

## A CRITICAL STUDY OF WILLA SIBERT CATHER'S SELECT NOVELS

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### ABSTRACT

Willa Sibert Cather, Present study is an endeavour to explore Cather's love for nature and her relation to it. Since nature as such is not the only focus of eco-critical studies of representation, other topics include frontiers, animals, cities, Indians and modernization, so this study would cover a wide range of issues, involving all that which comprises human interior and exterior contexts.

Willa Sibert Cather deals with issues of identification human presence in the wilderness. She tries to achieve stability between nature and human beings by discussion of environmental communities. Cather's writing presents nature and gentle as partners in green area. In her fiction, the natural and built environments are mixed up.

### KEYWORDS:

Nature, environment, truth, experience, emotion, romantic tradition etc.

### INTRODUCTION

Cather's novels have been explained from different perspective. Some praise her as a novelist of considerable women characters in rural ambiances. Her novels foreground the experiences

of American and immigrant women in the prairies and towns of a blooming nation. Cather's short-stories and novels chronicle, the predicament of the artist during the age of progress and industrialization, and the alienation and inception of the young. For Cather, the place where she grew-up - the American Midwest - is her influence and the inmost source of her art. Her portrayals of desert scenes, of the mesa, and of farms are like impressionistic landscape paintings. So while some place Cather in the romantic tradition, there are others who correlate her to modernism.

The supremacy of nature is so evident that at different places land has different connotations. The garden imagery and the myth of Adam and Eve dwelling in the Promised Land are recurrent. Sometimes it has been analysed as 'Garden of the World,' at times as 'Wilderness,' as 'Real Estate' and even as 'Wasteland.' Thus the prairie landscape has been illustrated lucidly and given a paramount status in the Southern novel of nineteenth century. Prairie is a French word means meadow and signifies any description of surface, covered with grass, and completely void of bush and timber. Even this vast and empty land thrilled Cather and it revitalised the spark of art inside Cather.

Cather has closeness with all these human and non-human entities, so her works are ecocritical from the very beginning. Her love for landscape started with her fondness for Virginia, a place where the wild and cultivated plants and local geology appear to coincide in an amicable ecosystem. But, Cather has a distinctive spiritual bond with the prairie landscape. It is the prairie that linked Cather with nature and it is this connection that influenced her to write.

The prairie became a recurring theme in Cather's novels. As a typical deep ecologist, Cather became one with the land that she so earnestly admired. On a list of magnificent volumes from the prairie plains of South America, Cather is certainly near the top. For her eternity is a

penepain and no single landscape reveals both the forces of nature and the bland puniness of human beings on the face of this planet than the South American prairie plains regions as in Cather's novels. There is a connection with the place and it led to a story to recount that has not been recounted before. The truth is that not all the writers have the competence like Cather to transcribe pictorial elements into metaphor and to express the real life stories. The experience of the prairie land created a wider vision of spaciousness and expansiveness in Cather. Her vision of a global consciousness is an image born directly from these great open spaces of the mid-west.

The investigation of Cather's novels from the ecocritical perspective involves comprehensive understanding of the literary regionalism of her. When she was born in 1873, vast regions of America are yet to be settled and shaped. There are bright possibilities for her imaginative world. Her world is one of subtle human relationship in settings of extraordinary physical reality. Rarely have these regions of the midlands and the southwest, been given such pictorial life and brilliance as in her novels. The shapes, colours and voices of the land are not reported but recreated through her consciousness. She uses regional materials not to exhibit differences or to trace local colour but because they are her deepest emotional resources and in them she epitomized universal themes. According to the deep ecological doctrines of Arne Naess, she extols the "richness and diversity" (49) of the natural entities of different regions. Most of the critics of Cather examine her novels categorically keeping in mind the prairie. But the reality is that Cather's range is broader. Nebraska has initiated the process of her bond with land. There are other regions like New Arizona and Mexico, Virginia, France eastern Canada and also other imaginative regions explored and used by Cather.

As mentioned earlier, the novels of Cather contains American geographical heterogeneity. Various un-fictionalized regions of a nation come into being in her novels. More than any other novelist, Cather's novels is characterized by profligate instability within the

multicultural frontiers, as she migrates from one zone to another.

The bond between Cather and land is captivating. After Cather's family moved to Nebraska, Cather is challenged with one of the main duties of her life. She has to master how to remember Virginia, how to live and write with her Southern inheritance, and does this strongly in both her short-stories and novels. First it is the fertile Virginian land that coloured her childhood and later on even the colourless and soulless Nebraskan prairie became a source of inspiration. Thus Cather celebrated the uniqueness of each place. Ecocriticism reveres this bond between the human and the non-human systems.

Criticism is an inherently inclusive system and it lauds the interconnectedness of things. On the same manner Cather cannot be isolated from the places that she connected with.

There is another evolving approach that regards Cather as an environmentally conscious writer. In the age of globalization, eco-critical thinkers examine the bond between ecology and literature. Thus the new outlook is to re-read Cather within an eco-critical structure. The integrative examination of the rapport between literature and art has progressed recently and it is known as Eco criticism. Despite the traditional interplays between humans and landscape in the literatures of the world, literary scholars have merely concentrated their studies on human experience and expression, seldom regarding the developments of human behavior on the earth and the impact of the human and non-human interrelationship and interactions.

Eco criticism encompasses a wide range of issues, including all that comprises of the human exterior and interior contexts. Literary scholars, social scientists and humanists are engrossed in significant ecologically based interdisciplinary work with natural sciences. Eco criticism becomes progressively interdisciplinary because the natural world is interconnected.

The novels of Cather are not just about the drama of characters, the drama always has the

presence of nature, either as backdrop or nature is exemplified. Deep Ecology states the pre-eminence of nature over humans. This is precisely what Cather does in her novels. Whenever in her novels, there is a critical point Cather emphasises the tension by drawing a graphic description of nature. At times these descriptions overshadow the human issue in hand. Cather lucidly explains the attitude of pioneers towards the new-found land. Shifting from different regions of the world, these pioneers miss the particularities and peculiarities of their familial land, but constantly they adapt the uniqueness of their new homes and they attempt to connect with it.

## CONCLUSION

Cather highlights the prairie itself in the novels. The crops, soil, trees, flowers, birds, animals, rain, wind, the flatness or rolling characters of landscape and the force of sky are given special treatment by her. The prairie land emerges as an individual with its unique characteristic qualities.

The onus of Cather's ecological consciousness also lies with her leaving to Nebraska from Virginia. Though her evolution is not as sudden as it sounds, but this shift did affect Cather as a person, and is about to echo in her works as well. Cather is picked from her opulent home in Virginia and thrown at the grass prairies of Nebraska in 1883, an experience that became the force behind all of her major novels.

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