CHAPTER-II
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Willa Cather's work reflects the world she knew in her childhood, the pioneer era, which she clearly idealized in her fictional recreation of it and the post world war-I wasteland, which she completely rejected. After close reading of her novels and short stories we observe that the values, which she idealized in her art, were the pioneer values. Her theme was not the superiority of the past over the present, but as Henry Steele Commager has observed "The supremacy of moral and spiritual over material values, the ever recurrent but inexhaustible theme of gaining the whole world and loosing ones soul". One theme, however which persists through out her fiction is the dilemma of the artist caught between his commitment to art on one hand and to life on the other. Her vision of life perceived duality in all human experience, and in much of her fiction she celebrates without contesting the double nature of both man and his world; but as an artist she also strove to find a way of reconciling the opposing claims of art and life which would allow her to be both an artist and a woman.

In 1933, Dorothy Canfield Fisher made a perceptive and I think important analysis of those early years in Nebraska
the eighties and nineties, as they would have affected Willa Cather. In the first years of settlement, wrote Mrs. Fisher, it was a "stirring drama of hope." Since nothing had been done, "everything was still possible," and the settlers were "half drunk with the exquisite and unforgettable elixir and of frontier hopefulness". In the mid eighties, the tide was already turning, and disappointments increased in the next decade, so until she left Nebraska in 1896, Willa Cather lived "in the midst of one of the greatest disillusionments the American pioneer movement has ever known — she had lived through years of hope so blinding that the defects of frontier life could not be seen; she had lived through years of reaction so bleak and black that its fine qualities were invisible". Willa Cather knew pioneer life in both the dark and the light of the moon, and she wrote of both sides. More important, she was used to living rhythms of exile and return, conquest and defeat. They were the inevitabilities of life, is it possible that she wrote to lament the old order than to embody—vivify—that inescapable experience? It was indeed one of the fundamental facts on which life rests.

Miss Cather was painfully aware of the changes going on around her and for the most part fiercely resented them. In her former novels Cather believed that there is no life to match the life of the soil. We see that even the first of her Nebraska novels ends on a note not of triumph but of failure.
In her early Nebraska novels Cather's exceptional individuals fulfill their destinies by rising above the common lot and her sensitive observer strained to grasp immortal truths in the material world. Alexandra Bergson to see the beauty of the land; Jim Burden, to see Antonia as an earth mother; Niel Herbert, to get at the secret of Marian Forrester. Cather formerly had pulled away to transcend mortality by converting life into art, in her later work of art she wrote of accepting life as it is "Complete and beautiful".

As she idealized "Old world" values in her work, for Ms Cather the "old World" signifies tradition, respect for the past, and a clear sense of identity; in contrast are "New World" values, which emphasize rejection of the past and a pressure to conform. For better future Cather feels that "a continuation of the good things of the past" while adapting American ways is essential. Material success, if based on a drive for modernism and conformity, hampers self-definition. Cather stresses the importance of community to the individual in her former novels. Cather suggests that a healthy community provides, the security, the sense of belonging and the sense of ordered growth that human's need. To make ones past meaningful and special and to fill an otherwise empty present life an individual's task must involve perception, arrangement and interpretation. This task can be achieved by using literature as a filter for viewing
life. Good judgement and resourcefulness are the qualities, which Cather admired in her characters to be successful in life.\textsuperscript{12}

Art for Cather is an enduring value, a stay against the onslaught of time.\textsuperscript{13} She feels that success is achieved by sacrificing personal needs. In her work Cather had appreciated unselfish desire to achieve great height in life as well as in art. On the other hand in the new century had blamed ambition, cruelty, and selfish desire for the decline of civilization.\textsuperscript{14} In her letter to editor of Women's Companion Cather elaborated on the idea that our lives are very little made up of economic conditions. They affect us on the outside, she said, but they certainly are not what life means to us or the taxi driver or the elevator operator. Theories of economic reform and social reconstruction, she thought, really seemed to interest nobody, very much except the men who wrote about them, those who had made it a profession to be interested in them.\textsuperscript{15} We see throughout her early writing that strength, power and passion are the primary elements of greatness. She hated languor as much as mediocrity or sham and cheapness. Action and energy were life qualities.\textsuperscript{16} Willa Cather rarely mentioned but deeply held the conviction that money is absolutely necessary if life is to be at all worthwhile.\textsuperscript{17}

As a grown up person she hated change – change in her-self, in her family, in her town, in the countryside. She
mourned the old "board walks" which were replaced by cement sidewalk. She missed every tree that died, every landmark that had been destroyed. She believed that new things are always ugly. New clothes are always ugly; a prima Donna will never wear a new gown upon the stage. She wears it first around her apartment until it shapes itself to her figure, or if she hadn't time to do that, she hires an understudy to wear it. A house can never be beautiful until it has been lived in for a long time. An old house built in miserable taste is more beautiful than a new house built and furnished in correct taste. The beauty lies in the associations that cluster around it the way in which the house has fitted itself to the people. She deplored the rage for newness and conventionality and the prevalence of superficial culture. She felt that change and progress were not at all related, and some of her attitudes gave rise to the opinion that she believed herself to belong to some special aristocracy. She said in New York, in 1925:

I like horses better than automobiles and I think fewer and better books would be a great improvement. I think it is a great misfortune for everyone to read, for that matter: A little culture makes lazy handiwork, and handiwork is a beautiful education in itself, and something real. Good carpentry, good weaving, all the handicrafts were much sounder forms of education than what the people are getting now. One sad feature of modern education
is that the hand is so little trained among the people are who have to earn their daily bread, and the head so superficially and poor educated. The one education, which amounts to anything, is learning how to do something well whether it is to make a bookcase or write a book. If I could get a carpenter to make me some good bookcases, I would have as much respect for him as I have for the people whose books I want to put on them making something well is the principal end of education. I wish we could go back, but I am afraid we are only going to become more and more mechanical.

As a child Willa Cather has grown up among the immigrant families. Their struggling life made a good impression on her mind, which later became the material for her fiction. Immigrants in Cather's novels retain "Old world" values - respect for traditions reverence for family, desire for intellectual growth - despite the pressure of their new environment. Cather implies that one can escape "the trap of worldly success" one can "(feel) the ground under (one's) feet," by gaining a foothold in community. Cather's four novels of 1922-26 all suggest that such a foothold may bring one closer to self-fulfillment then a competitive, individualistic the dream of success. In her next two novels, Cather examines more closely such a new perception of success. As she does so, she confronts more directly the troubling aspects of such a community oriented
outlook, and specifies more concretely. The communities that in her view offer the best opportunity for self-fulfillment tradition and family.

Fastidious selectivity, reticence, control—these principles governed both her life and her art, she believed that the little, everyday happenings and occurrences, that form the greatest part of everyone's life and happiness. Cather's one of the concept of life is that it is life that grows from the loss of art. In losing his arts, David Gerhardt in ONE OF OURS finds a soul mate and purpose in life. In her novels as she idealizes the great adventurers i.e. the pioneers of the Old West, she also suggests their failure. Their strength lies in the magnificence with which they grasp the present but their weakness lies in their "princely carelessness", that is, their failure to look responsibly toward the future. They are great hearted adventurers," but they are "unpractical to the point of magnificence". They are strong in attack but weak in defense," men who "could conquer but could not hold ". If the new generation is shrewd, hard, and consecrated to petty economics, this state of affairs in part due to the "princely carelessness", of the older generation. In her character she devoted to the spirit of strong curiosity, talent and a desire to learn.

Willa Cather was fascinated by Pueblo civilization. Communal, ritualistic, mystic, the southwest Indians culture
seemed a healthy counterpoint to the aggressive individualism, spiritual emptiness, and corrupt materialism of modern American life, where getting and spending were the only sacred enterprises, "their lives were so full of ritual and symbolism that all their common actions were ceremonial" she wrote later of the Cliff-dwellers, "planting harvesting, hunting, feasting, fasting. In this society where myth were part of people's lives- not narratives to be read about in books – Cather found the dichotomy between "Art" and "Life" erased. In Indian-culture both past and present, everyday life was imbued with order and meaning. Cather had blamed ambition, cruelty and desire for the decline of civilization in the new century. One of the opinions, of Cather reminded by the editor John Farrar in March 1925 about life is that life not only gives us wages for our toil but a bonus besides. It makes for nice, easy family life but not for art. She believed that "Preparation of food is one of the most important things in life." Hence we see most of the mothers in Cather' novels are good at cooking and preserving food.

Miss Cather has a number of ways to tell us that life is most passionate in the promise, not in the fulfillment. A strenuous physical life is lived throughout every novel, whether it is the struggle for survival or the keen experience of joy in simple physical well-being; it may reach in some characters
the point of total identification with the living world around. It is a form of the passion that is, all through Willa Cather's work; her work is written out of it we see it in many modulations: desire - often exalted an ambition; devotion; loyalty; fidelity; physical nearness and kindness and comfort when it lies at rest. Love? It is affection that warms the life in her stories and hates that chills it. The following passage from the novel O PIONEERS! shows how affection warms the life of a person who is disgusted and frustrated in life:

   She put her hand on his arm, "I need you terribly when it happened, Carl. I cried for you at night and I thought perhaps I should never care for you again. But when I got your telegram yesterday, then – it was just as it used to be. You are all I have in the world, you know (p. 287)

In the above passage from the novel O PIONEERS! Alexandra expresses her love and need for Carl, when he comes to meet her as fastest as the trains and boats could bring him. Another passage from the same novel shows how hate and anger chills the life:

   He began to act, just as a man who falls into the fire begins to act. The gun sprang to his shoulder, he sighted mechanically and fired three times without stopping, stopped without knowing why, either he shut his eyes or he had vertigo — they had fallen a little apart from each other, and were perfectly still. (p. 268)
The above passage is about how anger and hatred brings disaster in one's life. Frank kills his wife and Alexandra's brother Emil unintentionally but in anger, as he was suspicious about his wife's character. There is reconcilement and here is pity. There is obsession here too and so is the hunger for something impossible: All of these are forms of love and there is marriage, though the marriages that occur along the way of the novels are milestones hardly destinations as required in the careful building of her plots, they are inclined to be unavailing.

In the long run, love of art which is love accomplished without help or need of help from another- is what is deepest and realest in her work. She lacked self-righteousness, and she just as wholly lacked bitterness. It is impossible to think of diminishment in anything she thought or wrote. She conceived of character along heroic lines. For her, the heroic life is the artists as it is the pioneer's. She equated the two. As an American writer Cather demanded – hard work, struggle, good sense, discrimination, and an eagerness for beauty of herself as well as from others. Her respect for the traditions and values of the past, however, provides one of the reasons critics dismiss Cather as nostalgic outdated or "genteel".

The pioneer novels comment indirectly on the loss of pioneer values in the modern world, and A LOST LADY and
THE PROFESSOR'S HOUSE make direct statements about the standards in the contemporary world that produce a modern alienation from our roots. The materialism and showy extravagance of this hour a passing phase\textsuperscript{1}35. The belief that smug success and easy money are the real aims of human life has settled down over the prairies, but it has not hardened into molds and crusts. The people are warm, mercurial, impressionable, restless, over found of novelty and change. These are of course not the qualities, which make the dull chapter of history\textsuperscript{2}36.

Creative life for Willa Cather was the only escape from an undesirable world\textsuperscript{3}37. Cather believed love and marriage as the basic realities of life. She was not against marriage in her novels she presents her views regarding love and marriage. Even though she remained single all her life, she was interested in portraying good and bad results of married life. In her novels we see that most of the characters refuse marriage or if they marry, their lives are unhappy. Cather describes that marriage leads to bitter experiences in life which is revealed in novels like MY MORTAL ENEMY and A LOST LADY because either there is incompatibility or it leads to exploitation of one party - by the other.

Sometimes Cather feels that woman who are sympathetic and compassionate towards their husbands and
children are best housewives and only a right sort of woman is to get married. The wrong sort of woman does not prove a good housewife in Cather's novels. Cather takes pleasure in portraying the wrong types of woman who fail as housewives and produce rather disappointing results of married life. This is one of the reasons why most of Cather's novels are full of the pictures of unhappy couples. But there are a few characters in Cather's novels who do realize the happiness of married life. This shows that Cather was not against marriage but she was against unhappy marriages, which were source of troubles in ones life. Lack of understanding between husband and wife results in unhappy marriage. According to her opinion marriage is a happy experience if a couple has warmth, love and understanding for each other.

Cather feels that a married woman's reputation rests on her faithfulness to her husband. A corrupt wife who is loyal to her husband has no regard in Cather's novels. Morality and loyalty are qualities of a virtuous wife. Cather dislikes fashions. She feels that a housewife must bear responsibilities in spite of running blindly after pomp and show. Cather realizes that husband provides security and shelter to wife. In her novels she gives more importance to spiritual love in life. She feels that love affairs do not produce good results always.
Cather accepted that fate and chance matter in love and marriage. She had produced excellent examples of lovers who had all the qualities of a true lover and a husband but they had experienced only frustration and dejection in their relationship because circumstances and fate did not favour them. Cather felt that impulse marriages were risky. Cather realized the fact that the company of a true lover affords comfort and peace to a person who is disgusted and frustrated.

The love between Emil and Marie, however powerful and alluring, is at difference with the order of the community, and the results of their love, from the very beginning are disruptive, for Marie is another man's wife. The contrast between this frustrated love, which makes Emil harsh and quarrelsome and the delight of harmonious love is emphasized in the portrayal of the happy, sunny love between Emil's best friend Amedee and bride, Angelique.36

In the novel *O PIONEERS! we see in her pioneers the heroic traits of old and a dedication to building a culture which would preserve the values of the past meeting the demands of the present.39 The novels basic theme, the pioneers story of taming and making fruitful the wild prairie is the background

*Ms. Willa Cather, O PIONEERS! ,Boston (Houghton Mifflin Company) 1913 - 1941. All subsequent references to the text are to this edition.
against which are set the more personal but thematically similar stories of love, birth and death – The basic realities of man's existence⁴⁰. Alexandra's relationship to the land not only brings the land under submission to the plow and makes it fruitful; it also brings into being, in Alexandra's household, a human community which is ordered and harmonious and whose harmonious depends as Cather believed on the continuous of right relationships among its members⁴¹.

Alexandra's a openness to things of value in both the old and the new her sympathy and understanding of the needs of Ivar and of the old-fashioned Mrs. Lee, Lou's mother-in-law, and her willingness to try alfalfa or a silo when none of her neighbours would hear of such a thing-are implicitly contrasted with her brother's slavery to conventional ways of behavior and their concern over what people might say⁴².

Through Carl, the pettiness and conventionality of Alexandra's brother is seen as a metaphor of the lack of right order in the world at large, where modern prosperity has brought not only relative ease and abundance but also shallowness and lack of taste and scorn of those who cannot or will not follow the conventional patterns of behavior⁴³.

In the last chapter of O PIONEERS! we see that Alexandra's ascent from death is facilitated through love of Carl, who, the moment he learned of Alexandra's misfortune, had
left his prospecting business in Alaska and rushed to her as fast as trains and boats could carry him. His earlier timidity in the face of her brother's disapproval vanishes in the awareness of her need for him, and her grief has opened in her a greater awareness of that need:

Her letter had never reached him. He had first learned of her misfortune from a San Francisco paper, four weeks old, which he had picked up in a saloon, and which contained a brief account of frank Shabata's trial. When he put down the paper, he had already made up his mind that he could reach Alexandra as quickly as a letter could; and ever since he had been on the way; day and night, by the fastest boats and trains he could catch. His steamer had been held back two days by rough weather. (p.286).

Leon Edel in Willa Cather, the paradox of success an article on thematic and mythic criticism on Willa Cather comments on O PIONEERS! that it seems to say, the pioneer must do what he is ordained to do as Alexandra the younger rebel in the novel is ordained to conquer the land and finish the task her pioneer father had but half completed—and in the process impose her will on her brothers; and that the children of the pioneers who remained within the tradition of struggle had hard lives, but in the end achieved a rugged kind of happiness.
The novel *MY ANTONIA*, opens with the motif of the journey, which is most broadly given expression in the pioneer's journey from an old established culture to a new land⁴⁶. The pioneer journey in general and Jim's life in particular, became metaphors for a quest for the power, life, and productivity, which are manifestations of the sacred, of ultimate reality⁴⁷.

The plight of the Shimerdas is intensified by the implicit contrast with the comfortable, harmonious family life of the Burdens; ignorant of the language, cheated by this go-between Krajiek, living like animals in a dugout that is little better than a cave, they are, in external at least a sorry sight. And the conditions within the family are far from harmonious, the mother is grasping and mean and has centered all her ambitions on her surly son Ambrosch⁴⁸. The father, whose major concern is for his beloved Antonia, is a gentle man of culture and sensitivity, demoralized by his wife and suffering terribly the hardships of prairie life. In the midst of these hardships Antonia herself, at fourteen, is eager, cheerful, full of life. Without ever ceasing to her exuberant, particular self, she is already beginning to become for Jim, the personification of life itself⁴⁹.

*Ms. Willa Cather, MY ANTONIA*, Boston (Houghton Mifflin Company) 1918-1954. All subsequent references to the text are to this edition.
In Book Ilnd "Hired Girls" we see how life in town is hard in more delicate ways. Though the town offers the pleasures of social life, Jim soon becomes aware of the class distinctions that are a part of town consciousness. It is the mark that the pioneer spirit has left on them that makes the hired girls superior to the Black Hawk girls. The hired girls are in their different ways and degrees, the embodiment of life in its generosity and abundance. Jim recognizes this more clearly when the realization comes to him that if there were no girls like them in the world, there would be no poetry" (p.880). In the end we see Antonia is a good and ideal housewife. In this novel Cather feels the need of marriage, which leads to happiness in one's life.

In this novel the protagonist Antonia is depicted by Cather as a true pioneer woman who faces the life's struggle and hardship and triumphantly comes out at the end of the novel while reading the novel we feel the realness in the character and basic human values of man's survival are observed. The pioneer spirit is praised throughout the novel. Following passage from the text clearly indicates the pioneer spirit of the protagonist, Antonia:

Antonia stood up, lifting and dropping her shoulders as if they were stiff. "I ain't got time to learn. I can work like mans now, my mother can't say no more how Ambrosch
do all and nobody to help him. I can work as much as him. School is all right for little boys. I help make this land one good farm,"... Sometimes you will tell me all those nice things you learn at the school. (p. 792).

H.L. Mencken in his review essay expresses his views on the novel more appropriately, "I know no novel that makes the remote folk of the western prairies more real than MY ANTONIA makes them, I know of none that makes them seem better worth knowing — she discovers human beings embattled against fate and the god's and into her picture of their dull struggle she gets a spirit that is genuinely heroic, and the pathos that is genuinely moving it is not as they see themselves that she depicts them but as they actually are — there is not only the story of poor peasants, flung by fortune into lonely, inhospitable wilds; there is the eternal tragedy of man"(p. 9).

James E. Miller, junior viewed MY ANTONIA, as a novel is ultimately about time, about the inexorable movement of future into present into past. Intensely felt awareness of the past, as past is the emotional heart of the novel, and is evoked and sustained the revolving cycles of time. At the end of the novel Jim Burden returns to the prairie scenes of his boyhood and discover at the same time the enduring qualities of those values not dependent on cultural level, but accessible on the
untutered prairies. Antonia in the full vigour of her personality, battered but not diminished, not only endures but achieves an emotionally and physically fulfilled life her boys are her triumphant creative achievement.

In *THE SONG OF THE LARK* when Ray Kennedy - who had hoped to marry, Thea when she was old enough - is killed in a railroad accident, shows how fate matters in love and marriage. Fate also plays an important part in framing the future. Once while bathing in the cannon stream Thea comes to a recognition of the meaning of art as the Indian woman had made jars to hold the precious water - the source of life in an arid land: She sees all art as:

an effort to make a sheath, a mould in which to imprison for a moment the shining elusive element which is life itself, life hurrying past us and running away, to strong to stop too sweet to lose ... The Indian woman had held it in their jars ... In singing, one made a vessel of one's throat and nostrils and held it on one's breath, caught the stream in a scale of natural intervals. (p.378).

After discovering this, she realizes what she intends to do with her life, and she determines to go to Germany to study at the first opportunity. In this novel Willa Cather suggests that human

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*Ms. Willa Cather, THE SONG OF THE LARK, Boston (Houghton Mifflin Company) 1915. All subsequent references to the text are to this edition.*
life even on its simplest level, is reaching toward "something else". Thea's quest for something far, deep and beautiful has the same origins as the Indians inarticulate desire that led them to decorate their water vessels.

In *ONE OF OURS* Claude Wheeler finds none of the resources in his life that were available to the earlier generation. He is the true pioneer, strong and gifted with a generous, idealistic nature - but his modern environment has no understanding of those gifts and laughs at him for his inability to "get on". As a result, Claude's strength is turned against himself. As a social being he cannot escape the compelling pressure of his environment, and he exhaust himself trying to subdue his nature so that he can live like everyone else. Claude's Nebraska environment is such, where value is placed on "made things" and men work the land for money and without love.54

Claude's encounters with French life between military engagements are charged with quiet but deep meaning: his return, after a brush with death to the household of the Jouberts, where he is billeted and where he is met with genuine affection; his visit to the nearby woods, which are described with lambent

*Ms. Willa Cather, ONE OF OURS, New York (Alfred A. Knopf). 1922-1949. All subsequent references to the text are to this edition.*
beauty, and which evoke a sense of ancient peace, of the quiet depths of life flowing in beneath the surface violence of the war, with his Co-officer David Gerhardt, a former violinist who represents to Claude all that is admirable and worthy of emulation, he visits the home of a French family of the haute bourgeoisie. He is torn between admiration and bitter envy, feeling himself awkward and undeveloped among people who have a heritage of beauty, culture and discipline. Out of this encounter Claude comes to the realization that he had never known that "there was anything worth living for, till this war came on. Before that, the world seemed like a business preposition". A "business preposition," however dull, may seem more harmless than the enormous physical and mental cruelties of war, but Claude is responding out of a radical awareness that it profits a man nothing to gain the whole world and lose his soul, and that to live in a soulless world, as he knows from his own experience, is to be in danger of a worse death than any death in war.

No battlefield or shattered country he had seen was as ugly as this world would be if man like his brother Bayliss controlled it all together. Until the war broke out, he had supposed they did control it, his boyhood had been clouded and enervated by that belief. The Prussians had believed it, to,
apparently. But the event had shown that there were a great many people left who cared about something else (p. 1265).

The very fact that there is a war is proof to Claude that men like his brother Bayliss will not prevail; the very sound of the guns tells him:

that men could still die for an idea and would turn all they had made to keep their dreams. He knew the future of the world was safe; the careful planners would never be able to put it into straight - jacket - running and prudence would never have it to themselves... Ideals were not archaic things beautiful and important; they were the real sources of power among men. As long as that was true, and now he knew it was true - he had come all this way to find out - he had no quarrel with destiny (p. 1266).

In this novel we see that Claude wheeler the man of feeling dying for an ideal is preferable to living without one. Rereading his letters Claude's mother muses that he, "died believing his own country better than it is, and France better than any country can ever be. And those were beautiful beliefs to die with. Perhaps it was as well to see that vision, and then to see no more" (p.1296).

Claude's mother speaks out of the deepest pity and sympathy for her son and finds comfort in the fact that death
spared him the terrible disillusion that drove to suicide other hero's who survived the war. Her sentiments imply, however, that there is no place in the world for extravagant hope and passionate belief, that such hopes and beliefs, however inspiring and beautiful, are ultimately illusory. They may enable one to die meaningfully, but they do not enable one to live\textsuperscript{57}. In this novel the description of Enid a missionary girl is such that as she want to achieve something higher and nobler in her life, she will never be a proper wife and her marriage with Claude wheeler is a failure.

Discussing the merits of the last scene of this novel H.L. Mencken rightly states that "war is the enemy of the fat and happy, but it is kind to the lonesome. It bring as them into kinship with their kind, it fills them with a sense of high usefulness- and it obliterates the benign illusion at last in a swift and human and workman like manner"\textsuperscript{58}.

In the novel *A LOST LADY* Willa Cather portrays Captain Forrester as a symbolic representative of the flowering of life in the pioneer era, which is of course, is the condition of the spirit Mr. Forrester has been described as "a man of iron"(p.70)

because he shows tolerance and patience. He is happy to see his wife happy. He says, "If Mrs. Forrester is satisfied, I shall never regret my decision" (p. 49). As he belongs to pioneer generation, he loves to live with old values. He has a good understanding with his wife. He is aware of the activities of Mrs. Forrester that she is involved with other men but he keeps silence keeping the fact in mind that he is crippled and thinks that he is quite unfit for his beautiful and lovely wife.

The decline of the pioneer era is symbolized in two primary ways. In the physical decline of Captain Forrester, and in the presence of younger men who set him aside by taking his place. Frank Ellinger is only half a generation younger than the captain but he represents the already-present decline from pioneer standards. The contrast between the two men is illustrated by vignettes of their youth. While captain Forrester worked hard driving supply wagons across the unbroken plains from Nebraska to Denver, Frank Ellinger was a fast young dandy who squired the madam of a Denver brothel about the city in his carriage in broad daylight. Ivy Peters, a full generation younger than the Captain, is a representative of the coming man of the modern era who covets power and wealth and who is opposed to all of the values and beauty intrinsic in the Forrester's life. Symbolically, Mrs. Forrester is beauty, charm, vitality, the fit ornament to crown her husband's life and reflect,
in aesthetic terms, the solid values that are at its base. Even though Niel virtually idolized her, he recognizes that:

It was in relation to her husband that he most admired her given her other charming attributes, her comprehension of a man like the railroad-builder, her loyalty to him, stamped her more than anything else. That, he felt, was quality…his admiration of Mrs. Forrester went back to that just as he felt, she herself went back to it (p. 43).

Mrs. Forrester fails to remain loyal to her husband, because of the age difference between them. Mrs. Forrester is such a woman who wishes to live life at any cost. Even by falling from grace. It is her misfortunes that she falls in love with Mr. Ellinger who is a corrupt man and Mr. Ivy Peters who is a fortune hunter and cares more for Mrs. Forrester's property than her feelings61.

At the end of the novel we see that even though she remarries, she never forgets Mr. Forrester her first husband. Her love for him never fades while living away from Sweet Waters with her second husband. She never fails to send a check to the grand Army post every year for the flowers to be put on captain Forrester's grave. This shows that love is the most precious thing in human life, time and tide can also not fade it.
According to Dorothy Tuck McFarland, in the novel *THE PROFESSOR'S HOUSE* Willa Cather indicates the path taken by St. Peter, as a solid symbol of reality-matter-of-fact and unglamorous and unexciting. The novel clearly suggests that success is not so interesting than the struggle made to achieve it is. After achieving success the professor St. Peter goes through a mental depression and is not at all happy with his own success. He is not at all comfortable in his new house of success. The professor wants to be alone in his old study with the memories of the past. Here we see that the Professor is the symbol of old world values and is against the materialism of the society. His wife, Lillian, his older daughter Rosamond, and her husband Louis Marsellus is the representatives of modern world.

In one such instance of the novel Willa Cather shows how the behaviour of the family members has changed after coming in the new house, the family diners are occasions for money talk, Lillian gives attention to showiness instead of giving attention towards her husband. All this makes the professor increasingly uncomfortable. Cather describes St. Peter as a perfect teacher, loving and caring father, and husband:

"preferably he wrote by a faithful kerosene lamp which he filled and tended himself. But sometimes he found that the Oilcan in the closet was empty; then to get more, he would have had to go down through the house to the cellar, and on his way he would almost surely become interested in what the children were doing, or in what his wife was doing - or he would notice that the kitchen linoleum was breaking under the sink where the maid kicked it up, and he would stop to tack it down" (p.113).

As a protagonist of the novel St. Peter is the price winning historian and a representative of high old values in the novel. In the above passage we see him as a family man, while attending to his work, he does not loose track of what is happening in his household, and what his wife and children are doing. In the following passage we find how doctor St. Peter manages to steal time for his wife and children out of a very busy schedule, as he is equally interested in his family and his work. St. Peter is a fine example of maintaining a balance between personal and professional ethics:

"If someone in the family happened to be sick he didn't go to his study at all. Two evenings of the week he spent with his wife and daughter, and one evening he and his wife went out to dinner, or to the theater or a concert. St. Peter had managed for years to live two lives, both of them very intense, He loved youth - he was weak to it, it kindled
him, if there was one eager eye, one
doubting, critical mind, one lively curiosity
in a whole lecture-room full of common
place boys and girls, he was its servant
(p.113).

Cather shows how money makes a man or a woman
materialistic and snatches away spiritual love which couple had
for each other so strongly in the initial days of their married life
when they had to struggle for their living. Mrs. St. Peter clearly
enjoys her son-in-laws social and financial success, his frank
joy in furnishing his new country house with sophistication or in
purchasing just the right cloth and jewels for his beautiful wife.
But Louie and his money have unintentionally poisoned the
relationships within the family Kathleen, Rosamond's once-
adoring younger sister, cannot forgive Rosamond for forgetting
Tom outland and marrying Louie, and Louie's money and his
too much praise of, Rosamond's beauty have made Rosamond
proud and scornful. She is arrogant and subtly hateful toward
Kathleen, and Kathleen is devoured with resentment and envy
of her. Kathleen's husband, Scott who was Tom Outland's friend,
is resentful and jealous that Louie, who never knew Tom, seems
to have appropriated Tom for himself. St. Peter sadly wonders,
what would be Tom's reaction, to the great success achieved
by him if he had been alive⁶³:
He couldn't see Tom building "outland (the name given by the Marselluses to their pretentious country house) or becoming a public-spirited citizen of Hamilton. What change would have come in his blue eye, in his fine long hand... which had never handled things that were not the symbols of ideas? A hand like that, had he lived, must have been put to other uses. His fellow scientists, his wife, the town and state, would have required many duties of it. It would have had to write thousands of useless letters, frame thousands of false excuses. It would have had to manage a great deal of money to be the instrument of a human, who-would grow always more and more exacting. He had escaped all that. He had made something new in the world - and the rewards, the meaningless conventional gestures, he had left to others (p. 257).

Willa Cather shows through Tom's regret that friendship and love should be cared and nurtured with understanding otherwise it will take you on the path of regret only "I understand what it was I did that night on the mesa. Any one who requites faith and friendship as I did will have to pay for it. I am not very sanguine about good fortune for myself. I will the called to account when I least expect it" (p. 254). In the last chapter of the novel Willa Cather tells, even if we are outwardly changed and are more successful still at heart will remain the same original one, the way we were in our boyhood:
The Professor knew, of course, that adolescence grafted a new creature in to the original one, and that the complexion of a man's life was largely determined by how well or ill his original self and his nature as modified by sex rubbed on together. What he had not known was that, at a given time, that first nature could return to a man unchanged by all the pursuits and passions and experiences of his life; untouched even by the tastes and intellectual activities which have been strong enough to give him distinction among his fellows and to have made for him as they say, a name in the world (p. 261).

We see that the Professor did not regret his life but he felt that he was living the life of another person after being successful. St. Peter was sorry to see the decline of old world values in his own family members. His own wife instead of caring for him and giving time to him she is busy with her daughter Rosamond and son-in-law Louie, in her trips abroad, buying new furniture, curtains for new house. This apparently shows how happy she feels in managing material comforts. This makes the professor a stranger in his own house and his life choking in the materialistic atmosphere.

Alfred Kazin in his article on Willa Cather argues that with the publication of two short novels A LOST LADY and THE PROFESSOR'S HOUSE there was a climax in Cather's
career she now possessed a cultivated poise that could express regret without rancor or lost without anguish. He described St. Peter the archetype of all her characters and the embodiment of her own beliefs. He is not merely the scholar as artist, The son of pioneer parents which has carried the pioneer passion in the world of art and thought; he is what Willa Cather herself has always been or hope to be a pioneer in mind, a catholic by instinct, French by inclination, a spiritual aristocrat with democratic manners his opinion about St. peters tragedy is that it is the most signal and illuminating of all Willa Cather's tragedies. The new trading, grasping class is reflected in the vulgar ambition of his wife and eldest daughter, the lucrative commercial views his son-in-law has made of the inventions 64.

In the novel *MY MORTAL ENEMY* Cather portrays the importance of money in one's life. She also describes here the couple that has married on impulse but lack mutual understanding. How love fades as time progresses. How the women without children feels lonely. In this novel sudden poverty and indiscretion lead to the tragedy of the couple Mrs. Myra Henshawe and Mr. Oswald Henshawe's. Their marriage was an impulsive marriage. Here Cather points out that love is merely an emotional thing, which makes a man blind. In the novel, the

*Ms. Willa Cather, MY MORTAL ENEMY, New York (Alfred A. Knopf). 1926 All subsequent references to the text are to this edition.*
blind love of Mrs. And Mr. Henshawe brings disaster after they get married. The reason for their ruined married life was that both the husband and wife were quite different from each other in nature - a fact they understood after a few years of their marriage. Myra was a person of unstable and short temper; whereas her husband was cool, generous and a pioneer gentleman. Their different temperaments led to serious disagreements between them.

In the novel we see Myra through Nellie's eye. When Nellie and Aunt Lydia started for home, before their train started they saw Myra coming into the car. Since Myra and Oswald had some disagreement she left him for Pittsburgh. "If he needs me, he can quite well come after me" (p. 68). In fact Cather felt that human relationships were a tragic necessity of human life. Like Myra, man is never satisfied with the sort of life he lives. Myra Henshawe felt this and she stated, "I was always a grasping worldly woman, I was never satisfied". (p.104) Lack of patience, courage and tolerance in a wife destroys a happy married life, like Myra's.

Cather shows that love and emotion fade away before the harsh realities one has to face in life. In the case of Myra and Oswald, Cather realizes the importance of money before the passion of love. Love stands with money and status. Myra could admire her husband only till he had money and status.
When Myra is seriously ill she feels the vacuum in her life and she murmurs, "Why must I die like this, I alone with my mortal enemy?" (p.113) Thus Willa Cather presented two deeply felt and contradictory aspects of life the "flaming courage of youth", and the discovery, which comes with age and the awareness of death, that love is inadequate is rightly observed by Dorothy Tuck McFarland65.

Jean Tsicen says whether the story speaks for Myra or for Nellie, the message is, 'romantic love does not last; it is only a illusion'. Unlike other writers Cather begins her story several decades after the wedding mercilessly to record the gradual change in Myra's feeling. As in her lovelier novels of the twenties, Cather confronts facts, refusing to paint the rosy picture66.

In *DEATH COMES FOR THE ARCHBISHOP*, hierarchy, tradition, ritual order are triumphantly celebrated by Willa Cather as the basis for a whole and meaningful life. We see in this novel that father Latour likes the quality in Indians to have deep respect for old customs. It played a great part in his own religion. He believes that one can make good Catholics out of Indians but one cannot separate them from their own

*Ms. Willa Cather, DEATH COMES FOR THE ARCHBISHOP, London (Hamish Hamilton). 1961-1970 All subsequent references to the text are to this edition.*
beliefs. The author further makes a significant statement through this novel that man finds lasting happiness in life, in the unselfish experiences of art and religion. The Bishop has to make every possible sacrifice for martyrdom. And this theme recurs throughout the novel. As we are shown the Bishop and his vicar at work in their vast diocese, deprived of the amenities of civilized life and enduring numerous hardships to bring religion to the humble Mexicans and Indians, we are told of their, instinctive wishes and of the kind of earthly life they would otherwise lead. Father Vaillant, whose physical body is so frail, would love to remain settled at one mission, but under his Bishop's guidance, he is continually moved to new regions. For the Bishop himself, a contemplative life enriched by aesthetic pleasures is at the center of his earthly desires, but like his vicar he has disciplined his own wishes to work for his faith.

DEATH COMES FOR THE ARCHBISHOP is Willa Cather's masterpiece on religion and life. The conflicting demands of religious and personal life are dramatized into a passionate tale. Commenting on the uncharacteristic nature of this novel Dorothy Tuck McFarland makes an interesting observation. She says that the novel DEATH COMES FOR THE ARCHBISHOP is an uncharacteristic masterpiece in which Cather has transformed the tales of the establishment of moral order in a
savage land into metaphors on the nature of religion and light itself\textsuperscript{65}.

It is important to note that father Vaillant in \textit{DEATH COMES FOR THE ARCHBISHOP} we see that father Vaillant represent the life which interested Willa Cather in her youth and Archbishop represent the life which interested her in her old age. In her youth Willa Cather was very clear headed and was of the opinion that an artist's life is more superior to all demands of life but in her older days, she refuses to admit that any conflict between art and life exists; so she tells us that the Bishop's solitude is not solitude after all\textsuperscript{69}.

However faith is the main aspect of a novel like \textit{DEATH COMES FOR THE ARCHBISHOP} and the author's artful spirit rises to new life through faith. The ritual and beliefs of the Catholic church, the heroic activity of missionary priests and the vivid colours of the southwest landscape are combined to produce a new kind of vitality in Cather's art. As a result beauty, order and heroic action are the qualities associated by Cather with the two missionary priests father Vaillant and bishop Latour\textsuperscript{70}. Faith in God and respect for all religions is the essence of the life for two dedicated men in this novel, which is as well observed in Willa Cather's art.
*OBSCURE DESTINIES is the collection of following three stories, which are to be discussed. In these stories Cather has returned back to Nebraska and old memories. Her father's death and her mother's long illness turned her mind to family and friends of her youth. As observed by David Stouk the priority of life over art and achievement is implicit throughout Willa Cathers last four books.71

In NEIGHBOUR ROSICKYS for instance, we see that Cather pictures the life of Mr. Rosicky, the ex-tailors boy, who is a Bohunk, lived fully and without any regrets. In fact the values of life portrayed by the author are defined in terms of a readiness to enjoy life at every cost and always be smiling, in all circumstances, good as well as bad, life should be lived fully and completely. To love others; to care and understand other's problems and to see others smiling is a part of one's life. Actually the little, every day happenings and occurrences form the greatest part of every one's life and happiness. In second story of the above collection i.e. OLD MRS. HARRIS Cather has dealt with human relationship and the three phases of life i.e. old, middle, and young. OLD MRS. HARRIS is informed by quiet regret, it argues that youth in its self absorption is so

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*Ms.Willa Cather, OBSCURE DESTINIES, New York (Alfred A. Knopf) 1930-1960. All subsequent page references to the text are to this edition.
frequently cruel and indifferent, ' Wasn't it just like them all to go and get sick, when she had now only two weeks to get ready for school and no trunk and no clothes or anything.'(p.185) These lines from the story indicates Vickie's disgusting feeling at the sight of her grandmother sickness and on hearing that her mothers expecting another baby. Later on in the story we come to know that grandmother Harris was not actually sick but she was dead. This makes it clear that Vickie is so engrossed in her own affair as a teenager that she was inattentive to the need of others in the family.

As viewed by James Woodress such was Cather's mood as her mother was dying and she looked back over her life in her fifty-eight year. Although both 'Neighbour Rosicky' and Old Mrs Harris end in the death of the title characters, they affirm life. Cather wrote Akins at this time that biologically speaking life was rather a failure, that something rather nice happens in mind as one grows older. A kind of golden sight comes as a compensation for many losses. The novel symbolizes love, compassion, understanding, caring as the most important aspect of life it self. In TWO FRIENDS the author suggests the value of friendship as something secure and established. Friendship is an unalterable reality of one's life.
A slight misunderstanding between the two friends separate them forever. The author regrets "something broken that could so easily have been mended; something delightful that was senselessly wasted..." (p. 230)

While talking about the collection of short stories i.e., OBSCURE DESTINIES, David Daiches observes that in these stories Willa Cather is handling themes which for the most part she had already left behind in her novels. She is drawing on her Nebraska memories and other recollections of her childhood and the richness of texture and clear emotional pattern are found in them which is as well observed in her novels like O PIONEERS! and MY ANTONIA. He further states that these stories are essentially studies in the quality of country living in the American Midwest and west done with an affectionate interest in the human characters involved and a lyrical sense of the natural background.

In the short novel LUCY GAYHEART when Lucy returns back to Haverford on the Platte and struggles to find some meaning in her life after the death of Sebastian, listens to the advice of Mrs Ramsay, "sometimes people disappoint us, and sometimes we disappoint ourselves; but the thing is, to go right on living" (p. 737). Lucy makes her own decision at last to go back to Chicago, to her work and to life itself. To this novel
Cather suggests her reader that above all things living rightly, without fearing death or mourning over other's death is more important. The life, which is living, should be cared most than the life, which is no more alive.

In *LUCY GAYHEART* it is Mrs. Ramsay who suggests to Lucy a way of finding happiness again. She tells her, "Life is short; gather roses while you may... make it as many as you can Lucy. Nothing really matters but living". (p. 737).

Get all you can out of it. I am an old woman and I know". Her advice is purposely a generalization for happiness can only be sustained by life itself, not by an individual perishable love. Earlier in the novel professor Averbach, Lucy's music teacher in Chicago had given her the same advice "you will learn that to live is the first thing " (p. 721) Mrs. Ramsay also suggests to Lucy that in the end one's career comes second in importance to living, that accomplishments are only the ornaments of life.

Lucy feels she must go "back to a world that strove after excellence". But she is not a lonely artist figure like Thea Kronborg who would fight for a great career by denying herself life's pleasures, rather, she would return to a life of "flower and music and enchantment and love," (p. 72) those things which

*Ms. Willa Cather, LUCY GAYHEART, New York (Alfred A. Knopf), 1935-1990. All subsequent page references are to this edition.*
the shift in Willa Cather's perception of life and art in her later work.\textsuperscript{76}

We see that Harry Gordon's guilt is the result of his pride and possessiveness. He had not loved Lucy in a detached, selfless way rather, he viewed her as, a beautiful creature, who would enhance his own life. Love that is possessive and self regarding is destructive Mackford's attachment to Sebastian is jealous and possessive and both men are drawn. In contrast Sebastian grew to love Lucy because her feeling for him "seemed complete in it self, not putting out tentacles all the while... in her companionship there was never the shadow of a claim" (p. 690). Just as Lucy was forced to redirect her love from an individual to "life", so Gordon must replace passion with compassion. His love for Lucy finds expression in his solicitude for her father.\textsuperscript{77}

While commenting on Lucy Gayheart Maxwell Geismar says, Lucy Gayheart contains the most complete love relationship and is also among Willa Cathers most convincing works. Geismar further says that the sense of immediacy that we have in regard to both the scene and emotions of the central story is a remarkable achievement for an artist who is approaching her sixties.\textsuperscript{78}
*SAPPHIRA AND THE SLAVE GIRL* is a story about the radical protestant movement, abolitionism of the only woman-practicing aristocrat. A jealous and suspicious wife ruins her family life and the story of most unsung daughter Rachel Blake, who has never been sympathetic with her mother's slave binding mentality and autocratic temperament. Rachel helps Nancy the slave girl escape to Canada via the Underground Railroad. The money needed for the venture is supplied by the miller but, although he is firmly convinced that slavery is wrong, he does not think he has the right to interfere with his wife's personal property.

Through this novel Willa Cather wanted to show that the social system, which promotes slavery is unjust. Nancy is another in the long line of Cather protagonists who have to free them selves from a hostile environment. Here slavery is clearly equated with being cared for and freedom with taking care of oneself⁷⁹. In this novel the author presents two contradictory views of human nature. One, having Rachel as its exponent, consists in the belief that equality is a moral requirement and that some measures of dignity and respect is due to every man as a human right. The other, represented by Sapphira, holds

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that equality consists of treating equals as equals and unequals as unequals. There is complete confusion of values between a feudal episcopalian hierarchy and a democratic puritan individualism. The two are clearly incompatible and Willa Cather makes no efforts to show that the state of tension between the two is a tension, which exists in life itself.

The last glimpse we are given of Sapphira is through the eyes of Till, one of the servants most injured by Sapphira's autocratic ways but that last view is colored by the feelings of loyalty and Christian forgiveness. Sapphira's head strong, indomitable nature is now seen as stoical dignity and courage in the face of death. We not only admire her at the end but feel sympathy for her. Particularly affecting is the image of Sapphira with her candles reflected in the window; their religious connotations remind us of her final penitential confession to the miller: "we would all do better if we had our lives to live over again" (p. 926)

Edith Lewis believe that Sapphira has very strongly the quality of permanence of survival; and that as time goes on it will take a higher and higher place in any estimate of Willa Cather's work. The story as a whole seems to him to be the brief chronicle of a time that will never again be recaptured with the same truth and crystalline vision, the same supreme art.
James Woodress says in Sapphira Cather had invented an overbearing unattractive protagonist with remarkable success. It is a triumphant achievement at the end of a long and distinguished career. It is gothic tale more sinister than LUCY GAYHEART more deeply probing into the nature of evil and the dark irrational forces that are always threatening her. It is tempting to read this novel as a commentary on events then taking place in the external world. It seems the end of the world she had loved the final debasement of values she held here, the destruction of all tradition and culture. The novel is deeply pessimistic.

In *THE OLD BEAUTY AND OTHERS* Willa Cather portrays the picture of a woman who in her old day remembers the memories of her youth when she was very beautiful and famous. She hates to live in the present; she finds happiness in reading, about the men whom she had known in her youth. Their greatness was recognized by her only after they were dead, that there are no others like them. In this story Cather suggests us that youth is selfish and ignorant.

In another sequence of the story, "Gabrielle's Companion", Cherry Beamish is described as vigorous, plump

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*Ms. Willa Cather, THE OLD BEAUTY AND OTHERS, New York (Alfred A. Knopf) 1967. All subsequent page references to the text are to this edition.*
a "most comfortable little person whose presence considerably warms the chilly atmosphere Gabrielle's creates and who finds the present really very interesting if only you will let yourself think so" (p. 31)

Cather suggest that life's nature depends on your ability to think and feel i.e. how you feel about your past as well as your present. In the story THE BEST YEARS the deep love between the family member is cherished by Cather. Bond of love between the family members is more important than materialistic comfort. In the midst of this story the loving sister of four brothers dies of pneumonia. Twenty years after her death. The school superintendent makes a visit to Mrs. Fergusson. She observes that Lesleys brother are now grown and gone, and the Fergussons have new and spacious house. But in her mind, their prosperity does not compare with all the happiness they had in the old house, when the family was together and completely absorbed in the day to day attempts to make ends meet "well, this I know our best years are when we are working hardest and going right ahead when we can hardly see our way out (p. 136) "Nothing in the life really matters but the people one loves (p. 68)"). Charles Poore in his review essay on the old beauty and others says Willa Cather was born a Virginian and died a New Yorker and wrote most memorably about Nebraska and the West which is as well seen in her last
book. **BEFORE BREAKFAST** is the story of Henry Grenfell, a self-made man who has achieved a lot in his life but regrets his achievement as he is a self made man and had achieved a great height in his own life, he is not at all satisfied with his son's progress, even though they have turned out well, two of them brilliantly, but admits to himself despairingly that they are 'as cold as ice'. This particular feeling make him regret his own achievement but at the end of the story when he observes the geologist daughter swimming in 'Death-chill' water coupled with her full vigour and vitality. This observation eventually precipitates his reaffirmation of living and finally believing in the continuity of life.

His acceptance of the human condition (his own rebirth to life) is evidenced in his awakened physical appetite and in his final reflection, which good-humoredly turns on an image of evolutionary science over which he had despaired:

> Anyhow, when that first amphibious frog-toad found his water-hole dried up behind him, and jumped out to hop along till he could find another well, he started on a long hop" (p. 166).

The above discussion of values, which Cather has idealized in her work, clearly indicates that there was a shift in her value system, as she grew older. The changes and happening in the American West had a great impression on
her sensitive mind. She was a master of her own art and never stick to one method of writing for the sake of satisfying her readers and was absolutely content to continue writing for her own artistic satisfaction, trying new ways of reproducing life in art that would evoke for her readers an intense realization and experience of that art.

Initially her art was interpretation of new American life, especially in its regional aspects. In her work she presented a picture of what was hard and bleak and cruel in the states way of life - the collapse for instance of minds and bodies in the struggle with the land, the pressure of convention in the village, the imperviousness to art which was throughout career as an author, the chief expression of mind. The sacredness of her nature is observed in her work as early as O PIONEERS! and MY ANTONIA. Though the religious element in THE PROFESSOR'S HOUSE and MY MORTAL ENEMY are presented in ambiguous light, it is clear that Willa Cather was concerned with ultimate questions and ultimate values, and with the conflict, in contemporary times, between these and secular values. In ONE OF OURS and A LOST LADY, studying Nebraska in the decade before the war, she showed how uncreative, mercury and Odious men kept control once they had won it, and what they did to those who were finer than themselves; in THE PROFESSOR'S HOUSE she showed the
hollowness of any pretensions they might make to interest in art or mind. She was, for the first time painful at this moment in her life, disillusioned with the world about her and suffered from a sense of being helpless.

It was not until after the first world-war when she was nearing her fiftieth year, that religion, in a broad sense came to play a more significant role in her art which she projected in her novel **DEATH COMES FOR THE ARCHBISHOP**, in which the civilizing values of the catholic faith are engrafted onto the half pagan world of the Mexican and Indian Southwest. Cather's last volumes, **OBSCURE DESTINIES, LUCY GAYHEART, SAPPHIRA AND THE SLAVE GIRL, THE OLD BEAUTY AND OTHERS** are subtle, intelligent and artfully contrived but the vision which underlies them is one which questions the old urge to expression through art. In her old age Cather strongly felt that not art but life matters the most. One thing, which persists throughout Willa Cather's fiction, is the dilemma of the artist caught between his commitments to art on one hand life on the other.
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