

CHARLES UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Education

Department of English Language and Literature



The Influence of Czech Immigrants on Willa Cather's Literary Work

Prohlašuji, že předloženou práci

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci
uváděná výše uvedeno-použitou literaturou

V Praze, dne 27. 4. 2006

Author: Tatiana Vomáčková

Supervisor: Mgr. Jakub Ženíšek

Thesis handed in: April 2006

Key words:

- Immigrants
- Expatriate Bohemian Community
- Bohemian Character
- Stereotype
- Old World
- Nebraska Prairie
- Real Life Models
- Symbols

Prohášení o původnosti práce

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci vypracovala samostatně a že jsem uvedla veškerou použitou literaturu.

V Praze, dne 28.4.2006

Tatiana Vomáčková

Key words:

- Immigrants
 - Expatriate Bohemian Community
 - Bohemian Character
 - Stereotypes
 - Old World
 - Nebraska Prairie
 - Real Life Model
 - Struggle
1. Introduction
 2. Historical Background
 3. Nebraska's Bohemian Community
 4. Bohemian Character
 5. Stereotypes
 6. Old World
 7. Nebraska Prairie
 8. Real Life Model
 9. Struggle
 10. Conclusion
 11. Bibliography
 12. Appendix

Contents

1. Introduction	5
2. Critical Others on Willa Cather	6
2.1. James Woodress	6
2.2. Mildred Bennet, Edith Lewis, E.K. Brown	7
3. About the Author	8
3.1. Family Background	8
3.2. First Employment	16
3.3. Fulltime Writer	16
4. Nebraska and its Immigration History	32
4.1. Louisiana Purchase and the Homestead Act	32
4.2. Reasons for Immigration of the Bohemians	34
4.3. Life on the Prairie	37
4.4. Possible Sources for the Fictitious Characters' Names	40
5. Real Life Models in "My Antonia" and "Neighbor Rosicky"	43
5.1. Annie Sadilek-Pavelka	44
5.2. John Pavelka	47
6. Stereotypes of the Czech Immigrants	49
6.1. Geographical Condemnation	50
6.2. Racial Condemnation	51
6.3. Cather's Revision	52
6.4. Family Unity	53
6.5. Violent Behavior	55
6.6. Penchant for Music	57
7. Conclusion	60
8. Tabular Summary of "Life Models" Inspiration	63
9. Synopsis in Czech Language	68
10. Bibliography	69
11. Appendix	73
11.1. Photographs of Cather and her Parents	74
11.2. Photographs of Nebraska	75
11.3. Photographs of Pavelka Family	76
11.4. Photographs of Friends	77

1. Introduction

My interest in Willa Cather developed from reading her novels "My Antonia", "O Pioneers!" and several short stories dealing with European immigrants, especially those from Bohemia. I found it interesting that an American writer devoted so much attention to portray characters of another nationality with such a consistent approach. In this work I present available information on the background of her motivation and trace her sources for understanding the expatriate Bohemian community in the United States, in order to describe their representatives in fiction.

I would like to draw a connecting line between the historical context and the literary portrayal of immigrants from Bohemia.

Furthermore, I would like to introduce the real life model for Antonia Shimerda in "My Antonia" and depict some of the general characteristics ascribed to Bohemians at the break of the twentieth century. This thesis will deal with the factual, as well as the implicit, characteristics of Bohemian characters shown in her writings. I intend to compare Cather's point of view with the perspective of others who added their voice to the literary discussion of this subject matter.

2. Critical Others on Willa Cather

2.1. James Woodress

Even though Willa Cather and her closest friends, namely Edith Lewis, tried to preserve her privacy by destroying evidence, there have been many attempts to dissect her personal life as well as her literary career. The main problem in approaching her literary and historiographic legacy is quite aptly summed up by her biographer, James Woodress:

“The problems that the biographer of Cather has to face, however, are more complicated than merely locating the raw materials for the life. She threw up roadblocks, consciously and unconsciously, to frustrate pursuit. During her own lifetime she managed her image rather successfully by writing biographical sketches of herself and telling interviewers what she wanted printed about her. She changed her birth date; she altered details of her life; she exaggerated many events; she revised her opinions. She made no effort to be accurate in recalling facts, and it is hard sometimes to tell where the reality leaves off and the fiction begins. Too make matters still more difficult, Lewis’s memoir of her friend also tries to manage the image, and one has to use her data with caution.¹

Fortunately there are many correspondents who outlived Willa Cather and kept their letters, as well as a number of published interviews, speeches and public statements, which allowed biographers to reconstruct her life. Willa Cather herself contributed by turning much of her life including family members, neighbors, friends and experience into literature. In Woodress’s

¹ Woodress, James: **Willa Cather: A Literary Life**. University of Nebraska Press, 1987, pp. 2

words: "The biographer of a writer like Cather, whose memories and experiences are woven into the fabric of her fiction, has to separate the reality from the invention. Cather presents a special problem because she often treats her own life as though it were fiction. In the biographical sketch she provided her publisher she writes: *Willa Cather did not go to school. She had a pony and spent her time riding about the country.* This is part of the myth Cather created out of her past, the image of the young girl running wild across the prairie, but the reality is more prosaic. She certainly had a pony, as Jim Burden² does, but she also went to school, as he does in the novel."³

2.2. Mildred Bennet, Edith Lewis, E.K.Brown

Among the most significant scholarly works on Cather is Mildred Bennet's "The World of Willa Cather". Her study comprises information from interviews with Cather's friends and relatives. Already mentioned, Lewis's memoir was a building stone for E.K.Brown's effort entitled "Willa Cather, A Critical Biography", published in 1953 and accompanied by Alfred Knopf's comment on the jacket: "Here is all the biographical information anyone is likely ever to gather about Willa Cather"⁴ James Woodress proved him wrong in his 1987 biography "Willa Cather: A Literary Life". Apart from biographies, there are many works covering Cather's essays, journalistic writings, poems and stories such as "The Art of Willa Cather" by Bernice Slote and Virginia Faulkner.

² Cather's "alter-ego" character in *My Antonia*

³ Woodress, James: *Willa Cather: A Literary Life*. University of Nebraska Press, 1987, pp. 27

⁴ Brown, E.K. completed by Leon Edel: *Willa Cather, a Critical Biography*, New York, Knopf, 1953

3. About the Author

This chapter is based on the biography by James Woodress published in 1987. I have focused on his record of Willa Cather's life, because it is the most recent project and the author was able to draw on all of the previously published attempts to portray the life of Willa Cather. Moreover, he was entitled to use the materials gathered by deceased Bernice Slote, who spent many years collecting data for the definitive biography.

3.1. Family Background

Wilella Cather was born on the 7th of December 1873 in Back Creek Valley, Virginia. Throughout her life, even among family, she insisted that she was born in 1876. Willa was her own invention, as was her middle name Sibert, which she started to use after settling in Pittsburg in 1896, in memory of her deceased uncle William Seibert Boak who died in the Civil war and whom she had never met. Although the spelling was different, she liked to pretend that she was named after this uncle. She also dedicated a poem to his memory – “The Namesake” in 1902.

Somewhere there among the stones,
All alike, that mark their bones,
Lies a lad beneath the pine
Who once bore a name like mine, -
Flung his splendid life away
Long before I saw the day.

...

Willa was always closer to her father, Charles Cather, a gentle man who had studied the law and, after giving up farming, ran an insurance office. As Woodress notes: "His death was a heavy blow, for Charles and his oldest child always had been very close. All the kind, gentle fathers in Cather's fiction have her father in them."⁵ Among other characters, he is most probably partially portrayed in "Old Mrs. Harris" as Mr. Templeton – an easy going and kind businessman. On the same assumption, his wife, Willa's mother, was a model for Victoria Templeton in the same story. "Victoria had a good heart, but she was terribly proud and could not bear the least criticism."⁶ Even though the mother and daughter often clashed due to the same temperament, Willa had a great appreciation for her often tyrannical, yet charming mother. In her article on the author, Helen Buss illustrates their affairs: "Cather's relationship with her mother continued to be one in which her mother held great authority. For example, knowing how the heat depressed her daughter and made her cranky, her mother had to tell her, when she was old enough to know better, to please delay her annual summer trip home."⁷

Finally, Willa's grandmother – Rachel Boak – who according to Woodress, "has been portrayed indelibly as Old Mrs. Harris"⁸ - had a great influence on her granddaughter while taking care of her preschool education. Willa was the oldest of seven children; her two brothers her age were her childhood companions as opposed to her younger sister, eight years her junior, who was very different and the two had little to say to each other.

⁵ Woodress, James: **Willa Cather: A Literary Life**. University of Nebraska Press, 1987, pp.236

⁶ Cather, Willa: **Obscure Destinies - Old Mrs. Harris**, eBook No.: 0201131h.html

⁷ Buss, Helen M.: **Willa Cather: Reading the Writer through Biographies and Memoirs**. In: *Cather Studies*

⁸ Woodress, James: **Willa Cather: A Literary Life**. University of Nebraska Press, 1987, pp.14

Three other siblings were much too young to play an important part in Willa's formative years.

The family joined the westward movement following the paternal grandparents, who urged Charles to join them in their new flourishing prairie home. The young family, accompanied by grandmother Boak, her two other grandchildren, their hired girl, and her brother, arrived at Red Cloud, Nebraska in April 1883.

Nine year old Willa wasn't happy at first, but soon grew accustomed to the new home. In an interview in 1921, she recollected: "I was little and homesick and lonely and my mother was homesick and nobody paid attention to us. So the country and I had it out together and by the end of the first autumn the shaggy grass country had gripped me with a passion that I have never been able to shake. It has been the happiness and the curse of my life."⁹

The arrival in Nebraska is reflected in "My Antonia", when ten year old Jim Burden comes to live with his grandparents after his parents die. In Jim Burden, Cather created her alter ego narrator. Her decision to use a first person male narrator is discussed later. Just like Willa upon her arrival, Jim for the first time comes into contact with immigrants who represent the Old World. Although Cather arrived in Nebraska as a part of a large family, her narrator came in as an orphan accompanied only by his parents' farm hand. His solitude enabled Cather to express her own feelings of loneliness and isolation and to affirm the privacy and subjectivity of her childhood. As Woodress notes, "from the very opening of the novel Jim Burden evokes the

⁹ Brent Bohlke, L.: *Willa Cather in Person: Interviews, Speeches, and Letters*, University of Nebraska Press, 1986

land as Cather remembered it when she was a child in Catherton.”¹⁰ Jim’s departure from the prairie to settle in town also mirrors Cather’s experience. The similarities of the fictive life of Jim and real life of Cather continue throughout the novel. They both develop deeper friendships with the foreign people and disapprove of the social situation regarding the immigrants. In the novel, Jim says “I thought the attitude of the town people toward these girls very stupid. {...} What did it matter? All foreigners were ignorant people who couldn’t speak English.”¹¹

Eventually, Jim, like Cather, leaves the west of the United States to permanently reside in the east, concretely in New York.

Charles Cather gave up farming after 18 months and moved his family from an isolated farm to the town of Red Cloud, where Willa’s serious schooling began. Unlike other students her age, she was very fond of literature and spent a lot of time reading. She befriended an older, educated, immigrant couple – the Weiners – who introduced her to French and German literature in translation and let her use their large library. Upon reading the story, it is reasonable to assume that she had portrayed them as the Rosens, also an older immigrant couple, in “Old Mrs. Harris”. It is also fair to assume that, in this tale, the Rosens support autobiographical Vickie Templeton in her college ambitions. Her high school teachers – Mr. and Mrs. Goudys – deepened her academic interest, and she stayed in contact with them for the next forty years. Unlike her coevals, she had many adult friends who contributed to the growth of her mind.

¹⁰ Woodress, James: **Willa Cather: A Literary Life**. University of Nebraska Press, 1987, pp.169

¹¹ Cather, Willa: **My Antonia**, Everyman Paperbacks, 1996, pp.116

She often visited immigrant farm women to listen to their stories, and had great respect for them. She also spent a lot of time with the family physician and often went on calls with him. Dr. McKeeby must have influenced her early goal to become a surgeon. Another one of her most significant adult friends was an Englishman, William Ducker, who guided her through the works of Latin and Greek authors, and with whom she conducted scientific experiments. His death was the first great loss of her life.

Although not a talented performer, she had a passion for music. Her neighbor in Red Cloud, Mrs. Julia Miners, according to correspondence with Carrie Miner Sherwood, later portrayed in "My Antonia" as Mrs. Harling, was the person most responsible for this interest. The Miner daughters were her friends for life. Both the girls appear in "My Antonia" and the novel is actually dedicated to them "To Carrie and Irene Miner/ In memory of affections old and true". It was through the Miner family that she met the real life model for Antonia – Annie Sadilek, a hired girl and another friend for life.

By her adult friends, Willa Cather was considered remarkable, but to the average citizen of Red Cloud she must have seemed somewhat strange. Not only did she wear her hair shorter than most boys, but she also signed her name as William Cather, Jr. She deprecated the traditional Victorian norms of behavior for girls, and she preferred the way the hired girls from immigrant families were brought up. She strongly believed in women's self-reliance and freedom. From her adolescent years up to her junior year in college, she appeared in male roles in theatre plays and performances. It is quite reasonable to meditate, along with James Woodress: "What effect this denial of sex had on her psychological development, her sexual orientation, and her life as an artist is a matter of considerable interest. Contemporary

readers, especially feminist critics, have speculated at length on these matters. Did this pattern of adolescent behavior foreshadow, as some critics think, a latent or covert lesbianism? Did it make inevitable her remaining single, her selection of women as her closest friends, her creation of strong, resourceful heroines? Did it produce the large number of unhappy marriages in her fiction? Did it engender a fear of sex? Available data give no objective answers."¹²

She graduated from high school in June 1890 as one of three graduates that year. Her oration, a parting message to Red Cloud, was her first piece of serious writing, although never reprinted in full.

Like Vickie Templeton in "Old Mrs. Harris", Cather had to finance her education by borrowing money, for her family was poor and had six children to support. Cather spent her university days in Lincoln, the state capitol and eighteen times the size of Red Cloud. It was an instant town built by settlers from the east on what used to be a prairie. It was growing fast and, due to its convenient location, it soon became a railroad center connecting the east and the west. The University of Nebraska, Cather's base for the next five years, was as old as the town, though still in process of completion, its standards were high. In order to meet necessary requirements, Cather had to attend one year of prep school before she was matriculated as a freshman. Still a controversial figure in appearance, she was a very devoted student. Although she intended to study medicine and become a doctor, she also enrolled in literature classes. The breaking point came already in her first year. She submitted an essay on Thomas Carlyle that was a work of such value that, without her knowledge, it appeared in print in the Nebraska State Journal

¹² Woodress, James: **Willa Cather: A Literary Life**. University of Nebraska Press, 1987, pp.35

and the Hesperian – newspapers published on campus at Lincoln. In a letter dated June 1927 to Will Owen Jones, editor of the Journal and a friend, she wrote: "Up to that time I had planned to specialize in science; I thought I would like to study medicine. But what youthful vanity can be unaffected by the sight of itself in print! It has a kind of hypnotic effect."¹³

From then on she decided to become a writer and to live a life that would enable her to do so. By the beginning of her sophomore year she was a staff member of the Hesperian; during her junior year she became the managing editor. Apart from the Hesperian, Cather participated in many other extracurricular activities ranging from drama criticism and performing, editorial work on her class yearbook to creative writing under the guidance of her English instructor and later a friend, professor Herbert Bates. He was so amazed by her short story "Peter" that he sent it to *The Mahogany Tree*, Boston magazine, which published it in May 1892.

In "Peter", Cather used her knowledge of the immigrant community for the first time. In this a story of a Bohemian incomer who commits suicide on his Nebraska farm, she shows her familiarity with the Bohemian community by using thee's and thou's to suggest the familiar second person singular of the Czech language.

"No, Antone, I have told thee many times, no, thou shall not sell it until I am gone." "But I need money; what good is that old fiddle to thee? The very crows laugh at thee when thou art trying to play. Thy hands trembles so thou

¹³ Brent Bohlke, L.: *Willa Cather in Person: Interviews, Speeches, and Letters*, University of Nebraska Press, 1986

canst scarce hold the bow. Thou shalt go with me to the Blue to cut wood tomorrow. See to it thou art up early.”¹⁴

After republishing it three times, she finally used this story as an early version of Mr. Shimerda's death in the later novel "My Antonia".

Cather's early stories, including "Peter", reflect her memory of Nebraska as a bleak country. The characters of farmers depict hardship, deprivation and failure. Paradoxically, in her correspondence about this period, she expresses passion for the prairie.

While living in Lincoln, Cather met a number of people who became her lifelong friends. She was very selective of people she got acquainted with and she ignored the rest. Louise Pound, a fellow student one and a half years older than Cather, stands out among others. She was the very opposite of Cather, for she dressed fashionably, let her hair grow, played tennis and golf, managed the women's basketball team, and bore a very feminine appearance. The two women met during Cather's freshman year, they were both associate editors of a campus magazine. Based on mutual correspondence it is obvious that Cather fell in love for the first time in her life, but Pound did not reciprocate her affection and wanted an ordinary friendship. After about two years Cather, probably subconsciously, destroyed her relationship with the entire Pound family by publishing a parody on Louise's brother Roscoe in the *Hesperian*. The two of them were quite different in nature and did not get along. Cather's crush on his sister might have whetted the antipathy, but that is just a speculation. Either way, this was not the only time when using real people in fiction caused problems for Cather. Not all the portraits of real life people in her works were

¹⁴ Cather, Willa: *Peter*. In: *The Mahogany Tree*, May 21, 1892, pp. 323-324

flattering. "Throughout her life Cather put real people into her fiction, but in her later years she was somewhat more circumspect."¹⁵ Her relationship with Louise Pound was later restored, at least in correspondence.

Cather's last two years of college were no longer filled with such devotion for schoolwork. In 1893 her professional career in journalism started with a new column, "One Way of Putting It", in the Nebraska State Journal. The column ran until 1912, not only in Lincoln, but also in Pittsburg, and eventually New York. She scarcely mentioned her newspaper and magazine writer foreground, but all the work she had done throughout those years certainly led to her artistic maturity in the later years. Apart from columns, she excelled in drama criticisms that she wrote for the Lincoln Courier. Although overextended with her journalistic commitments, she graduated from Nebraska University in 1895.

3.2. First Employment

It was difficult for Cather to find a full time job in Lincoln after graduation, so she was happy to get an offer from Pittsburg's "Home Monthly" magazine. Thus, she moved east for the next phase of her career. She perceived the new environment in two different ways. She liked what the city had to offer, particularly the galleries, theatres, concerts, and the Carnegie Library. She also enjoyed being popular. She took advantage of all the cultural resources that a city much larger than Lincoln offered; nevertheless she criticized its dirt and unpleasant climate. She was not very fond of the magazine, which she considered trashy, but it paid well, certainly

¹⁵ Woodress, James: **Willa Cather: A Literary Life**. University of Nebraska Press, 1987, pp.53

better than *The Nebraska State Journal*; and as an editor she was able to publish her own stories, mostly stories for children. To keep up with the artistic life, she accepted a part time position as drama and music critic for the *Pittsburg Leader*. Both jobs brought her into contact with many people, among them eligible men her own age, which was new to her. Two of her male friends proposed to her within an interval of eight months. She turned both of them down and decided to remain single. Her decision and reasons are nicely concluded by James Woodress: "To be wholly free, to really be of some use somewhere, to do with her money what she wanted, to help those who had helped her, to pay the debts of her loves and her hates – those were the things she wanted to do with her life." {...} To state the matter simply, Cather was married to her art and sublimated her sexual impulses in her work. Throughout her life she gave art her highest priority, preferring her work to society, to family, to friends."¹⁶ She loved children, yet had no desire to have children of her own, and although she knew that some artists managed to combine marriage and careers, she was devoted solely to art.

Cather gave up her job at the *Home Monthly* and returned to Nebraska for a while before accepting a full time position at the *Leader*. Reviewing dramas and concerts kept her busy, but allowed her to visit Washington and New York to see more plays. Her social life at the time involved many artists – musicians, actors and actresses. One actress in particular, Lizzie Hudson Collier, whom she praised, was also a subconscious mediator of a meeting that changed Cather's life. In her dressing room Cather met Isabelle McClung. The two women immediately chimed and their friendship grew into a love that lasted all life. Cather soon moved into Isabelle family's home, raising the issue of lesbianism once again.

¹⁶ Woodress, James: *Willa Cather: A Literary Life*. University of Nebraska Press, 1987, pp.74

Sharon O'Brien shows that it had previously been an issue; in her biography she says: "I did not refer to her as a lesbian in the early drafts of the manuscript. But when I came across Cather's love letters to Louise Pound, written during her college years, I changed my mind. This important correspondence persuaded me that *lesbian* did in fact capture Cather's self-definition and that my biography should consider the impact on the creative process of her need both to conceal and to reveal her experience of desire."¹⁷

Due to a lack of records, it is hard to state whether Cather had a sexual relationship with Isabelle and therefore was a lesbian, but if a lesbian is defined as a woman whose primary emotional attachments are to other women regardless of sexual relations, then she can be considered so. Despite the fact that Isabelle McClung married about sixteen years later, their mutual love endured.

Cather was slowly getting tired of journalism she had been practicing since her junior year in college and was ready for a change. After another of her stories portraying the Nebraska immigrants was published in a national magazine, she finally quit the Leader and took a short term job at a weekly paper called the Library for which she wrote stories, poems, articles and essays of no particular importance. In fall 1900 she moved to Washington, where she translated documents and letters from French. Her accessible correspondence of that time is filled with joy undoubtedly coming from her growing love for Isabelle. After a few months in Washington she returned to Pittsburg and started her high school teaching career, which lasted 6 years. During that time she kept writing and contributing to newspapers and magazines under a pseudonym, Henry Nickelmann.

¹⁷ O'Brien, Sharon: **Willa Cather: The Emerging Voice**, Oxford University Press. 1987, pp.103

After about a year of teaching and saving money, she finally visited Europe with McClung. "For any educated American with European antecedents the periodic need to visit Europe to water his or her cultural roots is a compelling imperative. For Cather the urge was especially intense. The European immigrants she had met on the Divide, the German-French culture of the Wieners in Red Cloud, her early love of the classics, her deep immersion in French literature starting in college, her reviewing of books and plays by European authors and playwrights, her wide reading of British writers – all these factors drew her inevitably to the Old World."¹⁸

She returned to Europe a few times after that, and it always made a great impression on her.

3.3. Fulltime Writer

In 1906 her teaching career came to an end, when she accepted a job in McClure's Magazine in New York. She was still teaching when she published her first book, surprisingly, of poems called "April Twilights" in 1903. Two years later McClure and company agreed to publish her collection of seven stories – "The Troll Garden".

She left Pittsburg for good and started to work fulltime for McClure's Magazine, not as a writer, but an editor. She fell in love with New York and became deeply attached to the brilliant, yet difficult, Sam McClure. She spent six years editing other people's contributions. During that time another important person entered her life. Edith Lewis, co-worker from McClure's and friend, who later became her life companion. Lewis, as well as

¹⁸ Woodress, James: **Willa Cather: A Literary Life**. University of Nebraska Press, 1987, pp.91-92

McClung, who even after her marriage in 1916 remained unrivalled in Cather's affection, supported Cather throughout the time she grinded for the Magazine and took care of her when she fell ill from overworking herself. Cather knew she was missing out on her dream to be a full time writer, but she was happy to have succeeded in a man's world. She liked the fact that she had worked herself to the top and was happy with the salary that enabled her to travel to Europe and live in conditions so dissimilar to her youth. Her high appreciation of Sam McClure made her fulfill tasks that drained so much energy from her that she very often got sick and had to be hospitalized. While working on a demanding and uninspiring editing piece for McClure's Magazine – a biography of Mary Baker G. Eddy: "The Story of Her Life and The History of Christian Science", she had to go to Boston to check the facts. Her trip paid back in the most contributive way to her future career as a full time writer, even though she did not accept it at the time. By a stroke of good luck she had met Sarah Orne Jewett in Boston while paying a visit to a friend, Mrs. Fields.

Although Cather's friendship with Jewett lasted only sixteen months before Jewett's unexpected death, it was very valuable. Jewett was the first important woman writer Cather knew. Before meeting Jewett, she did not acknowledge many women writers. As she said: "I have not much faith in women in fiction. They have sort of sex consciousness that is abominable. They are so limited to one string and they lie so about that. They are so few, the ones who really did anything worth while; there were the great Georges, George Eliot and George Sand, and they were anything but women, and there was Miss Bronte, who kept her sentimentality under control, and there was Jane Austen who certainly had more common sense than any of them

and was in some respect the greatest of them all. Women are so horribly subjective and they have such scorn for the healthy commonplace.”¹⁹

Jewett, during the short time they had together, became Cather's mentor and role model. It was after her death, and few more years at McClure's, that Cather finally followed her suggestions to slow and quiet down from work in order to perfect her voice as a writer and stabilize and improve her style. Jewett also proposed that Cather should draw on her own background and experience.

Before irretrievably leaving the Magazine as a full time editor, Cather had met one more woman that became a close friend, Elizabeth Sergeant. When Sergeant brought her manuscript to McClure's, Cather instantly liked her. Although they did not see much of each other after the first twenty years, they stayed friends in correspondence.

By the time she decided to become a fulltime writer, Cather was 39 years old. In the fall of 1912, she moved with Edith Lewis into an apartment on Bank Street in New York, where they lived for the next fifteen years. She still continued to spend months away from the city in the company of Elizabeth McClung. She mostly concentrated on her writing, but she also met people and soaked up the history of places, which she later used in her stories.

However, in her first novels succeeding "Alexander's Bridge", following Jewett's advice, she portrayed what she knew best that is the life on the Nebraska prairie. She started off with a short story called "Bohemian girl", in which she used the immigrant families for first time. She soon followed with a novel "O Pioneers!" using the same material. It was also the land that

¹⁹ Cather, Willa: *The World and the Parish: Willa Cather's Articles and Reviews, 1893-1902*

was the hero of the story, although the novel of the soil was at the time far from fashionable. Cather carefully watched and clipped reviews and thanked those who were highly sympathetic. She was especially happy that reviewers from the prairie states were pleased with the novel. When writing the novel, she wanted to shine for her home folks, since she had not made much impression in Nebraska in her youth. Now, she had something she was proud of, and so did the people in Nebraska. The reviews were positive, not only in the Western states, but also in the national magazines. The New York Herald printed: "With a steady hand this author holds up the mirror of fiction to people of our land little, if at all, seen therein before: the Scandinavian and Bohemian pioneers... we see these Old World Pioneers adapting themselves to new conditions, identifying themselves with the prairie soil and becoming a voice in our national life... This is a novel of considerable substance."²⁰

As far as literary style classification, "O Pioneers!" could be called realistic in terms of the settings, authenticity of the characters, and the reality of events Cather describes. In her heart, however, the author belongs to the tradition of American romanticism. She shows abruptness, obscurity, and most of all, she believes in nature. After all, the title for the book comes from Whitman's poem. Her inspiration from Whitman's poetry could be seen in the description of nature she gives in her novel. "The air and the earth are curiously mated and intermingled, as if the one were the breath of the other."²¹ As John J. Murphy says in his contribution to the *Literary History of the American West*, "Alexandra's final view of the land as a universal and eternal factor resembles Whitman's view in *Song of Myself*.

²⁰ New York Herald, July 18th, 1913, pp.8. In: Woodress, James: *Willa Cather: A Literary Life*. University of Nebraska Press, 1987, pp. 120

²¹ Cather, Willa: *O Pioneers!*, Virago Press Limited, 1983, pp. 77

"I bequeathe myself to the dirt, to grow from the grass I love;
If you want me again, look for me under your boot-soles."²²

In contrast to the pioneer days, Cather showed the prosperity that followed. Although it brought comfort and materialistic well being, it lost its peaceful and tranquil harmony for good. The author uses contrast as a literary technique throughout the whole novel – from the clash between the old beliefs, faith and individuality versus the conformity and money-driven activities, the difference in character to the contrast of life and death.

She also incorporated her personality and viewpoints into the novel, in particular her opinion on love and marriage. Through her characters she showed the tragic essence of romantic love and her skepticism towards marriage other than the safe union of friends.

It is very probable that Cather partly based the character of Alexandra Bergson on the image of herself as she might have been in the pioneering days in Nebraska. The character and the author share a strong masculine personality and energy, and they both strive to succeed. In Alexandra, Cather created a female protagonist much appreciated by feminist critics.

Besides Alexandra, Cather gave the readers of "O Pioneers!" a number of other characters, both major and minor, but all of them living and breathing. Although the structure of the book is loose and filled with a lot of digressions and gaps, Cather managed to overcome the plot with emotional engagement and stimulation of imagination of her readers.

²² Murphy, John. J: **Willa Cather**. In: *A Literary History of the American West*, Texan Christian University Press, 1998, pp.689

Right after publishing "O Pioneers!", Cather devoted her time to work on Sam McClure's autobiography, which was running in McClure's before being published in a book form. It was her pleasure to write this piece, for she was very fond of the McClure family, especially Sam.

Her next novel, "The song of the Lark" combines the immigrant subject matter with Cather's interest in opera and music in general. The title suggests a young girl's awakening to something beautiful. James Woodress articulated his delight concerning the choice of the motif:

"A Swedish immigrant from Minnesota who had fought her way to the pinnacle of artistic success was a character to get excited over. Cather could combine her deep interest in art and artist with her memories of growing up in Nebraska" ²³Cather, in all probability, based this character on Olive Fremstad, whom she often met to interview while writing the novel. The two women were congenial, and Cather was very supportive of Fremstad's career. In the novel, the author once again depicts characters suggested by real people and even the setting uses a real place - Red Cloud, Nebraska. The protagonist's early life combines both Cather's and Fremstad's memories.

The novel received enthusiastic reviews, and not only from opera fans.

Upon finishing the novel, Cather abandoned the idea of visiting wartime Germany and went to the western United States instead. Lewis accompanied her on this trip to Colorado and New Mexico, which proved to be a great idea. Not only was Cather happy there, but she also accumulated a great deal of material for her later novels. "The Professor's House" inspired by visiting Mesa Verde and its remarkable Cliff Palace and "Death Comes for the

²³ Woodress, James: **Willa Cather: A Literary Life**. University of Nebraska Press, 1987, pp. 147

Archbishop” which, 12 years later, reflects the month Cather and Lewis spent in New Mexico.

Back home her literary life progressed and flourished, but her personal life was not in its best phase. Judge McClung died and the family’s house in Pittsburg, where Cather spent great many years, was to be sold. Soon after this bad news, Elizabeth McClung announced her marriage to a violinist Jan Hambourg, which was even worse. It took Cather several months before she was able to continue working on other than hard and sour themes. She managed to publish a couple of stories, none of them enthusiastic.

It was only after she visited Nebraska and her friends among immigrant farmers that she got back to writing with joy. It was “My Antonia” that she focused on. In a way, the idea for this novel had been in Cather’s head for a long time. She had known the model for Antonia, Annie Pavelka – Sadilek, since her childhood in Nebraska, and she had already used the story of the suicide of Annie’s father in her early short story “Peter”. In “My Antonia” Cather once again proved that “she could only write successfully when she wrote about people and places she loved”²⁴ It took her two years to finish the manuscript, but it was worth the effort. She wanted her heroine to be presented by a first person narrator – someone engaged in the story to really transfer the feeling. She decided that the narrator should be a man, for most of what she knew about Annie came from talks with young men. Thus, she created Jim Burden, Antonia’s friend since childhood, who adored her and never lost touch with her. Cather felt quite confident in using a male narrator, after having written McClure’s autobiography so successfully. Through Jim Burden, Cather presents a chain of memories that give

²⁴ Woodress, James: **Willa Cather: A Literary Life**. University of Nebraska Press, 1987, pp.166

an impression of a real autobiography rather than fiction. She once again used Red Cloud as a model setting for *Black Hawk*, as well as many of its inhabitants. In *Antonia*, she portrayed the mother of races. Despite the hard conditions on the prairie, the suicide of her father, and later the betrayal of her lover, Antonia always stood straight and was full of life. Surrounded by her many children, she was like a founder of early races. The image that framed the heroine is pertinently formulated by Woodress: "Cather mythologizes American experience in creating Antonia as an embodiment of the westward movement, the pioneer woman, the symbol of the frontier. Her life is emblematic of the breaking of the sod, the cultivation of the wilderness, the migration of people from the Old World to the New."²⁵

The book was published at a time when the world was preoccupied with the last days of WWI, so it did not become an immediate success. It took the readers and the critics a few years to fully appreciate the value of the novel.

The war is reflected in Cather's novel "One of Ours". On her annual visit to Red Cloud, Cather read a letter, her young cousin sent to his mother before he was killed at Cantigny in May 1918. Upon this family tragedy, she resolved to make him the subject of her novel. The novel consists of two parts: the first one takes place in Nebraska and once more describes the life on the prairie; the second part is set on a battle field in France. It took Cather a long time to finish this piece, and she even made a trip to France to be able to continue writing. Meanwhile, she managed to publish a compilation of short narratives called "The Youth and the Bright Medusa", which included several stories dealing with artists and musicians. It also featured the best stories from "The Troll Garden" and became a success under the

²⁵ Woodress, James: *Willa Cather: A Literary Life*. University of Nebraska Press, 1987, pp.170

promotional hand of Alfred Knopf, who later overtook the position of Cather's publisher.

It was him who persuaded Cather to publish her war novel under the title "One of Ours" rather than its working title "Claude" and he was right. In spite of a great number of unfavorable reviews, the book became a best seller and won Cather a Pulitzer Prize in 1923.

Cather experienced a contemplative decade during the 1920's.

Upon visiting her family in Nebraska to celebrate her parents' golden wedding anniversary, she joined the Episcopal Church and became a loyal member till her death.

Her hometown was again a source for another novel. "Lost Lady" derives its plot from the life of Lyra Garber, later Anderson, the wife of former governor of Nebraska and the leading lady of the town when Cather was growing up. According to Mildred Bennet: "she was considered one of the most beautiful and charming hostesses of the governor's mansion."²⁶In her the author portrays another type of woman than in her previous novels. Unlike Alexandra, Thea, and Antonia, Marian Forrester represents a wife with no vocation or career. A woman who is limited in her opinions and who is driven by her sexual needs. The novel finds its template in the nineteenth century novel of adultery, only without the moral purpose.

Marian Forrester marries a generation older man whom she adores and cares for, but who cannot fulfill her sexual needs. He knows about her extramarital affair, but does not comment on it. They have no children who are affected by her adultery and the affair does not destroy her as a woman and a small town resident. Unlike Flaubert, Tolstoy, or Hawthorne, Cather showed the aesthetic rather than moral concern of adultery.

²⁶ Bennet, Mildred, R.: *The World of Willa Cather*, University Press of Nebraska, 1961, pp.73

In the novel, Cather had decided upon third person narration. The anonymous narration is often supplemented with the insights of a young man, Neil, who is charmed by Marian's appearance and manners, but later comes to despise her when he finds out about her affair. It is not moral concern that destroys his affection for her, but rather the degradation of his high estimation of Marian. He is more disturbed by her choice of the lover than the adultery itself.

In writing "A Lost Lady" Cather followed principles she had stated in her best-known essay "Novel D meubl ", published in the *New Republic* in 1922. There she calls for less furnished novels and instigates authors to simplify the form while preserving the spirit.

"A Lost Lady" was well appreciated by the critics and admired by its readers. The rights were sold to Hollywood, and a movie was made. There was a remake of the film in 1934, but Cather despised the production and the wide public response up to a point that, in her will, she prohibited any further dramatization of her works in perpetuity.

The next novel, "Professor's House", came into life while reviews of "A Lost Lady" were still appearing. As was already mentioned, Cather found inspiration for the novel when traveling to the west of the States. She left the prairie locale behind and moved the setting close to Chicago to depict a life of a professor, St. Peter, who bears many autobiographical features starting from the parallel family backgrounds to a deep affection to houses they live in and get attached to. The author and the protagonist both had to solve personal crisis connected with the changes in the world order after the war, and they both pondered the question of materialism and power of money, which was corrupting in many aspects. The novel incorporates a narration about Tom Outland, a young student, who discovered the cliff city

in Mesa Verde and whom the professor once knew and valued. Tom represents an idealistic and defeated youth and draws a great contrast to the professor's daughters, who are caught up in the money webs and are a disappointment to him.

"Tom Outland's Story" was reprinted as a separate tale and is among the best stories Cather had written.

As a whole, the novel was accepted with both positive and rejecting attitudes. Cather herself did not assign it as her favorite.

Soon after the "Professor's House", she published a nouvelle very similar to it in tone called "My Mortal Enemy". It is a bleak story of a woman whose life ends unfulfilled. In it she again followed the principles of *Novel D meubl * and made a great effort to cover her tracks in creating the character, which was quite unusual. Neither the critics nor readers appreciated the nouvelle very much.

On the contrary, her next piece "Death Comes for the Archbishop" was accepted with great delight. It was the first of three historical novels she wrote. "Death Comes for the Archbishop" deals with the Southwest, a region Cather had often visited and was interested in since her youth. When she described the story to Reynolds, who was to take care of its serialization, "she said it was concerned with the picturesque conditions of life in the Southwest just at the time that New Mexico was taken over from the Old Mexico, and with the experience of two Catholic missionaries who were sent there to bring order out of the mixture of Indian and Mexican superstitions. The hero of the story was Father Latour, a young Frenchman who was made Bishop of New Mexico at the age of thirty-seven, a man of old and noble family in Puy de Dome in Auvergne, a man of wide culture, and idealist, and

from his youth hungry for the world's frontiers. He was finally made and archbishop and died in 1888. In other words, she added, he went there in the days of the buffalo and Indian massacres, and he lived to see the Santa Fe Railroad cross New Mexico."²⁷

Cather really enjoyed writing it and found it hard to part with her characters, although they were exclusively men, and Catholics, which was unusual for Cather's world. Despite the fact that she had only been a visitor to New Mexico and that she was writing about a subject matter she had not lived through, she managed to publish a masterpiece that became an American classic.

Throughout the twenties and thirties Cather traveled within the United States and Europe in order to visit her family and friends and to collect material for her novels. She gave lectures and interviews and received many honorary degrees from various universities including Nebraska, Yale, and Princeton. She did not enjoy social events or gatherings and believed that artists should devote most of their time to work. In order to find peace and quiet for the necessary concentration, Cather bought a small cottage on the Grand Manan Island near the Canadian coast. After having to leave her home on Bank Street in New York due to a planned demolition of the building and moving into a hotel for another five years, the primitive house was her one and only own place. Once, when she was traveling there though Canada, a sudden inspiration to write a story about French Canada hit her. "Shadows on the Rock" was her second historical novel. It was set in Quebec at the end of seventeenth century and required profound research, including a trip to Paris.

²⁷ Letter to Peter Reynolds kept in Columbia University Library. Here I quote from Woodress, James: **Willa Cather: A Literary Life**. University of Nebraska Press, 1987, pp.74
pp. 227

The novel was her first piece of writing after her father died in 1928. The same year her mother had a stroke and remained paralyzed for the rest of her days in 1931. Cather divided her time between visits to her mother and work on the novel. It was not a pleasant time for her, so she was happy to reunite with Elizabeth McClung in Paris after a seven year separation.

Cather returned to America and finished "Shadows on the Rock". The reviews were not different from what she expected. She wrote the novel to keep herself going, not to publish another bestseller.

With both her parents gone and no family to cling to, Cather was slowly adjusting to her new conditions. She arranged a successful family reunion and spent some time in Nebraska. This stay inspired her to write three short stories published in a collection called "Obscure Destinies". One of the tales was "Neighbor Rosicky", in a way a sequel to "My Antonia". The model for Rosicky was Annie Pavelka's husband, together with old Mr. Cather. The story, although not happy in the end, describes a warm-hearted husband and a father of an immigrant Bohemian family on the Divide. Here again, Cather brought her memories of childhood to life. The whole collection derives from the prairie land and gives a subtle ending to Cather's youthful memories of immigrant families in fiction.

Upon her return to New York, she moved from the Grosvenor hotel into an apartment on Park Avenue, where she lived until her death. There she started her penultimate novel "Lucy Gayhaert", a book filled with music and despair. Cather thought of it as a romance, the critics added an attributive of a Gothic romance. An innocent young girl trapped in a sinister relationship with an older man who feeds on her youth, was one way to see the novel. For the readers, however, it was a tragic love story of a country girl, who is fascinated by music and, although she is lacking the talent, she strives to

succeed in it. Through music she meets and falls in love with a man, but the love is ended by his drowning just like Lucy's life in the end of the tale. The response to the novel was great and earned Cather a lot of money.

The last decade of Cather's life was filled with rather painful occurrences and events. The Great Depression, which started in the late twenties, and looming of the Second World War did not provide a pleasant environment for the author. She was heartbroken over the situation and tried to help as much as she could. She kept sending money to the suffering farmer families in Nebraska and expressed her grief in letters to her friends in Europe.

To make matters worse, she buried her beloved brother Douglass who died of a heart attack the same year that Isabelle McClung - Hambourg lost her life to kidney failure. Cather was devastated and thought she could not go on living.

"Her brother, she felt, was almost like a twin, and Isabelle, who had grown more beautiful every year in person and spirit, was the one for whom all her books had been written."²⁸

After a blank period, Cather continued to work on her last completed novel "Sapphira and the Slave Girl", where she brought the memories of her early childhood back to life. The novel is set in the Shenandoah Valley, Virginia during the final years of slavery in 1856. The Majority of the characters are drawn upon Cather's family members, including their servants. As a reflection of the outbreak of the War, the destruction of tradition and culture,

²⁸ Woodress, James: **Willa Cather: A Literary Life**. University of Nebraska Press, 1987, pp.273. The author here draws on Cather's letters to Zoe Akins and Dorothy Canfield Fisher

and the end of the world she loved, the subject matter is dark and evil, definitely not a nostalgic return to happy childhood memories.

Once again, the novel was defined as a Gothic tale. Sapphira, a tyrant, baits an innocent young slave girl, Nancy, until Sapphira's daughter and husband rescue poor Nancy by sending her away from the tyrant's trap. Later in the novel Sapphira is changed by the loss of her granddaughter and the book ends in peace and harmony.

The reviews were outstanding, and the sales enormous. Cather was very pleased with the success.

Towards the end of her life, Cather suffered from great pains in her right hand and had to wear a special brace, which for most of the time prevented her from writing. Nevertheless, she managed to start her third historical novel, to be called "Hard Punishments", set in Avignon in the Middle Ages. She never finished and after her death, Edith Lewis destroyed the manuscript, following Cather's wish.

She turned once more to Nebraska memories for inspiration for a tale she wanted to give to her brother Roscoe as a reminder of their childhood. Unfortunately, Roscoe died just before she was about to send him the finished story, called "The Best Years" to him.

Three years before her death of cerebral hemorrhage in 1947, Cather received a gold medal from the National Institute of Arts and Letters for her lifelong literary accomplishments.

The inscription on her tombstone reads an excerpt from "My Antonia"

"...that is happiness; to be dissolved into something complete and great."

4. Nebraska and its Immigration History

In this chapter, I would like to relate the struggle of Nebraskan immigrants and the relevant historical context of the latter part of the nineteenth century up to the early twentieth century, with their image in Cather's novels.

4.1. Louisiana Purchase and the Homestead Act

What is now known as Nebraska became a part of the union through the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, in which the United States bought a tremendous amount of land in the western part of North America from France.

The Kansas-Nebraska Act, passed in 1854, officially created a Nebraska territory and opened the area to settlement west of the Missouri River. This led to a controversy over the disposition of public lands. In response, in 1862, the United States Congress enacted a series of laws, including the Homestead Act, that totally transformed the American West.

From then on, a settler in Nebraska could take 160 acres and after living on it for six months, buy it from the United States for \$1.25 an acre. This was called pre-emption. Furthermore, under the new Free Homestead Act, any head of family or person over 21 years of age who was a citizen of the United States or who had filed a declaration of intent to become a citizen could settle 160 acres with only a \$14.00 filing fee and have it for free by living on it and improving it for five years. In 1873 the Timber Claim Act was passed, granting a settler 160 acres if he planted 10 acres of trees and took care of them for eight years. Under these laws a settler could, in a few years, acquire 480 acres of land.

4.2. Reasons for Immigration of the Bohemians

Such conditions were a great attraction to Czechs, who suffered from lack of freedom and political persecution under Bach absolutism established in Bohemia after the revolutions in 1848. In her letter dated August 12, 1856 to her friend Josef Lidumil Lesikar, who had gone to America following the 1848 uprising, Bozena Nemcova wrote the following: "...You cannot realize what a difficult time we are living through in our country...Till my death I will regret that I did not decide to leave for America when you were going there...I would now be spared bitter moments and would be rid of these miserable conditions...Live happily in that new country and never regret that you had to leave your native country and that you have to live abroad – the Fatherland is everywhere where there are people of one language, morals and endeavors."²⁹

To Czech immigrants, America was a country where freedom of the individual was respected, and personal and spiritual freedom recognized. Together with the option of settling and owning land, it was the perfect destination for many people, not just farmers, who desired better economic circumstances through the acquisition of land.

At the time, the influx of immigrants to America was tolerated, if not altogether welcomed, under the right of unrestricted departure. Immigrants helped to populate the growing country and as majority of them were English-speaking Protestants, they blended in well with the rest of the population. Later on, as more Irish and European Catholics entered the United States, previous immigrants began to protest for they feared both cheap labor and the possible increase of the Pope's influence in the United States.

²⁹ Svejda, J: **The Czech Immigration to Nebraska from its Origins to the Present**. In: *Czech Contributions to the Progress in Nebraska*, 1976. Editor Vladimir Kucera

As a reaction to the protests, the U.S. government passed various laws to regulate immigration. In the 1920's there were quota systems heavily favoring British and Northern European Immigrants. By 1924 the laws became very stringent towards immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe.

Land grants in the Western United States were also given to the transcontinental railroad companies to extend rail transportation from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Buying land from the railroads was a second best opportunity for immigrants after the majority of good homesteads were occupied. For those who had come in the seventies and later, there was no other chance than to buy land from someone who was lucky to arrive first.

In order to attract immigrants, various pamphlets were printed within advertising campaigns that ran in eastern United States as well as in Europe. Following the glowing descriptions of Nebraska's farmland, the Czechs started to immigrate into southeastern Nebraska not only from the old country, but also from Wisconsin, Iowa, and other eastern cities. There, they began to build towns like Praha, Brno, and others reminding them of their homeland. Statistics state that, up to the year 1880, approximately 75% of all Czech immigrants settled in Nebraska.

"As to the number of Czechs in Nebraska, the census of 1920 says there are 15,818 persons, men and women, born in Czechoslovakia, living here, or 51,000, including the first American-born generation. However, some Czechs are enrolled as Austrians. Miss Sarka Hrbkova, in her article "Bohemians in Nebraska", (published in Volume 19 of the Nebraska State Historical Society's publications) says: "Of the 539,392 Bohemians according to the census of 1910 it is probably safe to say that one-eighth

reside in Nebraska." That would mean 67,676. Dr. John A. Habenicht, who at one time lived in Nebraska, wrote a history of Bohemians in the United States (Nebraska included of course). His history was published in 1904. He computed the population at about 57,000. ³⁰

4.3. Life on the Prairie

Life on the prairie was not always easy, but very much to the contrary. It was mentioned that not all who came to America to prosper by working the soil were farmers. Breaking the tough prairie sod while fighting inclement weather, grass fires and later swarms of crop damaging grasshopper was a task that many immigrants couldn't take. The sad ending of a musician rather than farmer that Cather describes in her short fiction "Peter", and later again in "My Antonia", was not unusual. Transformation of the virgin soil into food producing land was a struggle, which only the hardy could survive. Rose Rosicky, daughter of an immigrant family, collected and recorded several stories of their fellow pioneers in order to leave a record of their life for future generations. They are, in fact, very similar to what Cather describes in her novels.

For instance, Mrs. Frank Jelinek writes: "We started out from Manitowoc on October 5, 1865 and with our family traveled the families of my husband's brothers Joseph and Vit, his father Vaclav Jelinek, Joseph Hynek, Matej and Frank Kubicek, Vaclav Kubicek and Jiri (George) Krajnik and his mother. When we arrived in St. Joseph, Missouri, we found our baggage had not come. It was at the close of the Civil War, the trains were loaded with returning soldiers and freight, and so we had to wait three weeks before the missing articles turned up. One box, containing feather-beds and clothing,

³¹ Rosicky, Rose: *A History of Czechs (Bohemians) in Nebraska*, National printing company Omaha, Nebraska, 1929, pp.19

so badly needed, never did arrive. A scarlet fever epidemic was raging in St. Joseph and we lost a three-year-old boy, whom we buried in Arago. While we were waiting for our luggage, Vaclav Jelinek (the father), Vaclav Kubicek and Vaclav Sestak had gone ahead on foot, to prepare a shelter. At last we were able to proceed on our journey of two hundred miles by wagon. Autumn had come with rainy, chilly weather. We had to stock up with provisions, for after leaving Nebraska City, there were no towns or settlements. We traveled two weeks before we reached our destination, for the roads were bad.... Going a mile further, we came to the shelter prepared on our claim, a veritable hole in the ground, covered, but without door or windows. It measured 10x14 and in it eighteen people lived all winter, crammed like sardines. The third day after our arrival a bad snowstorm came on. Our abode filled with snow, which drifted high all around. Krajnik had brought his old, ailing mother, who had become ill from traveling and for that reason was left in the wagon, on featherbeds. At that she was situated better than anything we could have done for her in the dug-out. She died the morning of the storm and there being no material for a coffin, the men broke up a wagon box and used the boards for that purpose.... The settlers put in crops and helped one another. Two teams were harnessed to a plow and the breaking of the virgin soil begun. The women planted corn with the aid of hatchets. When provisions were needed, the men had to go to Nebraska City for them, a distance of seventy-five miles, requiring a week's time. Those who did not have teams had to walk...There were no wells, water from the river had to suffice. After rains the river rose and crossing was a hardship. My husband had bought a little pig, the price being service, not money. The owner would sell it in no other way. So one day my husband set out to pay his debt. He put a plow in the wagon and began to ford the stream. When he reached the middle, the box was lifted off the wheels, these and the horses

went shoreward and my husband in the box sailed down the current. He saved himself by jumping out and swimming for the shore. The plow, so valuable to him, was never recovered. Our men had each bought a load of corn and took it to Fort Kearney, where they sold it with good profit. Prospects for a good crop that year (1866) were bright, but the grasshoppers took everything except sorghum, that was all we had left. The next winter a heavy snow fell, and we had plenty of rabbit and prairie-chicken meat. These heavy snows caused an inundation in the spring and the settlers had to camp on the hills for two days and nights. It was still cold and their dug-out was filled with mud, a most cheerless state. As soon as the weather permitted more substantial dug-outs were built, of young trees, sod and dry grass. In one corner four posts were driven, young trees laid across and covered with grass, -- that was the bed. In the other corner stood a packing box, -- that was the table. Stumps and boxes served as chairs. In 1866 we celebrated our first Fourth of July in Nebraska. We gathered on the farm of Vaclav Petracek, where we danced, sang, ate, drank and made merry. Petracek was the orchestra; he played for the dancers by pounding on a plow wheel. But that year the grasshoppers came, hordes of them. They ate everything in sight, except the sorghum, and covered the river so thickly that the only supply of drinking water was shut off for some time. The following spring a new breed was hatched, but was partly annihilated by the use of kerosene. In later years they came again, more than once, but did less damage."³¹

The Czech community in Nebraska was large and quite active. The mutual Aid Society was founded in order to help those who did not speak English

³¹ Rosicky, Rose: *A History of Czechs (Bohemians) in Nebraska*, National printing company Omaha, Nebraska, 1929, pp.70 - 71

insure their crops. There were Czech language schools held on Saturdays and Sundays to keep the mother tongue active among the children born in the New World. A number of newspapers and magazines was published and various clubs and organizations, including church based ones, were established.

4.4. Possible Sources for the Fictitious Character's Names

In her book "The History of Czechs (Bohemians) in Nebraska", Rose Rosicky mentions a lot of significant Czech immigrants who became known throughout Nebraska for their activities in public life. She had also tracked and recorded the names of individual families according to the county they lived in, inclusive of Red Cloud, Webster County the home of Willa Cather.

"This also is one of the counties containing small settlements that have never grown to any proportions. However, the Czech pioneers here have gained fame in Nebraska literature, for it is about them that Miss Willa Cather has written with such rare understanding and sympathy. Black Hawk in her book "My Antonia" is Red Cloud, her own home town. It is very unusual for an American, be he or she ever so kindly and broadminded, to entirely grasp the psychology of a foreign people, but Miss Cather has done it thoroughly."³²

According to Rosicky, there were Anton Sadilek, Josef Jelinek and Matej Vavricka living within eight miles south of Red Cloud in the last decade of nineteenth century. Anton Sadilek must have been the father of Annie Sadilek, real life model for Antonia Shimerda in "My Antonia".

Jelinek is a last name Cather used in the same novel to introduce Anton, who came to help the Shimerdas bury the father, after he had committed suicide.

³¹ Rosicky, Rose: *A History of Czechs (Bohemians) in Nebraska*, National printing company Omaha, Nebraska, 1929, pp.205

As Jim Burden recollects: "Fuchs brought home with him a stranger, a young Bohemian who had taken a homestead near Black Hawk, and who came on his only horse to help his fellow countrymen in their trouble. That was the first time I ever saw Anton Jelinek."³³

It is very probable that Cather had used the last name Vavricka (with a changed spelling of Vavrika, because in English -ck blends in pronunciation to -k) as the last name of her heroine Clara in a short story called "Bohemian Girl".

H.L.Mencken, in his "History of American Language", admits that "these changes in surname are enforced by the sheer inability of Americans to pronounce certain Continental consonants, and their disinclination to remember the Continental vowel sounds. Many an immigrant, finding his name constantly mispronounced, changes its vowels or drops some of its consonants; many another shortens it, or translates it, or changes it entirely for the same reason."³⁴

It would be impossible to leave out Jan (John) Rosicky as a possible name source for another of Cather's characters. Although she had most definitely drawn neighbor Rosicky in a story of the same title upon John Pavelka, husband of Annie Sadilek-Pavelka, she must have been familiar with John Rosicky, a very active Czech immigrant, who came to be recognized as one of the most noteworthy members of the journalistic profession in Nebraska. He started off by purchasing Edward Rosewater's "Pokrok Zapadu" and bringing it to the front of Czech weeklies. Later he attempted to raise a truly literary periodical "Kvety Americke", but the project failed due to a lack of readers. His great success was an agricultural paper called "Hospodar",

³³ Cather, Willa: *My Antonia*, Everyman Paperbacks, 1996, pp.61

³⁴ Mencken, H.L.: *The American language*, A.A.Knopf, New York, 1921

which is still being published. Apart from his journalistic activities, he was instrumental in protecting the Department of Slavonic languages at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. His daughter Rose (Ruzena) took after him and apart from other editing and translating work, prepared "The History of Czechs (Bohemians) in Nebraska" for print in 1929.

A possible name source for Frank Shabata, Marie Tovesky's impulsive husband in "O Pioneers!", could have been Frank Sabata, an old Nebraska resident and grandfather of Helen Sadilek Khyll, a very talented pianist and later a voice coach and piano teacher in Omaha, whom Cather might have known since she was a music and theatre critic and a patron at the time.

There are many other Czech names, both family and first names, used in Cather's fiction. Some of them most probably come from the names of Bohemian immigrant families she had known while growing up in Red Cloud, some of them might be names she had come across in newspapers or public affairs. After all, Nebraska was highly populated with Czech immigrants at the time.

5. Real Life Models for Bohemian Characters in *My Antonia* and *Neighbor Rosicky*

Cather often found inspiration for her literary characters among the real people she had known. As Woodress stated in his biography: "Throughout her life Cather put real people into her fiction ..." He went on to say that while some people found it disturbing, most of those who recognized themselves were pleased to find their portrayals in her books. "So were Annie Pavelka and the Miner sisters when *My Antonia* appeared."³⁵ This chapter is intended to show how Cather's friendship with Annie Pavelka and familiarity with Annie's surroundings, attitude, and family are reflected in "*My Antonia*", and in her later short story "*Neighbor Rosicky*". Woodress classified the tale as "in a sense a sequel to *My Antonia*, for Annie Pavelka's husband sat for the portrait of the Bohemian farmer Rosicky..."³⁶

The story of Antonia Shimerda narrated through Cather's fictive autobiographical persona Jim Burden, reflects her own perceptions, values and feelings for the heroin. Cather's friend and biographer Elizabeth Sergeant supports the interpretation of her intense investment in the narrative by an anecdote published in her memoirs. "In the spring of 1916, I had the first inkling that Willa had a new story in mind." The two women were drinking tea in Sergeants New York apartment, "when suddenly Cather leaned over – and this is something I remember clearly when *My Antonia* came into my hands at last, in 1918 – and set an old Sicilian apothecary jar of mine, filled with orange-brown flowers of scented stock, in the middle of a bare, round, antique table.

³⁵ Woodress, James: *Willa Cather: A Literary Life*. University of Nebraska Press, 1987, pp.53

³⁶ Woodress, James: *Willa Cather: A Literary Life*. University of Nebraska Press, 1987, pp.250

"I want my new heroine to be like this - like a rare object in the middle of a table, which one may examine from all the sides."

She moved the lamp so that light streamed brightly on my Taormina jar, with its glazed orange and blue design.

"I want her to stand out - like this - because she is the story."

Saying this her fervent, enthusiastic voice faltered and her eyes filled with tears. Someone you knew in your childhood, I ventured. She nodded, but did not say more."³⁷

In 1921, Cather did say more. Bennet records her words:

"One of the people who interested me most as a child was the Bohemian hired girl of one of our neighbors, who was so good to me. She was one of the truest artists I ever knew in keenest and sensitiveness of her enjoyment, in her love of people and in her willingness to take pains."³⁸

5.1. Annie Sadilek-Pavelka

This hired girl was Annie Pavelka, whose maiden name was Sadilek.

She was the daughter of a Czech immigrant, whom Cather had met when she was a teenager living in Red Cloud. Although there was discussion about the possibility of the two women meeting in the country, before the Cathers moved to town, Mildred Bennet says in her book that "It was through the Miner children that Willa came to know Annie." Thus, they must have met in town, for the Miners were the Cathers' neighbors in Red Cloud ³⁹

³⁷ Shepley Sargeant, Elizabeth: **Willa Cather: A Memoir**, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln 1963, pp. 139-140

³⁸ Bennet, Mildred, R.: **The World of Willa Cather**, University Press of Nebraska, 1961, pp.46

³⁹ Bennet, Mildred, R.: **The World of Willa Cather**, University Press of Nebraska, 1961, pp.46

In the novel, Jim Burden sees Antonia for the first time, as he gets off the train that brings him, as well as the Shimerda family, to their new home in Nebraska. He is introduced to her a few days later when he and his grandparents visit their new neighbors in their dugout house on the prairie. Jim and Antonia immediately like each other and their friendship continues in town, where Antonia comes to work for the Harlings. Here fiction meets reality, for Annie was a hired girl at the Miner household. She accepted the position in order to help her family in the country. Her family had suffered great inconvenience after Mr. Shimerda's death. His misfortune mirrors the real suicide of Annie Pavelka's father. Cather, who remembered this tragedy, had used it already in her early story "Peter".

Even though most of Cather's correspondence was destroyed, there are some letters at the Historical Center of Red Cloud that prove the fact that the real Miner family resembled the fictive Harling family. In a letter dated October 29, 1917, Cather condoles Carrie Miner Sherwood on her mother's death and confirms that it was Mrs. Miner who inspired the character of Mrs. Harling.

After Cather left Red Cloud to proceed in her studies and career, she lost track of Annie's life for a while. However, like Jim Burden, she learned about Annie's adventures retrospectively. The depiction of the years Antonia spends at the Harlings' house, as well as her subsequent departure to start her own household with a man she falls in love with, and her degrading return back to the prairie, are very much like the real life experiences of Annie.

Bennet, who had known both Annie and Willa, recalls in her book that Annie did all she could to help support her widowed mother. Whenever Mrs. Miner let her use the sewing machine, "she made all the clothes, shirts,

jeans, overalls and husking gloves for her own hardworking family.”⁴⁰ Bennet continues to say: “Annie would work all day and dance all night if she could. She soon learned to copy any style of dress, and much to the annoyance of some of the other girls, made herself duplicates of those she liked.”⁴¹ Jim Burden remembers that Antonia was very fond of dancing and admits that “she was already beginning to make pretty clothes for herself.”⁴² Cather also adopted Annie’s unfortunate love story, which she supplemented with an illegitimate child. Bennet continues in her depiction, “When later Annie went west to marry a brakeman on the Burlington, she had many beautiful clothes, but her happiness was short-lived, for after a few weeks her lover deserted her and Annie returned to Webster County and her mother’s dogout.”⁴³ In the novel, Jim learns from Mrs. Steavens, his grandfather’s tenant, that Antonia has gone to Denver following her lover Larry Donovan, a passenger conductor, whom she was to marry. Mrs. Steavens tells Jim: “I taught her hemstitching, and I helped her to cut and fit. She used to sit there at that machine by the window, pedaling the life out of it.”⁴⁴ After a few weeks, Antonia returns to her mother’s house, alone. “He’s run away from me”⁴⁵, she says to Mrs. Steavens.

In the novel Antonia’s strength and hard work earns her a way back to joyful life, despite the unfortunate events of her youth. She later marries a Czech farmer, Anton Cuzak, and bears him many children. When Jim meets her

⁴⁰ Bennet, Mildred, R.: *The World of Willa Cather*, University Press of Nebraska, 1961, pp.48

⁴¹ Bennet, Mildred, R.: *The World of Willa Cather*, University Press of Nebraska, 1961, pp.48

⁴² Cather, Willa: *My Antonia*, Everyman Paperbacks, 1996, pp.102

⁴³ Bennet, Mildred, R.: *The World of Willa Cather*, University Press of Nebraska, 1961, pp.48-49

⁴⁴ Cather, Willa: *My Antonia*, Everyman Paperbacks, 1996, pp.177

⁴⁵ Cather, Willa: *My Antonia*, Everyman Paperbacks, 1996, pp.179

again, after more than twenty years, he finds her content, surrounded by her large family. He enjoys the warmth and friendliness of her household and admires the way she raised her children.

Annie Pavelka outlived Cather by exactly 8 years. Just like Antonia, she was a mother of many wonderful children. Cather, who continued to visit her whenever she returned to Nebraska, once said: "The manners of Annie's sons would do credit to the family of a Grand Duke."⁴⁶

5.2. John Pavelka

Cather was equally fond of Annie's husband. This man, who is said to have suggested Cather's Neighbor Rosicky, was, according to Bennet, very proud of his family. "At the Mary Lanning Hospital in Hastings, an attendant asked Annie's ailing husband who he was, and he replied with the same pride, "I am the husband of My Antonia!"⁴⁷

In her book, Bennet records an anecdote that Mr. Pavelka once shared with Cather. "Neighbors told him he should sell his cream, get more money, and buy more land, but he agreed with Annie ("That's right, mama!") that roses in the cheeks of their children were more important than the land or money in the bank."⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Bennet, Mildred, R.: *The World of Willa Cather*, University Press of Nebraska, 1961, pp.50

⁴⁷ Bennet, Mildred, R.: *The World of Willa Cather*, University Press of Nebraska, 1961, pp.50

⁴⁸ Bennet, Mildred, R.: *The World of Willa Cather*, University Press of Nebraska, 1961, pp.50

This amusing exchange appeared in Cather's story *Neighbor Rosicky*, published in *Obscure Destinies* in 1932. "Once when the creamery agent came to the Rosickys to persuade them to sell him their cream, he told them how much money the Fasslers, their nearest neighbors, had made on their cream last year. "Yes," said Mary, "and look at them Fassler children! Pale, pinched little things, they look like skimmed milk. I had rather put some color into my children's faces than put money into the bank." The agent shrugged and turned to Anton. "I guess we'll do like she says," said Rosicky."⁴⁹

The response of readers to "My Antonia" was great. In 1943, Ferris Greenslet, publisher of the book, said in a letter to Cather that *My Antonia* was a book to cherish and that twenty-five hundred copies had been sold in the previous year.⁵⁰

Cather herself was pleased with the novel. According to Woodress, she "told Carrie Sherwood in 1938 that *"the best thing I've done is My Antonia. I feel I've made a contribution to American letters with that book."*⁵¹

Moreover, she had also greatly contributed to the American perception of the Old World and its cultural heritage.

⁴⁹ Cather, Willa: *Obscure Destinies - Neighbor Rosicky*, eBook No.: 0201131h.html, pp.8

⁵⁰ Letters exchanged between Cather and Greenslet are kept in Houghton Library of Harvard University. It is allowed to paraphrase them.

⁵¹ Woodress, James: *Willa Cather: A Literary Life*. University of Nebraska Press, 1987, pp.168 – quoted from conversation with Carrie Miner Sherwood

6. Stereotypes of the Czech immigrants

In this chapter I would like to focus on the way Willa Cather portrayed the nature and ideals of Czech immigrants in the context of many disparaging characteristics attributed to them by others at the break of the twentieth century. I will draw on two articles published on this subject in the past four years. I greatly appreciate the research and conclusions of Tim Prchal, author of "The Bohemian Paradox: My Antonia and Popular Images of Czech Immigrants". The second article, written by Kendra L. Moore deals with Cather's literary contribution to portraying the Czech experience. The main traits and ideals to be discussed regarding the Czech cultural distinctiveness are resistance to assimilation, family unity, potentially violent nature, and musical proficiency.

With the influx of Czech immigrants, much was written on this community by the American popular press. For the most part, these were rather disparaging portrayals of Czechs, who were also called Bohemians. Slama writes in a letter published in the national newspaper of the Czech-Americans, *The Bohemian Voice*: "The number of people who can really form any judgment as to the comparative merits of Bohemia and Bohemian people might be counted on one's fingers. On the other hand, the number of people who make the most confident assertions about us, and who fancy they are especially qualified to speak, is almost unascertainable."⁵² The publication of *My Antonia* in 1918, as Prchal says, "could be seen as

⁵² Charles Slama, Letter, In: *The Bohemian Voice* 1, June 1893, pp14. Here I quote from Prchal

Cather's response to and reshaping of the popular image of Czech immigrants."⁵³

6.1. Geographical Condemnation

As was mentioned earlier, Czechs were not among the preferred group of immigrants, as they belonged to the eastern European nations. McNall writes in her study of the immigrant background to *My Antonia*, "Though many Czechs arrived in Nebraska at the same time as the western and northern Europeans, the national picture was different, and the Shimerdas reflect this change, arriving late, on the largest wave of Czech immigration. These more recent immigrants bore the brunt of the economic insecurity of the period."⁵⁴ Supporting this claim, Bennet quotes Georgia Representative Carl Vinson when he explains: "I respectfully submit, with all the power within me, that the people from these countries do not yield their national characteristics, but retain them practically unimpaired by contact with others." The Czech tendency to preserve their cultural distinctiveness was threatening to Americans, who would much rather see them assimilated. Not being able to Americanize the Czechs, they at least made up a word Bohunk to call them. Dictionaries explain this word as a noun used in offensive slang to address a person, more specifically a laborer from east-central Europe. Etymologically, it is a fusion of **B**ohemian and **H**ungarian with alteration of a consonant. Cather used this term without its pejorative touch in *Neighbor Rosicky* when describing Rosicky's friendly conversations with a sales girl in town.

⁵³ Prchal, Tim: **The Bohemian Paradox: My Antonia and Popular Images of Czech Immigrants**. In: *Melus*, vol. 29, Iss. 2, Los Angeles 2004, pp.2

⁵⁴ McNall, Sally: **Immigrant Backgrounds to My Antonia: "A curious situation in Black Hawk"**, pp. 24-25

"I'd like dat. I ain't much fur all dem slim women like what de style is now."

"That's one for me, I suppose, Mr. Bohunk!" Pearl sniffed and elevated her India-ink strokes. ⁵⁵

The same appellation had also appeared in *Bohemian Girl*, when Mrs. Ericson explained why her son never fought with his Bohemian wife.

"He says if he quarreled with her she'd go back to her father, and then he'd lose the Bohemian vote. There are a great many Bohunks in this district."⁵⁶

Mrs. Ericson was a Norwegian immigrant, superior in her thoughts, as she was a member of the preferred people. Her use of Bohunk has the pejorative sense as she admits "I never thought much of Bohemians; always drinking."⁵⁷

These two examples show that the perception and distribution of the word and subsequently of the Bohemian people, was connected with individual experience.

6.2. Racial Condemnation

Apart from being placed in the inferior immigrant group, Czechs were also sometimes deprived of their belonging to the white race as well as of their Slavic origin. William J. Fielding, in his article for *The Nation* in 1919, remembers that he and his coworker at the iron mills "are the only two white

⁵⁵ Cather, Willa: *Obscure Destinies - Neighbor Rosicky*, eBook No.: 0201131h.html

⁵⁶ Cather, Willa: *Bohemian Girl*. In: McClure's Magazine 39, April 1912, pp.420-443

⁵⁷ Cather, Willa: *Bohemian Girl*. In: McClure's Magazine 39, April 1912, pp.420-443

men in the cast-house... The rest are Poles, Slavs, Finns, Letts and Bohunks.”⁵⁸

6.3. Cather's Revision

In her novels dealing with the immigrants, Cather, fortunately for the Czechs, revised the period perception of the Bohemian community to a great extent. Although she also describes the unique and different cultural practices of the immigrants, she does so with a sensitive and comprehensive approach, without focusing on only negative traits. As Prchal concludes, “Cather flips notion of racial superiority, implying that Americans of the dominant culture should emulate immigrants rather than pressure immigrants to assimilate to their culture.”⁵⁹

It is best described in book 2 of “My Antonia” called *The Hired Girls*. Cather, through the eyes and words of Jim Burden, pictures the social division and prejudices that the inhabitants of Black Hawk have towards the daughters of immigrant farmers. “There was a curious social situation in Black Hawk.” Cather depicts the hired girls as “well-set-up country girls who had come to town to earn a living, and, in nearly every case, to help the father struggle out of debt, or to make it possible for the younger children of the family to go to school. Those girls had grown up in the first bitter-hard times, and had got little schooling themselves. {...} Physically they were almost a race apart, and out-of-door work had given them a vigor which, when they got over their first shyness on coming to town, developed into a positive carriage and freedom of movement.” On the contrary, the self-elected superior daughters of Black Hawk merchants “were jolly and pretty,

⁵⁸ Fielding, William, J.: *The Furnaces*. In: *The Nation*, November 8, 1919, 586-7

⁵⁹ Prchal, Tim: *The Bohemian Paradox: My Antonia and Popular Images of Czech Immigrants*. In: *Melus*, vol. 29, Iss. 2, Los Angeles 2004, pp 4

but they stayed indoors in winter because of the cold, and in summer because of the heat. When one dances with them, their bodies never moved inside their clothes; their muscles seemed to ask but one thing – not to be disturbed.”⁶⁰

It was obvious that the boys were attracted to the hired girls, but “the respect for respectability was stronger than any desire in Black Hawk”. Thus “the country girls were considered a menace to the social order.”⁶¹

This same social order later worked to the advantage of the immigrants.

6.4. Family Unity

The hired girls did not need to marry respectable American boys in order to become wealthy. It was their hard work and family unity that eventually let their fathers’ American dream come true. As Cather notes, “One result of this family solidarity was that the foreign farmers were out of debt, the daughters married the sons of neighbors – usually of like nationality – and the girls who once worked in Black Hawk kitchens are today managing big farms and fine families of their own; their children are better off than the children of the town women they used to serve.”⁶²

To support the family unity ideal that Cather often portrayed when it came to Czechs, Vladimir Kucera says in his essay “Nebraska: My New Home” that “the Czechs are not self-centered but that they entertain a deep love for home, family and friend.”⁶³

⁶⁰ Cather, Willa: *My Antonia*, Everyman Paperbacks, 1996, pp.114- 115

⁶¹ Cather, Willa: *My Antonia*, Everyman Paperbacks, 1996, pp.116

⁶² Cather, Willa: *My Antonia*, Everyman Paperbacks, 1996, pp.116

⁶³ Kucera, Vladimir: *Nebraska: My New Home*. In: *Czech Contributions to the Progress of Nebraska*, Lincoln: Kucera and Novacek, 1976, pp.177

In Cather's writings, Antonia Shimerda - Cuzak and Mary Rosicky, the wife of Anton, both represent home and safety for their large families.

They speak Czech to their husbands and children. As Prchal notes, "the persistence of national culture in Antonia's family is also apparent in their using the Czech language."⁶⁴ It is not only the language that makes both the households Bohemian homes. Antonia decorates her walls with pictures of Prague, Rosicky as well as Cuzak read Bohemian newspapers in their free time and the visitors are always treated to some traditional Czech sweets. When Jim Burden visits Antonia's home on the prairie after many years, "Anna and Yulka left their chairs from time to time to bring fresh plates of kolaches and pitchers of milk."⁶⁵ In most of her Bohemian women characters, including Marie Shabata in "O Pioneers!", Cather points out their talent for domestic work, especially baking, cooking and growing flowers and plants, all of which together with love and understanding constitute a stable and warm family base. This family atmosphere is highly appreciated by Rosicky's young American doctor who enjoys the warmth and good food that always awaits him at the Czech farm. In order to persuade Rosicky to slow down his work to protect his ailing heart, he tells him "My Lord, Rosicky, you are one of the few men I know who has a family he can get some comfort out of; happy dispositions, never quarrel among themselves, and they treat you right. I want to see you live a few years and enjoy them."⁶⁶

Marie Shabata, in contrast to Mary Rosicky, does not have a happy marriage, although her geraniums bloom, even in the hardest days of winter,

⁶⁴ Prchal, Tim: **The Bohemian Paradox: My Antonia and Popular Images of Czech Immigrants**. In: *Melus*, vol. 29, Iss. 2, Los Angeles 2004, pp 4

⁶⁵ Cather, Willa: **My Antonia**, Everyman Paperbacks, 1996, pp.197

⁶⁶ Cather, Willa: **Obscure Destinies - Neighbor Rosicky**, eBook No.: 0201131h.html

and she is a great baker. Alexandra Bergson proclaims upon a visit to Marie's house:

"The Bohemians," said Alexandra, as they drew up to the table, "certainly know how to make more kinds of bread than any other people in the world. Old Mrs. Hiler told me once at the church that she could make seven kinds of fancy bread, but Marie could make a dozen."⁶⁷ Marie is trapped in a marriage that died soon after the wedding was over. Marie married Frank despite her father's opposition, thinking he was the most wonderful man. Upon his arrival from the old country, "he was easily the buck of the beer-gardens, and on Sunday he was a sight to see, with his silk hat and tucked shirt and blue frock-coat, wearing gloves and carrying a little wisp of a yellow cane. He was tall and fair, with splendid teeth and close-cropped yellow curls, and he wore a slightly disdainful expression, proper for a young man with high connections, whose mother had a big farm in the Elbe valley. There was often an interesting discontent in his blue eyes, and every Bohemian girl he met imagined herself the cause of that unsatisfied expression."⁶⁸

6.5. Violent Behavior

Maybe due to that unsatisfied expression, maybe to balance his good looks, Frank represents one of the violent-natured Bohemians. Cather, through Alexandra, describes him as "one of these wild fellows. Most Bohemians are good-natured, but Frank thinks we don't appreciate him here, I guess. He's jealous about everything, his farm and his horses and his pretty wife."⁶⁹ Marie's father "characterized Frank Shabata by a Bohemian expression

⁶⁷ Cather, Willa: *O Pioneers!*, Virago Press Limited, 1983, pp. 194

⁶⁸ Cather, Willa: *O Pioneers!*, Virago Press Limited, 1983, 1983, pp. 143

⁶⁹ Cather, Willa: *O Pioneers!*, Virago Press Limited, 1983, pp. 120

which is the equivalent of stuffed shirt.”⁷⁰ Although he works really hard and does well on the farm, he is bitter and sour to his wife. He is the opposite of impulsive and warmhearted Marie, and she quietly suffers through his quick temper fits. Eventually she succumbs to the temptation that Alexandra’s beloved brother Emil presents. Tragedy quickly follows - Frank, blinded by anger, shoots the two lovers to death. Alexandra, whose perception of the world was always more rational than emotional, wonders after the disaster if it wasn’t Marie’s impulsiveness that was an undesirable quality. To this matter Prchal concludes that “Czech are an impulsive people, which might make them especially friendly or, possibly, especially violent.”⁷¹

Besides in “O Pioneers!” Cather also admitted the negative trait of violent behavior ascribed to Czechs in “My Antonia”, although the case is not as extreme. Her description of Ambrosch, Antonia’s older brother, sometimes involves an inclination to brutal retaliation. Once, when Ambrosch and Burden’s farm hand, Jake, argue over a horse harness that Ambrosch failed to return and without explanation walked away, “Jake caught him by the belt of his trousers and yanked him back. Ambrosch’s feet had scarcely touched the ground when he lunged out with a vicious kick at Jake’s stomach. Fortunately, Jake was in such a position that he could dodge it. This was not the sort of thing country boys did when played at fisticuffs, and Jake was furious.”⁷²

To the contrary, other male characters, namely Rosicky, but also old Mr. Shimerda or Clara Vavrika’s father in “Bohemian Girl” are portrayed as rather sensitive and peaceful beings. It could be said that Cather does not stereotype all Czechs as potentially violent.

⁷⁰ Cather, Willa: *O Pioneers!*, Virago Press Limited, 1983, 1983, pp. 144

⁷¹ Prchal, Tim: *The Bohemian Paradox: My Antonia and Popular Images of Czech Immigrants*. In: *Melus*, vol. 29, Iss. 2, Los Angeles 2004, pp 6

⁷² Cather, Willa: *My Antonia*, Everyman Paperbacks, 1996, pp.75

6.6. Penchant for Music

On the other hand, Cather tends to stereotype Czechs as musicians. There are many examples in other authors' writings to support the traditional Czech saying: Who is a Czech is a musician.

In 1916 Carl Sandburg published a poem Jan Kubelik in his "Chicago Poems".

"Your bow swept over a string, and a long low note quivered to the air.
(A mother of Bohemia sobs over a new child perfect learning to suck milk.)

Your bow ran fast over all the high strings fluttering and wild.
(All the girls in Bohemia are laughing on a Sunday afternoon in the hills
with their lovers.)"⁷³

This short verse suggests that there is a close parallel between the violinist's music and the lives of Bohemians.

The same could be said about Cather's portrayal of Mr. Shimerda, who decides to commit suicide, not only because life on the prairie is tough and collides with his nature, but also because he can no longer play his violin. Antonia once tells Jim "My papa sad for the old country. He not look good. He never make music any more. At home he play violin all the time; for weddings and for dance. Here never. When I beg him for play, he shakes his

⁷³ Published August 1999 by Bartleby.com: © Copyright Bartleby.com, Inc.

head no. Some days he take his violin out of his box and make with his fingers on the strings like this, but never he make the music.”⁷⁴

While Mr. Shimerda is not able to overcome his despair with music, other Cather's Czech characters, like Mr. Vavrika in “Bohemian Girl”, use music to their advantage. Nils Ericson opposes his mother's view of the Czechs when he refers to the Bohemian household of the Vavrikas as “the one jolly house in this country for a boy to go. All the rest of you were working yourselves to death, and the houses were mostly a mess. {...} Now, Vavrika's was always jolly. He played the violin, and I used to take my flute, and Clare played the piano, and Johanna used to sing Bohemian songs.”⁷⁵

In “My Antonia”, Jim notes that, “dancing became popular now, just as roller skating had been the summer before.”⁷⁶ An Italian family of the Vannis put up a tent with a dancing floor to hold dances every Tuesday and Friday night. The hired girls often attended those dances in Black Hawk, and Antonia was said to be the best dancer of all. “Antonia talked and thought of nothing but the tent. She hummed the dance tunes all day.”⁷⁷ She was so fond of it that she often gave up her good job at the Harling's house to be able to keep going. The Harlings, as well as the Burdens and other respectable families, did not approve of such amusement for it spoiled the girls' reputation.

Music and dancing is also documented in “The History of Czechs (Bohemians) in Nebraska”. Already mentioned Mrs. Mary Jelinek remembers: “In 1866 we celebrated our first Fourth of July in Nebraska. We

⁷⁴ Cather, Willa: *My Antonia*, Everyman Paperbacks, 1996, pp.54

⁷⁵ Cather, Willa: *Bohemian Girl*. In: McClure's Magazine 39, April 1912, pp.420-443

⁷⁶ Cather, Willa: *My Antonia*, Everyman Paperbacks, 1996, pp.114

⁷⁷ Cather, Willa: *My Antonia*, Everyman Paperbacks, 1996, 1996, pp.118

gathered on the farm of Vaclav Petracek, where we danced, sang, ate, drank and made merry. Petracek was the orchestra, he played for the dancers by pounding on a plow wheel.⁷⁸

Mashek, in an article about Czech farmers in Wisconsin, says that "perhaps, their most striking characteristic is their love of music and dancing. In the country, almost every village has a band of self-taught musicians, and the country dance is a time honored institution."⁷⁹

Finally, it was also a matter of pride that the Czechs had a special liking for music. Apart from world-famous violinist Jan Kubelik, who toured the US in the beginning of twentieth century, there were also Dvorak and Smetana, whose compositions were acknowledged by Americans. This contention is sustained in a short story, "The Bohemian" written by Robert Schauffler in 1911. His protagonist, Vaclav, questions his American boss: "You got anybody ever wrote such music like our Smetana? Didn't you have to get Dvorak over here to write the New World Symphony?"⁸⁰

It should to be recognized that Cather's view of Czech immigrants was colored by her personal sympathy for this community. As stated in the previous chapter, she was engaged in a life-long friendship with a Bohemian woman and was acquainted with a number of others since her childhood in Nebraska. I believe that her familiarity with their actual conditions and circumstances contributed to her ability to accurately portray the Czech character and personality traits.

⁷⁸ Rosicky, Rose: **A History of Czechs (Bohemians) in Nebraska**, National printing company Omaha, Nebraska, 1929, pp.70 - 71

⁷⁹ Mashek, Nan.: **Bohemian Farmers of Wisconsin**. In: *Charities*, December 3rd 1904, pp.214

⁸⁰ Schauffler, Robert Haven: **The Bohemian**. In: *The Outlook*, March 11th, 1911, pp.559

7. Conclusion

“Le but n’est rien; le chemin c’est tout” [translated as]

“The end is nothing, the road is all”.

This is what that Mr. Rosen says to Vickie Templeton, as she leaves for college in the story “Old Mrs. Harris”. He wants her to understand that it is not what comes out of our actions that matters, but the fact that we are doing it itself. Cather must have been familiar with these words, since she was an avid reader of French classics. She often quoted this phrase, written by her hero - Jules Michelet - a French historian and novelist born at the end of eighteenth century in Paris.

I dare say that this motto affected Cather in all her life. Despite all kinds of obstacles that got in her way throughout the seventy-three years of her life, she always found a method to get back on the road. When she finished her novel “Shadows on the Rock”, she explained that it was not written aiming to publish another bestseller, but rather to keep her going. Although she must have invested the same amount of effort in the writing process, as she did with her other books, she did that simply for the sake of writing. The act of writing must have made her equally happy as the possible positive response of readers.

When she first came to Nebraska, she felt lonely and homesick for Virginia. However, she managed to get over it and enjoy what the prairie had to offer. In her mind, she created her own little world, which let her deal with a country where there was nothing but vast plains and fields of grass in sight,

a country that required a great deal of imagination in order not to get dejected by its bleakness.

Cather eventually grew to like the Divide, and although she never returned to reside there permanently, she kept returning for visits. If this, at first, uncomfortable move had never happened in Cather's life, if her family had stayed on the east coast of the United States, a great many readers would never have had a chance to read her novels set in Nebraska, like

"O Pioneers!" or "My Antonia". The Bohemian heritage would not have been transferred so far, and interesting life stories would never have been recorded. In this sense, the end of Cather's life in Virginia opened up a whole new perspective.

When Cather was growing up, she seemed strange to people for she did not match her coevals' standard behavior. She never followed the crowd, nor did she accept mainstream activities. On the contrary, she was rather different. She dressed and appeared more like a man, she befriended people much older than herself, and she was absorbed in antique and Old World literature – quite unlike a typical child in a small prairie town.

Through her disguise, which enabled her to stand out and at the same time keep to herself, she might have been implying what was to come later in her life.

Cather was always hardworking, sometimes to the point of crossing her physical capacity. Maybe she wanted to show her strength and ability to succeed in difficult and unlikely conditions. As with the Nebraska prairie, which seemed invincible at first, but proved very fruitful in the end. Cather didn't publish a novel until she was thirty-eight years old, but eventually, she succeeded in the literary world and published many acclaimed works.

The road of her life was marked with a few unfortunate events, both general and personal, ranging from the Great Depression and both World Wars to illnesses and deaths of beloved people. Furthermore, she had to face assumptions about her sexual orientation and criticisms on her way of life. She managed to endure all of the hard times and even benefit from them in her literary works. The war and the death of her cousin inspired her to write "One of Ours". Her visit to Grand Canyon, where she almost died of physical exhaustion, inspired another two novels – "Professor's House" and "Death Comes for the Archbishop"

Although she decided to become a writer - a career subject to the appreciation and judgment of others - she became obsessed with her privacy. Her wish was that all correspondence and unfinished work be destroyed, after her death, as if she wanted to end her life with a full stop.

To me, she once again proved that the end is nothing. Her obsession only opened up a space for speculations and assumptions that will always lead down many roads.

8. Tabular Summary of “Life Models” Inspiration

Title	“Life model” inspiration	Fictitious character	Similarities / Points of concurrence
Old Mrs. Harris	Charles Cather	Mr. Templeton	<p>Like Mr. Cather, Mr. Templeton is a businessman, too goodhearted to make lots of money. “As for Mr. Templeton (people usually called him “young Mr. Templeton”), he was too delicate to collect his just debts. His boyish, eager-to-please manner, his fair complexion and blue eyes and young face, made him seem very soft to some of the hard old money-grubbers on Main Street...”⁸¹</p> <p>The description of Mr. Templeton’s appearance is like looking at a photograph of Mr. Cather. According to Bennet: “Willa loved her father, a Southern gentleman refined almost to the point of delicacy. He was quite unlike his aggressive older brother George, who was intent on making money...”⁸²</p> <p>Like Mr. Cather, Mr. Templeton is a father of a large family that lives in a small house and tries to make the ends meet every month. Mr. Templeton as well as Mr. Cather has to borrow money to be able to send his daughter to college.</p>

⁸¹ Cather, Willa: *Obscure Destinies - Old Mrs. Harris*, eBook No.: 0201131h.html, pp.37

⁸² Bennet, Mildred, R.: *The World of Willa Cather*, University Press of Nebraska, 1961, pp.22-23

Old Mrs. Harris	Virginia Boak Cather	Victoria Templeton	Like Virginia, Mrs. Templeton represents a strict and strong female. In Bennet's words: "Mrs. Cather was not one to be <i>put upon</i> . Apparently a much more positive and strong-willed person than her husband, she ordered the household, her steel-gray eyes unwavering as she disciplined, severely when necessary. She had an immense store of energy and was fiercely devoted to what she considered the proper way of doing things... A handsome woman, she maintained the strictest standards of poise, carried a small parasol to match her costume, and whenever possible, wore fresh violets." ⁸³ In the story, Victoria is portrayed as: "a tall, handsome woman, dressed in white broadcloth and a hat with white lilacs; she carried a sunshade and walked with a free, energetic step, as if she were going out on a peasant errand." ⁸⁴
Old Mrs. Harris	Willa Cather	Vickie Templeton	In Vickie, Cather portrayed herself during the teenage years. Vickie is fond of reading and often visits her next-door neighbors, an old immigrant couple, who support her interest in literature and French language acquisition ambition.
Old Mrs. Harris	Rachel Boak	Mrs. Templeton	Rachel Boak accompanied the young family when they moved to the west of the States, just like old Mrs. Templeton did in the story. Mrs. Boak helped a great deal to take care of the household together with her loyal friend Margie, maid at the Cathers' home. In the story, old Mrs. Templeton has a very close friendship with Mandy, a bound girl that the family brought with them from the south.

⁸³ Bennet, Mildred, R.: *The World of Willa Cather*, University Press of Nebraska, 1961, pp.30-31

⁸⁴ Cather, Willa: *Obscure Destinies - Old Mrs. Harris*, eBook No.: 0201131h.html, pp.25

Old Mrs. Harris	Mr. and Mrs. Weiner	The Rosens	Old intellectual immigrant couple who introduced Willa, in the story Vicky, to the classic European writers and let her borrow their books. The Weiners were neighbors to the Cathers, in the story, the Rosens live next to the Templetons. Like the Weiners, the Rosens have no children, but support the literary and academic ambition of their neighbor's daughter with true pleasure.
My Antonia	Annie Pavelka Sadilek	Antonia Shimerda	Discussed in chapter 5.
My Antonia	Anton Sadilek	Mr. Shimerda	Discussed in chapter 5.
My Antonia	Julia Miner	Mrs. Harling	As Cather admitted in an interview by Eleanor Hinman ⁸⁵ , Mrs. Harling was a true picture of what she remembered of Julia Miner, a mother of a neighbor family from Red Cloud. Mrs. Miner kept hired girls from the immigrant families that lived on the prairie, and it was her house where Cather had met Annie Pavelka. In the book, Jim Burden's grandparents organize that the Harlings hire Antonia. The episode when Antonia Shimerda is asked to either stop attending dances or leave the Harlings' house is based on a real situation. Mrs. Miner's daughters appear as Mrs. Harling's girls in My Antonia.
My Antonia	Carrie Miner	Frances Harling	Daughter of the Cathers' neighbors. Cather dedicated the book to her and Irene. In the flyleaf she inscribed: "In memory of old friends whose portraits are sketched in this book." Carrie, in the story Frances, was the oldest of the Miners' children and took charge when the father was out of town.

⁸⁵ Interview by Eleanor Hinman, Lincoln Sunday Star, November 6, 1921. In: Bennet, Mildred, R.: **The World of Willa Cather**, University Press of Nebraska, 1961

My Antonia	Irene Miner	Nina Harling	Daughter of the Cathers' neighbors. Cather's childhood friend to whom she also dedicated the book. In <i>My Antonia</i> Jim says: "I used to think that no eyes in the world could grow so large or hold so many tears as Nina's." ⁸⁶ Bennet recalls: "Willa often said that Irene's eyes could hold more tears than any others." ⁸⁷
My Antonia	Mary Miner	Julia Harling	Daughter of the Cathers' neighbors, the "musical one" whom Willa liked to listen to play the piano. In the book it is Jim who enjoys music in the Harlings' house. "Except when the father was at home, the Harling house was never quiet. Mrs. Harling and Nina and Antonia made as much noise as a house full of children, and there was always somebody at the piano. Julia was the only one who was held down to regular hours of practicing, but they all played." ⁸⁸
My Antonia	Willa Cather	Jim Burden	Author's "alter ego"
Neighbor Rosicky	John Pavelka	Anton Rosicky	Discussed in chapter 5.
One of Ours	G.P. Cather	Claude Wheeler	Cather's cousin who died in the first World War. Cather decided to write the novel upon reading a letter he wrote to his mother from the battlefield in Europe.
The Song of the Lark	Olive Fremstad	Thea Kronborg	The inspiration for the heroin of the novel came from Cather's admiration for the real life Swedish opera star from Minnesota whom she had met for several interviews and who had made a great impact on her. Like Olive, Thea fights her way to the top on her own, despite the hard conditions and her poor background.

⁸⁶ Cather, Willa: *My Antonia*, Everyman Paperbacks, 1996, pp. 92

⁸⁷ Bennet, Mildred, R.: *The World of Willa Cather*, University Press of Nebraska, 1961, pp.45

⁸⁸ Cather, Willa: *My Antonia*, Everyman Paperbacks, 1996, pp. 93

A Lost Lady	Lyra Garber	Marian Forrester	The fictional and the real woman overlap in the appearance and life story. Like Lyra, Marian was a very beautiful woman who married an older well established man and moved to Nebraska with him. Cather told an interviewer: "The question was, by what medium could I present her the most vividly, and that, of course, meant the most truly. There was no fun in it unless I could her just as I remembered her and produce the effect she had on me and the many others who knew her..." ⁸⁹
-------------	-------------	------------------	---

⁸⁹ Interview by Flora Merrill, *New York World*, April 19, 1925. In: Bennet, Mildred, R.: *The World of Willa Cather*, University Press of Nebraska, 1961

9. Synopsis in Czech Language

Diplomová práce se zabývá tématem českých přistěhovalců v Americe, jak je ve svých literárních dílech znázorňovala Willa Catherová.

V úvodu je představena autorka, její biografie a celková literární tvorba. Následuje relevantní popis historických souvislostí, které se podílely na přílivu českých imigrantů do Spojených Států Amerických, konkrétně do Nebrasky. Kapitola odkrývá drsné podmínky, v nichž si česká komunita budovala nové domovy a vypovídá o životním stylu dobových usedlíků na základě dostupných pramenů. Jsou zde citovány výpovědi některých českých přistěhovalců, jež se podobají osudům literárních postav ztvárněných Willou Cather.

Podrobně jsou popsány skutečné osoby, se kterými autorka udržovala přátelské vztahy, a na jejichž základě pak vystavěla své románové postavy. Pozornost je dále věnována typickým českým charakterovým vlastnostem a na příkladech je znázorněno, do jaké míry se autorka ztotožňovala s obecným americkým vnímáním české přistěhovalecké mešiny.

Práce je dopněna o tabulkový přehled literárních postav Catherové a jejich domnělých předobrazů včetně stručného shrnutí podobností.

V příloze jsou pak vybrané fotografie autorky, její rodiny a přátel.

10. Bibliography

Primary:

Cather, Willa: **My Antonia**, Everyman Paperbacks, 1996

Cather, Willa: **O Pioneers!**, Virago Press Limited, 1983

Cather, Willa: **Obscure Destinies - Old Mrs. Harris**

eBook No.: 0201131h.html, most recently updated: December 2002

<http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks02/0201131h.html#S02>

Cather, Willa: **Obscure Destinies - Neighbor Rosicky**

eBook No.: 0201131h.html, most recently updated: December 2002

<http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks02/0201131h.html#S01>

Cather, Willa: **Bohemian Girl**. In: McClure's Magazine 39, April 1912, pp.420-443

<http://libtextcenter.unl.edu/cather/index.html>

Cather, Willa: **Peter**. In: The Mahogany Tree, May 21, 1892, pp. 323-324

<http://libtextcenter.unl.edu/cather/index.html>

Cather, Willa: **The World and the Parish: Willa Cather's Articles and Reviews, 1893-1902**, selected and edited by William M.Curtin, University of Nebraska Press, 1970

Secondary:

Bennet, Mildred, R.: **The World of Willa Cather**, University Press of Nebraska, 1961

Brent Bohlke, L.: **Willa Cather in Person: Interviews, Speeches, and Letters**, University of Nebraska Press, 1986

Brown, E.K. completed by Leon Edel: **Willa Cather, a Critical Biography**, New York, Knopf, 1953

Buss, Helen M.: **Willa Cather: Reading the Writer through Biographies and Memoirs**. In: *Cather Studies*, Vol.4, edited by R.Thacker and M.A.Peterman, University of Nebraska Press, 2003

Fielding, William, J.: **The Furnaces**. In: *The Nation*, November 8, 1919

Kucera, Vladimir: **Nebraska: My New Home**. In: *Czech Contributions to the Progress of Nebraska*, Lincoln: Kucera and Novacek, 1976

Mashek, Nan.: **Bohemian Farmers of Wisconsin**. In: *Charities*, December 3rd 1904

McNall, Sally: **Immigrant Backgrounds to My Antonia: "A curious situation in Black Hawk"**. In: *Approaches to teaching World Literature*, Editor Susan Rosowski, New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1989

Mencken, H.L.: **The American language**, A.A.Knopf, New York, 1921

Moore, Kendra, L.: **Willa Cather's "Neighbour Rosicky: Painting a Realistic Portrait of Immigrant Life in Nebraska**. In: Teaching Cather, Spring 2002, Vol.2, Iss.2, published by the Department of English at Northwest Missouri State University

Murphy, John. J: **Willa Cather**. In: A Literary History of the American West, Texan Christian University Press, 1998

O'Brien, Sharon: **Willa Cather: The Emerging Voice**, Oxford University Press, 1987

Prchal, Tim: **The Bohemian Paradox: My Antonia and Popular Images of Czech Immigrants**. In: Melus, vol. 29, Iss. 2, Los Angeles 2004

Rosicky, Rose: **A History of Czechs (Bohemians) in Nebraska**, National printing company Omaha, Nebraska, 1929

Schauffler, Robert Haven: **The Bohemian**. In: The Outlook, March 11th, 1911

Shepley Sergeant, Elizabeth: **Willa Cather: A Memoir**, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln 1963

Svejda, J: **The Czech Immigration to Nebraska from its Origins to the Present.** In: *Czech Contributions to the Progress in Nebraska, 1976.* Editor Vladimir Kucera

Woodress, James: **Willa Cather: A Literary Life.** University of Nebraska Press, 1987

Internet sources:

<http://www.bartleby.com/165/58.html>, jan 25, 2006

http://www.nps.gov/home/homestead_act.html, feb 12, 2006

http://www.fairnet.org/agencies/timegen/gen_usa.html, feb 12, 2006

<http://libtextcenter.unl.edu/cather/index.html>, march 5, 2006

<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=bohunk>, march 5, 2006

<http://www.rootsweb.com/%7eneethnic/czechs/contents.html>, jan 25, 2006

11. Appendix*

1. Cather with boy's haircut, about age 13. Courtesy of WCPMC-NSHS
2. Cather about 1893. Courtesy of the Nebraska State Historical Society
3. Charles Cather, Willa's father. Courtesy of WCPMC-HSHS.
4. Jennie (Virginia) Cather, Willa's mother. Courtesy of WCPMC-HSHS
5. The Cather house at Third and Cedar, Red Cloud. Courtesy of WCPMC-HSHS
6. Webster Street, Red Cloud, 1889, Courtesy of Webster County Historical Museum.
7. Site of William Cather's farm. Courtesy of WCPMC-HSHS
8. Annie Pavelka, protagonist of *My Antonia*. Courtesy of WCPMC-NSHS
9. Annie Pavelka with her husband and children. Courtesy of WCPMC-NSHS
10. Carrie Miner. Courtesy of WCPMC-NSHS.
11. Julia Erickson Miner, Courtesy of Jennie Miner Reiher and WCPMC-NSHS.
12. Mrs. Silas Garber. Courtesy of WCPMC-NSHS.
13. Olive Fremstad as Isolde. Courtesy of the New York Met. Opera Association Archives

* Images copied from: Woodress, James: **Willa Cather: A Literary Life**. University of Nebraska Press, 1987

11.1.



1



2



3



4

11.2.



11.3.



11.4.

