henry and Sapphira, Rachel Blake, was drawn from Cather's grandmother, Rachel Boak. According to Brown, Cather attributed even her grandmother's appearance to Rachel Blake (15):

> The same set of the head, enduring yet determined, the broad, highly coloured face, the fleshy nose, anchored deeply at the nostrils. She had the miller's grave dark eyes, too, set back under a broad forehead. (*Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, 11)

Another trait shared by both the real and fictional Rachel was willingness to help sick and suffering people. The real Rachel Boak was recognized as an "unofficial nurse" by her Back Creek neighbours (O'Brien, 25). Similarly, the fictional Rachel Blake had "skill and experience in nursing; was certainly a better help to the sick than

the country doctor" (*Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, 11-12). Another fictional character that was based on one of Cather's family members was the postmistress, Mrs. Bywaters. The model for Mrs. Bywaters was Cather's great-aunt Sidney Gore. Similar to Mrs. Bywaters, Gore was widowed and also worked as a postmistress for some time (Brown, 7). Moreover, Gore used letters as "an instrument of power" in the same manner Mrs. Bywaters does when she writes a letter to prepare Nancy's escape (O'Brien, 20-21).

The character of Mrs. Ringer was drawn from Mary Ann Anderson, a woman who occasionally came to help in the Cathers' household (Woodress, 284). Anderson was a great storyteller and Cather enjoyed listening to her. Later she wrote to Anderson's granddaughter, stating "her grandmother had had an unusual interest in following the story of people's lives" (O'Brien, 29). In *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, Cather described Mrs. Ringer in terms of her real model:

> Mrs. Ringer was born interested. She got a great deal of entertainment out of the weather and the behaviour of the moon. Any chance bit of gossip that came her way was a godsend. […] Mrs. Ringer couldn't read or write, as she was frank to tell you, but the truth was she could read everything most important: the signs of the seasons, the meaning of the way the wood creatures behaved, and human faces. (*Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, 119)

Cather set her book *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* in an environment well-known to her. The story is set in a village called Gore, which was named after Cather's great-aunt Sidney Gore, and its surrounding landscape (Woodress, 284). In her book, Cather provided an elaborate description for the countryside of her childhood. It is a testament to her extraordinary memory that she was able to evoke so articulately the landscape after so many years. Passages also show the fondness she felt towards it:

> In the deep ravine below the road a mountain stream rushed coffee brown, throwing up crystal rainbows where it gurgled over rock ledges. On the steep hillside across the creek the tall forest trees were still bare, - the oak leaves no bigger than a squirrel's ear. […] Here and there stood a well-built farmhouse, with carefully tended yard and garden. Along the rail fences the locust trees were in bloom. (*Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, 115-116)

Cather also used both the mill and the mill house that was once owned by her maternal grandparents as a place where Mr. and Mrs. Colbert live (Brown, 311).

Bennett states "members of the Cather family who went from Nebraska to visit in Virginia, feel that "The Big Mill" is the mill of *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*" (5). In her novel, Cather described the mill and its surrounding property:

> The Mill House was […] two storeys, with a steep-pitched roof and dormer windows. It stood long and thin, and a front porch, supported by square frame posts, ran the length of the house. From this porch the broad green lawn sloped down a long way, to a white picket fence where the mill yard began. […] Some ten yards from the back door of the house was the kitchen, entirely separate from it, according to the manner of that time. The negro cabins were much farther away. (*Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, 20-21)

In the epilogue for the novel, when Cather described the house where Nancy and Till's reunion took place as "big old brick house entered by a white portico with fluted columns" (*Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, 279), she was describing the actual place where she lived as a little child, in the house built by her grandfather and called Willow Shade because of the willows that stood in front of it (O'Brien, 13).

5.4.3 Conclusion

Similar to *My Ántonia, Sapphira and the Slave Girl* is based mainly on Cather's memories and experiences. Also, the traits of Cather's fictional characters can often be found in real people, this time the ones Cather knew as a child in Virginia. Furthermore, Cather set the novel in an environment that was once very close to her and which she kept in her memory for many years. There are no significant signs of any literary sources except for a few brief remarks on and references to Bunyan's works. Considering this, it can be said that *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* is primarily inspired by non-literary sources, specifically by Cather's memories of Virginia.

6. CONCLUSION

Two main sources of inspiration are evident throughout the works of Willa Cather. The first is literary, concerning authors and specific works that affected Cather's writing. The second is of a non-literary nature and is mainly based on elements and facts from Cather's personal life. The literary sources referred to throughout this paper primarily concern the influence of two important American authors, Henry James and Sarah Orne Jewett, but include Housman and many others. The non-literary influences on Cather's writing include her memories and experiences, real people and real places. Cather's use of these sources can be found in almost all of her work.

The analysis that has been provided in previous chapters has shown through examples how literary and non-literary influences impacted four of Cather's important works, *My Ántonia*, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, *Shadows on the Rock* and *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*. This analysis has focused primarily on passages, characters, stories and settings that can be traced to tangible sources, or ones that can be supported by documented facts from Cather's life. Having closely examined these books in relation to Cather's inspirations, it must also be considered what patterns can be seen in their use and what conclusions can be formed on this basis.

First, we will focus on the literary sources influencing Cather's novels *My Ántonia*, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, *Shadows on the Rock* and *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*. When looking at these books from the point of view of their theme, style and form, we see that Cather certainly did not use other authors' material. Thus, we must say that in this matter, she was influenced by advice she was given by Sarah Orne Jewett at the beginning of her career. When Cather was still under the influence of Henry James, Jewett told her to turn to her own material in order to become a distinguished author. Considering this, when choosing material for all four of the novels analyzed here, it is very clear that Cather was directly influenced by Jewett.

In further considering how literary influences affected Cather, we must divide the novels into two groups. One group includes novels in which Cather used literary sources as the essential base and the other consists of books which show no significant literary influence. *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Shadows on the Rock* belong to the first group, while *My Ántonia* and *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* to the latter. Both

Death Comes for the Archbishop and *Shadows on the Rock* can be called historical novels. They are set in times before Cather was born and thus it would have been difficult for her not to use any historical sources while writing them. While writing *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, Cather relied mainly on Howlett's biography of bishop Mechebeuf. In *Shadows on the Rock*, significant signs of Cather's use of Parkman's books on Canadian history can be found. On the contrary, *My Ántonia* and *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* are based on events and people Cather remembered from her childhood both in Nebraska and Virginia, or was told about, and thus it was not necessary for her to use any significant written sources. The only literary inspirations found in *My Ántonia* are folk tales which Cather retold in her personal style. Similarly, in *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, there are only brief remarks on Bunyan's works. Based on this evidence, it seems clear that Cather used literary sources only when she felt it absolutely necessary to support the plot of her books.

In terms of the influence of non-literary sources on Cather's writing, we will divide them into individual groups according to their themes: personal memories and experiences, real people and places. By analyzing these ideas in four of Cather's novels, we will try to determine whether one of these influences is the most significant in Cather's fiction.

Regarding Cather's memories and experiences, this influence appears in some way in all four books that are being discussed. The only variable is the amount they are featured in the individual books. The novels *My Ántonia* and *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* are almost entirely composed of Cather's childhood memories. These appear in great number and create important and unmovable frames for the stories. If these true episodes were erased from the book, the whole story would fall apart. In *My Ántonia*, all the important passages described really happened in Red Cloud at one time or another, for example the episode of Mr. Shimerda's suicide or the incident of Ántonia leaving the Harlings. Similarly, in *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, the significant episode of Nancy Till's return is based on a real event from Cather's childhood. On the other hand, in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Shadows on the Rock*, Cather's experiences serve only as marginal episodes. Were they to be removed, there would not be any important impact on the central story. For example, if the episode of white mules disappeared from *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, the main plot could continue without any

change. Similarly, if Cather did not include the episode with the crèches and the beaver in *Shadows on the Rock*, it would not influence the central story in any significant way. Nevertheless, the fact that Cather used her memories and experiences even in books that did not concern her familiar environment shows how important personal memories and experiences were to her. This may be the reason why she described them in her novels so often. Considering all of this, we should regard Cather's memories and experiences as one of the most important sources of inspiration on Cather's writing.

Similar to the inclusion of personal memories in her novels, Cather often portrayed her fictional characters according to real people she knew in the various stages of her life. Cather most often pictured the people she really loved, family members and friends, or people she was interested in. Thus, in her novel *My Ántonia*, she immortalized her paternal grandparents and her best friends from Red Cloud, but she also drew a detailed picture of the wicked M. R. Bentley, a cruel Red Cloud money-lender. In the same way, she portrayed her maternal grandmother in *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*. On the contrary, in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Shadows on the Rock*, she relied on historical books when creating her protagonists. Nevertheless, Cather at least created minor characters based on people she knew even in these more historical novels. For example, Sada in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* resembles the Cathers' maid, Margie, and the apothecary from *Shadows on the Rock* is partly based on Cather's father. This leads us to believe that for Cather, it was important to involve real people in her books. Without them, Cather's fiction would look different and, as with her use of personal experiences, we should consider her use of real people to be one of the most significant influences on her writing.

In her books, Cather often used locales that she knew from her experiences. In *My Ántonia* it was Red Cloud, disguised as Black Hawk, and the country of her childhood. *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* features Back Creek, where Cather was born and spent the first few years of her life. In *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, Cather used the Southwest she visited many times and kept returning to as a setting. The only exception to this pattern of Cather using familiar environments as the setting for her books is the novel *Shadows on the Rock*, which is set in the French part of Canada, with which Cather had very little previous experience. Even though Cather had visited French Canada for the first time just before writing the novel, her lifelong interest in

French culture gave Quebec familiar feeling. This shows that Cather always used an environment that was at least remotely close to her and her inner feelings. From this, we can clearly see that the use of familiar landscapes was important for Cather and thus her use of real places as settings should be considered one of the most significant influences on her work.

It has been demonstrated in the analysis above that several literary and non-literary factors influenced the writing of Willa Cather. When evaluating the importance of these influences, it cannot be answered simply whether one is more significant than the other. Cather's literary influences, having once been strongly based on James' style and themes, developed over the course of her writing career. On Jewett's advice, Cather turned to material derived from her life. In many cases, however, Cather did not have enough experience with her subjects or with the history of the localities she wrote about. Therefore, she turned to other writers' works, not for stylistic or thematic help, but for help in achieving credibility and historical accuracy. On the other hand, Cather's use of non-literary sources gives her novels character and intimacy that makes them distinguishable from works by other authors. Cather clearly considered her memories and experiences with people and in particular places extremely important. However, she must have also known that she could not rely on these influences alone.

On the basis of the evidence that has been identified, one must admit that both literary and non-literary sources of inspiration were important in Cather's writing. Perhaps this shows that what is most important in evaluating Cather is not the inspiration, but the completed work. As Cather herself stated, "You can't write imaginary things. To have universal appeal, they must be true!" (Bennett, 201). As detailed reflections of both literary and non-literary influences, Cather's works are certainly both appealing and true.

RESUMÉ

Willa Cather je jednou z nejvýznamnějších amerických spisovatelek z přelomu 19. a 20. století. Krátké povídky začala psát již v 90. letech 19. století na univerzitě a v roce 1905 vydala svou první sbírku povídek *The Troll Garden*. Úspěch jí však přineslo až vydání jejího druhého románu *O Pioneers!* v roce 1912. Od napsání tohoto románu publikovala se střídavým úspěchem ještě dalších 12 děl.

Většina literárních znalců řadí Willu Cather do realistické literatury, přestože mnoho jejích děl je psáno v romantickém duchu. Na druhou stranu musíme dodat, že v některých ohledech Willa Cather skutečně splňuje charakteristiku realismu, a to například ve výběru postav, které v jejím případě často popisují obyčejné lidi v obyčejném prostředí. Také její pojetí světa, které vždy zobrazuje pravdivě, je veskrze realistické.

Někteří literární vědci ji také spojují s regionálním hnutím 19. století. Přestože díla Willy Cather často obsahují prvky, které jsou charakteristické pro regionalismus, ona sama se zařazení do kategorie regionálních spisovatelů bránila. Pravdou je, že její díla nemohou být jednoznačně označena za regionální literaturu. Na rozdíl od spisovatelů, kteří se skutečně věnovali regionálnímu románu, Willa Cather svá díla nezasazovala pouze do jedné oblasti. Příběhy v jejích románech se také soustředí spíše na jedince než na celou komunitu, jak je tomu zvykem v regionální literatuře. Z tohoto pohledu se zdá zcela zcestné klasifikovat Willu Cather jako regionální spisovatelku.

Pokud se na díla Willy Cather podíváme z hlediska zdrojů inspirace, které při psaní používala, zjistíme, že se ve svých dílech spoléhala na dva hlavní zdroje inspirace. Jedním z těchto zdrojů jsou literární vlivy, tím druhým jsou pak vlivy neliterárního charakteru. Literární inspirační zdroje zahrnují hlavně vliv různých autorů na tvorbu Willy Cather, a to zvláště vliv Henryho Jamese a Sarah Orne Jewett. Mezi neliterární zdroje inspirace patří především vlastní vzpomínky Willy Cather na dětství, které strávila s rodinou v Nebrasce, a její celoživotní zkušenosti. Dále se v jejích dílech často objevují postavy inspirované skutečnými lidmi a hlavní dějové linie jsou často zasazeny do prostředí, které Willa Cather důvěrně znala a k němuž chovala kladný citový vztah.

Jedním z autorů, kteří zásadně ovlivnili tvorbu Willy Cather, byl Henry James. V začátcích své kariéry se ho Willa Cather snažila napodobovat, což se jí mnohokrát

s úspěchem podařilo. Jamesův vliv se objevuje například v povídkách "Flavia and her Artists" nebo "The Marriage of Phaedra", které byly vydány v souboru krátkých povídek *The Troll Garden*. Také na jejím prvním románu *Alexander's Bridge* je Jamesův vliv na první pohled zřejmý. Willa Cather úspěšně kopírovala jak Jamesův styl, tak i jeho témata, která jí byla myšlenkově blízká. Patří k nim především téma umělců a jejich uměleckého vývoje. Často se také v dílech Henryho Jamese a Willy Cather setkáváme s námětem parazitického vztahu, v němž jeden účastník profituje na úkor druhého. Takový vztah je ústředním motivem například v Jamesově románu *The Sacred Fount* nebo v krátké povídce Willy Cather "The Willing Muse".

Dalším autorem, jehož vliv je jasně patrný v dílech Willy Cather a který zásadně ovlivnil i její kariéru spisovatelky, je americká autorka Sarah Orne Jewett. Jewett ze své pozice již zavedené a úspěšné autorky Wille Cather poradila, aby přestala napodobovat Jamesův styl a používat jeho témata, doporučila jí, aby se soustředila na náměty, které jí jsou blízké a které důvěrně zná z vlastní zkušenosti, a aby našla svůj vlastní styl psaní. Willa Cather si vzala její rady k srdci a výsledkem byl roman *O Pioneers!*, ve kterém se vrací k Nebrasce svého dětství a který jí konečně přinesl uznání a zájem čtenářů i literárních kritiků. Jewett neovlivnila Willu Cather pouze svými radami, ale Cather našla inspiraci i v některých prvcích z jejích děl. V povídce "The Joy of Nelly Deane" se Willa Cather poprvé zabývá hlavním tématem Sarah Orne Jewett – citovými vztahy mezi ženami. Také v díle Sarah Orne Jewett *The Country of the Pointed Firs* a v románu Willy Cather *Shadows on the Rock* můžeme najít podobný prvek ženy, která žije poustevnickým životem.

Přestože Henry James a Sarah Orne Jewett byli hlavním literárním vlivem, který působil na tvorbu Willy Cather, v jejích dílech je možno nalézt také stopy dalších autorů. V roce 1903 Willa Cather vydala svou první sbírku básní *April Twilights*, ve které je zřetelně patrný vliv A. E. Housmana, anglického současného básníka. V některých básních z *April Twilights* Cather použila Housmanův styl psaní veršů a básně také vyvolávají podobné pocity a nálady jako básně Housmanovy. Ve sbírce *April Twilights* se kromě Housmana objevuje také vliv Virgilia, Horacia či Rossetti.

Dále se Willa Cather nechávala ostatními umělci ovlivňovat také při vyběru jmen pro svá díla. Titul jejího románu *O Pioneers!* je bezpochyby inspirován názvem Whitmanovy básně "O Pioneers! O Pioneers!". Willa Cather si vybrala parafrázi titulu

tohoto díla pravděpodobně proto, že Whitmanova báseň sdílí s jejím románem hlavní motiv, a to motiv života průkopníků v drsných podmínkách člověkem dosud nepodmaněné prérie.

Ačkoliv se v dílech Willy Cather často objevují důkazy literární inspirace, její díla jsou také zásadně ovlivněna zdroji neliterárními. Mezi tyto zdroje patří především vlastní vzpomínky a zkušenosti Willy Cather, skuteční lidé, kteří se stali předobrazem pro fiktivní postavy a místa, která Willa Cather důvěrně znala a která použila ve svých knihách.

Willa Cather mnoho děl založila na svých vzpomínkách. Ty se většinou týkají jejího dětství v Nebrasce a objevují se například v románech *My Ántonia* a *O Pioneers!*. Dokonce i její dřívější vzpomínky z Virginie, z doby před tím, než se její rodiče rozhodli přestěhovat, si nakonec našly cestu do její tvorby a je možné je nalézt v jejím posledním románu *Sapphira and the Slave Girl.* Kromě raných vzpomínek Willa Cather také často používala své pozdější zkušenosti z cest. Její dojmy z Evropy se projevily například ve válečném románu *One of Ours* a zážitky, pocity z jejích návštěv na jihozápadě Spojených států se objevují v románu *Song of the Lark* a v menší míře i v historickém románu *Death Comes for the Archbishop*.

Willa Cather také často zakládala své literární postavy na skutečně žijících lidech. Ve větší či menší míře zobrazovala členy své rodiny nebo své přátele a jejich rodiny. V povídce "Old Mrs. Harris" použila jako předobraz manželů Templetonových své vlastní rodiče a jako inspirace pro paní Harrisovou posloužila její babička z matčiny strany. V románu *My Ántonia* lze v prarodičích Jima Burdena rozeznat prarodiče z otcovy strany a v rodině Harlingových zase její přátele z městečka Red Cloud. Dále také Willa Cather ve svých dílech zachycovala vyjímečné osobnosti, které v životě potkala. Tak je tomu například i v románu *Song of the Lark*, ve kterém je hlavní postava Thea Kronborg částečně inspirována operní pěvkyní Olive Fremstad, nebo v románu *A Lost Lady*, kde jako hlavní postava vystupuje paní Forresterová, jejímž předobrazem byla skutečná paní Garberová, která žila v městečku Red Cloud.

Stejně jako Willa Cather používala známé lidi jako vzor pro své knižní postavy, tak používala také známé protředí, do kterého často své příběhy zasazovala. Ve většina příběhů a románů, které se odehrávají na středozápadě Spojených států se objevuje malé město, jež je nápadně podobné městečku Red Cloud, kde Willa Cather vyrostla. Red

Cloud se objevuje pod jménem Hanover již v *O Pioneers!*, dále jako Black Hawk v *My Ántonia*, Frankfort v *One of Ours*, Haverford v *Lucy Gayheart* a Sweetwater v *A Lost Lady*. Podobně jako Red Cloud Willa Cather ve svých dílech také používala domy, které znala a ve kterých nějaký čas pobývala. V povídce "The Best Years" se například objevuje dům, ve kterém žila rodina Willy Cather v Red Cloud. Dům na prérii, kde bydleli její prarodiče, zobrazila v povídce "Wagner's Matinee". Další dům, který byl pro Willu Cather citově důležitý a který popsala ve své knize *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, je sídlo Willow Shade, ve kterém žila v dětství ve Virginii. Dále také Willa Cather často popisovala pokoje, ve kterých bydlela. V románu *The Song of the Lark* zobrazila podkrovní pokoj, který obývala v dětství v rodinném domě v Red Cloud a v románu *The Professor's House* se objevuje další podkrovní pokoj, který tentokrát měla k dispozici v Pittsburghu.

Pokud se pokusíme z hlediska zdrojů inspirace porovnat díla Willy Cather, je možné její tvorbu rozdělit do dvou skupin. Do první skupiny patří romány, které jsou založeny téměř výhradně na vlastních vzpomínkách a zkušenostech Willy Cather. Mezi tyto romány patří například *My Ántonia* a *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*. Do druhé skupiny pak patří romány jako například *Death Comes for the Archbishop* a *Shadows on the Rock*, jejichž zápletka je založena na literárních zdrojích. Přestože jsou romány *My Ántonia* a *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* složeny především ze vzpomínek, i tady je možné najít vlivy jiných literárních děl. V románu *My Ántonia* se objevují lidové příběhy a mýty běžné pro Nebrasku a v díle *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* je možné najít odkazy na dílo Johna Bunyana *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Stejně jako v dílech založených na neliterárních inspiračních zdrojích lze najít i literární vlivy, tak i v dílech založených převážné na literárních zdrojích lze najít inspiraci neliterárního charakteru. Přestože román *Death Comes for the Archbishop* je založen hlavně na Howlettově biografické knize *Life of the Right Reverend Joseph P. Machebeuf*, i zde se jako vedlejší epizody objevují autentické příběhy ze života Willy Cather a některé postavy mají svůj předobraz ve skutečných lidech. Stejně je tomu i u románu *Shadows on the Rock*, jehož základem jsou dějepisná díla Francise Parkmana, ale ve kterém je také možné najít skutečné příběhy a lidi.

Z tohoto vyplývá, že Willa Cather nepoužívala výhradně pouze jeden z literárních nebo neliterárních zdrojů při vytváření zápletek pro svá díla, ale že

používala oba zdroje podle potřeb daného příběhu. Proto se nedá jednoznačně určit, který z těchto zdrojů hraje v dílech Willy Cather důležitější roli. Lze však s jistotou tvrdit, že oba, jak literární, tak i neliterární zdroje inspirace jsou důležitou součástí děl Willy Cather a bez nich by její tvorba nedosahovala své vysoké kvality.

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