CHAPTER V

NEGATION AND AFFIRMATION
The generally accepted assessment of Cather's growth as a writer of America, representing its tendencies and her vision is that after *My Antonia* she felt out of place in the world as it was marked by materialism and mechanization.

She wrote in 1923 that "The splendid story of the pioneers is finished and..... no new story worthy to take its place has yet begun." The generation of the pioneers, though passing, was still there and its material prosperity was incidental to their physical and moral victory over their environment. The middle-aged second generation was indifferent to making things and was interested in expensive, mass-produced, and, therefore, in Cather's view, ugly things. She posed the question whether the third generation would be deluded into believing that a life of ease was a happy one. Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant records Cather saying, "Our present lay about us in ruins but we had.... a beautiful past."  

Looking back at the twenties she wrote in *Not Under Forty* (1936) that for her, "The world broke in two in 1922 or thereabouts..." and felt that she belonged to the earlier part. She felt a sense of shock at the change that had come over the world after the war. Mrs. Fields' drawing room at 148, Charles Street, Boston, where the past was "protected and cherished, had sanctuary from the noisy push of the present" had yielded place to a garage which represented the
tawdry and cheap things that replaced the enduring ones. E. K. Brown records that in 1923, in Omaha she expressed her rejection of the garage, the departmental store and mechanization. "We have music by machines, we travel by machines..... I think they can only be made to laugh and cry by machinery."\(^5\)

She felt puzzled and shocked by the disappearance of the tradition she cherished and felt that the World War I, the embodiment of the worst form of mechanization at the hands of greedy businessmen and politicians, had caused it. She wrote, "when and where were the Arnolds overthrown and the Brownings devaluated? Was it at the Marne? At Versailles, when a new geography was being made on paper?\(^6\)

A change was visible in the countryside with the increasing availability of mass-produced things that reduced the difference between the countryside and the towns. In the countryside land was neglected and old things were destroyed with a callousness that resulted from prosperity. Friendliness disappeared and there were lawsuits among neighbours. The young men were "stingy and grasping, or extravagant and lazy."\(^7\) Most of the money was spent over showy articles and machines, which very soon became junk "a horse outlived three automobiles"\(^8\) The cities were no more centres of art and culture but posed a threat to the agrarian life in the countryside which she had celebrated in *My Antonia*. Bayliss Wheeler in *One of Ours* sells mechanical agricultural implements and Claude feels that "No battle-field or shattered country he had seen was as ugly as this world would be if men like his brother Bayliss controlled it altogether."\(^13\)
He merely sells but does not produce anything and is always calculating
risks and profits. He posed a threat to the noble, creative and
productive life of the homesteaders. Lou and Oscar in *O Pioneers!*
the younger brothers and sisters of the 'Hired Girls', Sylvester
Lovett and Wick-cutter in *My Antonia* were his precursors, followed by
Ivy Peters in *A Lost Lady* and the generation of fortune-hunters in
*Death comes for the Archbishop*..."the last sheep in Mining Camps"11
living in the "world of gold crazed men."12 In *One of Ours* Bayliss
Wheeler plans to modernize the Trevor place after buying it, to satisfy
his sneaking fancy. His wealth makes him superior to the cultured
owners of the building.13 Money had become an all important force
and an end in itself. It led to vulgarity. The individual was not
free any more to assert his will, whether on land or on the battle-
field. There was no scope for personal valour and heroism in the
world controlled by impersonal forces. Personal vision of beauty
could not be pursued because of mass production of cheap articles and
the agrarian dream was a thing of the past. This led to rootlessness
and physical and spiritual sterility.

Cather felt alienated and according to Randall this impaired
her art as it led to pessimism, escapism and ultimately the "rejection
of life."14 In *One of Ours* and *A Lost Lady* they led up to nothing less
than a complete and unqualified repudiation of the present and all its
works... a repudiation which, in the case of the latter book mars the
ending of an otherwise fine novel. In *The Professor's House* and
*My Mortal Enemy*, as her agony reaches its climax the protagonists not
only reject the present, they turn against life itself. No alternative
is suggested. Randall thinks that Cather's emotions got out of control
and "impaired her artistic vision. For an artist, to be successful, must have at least some idea of what he considers to be the essence of the good life." He feels that Professor St. Peter in The Professor's House and Myra-Henshaw in My Mortal Enemy indulge in day-dreaming by way of escape like Cather and their repudiation of the present can be understood only if the biographical details of the author are known to the reader. This is a defect and takes away the element of universality. He sees the outlook of life in these novels so distorted and falsified "as to be practically worthless as an interpretation of human experience. If this is true, the beauty of parts cannot compensate for the deficiency in the structure of the whole; no amount of charm in the writing can make a novel convincing if the author's moral vision has failed." 

It is true that these novels are concerned with spiritual estrangement of the individual in a changing world order. But there is a note of affirmation in each of these novels of negation, except perhaps in the case of My Mortal Enemy. Even there, there is a sign of hope in religion as an outlet. The note of hope is expressed through the protagonists, Claude Wheeler in One of Ours; Niel in A Lost Lady; and Tom Outland and Prof. St. Peter in The Professor's House. The historical perspective reinforces the blending of the primitive sensibility and idealism and this is perceived by Tom Outland who conveys it to Prof. St. Peter. Land symbolism expresses the note of hope. Prof. St. Peter goes through the dark night of his soul and emerges a changed person. Taken together these novels provide the basis for Death Comes for the Archbishop where land symbolism is
concentrated as providing sanctuary and fulfilment, symbolized by
the Cathedral at Santa Fe, hewn out of the native rock. In Shadows
on the Rock, the rock of Quebec itself serves as sanctuary.

One of Ours (1922) is the last of Cather's "furnished" novels;
and marks the end of her early phase of Nebraska novels. It is the
first of her novels of the middle period in which Cather expressed
her alienation because she saw materialism gaining an upper hand
over the traditional values. As in The Song of the Lark the
protagonist leaves the native town for fulfilment but apparently
does not achieve it.

It was inspired by two dissimilar persons who found a
common cause in war, which, in a way provided the protagonist the
elements that Nebraska lacked. The letters of a younger cousin
Lt. F.P. Cather who was killed in the war in France on May 28, 1918,
and the letters of a violinist David Hochstein from New York who
also got killed in the war in France the same year inspired Willa
Cather to write One of Ours.

The novel is divisible in two parts. The first part deals
with Nebraska and it has been praised while the second part dealing
with war has been criticized for its lack of realism primarily
because the author had no first hand experience of war and was out of
her element in writing about it.

Reviewing it H.L. Mencken said that the first part "deserves
to be rank almost with By Antoina," while the second one "drops
precipitately to the level of a serial in Ladies' Home Journal."
He felt that until Dos Passos's *Three Soldiers* is forgotten and fancy achieves its inevitable victory over fact, no one story can be written in the United States without challenging comparison with it—and no story that is less meticulously true will stand up to it.19 He felt that *One of Ours* lacked realism and described the war on a "Hollywood movie-lot."20 "Its American Soldiers are idealists engaged upon a crusade to put down sin; its Germans are imbeciles who charge machine-guns six-deep, in the manner of the war despatches of *The New York Tribune*. There is a lyrical nonsensicality in it, that is often half pathetic; it is precious near the war of the standard model of lady novelist....which Miss Cather surely is not."21

Louis Auchincloss said that like Amy Lowell and Edith Wharton, Willa Cather also caught the War-hysteria and wrote her worst novel. He described her war scenes at best a *tour de force* by the writer of *My Antonia*. "We are subjected to the war with all its jingle and jangle and nonsense about French culture as silly as Edith Wharton ever wrote at her most bellicose."22

Sinclair Lewis considered the novel a disappointment and the description of war as mere journalism. It is 'second hand' and 'second rate.'23 a sort of romance in contrast to the realistic description of Nebraska life in the first part.

Edmond Wilson considered it a failure for lack of vitality. Hemingway wrote to him:

"Wasn't that last scene in the lines wonderful?" 

"Do you know where it came from? The battle scene in Birth
of Nation. I identified episode after episode, Catharized.

Poor woman, she had to get her war experience somewhere."^24

According to Randall it is one of the "least interesting
books she ever wrote."^25 Edith Wharton and Dorothy Canfield who
also wrote of war, without having participated in it had the experience
of the Red-cross work. In A Son at the Front (1923) Edith Wharton
felt it was her responsibility to save France and through it, the Western
Civilization that she cherished from Germans and their vulgarity.
To Miss Canfield's heroine of The Deeper Stream (1930) the
behind-the-scenes maneuvers during the Peace Conference were
a disappointment.

To all these women of an older generation war had been an
instrument of saving a civilization. It was too simple a view. They
felt that England and France represented an ideal civilization which
must be preserved from being perished. The war was at the most a
cultural trauma to them. Cather had not even been a witness to it.
This traditional evaluation of war was different from the view of the
twenties in the case of writers like Dos Passos, Hemingway and Faulkner.
Cumming's The Enormous Room (1922), Eliot's The Waste Land (1922)
and Lewis's Babbit (1922) had already appeared and the tone for the
postwar disillusionment had been set. Cather was out of her element
wherever she described actual battle or the dialogue of soldiers and
kept it to the minimum and avoided battle scenes. There are only
three such scenes - one patrol, one sniper action and the final scene.
Randall however says that "The significant action which Claude performs
may not be very convincing to us since it consists of fighting and
dying in a war now considered to have been useless and a cause which has since been exploded, but it was almost universally considered to be an act of praise-worthy heroism at the time. Willa Cather accurately records the emotional temperature of the age and circumstances in which she lived.26

Ironically, the novel brought the Pulitzer Prize to Willa Cather for upholding the American point of view in the war. It deals with the period before and after the war in America. For once Cather used a contemporary event as vehicle for conveying her personal vision. Her theme is the plight of an imaginative individual in an increasingly narrow and self-satisfied civilization and the decline of the pioneering era.

The protagonist is a man, unlike *O Pioneers*, *My Antonia* and *The Song of the Lark*, where Cather's protagonists are women. After *Alexander's Bridge* she used a male protagonist for the first time, in this novel, contrary to Jewett's advice, for she felt that she could enter the skin of Claude Wheeler. Claude is strongly built, yet flawed, with a shy and weak look in the eyes; always awkward and sluggish, and haunted by a feeling that whatever he touched went wrong. While Alexandra and Antonia belonged to the generation of the eighties and nineties, Claude attains maturity just before 1914 and thus, he belongs to a later generation and is not built of the heroic cast. His family is comfortably placed and until he enlists and goes to the war there are no challenges to his potentialities. Until that time he intuitively feels that there must be
something splendid about life but is unable to identify it. He does not act but waits for stimulus from outside and this makes him look unherculean. Through his family Cather presents the decline in values of homesteaders she celebrated in *My Antonia*. Claude's father is a materialist while still engaged in agriculture. His mother has a religious attitude but is lacking in a sense of responsibility of doing the right thing. His brothers Ralph and Bayliss are acquisitive and unproductive. Only the old servant Mahalpy represents the eternal values of endurance, devotion and loyalty and she is in right relation with the soil. Claude is at war with this environment at home. Like an average American he goes to college, returns to the family farm, gets married, builds a house and when America joins the war, enlists and goes to Europe. But in his case, each step goes wrong. He wanted to go to the University of Nebraska but was prevented by his father who sent him to an ordinary college in Lincoln, Nebraska. While there, his German friends introduce him to the world of art, music and culture. A course in history at the University stimulates his intellect but he is withdrawn and has to work on his farm, as his brother has to take care of the farm at Colorado. At this point Willa Cather indicates that work on the farm is not enough and as satisfying as celebrated in *My Antonia*. The toil can absorb Claude's frustration but each night it leaves him exhausted and he wants something more, some idea outside himself and not mere food, shelter and security. His capacity for hard work on the farm belies the charge of slownessness, while he is taken ill he falls in love with one of the visitors, Enid Royce, the wrong sort of girl and marries her against some advice, and not
Gladys Farmer, who is the right girl for him. She proves frigid and
pististic and ultimately leaves him and goes to China to take care
of her ailing missionary sister. Cather fails to portray the sexual
frustration of Claude when his wife shuts him out of her compartment
on the first night of their honeymoon trip. Also she does not care
for the house he builds.

Claude is thus isolated more and more and through his
readings and brooding begins to idealize European culture more and
more. When the war breaks out there is gradual change in the attitude
of Americans towards Germans. Cather portrays the gradual awareness
of the people of midwest to the implications of war. First the
price of wheat in Chicago is affected. They find it difficult to
accept the attack by Germans on Belgium because their German neighbours
had been good and had stood for culture.

The Germany that entered war was the mechanized and industrial
Germany different from the one that symbolized the world of art and
culture. Gradually Claude realized that everything that was valuable
in European culture was symbolized by France which was threatened.
Edward Wagenknecht has pointed out that Cather's description of the
effects of war on the people in Nebraska is authentic:

"The frantic reading of newspapers, the hunting for
old neglected maps, the strange, wild tugging at the heart,
the wonder of a horizon really expanding at last to the
breadth of the world — that all this is authentic must be
recognised by every-body who lived through those terrible days.²⁷

To Willa Cather, the war was the first mechanized war which reduced individual valour, and taken together with the influence of machinery on the agrarian life, it meant the end of all possibility of the assertion of the individual will which was important to her.

Claude muses that the stars "must have something to do with the fate of the nations .... In the ordered universe there must be some mind that read the riddle of this one unhappy planet, that knew what was forming in the dark eclipse of this hour. A question hung in the air.... To older men" the recall of the U.S. ambassador from Berlin and the dismissal of German Ambassador from the U.S. "were subjects to think and converse about, but to boys like Claude they were life and death predestination."²⁸ When America enters the war Claude enlists, believing that Americans would "make war without rage, with uncompromising generosity and chivalry,"²⁹ and Gladys Farmer tells him that she had always admired him and would not marry his brother Bayliss Wheeler. She hopes that his joining the American Expeditionary Force would be the making of his career. The war did serve the purpose of "giving significance to the life of farm boys in Nebraska."³⁰

Book IV describes the voyage of the American soldiers in epic terms with a touch of patriotism and Claude's early training. According to David Daiches it "is a remarkable piece of writing, done with vigor, liveliness, and a sharp eye for detail. It stands out
from the novel as almost a short story in its own right ...” 31

The voyage is rough and trying. An epidemic of influenza kills a large number of soldiers. Randall considers such details of the journey unnecessary. 32 But it is a realistic picture. It is pointed out that all the soldiers were not inspired by high ideals. Some were just going while others were escaping from responsibilities. There are some rare moments of joy, like the piano music by a Swedish boy, in spite of the general mood of war. This yields to funeral music when the body of a boy who dies of influenza is lowered into the sea and makes Claude think of those who died at sea.

Randall has complained against what he describes as Willa Cather’s “overidealization of French Culture,” 33 the moment Claude reaches France. In fact Willa Cather was drawing upon the memory of her 1902 visit to France and her friendship with Dorothy Canfield Fisher who was at home in France and French culture to the envy and admiration of Willa Cather. In the novel the relationship of Claude and David Gerhardt, whose original was David Hochstein, reflects Cather’s relationship with Dorothy Canfield Fisher. David is an American influenced by European culture. He had learnt violin in Paris before the war but his talent in music was suppressed by war. He introduces Claude to music, French culture and the beauties of French Provencial life. The friendship with Claude helps him in getting over his alienation through appreciation and a sense of belonging. David had lost his violin in a car accident symbolizing the tension between machine and music. The emphasis is not on the
city-life in France but on the country-side which had been influenced
by the best in French culture. This is what Cather wanted Nebraska
to be. Amid the waste of war, Claude undergoes a process of awakening.
While with Mlle. Olive de Courcy Claude has the feeling of "being
completely understood, of being no longer a stranger." This
feeling creates a bond between them and leads to his inner growth.
Before meeting her he used to feel comfortable only on seeing American
soldiers. When Louis, the orderly of Olive’s dead brother, nurses
the plants in the garden or sings a song while the guns boom at
a distance, Claude is reminded of his native place and cornfields.
He becomes aware of "a new kind of happiness, a new kind of sadness.
Ruin and new birth; the shudder of ugly things in the past, the
trembling image of beautiful ones on the horizon; finding and losing;
that was life, he saw." Thus he discovers the meaning of life.
While he goes with David on a visit to the Joubarts’ home who had
lost two sons in war and were taking care of their property for the
two daughters of their elder son, he felt that "Merely having seen
the season change in a country gave one the sense of having been
there for a long time." Having seen the civilized French country-
side he decides to settle down in France after the end of the war
on a little farm. He felt that, "there was no chance for the kind
of life he wanted at home, where people were always buying and
selling..... life was so short that it meant nothing at all unless
it were continually reinforced by something that endured; unless
the shadows of individual existence came and went against a background
that held together."
Thus Claude sees into the meaning of life as consisting in constant finding and losing and being reinforced by something that endured, in spite of the war and other negative things one experienced. He grows beyond narrow patriotism and becomes a citizen of the world. It is here that Claude has his second youth and feels that "everything had a noble significance... He was beginning over again" and dreams of being on his native ploughed fields, with a plough and a pair of horses. Thus wherever he missed in Nebraska he had in France. He learns that losing and finding is part of life just as planting and harvesting are part of the cycle of seasons. This realization is implied in the dream of fulfillment he has. The land also implies stability and continuity. The dream also points out that land continued as background for human life in Cather's fiction. The two friends visit the family of a friend, Rena, killed in war. His sister Mlle. Claire, and mother entertain them. Since "Music has always been like a religion in this house" David plays his 'suppressed bitter melody' upon the violin, while Mlle. Claire plays on the piano. The melody is associated with the departure of the dead friend. Claude tells David that after the war he could return to music. David points out the booming guns saying "That's all that matters now. It has killed everything else" and says that it was something that was put upon their generation. Claude disagrees and asserts "It has only scattered things" If men like Bayliss controlled it, it would be worse. This implies that Claude had come to believe that order could again be conferred on the world by those who believed in positive things. This was the result of the glimpses of civilized life he had in the French countryside beside that of ordered nature.
To him the booming guns implied "that man could still die for an
idea."42 "Ideals were not archaic things, beautiful and impotent;
they were the real sources of power among men,"43 and, therefore,
the world was safe from cunning persons like his own brother. Gladys
Farmer had hoped that "he would be more successful than Bayliss and
still be Claude,"44 and he did succeed on the battlefield in
controlling his soldiers.

Soon after this David and Claude die. Before his death
Claude had realized both the validity of ideals that constituted
the mystery he had sought that gave meaning to life. Just as the
grain crushed in the milling process was freed from the process of
germination, growth and harvest, and entered a wider life, Claude,
too, lost his life in order to reach out to fulfill that "wish which
was so beautiful that there were no experiences in this world to
satisfy it."45

The novel ends with Claude's mother musing that by dying
in war Claude escaped the post-war frustrations in America. "He
died believing his own country better than it is and France better
than any country can ever be, and those were beautiful ideas to
die with. Perhaps it was well to see that vision and then to see
no more."46 He was among those who "had hoped and believed too much"
and "could ill bear disillusion" and were "safe."47 This indicates
that death served as a lucky escape for Claude Wheeler. The implication
is that there were only two alternatives for men like Claude. Either
to die with illusions or to live and face the post-war disillusionment.
David Daiches says, "Claude Wheeler did escape, did find what he wanted even though it took a war to provide it for him."\textsuperscript{48} Heywood Brown says, "The hero of the book loses his life and finds his soul. We happen to believe that there is such a thing as setting too high a price even upon souls, and war is too high a price."\textsuperscript{49} War and dying, however, are not practical solutions to the search for values. These views represent the accepted interpretation of \textit{One of Ours} as showing Cather's sense of defeat in the face of growing greed, mechanization and commercialization which made it impossible for an intelligent and sensitive person to assert himself. Such an interpretation ignores the irony at the expense of Claudes's mother and Mahalley who are totally ignorant of Claude's awakening to the validity of ideals, in the face of which war was a mere scattering of things and order could be restored by a commitment to ideals. Whatever he had missed at home he achieved in the civilized French countryside. He outgrew narrow patriotism and became a citizen of the world. At the moment of his death Claude is not a normal American. Similarly, in \textit{The Professor's House}, Prof. St Peter is not the same person after emerging out of his dark night of the soul. It is a mistake to take the glimpses of life in the French countryside as Cather's fond hope. As Randall says: "In \textit{One of Ours} she still believed that the comely life could be achieved in the present, even if only in wartime France. In \textit{A Lost Lady} she became convinced that it could not be achieved in the present at all."\textsuperscript{50} In fact she saw the possibility of an ideal life in America if only Americans could get rid of a materialistic attitude. In \textit{A Lost Lady},
again she expresses a hope that men like Niel who had a glimpse of a better past could sustain as idealists and confer a better order just because of that experience. This note is marked, in spite of all that is said about the novel being an elegy on the decline of the pioneering days. It is a continuation of the value of Jim's experience in *My Antonia* who becomes reconciled to the present because he shared the invaluable past with Antonia. *A Lost Lady* (1923) presents a contrast to Willa Cather's prairie novels, especially, *The Song of the Lark* as it is her first uncluttered novel. It has been praised for its evocative quality by E. K. Brown. Its classical severity and perfection of form have been noted by T.K. Whipple. The original of its heroine, Lady Forrester, was the vivacious wife of Governor Garber, one of the founders of Red Cloud. The financial panic of 1893 had affected the Farmers' and Merchants' Bank founded by him and its crash led to his financial ruin. After a stroke he remained invalid till his death. His wife frequently visited Colorado. After his death she remarried and become Lyra Anderson. Her death shocked Willa Cather and she was reminded of her childhood impressions of Mrs. Garber and the cottonwood grove around her residence. With some modifications all these facts were used by her in the novel. Niel is the Jamesian reflector in the novel through whose consciousness the narrative passes, evoking a period which had vanished. According to Lionel Trilling it is the central work of Willa Cather's career containing the 'most explicit treatment of the passing of the old order.'
She believed in the tonic moral quality of the pioneer's life and therefore she felt that with its disappearance a great source of fortitude had been lost. The novel shows the downfall of the pioneer through betrayal and expresses Willa Cather's gloom resulting from her view of the national scene. The pioneer virtues could not be exercised in the modern commercial-industrial society in which men were extremely interdependent. James Woodress has pointed out that she pushed back the time of the new materialism of the post-war period to the mid-nineties in order to fit it into the novel. A note of personal loss had been added to her gloom by the marriage of her friend Isabel McClung in 1917 with Jan Hambourg, a jew, who serves as the model for the portrait of Marcellus, the son-in-law of Professor St. Peter in The Professor's House. The two novels have been defined as "parables of the decline and fall" of Cather's own tradition by Alfred Kazin who said that Captain Forrester in A Lost Lady and Professor St. Peter in The Professor's House were the last of her pioneers, the last of her great failures. Willa Cather had resigned herself to defeat and become the "elegist of the defeated." Her theme was corruption of the new order and she applied her art to the exploration of failure. This sense of loss gave poignancy to her recollection of the past. Randall says that this led to Cather's "virtual rejection of life itself" and a retreat to the past in her later novels. There seems to be a general agreement on this. There are critics who see in Lady Forrester's fall a certain depravity. For example Leo Edel says that she is "prepared to accept shallow compromises." This is related to the change in times. In Niel's view, she is lost because she does not reject the present. She should have gone with the pioneer period to
which she belonged." Granville Hicks also sees her as "the product of changed times" who "abandons her standards, betrays her friends, and encourages mediocrity and grossness. She is the symbol of corruption that had overtaken the age." Her beauty is tarnished like the Old West because put to shabby use: "That the gross and greedy Ivy Peters should supplant Captain Forrester is symbolic of the triumph of the speculator over the builder;" according to Henry Steele Comerger.

Lady Forrester had failed to absorb the creative principle of the earth, was rootless and sterile in contrast to Alexandra and Antonia of the earlier novels, who had "found themselves in the heroic taming of the Nebraska plains; Marien Forrester lost herself in the emptying and vulgarizing process that followed," according to David Daiches. He considers the novel as "the story of the great western dream in reverse." He points out that in this novel Willa Cather probes into the "ambiguities and paradoxes of human character that make it possible for someone like Mrs. Forrester to be at once the epitome of aristocratic grace, kindness, and understanding, and a vulgarian - who will do anything - deceive her husband, make advances to coarse and unprincipled young men - to get some excitement out of life." He adds that in One of Ours, Willa Cather had written about the personal frustrations of a maladjusted protagonist, Claude Wheeler. In A Lost Lady, she presented the decline of a community as a back drop to personal frustration.

When the novel opens Sweet Water is a ghost-town. The farmers are ruined by successive crop failures and the railroad
officials do not stop there anymore as they have already sunk a lot of money there which is not likely to be recovered. Captain Forrester has the stuff of the pioneers in him. He had once dreamed railroads across the west. He is now old and his generation is passing. He represents the aristocracy that flourished after the Civil War and his toast is always to the "Happy Days." He is marked by imagination to see, strength to achieve, absolute moral integrity, grave courtesy and magnificent generosity. His insistence upon dreams implies ideals, passion and heroic energy which had gone into the making of the great West "the homesteader's, the prospector's, the contractor's," as he tells ME! The Forrester place is also the realization of a dream, set in the middle of a garden, like the home of Antonia in My Antonia, symbol of an ideal. It is a wildlife sanctuary, a tribute to and a setting for his lovely wife, Marian Forrester. It is also served as a hospitable haven for the exhausted railroad aristocracy. Captain Forrester has the repose of a mountain and can confer order upon his environment - the American West, the town of Sweetwater, agitated workers, wild animals and hysterical women. The order consisted of peace, repose and sanity, which Cather considered as the essence of civilization. He is a symbol of the Frontier, committed to the spirit of the land and like it he is also on the way out. He would not drain his marshes for money when he is poor and on being incapacitated seek solace in watching the shadows creasing on his sun-dial. The sun-dial represents the rock, an intensification of land as a symbol of stability. By watching the shadows on the sun-dial he faces the fact of the vanishing of his kind of way of life and derives strength, from a symbol of
land. This symbol links the novel with *The Professor's House*, *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Shadows on the Rock*. About his portrait Edmund Wilson said that it "is surely one of the most sensitive and accurate that has ever been put into a novel of the best type of old-fashioned American of the post-Civil War period." He belonged to the class of "great-hearted adventurers who were unpractical to the point of magnificence". According to E. K. Brown he has "a grandeur that had not been within her reach before, a poetic beauty. In Old Captain Forrester Archbishop Latour is already implicit." He could conquer but not hold and therein lies his weakness which paved the way for the usurpation by an inferior generation. Men like him never suspected the possibility of betrayal. His fall from the horse and his strokes are physical symbols of his financial ruin leaving him incapacitated. His friend Judge Pommeroy is justly proud of him when he ruins himself in trying to cover the savings of poor depositors, when the bank of which he is a director crashes. He does it because they had trusted his name. It is a tribute to his moral integrity but it also shows his ignorance of the fact that no individual can control the effects of a nation wide financial panic and that the day of individual heroism is done. Judge Pommeroy's praise of Captain Forrester's moral integrity, in contrast to the petty attitude of the younger directors of the bank who talked of limited liability of the bank, causes a blush in Lady Forrester because of her consciousness of her own immorality and unworthiness. While he is away in connection with the bank crash she commits adultery with Frank Ellinger, a middle-aged person, who was a dandy when the Captain was working hard, thus symbolizing the
decay that had set in. He serves as a link between the generations of the Captain and the Lady, twenty-five years younger to her husband, and, therefore, unable to appreciate his magnanimity and later on his preoccupation with the sun-dial. She belongs to the generation of Ivy Peters, who represents the new age. He drains the marshes around the Forrester Place and debauches Lady Forrester; as she leans on him for financial security during the illness of her husband and after his death.

Lionel Trilling has linked Lady Forrester's charm with the moral strength of her husband and pointed out that the more she withdraws from him the greater is her perdition. Captain Forrester is aware of her adultery but he never shows it. His acquiescence shows his compassionate understanding of her helplessness, beside a realization of his own helplessness. McFarland says that it is "not an unusual occurrence when a beautiful woman is married to an older and a physically incapacitated man." 

Niel, the young idealist who, unlike Jim in My Antonia, is unable to discover a link between life and literature, can romanticize Lady Forrester's life of pleasure in Colorado but is horrified on discovering the fact of her adultery on a May morning. It takes place immediately after his ecstatic awareness of the beauty of morning as "unsullied, like a gift handed down from the heroic ages." He goes to place a bouquet of roses near her window. Randall says that "The symbolic gift of the roses, the Cyrenaicism with its poignant awareness that any kind of intense beauty is too fragile to last, provide the setting for Niel's first direct contact with
experience and his initiation into adulthood." He hears her silvery laughter as well as Frank Ellinger's coarse coughing. The fact of her adultery horrifies him and he takes it as a violation of an aesthetic ideal, and not of a moral scruple. Patricia Lee Younge says that the aesthetic ideal is something sacred to all Cather heroes. "... artistic code is violated when she violates the whole concept of the frontier, because the frontier was for Cather a natural expression of the aesthetic ideal." The novel is a record of the story of aesthetic decline, a loss of aesthetic sensibility. This explains why she is unable to truly appreciate Captain Forrester's behavior. She is generally considered a Nebraska version of Madame Bovary and an evidence of Willa Cather's admiration of Flaubert. The difference, however, is that in her case there is no ethos to serve as a foil to her. She represents a certain aesthetic aspect of life. In a way she is an artist in living who consciously "devoted her vitality to the creation of a person who was more than a person, who was the Lady as a type and as a work of art, so that when she failed she failed as an artist." Thus J. W. Krutch interprets her failure as an aesthetic failure. "In a complete civilization she might have found lovers worthy of her who would not have spoiled her creation but she failed because she was not artist enough to refuse to do all what she could not do worthily.... the artist must sacrifice himself for his work. The lost lady was guilty and lost because she put her own happiness before her art and betrayed her ideal to snatch at the joy of life." Her aesthetic aspect consists of the power of suggesting things much lovelier than herself, as the perfume of a single flower may call
up the whole sweetness of spring. Her mere glance could make one's blood tingle and her laughter was musical. Her infectious gaiety as a hostess is the most finished artifice and she possesses the magic of contradictions.

When she tells Cyrus Dalzell responding to his invitation "Oh, that I am afraid, is a pretty dream. But we'll dream it, any way," her voice has the "heart breaking sweetness one sometimes hears in lovely, gentle old songs." This links her with Thea who realized that the true meaning of song lay in the mingling of sadness and sweetness. The pursuit of the ever blooming and ever piercing joy was a sort of intuitive response to an ideal by artists like Thea and Lucy, who were aware of the closeness of happiness and pain in life. Her insistence upon dancing till the age of eighty and be called a waltzing grandmother and her refusal to accept age gracefully indicate that something is broken inside her. There is a hysterical defiance in her gaiety and the glitter in her eyes has no mirth in it. During her husband's illness she appears like a bird caught in a net. She herself feels imprisoned in the Forrester Place and grows weary as wringing her hands she says, "Nothing will happen over there. Nothing ever does happen." As a widow she is like a ship without a ballast, at the mercy of every wind, flighty, perverse, having lost discrimination and the power of keeping everyone in his proper place with ease and grace. She loses sleep and takes to drink. She clings to physical pleasures of life mistaking sex with happiness. She is lost less for having broken a moral law and more in the crowd of the unworthy youngmen
that surround her and also in the crowded consciousness of Niel who feels like calling up the "shade of young Mrs. Forrester, as the witch of Endor called Samuel's and challenge it, demand the secret of that ardour, ask her whether she had really found ever-blooming, everburning, ever-piercing joy; or whether it was all fine play-acting. Probably she had found no more than another...

Her reported marriage with Henry Collins, an old Englishman who takes care of her till the end is the culmination of her play-acting and does not sound convincing.

During a chance visit to Sweetwater an old friend of her husband Ogden comes to know of her indiscretions including the transfer of her legal affairs from Judge Pommeroy to Ivy Peters. He is shocked and feels that she is misguided and requires advice from old friends of her husband. Some were dead, others were invalid and far away. He himself had very little time. Niel felt he remained diffident for quite sometime about going to see her and ultimately did not go for fear of losing an illusion about her. This makes him realize how much his own feeling towards her had changed. Ogden's fear of losing an old illusion reminds of Jim's similar hesitation in meeting Antonia.

Lady Forrester's fall makes her appear a very depraved person while in fact she is a helpless victim of Ivy Peters. Her tragedy is seen foreshadowed in the early part of the novel containing the blinding of the woodpecker by Ivy Peters. It is the first example in Cather's fiction of senseless, irresponsible cruelty, and her helpless blind fluttering and fall seem to foreshadow the tragedy
of Lady Forrester, who becomes a helpless victim of Ivy Peters.

Willa Cather is not an elegist of the defeated in this novel. She is not just expressing her gloom over the change in times that made her feel alienated and the novel is not merely a nostalgic tribute to the greatness of the pioneers. As McFarland has pointed out the pioneer era is used "as a symbol or an extended metaphor, not as a literal depiction of reality." Both Lady Forrester and the pioneer era are described as they appeared to Niel who had come upon it when its glory was nearly spent, as a traveller might come upon a buffalo hunter’s fire after the hunter was gone: "the coals would be trampled out, but the ground was warm, and the flattened grass where he had slept and where his pony had grazed, told the story." The story that it tells is "the stuff of heroic legend, not history." This is unconsciously recognized by Lady Forrester also when she narrates the story of her meeting and marrying Captain Forrester ‘once upon a time’. James Woodress has pointed out that Willa Cather also felt like Niel who had caught "the taste and smell" of the pioneer age — had seen "the visions of the pioneers" in a kind of afterglow in their own faces,—and this would always be his." Later in the novel he is grateful that Lady Forrester had a hand in breaking him to life. Thus Niel strikes the note of hope in the novel. Hope is placed in him in spite of all the vulgarity of the bourgeois represented by Ivy Peters and the degradation caused by him to the legacy of the pioneers. Niel endures because of his experience. He is nurtured on the ideals of the pioneers and lives on in an age dominated by men like Ivy Peters, who never risked anything.
Niel carries the message of dream, desire, assertion of the heroic will, a passionate commitment to ideals and moral integrity in contrast to petty materialism of the new age. He is the hopeful sign that all is not lost. Willa Cather felt that man had lost his bearings for the time being only and not permanently. The way out lay in a commitment to ideals whose validity was shown by Niel who endured in spite of a generation that had reduced the legacy of the pioneers to dust.

Willa Cather felt that the attitude towards wealth in the new age was wrong. No amount of wealth could make Ivy Peters a better man while Captain Forrester's wealth was essential for the protection of the aesthetic aspect of life symbolized by Lady Forrester. For the time being at least man had failed to adjust with the purer spirit but Cather placed hope in Niel who continued the quest. He represented order and the artistic sensibility. His farewell to Sweetwater has been interpreted by Randall as Cather's rejection of the present but it need not be. It is hoped that Niel would restore order. Thus the note of affirmation is sounded in A Lost Lady. With the death of Captain Forrester the story of pioneering as told in the old way in Cather's fiction is concluded. There is no more elegy for the past. Her next pioneer Archbishop Latour in Death Comes for the Archbishop shows how to live according to the aesthetic ideal. As regards penetration into the mysterious depths of personality, My Mortal Enemy, The Professor's House and Death Comes for the Archbishop surpass A Lost Lady in their complexity and inescrutibility. The Professor's House is Willa Cather's first novel.
after 1922, the year during which her world broke in two. It is generally taken to be an expression of her disgust with contemporary life and a sense of defeat. Granville Hicks said that Cather wrote it because she felt "the need for a more comprehensive record of the phenomenon of decay" than portrayed in *A Lost Lady*. She felt that with the disappearance of the heroic idealism of the frontier, something precious had been lost and she expressed this conviction by portraying the tragedy of Professor St. Peter. Henry Steele Commager considered the novel "an acknowledgement of defeat" after which she gave up even the pretense of finding something worthwhile in contemporary life. According to Lionel Trilling Willa Cather, in this novel, brought the "failure of the pioneer spirit into the wider field of American life.... It epitomizes as well as any novel of our time the disgust with life which so many sensitive Americans feel, which makes them dream of their preadolescent integration and innocent community with nature, speculate on the "release from effort" and "the eternal solitude" of death, and eventually reconcile themselves to a life "without delight".

According to Alfred Kazin, she saw only failure in the conflict "between grandeur and meanness, ardour and greed" which she had always explored. She identified the corruption of the times and became the elegist of the defeated. She was no longer afraid of failure as a spiritual fact and her work gained a new strength and a keener radiance. This phase of her work is best illustrated by *The Professor's House*. James Woodress has described it as her "spiritual autobiography."
Like Willa Cather, Professor St. Peter, too, was born on a farm and when his parents compelled him to leave it at the age of eight, he experienced a great emotional wrench. His father was gentle, his mother a strong-willed person and his grandfather a patriarchal figure. He returned to his native place for his professional career, taught for several years and remained torn between the claims of his profession and vocation for fifteen years while working on the first three volumes of *The Spanish Adventurers in North America*. Like Willa Cather he began to attract attention with the fourth volume and with the fifth and the sixth began to be known. The last two volumes brought him international recognition and an Oxford prize, including five thousand pounds corresponding to Willa Cather's Pulitzer Prize for *One of Ours* and her royalties from *The Professor's House* for *The Knopf* for the year before writing *The Professor's House*.

Professor St. Peter is the archetype of all Cather characters and the embodiment of her own beliefs. He has carried the pioneer passion into the world of art and thought, and is, like her, "a pioneer in mind, a Catholic by instinct, French by inclination, a spiritual aristocrat with democratic manners."

His pioneer passion was for the life of the mind and it had gone into his work. The exultation he felt while writing the multiple volume history was more valuable to him than the Oxford prize money. It was akin to the physical exultation experienced by the adventurers in their explorations described by him. His story is a symbolic version of the story of heroic failure and
and states Cather's endeavour as an artist. He felt betrayed by his family which had been an indirect participant in his life's work and ideals and which yielded to the new wave of material acquisition. Here the class represented by Ivy Peters in A Lost Lady has entered the home of the Professor. It is reflected in the vulgar ambition of his wife, his eldest daughter, the lucrative commercial use his son-in-law Louie Marcellus has made of the invention Tom Outland had developed in scholarly research and the genteel acquisitive people around him. The town of Hamilton where he lives is marked by petty jealousies, greed, depressing relationships within the family and among colleagues within in the university.

Louie Marcellus is pleasant, handsome, generous and his wealth only helps him in making expensive gifts to others. He is different from the stereotype Jew in American fiction - vulgar, acquisitive and ugly. Yet he is not liked by Professor St. Peter although the reason is not specified. His background is not known. He does not have the marks of a Jew. He does not represent any tradition. He is without any creative genius. His talent is in getting and spending. He has put Tom's invention in physics to practical use and become rich and has married Tom's fiance Rosamond. Tom Outland presents a contrast to him. Like Professor St. Peter and Willa Cather he is a child of parents who moved west when he was eight. His parents died when they were crossing Southern Kansas in a prairie schooner. Tom Outland worked as a callboy on The Santa Fe and as a cowhand on a ranch. Thus he represents the genuine American pioneer tradition. He makes two discoveries -
the artifacts of an ancient Indian civilization while trying to find the source of America's beginnings; and a gas in the laboratory which pushes man's frontiers of knowledge. He is aware of the potentialities of getting rich through these but he refuses the offers of money for the artifacts and presents these to the Smithsonian Institute in Washington. He is killed in the war and thus escapes the trap of worldliness. The contrast between Tom and Marcellus points out that "the gentile is the innovator and creator, while the Jew is the exploiter who parasitically battens off what he creates." 593 They are symbols of time past and time present. Willa Cather saw machine as an enemy to man and the engineer as the new man. She combined the Jew and the engineer in Marcellus as a symbol of the combination of forces which were tearing the Americans away from their past. The original of Marcellus was Hambourg, a Canadian Jew, a concert violinist, the husband of Cather's friend Isabelle. She departed from her model and made the Jew an engineer in order to provide a ruling symbol to her picture of the ugly present. The Jew is a traditionless aggressor who invades from the outside. He threatens and destroys the past. He symbolizes what is wrong with the present. Shroeter says: "Tom is the son the Professor would have liked to have; Marcellus is the son he actually gets. If the Professor can be taken as a symbol of America, then Willa's message is simply that America is falling into the hands of the Jews. This is what she means by having the Professor's daughter and Outland's discovery fall into the hands of Marcellus. They, the Jews, are the unworthy inheritors
of that tradition and wealth which they had no share in making but which, through some unaccountable flaw in the scheme of things, they have taken over very much as the Snopeses in Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha novels take over the glories and tradition of the old South. 94

As Elizabeth Moorhead puts it, the novel presents "a convincing picture of the demoralizing effect of inherited wealth upon those who have done nothing to earn or deserve it." 95

While Ivy Peters in A Lost Lady is a despicable person, Marcellus is not. He is not corrupted by his money. His "enjoyment of his wealth is completely innocent," according to Mcfarland. She points out that the members of the Professor's family who had been "nurtured in the tradition of art, and who have participated at least indirectly in the world of creative endeavour represented by St. Peter and Tom Clitland, have disowned old loyalties and ideals, and have been corrupted by Louie's money." 97 Except the Professor and his younger daughter Kathleen, everyone is infected by greed, jealousy, spitefulness, snobbery, vanity which are the effects of a deepseated underlying disease, "a spiritual malaise that is so pervasive and protean that a single name cannot be given to it." 98 That makes the Professor's environment stuffy, Modern civilization, "with its disregard for humane values in its pursuit of materialism, is dehumanizing. Neither St. Peter's city of Hamilton nor Washington D.C. - significantly the capital of The Country - is especially worthy to be a home for man," 99 as Mcfarland sees it.
The Professor fights a losing battle in the university for the liberal arts. He feels alienated from his family and refuses to live in the new house built out of the royalties of his monumental multi-volume history of the adventures of the Spanish explorers in America. He refuses to leave his old house, and his old study which is associated with the period of endeavour. This old study is like the attic room of Thea in The Song of the Lark and Willa Cather's own room in the McClung Household. Isabelle and her husband Jan Hambourg had invited her to Ville d'Avray in France and fitted a study for her hoping that she would make it her permanent home. But she felt she could not work there. The Professor's reaction to his son-in-law's hospitality, while on a European tour is "a miniature version both of Willa Cather's Ville-d'Avray and of the larger pattern running through the book, which centres on St. Peter's reluctance to move out of his old house and his unaccountable discomfort in the new one, with its convenient study arranged by his wife and Marcellus. Clearly the visit that summer to Ville d'Avray must have provided Willa not only with her model for Marcellus but her symbolism of houses, rooms, and studies and the emotional furniture she put into them," according to Shroter.

Willa Cather, like the Professor was in easy circumstances. She had won the Pulitzer Prize for One of Ours and financially she was secure. Her literary reputation was quite high. Her portrait painted by Leon Bakst hung in the Omaha Public Library. Once she possessed material comforts these became insignificant
and she lost privacy. In *The Professor's House* her major theme was the whole process of getting the wealth and fame and then having them turn sour. There is a contrast between Effort, symbolized by Tom and Reward, symbolized by Marcellus. The Professor's life is split into two parts—one is concerned with effort, endeavour and idealism and the other with wealth, and a new house. Like the Professor, America, too had a noble past and an ignoble present cheapened by material things. The Professor stands as the unassailable rock—the mass of spiritual and ethical qualities, like St. Peter, in the Bible, a rock on whom the church was built. His room is his rock of refuge from where he can scan the modern life, with some perspective. His History is the counterpart of the water jug of the cave dwellers. His refusal to leave his old room is a pathetic symbol but it serves his need for a refuge in a world "wearing him out by slow attrition."101 The Professor decides to edit the diary of Tom Outland. Book II contains "Tom Outland's story."

The older critics considered it a defect in the novel. For example, Alfred Kazin said, "The violence with which she broke the book in half to tell the long and discursive narrative of Tom Outland's boyhood in the Southwest was a technical mistake that has damned the book."102 He calls it "the parable of St. Peter's own longing for that remote world of the Southwest which he had described so triumphantly in his book."103 Cather, too, like all her books was moving towards the south—towards the "more primitive in nature and the more traditional in belief."104 Tom Outland's desert life thus is a symbol of a forgotten freedom and harmony that could be realized only by a frank and even romantic submission to the past,
to the Catholic order and doctrine, and the deserts of California and New Mexico in which the two priests of *Death comes for the Archbishop* lived with such quiet and radiant perfection.¹⁰⁵

This view implies that Willa Cather sought an escape into the past and in Catholic religion. J. W. Krutch called it a defect and Cather's initial mistake and said that she tried to multiply incidents. He felt that Tom had "no business to dwarf as he does the Professor.... He is merely a hero, almost an abstraction; he has attributes but he has no character; and he is only very superficially convincing."¹⁰⁶ He finds Tom a shadow if put beside Marcellus. This view, ignores the relevance of Tom Outland's story as a symbol of the validity of ideals in a conflict with reality. Granville Hicks says that Tom sums up heroism, beauty and joy, which had disappeared from America. When the novel opens he is fortunately dead otherwise he would have been trapped by materialism. He lives in the Professor's memory and most of the book is concerned with him. He is "the pioneer, vital, determined, joyful, sensitive to beauty. In telling his story Miss Cather escapes from her gloom and writes with the vigor and tenderness of her earlier work. But in the end the animation of the Outland narrative only serves to accentuate her melancholy, and she is left, like Professor St. Peter, in a drab and meaningless world."¹⁰⁷

This view accepts the therapeutic value of the novel for the author but only confirms the view that Willa Cather felt helpless in the world and St. Peter's near-suicide at the end indicated her own mood. Willa Cather tried to justify "Tom Outland's story" as
an afterthought in 1938. She wrote that she had seen in Paris, "an exhibition of old and modern Dutch paintings. In many of them the scene presented was a living-room warmly furnished, or a kitchen full of food and coppers. But in most of the interiors, whether drawing-room or kitchen, there was a square window, open, through which one saw the masts of ships, or a stretch of grey sea." She had wanted to open a window in the Professor's house and let in the fresh air of the Blue Mesa. She also said that she had in mind an organizational pattern something like the sonata form in music. James Woodress says that she "probably meant no more than the use of a three-part form based on contrast." My Antonia also contained stories within stories and Willa Cather was familiar with the use of this device in French, Spanish and English novels. The real significance of "Tom Outland's story" in the novel lies in Willa Cather's own emotional involvement with the southwest. Tom is Cather's own dream self. His story is about youthful defeat and romantic adventure in describing which Willa Cather's own emotions were involved. The first draft of the story had been written when she began the novel and therefore it was ready-made to be inserted.

The Blue Mesa discovered by Tom Outland is related to the actual discovery of the cliff dwellings in Mesa Verde by Dick Wetherell, a young cowboy who forded the river and rode into the mesa after lost cattle. In one of her visits to the Southwest Willa Cather had heard the story from his brother, by that time an old man. She used the cliffs as a symbol of all that is of enduring value in contrast to the ugly and heartless modern society.
South West had teased Willa Cather's memory for long before she presented it directly in Tom Outland's story, in The Professor's House. She visited Southwest in 1912. In 1915 and 1916 she went to Mesa Verde country and parts of New Mexico. The result was the Panther Canyon description in The Song of the Lark and Tom Outland's story in The Professor's House. A lengthy stay in 1925, principally in Santa Fe resulted in Death comes for the Archbishop.

In "The Enchanted Bluff," Mesa Enchantada, remains an unrealized dream for the boys who dream of climbing it but their manhood years are a failure. The Southwest here remains evocative and distant. Spanish Southwest is evoked in My Antonia, when the story of Coronado's search is narrated and parallel is established between suffering and death in Nebraska, of pioneers like Mr. Shimerda and Coronado dying of a broken heart. The Spanish part finds its continuity in Nebraska, through the determination and heroism of Antonia. Thus the theme of quest began in Cather's fiction and remained associated with land which, though, gradually receded into the background, remained as a symbol. For example, Thea's name, as Gerber points out, has rock-connnotations and thus rock as symbol begins expanding in breadth of meaning, now associated with the fidelity to art, which helped Thea in steering safe through temptations in Chicago. Her moment of awakening, as already pointed out is a sudden reaching the 'Enchanted Bluff'. Panther Canyon serves as a background in her moment of awakening. When Fred arrives it is merely the 'pile of stones'. Although Thea decides to fulfill some desire of the dust that slept there the landscape remains a
dead city and it is Thea's consciousness that is more important.

In "Tom Outland's story" it is directly described as "a little city of stone, asleep," marked with composition in sculpture and immortal repose. Here is a spiritual rebirth in Tom Outland. The mesa had been constructed to be a home and a castle more and more worthy to be a home purifying life by religious ceremonies.

Tom's discovery is for him a revelation both of the past and of his own ability to feel and to see where he fits into the scheme of civilization. Like Thea in The Song of the Lark, he discovers himself there. When he first invades the long-fellow mesa he is almost intoxicated in the new atmosphere. Here in the distant past a kindly people flourished while practicing the gentle arts of peace. The first view of the cliff-dwellings is a vision of the Heavenly City set in an aura of gold: "That village sat looking down into the canyon with the calmness of eternity." Later, as Tom leads his teacher, St. Peter, imaginatively through the colors and shapes of his paradise on the desert rock, the happy enchantments of romance emerge; and the reader discovers with St. Peter and Tom the object of man's eternal quest: a time, a place, and a condition of absolute bliss. The charm of the retreat beguiles them long enough to forget the hard world of twentieth century fact. The mesa looks like the heavenly abode of gods. The delicate stone work of the cliff-city is a prelude to a final symbol of vitality: absolutely colourless water flowing from the wall in the courtyard. Fittingly, the place is guarded by the sentinels of the gods. When a sheep comes out an
a ledge high above the cliff city, he looks like a priest and cannot be shot. The mesa inspires worship, for as Tom says, "I had that glorious feeling that I've never had anywhere else, the feeling of being on the mesa, in a world above the world." Before Tom completes his stay there, he has been fully awakened: "for me the mesa was no longer an adventure, but a religious emotion."

Tom's narrative of his experience on the mesa becomes a litany of praise of whatever God of creation may exist in that country: "I had my happiness unalloyed." He is filled to the brim with the ecstasy of creation. With the psalmist he is saying, "My cup runneth over!"

"I can scarcely hope that life will give me another, summer like that one. It was my high tide. Every morning when the sun's rays first hit the mesa top, while the rest of the world was in shadow, I awakened with the feeling that I had found everything, instead of having lost everything. Nothing tired me. Up there alone, a close neighbour to the sun, I seemed to get the solar energy in some direct way. And at night, when I watched it drop down behind the edge of the plain below me, I used to feel that I couldn't have borne another hour of that consuming light, that I was full to the brim, and needed dark and sleep."

Here it is a living city—the cliff city, not a pile of stones, and the emphasis is on order, the houses, the struggle and the endurance of the people who once lived there. It provides an insight
into the ways of the world—past and present. The discovery matures Tom and he is made more sensitive.

The Southwest in Tom Outland’s story is the counterpoint of the materialistic present represented by the Smithsonian Institute, where everyone wants to go to Europe on one or the other committee and does not care for the discovery of Tom Outland.

His friend Rodney Blake thinks that everything ultimately comes to money and he sells the relics to a foreigner for money. The two quarrel and Blake goes away never to return. Tom becomes aware that human relationships are the tragic necessity of life and this makes him mature. When he is introduced in the novel his early mesa experiences are completed. He has lived his time in the earthly paradise, his treasures have been sold by his friend for merely earthly gold, and he has become a mature, sensitive human being, touched quickly by beauty. With him he has brought to the University town "an earthen water jar, shaped like those common in Greek sculpture, and displays "two lumps of soft bluestone, the colour of robins’ eggs, or of the sea on halcyon days of summer." These he generously gives to the St. Peter children as gifts. Later on he falls in love with Rosamond who marries Marcellus who tolerantly recalls Tom’s gift “the turquoise set in dull silver," contrasting it with his own gift of a gold bracelet. Shroeter has pointed out that Willa Cather presents an ironic contrast between two epochs, two civilizations and between Marcellus and Tom Outland who symbolize these differences.
Tom's gift "has never been bought or sold, it is unique, it is made by hand, it is the product of an ancient and vanished Indian civilization, and its value is of the intrinsic sort that comes from the beauty of its design and workmanship, and of the extrinsic sort conferred by its origin and the beauty of the motives behind Outland's finding it and then giving it as a gift." It represents true beauty while the gold necklace with which it is contrasted represents false. The irony is that Marcellus and Rosamond do not understand its worth.

Sherzer's argument is that Book II containing 'Tom Outland's story' is the "Turquoise" and Books I and III are the "dull silver". The whole novel is constructed like the Indian Bracelet.

The story of Tom Outland develops the correspondence between the sensibilities of Professor St. Peter and Tom with his idealism, and awareness that human relationships are the tragic necessity of life, represents a sort of second youth of the Professor. The Professor ultimately overcomes the temptations and the trap of worldly success - from which, in his mood of despair he thought, Tom had escaped through death in war.

The tension in the novel builds as the problem is brought to focus. Willa Cather's problem was the growing commercialization in America and she wished to retreat to an ideal world - in the past, withdraw - even die, as an escape; and also to somehow outgrow the desire for possession - power over others - in human relationships as well as in material affairs.

Granville Hicks said that Willa Cather felt that all Americans
must learn the lesson of living "without delight, without joy, without passionate griefs," because of the disappearance of heroism, beauty and joy from the national scene. Professor St. Peter's response to the decline in values in his environment is "to decline himself into apathy and bitter premature old age. Indeed, he all but commits suicide," according to Leon Edel. Lionel Trilling also noted that Professor St. Peter seeks 'release from effort' and the 'eternal solitude' of death and "reconciles himself to a life without delight." T.K. Whipple agrees with this view and says that in the story there is "a strange sinking or regression of desire and energy, of the love of life, which almost causes his death before he sees the necessity of learning to 'live without delight.'"

These views relate Professor St. Peter's near-suicide with Willa Cather's own sense of defeat. James Woodress has also noted that "Willa Cather too experienced something like a psychic annihilation at this period of her life." McFarland has referred to Willa Cather's note on the presentation copy of the novel to Robert Frost alluding to his poem "Wild Grapes" in which the protagonist has learned to let go with the hands and the mind but not with the heart. Cather wrote that the novel was about "letting go with the heart" implying a further stage. The Professor has to learn to let go with the heart as well. McFarland says, "the rigorousness of this conclusion, which Willa Cather does not soften in the least, makes The Professor's House more problematical than any of her earlier works." She says that the "movement of the novel is from the old house - the house
of youth, the house of life, the house of artistic creation — by way of the temptation of the house of success, to the new house of religious awareness.129

In Book III St. Peter reverts to his "almost forgotten boyhood, to his elemental, solitary self that existed before the "secondary social man" supplanted it. This boy was never involved in the web of human relationships and worldly pursuits; he was a primitive who was "only interested in earth and woods and water... He seemed to be at the root of the matter; Desire under all desires, Truth under all truths... He was earth, and would return to earth."129 Concurrently with the emergence of his boyhood self, St. Peter comes to feel that he is near the end of his life."130

If the emergence of his boyhood self and his seeming drift toward death are taken literally they suggest a kind of Freudian regression to childhood or pre-natal unconsciousness in the face of insoluble difficulties in adult life. Such an interpretation has two difficulties. It does not explain the rescue of the Professor by Augusta and it shows the author as deeply pessimistic.

Mcfarland interprets the emergence of St. Peter's boyhood self as indicative of his "incipient rebirth,"131 taking clue from C.G. Jung. According to Jung the child is a symbol of a new and as yet unknown integration of the self that is emerging out of intense psychic conflict and that signifies "a higher stage of self-realization."132 The archetype of the child has a redemptive significance. It symbolizes the whole nature of man, reaching back to the preconscious life of
early childhood and forward to "an anticipation by analogy of life after death." It is an irrational force and it represents "the strongest, the most ineluctable urge in every being, namely, the urge to realize itself. It is, as it were, an incarnation of the inability to do otherwise, equipped with all the powers of nature and instinct, whereas the conscious mind is always getting caught in its supposed ability to do otherwise."\[134\]

St. Peter seems bewildered, unable to understand the implications involved in the way he feels. He acts in an intuitive way rather than rationally. He does not comprehend why his boyhood self emerges. He senses the nearness of death and interprets his feeling literally. He is surprised when a doctor tells him that there is nothing wrong with him. His awareness of death implies a mature acceptance of the reality of death as a part of life. So far in his life he has resisted it in his attachment to the joys of life and his shrinking from life's end. He also begins to see death as the metaphysical, not merely biological end of the kind of life he has led. It is "that house" - the coffin, the house of death - to which the professor's house - his life - is inexorably leading. The death he is about to undergo is a spiritual experience, the death that is necessary for the birth of the new man. He is in the process of conversion, of turning away from all that he has been. In this light, "his turning away from the man he has been - lover, father, scholar - toward his boyhood self becomes a meaningful metaphor."\[135\] When the Professor realizes that his life's happiness stems, at least,
partly, from his wife's inheritance; and that if he is comfortable it is because they have money, he has no desire left to live any longer and to face the family returning from abroad.

St. Peter's dilemma is that he is attached to his family and therefore he cannot live without it and at the same time he cannot live with it because of their differences. Subconsciously he courts the 'accident' when the defective gas stove is blown off by the wind and the gas fills the room. He just does not wish to get up and open the window. But Augusta, the sewing woman, accidentally arrives and saves him from death. She is an ascetic, who expresses love in the ritual of the Magnificat. When saved he finds that his symbolic death has changed him. On regaining consciousness he finds her wrapped in a shawl reading a much-worn book, and finds a quiet comfort in her presence. The only indication Willa Cather gives in the novel about the direction St. Peter is taking is Augusta - "seasoned and sound on the solid earth... real... that was enough—now..." 136

"One solid symbol of reality - matter of fact and unglamorous and unexciting." 137 She has about her a faint echo of a mythic figure and is the first individual in whom the religious world is first glimpsed. She is a Catholic and brings St. Peter back to the religion of his boyhood. The gorgeous drama with God implicit in religious faith is not there as yet. "The horizons of Augusta's meaning shimmer just a little with hidden brightness as St. Peter freed of his old life contemplates...." 138 He realizes - "If he had thought of Augusta sooner he would have got up from the couch sooner. Her image would have at once suggested the proper action." 139 "There was still Augusta,
a world full of Augustas with whom one was outward bound... perhaps the mistake was merely in an attitude of mind. He had never learned to live without delight." When averted by Augusta, the Professor says that "he had let something go — something very precious" that is his past life, his past self, his life — long attachments. But just because that went away, he can now survive. He has let go of "the will to power through love, the instinct to possess and dominate that brings great joy in achievement, but that also breeds much misery and unhappiness." Henceforth "He doubted whether his family would ever realize that he was not the same man they had said goodbye to.... If his apathy hurt them.... At least, he felt the ground under his feet. He thought he knew where he was, and that he could face with fortitude the Berangaria and the future."

Thus he would take the course of calm and proper action. Tom had felt on the mesa a religious emotion "deriving from the oldest paradox of the Christian faith — that one must lose one's life to gain it. Only when desire has ceased will fullness of life be granted," akin to 'filial piety' of the Latin poets. Augusta, too, represents such a life, although, she has had her share of disappointments in life.

In the beginning of the novel the Professor points out that Art and religion are ultimately the same and they have given the only happiness man has known. Both Augusta and Tom, do not have personal ambitions, but, at the same time they are full of sympathy — not cold and indifferent like the worldly people, of whom the Professor is sick and Augusta tends the sick. On waking up St. Peter wishes to have her by his side, rather than anyone else. Augusta is "the bloomless side of life,"
and yet it is the fact that there is still a world of Augustea which assures him that he can survive and he decides to go ahead in life after a dark night of the soul. He learns to live without delight that is physical joys. Thus the novel shows some hope for resurrection in this picture of the post-World War I wasteland of materialism and spiritual sterility.

Willa Cather, like St. Peter, followed the course of right action, secluded from the crowd. In place of satirizing or expressing a sense of shock at the course of events she succeeded, gracefully, and, having gained peace brought about partly, by the Episcopal Church, in 1923, she joined, she turned to her vocation and her next two novels were Catholic ones in both, the secular, as well as, religious senses.

According to David Stouch, it is true that her emotional preference was for the past, her intellectual commitment was to find a "perspective on a more meaningful and continuous present." 145

The last and the bitterest of Willa Cather's novels of negation My Mortal Enemy (1925) is the shortest of her novels and has been generally neglected by critics who have considered it important only in the sense of revealing her pessimism and negativity that are frequently believed to have overtaken her after 1922. Very little is known about the original of its heroine, Myra Henehawe, except that Willa Cather had known her through connections in Lincoln, and she had died before the first World War. Myra has the sarcasm of Lady Forrester in A Lost Lady and is what Lillian, the wife of Professor St. Peter, might have been without her inheritance. Her
husband Oswald is Myra's mortal enemy and the novel ends with her death. Leon Edel has hinted that in this novel "Willa Cather seems to offer herself a kind of ambiguous resignation and the possible solace of religion. But the novel is of a piece with its immediate predecessors and the view of life in it is dark and ominous."\(^{147}\) David Daiches has complained that the novel lacks conviction because of inadequate knowledge about the heroine before her degeneration sets in, contrived incidents and "a melodramatic atmosphere hanging about the novel with no particular functions to serve."

The theme suggests Flaubert and Flaubert at times. But Cather lacks the ironic realism of the former and the meticulous skill of the latter in examining "the sordidness underlying frustrated romanticism."\(^{148}\) He has pointed out that the change in this novel from "adventurous generosity to bitter resentment is the product of poisons working within the character, and these we are never allowed to see...... My Mortal Enemy requires a more detailed and searching method to be thoroughly convincing, more meticulous documentation, the ability to marshal a great number of details patiently and relentlessly. Instead, she tried to do it in a few broad strokes, and though these strokes are individually skillful, and there are several incidents in the novel which show real perception and a feeling for the specific situation, there is no cumulative massing of effects to achieve the inevitable and which this kind of story must have if it is not to appear altogether too arbitrary and willy-nilly. My Mortal Enemy is thus a paragon of considerable interest to students of Miss Cather's art, illustrating its limitations,
and, negatively, pointing up her characteristic excellences; but it is not in itself a wholly successful work." 149

The chief defect of the novel, according to this view is a lack of cumulative massing of details about the psychological conflicts of the heroine. However, there are reasons for this lack of details. It is the most demure of her novels. Shroeder has pointed out that it made a new experiment as "it embodies a theme, a story, and a chronological span that would, if developed according to normal novelistic techniques, make for a longer-than-average novel. Instead the book is pared ruthlessly to the bone." 150 His view is that by writing this novel Willa Cather was testing in practice the critical notions she had put forth in 1922 in "The Novel Demurred", "Whatever is felt upon the page without being specifically named there - that, one might say, is created. It is the inexplicable presence of the thing not named, of the overtone divined by the ear but not heard by it, the verbal mood, the emotional aura of the fact of the thing or the deed, that gives high quality to the novel...."

J. B. Krutch has emphasized Willa Cather's classic courtesy and modesty of method in the opening lines of this novel - "Events are seen frankly through the haze of distance; the thing immediately present is not these events themselves but the mind in which they are recollected; and the effect is, therefore, not the vividness and the harshness of drama but something almost elegiac in its softness. The knowledge of the narrator is both mellow and imperfect; he gropes, reflects and tries (after the manner of a human, far from
omniscient, spectator) to piece together the bits of his information and to extract from it as much as he can of its secret meaning. What we get is not that sense of present action for which novelists more commonly seek but rather a mood — the reverberation of wonder, of interest, and of pity which have lingered after many years in a sensitive, resonant temper.152 The effect is of "a quiet and brooding sadness"153 because its center is the mind of the narrator. He has pointed out the obvious limitations of such a method. "It does not stir deep passions and it is, as Nietzsche would have said, to the last degree Apollonian. The mood is a minor mood, brooding and faintly melancholic, with an eye turned always backward. But in the midst of our strident literature its graceful ease has a charm not easy to overestimate. Whenever Miss Cather evokes memory there comes with it a lingering fragrance."154

The story is narrated by Nellie Birdseye, one of the few female narrators in Willa Cather's fiction. It is about Myra Henshaw, seen three times — twice when she is forty-five and again ten years later. The first view of Myra occurs when she and her husband visit their home town Garthia, somewhere in southern Illinois. The narrator's aunt is Myra's friend and she accompanies them. To Nellie Myra is the heroine of a village legend. She had eloped with Oswald, the son of an Ulster Protestant against the wishes of her great-uncle — a self-made rich, savage Irish-Catholic who cut her off without a cent. Some months after the visit to Garthia Nellie and her aunt go to New York for the Christmas holidays and visit the Henshaw. Nellie's response to New York is Willa Cather's
own during 1900 - 1901, although the time of the story is about 1904. Willa Cather had met Helene Modjeska in 1898, and she is among Myra's guests in her New Year's Eve party. The descriptions of New York during winter bring in "the nostalgic, elegiac tone that one finds in Willa Cather's best fiction."155

Myra's husband Oswald works for a railroad. They live comfortably, though they are not affluent. Myra cultivates the rich people in order to help her husband but owing to jealousy she hates this section of society. Her ability to hate is a part of Willa Cather's belief in creative hate. James Woodress has pointed out that in Myra Henshawe, Willa Cather may have seen "a glimpse of what she might have come to if she had not had her art to sustain her."156

To begin with, Nellie sees Myra as a symbol of youth and love triumphing over difficulties. Gradually, she learns of her jealousies and insistence upon luxuries beyond the income of her husband. Oswald is devoted to her to a fault and she always has her way, although most of the time she is unreasonable with him. At the end of Nellie's visit Myra and Oswald quarrel.

Part II of the novel opens ten years later. Nellie is twenty-five and a teacher in San Francisco, living in a poor apartment hotel. The Henshawes, now reduced to extreme poverty, are her neighbours. Myra is a cancer patient. She blames everyone but herself for the way life has turned out, ignoring that her misery is the direct result of her own emotional inadequacies. She, like Professor St. Peter in The Professor's House rejects her past, and is estranged from her husband. She turns on him with ferocity and blames him
for her decisions, and calls him her mortal enemy. There is a great emphasis on money which is the only protection.

Randall points out, "In view of the increasingly important role which money plays from One of Ours through A Lost Lady and The Professor's House, it appears that the only way Willa Cather saw of effectuating one's will in the modern world was through the possession of great wealth.... Unfortunately, money is almost the only value stressed in the book." Myra's uncle had told her that "A poor man stinks and God hates him."  

James Woodress has pointed out that the portrait of defeat and death in this novel is "her final comment on the destructive power of money and a society that worships the golden calf. What began mildly in One of Ours, like the rather superficial attacks on the "village virus" in Sinclair Lewis, stepped up in tempo with the savage portrait of Ivy Peters in A Lost Lady, and went on to annihilate psychologically Professor St. Peter, finally destroyed Myra Henshaw and her husband."  

Money is the instrument of punishment of Myra who is disowned by her tyrannical uncle, the novel is a warning against love and physical passion but is singular in the sense that the punishment is given by a parental figure. Myra repeats the rejection by rejecting her husband. She tells Nellie, "we've destroyed each other. I should have stayed with my uncle. It was money I needed. We've thrown our lives away." She also tells him, "People can be lovers and enemies at the same time, you know. We were... A man and women draw
apart from that long embrace, and see what they have done to each other. Perhaps I can’t forgive him for the harm I did him. Perhaps that’s it. In age we lose everything, even the power to love.”

Nellie realizes that Myra turns against her idolatrous love of Oswald, “Violent natures like hers sometimes turn against themselves..... against themselves and all their idolatries.”

The note of inadequacy of love is sounded quite early in the novel when Myra Henshawe points out that hell would come out of a certain love affair. It indicates that she is torn between her romantic attraction for love and a growing realization that it is not, engross enough. In the last section love is shown as potentially destructive as Myra refers to the suicide of a young actor because of “some sordid love affair.”

In Nellie’s mind Myra is associated with Norma, the Druidic high priestess, who broke her vows of chastity for love of a Roman soldier, an enemy of her people. Mofarland has pointed out that a moving rendition of the aria Casta Diva (Chaste Goddess) by an opera singer makes Nellie aware of this aspect of Myra’s personality. For Myra love has been a betrayal. She also says that Oswald should have been a soldier or an explorer. There is something “compelling, passionate and overmastering”, in Myra which cannot be satisfied in the marital relationship. It may be the explanation of her jealousy: “She is unconsciously demanding something of a human love that it cannot be expected to satisfy. It is, to her, an idolatry – the worship of a false God.”
McFarland, referring to Richard Giannoni's view that Myra's passion is for immortality, has pointed out that she "has sought to fulfill her desire in things outside herself - in Oswald, in her friendships in material beauty and elegance, in the theatre and art - and has found them unsatisfying. Poetry, she feels, is immortal ("How the great poets do shine...They have no night,"165) but she is not a poet. She is an artist only in being herself, and to finally become herself she must return to her sources, symbolized by her fierce old uncle and the Catholic faith of her childhood. Religion, she finds, is different from everything else; "because in religion seeking is finding."167 For her, religion is both the means and the expression of wholeness, of becoming one with herself. Thus, in spite of her unsaintlike qualities - her arrogance, her hatred of poverty - the intensity of her passion for wholeness, for immortality, is such that Father Fay remarks, "I wonder whether some of the saints of the early Church weren't a good deal like her."168169

This seems to explain Randall's objection to Myra's view of religion. She tells Father Fay that "Religion is different from everything else; because in religion seeking is finding."170 According to Randall "This is surely a strange description of Catholicism, and it also shows her telling the priest his own business,"171 Further he says that there is no indication that she understands religious rituals to which she turns.172

The conflict underlying the novel as a whole is not resolved although Myra's conflict ends with her death. Nellie remains torn between the fascination for love and its inadequacy, as proved by
Myra’s example, till the end. McFarland’s conclusion is that the novel “seems to be an experiment in the depiction of conflict in an almost pure form, and the problems of understanding its meaning have stemmed from focussing too much on, and trying to make satisfactory sense out of, the particulars in which the conflict is expressed.

The whole refractoriness of the novel, its resistance to resolution, seems to be Willa Cather’s attempt to forestall the natural tendency to thrust past conflict toward resolution. Instead she would have us remain almost against our will, in the conflict situation itself, until we not only experience it in its particular form, the powerful and discomforting relationship between Myra and her mortal enemy, but also recognise that it points to an unspecified, elemental conflict within the human soul.”

Thus each of the novels of negation carries a note of affirmation. Professor St. Peter and Myra Henshaw find solace in Catholicism, like Willa Cather. My Mortal Enemy had a Cathartic effect upon Willa Cather beside indicating the direction her next novel was to take.

It paved the way for her Catholic novel, Death Comes for the Archbishop.