

WILLA CATHER'S SIMILES

By

NEVA JOY CHILDERS

"

Bachelor of Arts

Southeastern State College

Durant, Oklahoma

1954

Submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of
the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
August, 1954

OKLAHOMA
AGRICULTURAL & MECHANICAL COLLEGE
LIBRARY
MAR 1 1955

WILLA CATHER'S SIMILES

Hans H. Andersen

Thesis Adviser

Cecil B. Williams

Ravenwood

Dean of the Graduate School

337450

PREFACE

The subject of Willa Cather's similes was suggested to me by Professor Hans H. Andersen, who has also been my major adviser. As it was his general impression that she used similes more critically and with more restraint in her later works than at the beginning of her career as a writer, he suggested that a study of them might be revealing.

A preliminary survey did not corroborate his hypothesis but emphasized that the function of the similes in her work formed a promising subject of inquiry. No attempt has been made to count or tabulate them, but the notes collected for this study contain approximately a thousand. I cannot be certain that I have not overlooked better examples than those given, but any such would only make my conclusion more convincing, for it was not foreseen before the examples began pointing in its direction.

For this study I have read all of the works of Willa Cather--her novels, short stories, essays, and poems, with the exception of a few stories in The Troll Garden, which were not reprinted in Youth and the Bright Medusa. I have also read many of her secondary sources and consulted reference books for definitions of terms.

For Professor Andersen's skillful guidance and constructive criticism in the organization and writing of this study I am sincerely grateful. Also, I wish to thank Dr. Cecil Williams, my second reader, for his helpful suggestions and encouragement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	WILLA CATHER'S INTEREST IN SIMILES.....	1
II.	CONVENTIONAL AND APT SIMILES.....	6
III.	REMOTE, LITERARY, AND UNUSUAL SIMILES.....	14
IV.	EMOTIONAL SIMILES.....	23
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	33

CHAPTER I

WILLA CATHER'S INTEREST IN SIMILES

That Willa Cather has now a permanent place among American writers is becoming increasingly clear. The bibliography of writings about her is already extensive, including several full-length books, three of them since her death in 1947. The latest is the critical biography by Professor E. K. Brown, who had a high opinion of her, believing, in fact, that "No American novelist since the death of Henry James was Willa Cather's equal in vision or in design..."¹

More specifically, he says:

What we have gained by her craftsmanship is, above all, a beautiful lightning of the novel form....For the popular fiction that aspires to distinction without attaining it, the characteristic formula has been during the past quarter of a century the memoir of a crowded life, abounding in rather crude sexual experience and with somewhat hasty reflections on education, industry, the social system, coming to a climax in a melodramatic ethical regeneration or else in an equally melodramatic recognition of life's futility, the entire story often crowded with violence and brutality....In most of them character and story are mere props and are handled with an almost unbelievable clumsiness; structure and tone are scarcely considered; and in style the model appears to be the manner of the more lively foreign correspondent or the court reporter. Against such a degradation of the art of fiction to mere journalism Miss Cather's craftsmanship stands out with an alien definiteness and firmness of beauty.²

The tribute ends with a quotation from Willa Cather.

One might say...that every fine story must leave in the mind of the sensitive reader an intangible residuum of pleasure; a cadence, a quality of voice that is exclusively the writer's own, individual, unique. A quality which one can remember without the volume at hand, can experience over and over again in the mind but can never absolutely define, as one can experience in memory a melody, or the summer perfume of a garden.³

¹E. K. Brown and Leon Edel, Willa Cather, A Critical Biography (New York, 1953), p. vi.

²Ibid., pp. 39-40.

³Ibid., p. 341.

This was the theory that she tried to put into practice. And her letter to Governor Wilbur Cross of Connecticut in acknowledgment of his appreciative review of Shadows on the Rock is further corroboration of her stated aim. In speaking of Quebec and those, who, for a little time, cast their shadows on the rock, she says:

It is hard to state that feeling in language; it was more like an old song, incomplete but uncorrupted, than like a legend. The text was mainly anacoluthon, so to speak, but the meaning was clear. I took the incomplete air and tried to give it what would correspond to a sympathetic musical setting; tried to develop it into a prose composition not too conclusive, not too definite: a series of pictures remembered rather than experienced.⁴

Professor Brown is aware of her inclination for picture-making. He points out the concentrated effect achieved by the use of images in My Antonia, and he makes this observation about A Lost Lady:

Mrs. Forrester also left images that did not fade, and grew stronger with time; and in A Lost Lady these images stand out more boldly than the sequence of images concerning Antonia. The images that give us Mrs. Forrester are more highly colored, and sometimes more richly phrased; but what is best about them is the amount of vitality they have, the movement, the intensity.⁵

Other commentators have also remarked on her proclivity for images. David Daiches in his Willa Cather, A Critical Introduction (1951), notes that her style "...is the result of a deeply felt emotional pattern manifesting itself not unconsciously but easily in appropriate images..."⁶ Miss Cather's good friend Elizabeth Sergeant points out, "In her art she transformed heat to a plasticity that made her characters live as if one actually saw and touched them."⁷ Walter Havighurst says that My Antonia is a more memorable picture of pioneer life on the prairie than any history "...because it gathers the whole pioneer experience into pictures...strong,

⁴Stephen Tennant, ed., Willa Cather On Writing (New York, 1949), p. 15.

⁵Brown, p. 234.

⁶New York, p. 21.

⁷Willa Cather, A Memoir (Philadelphia, 1953), p. 9.

clear, and expressive."⁸ In writing of the title character Lucy Gayheart, James Southall Wilson observes, "That is what Willa Cather does for you: she makes you see to remember forever the figure of a beautiful young girl with two ends of crimson scarf floating behind her on the wind; as a poem might make one remember it--or a painting."⁹ And Clifton Fadiman in his article, "Willa Cather: The Past Recaptured" (1932), concludes that "Miss Cather's mind is...rich in images of fixed contours."¹⁰

Her writing contains many memorable images. For example, in an early short story, "A Wagner Matinee," she presents the narrator's overwhelming sense of waste and wear as he sees what life on a Nebraska homestead has done to his aunt. He remembers his own barren childhood on the prairie and can almost visualize its bleakness and desolation. "The world there was the flat world of the ancients; to the east, a cornfield that stretched to daybreak; to the west, a corral that reached to sunset; between the conquests of peace, dearer-bought than those of war."¹¹ One of her most magnificent verbal pictures appears in My Antonia. Jim Burden and some of his friends spend a day in the country, a day climaxed by an unexpected phenomenon of nature.

There were no clouds, the sun was going down in a limpid gold-washed sky. Just as the lower edge of the red disk rested on the high fields against the horizon, a great black figure suddenly appeared on the face of the sun. We sprang to our feet, straining our eyes toward it. In a moment we realized what it was. On some upland farm, a plough had been left standing in the field. The sun was sinking just behind it. Magnified across the distance by the horizontal light, it stood out against the sun, was exactly contained within the circle of the disk; the handles, the tongue, the share--black against the molten red. There it was, heroic in size, a picture writing on the sun.¹²

⁹"Two American Novels," The Virginia Quarterly Review, XI (October, 1935), 625.

¹⁰Nation, CXXXV (December 7, 1932), 564.

¹¹Youth and the Bright Medusa (New York, 1938), p. 242.

¹²My Antonia (Boston, 1949), p. 159.

This one image truly gathers the whole pioneer experience into a picture which is strong, clear, and expressive.

Jim, like Willa Cather, expresses himself often in images. And at the conclusion of the book he summarizes his memories of Antonia in this way:

Antonia had always been one to leave images in the mind that did not fade-- that grew stronger with time. In my memory there was always a succession of such pictures, fixed there like the old woodcuts of one's first primer: Antonia kicking her bare legs against the sides of my pony when we came home in triumph with our snake; Antonia in her black shawl and fur cap, as she stood by her father's grave in the snowstorm; Antonia coming in with her work-team along the evening sky-line. She lent herself to immemorial human attitudes which we recognize by instinct as universal and true.¹³

Her images frequently take the form of similes and metaphors. They are there from the beginning and persist to the end. Though it is probably a coincidence, a passage Professor Brown quotes from one of her student papers at the University of Nebraska is dominated by a simile. It is about Thomas Carlyle:

Like the lone survivor of some extinct species, the last of the mammoths, tortured and harassed beyond all endurance by the smaller though perhaps more perfectly organized offspring of the world's maturer years, this great Titan, the son of her passionate youth, a youth of volcanoes and earthquakes and great unsystematized forces, rushed off into the desert to suffer alone.¹⁴

Brown remarks that this sentence reveals much more about Willa Cather than about Thomas Carlyle. Whether he was thinking of the simile he does not say, but it is hard to miss, as are indeed the hundreds of others throughout her writing.

Though this tendency of Willa Cather toward memorable images has been frequently noticed, it has not been analyzed. On the surface, admittedly,

¹³My Antonia, p. 228.

¹⁴Brown, p. 50.

these images present no problems. In themselves they are readily understood. Yet, their frequency suggests that they are important to her and that an analysis of them may show why.

In order to bring the study within a manageable compass, it is limited to the similes, which are by far the most numerous of her figures, and all in all the most elaborately wrought. Her own interest in them is shown further by the fact that even her characters worry about them. A good example is Professor Wunsch of Song of the Lark, who attempts to describe his pupil Thea Kronberg, and casts about for an adequate simile.

Yes, she was like a flower full of sun, but not the soft German flowers of his childhood. He had it now, the comparison he had absently reached for before. She was like the yellow prickly-pear blossoms that open there in the desert; thornier and sturdier than the maiden flowers he remembered; not so sweet, but wonderful.¹⁵

Most of the characters are satisfied to make similes without reporting their trouble with them but seldom without betraying Willa Cather. Similes were important to her and not simply for the vividness of the images, as this study of them shows.

¹⁵Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1935, p. 96.

CHAPTER II
CONVENTIONAL AND APT SIMILES

It may be observed that Miss Cather's writings contain many images which suggest simply that the use of comparisons was a habit with her. Her pages are sprinkled liberally with conventional similes such as these: he "shut up like a clam;"¹ his dark eyes were "flashing like coals of fire;"² he "burnt like a faggot in a tempest;"³ he looked at his wife "as a spaniel looks at the whip;"⁴ he shuddered "as if some one had stepped on his grave;"⁵ his pale face was "as bare as an egg;"⁶ he was tall and straight "as a young pine tree;"⁷ he thought he knew her "like the glove on his hand;"⁸ he was "white as paper;"⁹ his red hair stood up in peaks "like a cock's comb;"¹⁰ when he used a word for the first time and mispronounced it, he would become "as confused as if he were trying to pass a lead dollar;"¹¹ he sprang

¹James R. Shively, ed., Writings from Willa Cather's Campus Years (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1950), p. 63.

²Ibid., p. 89.

³Youth and the Bright Medusa (New York, 1938), p. 225.

⁴Ibid., p. 256.

⁵Alexander's Bridge (Boston, 1922), p. 88.

⁶O Pioneers! (Boston, 1936), p. 55.

⁷Ibid., p. 77.

⁸The Song of the Lark (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1933), p. 245.

⁹My Antonia, p. 86.

¹⁰One of Ours (New York, 1934), p. 1.

¹¹Ibid., p. 45.

up "as if a hornet had stung him;"¹² his heart was "like a lump of ice;"¹³ he was "as close as a clam;"¹⁴ he worked "like a miner under a landslide;"¹⁵ he was "standing like a statue;"¹⁶ his teeth were "like two rows of pearls;"¹⁷ he knew that bell "like a voice;"¹⁸ his hair "was like sunshine;"¹⁹ he smiled "as if he had a safe card up his sleeve;"²⁰ he scuttled off "like an old rat."²¹

These instances are not about the same man. They are representative of the many commonplace similes appearing in her short stories and novels between 1893 and 1946. There is no decline in the frequency of commonplace images in her later works. Incidentally, women fare no better than men. Here are a few examples: her hair is "like flax;"²² she was "fresh as the morning;"²³ her hands and feet were "cold as ice;"²⁴ her legs seemed "as

¹²Ibid., p. 190.

¹³Ibid., p. 223.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 287.

¹⁵The Professor's House (New York, 1925), p. 29.

¹⁶My Mortal Enemy (New York, 1926), p. 60.

¹⁷Shadows on the Rock (New York, 1937), p. 84.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 243.

¹⁹Obscure Destinies (New York, 1932), p. 116.

²⁰Lucy Gavheart (New York, 1935), p. 63.

²¹Sapphira and the Slave Girl (New York, 1940), p. 33.

²²Alexander's Bridge, p. 70.

²³Ibid., p. 113.

²⁴The Song of the Lark, p. 199.

heavy as lead;"²⁵ she was "red as a turkey cock;"²⁶ when she was peaceful, she was "like a dove with its wings folded;"²⁷ her heart "felt like a stone;"²⁸ she was "quick as a kitten;"²⁹ her eyelids were "thin as paper;"³⁰ she snapped like "a mastiff;"³¹ she was "strong as an ox;"³² she "came up like a cork;"³³ she flushed "red as a poppy."³⁴

Or, in other contexts, there is the express shooting through the night "red as a rocket;"³⁵ the bridge "delicate as a cobweb;"³⁶ the air "clear as crystal;"³⁷ the room "hot as an oven;"³⁸ the sandbars glittering "like glass;"³⁹ the bullets bounding on the rocks "like hail;"⁴⁰ the laprobes "as heavy as lead and as slippery as oiled paper;"⁴¹ spring warm and "dry

²⁵Ibid., p. 238.

²⁶Youth and the Bright Medusa, p. 146.

²⁷My Mortal Enemy (New York, 1926), p. 45.

²⁸Death Comes for the Archbishop (New York, 1928), p. 275.

²⁹Lucy Gayheart, p. 13.

³⁰Sapphira and the Slave Girl, p. 88.

³¹Ibid., p. 93.

³²Ibid., p. 95.

³³Ibid., p. 120.

³⁴The Old Beauty and Others (New York, 1948), p. 82.

³⁵Youth and the Bright Medusa, p. 250.

³⁶Alexander's Bridge, p. 22.

³⁷The Song of the Lark, p. 56.

³⁸Ibid., p. 239.

³⁹My Antonia, p. 159.

⁴⁰One of Ours, p. 397.

⁴¹A Lost Lady, p. 43.

as a bone."⁴² There are many instances of this kind.⁴³

As previously observed they are noteworthy in this study chiefly as a symptom of her tendency to use comparisons. If, incidentally, this concentration of them here seems to denote a curious indifference in so sensitive a writer to what appears now to be worn and conventional images, this impression is more than offset in her pages by images of a quite different kind.

Miss Gather herself points out:

The artist spends a lifetime in pursuing the things that haunt him, in having his mind 'teased' by them, in trying to get these conceptions down on paper exactly as they are to him and not in conventional poses supposed to reveal their character; trying this method and that, as a painter tries different lightings and different attitudes with his subject to catch the one that presents it more suggestively than any other.⁴⁴

She is here thinking of a fundamental problem of the artist, that of getting herself expressed in the best way. Though she does not say so, it is clear enough that the simile was for her often a means to this end, and as already implied, from the beginning of her work. "A Wagner Matinee"

⁴²Obscure Destinies, p. 61.

⁴³Willa Cather's Camous Years, pp. 21, 54; Alexander's Bride, pp. 11, 24, 49, 70, 94, 102, 104, 108, 110; O Pioneers! pp. 11, 71, 76, 189, 264; The Song of the Lark, pp. 23, 42, 74, 113, 119, 128, 191, 222, 224, 232, 238, 239, 270, 274, 298, 314, 324, 427; My Antonia, pp. 1, 8, 15, 18, 19, 20, 36, 92, 112, 133, 134, 145, 147, 182, 209, 215, 239; Youth and the Bright Medusa, pp. 27, 95-96, 104, 150, 166, 186, 202, 246-247, 273, 282, 287, 297; One of Ours, pp. 2, 92, 118, 133, 152, 206, 269, 273, 280, 293, 294, 319, 325, 403, 411, 445, 451, 455; A Lost Lady, pp. 13, 60, 110, 116; The Professor's House, pp. 37, 43, 84, 106, 124, 202; Death Comes for the Archbishop, pp. 29, 31, 85, 108, 120, 141, 196; Shadows on the Rock, pp. 51, 84, 132, 155, 172, 229; Obscure Destinies, p. 81; Lucy Gayheart, pp. 4-5, 10, 18, 75, 161; Sapphira and the Slave Girl, pp. 18, 45, 119, 206; The Old Beauty and Others, pp. 18, 160.

⁴⁴Miss Jewett, "Not Under Forty" (New York, 1936), p. 80.

(1905) contains some good examples. This is a story about a woman who grew up in Boston, in a cultural environment providing excellent opportunities for her to develop her interest in music. As a young girl she fell in love with a Westerner, who took her out to the frontier of Nebraska, where except for a brief visit to her old home thirty years later, she lived the rest of her life deprived of the music she had known. The story deals with her feelings during that visit. They are reported by her nephew Clark, who meets her train in Boston and takes her to hear a Wagner symphony program. His Aunt Georgiana's face is transformed with the opening strains of the music, and the nephew recalls the barrenness of his childhood on the Nebraska prairie. He tries to fathom her thoughts, but she sits mutely "staring at the violin bows that drove obliquely downward, like the pelting streaks of rain in a summer storm."⁴⁵ As the symphony progresses, Aunt Georgiana's face glistens with tears. The nephew realizes for the first time what her life on the prairie has been as she weeps quietly but almost continuously, "as a shallow vessel overflows in a rain-storm."⁴⁶ These similes come out of the things that haunt them. The concert ends, the people leave, the men of the orchestra file out one by one, "leaving the stage to the chairs and music stands, empty as a winter cornfield."⁴⁷

There are also many good similes in her novels. And, in O Pioneers! she again chooses an image from the land, in this case using a comparison

⁴⁵Youth and the Bright Medusa, p. 243.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 245.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 246.

which universalizes the particular experience. After many years of separation Carl Linstrum and Alexandra Bergson, childhood friends, meet again and speak of former companions and loved ones, many of whom lie in the nearby graveyard, which not many years before was wild prairie. And they realize that life and death is an old story. Carl muses, "Isn't it queer: there are only two or three human stories, and they go on repeating themselves as fiercely as if they had never happened before; like the larks in this country, that have been singing the same five notes over for thousands of years."⁴⁸

Moonstone people liked amiable Dr. Archie, (Song of the Lark), but they could never understand why he married a woman as petty and uncongenial as Mrs. Archie. Of course, before her marriage, she had been known as a spirited girl, who always had a train of suitors around her. Now she looked as small and mean as she was. "Her reputed prettiness must have been entirely the result of determination, of a fierce little ambition. Once she had married, fastened herself on some one, come to port,--it vanished like the ornamental plumage which drops away from some birds after the mating season."⁴⁹

When Thea Kronberg first went to Chicago to study music, she had small opportunity to attend concerts. She had been to so few that she found herself avidly interested in the orchestra, the men, the instruments, and the volume of sound. Her excitement impaired her power of listening. "She kept saying to herself, 'Now I must stop this foolishness and listen; I may never hear this again;' but her mind was like a glass that is hard

⁴⁸Pioneers!, p. 119.

⁴⁹Song of the Lark, p. 35.

to focus."⁵⁰ Theodore Thomas, conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, warned Thea's music teacher that voices were often disappointing because of the change involved. But he added, "Perhaps that is why they interest one. All the intelligence and talent in the world can't make a singer. The voice is a wild thing. It can't be bred in captivity. It is a sport, like the silver fox."⁵¹

Being a mark on Wall Street would gratify Jerome Brown's peculiar vanity ("The Diamond Mine," 1920). The more of his wife's money he spent, the more affectionately he told her that her cares and anxieties were over. "To try to get related facts out of his optimism was like trying to find framework in a feather bed."⁵²

Mrs. Ogden, one of the Forresters' guests (A Lost Lady, 1923), was almost unpardonably homely, but as she talked she tilted her head and 'used' her eyes, availing herself of the arch glances usually thought of in connection with pretty women. She was from East Virginia, and Niel noticed that "her vowels seemed to roll about in the same way her eyes did."⁵³ In his youth he worshipped at the shrine of Mrs. Forrester's loveliness and ardour. In later life he tried to analyze this youthful adoration. He decided that fine play-acting might have been part of her charm. However, he remembered, "she had always the power of suggesting

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 198.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 204.

⁵² Youth and the Bright Medusa, p. 134.

⁵³ A Lost Lady, p. 51.

things much lovelier than herself, as the perfume of a single flower may call up the whole sweetness of spring."⁵⁴

Another disillusioned man is Professor St. Peter of The Professor's House (1925), who withdraws more and more into his schoolwork, finally becoming indifferent to life. With this indifference comes the feeling that he has not long to live. "The feeling that he was near the conclusion of his life was an instinctive conviction, such as we have when we waken in the dark and know at once that it is near morning; or when we are walking across the country and suddenly know that we are near the sea."⁵⁵

When Bishop Latour (Death Comes for the Archbishop, 1927) held services for the Atomas, he was depressed by their old world church with its two stone towers and its nave rising some seventy feet to a sagging, half-ruined roof. The spacious interior with its gray light revealed some fifty or sixty silent faces.

He felt as if he were celebrating Mass at the bottom of the sea, for antediluvian creatures; for types of life so old so hardened, so shut within their shells, that the sacrifice on Calvary could hardly reach back so far. Those shell-like backs behind him might be saved by baptism and divine grace, as undeveloped infants are, but hardly through any experience of their own, he thought.⁵⁶

An entirely different type of sea life is described by Grenfell ("Before Breakfast," 1948), who was amazed to see a girl preparing to dive into the cold ocean water so early in the morning. "She opened her robe, a grey thing lined with white. Her bathing suit was pink. If a clam stood upright and graciously opened its shell, it would look like that."⁵⁷

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 106.

⁵⁵The Professor's House, p. 269.

⁵⁶Death Comes for the Archbishop, p. 100.

⁵⁷The Old Beauty and Others, p. 164.

CHAPTER III

REMOTE, LITERARY, AND UNUSUAL SIMILES

The similes in the last part of the preceding chapter are to the point; they clarify the content and amplify it, and through them she has come closer to her intentions and feelings. What could be more suggestive of Aunt Georgiana's mood at the end of the concert than the memory of a winter cornfield to which she must return? Or what comes closer to the bishop's frustration than the image of antediluvian creatures with shell-like backs? But Willa Cather's aim is not always so inevitable, as the following samples will serve to illustrate. It isn't that they are inappropriate exactly, but a good many have come too far to be inevitable.

When Clark met his Aunt Georgiana at the station, he saw her battered figure "with that feeling of awe and respect with which we behold explorers who have left their ears and fingers north of Franz-Joseph Land, or their health somewhere along the Upper Congo."¹ When they entered the concert hall, she looked about her with "eyes as impersonal, almost as stony, as those with which the granite Rameses in a museum watches the froth and fret that ebbs and flows about his pedestal."² Clark adds further, "I have seen this same aloofness in old miners who drift into the Brown hotel at Denver, their pockets full of bullion, their linen soiled, their haggard faces unshaven; standing in the thronged corridors as solitary as though they were still in a frozen camp on the Yukon."³ Certainly the analogies

¹Youth and the Bright Medusa, p. 236.

²Ibid., p. 240.

³Ibid., p. 240.

help to convey what the frontier has done to her, but the particulars of the ears and fingers north of Franz-Joseph Land, health along the Upper Congo, granite Ramesses in a museum, old miners in the Brown hotel at Denver with pockets full of bullion, linen soiled, and haggard faces unshaven seem not altogether pertinent to Aunt Georgiana.

The remote clearly appeals to Willa Cather. As she thinks of the Nebraska prairie of O Pioneers! she observes that it is joyous and young in its openness, and that like the plains of Lombardy, it rises a little to meet the sun.⁴ After the manner of graying yellow hair, Mrs. Kronberg's took on a color like that of English primroses.⁵ Recalling his childhood days on a Nebraska farm, Jim Burden remembers that the men coming in from husking corn, with their long caps and red-lined overshoes looked like Arctic explorers.⁶ In "The Diamond Mine" Cressida Garnett's accompanist, Mr. Poppas, explained that his facial neuralgia caused him to suffer especially in London. "My nervous system is exotic in any country washed by the Atlantic ocean, and it shivers like a little hairless dog from Mexico."⁷ Kitty Ayrshire's throat condition had kept her cloistered like a Trappist for six weeks ("Scandal"), but when her friend Pierce Tevis saw her curled up before the fire, he thought she looked like a sultan's youngest, newest bride.⁸

Only two years before Claude Wheeler enlisted in the army, he had seemed like a fellow for whom life was over. So much was it over that he

⁴O Pioneers! p. 76.

⁵The Song of the Lark, pp. 114-115.

⁶My Antonia, p. 45.

⁷Youth and the Bright Medusa, p. 83.

was "...like those Chinese criminals who are planted upright in the earth, with only their heads left out for birds to peck at and insects to sting."⁹ Captain Forrester's face was fat and relaxed in his declining years, and its Asiatic smoothness made him look like a wise old Chinese mandarin.¹⁰ Professor St. Peter's swimming visor caused his head to appear sheathed and small and intensely alive, like the heads of the warriors on the Parthenon frieze.¹¹ The history books he was writing were of primary interest to him. "Just as when Queen Mathilde was doing the long tapestry now shown at Bayeux,--working her chronicle of the deeds of knights and heroes,-- alongside the big pattern of birds and beasts that are a story in themselves; so, to him the most important chapters of his history were interwoven with personal memories."¹²

Bishop Latour thanked God for the small oasis he had happened upon in the desert, and especially for the life-giving spring, which, like those well-heads in his own country where the Roman settlers had set up the image of a river goddess, was older than history.¹³ Cecile Auclair's mother gave the little girl much advice for she knew that her life was ebbing away. After such admonition the child's eyes would grow very dark, like the blue of Canadian blueberries.¹⁴ Unlike Cecile, Lucy Gayheart had brown eyes--not gentle brown eyes, for they flashed with gold sparks like

⁹One of Ours, p. 283.

¹⁰A Lost Lady, p. 136.

¹¹The Professor's House, p. 71.

¹²Ibid., p. 101.

¹³Death Comes for the Archbishop, p. 30.

¹⁴Shadows on the Rocks, p. 25.

the Colorado stone called the tiger-eye.¹⁵

Many of her similes have literary origins. Here are some of these: A disgraced clergyman is one of a group of wretches imposing on the hospitality of a nobleman. The narrator of "A Night in Greenway Court" (1896) says of this parasite, "He had been there three months, dwelling in shameful idleness, one of that band of renegades who continually ate at my lord's table and hunted with his dogs and devoured his substance, waiting for some turn of fortune, like the suitors of Penelope."¹⁶ Kitty Ayrshire of "Scandal" disliked the overbearing cordiality, the intimately indulgent tones of the society crowd for whom she had sung. No chill of manner could hold them off, and she thought, "I felt like Gulliver among the giants. These people were all too--well, too much what they were."¹⁷ To the extremely sensitive boy ("Paul's Case," 1905), who could be enthralled by a symphony, "...the first sigh of the instruments seemed to free some hilarious spirit within him; something that struggled there like the Genius in the bottle found by the Arab fisherman."¹⁸

Thea Kronberg's mother believed "that the size of every family was decided in heaven. Many modern views would not have startled her; they would simply have seemed foolish--thin chatter, like the boasts of the men who built the Tower of Babel, or like Axel's plan to breed ostriches in the chicken yard."¹⁹ When Mrs. Livery Johnson announced that the Baptist

¹⁵Lucy Gayheart, p. 4. See also: Alexander's Bridge, p. 4; O Pioneers!, pp. 11, 45, 77; The Song of the Lark, pp. 74, 172; My Antonia, pp. 19, 43; Youth and the Bright Medusa, pp. 82, 175; Death Comes for the Archbishop, pp. 96, 167; Lucy Gayheart, p. 39.

¹⁶Willa Cather's Campus Years, p. 83.

¹⁷Youth and the Bright Medusa, p. 196.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 205.

¹⁹Song of the Lark, p. 12.

prodigy Lily Fisher would not sing at the Christmas concert, but would recite, Thea thought that her eyes glittered more than the Ancient Mariner's.²⁰ Remembering a favorite novel, Anna Karenina, Thea noted that it was strange how her old friends seemed "...as full of meaning, as mysteriously marked by Destiny, as the people who danced the mazurka under the elegant Korsunsky."²¹

One of the first to enlist following the outbreak of World War I, Claude was subject to many questions and admiring looks on leave home. "Like the hero of the Odyssey upon his homeward journey, Claude had often to tell what his country was, and who were the parents that had begot him."²² When Owens was in college he had never shown the least interest in classical studies, but his philosophy had changed; it was "as if he were giving birth to Caesar."²³ Miss Erma Salton-Smith of A Lost Lady was exactly like her name--tall, very animated, and with glittering eyes like the Ancient Mariner's.²⁴ Even after the idealistic Niel had lost his illusion of Mrs. Forrester's quality, he wished he could call up her youthful shade as the witch of Endor called up Samuels and demand the secret of that ardor.²⁵

Professor St. Peter remembered the many obstacles he had faced in beginning to write his history books.

It was in those very years that he was beginning his great work; when the desire to do it and the difficulties attending such a project strove together like Macbeth's two spent swimmers--years when he had the courage to say to himself, 'I will do this dazzling, this beautiful, this utterly impossible thing.'²⁶

²¹Ibid., p. 130.

²²One of Ours, p. 244.

²³Ibid., p. 369.

²⁴A Lost Lady, p. 75.

²⁵Ibid., p. 171.

²⁶The Professor's House, p. 25.

Concerning a fellow teacher who had been subjected to many operations, he said, "It's like 'The Pit and the Pendulum.' I feel as if the poor fellow were strapped down on a revolving disk that comes around under the knife just so often."²⁷ Bishop Latour was thankful to find a settlement in the desert for he had expected to make a dry camp in the wilderness and sleep under a juniper, like the Prophet, tormented by thirst.²⁸ Turner Ashby (Sapphira and the Slave Girl, 1940) was one of the young heroes of the Civil War. "You would probably find fresh flowers on Ashby's grave. He was all that the old-time Virginians admired: Like Paris handsome and like Hector brave. And he died young."²⁹ Sapphira's cruelty had driven the slave girl Nancy to run away from home when she was little more than a child. Now a grown woman with a family, Nancy had returned home to see her aged mother. The old Negress fell meekly into the arms of "a tall gold-skinned woman, who drew the little old darky to her breast and held her there, binding her face down on the head scantily covered with grey wool. Neither spoke a word. There was something Scriptural in that meeting, like the pictures in our own Bible."³⁰ Grenfell enjoyed getting up early and hiking through the woods to watch nature awaken. He climbed out on a bold headland that topped a cliff two hundred feet above the sea. "He sat down on a rock and grinned. Like a Christian of old, he thought, he had left his burden at the bottom of the hill."³¹

²⁷Ibid., p. 134.

²⁸Death Comes for the Archbishop, p. 27.

²⁹Sapphira and the Slave Girl, p. 275.

³⁰Ibid., p. 283.

³¹The Old Beauty and Others, p. 164.

As has already been observed, some of these similes, like the analogy comparing Aunt Georgiana to the miners in the Brown hotel in Denver, seem to get a little out of hand. There is another distracting one in "A Wagner Matinee." Clark, seeing the effect of the music on his aunt, recalled how, in the first orchestra he had ever heard, those long bow-strokes seemed to draw the heart out of him, "as a conjurer's stick reels out yards of paper ribbon from a hat."³² Surely this analogy violates the intended sentiment. So does the simile about Mrs. Johnson's glittering eyes in Song of the Lark. They are said to glitter like the Ancient Mariner's, but hers was a malicious, triumphal gleam, unlike that of the Ancient Mariner.

And here are some others in which the analogies contain distractions or fit very loosely. One of Alexandra Bergson's striking features is her hair. "It is so curly that fiery ends escape from the braids and make her head look like one of the big double sunflowers that fringe her vegetable garden."³³ Another of the garden variety is one of Antonia's neighbors, "Curly Peter" or "Rooshian Peter." "His rosy face, with its snub nose, set in this fleece, was like a melon among its leaves."³⁴ Mr. Cutter felt that the one excitement he really could not do without was quarreling with Mrs. Cutter. "The reckoning with his wife at the end of an escapade was something he counted on--like the last powerful liqueur after a long dinner."³⁵ The rain washed channels of wheelruts in the country roads and made them so deep that the sod never healed over them. "They looked like

³²Youth and the Bright Medusa, p. 242.

³³O Pioneers! p. 88.

³⁴My Antonia, p. 25.

³⁵Ibid., p. 164.

gashes torn by a grizzly's claws, on the slopes where the farm wagons used to lurch up out of the hollow."³⁶ Here again she has neglected size in her analogy of shapes.

Kitty Ayrshire, operatic star of "A Gold Slipper," ran down the platform to catch her train. "The white-furred boots chased each other like lambs at play, the gold stockings flashed like the spokes of a bicycle wheel in the sun."³⁷ Lambs at play and spokes of bicycle wheels do not unite well. Walking down the stairs, she encountered a young man, "who looked like a camel with its hair parted on the side..."³⁸ Well?

Niel, sensitive to both beauty and ugliness, saw the short plump figure of Mrs. Beasley, like a boiled pudding sewed up in a blue kimono, waddling through the feathery asparagus bed..."³⁹ The narrator of My Mortal Enemy felt that in Madison Square Garden, winter brought no desolation. "It was tamed like a polar bear led on a leash by a beautiful lady."⁴⁰ Neighbour Rosicky, beloved and respected by his family and friends, was a kindly looking man. "His moustache was of the soft long variety and came down over his mouth like the teeth of a buggy-rake over a bundle of hay."⁴¹

Lucy Gayheart had disliked Clement Sebastian's accompanist from the first time she saw him. She remembered that concert. "He had the very white skin that goes with red hair, and tonight, as he sat against an olive

³⁶Ibid., p. 239.

³⁷Youth and the Bright Medusa, p. 153.

³⁸Ibid., p. 195.

³⁹A Lost Lady, p. 136.

⁴⁰My Mortal Enemy, p. 35.

⁴¹Obscure Destinies, p. 22.

green velvet curtain, his features seemed to disappear altogether. His face looked like a handful of flour thrown against the velvet."⁴² The emphasis here is on form. Shape rather than size is also emphasized in her description of the Negro Sampson's head. It was "full behind the ears, shaped more like a melon lying down than a peanut standing on end."⁴³ There are many others like these.⁴⁴

While the remote and occasionally wayward similes in this chapter are pertinent in a way, they are not inevitable. They show signs of being sought after. She needed them. After examining so many, it is hard to escape the impression that similes were a stylistic habit with her. As has been observed, they were with her from the beginning and stayed to the end. If they wouldn't come naturally, they would come as they could. For the need springs not merely from a desire for a clearer analogy, an apt equivalent or image, but for something far more important to her, something that would catch up the emotional as well and give more complete expression.

It is as if the simile provided a release for her, a final outlet. It comes frequently at the end of sentences, paragraphs, and chapters. The Song of the Lark ends with a simile, a long, elaborate figure that moves around what is central in the book and the life of an artist. The simile, in other words, is an attempt at crystallizing and giving memorable form to what is most central and salient.

⁴² Lucy Gayheart, p. 39.

⁴³ Sapphira and the Slave Girl, p. 109.

⁴⁴ Alexander's Bridge, pp. 7, 54; O Pioneers!, pp. 3, 10-11, 21-22; The Song of the Lark, pp. 34, 62, 80, 137, 235, 303, 313, 362, 468; My Antonia, pp. 14, 80, 120, 123, 222, 239; Youth and the Bright Medusa, pp. 23, 140, 148, 153, 192, 195, 225, 250; One of Ours, pp. 33, 59, 173, 258; The Professor's House, pp. 30, 93, 192, 270; Death Comes for the Archbishop, pp. 15, 99, 125; Shadows on the Rock, pp. 66, 225; Obscure Destinies, pp. 111, 204, 220; Lucy Gayheart, pp. 3, 8, 190; Sapphira and the Slave Girl, pp. 117, 182; The Old Beauty and Others, pp. 18, 109-110, 160.

CHAPTER IV
EMOTIONAL SIMILES

For the view that the simile in Willa Cather springs primarily from an emotional need there is considerable evidence. In the first place, many similes do not actually make the matter clearer but rather more obscure. They go from the concrete to the abstract. Here are some of these.

In recalling the magnificence of an autumn sunset, Jim Burden thinks of that hour as having the exaltation of victory, of triumphant ending, like a hero's death--heroes who die young and gloriously.¹ It is not difficult to picture a beautiful sunset until matters are complicated by comparing it with something of such magnitude as a hero's death. The same thing occurs in Jim's description of an electric storm on a summer night. The sky was chequered with black thunderheads, but the west was luminous and clear. "In the lightning flashes it looked like deep blue water, with the sheen of moonlight on it; and the mottled part of the sky was like marble pavement, like the quay of some splendid seacoast city, doomed to destruction."² To him, a winter sunset had nothing in common with victory or a hero's death. Rather, the pale, cold light was "like the light of truth itself."³ He thought that dancing "Home, Sweet Home" with Lena was like coming in with the tide. She danced every dance like a waltz--the waltz of coming home to something, of inevitable, fated return.⁴ And again Miss Cather's desire to

¹My Antonia, p. 28.

²Ibid., p. 92.

³Ibid., p. 116.

⁴Ibid., p. 145.

express an emotion in a simile takes form--but not a clearcut form.

In "Coming, Aphrodite!" the picture of the occasional misshapen, sul-
len-looking automobile surrounded by the more popular horse-drawn carriages
is clear enough. But then she says that this new invention seemed like
"an ugly threat in a stream of things that were bright and beautiful and
alive."⁵ Emotion borders on the sentimental in this description of a May
night. "There was a slender, girlish looking moon in the west, playing
with a whole company of silver stars. Now and then one of them darted away
from the group and shot off into the gauzy blue with a soft little trail of
light, like laughter."⁶

Claude Wheeler had very unorthodox views on religion, and his mother
wished desperately that he could bring himself to conform to what she be-
lieved--to simply trust and have faith in God. As she grew older, she was
not so perturbed, however, and one evening she told him of her belief that
God had ways of saving what was noble in the world, and that she knew He
was sometimes where one would least expect to find Him--even in proud, re-
bellious hearts. "For a moment they clung together in the pale, clear
square of the west window, as the two natures in one person sometimes meet
and cling in a fated hour."⁷ Again the vagueness increases with the simile,
which drifts into the abstract. A repetition of this procedure appears
when Claude, upon seeing for the first time the strong-looking self-suffi-
cient coast of France rising before him, thinks it is like a pillar of
eternity.⁸ Here the analogy obscures the coast line.

⁵Youth and the Bright Medusa, p. 15.

⁶Ibid., p. 20.

⁷One of Ours, p. 87.

⁸Ibid., p. 319.

Niel Herbert's youthful adoration of Mrs. Forrester was never so poignant as on the morning when he awoke with the dawn and decided to visit her in the freshness of the new day. Under the bluffs that overhung the marsh he came upon thickets of wild roses, with flaming buds, just beginning to open--and his thoughts turned naturally to how pleased Marian Forrester would be with his bouquet. Little did he dream that his world would soon crumble, for he was to hear Frank Ellinger's sleepy chuckle as he placed the roses on the sill of her bedroom window. Now, however, he thought only of the beauty of the roses. "Where they had opened, their petals were stained with that rose-colour which is always gone by noon,--a dye made of sunlight and morning and moisture, so intense that it cannot possibly last. . . must fade, like ecstasy."⁹ Because ecstasy is so much more complex than the fading of a rose, it dims rather than sharpens the image.

Again she goes from the specific to the general in Bishop Latour's description of the sensuous Martinez. "His mouth was the very assertion of violent uncurbed passions and tyrannical self-will; the full lips thrust out and taut, like the flesh of animals distended by fear or desire."¹⁰ Myra Henshawe of My Mortal Enemy lends complexity to sunrise in telling of her desire to sit under a tree on a favorite strip of bare headland with the sea below at dawn. "That is always such a forgiving time. When that first cold, bright streak comes over the water, it's as if all our sins were pardoned; as if the sky leaned over the earth and kissed it and gave it absolution."¹¹

⁹A Lost Lady, p. 85.

¹⁰Death Comes for the Archbishop, p. 141.

¹¹My Mortal Enemy, p. 89.

Other similes, though not so abstract, are equally unexpected. The aim is for the feeling rather than the picture. In "The Sculptor's Funeral" the narrator notices that even in death the artist's chin is thrust defiantly forward, as he lies in his coffin, still the victim of a lack of understanding in his home town. "It was as though the strain of life had been so sharp and bitter that death could not at once relax the tension and smooth the countenance into perfect peace--as though he were still guarding something precious, which might even yet be wrested from him."¹² The very vagueness of the "something precious" shows that she is attempting to convey an emotion rather than to sharpen an image. Another example in which the simile is an outlet for emotion rather than a pictorial device is in "A Death in the Desert." Katherine Gaylord's voice intones her love for Adriance Hilgarde as she tells his brother Everett of the night when she and Adriance were so close in their mutual realization of the aspiration and suffering necessary in other lives to make up the life of an artist such as he. She recalls, "Someshow the wind with all its world-pain had got into the room, and the cold rain was in our eyes, and the wave came up in both of us at once--that awful vague, universal pain, that cold fear of life and death and God and hope--and we were like two clinging together on a spar in midocean after the shipwreck of everything."¹³

Attempting to explain Thea Kronberg's artistic temperament and the way she charged at difficulties, Miss Cather said that she ran to meet them as if they were foes destined for each other.¹⁴ Neither the foes nor the

¹²Youth and the Bright Medusa, p. 257.

¹³Ibid., p. 298.

¹⁴The Song of the Lark, p. 175.

difficulties are explained. Thea practiced constantly on her music, and only at times could she satisfy the demands she made on herself. "There were other times when she was so shattered by ideas that she could do nothing worth while; when they trampled over her...and she felt as if she were bleeding to death under them."¹⁵ Equally vague was her feeling that some day when she was older she would know more about the confidence and sense of wholeness and inner well-being she had always felt. "It was as if she had an appointment to meet the rest of herself sometime, somewhere. It was moving to meet her and she was moving to meet it."¹⁶ When that time arrived, Thea knew that she had achieved her goal. "All that deep-rooted vitality flowered in her voice, her face, her finger tips. She felt like a tree bursting into bloom."¹⁷ Her voice gave out all that was best in it. "Like the spring indeed it blossomed into memories and prophecies..."¹⁸ A beautiful expression of a feeling, but one desiring a clearcut image might be tempted to ask, "And how does a tree bursting into bloom feel?" or, "Memories and prophecies of what?" When asked the secret of Thea's success, her teacher Harsanyi could only define one mercurial quality in terms of another. "'Her secret? It is every artist's secret'--he waved his hand,--'passion. That is all. It is an open secret, and perfectly safe. Like heroism, it is inimitable in cheap materials."¹⁹ The Song of the Lark concludes with a remote comparison which is a generalization on the place of the artist. Thea, even more than the boy who made good with a

¹⁵Ibid., p. 176.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 216.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 470.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 475.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 477.

business of his own in the city, is remembered by her townspeople. Little happens in Moonstone, and the people have long memories.

The many naked little sandbars which lie between Venice and the mainland, in the seemingly stagnant water of the lagoons, are made habitable and wholesome only because, every night, a foot and a half of tide creeps in from the sea and winds its fresh brine up through all that network of shining waterways. So, into all the little settlements of quiet people, tidings of what their boys and girls are doing in the world bring real refreshment; bring to the old, memories, and to the young, dreams.²⁰

Don Hedger of "Coming, Aphrodite!" gives little help to the reader when he says that the voice of the girl across the hall sounds like a soft shivering of crystal.²¹ Appalled to hear that his friend Victor Morse had been chased by eight Boche planes, had brought down three, put the rest to flight, then jumped from his flaming plane--and had fallen more than a thousand feet to his death, Claude Wheeler reflected, "What other age could have produced such a figure? That was one of the things about this war; it took a little fellow from a little town, gave him an air and a swagger, a life like a movie film,--and then a death like the rebel angels."²² Not only is this comparison vague, but it is also incorrect grammatically. In "Two Friends," the principal characters turn from each other because of a difference in politics. There was a premonition of this trouble in Mr. Dillon's laugh which was "like a thin glitter of danger."²³ Another simile in which feeling and sound of words hold precedence over the image is in Bishop Latour's bell with the beautiful tone. "Full, clear, with something bland and suave, each note floated through the air like a globe of silver."²⁴

Thoughts on the founding of Quebec in Shadows on the Rock evokes this

²⁰Ibid., p. 490.

²¹Youth and the Bright Medusa, p. 24.

²²One of Ours, p. 375.

²³Obscure Destinies, p. 220.

²⁴Death Comes for the Archbishop, p. 43.

conclusion:

When an adventurer carries his gods with him into a remote and savage country, the colony he founds will, from the beginning have graces, traditions, riches of the mind and spirit. Its history will shine with bright incidents, slight, perhaps, but precious, as in life itself, where the great matters are often as worthless as astronomical distances and trifles dear as the heart's blood.²⁵

This general simile undoubtedly springs from the emotions. And so does feeling prompt Cecile Auclair's musings when she fears she must leave her beloved Quebec.

Perhaps some day, after weeks at sea, she would find herself gliding along the shore of the Ile d'Orleans and would see before her Kebec, just as she had left it; the grey roofs and spires smothered in autumn gold, with the Recollet flèche rising slender and pure against the evening, and the crimson afterglow welling up out of the forest like a glorious memory.²⁶

Lucy Gayheart's dream world revolved not about a country but around the great operatic singer whom she accompanied. "A strange kind of life she had been leading. For two hours, five days of the week, she was alone with Sebastian shut away from the rest of the world. It was as if they were on the lonely spur of a mountain enveloped by mist."²⁷ Her world crumbled with his death, and she sought solace in the familiar streets of her hometown. "She loved her little town, but it was a heartbreaking love, like loving the dead who cannot answer back."²⁸ Now when she needed friendship desperately, Harry Gordon, the one who could have comforted her, ignored her, even refusing her a ride when she was tired and cold. She had only one thought--to get away from these people who were cruel and stupid. And trying for something really stupid, she thinks bitterly,

²⁵Shadows on the Rock, p. 98.

²⁶Ibid., p. 234.

²⁷Lucy Gayheart, p. 75.

²⁸Ibid., p. 136.

"stupid as the frozen mud in the road."²⁹ These similes do not give the reader much help in visualizing the situation--rather, they provide a channel for Miss Cather's pent up emotions.

Some of these emotional similes are not only vague and general, but they contain matter which is not to the point. It is in this matter that she often employs personal observations and experiences which destroy the universality of the simile. As has been mentioned, when she compares Aunt Georgiana's aloofness to that of old miners just returned from the wilderness, her point is made. But when she specifies these miners in the Brown hotel at Denver, with pockets full of bullion, linen soiled, haggard faces unshaven, standing as solitary as though they were still in a frozen camp on the Yukon, she destroys the universality of the experience. Somewhere in the past she evidently has come in contact with the Brown hotel in Denver. In like manner, the similes from literature are of a personal nature, for how could a parasitical clergyman and his companions be compared to the suitors of Penelope, or how could Grenfell be compared to a Christian who had left his burden at the foot of the hill, had she not read the Odyssey and Pilgrim's Progress?

Here are some other similes which reflect her own experiences and feelings. Jim Burden says that Mr. Shimerda's thick iron-grey hair was so long that it was brushed back behind his ears "and made him look like the old portraits I remembered in Virginia."³⁰ The reader perhaps has not shared the experience of Willa Cather and Jim Burden in viewing such portraits. Antonia's father was sensitive to the beauty in life, but had known little

²⁹Ibid., p. 198.

³⁰My Antonia, p. 19.

but hard work and poverty since his arrival in America. He did rejoice in the Burden's Christmas celebration, however, and "his face had a look of weariness and pleasure, like that of sick people when they feel relief from pain."³¹

In My Mortal Enemy appears a description of a pianist who plays the Casta Diva aria, "which begins so like the quivering of moonbeams on the water."³² Just as personal and subjective are her feelings as interpreted through Lucy Gayheart's thoughts the first time she hears Clement Sebastian sing. "When he began Der Doppelgänger, the last song of the group (Still ist die Nacht, es ruhen die Gassen), it was like moonlight pouring down on the narrow street of an old German town. With every phrase that picture deepened--moonlight, intense and calm, sleeping on old human houses; and somewhere a lonely black cloud in the night sky."³³

There are pictures here, but they are generalized. What is important is the emotional outlet they provide--like a final crescendo.

³¹Ibid., p. 59.

³²My Mortal Enemy, pp. 59-60.

³³Lucy Gayheart, p. 30.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources:

- Cather, Willa. Alexander's Bridge. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1922.
- . April Twilights and Other Poems. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1933.
- . Death Comes for the Archbishop. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928.
- . A Lost Lady. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1923.
- . Lucy Gayheart. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1935.
- . My Antonia. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1949.
- . Not Under Forty. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1936.
- . Obscure Destinies. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1932.
- . One of Ours. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1934.
- . O Pioneers! Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1936.
- . The Professor's House. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1925.
- . Sapphira and the Slave Girl. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1940.
- . Shadows on the Rock. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1937.
- . The Song of the Lark. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Riverside Press, 1933.
- . Willa Cather On Writing. Ed. by Stephen Terrant. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949.
- . Writings from Willa Cather's Campus Years. Ed. by James R. Shively. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1950.
- . Youth and the Bright Medusa. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1938.

Secondary Sources:

- Brown, E. K. and Leon Edel. Willa Cather, A Critical Biography. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953.

- Daiches, David. Willa Cather, A Critical Introduction. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1951.
- Fadiman, Clifton. "Willa Cather: The Past Recaptured." Nation, CXXXV (December 7, 1932), 563-565.
- Jessup, Josephine Lurie. The Faith of Our Feminists. New York: Richard R. Smith, 1950.
- Jones, Howard Mumford. "The Novels of Willa Cather." The Saturday Review of Literature, XVIII (August 6, 1938), 3-4, 16.
- Kronenberger, Louis. "Willa Cather." Bookman, LXXIV (October, 1931), 134-140.
- Millett, Fred B. Contemporary American Authors. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1944.
- Myers, Walter L. "The Novel Dedicate." The Virginia Quarterly Review, VIII (July, 1932), 410-418.
- Overton, Grant. The Women Who Make Our Novels. New York: Dodd, Mead, Co., 1931.
- Rapin, Rene. Willa Cather. New York: Robert McBride & Co., 1930.
- Sergeant, Elizabeth Shepley. Willa Cather, A Memoir. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1953.
- Wilson, James Southall. "To American Novels." The Virginia Quarterly Review, XI (October, 1935), 620-626.

VITA

Neva Joy Childers
candidate for the degree of
Master of Arts

Thesis: WILLA CATHER'S SIMILES

Major: English

Biographical and Other Items:

Born: March 23, 1932 in Denison, Texas

Undergraduate Study: Southeastern State College, 1948-1951

Graduate Study: Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College,
1952-1954

Experiences: Teaching in Ardmore High School, 1951-1952, 1952-
1953; Teaching Fellowship at Oklahoma Agricultural and
Mechanical College, 1953-1954.

Member of Phi Kappa Phi, Kappa Delta Pi, and Sigma Tau Delta.

Date of Final Examination: July, 1954

THESIS TITLE: WILLA CATHER'S SIMILES

AUTHOR: Neva Joy Childers

THESIS ADVISER: Dr. Hans H. Andersen

The content and form have been checked and approved by the author and thesis adviser. The Graduate School Office assumes no responsibility for errors either in form or content. The copies are sent to the bindery just as they are approved by the author and faculty adviser.

TYPISTS: Jean Corrinne Raper and Neva Joy Childers