

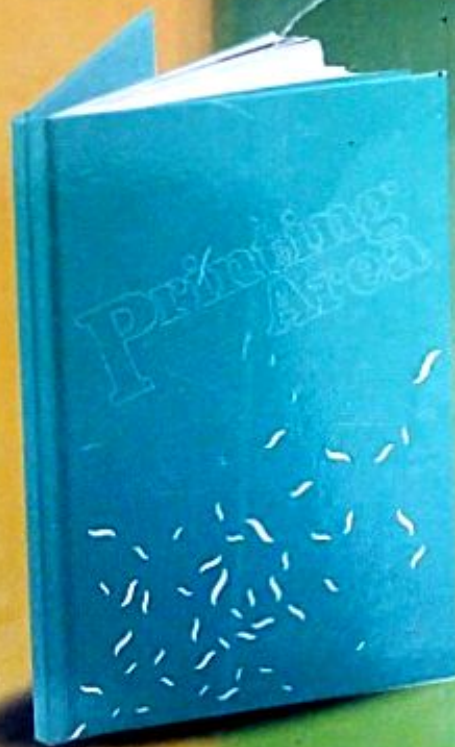


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07

Willa Cather's Passion for Virgilian Allusions: Dramatization of Epic Grandeur; Loss and Tragic Despair in My Antonia, The Professor's House and Shadows on the Rock

Ritu Gupta

Assistant Professor, Dept. of English,
Hindu Kanya College, Kapurthala

ABSTRACT

The present research paper entitled: "Willa Cather's Passion for Virgilian Allusions: Dramatization of Epic Grandeur; Loss and Tragic Despair in My Antonia, The Professor's House and Shadows on the Rock" explores the impact of Virgil on the ideas of Willa Cather and her chief concern on the loss of beauty and grandeur in the life of the pioneers. Lewis P. Simpson once observed that Willa Cather was fed up with the absurdities of the industrial America and in her novels My Antonia, The Professor's House and Shadows of the Dark, she turned to the pastoral plantation writing that acted as an anti-dote to the growing materialism, a withdrawal from memory and history". Willa Cather was greatly impacted by Virgil's Eclogues, Cather's novels don't focus on the plantation life of the pioneers of Nebraska but on the theme of a land of dreams threatened by extinction. Willa Cather depicted the culture of alienation with the growth of the money culture in America and her novels documented the painful experiences of the pioneers engulfed by

the forces of a mechanized society. Willa Cather used the tools of Virgil, images, metaphors and the pastoral techniques in My Antonia, The Professor's House and Shadows on the Rock to lend a sense of grandeur to the lives of common pioneers to suggest a sense of the infinite in the infinitesimal. Her epic insights add to the sweet tragic beauty of the novels.

KEYWORDS: Absurdities, Industrial, Extinction, Engulfed, Mechanized, Pastoral, Plantation, Alienation.

Willa Cather was dismayed by the destruction during the World War 1. It virtually tore her apart so she changed her perspective and put her faith in the pastoral images and myths seeking inspiration from Virgil and Homer. Through her historical allusions and myths, Willa Cather opens a window to comprehend reality and the existential absurdity confronted by the pioneers. The pioneers of the 19th century portrayed in the novels of Willa Cather experience nostalgia, death and destruction in their plantation project of Nebraska. Stephen Tennant reflects on Cather's genius: "We know that she is a great writer, not because we feel that she deals with epic themes, passions at white heat or noble dramas, but because of the curious fact that with a few mild sentences and rather uneventful narrative she convinces us that our own lives have given and received happiness" (xii). The critics observe that the secret of greatness of Will Cather lies in her poetic powers and lyrical style to create characters and situations in both historical and mythical modes simultaneously. There is an allusive depth in her novels. Cather recreates the scenes and lives of her characters imitating Virgil and uses pastoral tradition to give a true picture of the contemporary American society. In her novel, My Antonia she employed the technique of juxtaposition and contiguous opposites. She uses ironic tensions in her novel through the blending of myth and history. Her innovative stylistic techniques proved very

successful and *A Lost Lady* and *My Antonia* proved best sellers and Willa Cather got positive reviews. Willa Cather justified her new approach thus: "Nobody can paint the sun or sunlight. He can only paint the tricks that shadows play with it, or what it does to forms. . . . At bottom all he can give you is the thrill of his own poor little nerve – the projection in paint of a fleeting pleasure in a certain combination of form and colour" (On Writing, 124). Jim Burden and Neil Herbert are created on the pattern of pastoral tradition as they are projected as heroic ideals. Jim Burden treats Antonia as a new Eve and he remains as an outsider. Neil Herbert is also a pastoral idealist as he considers Mrs. Forrester as a goddess and an ideal lady. Jim Burden recognizes his own experiences in *Black Hawk* as larger in light of Virgil's *Georgics*. Tom Outland, when reading the *Aeneid*, sees "two pictures: the one on the page and one behind that" (228). Willa Cather uses power and persistence of Virgilian allusions in creating her idealistic characters. Bernice Slotte contends that Cather "learned the great epics so well that all the seas and islands of the ancients were living and real" (35). On the other hand, James Woodress and Edith Lewis observe that Willa Cather continued her interest in the classics of Virgil and other great masters of Rome. William Drucker had been her teacher who motivated and encouraged her to borrow ideas from the Greek and Latin literature. Mary Ryder pronounced that Cather is a "well— trained and capable classicist" (117). Theodore Ziolkowski also avers that in *The Professor's House* and *Shadows on the Rock*, the impact of Virgil can be clearly seen in the plots and characters (150), Ziolkowski in his book *Virgil and the Moderns* observes that there is a coherent plan in the novels of Willa Cather to dramatize the thematic sense of cosmos. There are scenes of chaos and disorder depicted through the various episodes in the novel. Cather's classical allusions are fundamentally chaotic evoking primal,

instinctive forces. The Virgilian allusions give an epical grandeur to the novels of Willa Cather. In *The Professor's House*, Cather introduces Godfrey St. Peter dragged into the present while he desperately clings to the past. He is sick of the growing materialism of his family since St. Peter yearns to preserve the more noble and self sustaining past. Leon Edel aptly avers that "He is a Gallic epicure, isolated, like his garden, in surroundings to which he cannot ever wholly belong" (202). St. Peter and Tom Outland turn to the world of Virgil and experience transcendental grandeur but soon they realize that the dark shadows of the mundane world dissatisfy them. Cather uses the phrases of Virgil's *Aeneid* to bring grandeur and epical tone in her novels. The multiple intertextual echoes of *Aeneid* in her novels intensify the thematic significance. Tom's story and the Professor's own actions are very interesting in the plot of the novel. The Professor is surprised to note that the young man Tom has studied Latin. Tom observes thus: "I read Caesar and Virgil, the *Aeneid*." Tom quotes many lines from the text of *Aeneid* narrating his understanding of the war of Troy. Tom enters the novel through St. Peter's garden, carrying a "canvas telescope" from which he will pull forth ancient, cliff— dweller pottery and offer it to Mrs. St. Peter (110). Cather clearly marks Tom and Godfrey's values and vision as distinct from the material concerns of St. Peter's immediate family.

Cather borrows from Virgil a narrative strategy of an intentional fragmentation in her novel *Shadows on the Rock* to capture the old glory of prairie culture. Cather wrote to Wilbur Cross about this strategy that she employed in her novels: "There another age persists It is hard to state that feeling in language; it was more like an old song, incomplete but uncorrupted, than like a legend. The text was mainly anacoluthon, so to speak, but the meaning was clear" (On Writing 15). Willa Cather used the popular epic device of disruption

and anacoluthon in her plots as each of her novels has fragmented, disjointed and allusive opening. Cather enjoins the reader, as Virgil does with fragments of Hesiod. Jim begins the plot giving fragments of Antonia's story. He narrates the life of Antonia step by step to convey the message effectively. The present is linked with the past and the glorious period of the past is described to sense of loss. Jim observes in *My Antonia* thus: "I didn't arrange or rearrange. I simply wrote down what of herself and myself and other people Antonia's name recalls to me. I suppose it hasn't any form. It hasn't any title, either" (Willa Cather, *My Antonia* 6) Willa Cather uses Virgilian allusions to dramatize the mood of doubt and despair and to achieve a synergy of narrator, writer and characters. In her novels *My Antonia*, *The Professor's House* and *Shadows on the Rock*, Cather uses classical allusions in the spirit of primitive and personal ritual. She evokes the past to add an epic flavor to the plot. Glorious past is but to collapse time, to illustrate how human beings engaged in finite lives, at the same time reach for the infinite in "brilliance" and "vigor" again and again only to lose that brilliance again and again. In both their success and failures, Cather uses epic allusions to remind us of the eternal pattern of heroic growth and tragic decay.

In *My Antonia*, Willa Cather uses the classical allusions depicting the struggles of the characters in the prairies of America. Murphy observes that in the allusions of Willa Cather, there is an effort to bring the classical grandeur and to highlight the essential and "universal yearnings" (7). Cather works through allusions to vividly visualize the Nebraskan landscape. Willa Cather uses the textual sentences of Virgil to mirror the themes of loss of life and death. In *My Antonia*, Murphy recognizes in Cather's depiction of hard work and seasonal change. Cather uses an extended metaphor to depict the value of hard work in life and the cultivation of land of the pioneers is the main focus of the

novelist. Antonia's idyllic family life mirrors the ideal balance between rustic and urban life style in the second book of the *Georgics*. Cather focuses on the theme of main conflicts of life caused by sex and death. Wick Cutter's attempts of rape of Antonia, a parallel to the sex and passion curbed by enlightened husbandry in the Third *Georgic*. In Murphy's study, Cather is completely Virgilian. She filters her narrative details through a classical lens – a lens which "illuminates the universal significance she saw in her frontier material" (16). Cather filters the Nebraska prairie through a Virgilian lens to the degree that Murphy claims, her allusions certainly add a larger, mnemonic import to the experiences of Jim, Antonia and others.

Willa Cather follows the heroic style in depicting the characters and documenting the experiences of the pioneers. There is a remarkable shift from the journalist's objective reportage to a novelist's subjective recollection, Cather takes up a cosmic view of life and allows her characters to struggle and get psychological traumas. Her vision of life is cosmic as she takes up the heroic view of life and the struggles of human beings. There is grandeur even in their failures and defeats. The landscape is described in heroic style; the imagery is drawn from nature and the farming life. She uses memory relying on the memory and all issues of life are discussed in epic style. The invocation to heavenly muse as we find in Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Virgil's *Aeneid* is remarkable and is on the epic tradition. For the epic poet, to invoke the muse is to invoke both divine inspiration and memory and Cather seems to enroll herself in this tradition. It is worth noting (and it is surprising that Murphy never highlights this) that in *Aeneid*, Virgil too evokes a curiously mnemonic muse when he writes, "Musa, mihi causas memora" (*Aeneid*, I. 8). Unlike Homer, Virgil calls on the muse not simply to record in admiration the heroic exploits of a bygone age but specifically to "remember through me the

causes." In this sense, Murphy's work points to a crucial affinity between the two writers, yoking them both to a shared muse of memory and an artistic program that strives to synthesize both the heroic past and the personal present. Other critics, like Paul Olson, follow Murphy's lead in recognizing, in Cather's allusions an intentional and formulaic means of depicting experiences in a heroic light, but add to this, a redemptive quality.

To conclude, Willa Cather uses the tools of Virgil to achieve epical grandeur and seriousness in her novels *My Antonia*, *The Professor's House* and *Shadows on the Rock*. The use of images and metaphors is very effective as the landscape is vividly described following the heroic style. The language is lyrical and the past is contrasted with the dismal present highlighting the struggles of the pioneers. Her contemporaries Hemingway and Norman Mailer were writing war experiences but Willa Cather took up the values of the American Dream and the American nightmares in a heroic style to achieve sublimity and grandeur and cosmic inclusiveness.

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08

Phytochemical Study of Azadirachta indica Plant

B. U. Kale

Department of Chemistry,
Shri Vyankatesh Arts, Commerce & Science
College, Deulgaon Raja(M.S.)

ABSTRACT:

The present study was aimed to analyze the phytochemical analysis of Azadirachta indica. The Phytochemical analysis of Azadirachta indica revealed that alkaloids, flavonoids, Terpenoids and steroids were present in leaves extract.

Key words: phytochemical extract, Azadirachta indica.

INTRODUCTION:

The use of plants and plant products as medicines could be traced as far back as the beginning of human civilization. The earliest mention of medicinal use of plants in Hindu culture is founds in "Rigveda", which is said to have been written between 4500 - 1600 B.C. and is supposed to be the oldest repository of human knowledge. Plants are used as resource of drugs of traditional systems of medicine, nutraceuticals, food supplements, pharmaceutical intermediates and chemical entities for synthetic drugs (Hammer et al., 1999). In Ayurveda, the foundation of medicinal science of Hindu culture, in its eight division deals with properties of medicinal contain and various aspects of science of life and the art of healing (Rastogi and Mehrotra, 2002).

Azadirachta indica, commonly known as Neem. It is traditionally used as a source of many therapeutic agents. A. indica (leaf, bark and seeds) are known to contain antibacterial,