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TRANSITIVE WORLD ORDER AND LOSS OF SELF IN WILLA CATHER'S A LOST LADY

□ Dr. Balkar Singh*
Ms. Ritu Gupta**

ABSTRACT

Willa Cather started writing at a time when the old world order was fast declining and the new American culture was fast emerging because of the rise of technology and industry in America. Willa Cather has been described as a novelist of transition since she writes about the pioneers of Nebraska. Willa Cather characterized the tensions of American existence in the 19th and 20th centuries. She had witnessed "the world broken into two" and she was trapped in this rift" (Sergeant 114). The novels of Willa Cather depict the tragic scenes of the pioneers who migrated from Europe in search of land and prosperity. The pioneers were excited to own the large tracts of land but soon they suffered loss of life due to the heavy rains, floods and snakes. Her novels depict the growing currents of transition, the rise of the money culture and the decline of the values of the pioneers who led a peaceful and hard working life. Her experience as a novelist and a settler is a microcosm of the spirit of the time. Willa Cather was rooted in the past and at the same time she was sensitive to the promise of the future in the new found land of America. She feared the loss of the innocence of the pioneers and erosion of the values of the American Dream. America was a land of opportunity and man could realize his dreams with hard work, honesty and liberty but Willa Cather found that all these values were declining as there was a craze in America to make fast money. In this research paper, the theory of loss of self of R. D. Laing has been applied to find out the causes of loss of self of the characters in the novel. R.D Laing in his book *The Divided Self* (1965) explores the causes and symptoms of a borderline personality. The very title of the book is about the study of self. Laing has taken up the experimental method to investigate the symptoms of abnormality in an individual.

Keywords : Psychological, Traumatic, Microcosm, Transition, Innocence, Abnormality Sexuality, Anxiety, Depression, Loss, Self.

Introduction

Willa Cather's novel *A Lost Lady* begins with the historical decline of the West. Willa Cather traces the passing of the noble pioneer and the exploitation of the land. The predominant metaphor of "lost" is very significant suggesting the mood of despair, loss of self and of impending doom. Willa Cather posits against the decline of a human need for primitive understanding for spiritual attitudes and intuitive, symbolic forms. The Roaring Twenties was an age of social and political transformation; it was a time of growing prosperity and a stimulated interest in leisure activities. For example,

mass produced entertainment and movies reached all social classes. Flapper is the most familiar symbol of the twenties; she is fashionable young woman passionate to enjoy, drink, and gamble and crazy to participate in all the activities of life. Fashion, glamour and grandeur became the main motives of the flappers. The novel *A Lost Lady* contains a bustle of activity forming a pattern of expectation and disappointment. The pioneers live and die, people come and go and even Marian Forrester suffers from growing trauma in her life. Willa Cather has dramatized the last phase of the pioneers, their struggles for survival and the experiences of trauma. The novel *A*

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A Lost Lady is focused on three themes; the psychological anguish, depression and the loss of self. A Lost Lady is set in the small railroad town of Sweet Water on the Western prairie. Cather has depicted the physical and psychological condition of the characters in this novel. The plot of the novel is composed of episodes that bring depression in the life of Captain Forrester and his young and beautiful wife Marian Forrester.

Captain Forrester suffers from the physical and psychological tortures resulting into disintegration of self. He falls from the horse and suffers severe stroke and becomes invalid. Captain Forrester is confined to bed most of his time and feels lonely and cut off from the active social life. This physical inability becomes the main source of his depression and psychological anguish. His physical inability results in sexual inactivity and this sexual repression is the main cause of his psychological anguish. He struggles against the forces of money culture and the rising trends of machine and technology. Captain Forrester is not satisfied with his life while he shows "a conflict between [his] libidinal wishes and the part of his personality we call his ego, which is the expression of his instinct of self-preservation and which also includes his needs of his personality" (Freud 316). Captain Forrester believes that his wife Mrs. Forrester is shifting her love to other men ignoring him because of his physical ailments. His dreams and fantasies haunt him day and night. Captain Forrester is a victim of psychological neurosis as he finds no hope for his survival. His death is the first tragic episode in the novel which gives a great setback to Mrs. Forrester. On this situation Freud remarks that "the husband is almost always so to speak only the substitute, never the right man; it is another man in typical cases the father who has first claim to a woman's love, the husband at most takes second place" (203). Freud, in his essay "Mourning and Melancholia", explains that "the distinguishing mental features of melancholia are a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, and loss of the capacity of love" (244). Harold Bloom calls attention to the "negativistic symbol of machine-made materialism" which appears to be so significant that all other elements are "pared down to allow amplification of the symbol" (67). Mrs. Forrester is

trapped between money and duty. There is conflict in her soul after the death of her husband; her property is insecure and the fear of bankruptcy haunts her day and night. The appearance of Ivy Peters in the life of Marian Forrester brings chaos in the life of the lost lady. Sherrill Grace explains, that "this divided self is —not an individual ego, defining itself against its surroundings, but as a place or entity co-extensive with its environment. . . We are fluid and need not be locked into ourselves. . . The world we perceive is the world we create (2). Sergeant in *A Memoir* commented thus: "Such ambivalent ambience shaped Willa Cather with her creative force as in an iceberg, the greater part of her load submerged" (148). This creative force impacted her career as a journalist and fiction writer of America. Cather came under the influence of French writers such as Flaubert, Merimee, Maupassant, Tourgeniev and the English poet Swinburne. The critics and reviewers have given their divergent opinions about the writings of Willa Cather. Willa Cather published *Not Under Forty*; a Collection of Essays in which she stated that "the world broke into two in 1922" She expressed her concern for the future generations and expressed her anguish thus: "Our present is ruined...but we had a beautiful past" (123). Cather's *A Lost Lady* is the outcome of her ambivalent vision. The novels of Willa Cather are set in pastoral America foregrounding the experiences of American and immigrant women in the prairies and towns of burgeoning country. Her novels and stories chronicle the plight of the pioneers during the age of industrialization and technology. Willa Cather dramatizes the touching scenes of dementia, alienation of Forrester and her loss of innocence. Marian Forrester uses her free will to marry Ivy Peters as Freud believes that freedom and logic cannot exist together. When a man enjoys freedom, certainly he is away from his rational thinking. Forrester loses her identity as she finds that there is no certainty in the universe. George Herbert Mead argues thus:

There are two kinds of selves. First, one has an immediate perception of oneself, as when hearing one's own voice at the same time respond to these social simulations. The self is relatively in the background and does not play a great part. The other self is active but it

lacks power to achieve equilibrium. (Mead 5)

Willa Cather's *A Lost Lady* (1923) evoked great interest in the critics and reviewers who expressed their different opinions about the novel. T.K. Whipple in *New York Evening Post* (1928) commented thus: "With *A Lost Lady*, Willa Cather arrived at what can be called perfection in her art" (143). Joseph Wood Krutch (1967) described the novel as "nearly perfect" (48). David Daiches (1976) described Willa Cather's *A Lost Lady* as "a flawless classic" (86). A.S. Byatt (1980) in her Introduction to *A Lost Lady* commented thus: Willa Cather's *A Lost Lady* is a study of the degeneration of a character and a set of values, the loss of Mrs. Forrester and her money to Ivy Peters, the symbolic representative of generation, shrewd, petty, ready to root out the great brooding spirit of freedom" (Byatt xi) The majority of the critics of Willa Cather argued that the plot of *A Lost Lady* is structured around the themes of the fall of the frontiers, the loss of their innocence, loss of self and trauma experienced by the characters of *A Lost Lady*. Cathy Caruth published *Unexplained Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996) and in this book, she explored all the causes and symptoms of trauma.

Mr. Forrester and his beautiful wife Mrs. Forrester are prominent in the town being wealthy and resourceful. They have a summer home in Sweet Water, Nebraska which is visited by important friends of old Captain Forrester and the young beautiful wife. Men from the world of business and the world of Burlington Railroad visit the house of Captain Forrester. Mrs. Forrester is known far and wide for her being a wonderful hostess. The leaders of the railroads often stop in her house to enjoy her hospitality. The novel is narrated by Neil Herbert who is a young boy and one who has closely watched all the activities of Mrs. Forrester. She is brought as a bride to the small town of Sweet Water by her road making husband one of the last of the pioneer aristocrats. Neil Herbert starts to spend a lot of time with the Forrester's as he matures into a young adult. Neil Herbert is the central consciousness in the novel that notices and narrates the harrowing tale of trauma of Marian Forrester trapped in the bog of duplicity, treachery and deceit. Marian Forrester belongs to a time when there is a failure

in the crops, in the small business, in the spirit of the farmers. People are moving away and new values are fast emerging eroding the old values of the pioneers. Marian Forrester is a tragic heroine of Willa Cather who struggles for survival but her limitations and tragic hamartia brings depression and frustration in her life. Freud observes in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* that "trauma is a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" (10).

The novel *A Lost Lady* is a heart rending tale of the fall of a woman who suffers anguish and traumatic experiences because of the victimization of mercantile forces. She belongs to California but she takes a wrong choice to marry a man much older than her age. Neil Herbert is a sensitive, intelligent youth comparable to Jim Burden of *My Antonia* and Claude Wheeler of *One of Ours*. Neil Herbert is a generation younger than Mrs. Forrester and two generations younger than the pioneers who settled in the West. He realizes he lives at "the very end of the road making West....It was already gone, that age, nothing could ever bring it back" (Willa Cather *A Lost Lady*, 169). As Neil grows older, he begins observing the imperfections of Mrs. Forrester whom he idealizes as the "perfect lady" representing the noble and high virtues of the West. Neil's point of view is faulty as Mrs. Forrester is a flapper passionate to enjoy all the material amenities of life, love and sex. The main focus of Willa Cather is on dramatization of the traumatic experiences of Marian Forrester who becomes a victim of growing capitalism, selfishness, greed and sexual perversion. The theme of loss, human degradation, chaos of life and false illusions are the main concern of Willa Cather. The tone of the novel is pessimistic, nostalgic as Cather incorporates an ambiguous ending raising many questions in the minds of the readers. Willa Cather uses sexual imagery to portray the character of Marian Forrester. The first thirty pages of the novel are in the form of exposition as Willa Cather introduces all the major characters but in the second section begins the real challenges for Mrs. Forrester and her journey, leading her to traumatic experiences. The house of Forrester itself becomes a representative of the female body "stripped of its vines and denuded of its shrubbery, the house would probably have been ugly enough" (8). Neil Herbert is

attracted and repulsed by her female sexuality. While Neil lives "on the edge of the Prairie the Forrester home is placed on the hill, against its bristling grove, it was the first thing one saw on coming into Sweet Water by rail and the last thing one saw on departing" (9). Willa Cather has described the Forrester land central to the experience of Sweet Water:

To approach captain Forrester's property, you had to get over a wide, sandy creek which flowed along the eastern edge of the town. Crossing this by the foot bridge or the ford; you entered the captain's private lane, bordered by Lombardy poplars, with wide meadows lying on the either side. Just at the foot on the hill on which the house sat, one crossed a second creek by the stout wooden road bridge. To get to the Forrester place, one has to cross over out of mundane time and space, into a new location, suspended from the moral and cultural demands of small town Sweet Water. (9)

In the first chapter of the novel, Willa Cather describes the romantic and pastoral atmosphere; she provides an explicit clue to her issues of place, sexual betrayal and the process of disintegration and moral transgression of Marian Forrester. When Mrs. Forrester uses her freedom, frustration usually results. Cather dramatizes a romantic scene when Marian Forrester watches the boys going to the marsh to celebrate "picnic" and she carries cookies to entertain them. She finds Neil Herbert who is at the age of twelve; the nephew of Judge Pommeroy, Ed Elliot, Gorge Adams and Ivy Peter whose red "skin was flecked with tiny freckles" (18). He is the arch-villain of the novel and Cather gives the images of snake and lizard to depict his personality thus:

His eyes were very small and an absence of eyelashes gave his pupils the fixed the unblinking hardness of a snake or a lizard's. His hands had the same swollen look as his face were deeply creased across the back and knuckles, as if the skin were stretched too tight. He was an ugly fellow, Ivy Peers and he liked being ugly (18).

Neil Herbert is charmed by the beauty, grace and glamour of Marian Forrester. He falls in love with her and she also takes keen interest in Neil as she finds in him sincerity, loyalty and a strange attraction of the youth. She

is older than him but there is a wave of emotional understanding between Neil and Marian Forrester. Marian Forrester is a charming beautiful woman full of passion and vitality but she marries a man twenty-five years older than herself. She settles in a small town surrounded by hills. She is full of sexual attraction and irresistible charisma; she defines what it means to be a "lady" in her milieu. Marian Forrester exemplifies elegance and high class, but she is also able to create an instant feeling of intimacy with the people she encounters. She is very active and smiling receiving the guests in her drawing room and these entire qualities spell bound Neil Herbert who becomes her confidant at the later part of her life. Neil Herbert observes thus: "Mrs. Forrester looked at one, and one knew that she was bewitching. It was instantaneous, and it pierced the blackest hide" The novel *A Lost Lady* chronicles the rise and degeneration of the machine age in Cather's America. Marian Forrester is the pivotal character who is a survivor, lives in the shadow of men: "It was in relation to her husband that Neil most admired her" (78) and "the right man could save her, even now" (65). Marian Forrester is caught between two men and two forces in society: Captain Forrester, the machine age man and Ivy Peters, the exploitative capitalist. The lady, like society is lost because she moves from one to the other in order to survive. She prefers "life on any terms" (169). The journey of Marian Forrester is from "found" by Captain Forrester to "lost" with Ivy Peters. She begins her life as a romantic, voluptuous young girl, romantic, adventurous but at the end of the journey of life she degenerates into a whore and adulterous experiencing the traumatic loss of self. Cathy Caruth advocates some similarities and relations between trauma and history. Caruth states, "History, like trauma is never simply one's own, that history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas" (Unclaimed Experience 4). Caruth proves that trauma doesn't lie in the first traumatic event but in the repetitive occurrence of identical upsetting events. The author records, "Trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature . . . the way it was precisely not known in the first instance . . .

returns to haunt the survivor later on" (4). Inwardly, Mrs. Forrester is a wounded self; her life is boring and lonely; she never enjoys real love because Captain Forrester is not her match and she always dreams of romantic love. No wonder, she indulges into illicit extra-marital relationships to escape from boredom and isolation. Neil Herbert's adoration of Mrs. Forrester is the basis of her portrait. He is a sensitive idealist living with his widower father and a spinster aunt. Captains Forrester is a pioneer of construction; he is a man of peace and happiness with his beloved. He stands out as a powerful idealist embodying the finer characteristics of the pioneers of the Mid-West. Cather has portrayed the grace and charm of Forrester, his straight forwardness and "clumsy dignity" (23). When Forrester suffers another stroke, it renders him utterly helpless. After the stroke, "his health deteriorated, his speech became blurred" (82). He could not clearly find words, so he "avoided talking even more than was his habit" (82). Captain Forrester was losing his ability to speak, the most prominent quality that separates humans from animals. He loses all property as his bank collapses and Mrs. Forrester is on the road trapped in the bog of poverty after the death of her husband. Mrs. Forrester succumbs to fate and allows the boorish townfolk to invade her home and ruin her life forever.

Willa Cather's *A Lost Lady* is a study of the traumatic experiences of Marian Forrester, her traumatic tale symbolizes the end of an era, of the breaking up of the spirit of the pioneer reflected in the life of Marian Forrester. The life history of Marian Forrester has historical and cultural relevance as she presents the age of decline and degeneration of the 1920s. Miss Elizabeth Sergeant in her *Willa Cather: A Memoir* (1953) observes that she is "heroine who does not preserve the moralities but clings to the amenities, and sometimes surprises us with the nobilities" (186). Her story is filled with the decay of the frontier; Cather gives the trajectory of her wounded soul. Her journey of life is replete with chaos, betrayal and deceit. Sigmund Freud developed the concept of trauma and betrayal in his seminal books *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *The Discontent of Civilization*. Freud rejected Darwin's theory of instinct and opined that "several distinct mental actions don't

always govern the instincts". Darwin ignored "the origin of the primary mental powers" (185) but Freud propounded his own theory of wound and trauma in his *Essay on Hysteria*. Freud talks of the mental powers of human beings and classified their instincts into life instincts and death instincts. Freud proposes that the beauty, mental order, and regularity of scheduled actions of a subject get affected when it's attacked externally. The subject becomes unconscious though "it also remains unconsciously active" (*The Unconscious* 47). Freud studied the "psychical traits and behavioral dispositions" of the patients of hysteria and trauma in his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. (*The Standard Edition* 356) to know what traumatized them. After Charles Darwin, Freud also got influenced by Jean Martin Charcot. For Freud the ego, despite its origin in the unconscious, is the result of the contact between the internal id and the external world. The influence of the external world is decisive in the genesis of the ego. Hence, it is the imposition of structures on the chaotic unconscious process by the external world that is determinative in the birth of the ego. (quid. in Tao Jang 9) The first cause of deterioration and loss of self of Mrs. Forrester is her sexual liberty. She develops intimacy with Frank Ellinger who is a tall and handsome man of her native place. He is well dressed bachelor of forty years of age and Mrs. Forrester is a married woman to an older fellow and she always longs to enjoy fruitful love. The presence of Frank Ellinger thrills her and she experiences romantic sensations in her body. Ellinger exudes a sense of malignancy; he is the main source of trauma in the life of Mrs. Forrester. Tony Tanner observes that two men bring psychological anguish to Marian Forrester; Frank Ellinger and Ivy Peters. Frank seduces and pollutes her body and Ivy Peters ruins her financially and morally. She is a victim of treachery and dishonesty of people who value money more than human beings. Neil is considered "wild" in his youth and he was also once infatuated with a whore in Denver. People regard him as "good fellow" a "generous and resourceful business man who was devoted to care of his invalid mother. Frank Ellinger carries on an affair and correspondence with Mrs. Forrester but he eventually marries Constance Ogden. Nancy Morrow published her

article "Willa Cather's *A Lost Lady* and the Nineteenth Century Novel of Adultery in Women's Studies (1984). She observes that Cather's *A Lost Lady* represents a consolidating or drawing together of different stories; here, memories of real people and places combine with memories of fictional portraits and situation" (295).

Willa Cather's *A Lost Lady* presents the age old tension between possibility and loss against background of the frontier of the West that promises opportunities and at the same time offers challenges for the future. Marian Forrester is a sinner like Hawthorne's Hester Prynne, Emma Bovary of Flaubert and Anna Karenina of Leo Tolstoy. Cather has given an insight into the psyche of a woman who is driven by the emotions and passions. Marian Forrester is like Hester Prynne; she is married but her sexual perversion becomes the main cause of her degeneration and degradation. There is no Boston society in *A Lost Lady* and she doesn't have to wear a scarlet letter but she suffers divine retribution. Her husband knows all about her adultery. He doesn't expose Marian Forrester but she suffers the loss of herself when her husband suffers the paralytic stroke. Willa Cather has written her first novel on the theme of adultery in imitation Flaubert's *Madam Bovary* and Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. The novel *A Lost Lady* is not about families, nor it is about unhappy marriages but it is a study as Tony Tanner asserts of "fictional adultery." Willa Cather doesn't attempt to harmonize the various roles of wife, daughter, mother and believing Christian and biological female. Cather gives full freedom to her heroine Mrs. Forrester who emerges as a New Woman of Sweet Water society. She belongs to California and knows her liberties and democratic rights; she is fully conversant of the second wave of feminism. She is fully aware of the culture of flappers and she follows the code of the flappers. She enjoys sexual liberty, enjoys brandy and coffee and feels excited in the company of men who visit her husband occasionally. Willa Cather doesn't mention Marian's religion and the family background and allows her to grow independently. She is childless and this is another cause of her lonely and secluded life. There is brewing a neurotic storm inside the psyche of Marian Forrester. According to Freud, "sublimated mental activity is chaotic, requiring that

order be imposed from without, by the external world, which results in the birth of the ego" (qtd. in Jiang 9). Marian Forrester's affairs with Frank Ellinger, her moral transgression is another cause of her loss of self. Sigmund Freud, Cathy Caruth and LaCapra are of the opinion that memory is the main source of trauma. Cathy Caruth holds that an event of the past goes deep into the psyche of an individual which keeps on torturing him so long he is alive. The traumatic event is buried deep into the psyche and like wounds the old memories appear on the surface and become a source of psychological pain. Their daily life is engulfed by symptoms of trauma, but they are ignorant of the symptoms affecting them. This study investigates the ways in which Willa Cather draws upon James and Sigmund's theories of consciousness.

Captain Forrester's story is also full of painful memories of the decline of the West. Something forbidding had come into the voice, the lonely, defiant note that is so often heard in the voices of the old Indians (55). Neil Herbert repeats the same thought later as he rides back to the West from his studies at an Eastern School after graduation. He finishes his law and becomes an assistant to his Uncle Judge and starts looking into the legal affairs of Captain Forrester. Neil is also rooted in the culture of the old West and he is shocked to notice the declining trends of the old West. William Faulkner wrote his famous novel *The Sound and the Fury* depicting the haunting memories of the Old South. Willa Cather describes the scenes of the declining of the West. Willa Cather describes the romantic dreams of Captain Forrester who is extremely happy to settle in Sweet Water with his beautiful wife Marian Forrester. Captain Forrester represents the noble pioneer spirit like Antonio and Alexandra and like them he suffers alienation and depression as the pioneer spirit is declining with cultural transformation in the West. He has "a deep nature, and a conscience that had never been juggled with" (48), he is true to the code of "a courteous brotherhood" (106). The change of time and culture visibly takes its toll upon Captain Forrester: "He met with an accident, fell from his horse, he had grown much heavier, seemed encumbered by his own bulk, and never suggested taking a contact for the railroad again" (32). The main cause of his loss of self

is clearly pointed out by Willa Cather in the early section of the novel. That he suffers from physical ailments, he grows bulky, met with an accident, he has no child, he suffers from inferiority complex because his wife Marian Forrester is twenty five years younger than him and above all he thinks that he has become redundant after his huge contribution of the railroad construction. Time is fast changing; values are fast changing; he feels disconnected with the age and spirit of time. All these causes compounded make Captain Forrester a frustrated man who dies. Freud defines "Mourning" as "the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as fatherland, liberty, [or] an ideal..." ("Mourning," General Selection 125). The adultery of his wife further gives him psychological trauma as he feels helpless. He finds that the "new age" is entirely different from the old age of the pioneers. Neil Herbert finds him physically immobile before a sun-dial: "Everything about him seemed to have grown heavier and weaker. His face was fatter and smoother, as if the features were running into each, as when a wax face melts in the heat... His brown hands lay on his knees, the fingers well apart, nerveless" (109). He is bedridden, "propped up on three pillows". All these images of frailty and physical weakness symbolize the degeneration of the "old age of the pioneers" represented by Captain Forrester. Merrill Skaggs in her book *After the World Broke in Two: The Later Novels of Willa Cather* (1990) opines that "sweet water" is a Greek slang associated with female sexuality: "a strayed woman is said to be of the sweet water" (50). Skaggs argued that Mrs. Forrester is viewed as "having strayed once she begins trading sex for financial security; she has crossed the boundaries of social morality into the murky waters of sex life (50). Her sexual affair is implied in the early part of the novel when Frank is invited to the residence of Forrester. Just before the two are about to sleep in their separate rooms," the train of her velvet dress caught the leg of his broadcloth trousers and dragged with a friction cracked and threw sparks" (49). There was something hidden going on between Mrs. Forrester and Frank; they were romantically involved as sparks symbolize love fire. Willa Cather has depicted Frank as an animal. He looked

like "a man who could bite an iron rod in two with a snap of jaws" (36). Frank had a "restless and muscular energy that had something of the cruelty of wild animals in it" (37). She even wants to go cedar-bough cutting with Forrester and Frank, getting an opportunity to be near Frank. After the dinner at that night Marian Forrester warns Frank to be careful of Constance. "Be careful", she murmured as she approached Frank: "I have distinct impression that there is someone on the enclosed stairway. There is a wide crack in the door. Ah! But the kittens have claws (59). And again: "I heard silk stockings on the stairs (60). Constance is fervently pursuing Frank creating jealousy in the mind of Marian Forrester. He keeps on flirting with her; she suits him because she is childless and a lady of excellent charms and vivacity but the tables turn when he has found that she has lost all wealth and has become poor and miserable. Mrs. Forrester expresses her despondency when she finds Frank nearly marrying Constance to become rich. She expresses her anguish thus :

Play safe! When have you played anything else?... You'd have got a safe thing at last, I should think; safe and pasty ! How much stock did you get with it? A big block, I hope" (134).

To conclude, Willa Cather's *The Lost Lady* is a novel about the moral and psychological fragmentation of all the characters. Frank gets a "big block" in his marriage with Constance, he proves a ruthlessly ambitious, she enjoys the sexual pleasures with Marian Forrester and when her husband dies, he doesn't even attend the funeral of her husband and leaves Sweet Water forever. This scene of betrayal virtually shatters Marian Forrester who has turned a "lost lady", because she has lost everything. In Morton D. Zabel's words, *A Lost Lady* of Willa Cather reflects mourning for America's pioneer past, her feeling that "the inspiring landscape of the priorities, deserts, and mountains, no less than the gracious charms of colonial Virginia or old New York, had been obliterated by a vulgar and cheapening modernity" (43)

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