AN ANALYSIS OF REPRESENTATIVE NOVELS BY WILLA CATHER ACCORDING TO "THE NOVEL DÉMEUBLÉ"

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AN ANALYSIS OF REPRESENTATIVE NOVELS BY WILLA CATHER ACCORDING TO "THE NOVEL DÉMEUBLÉ"

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PREFACE

The twentieth century has developed, in some ways, a taste for simplification. Many of us want the design of our homes to have straight, clean lines. We want our furniture to be not fancy, but functional. In clothes, the "tailored look" is very popular. In writing, too, the same kind of taste seems to be evident; we prefer a novel without frills.

Willa Cather wrote during the first half of this century novels of "simplification." She believed that one could, only by the application of economy, produce a true novel of quality. In this thesis I intend to examine her principles to see how they are applied in several of her novels. For the purpose of comparison, I shall also analyze two of Balzac's novels; they are considered to have characteristics opposite from Miss Cather's.

I wish to thank my principal adviser, Dr. Clinton C. Keeler, and my second reader, Dr. Agnes Berrigan, for their invaluable assistance. I am also indebted to Mr. Alton Juhlin, who helped to secure the books necessary for the writing of this thesis.

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CHAPTER I

IDEAS IN "THE NOVEL DÉMEUBLÉ"

In her essay "The Novel Démeublé" Willa Cather explains what she thinks a novel should be. She begins with the words, "The novel, for a long while, has been overfurnished."[1] As the title of the essay indicates, the author feels that the novel should instead be "démeublé," which in English means "defurnished."[2] The terms defurnished and overfurnished are, of course, relative ones, since any novel must have furnishing, and one cannot say specifically just at what exact point a novel becomes either defurnished or overfurnished. However, an examination of the essay will help to clarify these meanings.

Miss Cather disapproves of literalness in novel-writing. The addition of one descriptive detail after the other does not make a good novel. For instance, a story of a banker who is unfaithful to his wife is not reinforced by a long description of how our banking system works. Such a description has no rightful place in the novel.[3]

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[1]Willa Sibert Cather, "The Novel Démeublé," Not Under Forty (New York, 1936), p. 43.

[2]J. E. Mansion, ed., Heath's Standard French and English Dictionary (Boston, 1939), p. 132.

[3]Cather, pp. 45-46.

We must, she states, be sure to make it clear that we are talking about the novel of quality--the novel as a form of art, not as a form of amusement. The novel as a form of art is made of the stuff of immortality, and does not appeal to the people who prefer change to something that "wears."[4]

Not everyone who can observe and describe can write a novel of quality, because even "the most trivial writers often have a very good observation."[5] It is certain that realism in writing does not occur when a writer is merely able to observe and describe, but

> . . . realism, more than anything else, is an attitude of mind on the part of the writer toward his material, a vague indication of the sympathy and candour with which he accepts, rather than chooses, his theme.[6]

Tolstoi and Balzac showed a love for material things, but there is a great difference in their treatment of them. While Balzac merely enumerated his details, Tolstoi synthesized his so perfectly that they seemed to be a part of the emotional make-up of the characters.[7]

In American literature, Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter is given as an example of a defurnished novel. In this book, Hawthorne, like Tolstoi, fused his scenes and objects into the experiences of the characters. Hawthorne made people,

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[4]Ibid., p. 44.

[5]Ibid., p. 45.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid., p. 48.

not their surroundings, the most important thing. Also, all experiences were shown in perspective in order to obtain a quiet serenity and to enhance a consistent mood.[8]

When an author presents literal "mental reactions and . . . physical sensations"[9] in his work, a lack of realism in the characters is evidenced.[10] Miss Cather mentions The Rainbow by D. H. Lawrence as an example of a work containing this fault. As is true in The Rainbow, "characters can be almost dehumanized by a laboratory study of the behaviour of their bodily organs under sensory stimuli. . . ."[11] A quotation from D. H. Lawrence's book will help to make Miss Cather's position clearer. The following lines are taken from a love scene:

> And yet he trembled, sometimes into a kind of swoon, holding her in his arms. They would stand sometimes folded together in the barn, in silence. Then to her, as she felt his young, tense figure with her hands, the bliss was intolerable, intolerable the sense that she possessed him. For his body was so keen and wonderful, it was the only reality in her world. In her world, there was this one tense, vivid body of a man. . . .
>
> But to him, she was a flame that consumed him. The flame flowed up his limbs, flowed through him, till he was consumed, till he existed only as an unconscious, dark transit of flame, deriving from her.[12]

Too much is explained in this scene; practically nothing is left to the imagination. Consequently, one has the feeling

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[8]Ibid., pp. 49-50.

[9]Ibid., p. 50.

[10]Ibid., p. 45.

[11]Ibid., p. 50.

[12]D. H. Lawrence, The Rainbow (New York, 1924), p. 119.

that these characters are not real people, but that they are much like animals in a scientific experiment who are being analyzed under a microscope. These characters have thus, according to Willa Cather's viewpoint, become "dehumanized."

Miss Cather compares the defurnished novel to modern painting, where ideas and experiences are interpreted imaginatively, where a scene is presented "by suggestion rather than by enumeration."[13] She also states that since the novel cannot be both a form of imaginative art and a form of journalism, the novelist who wants to write imaginatively should learn to select his material just as the artist does. If an artist cannot learn to choose just what he needs to include in a painting to achieve a certain effect, all that results is confusion. The same applies to the novelist.[14]

Miss Cather summarizes her ideas in this paragraph:

> 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 or the thing or the deed, that gives high quality to the novel or the drama, as well as to poetry itself.[15]

The defurnished novel is therefore the "imaginative" novel, and it is opposed to the overfurnished novel, which is the "literal" novel. All the elements discussed above are necessary for a novel to be actually defurnished.

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[13]Cather, p. 48.

[14]Ibid., pp. 48-49.

[15]Ibid., p. 50.

In the following chapter I shall analyze two novels by Honoré Balzac in order to illustrate what the elements of the overfurnished novel are. In the remaining chapters I shall analyze five of Willa Cather's novels to see how well she applies her principles set forth in "The Novel Déneublé." By first examining the qualities found in the overfurnished novel, one can understand better what qualities should be found in the defurnished.

CHAPTER II

BALZAC AND THE FURNISHED NOVEL

Balzac, Miss Cather states, over-furnished his novels. She writes of him in her essay, "The Novel Démeublé," "In exactly so far as he succeeded in pouring out on his pages that mass of brick and mortar and furniture and proceedings in bankruptcy, in exactly so far he defeated his end."[1] An analysis of two representative novels by Balzac, Eugénie Grandet and Père Goriot, should further clarify what the defurnished novel is by showing what elements are contained in the heavily furnished novel.

Eugénie Grandet is very heavily furnished at the beginning, particularly. Balzac apparently considered it necessary that the setting be introduced in much detail. His first paragraph reads:

> There are houses in certain provincial towns whose aspect inspires melancholy, akin to that called forth by sombre cloisters, dreary moorlands, or the desolation of ruins. Within these houses there is, perhaps, the silence of the cloister, the barrenness of moors, the skeleton of ruins; life and movement are so stagnant there that a stranger might think them uninhabited, were it not that he encounters suddenly the pale, cold glance of a motionless person, whose half-monastic face peers beyond the window-casing at the sound of an unaccustomed step.[2]

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[1] Cather, pp. 46-47.

[2] Honoré de Balzac, Eugénie Grandet (New York, 1907), p. 1.

From this generalized paragraph, Balzac focuses attention upon a town named Saumur, which has houses of this type. He describes one house of this sort, and the dreary street where it sits, with its "tortuous roadway." The houses on this street are very similar, with "enormous oaken beams" of "rotting shingles" and "worn-out window sills." The houses are bulky old forms, and have their "doors studded with enormous nails, where the genius of our forefathers has traced domestic hieroglyphics. . . ." The buildings are no longer even historically significant, though, because the meanings in these hieroglyphics are "now lost forever."[3]

Balzac's addition of detail after detail continues so as to give a very accurate picture of the setting. His next concern is with the kind of people living on this street. There are traders, who all seem to own very little, with their dingy stores and a few samplings on display. In reality, however, many of them may own a great deal.[4] There are also idle gossipers, and "a young girl never puts her head near a window that she is not seen by [these] idling groups [who are] constantly in the street."[5]

The house of Monsieur Grandet, from which the story evolves, is described more fully. It is a "cold, silent, pallid dwelling, standing above the town and sheltered by

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[3]Ibid., p. 2.

[4]Ibid., p. 4.

[5]Ibid., p. 5.

the ruins of the ramparts."[6] The outside of the house has two pillars and an arch, made of "a white stone peculiar to the shores of the Loire, and so soft that it hardly lasts more than two centuries."[7] The archway door is "made of solid oak, brown, shrunken, and split in many places. . . ."[8] On the inside, one of the most important rooms is the hallway:

> The most important room in the ground-floor of the house was a large hall, entered directly from beneath the vault of the parte-cochiere. Few people know the importance of a hall in the little towns of Anjou, Touraine, and Berry. The hall is at one and the same time antechamber, salon, office, boudoir, and dining-room; it is the theatre of domestic life, the common living-room.[9]

It is interesting to note some of the things Balzac considers to be too significant to omit. While picturing the inside, he includes a "straw chair, whose legs were raised on castors to lift its occupant, Madame Grandet, to a height from which she could see the passers-by." Also, there is a "work-table of stained cherry-wood," and a "little armchair."[10]

The description of the inside completes the setting. The story itself then begins. Eugénie Grandet, the principal character, is the daughter of Monsieur and Madame

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[6]Ibid., p. 22.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid., p. 23.

[9]Ibid., p. 24.

[10]Ibid., p. 25.

Grandet. Monsieur Grandet is a miser, and his extreme selfishness makes life hard for Eugénie.

However, Eugénie trusts and obeys her father until she falls in love with Charles Grandet, Eugénie's cousin, who comes to visit. At the death of Charles' father, M. Grandet sends Charles to the West Indies to make his own fortune. Eugénie promises Charles, against her father's will, to wait for him.

For seven long years, Eugénie remains faithful. Then she discovers that these years have been wasted. She receives a letter from Charles, stating his intention to marry another woman.

In despair Eugénie marries another man, but he dies soon afterward. Even though she is wealthy now because her father, who is dead, willed her his fortune, she is not happy. Eugénie tells Nanon, a faithful servant and friend, "I have none but you to love me. . . ."[11]

During the story, Balzac pauses many times to give additional facts and ideas which are not essential to the central action. He pauses, for example, to give fuller explanation about a character, as in the case of Charles:

> . . . Charles was a true child of Paris, taught by the customs of society . . .; already an old man under the mask of youth. He had gone through the frightful education of social life, of that world where in one evening more crimes are committed in thought and speech than justice ever punishes at the assizes; where jests and clever sayings assassinate the noblest ideas; where no one is counted strong unless his mind sees clear; and to see clear in that world

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[11]Ibid., p. 294.

is to believe in nothing, neither in feelings, nor in men, nor even in events. . . .[12]

Elsewhere, Balzac is concerned with the sufferings of people, particularly those in love. He begins with, "In all situations women have more cause for suffering than men, and they suffer more. Man has strength and the power of exercising it; he acts, moves, thinks, occupies himself. . . ."[13]

Much of Balzac's moralizing is done not through implication, but through direct statements. Sometimes it is so extensive that he even relates the book situation to that of his own day. Once, when M. Grandet curses God, Balzac adds:

> Misers have no belief in a future life: the present is their all in all. This thought casts a terrible light upon our present epoch, in which, far more than at any former period, money sways the laws and politics and morals. Institutions, books, men, and dogmas, all conspire to undermine belief in a future life. . . .[14]

Further on, Balzac comes back to this same idea. "The life of a miser," he says, "is the constant exercise of human power put to the service of self. It rests on two sentiments only, --self-love and self-interest. . . ."[15]

In the plot itself, there is furnishing done especially in the places Balzac considers most important, and thus most needful of emphasis. A striking example of this occurs in the scene in which Eugénie defies her father by replacing

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[12]Ibid., p. 168.

[13]Ibid., p. 203.

[14]Ibid., p. 128.

[15]Ibid., p. 133.

the sugar on the table for Charles against her father's command.

Leading up to this scene, Balzac explains that Eugénie prepared a simple breakfast for Charles, but "which, nevertheless, departed alarmingly from the inveterate customs of the house."[16] When Charles finally comes down, very late, he talks to Eugénie, and his flattering ways go right to her heart-strings.[17] The stage is set for this defiance that Eugénie shows toward her father when he returns and is angered at the attention Charles is receiving. Seeing the circumstances, M. Grandet replies, "When the cat's away, the mice will play."[18]

Finally, Grandet notices all the sugar on the table, and asks his trembling wife, "Where did you get all that sugar?" His wife answers, "Nanon fetched it from Fessard's; there was none."[19] Grandet then takes the sugar from the table, and when Charles looks around for more, tells him to add more milk, and "your coffee will taste sweeter."[20]

After these words comes the climax of the scene:

> Eugénie took the saucer which Grandet had put away and placed it on the table, looking calmly at her father as she did so. Most assuredly, the Parisian woman who held a

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[16]Ibid., p. 102.

[17]Ibid., p. 106.

[18]Ibid., p. 108.

[19]Ibid., p. 109.

[20]Ibid.

silken ladder with her feeble arms to facilitate the flight of her lover, showed no greater courage than Eugénie displayed when she replaced the sugar upon the table.[21]

In this situation Balzac has taken time to lead up to the scene gradually, thoroughly supplying the reader background information.

Another example is found in the scene in which, after seven years, Eugénie hears from Charles. This scene, especially, points out the emphasis Balzac places upon the melodrama of a situation. It is in August, and Eugénie is sitting "on the little wooden bench where her cousin had sworn to love her eternally. . . ."[22]

When Eugénie receives her letter, she excitedly exclaims, "Paris--from him--he has returned!"[23]

Then,

> Eugénie turned pale and held the letter for a moment. She trembled so violently that she could not break the seal. La Brande Nanon stood before her, both hands on her hips, her joy puffing as it were life smoke through the cracks of her brown face.[24]

The entire letter is quoted. Balzac includes the letter, the description of the setting, and the description of Eugénie's fear and hope at getting the letter to emphasize the importance of this particular action.

Miss Cather sums up her ideas of the defurnished novel

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., p. 272.

[23] Ibid., p. 273.

[24] Ibid.

when she states, "It is the inexplicable presence of the thing not named, of the overtone divined by the ear but not heard by it . . . that gives high quality to the novel. . . ."[25] It is this quality of lightness, this mere suggestion of ideas, that makes the defurnished novel.

The furnished novel, therefore, consists of the opposite qualities. It is concerned with giving most, if not all, of the facts and ideas. As shown in Eugénie Grandet, there is a great emphasis on the amount of descriptive details and on the melodrama of a situation.

These facts are as true of Balzac's Père Goriot as they are of Eugénie Grandet. Père Goriot is the story of Parisian life, of its trials and its corruption.

Old Goriot, the main character, lives in an inexpensive boarding house belonging to Mme. Vauquer. Goriot has an undying love for his two daughters, who now reject him.

Eugène Rastignac also lives in the boarding house, and he becomes Goriot's good friend. Eugène gets caught in the web of Parisian high society; he falls in love with Goriot's daughter, Delphine, who is of that society.

When Goriot dies, he is given a pauper's funeral, since the husbands of Goriot's daughters will not permit their money to be spent in this manner, and since Eugène has now spent all of his money (which was given him by his needy family) attempting to keep up with his society life.

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[25]Cather, p. 50.

As in Eugénie Grandet, Père Goriot begins with detailed delineations. Mme. Vauquer's lodging-house, says Balzac, "is still standing at the lower end of the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Genevieve, just where the road slopes so sharply. . . ."[26] As is true of the district where M. Grandet's house stands, there is "a grim look about the houses."[27] Also, "the depressing influence of this place . . ."[28] is felt by all. Among other things, Balzac discusses, in order to help establish the setting, the pavements that are "clean and dry,"[29] the garden by the house,[30] the "gravelled walk bordered by geraniums and oleanders and pomegranates set in great blue and white glazed earthenware pots,"[31] the wicket gate which at night "is replaced by a solid door,"[32] the horse-hair furniture in the sitting-room,[33] and the hearth that is always "clean and neat."[34]

After the setting, the characters are carefully and thoroughly introduced. Mme. Vauquer is

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[26]Honoré de Balzac, Père Goriot (New York, 1941), p. 2.

[27]Ibid., p. 3.

[28]Ibid., p. 2.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Ibid., p. 3.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Ibid., p. 4.

[33]Ibid., p. 5.

[34]Ibid.

> . . . an oldish woman, with a bloated countenance, and a nose like a parrot's beak set in the middle of it; her fat little hands (she is as sleek as a church rat) and her shapeless, slouching figure are in keeping with the room that reeks of misfortune, where hope is reduced to speculate for the meanest stakes. Mme. Vauquer alone can breathe that tainted air without being disheartened by it. Her face is as fresh as a frosty morning in autumn; there are wrinkles about the eyes that vary in their expression from the set smile of a ballet-dancer to the dark, suspicious scowl of a discounter of bills. . . .[35]

The reader receives here a picture of her nose, her hands, her figure, her complexion, and her personality--all these things. There are four others besides Eugène and Goriot. In summary, Mme. Couture is described as a widow who "mothers" Victorine Taillefer, a schoolgirl. M. Vautrin, who later turns out to be an exconvict, is intelligent looking, and wears a black wig and dyed whiskers. There is an old, rather weak-minded man named Poiret.[36]

The book is filled with lengthy conversations that usually help to explain or emphasize some situation, idea, or personality. There are, for example, long reflections by Goriot about his daughters. The following instance, in which he is talking to Eugène, illustrates to what great extent Goriot really loves his daughters.

> "My real life is in my two girls, you see; and so long as they are happy and smartly dressed, and have soft carpets under their feet, what does it matter what clothes I wear or where I lie down of a night? I shall never feel cold so long as they are warm; I shall never feel dull if they are laughing. I have no troubles but theirs. When you, too, are a father, and you hear your children's little voices,

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[35]Ibid., p. 7.

[36]Ibid., pp. 8-9.

you will say to yourself, 'That has all come from me.'"[37] Instead of one's being led to draw his own conclusions as to the extent of this deep-seated love, either through suggestion or by the action of Goriot toward his daughters in the plot of the story itself, Goriot's feeling is stated explicitly here.

Another time, when Eugène comes downstairs elegantly dressed, the boarders must have their say. The reaction of each one is given.

> "Clk! clk! clk!" cried Bianchon, making the sound with his tongue against the roof of his mouth. . . .
> "He holds himself like a duke and a peer of France," said Mme. Vauquer.
> "Are you going a-courting?" inquired Mlle. Michonneau.
> "Cock-a-doodle-doo!" cried the artist.
> "My compliments to my lady your wife," from the employe at the Museum.
> "Your wife; have you a wife?" asked Poiret.
> "Yes, in compartments, water-tight and floats, guaranteed fast color . . .," cried Vautrin. . . .[38]

The melodrama of a situation is emphasized. For example, as Goriot lies dying and his daughters do not come, his words seem to be wrung from his very heartstrings.

> " . . . they will not come! I knew that they would not . . . Oh! my friend, do not marry; do not have children! You give them life; they give you your deathblow. You bring them into the world, and they send you out of it. No, they will not come. I have known that these ten years. Sometimes I have told myself so, but I did not dare to believe it."
> The tears gathered and stood without overflowing the red sockets.[39]

Later,

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[37] Ibid., p. 133.

[38] Ibid., p. 141.

[39] Ibid., p. 265.

> . . . Goriot made a movement as if he tried to clutch something to his breast, uttering a low inarticulate moaning the while, like some dumb animal in mortal pain.
> "Ah yes!" cried Bianchon. "It is the little locket and the chain made of hair that he wants; we took it off a while ago. . . . Poor fellow! he must have it again."[40]

It is clear that these scenes are highlights in the book, because they are treated far from lightly. There is no "abbreviation of incidents."[41]

Another example occurs when Eugène first begins his society climbing, and writes for money from home. His sister and mother each write him a letter saying that the family is answering his request. Before reading the letter, Eugène is fearful as he remembers their poverty. He fears that he is "draining their very lifeblood."[42] Such ideas in the letter as the following play up the melodramatic element very successfully: Eugène's mother tells him that it is up to him to shape the futures of all his family--that if he fails, all is lost.[43] In his sister's letter, she shows great confidence in Eugène's ability to be successful, and chastises herself for not being more saving with her money so as to have more to give Eugène.[44] Such words cause Eugène to exclaim, "Success at all costs now!"[45]

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[40]Ibid., p. 278.

[41]Brown, E. K., completed by Leon Edel, Willa Cather: A Critical Biography (New York, 1953), p. 250.

[42]Balzac, Goriot, p. 92.

[43]Ibid., p. 93.

[44]Ibid., p. 96.

[45]Ibid., p. 97.

. . . There is another instance when Vautrin, the exconvict, is discovered and arrested again. The officers, after bribing a woman resident of the boarding-house to get certain necessary information, come to the boarding-house to get him. The convict speaks. Then,

> The convict's prison, its language and customs, its sudden sharp transitions from the humorous to the horrible, its appalling grandeur, its triviality and its dark depths, were all revealed in turn by the speaker's discourse; he seemed to be no longer a man, but the type and mouthpiece of a degenerate race, a brutal, supple, clear-headed race of savages. . . .
>
> "Who betrayed me?" said Collin, and his terrible eyes traveled round the room. Suddenly they rested on Mlle. Michonneau.
>
> "It was you, old cat!" he said. . . . "Two words from me, and your throat would be cut in less than a week. . . ."[46]

After Vautrin leaves, the whole audience is practically paralyzed with shock, and no one says a word for a while. Mme. Vauquer's maid is energetically rubbing her mistress's temples with vinegar to revive her.[47]

The whole scene of Vautrin's arrest, as well as the other scenes discussed, is an example of the importance Balzac puts on the melodrama of the situation.

Balzac's language has a heaviness of style. Typical of his writing in both novels are these lines;

> As Eugène went home in the moonlight, he fell to serious reflections. He was satisfied and yet dissatisfied. He was pleased with an adventure which would probably give him his desire, for in the end one of the prettiest and best dressed women in Paris would be his; but, as a set-off, he saw his hopes of fortune brought to nothing. . . .[48]

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[46] Ibid., p. 202.

[47] Ibid., p. 204.

[48] Ibid., p. 151.

Here one is able to understand Eugène's ideas, but the language does not act as a source whereby one can also feel as Eugène feels. It does not have that weightless quality which seems to direct the reader on so that he is not reading words simply for understanding, but seemingly participating in the mood of the experience itself. As Miss Cather says, for the defurnished novel there must be that "quality of feeling which comes inevitably out of the theme itself; when the language, the stresses, the very structure of the sentences are imposed upon the writer by the special mood of the piece."[49]

One understands that Eugène is confused, but there are no feelings conveyed (through the tone of the language itself) that he must be experiencing. One understands, but does not feel, through this language tone, that fear that is at this moment in Eugène as he thinks about the unknowable future. That fear, one should feel, is mixed with hope, which is justifiable to Eugène when he is overcome by his baser self, but which brings him shame when his higher being asserts itself.

It is clear, therefore, that the true furnished novel, of which Balzac's writing is an example, shows a lack of economy. There is a lack of economy shown by the mass of details, a melodramatic emphasis on various events in the plot, and heaviness of style. These three things make up the principal elements of the furnished novel.

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[49]Willa Sibert Cather, "Miss Jewett," Not Under Forty (New York, 1936), pp. 46-47.

CHAPTER III

APPLICATION OF "DÉMEUBLÉ" TECHNIQUE IN REPRESENTATIVE NOVELS

Balzac and Willa Cather use two very different approaches in their writing. In the previous chapter, Balzac's "literal" approach was examined, and in this chapter, Miss Cather's "imaginative" approach is scrutinized. Four of her novels are used as a basis for the discussion. These novels are representative of her early, middle, and late writing periods.

At the writing of her first book, Alexander's Bridge, Miss Cather had not developed her method of defurnishment to the fullest extent.

Bartley Alexander is the main character. The story concerns his struggle with three different interests--his wife, his mistress, and his work.[1] Bartley loves his wife, who is beautiful and very charming; yet he cannot forsake his mistress, since with her he is able, in a sense, to relive his lost youth. When these affairs of his personal life begin causing him untold worries, Bartley grows less attentive to his work. This is a serious mistake, because as a famous bridge construction engineer, he has many

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[1]Willa Sibert Cather, Alexander's Bridge (Boston, 1937).

important responsibilities.

The trouble begins when Bartley is in London once on business, at which time he renews an old friendship with Hilda Burgoyne, now a famous actress. They fall in love, and Alexander feels helpless about what should be done. He loves his wife, but he also is attracted to Hilda.

Finally Bartley composes a letter to his wife as a last resort, telling her of his feeling for Hilda, and also telling her that he cannot continue their marriage. Before mailing the letter, however, he receives a telegram containing alarming news about the condition of one of his bridges. Because he has been in London visiting Hilda, the letter is late reaching him. He then puts the letter intended for his wife in his pocket, and quickly heads for Canada.

After arriving, he is alarmed to discover that the workmen have not been called off the bridge, and immediately he supervises their retreat off it. Unfortunately, it is too late. Some girders break loose; the bridge collapses with many men still on it. Bartley perishes with them.

When Bartley's wife finds the letter on his body, it is too blurred to read. Mrs. Alexander therefore never learns that her husband planned to leave her.

This story is briefly told. Since the book is only 137 pages in length, it is obviously not weighted down by many details. Willa Cather's economy of detail is illustrated by the following passage, which is the description of

Alexander's study as seen by his old teacher, Professor Wilson.

> The room was not at all what one might expect of an engineer's study. Wilson felt at once the harmony of the beautiful things that have lived long together without obtrusions of ugliness or change.[2]

Unlike Willa Cather, Balzac, one recalls, lists one detail after the other so that the appearance of a room or building is correctly pictured. In Père Goriot, the outside of Mme. Vauquer's boarding house is described with its gravelled walk, garden, and door with an inscription written above it. There are pigs behind the house to lend their stupid cries to the scene.[3] In the quotation above, Miss Cather does not describe the things contained in the room. In contrast to Balzac she is interested only in the total impression the room makes.

This same passage, however, is also suggestive of the author's immaturity of style. A lack of defurnishment is shown in the way that the room's total impression is given. In "The Novel Démeublé," Miss Cather states that the defurnished novel should contain emotions that are felt but not named.[4] In this passage, Wilson's impression of the room is expressed explicitly when the author says that "Wilson felt at once the harmony of the beautiful things. . . ."

Even in this first novel, Willa Cather's style

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[2]Ibid., p. 11.

[3]Balzac, Goriot, pp. 3-4.

[4]Cather, "Démeublé," Forty, p. 50.

evidences a certain degree of lightness and lucidity, as shown in the following lines:

> When Alexander awoke in the morning, the sun was just rising through pale golden ripples of cloud, and the fresh yellow light was vibrating through the pine woods. The white birches, with their little unfolding leaves, gleamed in the lowlands, and the marsh meadows were already coming to life with their first green, a thin, bright colour which had run over them like fire.[5]

Nowhere here is the lightness of style sacrificed to a heavy tone, and it is through this style that one is able to do more than merely understand the lines. One is also able to feel, at least to a degree, along with Alexander, the mood of the experience. Though Alexander's emotions are not stated directly, one knows by the language tone that he must be experiencing a quiet but exhilarating joy at observing this beautiful scene.

There is only one thing that may hinder one's ability to feel the mood of this experience to its fullest extent. Several of the phrases sound rather stereotyped, and thereby perhaps lose some of their power to convey the mood. These phrases especially sound a little overused: "sun . . . rising through pale golden ripples of cloud," and "fresh yellow light."

Yet it is evident that in these examples of Miss Cather's writing, not once has she obstructed the quiet, forceful mood of the story by asserting her own ideas and opinions. In fact, everything seems so detached from the author that

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[5]Cather, Bridge, p. 118.

it appears to come only from the characters. As the author states in "The Novel Démeublé,"

> [All things] . . . are always so much a part of the emotions of the people that they are perfectly synthesized; they seem to exist, not so much in the author's mind, as in the emotional penumbra of the characters themselves.[6]

For instance, in the previous example the details of the scenery seem to be the ones noticed by Alexander, and not necessarily by the author. The same is true in the description of Alexander's study. In fact, the paragraph specifically states that Wilson felt the harmony of the things in the room, not just that the things in the room were harmonious.

Earlier it was pointed out that Wilson's reaction to Bartley's study was not written in a defurnished manner because the author stated explicitly Wilson's feeling. This same lack of defurnishment is repeated several times later when Miss Cather analyzes Bartley's mind, instead of letting life itself reveal to us what we should know about him.[7]

To illustrate what this element of defurnishment should be, Miss Cather once wrote:

> Just as if I put here on the table a green vase, and beside it a yellow orange. Now, those two things affect each other. Side by side they produce a reaction which neither of them will produce alone. . . . I want the reader to see the orange and the vase--beyond that, I am out of it.[8]

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[6]Cather, "Démeublé," Forty, p. 48.

[7]Loyd Morris, "Willa Cather," North American Review, CCXIX (1924), 650.

[8]Latrobe Carroll, "Willa Sibert Cather," The Bookman, LIII (1921), 216.

In Alexander's Bridge, the author has not just pictured to the reader the orange and the vase. When she analyzes Bartley's mind, she, in effect, tries to point out the reaction the orange makes upon the vase. She should instead let the reader observe for himself. The following lines make up a brief but clear illustration of this lack of defurnishment: "Something had broken loose in him of which he knew nothing except that it was sullen and powerful, and that it wrung and tortured him."[9] To be effective, this passage should have simply illustrated Alexander's powerful new emotion through his various actions, not described it.

In Père Goriot, which Willa Cather considers to be over-furnished, Balzac frequently describes the feelings of his characters. Consider the following paragraph from that book:

> Towards the end of the first week in December Rastignac received two letters--one from his mother, and one from his eldest sister. His heart beat fast, half with happiness, half with fear, at the sight of the familiar handwriting. Those two little scraps of paper contained life or death for his hopes. But while he felt a shiver of dread as he remembered their dire poverty at home, he knew their love for him so well that he could not help fearing that he was draining their very life-blood.[10]

We know exactly what is going on in Eugène's mind when he receives the letter, just as we know Alexander's personal thoughts when he falls in love with Hilda. We learn not through Eugène's actions, but through the author's analysis of his mind, what he is thinking.

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[9]Cather, Bridge, p. 68.

[10]Balzac, Goriot, p. 77.

In Miss Cather's first book, therefore, are evidences both of defurnishment and a lack of defurnishment. Sometimes the author's style becomes a little stereotyped, and this may interfere with the conveyance of the mood. Several times, too, the author does not let the actions of the characters speak for themselves; she projects herself into the scene by delving into their minds and describing their feelings. However, there is some defurnishment evidenced in the book by the author's general economy of detail and weightlessness of style.

My Ántonia was first published in 1918, six years after Alexander's Bridge.[11] This, Willa Cather's fourth book, shows greater facility with her method than did Alexander's Bridge.

An earlier quotation points out that Willa Cather wants to keep herself as inconspicuous in her writing as possible. Beyond showing what the "orange" and "vase" are like, she wants to remain out of the picture.[12] To help her do this, in My Ántonia she has one of the characters act as narrator. The narrator is Jim Burden, and he relates the life story of his friend, Ántonia Shimerda. Jim is fond of Ántonia, but not overly sentimental so as to distort the truth about her. For instance, when one day she eats with the Shimerdas, he notices,

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[11]E. K. Brown, p. 346.

[12]See footnote 8, above.

Ántonia ate so noisily now, like a man, and she yawned often at the table and kept stretching her arms over her head, as if they ached. Grandmother had said, 'Heavy field work'll spoil that girl. She'll lose all her nice ways and get rough ones.' She had lost them already.[13]

Willa Cather writes that it is her purpose to maintain a unity of mood throughout the novel.[14] Everything not contributing to this central unity must be discarded. In My Ántonia, the mood, powerfully maintained, is one of quiet, heroic joy. The final paragraph, which summarizes the experiences contained in the whole book, reflects this mood.

This was the road over which Ántonia and I came on that night when we got off the train at Black Hawk. . . . The feelings of that night were so near that I could reach out and touch them with my hand. . . . For Ántonia and for me, this had been the road of Destiny; had taken us to those early accidents of fortune which predetermined for us all that we can ever be. Now I understand that the same road was to bring us together again. Whatever we had missed, we possessed together the precious, the incommunicable past.[15]

As Jim Burden reflects about the past, he remembers all the incidents in his and Ántonia's lives that made them what they are. In quiet and joyous heroism they met life then; they are doing the same now, even though they are separated.

Never is the description of any event allowed to crowd out the mood. Once Jim kills a big snake, and the author paints a vivid picture describing the incident. However, she writes with economy and restraint, so as not to detract from the central mood. This restraint is illustrated in the

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[13]Willa Sibert Cather, My Ántonia (Cambridge, 1949), p. 82.

[14]Cather, "Démeublé," Forty, p. 50.

[15]Cather, Ántonia, p. 240.

lines below:

> He lifted his hideous little head, and rattled. I didn't run because I didn't think of it--if my back had been against a stone wall I couldn't have felt more cornered. I saw his coils tighten--now he would spring, spring his length, I remembered. I ran up and drove at his head with my spade, struck him fairly across the neck, and in a minute he was all about my feet in wavy loops. . . . I walked away and turned my back.[16]

The same is true when Willa Cather inserts a short story within her main narrative. She does not place emphasis on the melodrama of the situation. The story is told of Pavel and Peter, Russian immigrants, who were in a wedding party. Everyone was crossing the country in sleds. Wolves attacked the party; the sled with the bride and groom and Pavel and Peter was the only one left. When one of the horses began failing,

> Pavel gave Peter the reins. . . . He called to the groom that they must lighten--and pointed to the bride. The young man cursed him and held her tighter. Pavel tried to drag her away. In the struggle, the groom rose--Pavel knocked him over the side of the sledge and threw the girl after him.[17]

If Miss Cather had related the emotions of the characters, the effect would be melodramatic. As the passage reads, only the characters' apparent actions are discussed. For example, the young bridegroom probably felt shock and a bitter anger toward Pavel at his suggestion. Yet all Miss Cather says is that the "young man cursed him and held her tighter."

On the other hand, it is evident that Balzac emphasizes

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[16]Ibid., pp. 32-33.

[17]Ibid., p. 41.

melodramatic events more than Willa Cather. In Eugénie Grandet, there is such emphasis, one recalls, in the scene which shows Eugénie defying her father for the first time by placing sugar on the table for Charles.[18] There is another example found in the scene which describes Eugénie's reactions when she finally hears from Charles, after waiting for seven years.[19] In Père Goriot, there is particular emphasis in the scene which describes Goriot's death; it is especially pitiful since he has not even the comfort of his daughters' presence.[20]

Although she never does so in the story itself, in the introduction Willa Cather abandons the indirect method of presentation. She writes as if she were Jim Burden's friend, and says that she has just seen him after many years. They reflect upon old times and catch up on the news. This introduction has been criticized as being "superfluous."[21] It is not difficult to understand why it has been criticized, especially when Miss Cather discusses Jim's wife. According to her viewpoint, Jim's wife is not deserving of Jim. Also, the description of Jim's coming to the author's apartment months later bringing a manuscript which he entitles My Ántonia actually adds nothing. The reader does not need such details to give an aura of reality to the story.

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[18]See Chapter 2, pages 11-12.

[19]See Chapter 2, page 12.

[20]See Chapter 2, page 16.

[21]Morris, p. 651.

Even so, My Ántonia indicates definite improvement over Alexander's Bridge. My Ántonia shows, as a whole, more skill in the author's ability to defurnish. Miss Cather tells the story through the eyes of another person, Jim Burden. Also, she does not, as in Alexander's Bridge, try to delve so much into the minds of her characters; she lets their actions speak for them, or else lets Jim speak in explanation for their actions. She has mastered so well the problem of maintaining a steadfast mood that even an inset story such as the Pavel and Peter incident does not detract from it.

My Mortal Enemy, published eight years after My Ántonia,[22] comes at about the middle of the author's novel writing career. It is her shortest novel, and shows rigid adherence to the defurnished method of writing. In fact, the book has been criticized as being so stripped of nonessentials that it lacks substance.[23] This, however, is not true, as a close examination of the novel proves.

In My Mortal Enemy it is precisely only the real substance that is present--but the whole substance, to be sure. Every word, every phrase, has been carefully selected to contribute to a thorough understanding of the central character, Myra Henshawe. The novel could only lack substance if the reader felt that there were not enough material to understand Myra thoroughly, and to sympathize with her.

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[22]Brown, p. 346.

[23]N. Elizabeth Monroe, The Novel and Society (Chapel Hill, 1941), p. 232.

With Willa Cather the character is the important thing, and if the mood of Myra's innermost soul is conveyed, the novel does not lack substance.

Since the author's central purpose is for the reader to experience real sympathetic understanding with Myra, a careful examination of the book is necessary to see if this purpose is accomplished.

Myra Henshaw lived, as a child, with an eccentric but wealthy old uncle, who, when she marries, excludes her from his will. Myra's husband Oswald is hard-working, but he can never make enough money to suit her. Myra loves having friends around her, and loves spending money on them to show her pleasure--money which Oswald can ill afford to give. She also admires nice things, and cannot resist trying to live as much in "high style" as she dares.

Yet Myra, who loves people, can at times be very lovable herself. Her only real flaw is that she lives too intensely, and it is the conveying of this intensity of feeling toward life that Willa Cather is concerned with throughout the novel.

Because of this flaw, of which Myra's extravagance is one outward indication, the lives of both herself and her husband are ruined. When Oswald's employer gives him a lower position in the company, Myra makes her husband resign. They go West for him to accept another position, but they have bad luck. Oswald's job is a poorly paid one, and they are forced to live in a ramshackle apartment building.

When Myra becomes ill with a fatal disease, she is without both money and friends. This causes her to utter, finally, those very revealing and passionate words:

> "I could bear to suffer . . . so many have suffered. But why must it be like this? I have not deserved it. I have been true in friendship; I have faithfully nursed others in sickness. . . . Why must I die like this, alone with my mortal enemy?"[24]

Myra regards her husband as her enemy. She sounds very cruel to be able to utter such words against him. Yet it is understandable that she could, because life seems a mockery to her. It appeared to have much to offer, but she feels that it gave her very little.

The reader sees Myra not through the author's eyes, but through those of an impartial observer, a young girl named Nellie. At the beginning of the novel, Nellie is only fifteen, at which time she first meets Myra through her Aunt Lydia. Nellie and her aunt later spend the Christmas holidays with the Henshawes, and the reader learns more about Myra's personality. Then ten years elapse in Nellie's life before she sees Myra again. When Nellie at twenty-five moves to a Western city, she finds the Henshawes living in an apartment next to her own. Myra is now fatally ill. When Nellie meets the Henshawes this final time, she learns about the important things that have happened to them. Not until then does she find out about such things as Oswald's losing his old position and about Myra's disease.

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[24]Willa Sibert Cather, My Mortal Enemy (New York, 1926), p. 113.

Miss Cather uses an indirect method to reveal information about Myra because she is interested only in Myra's personality, not in events as such. The events cannot be emphasized more because they will detract from the central character.

Balzac, however, always places emphasis in more than one direction. In Père Goriot, Balzac is interested in Rastignac's personality primarily, but not solely. He is also interested in other people, and in the various "furniture" that helps to make up the city of Paris. In Eugénie Grandet, Balzac includes not only the life story of Eugénie. Eugénie's father is almost as important, and others such as Charles Grandet are discussed in some detail.

It may be seen more clearly in the contrast, then, that Willa Cather is interested only in conveying a sympathetic understanding for Myra. Since she accomplishes that purpose, My Mortal Enemy does not lack substance.

Lucy Gayheart, first published in 1935, is Miss Cather's eleventh novel.[25] There is only one following this, Sapphira and the Slave Girl. Lucy Gayheart is the story of a young and talented girl from a small town in the West who goes to Chicago to study music. The turning point in the story occurs when Lucy falls in love with Clement Sebastian, a famous singer, who is later killed. Because of Sebastian's death, life seems to offer nothing more to Lucy. She finally goes home, but becomes even more disillusioned there.

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[25]Brown, p. 346.

Because Lucy had earlier refused to accept a proposal by the town "catch," a banker named Harry Gordon, she is now snubbed by him. Feeling friendless, Lucy decides one evening that she will ice-skate for awhile to take her mind off her troubles. On the way she meets Harry, who refuses her request for a ride to the pond. This makes Lucy very angry, and when she reaches the pond she does not notice the condition of the ice. She strikes out for the middle, where the ice is very thin. It breaks with her weight; her frantic efforts are in vain. In a few moments, Lucy drowns.

The story resumes twenty-five years later, when Lucy's father dies and Harry attends his funeral. When he returns, Harry thinks about the past, especially about Lucy.

One of this book's chief assets as a defurnished novel is its power to suggest so much more than what is actually written. For example, Willa Cather writes that when Harry walks home from the funeral, with his head held high, he gives "an impression of loneliness and strength--tried and seasoned strength."[26] So much is implied in these lines--Harry's last twenty-five years of life, in fact. These words imply all the strain of those years. They imply also that Harry is no longer the immature person he was when he childishly tried to spite Lucy Gayheart; he is courageous, independent, and uncomplaining. The line following adds to the picture of Harry, for it refers to his present

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[26]Willa Sibert Cather, Lucy Gayheart (New York, 1935), p. 208.

life: "He has need of . . . [this strength,] for he has much to bear."[27]

The final sentence in the book suggests a great deal. Harry recalls the time when Lucy, as a child, walked on some wet concrete that was being made into a sidewalk in front of her house. Lucy made three light steps, still visible on the sidewalk. The sentence reads:

> As he [Harry] was leaving the Gayhearts', he paused mechanically on the sidewalk as he had done so many thousand times, to look at the three light footprints, running away.[28]

The author suggests Lucy's whole personality in these lines. Lucy was a mischievous girl; this is implied by the fact that she ran across the still wet slabs. She was gay, independent, and full of life; this is implied by the fact that the footprints are "light," and "running," and that they are running "away."

In the quotation above we do not know precisely what Harry is thinking, though the lines suggest that he is remembering Lucy's charming ways. Balzac, in contrast, is usually much more explicit. The following lines show that he delves more into the minds of his characters. Rastignac has received a letter from Mme. de Nucingen, and he is wondering about why she sent it.

> "A woman does not fling herself at a man's head in this way," the student was thinking. "She wants to use me to bring back de Marsay; nothing but pique makes a woman

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[27]Ibid.

[28]Ibid., p. 231.

do a thing like this."[29]

There is no question, therefore, about what is going on in Rastignac's mind at this moment. Little is left to the reader's inference.

The first part of Lucy Gayheart has received some criticism because of its apparent heaviness of style. The earlier sections of the book are generally more pondered, less transparent and delicate. E. K. Brown states, "In those sections calmness had too often lapsed into heaviness, perspective faded into indifference.[30] The two following passages illustrate this rather slow style:

> The Schneff bakery was an old German landmark in that part of the city. On the ground floor was the bakery shop, and a homely restaurant specializing in German dishes, conducted by Mrs. Schneff. On the top floor was a glove factory. The three floors between, the Schneffs rented to people who did not want to take long leases; travelling salesmen, clerks, railroad men who must be near the station.[31]

> She missed her first recital without regret, though afterwards the newspaper notices, and the talk she heard among the students, aroused her curiosity. The following week he gave a benefit recital for the survivors of a mine disaster. Auerbach got a single ticket for her, and she went alone. She had dressed here, in this room, without much enthusiasm, rather reluctant to go out again after a tiring day. She had turned on the steam heat and put out the gas and gone downstairs, anticipating nothing.[32]

In the first example, Miss Cather uses several words just describing the building where Lucy Gayheart lives. It would be enough for Miss Cather to mention a brief fact or two to

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[29]Balzac, Goriot, p. 116.

[30]Brown, p. 302.

[31]Cather, Gayheart, p. 26.

[32]Ibid., p. 28.

show that the building was dismal in appearance; she could, perhaps, mention only briefly the glove factory and the homely restaurant. In the second example, the author includes facts of little significance. Does it matter, for example, that a benefit recital was given "for the survivors of a mine disaster," or that Lucy "turned on the steam heat" before leaving?

E. K. Brown's criticism is an understandable one. When facts are listed that appear to be of no general significance, and if they are rather uninteresting in themselves, then the style of writing does seem slower and more ponderous.

There is a noticeable difference between the above style which is typical of the earlier chapters and that of the last chapters. Below is an example of the typical style found toward the end of the book:

> He understood well enough why she hadn't noticed the change in the river; he knew what pain and anger did to her. It was that very fire and blindness, that way of flashing her whole self into one impulse, without foresight or sight at all, that had made her seem wonderful to him. When she caught fire, she went like an arrow, toward whatever end.[33]

This style seems much swifter and lighter than the earlier one. Words such as "fire," "flashing," and "arrow," seem to be more vivid and of more significance.

It may be, however, that E. K. Brown is wrong in his analysis, in this respect. The author may have been changing her style to suit her different purposes. The earlier style may be more labored to show that Lucy's feelings are not

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[33]Ibid., p. 221.

very gay, and that she feels life to be rather tiresome. In the first example, the dull style reflects, perhaps, the way Lucy's living quarters appear to her. In the second example, the lack of enthusiasm in the style could show Lucy's general attitude about life.

Regardless of whether or not the style in the earlier part of Lucy Gayheart is completely successful, it is clear that Miss Cather's later writing shows more defurnishment, than her earlier. The author shows a tendency in Alexander's Bridge to project herself into the minds of her characters. That tendency is not strong in any of her other books. With My Ántonia, she shows greater ability to maintain mood and to suggest much more than she actually states. Her writing clearly illustrates her difference in principle from Balzac's.

There is one novel, however, that seems to combine Willa Cather's elements of defurnishment more successfully than any other. This book is Death Comes for the Archbishop. Since it seems to be her best book, in the next chapter I shall analyze it in some detail.

CHAPTER IV

APPLICATION OF "DÉMEUBLÉ" TECHNIQUE IN DEATH COMES FOR THE ARCHBISHOP

Death Comes for the Archbishop is the novel that puts Willa Cather's theories of defurnishing to the greatest test. Written the year following My Mortal Enemy,[1] this book is a much more ambitious undertaking. While the sole purpose behind My Mortal Enemy, one recalls, is to reveal the personality of Myra Henshawe, the purpose behind Death Comes for the Archbishop is to portray the "story of the [whole] Southwest."[2] As E. K. Brown says,

> Here Indian villages, the exploits of the Spanish adventurers as well as of the missionaries, the coming of a new layer of high civilization with the French priest, and the small but true contribution of the best of the great-hearted Anglo-Saxon adventurers--men like Kit Carson--are set before us as on a frieze. The composition of this frieze, in the grouping of its figures and their portrayal against a living background, is the most beautiful achievement of Willa Cather's imagination. In it at last her craftsmanship and her vision were in relation, and that relation was complete.[3]

Death Comes for the Archbishop is episodic in form. It is about the experiences of a Bishop in New Mexico. The story begins about the middle of the nineteenth century, and

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[1]Brown, p. 347.

[2]Ibid., p. 254.

[3]Ibid., p. 255.

at this time most people think of New Mexico as being a wild, mysterious country filled with barbarians. The Bishop's name is Jean Marie Latour, and the character second in importance is Jean's close friend, Father Joseph Vaillant, who accompanies him to New Mexico. Willa Cather sets them in an environment which is, obviously, very different from their native France. In this new land they endure through one experience after the other until they seem as much a part of the land as do the sun-baked plateaus and the twisted juniper trees.

Willa Cather chooses ideas carefully in her story so that each time they contribute to a total effect. The description of each character, scene, and event fits neatly into place without destroying the unity of the whole. This careful selection is first evident in the Prologue, which gives the historical background for the story.

The Prologue tells of an incident occurring in the gardens of a villa situated atop the hills overlooking Rome, Italy. Three Cardinals and a missionary from America named Bishop Ferrand are sitting together, discussing business. The Bishop is convincing his companions that a French parish priest, Jean Marie Latour, should be recommended for appointment as Vicar in New Mexico, a territory only recently annexed to the United States. When the Cardinals and Bishop are sitting together in the French gardens, they are in an environment which is indicative of their easy, prosperous lives. Willa Cather writes that as the churchmen sat down

to dinner, the "light was full of action and had a peculiar quality of climax--of splendid finish."[4] In the same way, everything about this scene seems to have a quality of "splendid finish"--the Cardinals, with their "black cassocks with crimson pipings and crimson buttons . . .;"[5] the champagne;[6] the "long gravelled terrace and its balustrade."[7] As the Bishop talks of the New Mexico desert country, where the "very floor of the world is cracked open into countless canyons and arroyos," with "fissures in the earth which are sometimes ten feet deep, sometimes a thousand,"[8] this land seems to the listeners, especially at this moment, very far away and of little significance.

By eliminating ideas not contributing to one central effect, the author has given the scene this quality of "splendid finish." There is no mention of even one small detail to spoil the "wholeness" of this picture.

Not only does Willa Cather choose details carefully throughout, but she also chooses no more details than necessary; she is very unlike Balzac in this respect. In Eugénie Grandet, Balzac mentions "a little armchair" of Eugénie's,[9]

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[4]Willa Cather, Death Comes for the Archbishop (New York, 1927), p. 4.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid., p. 12.

[7]Ibid., p. 14.

[8]Ibid., p. 8.

[9]Balzac, Grandet, p. 25.

which is another article of furniture in his minute examination of M. Grandet's house. If Miss Cather, however, mentions any object, it is not just as one of a list. It has, in itself, much more singular significance. Perhaps it helps to indicate in some way the total atmosphere of the place, or perhaps it helps to express the personality of some person.

In one particular scene, Willa Cather mentions the "deep feather-bed" the Bishop is lying in.[10] One reason she mentions this is that the feather-bed is a symbol of the wonderful welcome Latour receives in a strange household. Another reason is that it helps to show what great hardship Latour has been through, since a night's sleep in a feather-bed is a striking contrast to "sleep under a juniper tree."[11]

Consider the following passage, which is a discussion of some images Father Latour sees in a Mexican adobe house where he once stays. It is an even better example of the same idea.

> After supper Father Latour took up a candle and began to examine the holy images on the shelf over the fireplace. . . . They had been carved by some devout soul, and brightly painted, though the colors had softened with time, and they were dressed in cloth, like dolls. . . . The wooden virgin was a sorrowing mother indeed,--long and stiff and severe, very long from the neck to the waist, even longer from waist to feet, like some of the rigid mosaics of the Eastern Church. She was dressed in black,

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[10]Cather, Archbishop, p. 33.

[11]Ibid.

with a white apron, and a black reboso over her head, like a Mexican woman of the poor. At her right was St. Joseph, and at her left a fierce little equestrian figure, a saint wearing the costume of a Mexican "ranchero," velvet trousers richly embroidered and wide at the ankle, velvet jacket and silk shirt, and a high-crowned, broad-brimmed Mexican sombrero. He was attached to his fat horse by a wooden pivot driven through the saddle.[12]

No other items in the house are given the attention that these images are given. In fact, little is learned about the inside of the house except that it has "thick whitewashed adobe walls" and that there is "bareness and simplicity"[13] everywhere. Why, then, does the author consider these images to be so important? One reason is that Willa Cather wants to show how much the images meant to the Mexican household. To these Mexicans with their child-like religious faith, the images, as symbols of love, courage, and of family unity, meant more than anything else they possessed. Another reason is that by showing what Father Latour especially noticed in the house, one learns more about what Father Latour is really like--about the depth of his religious faith.

The same things are true about a little wooden parrot that the author writes of later, when Father Latour finds it hanging from a roof-beam in another house. It is the only ornament in the house. It was

. . . cut from a single stick of wood, exactly the size of a living bird, body and tail rigid and straight, the head a little turned. The wings and tail and neck feathers were just indicated by the tool, and thinly painted. He was surprized to feel how light it was; the surface had the whiteness

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[12]Ibid., p. 32.

[13]Ibid., p. 29.

and velvety smoothness of very old wood.[14]

The owner of this bird is an old priest. His love for the old, for the hand-wrought, is indicated by his reply to Father Latour: "I see you have found my treasure! That, your Grace, is probably the oldest thing in the pueblo--older than the pueblo itself."[15] Therefore, the picturing of the reactions of the priest and Latour to this bird not only indicates the personality of Latour, but the personality of this old priest as well. The peacefulness and unobtrusive joy in this old priest's life are aptly conveyed.

One will recall how Balzac, in Eugénie Grandet, acquaints his reader with the house of M. Grandet--how with particular care he introduces the reader first to the whole section of town where the house sits. He talks of the people and their businesses, and of the appearance of the street itself, before he discusses the house.[16] For contrast, notice how Willa Cather introduces Santa Fe, and then the real spot of Jean Latour's destination, the church of Santa Fe:

> As the wagons went forward and the sun sank lower, a sweep of red carnelian-coloured hills lying at the foot of the mountains came into view; they curved like two arms about a depression in the plain; and in that depression was Santa Fe, at last! A thin, wavering adobe town . . . a green plaza . . . at one end a church with two earthen towers that rose high above the flatness. The long main street began at the church, the two seemed to flow from it like a stream from a spring. The church towers, and all

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[14]Ibid., p. 99.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Balzac, Grandet, pp. 1-26.

> the low adobe houses, were rose colour in that light, -- a little darker in tone than the amphitheatre of red hills behind; and periodically the plumes of poplars flashed like gracious accent marks, -- inclining and recovering themselves in the wind.[17]

The town of Saumur and the house of M. Grandet one sees as an extremely keen observer would see it, noticing many things that a person ordinarily would not. The town of Santa Fe, including its church, one sees as Jean Latour himself saw it. As Miss Cather says in "The Novel Démeublé," she wants things to "seem to exist, not so much in the author's mind, as in the emotional penumbra of the characters themselves."[18] Being a sensitive, imaginative person, Jean would be aware of all the color and of the town's quaintness. Being a priest, he would naturally notice the church's location in relation to the rest of the buildings.

The Bishop's home town, Auvergne, France, we see in the same way--only through his eyes. The Bishop, a little homesick, recalls

> . . . a certain grey, winding street, paved with cobbles and shaded by tall chestnuts on which, even to-day, some few brown leaves would be clinging, or dropping one by one, to be caught in the cold green ivy on the walls.[19]

No more details than necessary are given; only those are given that are noticed by Jean Latour. The personality of Jean is therefore indicated by Miss Cather's naming of these details.

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[17]Cather, Archbishop, pp. 24-25.

[18]Cather, "Démeublé," Forty, p. 47.

[19]Cather, Archbishop, p. 37.

The general appearance of Father Latour's own house is given more expansive treatment than one might, at first, think necessary. His study was "a long room of irregular shape." It had clay walls, and contained "an irregular and intimate quality of things made entirely by the human hand."[20] The walls were whitewashed, and rounded at the door and window sills. There was a flicker of fire that "threw a rosy glow over the wavy surfaces, never quite evenly flat, never a dead white, for the ruddy colour of the clay underneath gave a warm tone to the lime wash." The beamed ceiling and blanketed floor are discussed, as well as are the fireplace, the Bishop's crucifix, and a carved wooden door plastered into the wall for the purpose of holding a few books. The furniture of the house is heavy, "hewn from tree boles with the ax or hatchet."[21]

How can the above be called "defurnished"? To Willa Cather, all these details are vital for maintaining the mood. The adobe walls, the rounded sills, the flickering fire, the beamed ceiling, the blanketed floor, the crucifix, the bookholder, and the handmade furniture are all included for a reason. Each one plays a part in indicating that all objects in the room blend together in simple harmony, instilling an atmosphere of peacefulness. Since this is Latour's room, we thereby have an indication that what he

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[20]Ibid., p. 38.

[21]Ibid., p. 39.

likes and is interested in is simplicity and peacefulness.

There is another example which occurs as the Bishop and Vicar were riding through the mountains on one of their missions. Willa Cather tells of the rain falling on them. She says,

> The heavy, lead-coloured drops were driven slantingly through the air by an icy wind from the peak. These raindrops, Father Latour kept thinking, were the shape of tadpoles, and they broke against his nose and cheeks, exploding with a splash, as if they were hollow and full of air.[22]

This image is certainly an exact one, with no deceiving frills attached. To make a precise image, the word "heavy" could not be omitted, since a truly driving rain has drops that feel weighty. Neither could "lead-coloured," since this indicates the sunlessness and dreariness all about the men; if it were still very light, then the drops could not be the color of lead. "Slantingly" and "icy wind" show the force and might of this storm, as does the expression about the rain's being in the "shape of tadpoles." All the details in the last sentence of the quotation, particularly, are needed to help the reader sense the total feeling of the experience. There is an appeal to the eye by the unique image of the tadpole, and to the ear by the reference to the exploding air.

Perhaps one of Willa Cather's most successful attempts at choosing only the most significant image is shown in the scene in which Father Latour is visiting Father Martinez.

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[22]Ibid., p. 74.

Father Latour has retired for the night, and still feels very disgusted with the slovenliness of Martinez and his household. An image that very briefly and succinctly capstones the whole idea is this one:

> As the night wind blew into the room, a little dark shadow fluttered from the wall across the floor; a mouse, perhaps. But no, it was a bunch of woman's hair that had been indolently tossed into a corner when some slovenly female toilet was made in this room. This discovery annoyed the Bishop exceedingly.[23]

This one image indicates, for one thing, the careless ways of the householders. It indicates, for another thing, Martinez' infamous affairs with women. In Latour's eyes, therefore, this fluff of hair shows slovenliness of morals as well as slovenliness of appearance. Though a fluff of hair is, actually, a small thing in itself, here it is, so to speak, the "straw that broke the camel's back." After observing all day the unkempt ways of various persons, and realizing the low character of these people, Latour feels that this one last observation is the epitome of all the other things he has seen.

On the other hand, Balzac uses more detailed imagery to show a character's attitude toward a thing. To show the attitude of Goriot's daughters toward their father, Balzac pictures a scene which shows the daughters quarreling in Goriot's presence. Goriot begs them to be kind to each other, but they ignore him. Finally, Goriot " . . . sprang between them, grasped the Countess's hand, and laid his own

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[23]Ibid., p. 170.

over her mouth." Ignoring his feelings, the Countess reprimands him by asking, "Good heavens, father! What have you been handling this morning?"[24] The selfish attitudes of these daughters are indicated not by one brief image; instead, these attitudes are shown by Balzac's picturing the development of a whole quarrel.

We have seen, thus far, two of Willa Cather's techniques in writing the defurnished novel. First of all, she makes sure that all the details she uses help to create a total effect. Second, she is careful to use no more details than are needed for her purpose.

Closely related to these points is Miss Cather's ability with suggestion. She is able to imply much more than she actually puts down in writing. For example, in the Prologue, there is the strong suggestion that the Bishop Ferrand is the one with the strongest character:

> He ate more rapidly than the others and had plenty of time to plead his cause, --finished each course with such dispatch that the Frenchman remarked he would have been an ideal dinner companion for Napoleon.[25]

To the Bishop, his work is undoubtedly more than just a job; he takes his responsibilities more seriously than do the others. He is less concerned with manners and more concerned with matters of his Faith.

Another instance of Willa Cather's power to suggest more than she states is in the first scene showing Jean

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[24]Balzac, Grandet, p. 198.

[25]Cather, Archbishop, p. 66.

Latour in New Mexico. Two things are shown in this scene through implication: the difference between Jean Latour and the Cardinals, and the difference between his environment and that of the Cardinals.

In this scene, Jean Latour, "a solitary horseman, followed by a pack-mule," is "pushing through an arid stretch of country somewhere in central New Mexico." The main surroundings are the "monotonous red sandhills."[26] He wears a "buckskin riding-coat" with a "black vest and the cravat and collar of a churchman."[27] Jean Latour has one thought uppermost on his mind. His parched mouth and cracked lips tell him that he must get to water without delay.

Jean's environment, unlike that of the Cardinals, has not been "conquered." There is much hardship for him because of it. However, Jean is willing to work untiringly and to suffer greatly. Without any detailed explanations of any sort from the author, and without long descriptions, the contrast between this country and France, and between Jean and the Cardinals, is very apparent. Here much "is felt upon the page without being specifically named there. . . ."[28]

Universal truths are implied in the story. This passage is an example:

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[26]Ibid., p. 19.

[27]Ibid., p. 21.

[28]Cather, "Démeublé," Forty, p. 47.

> From the moment he entered this room with its thick whitewashed adobe walls, Father Latour had felt a kind of peace about it. In its bareness and simplicity there was something comely. . . . He found himself very much at home with the four dark-headed men. . . . Their manners were gentle, their voices low and agreeable. . . . The grandfather declared that the Blessed Virgin must have led the Bishop from his path and brought him here to baptize the children and to sanctify the marriages. . . . There was no one in the settlement who could read or write. --Salvatore . . . had gone all the way to Albuquerque . . . and had married there. But the priest had charged him twenty pesos, and that was half of all he had saved to buy furniture and glass windows for his house.[29]

In these lines one feels that several truths are being suggested. There is the fact that money is of much less importance than the heart: the bareness of the house Father Latour does not mind, since he is made very welcome. Also, it is implied that one's station in life does not make the man: even a priest is sometimes very worldly, as was the priest in Albuquerque who charged so much for a marriage ceremony. Another implication is that the simple life is one that usually brings the most peace: when Father Latour first entered this humble place, he "felt a kind of peace about it."

In contrast, Balzac, one remembers, does not usually suggest truths, but sometimes he states them outright. For example, instead of merely letting M. Grandet's life proclaim its own evils, Balzac discusses the idea that misers lose sight of the importance of having a strong religious faith.[30] If Willa Cather wanted to show this same idea, she would

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[29]Cather, Archbishop, p. 29.

[30]Ibid., p. 128.

have merely let the actions of a character reveal it.

In another very significant way, in the de-emphasis of melodrama in a situation, the novel illustrates the "déneublé" technique. Even though the story is episodic in form, there are many places where the dramatic situation could be "played up," and is not. In a death-bed scene, particularly, an author can usually be freely and seriously dramatic without fear of overdoing the situation. However, notice how Willa Cather relates a death scene. An old priest named Father Lucero is dying. An old acquaintance of his, Father Martinez, had died some time before; he and Father Lucero had quarrelled constantly before his death. As Father Lucero lies on his death-bed,

> Several times his lips twitched back over his teeth. The watchers held their breath, feeling sure that he would speak before he passed, --and he did. After a facial spasm that was like a sardonic smile, and a clicking of breath in his mouth, their Padre spoke like a horse for the last time:
>
> "Comete tu cola, Martinez, comete tu cola!" (Eat your tail, Martinez, eat your tail!) Almost at once he died in a convulsion.
>
> After day-break Trinidad went forth declaring (and the Mexican women confirmed him) that at the moment of death Father Lucero had looked into the other world and beheld Padre Martinez in torment.[31]

Even the death of the Archbishop is treated with calmness, as an event naturally to be expected. The Bishop's own attitude reflects this idea: "During those last weeks of the Bishop's life he thought very little about death; it was the Past he was leaving. The future would take care of

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[31]Ibid., p. 196.

itself."[32] As the Bishop lies dying, his mind is not even upon death; instead, he is daydreaming of the time when he is leaving France to come to America.[33] Then,

> When the Cathedral bell tolled just after dark, the Mexican population of Santa Fe fell upon their knees, and all American Catholics as well. Many others who did not kneel prayed in their hearts. Eusabio and the Tesuque boys went quietly away to tell their people: and the next morning the old Archbishop lay before the high altar in the church he had built.[34]

These two deaths Miss Cather treats in different ways, but she does not make either scene melodramatic. When Father Lucero dies, she gives the scene a humorous twist. She mentions his horse-like voice and his final words, which the watchers hope will be prophetic. When they are not, but are rather senseless, the Mexican women make something prophetic out of them anyway. When Father Latour dies, she treats the situation with much more seriousness. Even here, though, no spectacle is made of it. The author seems to be saying that his death is not, in reality, such a terrible thing. Even though death came, Latour still lives in the hearts of the praying Mexican population and "all American Catholics as well." This is the important thing.

There is one short story told in which the melodramatic could be emphasized, but is not. A boy named Ramon owned a prize-fighting cock of which he was very proud. At a bloody cock-fight, the author merely says that

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[32]Ibid., p. 330.

[33]Ibid., p. 342-343.

[34]Ibid., p. 343.

> . . . Ramon's cock neatly ripped the jugular vein of his opponent; but the owner of the defeated bird, before anyone could stop him, reached into the ring and wrung the victor's neck.

The following sentence, which relates a drastic development in the action, simply reads, "Before he had dropped the limp bunch of feathers from his hand, Ramon's knife was in his heart."[35] The next paragraph climaxes the scene. Even though it is given without emotional stress, the reader, by the end, feels in sympathy with Ramon.

> When Father Vaillant went to see the boy in his cell a few days before his execution, he found him making a pair of tiny buckskin boots, as if for a doll, and Ramon told him they were for the little Santiago in the church at home. His family would come up to Santa Fe for the hanging, and they would take the boots back to Chimayo, and perhaps the little saint would say a good word for him.[36]

This sympathy is the only feeling that the scene conveys to the reader. Miss Cather does not analyze Ramon's emotions in an effort to make the reader also feel the fear and dread that he must be enduring.

A surprising event occurs when the Bishop and Vicar stop on their journeys at an old adobe shack. A man and woman are there; the man seems to be very cruel and the woman almost crazed with fear. After their entrance, the man commands the woman to follow him.

> "Here, you! Come right along, I'll need ye!"
> She took her black shawl from a peg and followed him. Just at the door she turned and caught the eyes of the visitors, who were looking after her in compassion and perplexity. Instantly that stupid face became intense,

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[35]Ibid., p. 283.

[36]Ibid., p. 284.

prophetic, full of awful meaning. With her finger she pointed them away, away! --two quick thrusts into the air. Then, with a look of horror beyond anything language could convey, she threw back her head and drew the edge of her palm quickly across her distended throat--and vanished. The doorway was empty; the two priests stood staring at it, speechless. That flash of electric passion had been so swift, the warning it communicated so vivid and definite, that they were struck dumb.[37]

Willa Cather does not analyze emotions in this scene. She merely indicates the woman's gestures and her facial expression. Both of these things are evident to the Bishop and his Vicar. Then only the principal reactions the churchmen made are given: they were "speechless" and "staring."

Grant Overton states that "it is only in reflecting about things, after excitement is over, that in the warmness of remembering, we can accurately write about them."[38] When we reflect about things, we usually omit insignificant details and remember only those things that contribute to the total feeling of the experience. This is the way Willa Cather relates events, such as those described above. She describes them in perspective, simply and without melodramatic emphasis. She is interested not so much in individual events, but in their total effect. As Edward Wagenknecht writes, Willa Cather is interested in seeing life "steadily and wholly."[39]

By relating events in perspective, Miss Cather is able

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[37]Ibid., p. 79.

[38]Grant Overton, The Women Who Make Our Novels (New York, 1931), p. 260.

[39]Edward Wagenknecht, "Willa Cather," The Sewanee Review, XXXVII (1929), p. 221.

to gain more of the detachment she considers necessary in a defurnished novel. In portraying character, the author uses two methods to gain this detachment. First, she " . . . revealed what life itself might reveal to us about them, their conduct and its effect upon others and consequences for themselves. . . ." Second, she

> . . . learned to portray character by revealing through conduct only its universal relation to the particular experience in which it is involved. That is, she eliminated from her stories all minute dissection of the motives, impulses and instincts from which conduct arises.[40]

To show these methods of character portrayal, Padre Martinez is a good illustration. Martinez is priest of Taos, the second largest parish in Latour's diocese. When Latour visits Martinez, he finds a very peculiar personality. First, he sees Martinez hit a boy on the ears. When Father Latour protests, the priest boldly answers, "He is my own son, Bishop, and it is time I taught him manners." Latour then meets Martinez' student, Trinidad, who is lying asleep on the floor when he walks into the room. Martinez kicks him to awaken him. Later, at supper, Latour observes that Martinez helps himself to a very generous meal. It is at this time that Martinez asks the Bishop if he approves of celibacy for the priest. Martinez, of course, does not approve, and his ideas are in direct disagreement with the teachings of his church.

When the Bishop attends High Mass the following day,

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[40]Loyd Morris, "Willa Cather," North American Review, CCXIX (1924), p. 650.

he observes several startling things. Martinez' church, unlike his home, is clean and in good repair; the Mass is very impressively sung; and Martinez obviously appeals very strongly to the Mexican people.[41]

In the author's portrayal of Martinez' character, she, first of all, reveals only what life itself might reveal to another person about him. We see Martinez only through Latour's eyes. Because of this reason, the author never delves into his mind to see how he thinks or why he acts as he does. Through the priest's observations we know that Martinez is rough, imposing, and rebellious against even the most sacred of the church's teachings. However, it is through Latour's observations, too, that we learn that Martinez has good qualities. His aggressive nature commands respect from his people, so that they are willing to obey him. He is also quite talented, and is able to conduct High Mass in a very impressive manner.

In Père Goriot, Eugène Rastignac is shown as he really is. To Goriot, for example, Eugène is a wonderful, considerate person at all times. The reader, however, is constantly aware that he has his weaknesses. For one thing, Eugène ignores the needs of his family in order to remain in Parisian society. He tries to forget that it is their money that enabled him to be there in the first place.

In the second place, the author does not give a minute analysis showing why a person acts as he does. Martinez

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[41]Cather, Archbishop, pp. 163-171.

acts as he does because he is selfish. He considers his own interests before those of his fellowmen and his church. These facts are obvious as we see his actions. However, Miss Cather does not reveal to us further motives; it is enough that we merely understand generally why Martinez acts in certain ways.

Balzac goes into more detail to show why a person acts in a certain way. When Eugène is trying to decide whether or not to give up Delphine for a rich heiress, he decides to keep Delphine. Balzac delves into his conscience to show his reasoning:

> The law student's long walk was a memorable one. He made in some sort a survey of his conscience. After a close scrutiny, after hesitation and self-examination, his honour at any rate came out scatheless from this sharp and terrible ordeal, like a bar of iron tested in the English fashion. He remembered old Goriot's confidences of the evening before; he recollected the rooms taken for him in the Rue d'Artois, so that he might be near Delphine; and then he thought of his letter, and read it again and kissed it.[42]

In portraying various characters, Willa Cather is able to subtly direct her emphasis on whichever person she chooses, without stopping for long explanations. In picturing a man named Don Antonio, one paragraph states:

> Don Antonio was a large man, heavy, full at the belt, a trifle bald, and very slow of speech. But his eyes were lively, and the yellow spark in them was often most perceptible when he was quite silent. It was interesting to observe him after dinner, settled in one of his big chairs from New Orleans, a cigar between his long golden-brown fingers, watching his wife at her harp.[43]

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[42]Balzac, Goriot, p. 165.

[43]Cather, Archbishop, p. 202.

It is clear here that Don Antonio is not the important character in the scene; he is secondary. Though Don Antonio certainly deserves a personal "close-up," he is at the same time described while he is watching his wife. She is the one about whom the reader is to be principally concerned. In fact, the following pages focus attention upon her, and not Don Antonio; he is used mainly to introduce her. The sentence immediately following the above quotation reads, "There was gossip about the lady in Santa Fe, of course, since she had retained her beautiful complexion and her husband's devoted regard for so many years."[44]

On a much larger scale, the author skillfully does the same thing with Father Latour and Father Vaillant. As E. K. Brown writes, "Nothing in Death Comes for the Archbishop is more masterly than the novelist's instinct of how fully and warmly Father Vaillant could be rendered without jeopardy to the primary position of the Archbishop."[45] Prominence is given to the Archbishop in spite of Father Vaillant's much more positive personality--in spite of such passages as this one:

> "Blanchet," said the Bishop rising, "you are a better man than I. You have been a great harvester of souls, without pride and without shame--and I am always a little cold--un pedant, as you used to say. If hereafter we have stars in our crowns, yours will be a constellation. Give me your blessing."[46]

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[44]Ibid.

[45]Brown, p. 253.

[46]Cather, Archbishop, pp. 297-298.

At the beginning of the second book, "Missionary Journeys," Father Vaillant is pictured without Father Latour as he journeys to Albuquerque, and stops at the ranch of a rich Mexican for purposes of marrying and baptizing certain personages of the household. Before he leaves, Father Vaillant adroitly manages to receive as a gift the Mexican's two white mules. In fact, the Mexican even "believed he would be proud of the fact that they rode Contento and Angelica. Father Vaillant had forced his hand, but he was rather glad of it."[47] One could successfully maneuver such an act as this one would not only have to be clever and aggressive, but would need to be pleasingly so. Father Latour would certainly not be capable of such an act.

The author carefully avoids keeping Father Vaillant in the spotlight for a very long length of time. There is no mention of him in the Prologue, and in the first two chapters it is with Father Latour that we are almost solely concerned. At the last of the book, it is Father Latour who lives the longer time, and goes to his friend's funeral.

It is also in the type of language itself--its transparency and its fluidity--that the author demonstrates her "démeublé" style of writing. An ideal example is,

> The full moon, hidden by veils of cloud, threw a pale phosphorescent luminousness over the heavens, and the towers of the church stood up black against this silvery fleece.[48]

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[47]Ibid., p. 73.

[48]Ibid., p. 240.

In the clarity, in the easy rhythm, the words are not barriers to the image, but they seem to bear the reader effortlessly to the scene itself. Other instances show this same style, with an additional buoyancy of feeling: "The landscape one longed for when one was far away, the thing all about one, the world one actually lived in, was the sky, the sky!"[49]

> [The Bishop's] first consciousness was a sense of the light dry wind blowing in through the windows, with the fragrance of hot sun and sagebrush and sweet clover; a wind that made one's body feel light and one's heart cry 'To-day, today,' like a child's.[50]

These quotations illustrate the highest skill of which Miss Cather is capable. In no other book is this lightness of style surpassed.

Wherever possible in her novel, Miss Cather has simplified. She has chosen her details carefully, so that all of them will contribute to a total effect. Neither has she used more details than necessary. Many of her ideas are conveyed through implication, not through direct statements. She has subordinated events so that a consistent mood of happy serenity can be maintained throughout the book. Even the language style shows a definite lightness and simplicity. There is little doubt but that Death Comes for the Archbishop is Miss Cather's greatest writing accomplishment.

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[49]Ibid., p. 264.

[50]Ibid., p. 313.

CONCLUSION

After an examination of representative novels by Miss Cather, it is clear that her style is defurnished. Balzac's, on the other hand, is heavily furnished.

In "The Novel Démeublé" the author shows disapproval of Balzac's style. Undoubtedly, Balzac would never have been attracted to Willa Cather's defurnished style, either. The two writers grew up in different parts of the world at different times. Therefore, their tastes differed. Too, it is evident that Willa Cather's purpose is to maintain sympathy for her principal characters. This is not Balzac's central purpose. He wants to do much more. He wants to show many different types of people, reveal in detail their motives for action, and show the consequences of the action. He wants to show in detail the environments of his characters, and the influences of environment upon them. Because Balzac has these several purposes, his books are more heavily furnished.

Since her first book, Alexander's Bridge, Miss Cather's writing shows progress in her ability to defurnish. In Alexander's Bridge are found elements showing a lack of defurnishment; there is a tendency for the author to delve into the minds of the characters, and sometimes a constant mood is not maintained. The author's later books,

especially Death Comes for the Archbishop, show improvement in these respects, particularly. Generally, Willa Cather's method of defurnishment is evident in her novels by its apparent simplicity. Miss Cather suggests ideas and emotions as much as possible instead of describing them.

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