CHAPTER VII

MYTHS
James Woodress has emphasized that Willa Cather's wide reading added an important element in her treatment of the theme of the pioneers in the West. Instead of just romanticizing the pioneer she transferred the intellectual content of Europe to her fiction. Her importance lies in "her ability to fuse the experience of America with the tradition of Europe in a series of superbly conceived and skillfully executed novels." He lays emphasis on "the disciplined technique, the myth, the symbol, the allusion," that provide the intellectual fecundity to her fiction.

According to him the romantic view of the frontier fascinated Americans up to around 1930; and that, in part, was responsible for Willa Cather's immediate popularity. During the depression of the thirties her popularity suffered an eclipse because the romantic view of the frontier was not valid anymore; and, it was only during the fifties and the sixties that a new meaning was discovered in her fiction. Deeper levels of meaning were discovered by exploring her use of myth and symbols and allusions to the European and the classical literatures.

The American West, as depicted in Cather's fiction, reflects the progress of the human race, with the appropriate use of myth, related to the stage of the civilization which is depicted. The Cather heroine, larger-than-life, endures and triumphs over human and natural adversaries, and the struggle is
almost epic in proportion. While treating of the frontier in her fiction she adopted myths—universal and contemporary—and did succeed in creating a modern *Aeneid*. Her protagonists are often echoes of gods and heroes of old cultures. There are cycles of seasons, vegetation myths, personifications of nature—both hostile and benignant, as in *The Aeneid*. All the stories are reducible to a few fundamental eternal conflicts of human existence and their attendant myths. In her early childhood she had been introduced to classical literature and it all went into her unconscious and, as her writing was, more or less, drama of memory, the echoes and the myths were part of her unconscious response to the immediate stimulus.

In *The Professor's House*, Father Duchene says:

"Wherever humanity has made the hardest of all starts and lifted itself out of mere brutality, is a sacred spot."³

National myths are born at the dawn of civilizations. America appeared to be making a beginning, in the eyes of men like Carlyle who wrote to Emerson in 1849 that there was no myth of Athena or Herakles equal to the fact of the American frontier.⁴ Although the historians and the authors did see the potentialities of the frontier as a controlling idea in American life, the raw material was used only by Willa Cather; and she interpreted the opening of the frontier as a momentary heroic age.

Ronald Bryden has noted:

"In the present agonized American quest for identity and
direction, perhaps her novels could refresh the national myth which, at European distance, still seems magnificent and truthful in them." T.K. Whipple has described her fiction as "the triumph of mind over Nebraska."

The myths to be discussed here are confined to *Alexander's Bridge, O Pioneers! My Antonia, The Song of the Lark, My Mortal Enemy, One of Ours, The Professor's House, A Lost Lady, Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Shadows on the Rock.* L. V. Jacks has pointed out the connection between the plot of *Alexander's Bridge* and the Homeric myth of Paris — Helen and Oenone.

Alexander and Paris, both across the seas to meet women, Hilda in the novel and Helen in Homer, and in both the cases the love is disastrous; both of them recall their wives at the moment of death. Paris yearns for Oenone who may heal him and Alexander feels, if only he could return to his wife, things would be out right. In both the cases the deserted wife mourns by the body of her husband.

Another myth is of desire and fulfilment. Hilda is Diana, and Alexander is Endymion. As Diana, the moon is introduced as the symbol of aspiration in other novels also, such as *A Lost Lady* and *My Mortal Enemy.*

In *O Pioneers!* the deaths of Emil and Marie are comparable
to the deaths of Pyramus and Thisbe in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In both the stories the white Mulberry tree, shining with its fruits; the ground strewn with the white berries, the moonlit darkness of the summer night, the excessive scattering of blood, which reddens the fruit and the flutter of the dying limbs are present. The heroines in both the stories undergo bitter agony, and despair, and then accept their fate. In both, the man is the first to die. Thisbe throws herself upon the body of her lover, weeping over his injuries and kissing him. Maria, after dragging herself to Emil, died embracing him and clasping his hand covered with blood where she had kissed it. In both, the lovers are united in death.

James Woodress has pointed out a parallel with the death of Paolo and Francesca at the hands of the enraged Gianciotto Malatesta, as told in *Inferno*, Canto V, and with Romeo and Juliet and Tristan and Isolde.

Carl associates Alexandra with Eos walking straight out of the morning itself. The association with Eos is further emphasized when her reddish yellow curls — the crown of corn, are recalled. She resembles a sunflower, whose petals are symbolic of the 'shaggy ridges of the Divide.' Afterwards in *My Antonia*, the sunflower — covered roads are associated with freedom.

As Corn-goddess she is suggestive of Demeter and Persephone. This association with a goddess is made creditable, because of the almost religious tone of the description of the landscape and the relationship of man with it. It is the mingling of her identity
with that of the earth that unifies the novel; and serves as an
intermediary between nature and men - who like Oscar either do
not understand it, or, who like Crazy Ivyr, receive a religious
significance, through her.

The vision Alexandra has -

"Of being lifted up bodily and carried lightly by some -
one very strong. It was a man,certainly, who carried her, but
he was like no man she knew; he was much larger and stronger
and swifter, and he carried her as easily as if she were a sheaf
of wheat. She never saw him, but, with eyes closed, she could
feel that he was yellow like the sunlight, and there was the smell
of ripe cornfields about him. She could feel his approach, bend
over her, and lift her, and then she could feel herself being carried
swiftly off across the fields."

Reaver points out that this vision of the corn god, makes
her respond in a self-contradictory manner. The union with Corn-
god means fertility, which she wants in the soil, yet she rejects
it, as immediately after the vision, she bathes with vigor, pouring
buckets of cold well-water over her gleaming white body "which no
man on the divide could have carried very far."9

The corn-god is associated with Adonis, Attis and Tammuz.
Alexandra wants the gift of the corn, but rejects the desire of
the god for her. In "The Story of the Divine Bow," Father Daniel
kisses the last ear of corn and prophesies abundance of crop to be
reaped by his son. Gaster points out that the kiss of the last
ear of corn mythologizes the rites of the reaping of the last sheaf, which is represented as a young bride or is actually personified by a maiden wrapped in straw, who is ceremoniously wedded to a straw-covered bridegroom.

According to Reaver Alexandra unconsciously tries to "escape the implication of becoming a corn-maiden who is the beloved of the corn-god."11

The illusion is repeated just before she goes to see Frank in the prison. She has undergone a psychological change, in the meantime. She is alienated from her brothers; Carl is in Alaska, Emil is dead, and she is all the time in the cemetery where her parents lie buried. Now the earth holds the grave for her. At this stage she can accept the lover, having resolved her conflicts:

"As she lay alone in the dark, it occurred to her for the first time that perhaps she was actually tired of life. All the physical operations of life seemed difficult and painful. She longed to be free from her own body, which ached and was so heavy. And longing itself was heavy; she yearned to be free of that."12

The illusion recurs:

"Of being lifted and carried lightly by someone very strong. He was with her for a long while this time, and carried her very far, and in his arms she felt free from pain. When he laid her down on her bed again, she opened her eyes, and for
the first time in her life, she saw him, saw him clearly, though the room was dark, and his face was covered. He was standing in the doorway of her room. His white cloak was thrown over his face, and his head was bent a little forward. His shoulders seemed as strong as the foundations of the world. His right arm, bared from the elbow, was dark and gleaming, like bronze, and she knew at once that it was the arm of the mightiest of all lovers. She knew at last for whom it was she had waited, and where he would carry her. That, she told herself, was very well. Then she went to sleep."

The white cloak is linked with 'the plumes of white feather down, typifying the fleecy clouds of heaven and hence the winds and breath of life', which characterizes a bird, serving as an intermediary between heaven and earth, in a ritual of prayer for life, children, health and prosperity, in a Pawnee rite in American-Indian Folklore; while the mightiest of all lovers is linked with Gilgamesh who used to appear at spring corn festivals dressed in a dazzling dress and snatch maidens from their parents and carry them over his shoulders.

In Navaho Folklore, Atsa Hastin or 'First Man' was created from white maize and in the cult of the Navaho, white is the mantle of dawn.

There is an unconscious impact of old Bohemian folk practice in "Neighbour Rosicky"; which is about, with a different name, of course, Cuzak. Rosicky, (Cuzak in My Antonia) during
the crop failure has a picnic behind the mulberry hedge under linden trees. This is a sort of ritual, invoking plentiful crops. There is an old Bohemian custom:

"Crumbs and left overs from women making bread on Good Friday are burned in the orchard to ensure a plentiful yield from the fruit trees." 16

Although Good Friday is a day of passive lament throughout the Christian world, Rosicky symbolically performs this ritualistic practice on the 4th of July, a day celebrating the independent action of Americans.

In O Pioneers!, Alexandra's realization of herself is compared with the River Alph, that remains underground and only occasionally comes up, but it continues to be there, all the time:

"Her own realization of herself, was almost a subconscious existence, like an underground river that came to surface only here and there, at intervals, months apart, and then sank again to flow on under her own fields. Nevertheless the underground stream was there." 17

After this vision she visits Frank in the prison, and understands his essentially gentle nature, as also that he did not want to harm anybody. She can also now understand the impulsive nature of Marie. Now she has a new insight into human nature, and thus she attains a certain maturity. Then
Carl returns she accepts him, because she can now accept the vegetation god. The mightiest of lovers is not death. The grave represents death, which is transitory, while land is eternal, and one is absorbed into it to spring out again, as part of the vegetation. The fertility symbol is extended to include her:

"Fortunate country, that is one day to receive hearts like Alexandra's into its bosom, to give them out again in the yellow wheat, in the rustling corn, in the shining eyes of youth." 18

In Zuni myth the cornfather and the corn mother belong to "those below," 19 dwellers in the bosom of Mother Earth. In Navaho myth, 20 Atse Hastin (first man) and Atse Estgan (first woman) are created in the lower world from ears of corn who led the first people into the world into which we live.

Even if the symbol of death is accepted, the corn god may be taken to symbolize life-force itself, that contains both fertility and death. 21 This is more reasonable an interpretation than Randall's, who takes the mightiest of lovers as death, and as a sort of warning against impulsive behaviour. 22

In My Antonia, which, according to L.R. Jacks is one of the most Virgilian of Cather's novels, 23 the overall tone is of sadness, in spite of gains, because the rewards are much less as compared with the struggle of people driven on an inhospitable landscape; and this is a typically Virgilian tone.
The cycle of seasons is there:

"burning summers when the world lies green and
billoy beneath a brilliant sky, ... blustery
winters with little snow, when the whole country
is stripped bare and gray as sheet-iron."\(^{24}\)

This suggests birth and death cycle. Winter is man's
worst enemy—the truth—juxtaposed against the "frivolities of
nature."\(^{25}\)

Antonia, like Alexandria, is an earthgoddess, fruitful,
even when misused by man. Her twelve children may be
compared with the twelve months and the cave out of which they
emerge, is unmistakably, the womb:

"And the favourite is born at Easter, the festival
that celebrates the resurrection of the crops and the renewal of
life—a veritable explosion of life out of the dark cave into the
sunlight. It made me dizzy for a moment."\(^{25}\) Jim concludes that
"shōes a rich mine of life, like the founder of early races."\(^{27}\)
Antonia is at the centre of her homestead, in her Garden, while
the fields become the granaries of the world.\(^{28}\)

While at College, Jim hangs a map of ancient Rome and a
photograph of the theatre at Pompeii on his walls; and is
influenced by Gaston Cleric, his teacher, who introduces him to
Vergil. One evening he is musing upon a line from the 'Georgics'
"Optima dies...prima fugit,"\(^{29}\) and Lena enters the room, at a
moment when Jim is musing over Virgil dying at Brindisi, thinking of his birth place Mincio, near Mantua, and his having brought the Muse to the place of his birth. Thus imperceptibly Red Cloud is linked with Mantua and Brindisi with Lincoln, as Lena is associated with the past of Jim, and Jim at the moment is planning to go to the East, while the pull of Black Hawk is upon him.

At another level, it sets the mood of the novel, that the days of childhood, are the happiest and they are the first to go.

Also, like Virgil, Willa Cather, too, felt that she was the first to bring the muse to Nebraska by writing about it, in *O Pioneers*!

The reference to the story of Coronado symbolizes quest, which is a major theme in the novel. The plough within the sun serves as a metaphor for the westward movement, and mythologizes the American West. The plough within the sun, and the pen fitted to the theme, are linked with the poetry of Latin texts - "the evening star hung like a lamp suspended by silver chains - like the lamp engraved upon the title page of Old Latin texts, which is always appearing in new heaven, and awakening new desires in men."30 And, when Lena enters his room, about whom he had had romantic dreams, and some sort of a love affair, he understands the relation of girls like Lena with Virgil's poetry - "If there were no girls like them in the world, there would be no poetry."31
Nebraska is thus linked with the rural tradition of the
"Georgics" and the Odes of Horace.

Terence Martin has described Lena as Circe—"A blonde, Norwegian, Nebraskan Circe, Lena is a temptress, 'who gave her heart away when she felt like it,' as Jim says, but 'kept her head for business.' If she does not literally turn her admirers into swine, she cannot prevent their appetites from giving them at times hardly less graceful postures."

When dancing, Jim says, she moved, 'without exertion, rather indolently,' and her hand often accented the rhythm softly on her partner's shoulder. She smiled if one spoke to her, but seldom answered. "The music seemed to put her into a soft, waking dream, and her violet coloured eyes looked sleepily and confidingly at one from under her long lashes. When she sighed she exhaled a heavy perfume of sachet powder. To dance 'Home sweet Home', with Lena was like coming in with the tide. She danced, every dance like a waltz, and it was always the same waltz - the waltz of coming home to something, of inevitable, fated return." The parting of Lena and Jim is renunciation of love for duty and this is introduced with the background of Camille, to the accompaniment of Verdi's music from La Traviata, thus combining French literature and Italian opera, as pointed out by James Woodress.

The story of the blind d'Arnauld, is an illustration of Cather's use of the Homeric-pause—that seems to interrupt the
narrative, yet strongly reinforces the emotion. He looks like some African god of pleasure, full of the strong, savage blood, and the dancing of the white goddesses, to his tune makes the chapter a rhapsody to man’s instinctive urge toward sensual pleasure.

Personifications of land, description of men in vegetative terms, belief in superstitions, including American Indian superstitions; even by an educated person, like Jim, and his response to the classical literature and the relevance of that literature to Nebraska, serve as a unifying bond and establish a link between the past and the present. The links that are established, are free from prejudice. Biblical, Classical, European and Indian myths are drawn upon by Willa Cather. Her characters achieve an archetypal stature because of her view of man from the larger patterns of his experience.

The Song of the Lark, has the singing lark as a recurrent motif. The novel was named after a painting Cather saw at the Chicago Art Gallery, and it referred to a young girl’s awakening to the meaning of art. The singing lark symbolizes desire, aspiration and longing. The name of the old teacher, a German, who has drifted into Moonstone, is Wunsh, which means desire. He introduces Thea to Orfeo ed Euridica. Like Orpheus, he descends into an alcoholic hell to be torn by the Thracian women and cast into Hesperus. Thea goes on towards her destiny with his cherished gift.
The myth of Orpheus is the eternal story of the striving artist whose reach exceeds his grasp, who must reconcile desire with possibility. Eurydice is the ideal that cannot be attained because of human frailty. Although the will and the talent of Thea take her to the heights of success, which Wunsch must have or should have, once reached—as Orpheus, before his loss, the reader is aware that the success has been achieved by making the sacrifice of life, of human relations, to art, and, therefore, Thea's Eurydice would also escape her, sooner or later.

After treating of the vegetation myth in 0 Pioneers! and My Antonia and thus celebrating the fruitfulness of the land, Willa Cather felt a sort of drying up, owing to the emergence of the unworthy generation—the generation that would drain off the beautiful marshes of Captain Forrester in A Lost Lady.

Randall points out that in the original Wasteland myth the land is saved by a questing knight, who comes from without and is instrumental in bringing the waters back. There is no such hope in Willa Cather. The period of aesthetic joys was over, which, she felt, would lead to an impoverishment in art. She felt more and more estranged from her environment, and it is believed that by way of an escape she looked towards the past. On the contrary, she reduced the problems to their essentials and tried to discover patterns of life that might,
if accepted in their essence, provide an answer to the present day world, ridden with commercialism.

In *Opus of Dura*, Claude feels uncomfortable at his country-home, goes to a wrong place for education, is married to a wrong girl and ultimately goes on a quest for a meaning in life; and there is a Homeric parallel in his voyage:

"Like the hero of the Odyssey upon his homeward journey, Claude had often to tell what his country was, and who were the parents that begot him." 36

As he looks at the ship-building process he feels that they were" like simple and great thoughts, like purposes forming slowly here in the silence." 37 The ships "told the whole adventure of man with the sea." 38 He called them the sheath of valour, "the very impulse, they were the potential act, they were the "going over", the drawn arrow, the great unuttered cry, they were Fate, they were tomorrow." 39

This links the novel with the meaning of art as a sheath in *The Song of the Lark*, and the importance of passion and desire in all creative activity and the ships going to war link the present with the Trojan War.

In one of his dreams he sees himself as Adam and Enid as Eve and that "he had no clothes at all," 40 and then tries to cover himself with leaves and talks to her common-places, keeping her busy, last she may discover his plight.
The moon-myth is present as symbolic of unattainable desire. About Gladys, Claude says that moon is her confidant. Her wish was so beautiful that there were no experiences in this world to satisfy it, and therefore such an intercourse was essential. The moon, he felt, "came out of the historic past, and made him think of Egypt and the Pharaohs, Babylon and the hanging gardens. She seemed particularly to look down upon the follies and disappointments of men; into the slaves' quarters of old times, into prison windows, and into fortresses where captives languished." On the other hand, the children of the sun who walked and worked in the broad sun had captives within them - his own mother, Old Mahalley and Gladys. Thus through symbols all the frustration is expressed.

Ultimately, the comely life in the countryside of France, where music held the place of religion, in spite of the war, makes him aware of the positive things in life. It is European culture, at its best that serves the purpose here through music.

In *A Lost Lady*, the myth of the Garden of Eden is evoked. Mr. and Mrs. Forrester are Adam and Eve and their residence, The Forrester Place, is a sort of wild-life-sanctuary, and a place, made attractive to guests, comprising of the railroad aristocracy, because of the Lady. And there is the serpent - Ivy Peters. His blinding of the woodpecker is
symbolic of all the destruction he causes, to the Forrester place—the fall of the lady through him; and, the draining of the marshes. The draining of the marshes is linked with another symbol. In The Enchanted Bluff, the boys dream beside a river, and similarly, in My Antonia the picnic is by the river, when the story of Coronado is narrated and the plough within the sun is seen. In The Song of the Lark, Thoa realizes that water had been the object of much service and desire, and the stream was the only living thing that remained of the human drama in the Panther Canyon, centuries ago. In The Professor's House, Tom fords a deep stream to reach the Mesa. St. Peter was fascinated towards the blue water of the lake which, like an open door and a mere look at it assured one of freedom. In Shadows on the Rock, St. Lawrence surrounds Quebec and people during winters hope for the thaw and the ships from France. Auclair is 'clear water'. In a way, Cecile's asking for warm water is a subtle suggestion of her physical maturity. In O Pioneers! the duck in the water, swimming and diving, all by herself is described as an enchanted bird, and the duck-shooting incident serves as the symbol of the tragedy that overtakes Emil and Marie. In Death Comes for the Archbishop, Father Latour, gets dizzy due to thirst and turns to an inward contemplation of grace—which is a retelling of the story of the Passion of Our Lord. Afterwards Latour watches Indians drawing water from cisterns and deep wells.
Thus, water, as a purifying element and a life-giving source is respected in almost all novels. The draining of the marshes is symbolic of draining of all purity and vitality out of the Midwest, by the social climbers, and unworthy inheritors of the pioneers' wealth.

In the original myth of wasteland, the land suffers drought because the king is either impotent, sick or aged, or all the three, as in the case of Captain Forrester, but, in the original myth, the young knight comes questing into the land, and facing big dangers enters the castle perilous and restores the king to health. In some versions the restoration is symbolized by the knight's sexual union with the king's young wife. In this light Lady Forrester's sexual encounters look like fertility rites in order to reestablish the basis of life. But it may be pointed out that she is sterile, because she is not rooted in the soil, unlike Antonia and belongs to the next generation and therefore, there is no rejuvenation. Randall says that Cather here shows a mingled acceptance and rejection of Marian's sexuality. She takes it as the source of her vitality and yet finds it degrading. That she is both attracted and repelled by the fertility rite, Randall is right in pointing out that in place of a chaste questing knight only passionless vulgarians come to her; and therefore there is no rejuvenation. It may be added that she herself belongs to that generation. Her role as
a graceful hostess and a kind lady remains relevant, only so long as Captain Forrester remains in health.

The moon-myth as symbolic of desire is present in this novel also. Lady Forrester refers to a superstition that it is ominous to see the moon from over the left shoulder and she has done it. This is followed by her tragedy.

In *The Professor's House*, Euripides in his old age is mentioned. In his old age he lived in a cave by the sea. St. Peter says that perhaps "houses had become insupportable to him. I wonder because he had observed women so closely all his life." Likewise, St. Peter himself could not accept the new house built by his wife out of his prize-money for a work the satisfaction of doing which could not be measured in terms of money. His old study is his 'cave' where he retires for quiet study. In a moment of anguish he murmurs - "Is there no way but Medea's?" although it is irrelevant and is a misquotation. The idea of his weariness of life because of materialism is communicated. He is St. Peter in *The Bible* - the rock on which Christianity rests; and the keeper of the keys of heaven. St. Peter here is the mesa-like rock, committed to certain ideals. Like Christian, in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, he undergoes the Dark night of the soul; but emerges victorious. In another way, Augusta saving St. Peter is like Una saving Red-Cross Knight from suicide by snatching the knife given by Despair. There are repeated references to the Aeneid and the filial piety of the Latin poets. The
experience at the Mesa is almost a religious emotion.

It may be mentioned that Euripides is the only Greek Tragic poet mentioned by name in Cather's novels. There is a similarity between the two - both mask tragedy in such a way that the reader remains unaware of the undercurrents of the dark forces.

In My Mortal Enemy, Mrs. Henshawe is like Theseus, in Euripides' Hippolytus, unforgiving and unable to see her husband's point of view. She has taken the wrong road, like Turnus, in The Aeneid, driven by wrong notions, resisting the will of gods, and ready to kill Aeneas. Myra Henshawe, too, following a romantic illusion, resists her uncle's will, who is relentless like gods, and deprives her of his wealth. She realizes, too late, that she should not have done it. She tells Nellie - that the moon awakens the old guilt in her. Thus moon-myth is appropriately introduced, as, in her case, the desire had remained unfulfilled. In Nellie's mind Myra is associated with the Druidic high priestess Norma who broke her vows of chastity for love of a Roman soldier, an enemy of her people. In both the cases love is a betrayal.

But, though she loved, like the ancients, in order to be true to herself, she murdered her own soul, in a cowardly manner like Jason; and, therefore, she does not inspire compassion. Rather she inspires contempt. She ignored that a person may be defeated by external circumstances, yet may continue
to be admirable,

In Death Comes for the Archbishop, the Prologue sets the theme of heroic undertaking which merges with the journey motif - involving leaving one's familiar world to create a new life in a new land. Settling of a new country is a symbolic reenactment of the creation. It implies awareness of the sacred which makes miracles possible. Latour defines a miracle as a refining of our perceptions so that "for a moment our eyes can see and our ears can hear what is there about us always," and the element of miracle is introduced in the opening book in the form of the Juniper tree and the Hidden water. The vicar - a man of gentle birth, fine intelligence, brave, sensitive, courteous even towards his beasts, discovers a cross in the juniper tree and kneels before it. The steamer incident, like a shipwreck, leaves him nothing but his books, and he has lost his path and when extremely thirsty, he reminds himself of the extreme cry of physical suffering, wrung from his Saviour "I thirst" and there is an enactment of the Passion of Christ. His mares instinctively take him towards running water where Josepha meets him. He tells her:

"I am a priest who has lost his way. I am famished for water."46

The settlement is called Aqua Secreta, Hidden water. Josepha, by implication, is compared with Virgin Mary and the spring.
"rose miraculously out of the parched and thirsty sea of sand. Some subterranean stream found an outlet here and was released from darkness. The result was grass and trees and flowers and human life; household order and hearths from which the smoke of burning pinon logs rose like incense to Heaven." 47

Due to his superior aesthetic and religious sensibility Latour discovers a history of a thousand years in a cup of soup prepared by Vaillant and also welcomes the non-Christian past of the Indians symbolized by their Churchbell. It is appropriate that he sees Virgin's manifestation during his journey and the experience is a structural parallel to his desert experience of the Juniper tree. Towards the climax of his career he recounts the account of Junipero Serra wandering hungry and enjoying the hospitality of the Holy Family in the desert and this is parallel to Latour's own experience in the desert while the name - Junipero - is associated with the Juniper tree. The implication is that if a tree could represent the cross, a higher life - a human Juniper - might represent the cross better.

Latour's experience at Acoma is terrible. He takes shelter in a cave, resembling a Gothic chapel, which is shaken by the roar of an underground river. There is a reference to the rituals of snake-worship. These symbolize the continuance of evil and are an equivalent, at the mythic
level, of the chias exiating before Creation, which Latour saw in the physical landscape of Acoma. Also an arrested stage of evolutionary development is implicit.

This experience can be compared with the experience of the questing knight seeking shelter from storm, in a strange chapel where he undergoes an adventure, in which evil, supernatural forces are engaged.

Then follow the descriptions of continuance of evil in the reports of Baltazar's exploits, one hundred and fifty years ago and the descriptions of Martinez and Lucero in the present, representing lust for food, the pleasures of the bed and for money, respectively. These are placed at the very centre of the novel, and evoke a sense of evil.

In Book VII the bishop undergoes inner struggles – with loneliness in the spring garden, with the dark night of the soul in the "December Night" in the church and with his memories in the spring desert, and each time his perceptions are refined. He sees pigeons flying in the sunlight; moonlight on the snow, and man's relation to the earth and to the sky.

Latour's mission is both priestly and knightly. He is like the Spensarian knight bound on a quest, facing all kinds of archetypal difficulties – ship wreck, injury, wandering in a wilderness; experiencing thirst, the quenching of which is a symbolic fulfilling of the quest. The water of the stream
is identified with the blood of the Lamb; and he baptizes
the children with it, thinking at the same time of his
predecessor's blood - the Spanish friars, who "watered with
their blood," the faith of these people.

When, having fulfilled his dreams of youth, Latour
stops at the edge of Santa Fe (Holy Faith) to see the town
at sunset, the red hills are linked with the blood of Christ
and the blood of the early martyred missionaries. The same
red hills are the backdrop of the Cathedral that is going
to be the tomb of Latour. His blood would mingle with that
of the martyrs and of Christ, in order to nourish the ground
of faith in the country. In the prologue it had been
prophesied that this country would drink up his youth, as if
the land and its people needed his ultimate sacrifice to
ensure their continued life. He dies of having lived and
fulfilled the quest. His death is the fruition of his life
and he receives his grail full. Vaillant is also conscious of
it when he says:

"We have done the things we used to plan to do, long
ago, when we were seminarians, - at least some of them. To
fulfil the dreams of one's youth, that is the best that can
happen to a man. No worldly success can take the place of that." 48

He too is prepared for death as he puts it "whenever God
wills, I'm ready." 49
The land having drunk up his youth responds and comes to life while formerly it was sterile and even the Indians living there had become impervious and antediluvian like it.

The fertility of land is symbolized by gardens. Baltazar's garden had been only a symbol of his power and sensuality. Fr. Jesus on the other hand led a simple life, respected tradition and served the people. His natural garden of domesticated cactus was full of parrots and a source of joy to the Indians. Latour's garden, similarly, preserved the ancient tamarisks and also introduced fruit to balance the Mexican diet. His luxuriant garden is an emblem of the fruitfulness he has brought to this land. By arranging and recreating he completes God's work. There is emphasis on order and decorum which is the note of her next novel, also.

In *Shadows on the Rock* the colonists bring their gods with them, like Aeneas. The emphasis is on, "that last sacrifice, the giving of oneself altogether and finally" as Father Hector tells Euclide Auclair. In *Death comes for the Archbishop*, the question is resolved whether the talents of Latour and Vaillant would not have been better utilized in France. Similarly, in this novel, too, Euclide feels that there had been a waste of rare qualities, in bringing men like Hector, as missionaries in Canada. He tells himself:

"Ah, well,...perhaps that is the box of precious ointment which was acceptable to the Saviour, and I am like the disciples..."
who thought it might have been used better in another way." 51 Although the fog is there on the rock of Quebec, emphasis is on the stream of water that links it with the sea, and with the world and Cecile, looking at the after-glow at sunset, thinks of the rainbow as a promise that "all storms shall have an ending." 52 The emphasis on the devotion of Bishop Laval, who courted poverty for the sake of the seminary, and his capacity to see the 'infant saviour' in a small child, Jacques, at the steps of his residence, brings to mind, Blinker's words to Euclide:

"Suffering teaches us compassion," 53 at which Euclide tells Cecile - "when Queen Dido offers Aenas her hospitality, she says, Having known misery, I have learned to pity the miserable..." 54 Although emphasis is laid in the novel on the warm hearth and the perpetuation of tradition, the myth of Christian quest, suffering, leading to Christian pity pervades the novel and is a guidance to people who feel homesick for France. It is only a continuation of the theme of the previous novel. It is significant that Laval's devotion changes the lover of grandeur, Bishop St. Vallier, who, changed through suffering, decides, not to live in the palace but in the hospital, he had founded, hoping to be its next choelin.

It is against this background that Cecile grows with an inborn instinct of devotion, though of a worldly type and her
marriage with Pierre Charron is a mingling of the Pioneer and French virtues. On her acceptance of the beaver for the Little Jesus, a day before Christmas, from Jacques, Madame Promier says:

"Our Lord died for Canada as well as for the world over there, and the beaver is our very special animal."

_Sapphira and the Slave Girl_ is in the tradition of Terence - an African playwright - Simplicity of narration, the blazing desire in the dissolute young man; and helpless girl in distress, a conniving elder and a helpful third party, through whom the pure and defiant maiden attains her love, having escaped from a rascal. The outline of _Sapphira and the Slave Girl_, is on the same pattern - Mrs. Colbert and her nephew; Sapphira, Rachael and the help of Mr. Colbert, all follow it, there is not much of symbolism in this novel.

Thus the use of myth and symbolism has enriched the meaning of Cather's novels. She drew upon the Classical, European, Biblical myths and even the American Indian folklores, freely, because she felt that all that occurred in the past anywhere was relevant to the present. Harmony and order constitute the central myth of her work and the Garden of Eden, the Golden Age are her great metaphors.
Her concern with the essentials, the archetypal dimensions of her protagonists and her mystical vision of the future ensure the endurance of her fiction. It was only during the fifties and the sixties that her critics explored her use of myth, symbol, allusion and legend, emphasizing the total human significance and the world-view replacing the earlier assessment that she was a regionalist and an escapist. This new approach is part of reassessments which began after her death and indicates the direction of future Willa Cather criticism.