

813  
1022490  
0.3

WOMAN, NATURE AND IDENTITY IN WILLA CATHER'S MY ANTONIA

AN ABSTRACT

BY

MISS WANNAPORN PETCHDEE

21 H.A. 2547

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Education degree in English

at Srinakharinwirot University

October 2003

W. Wannaporn Petchdee

Wannaporn Petchdee. (2003). *Woman, Nature and Identity in Willa Cather's*

*My Antonia*. Master's Project, M.Ed. (English). Bangkok: Graduate School,

Srinakharinwirot University. Advisor: Dr.Supaporm Yimwilai.

This study examines the relationship between a female protagonist and nature in Willa Cather's, *My Antonia*. Life and personalities of the protagonist with close relationship to nature are analyzed as the main factors in developing her own identity and spiritual growth. Ecofeminist perspectives are applied to analyze this kind of relationship.

The results of this study show that this kind of relationship leads to a successful and happy life of the protagonist. As the novel expresses the ecofeminist idea, the researcher would like to specify *My Antonia* as ecofeminist writing.

ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างผู้หญิง ธรรมชาติ และเอกลักษณ์ ในงานเขียนของ วิลลาห์ แคเซอร์  
เรื่อง MY ANTONIA

บทคัดย่อ  
โดย  
วรรณพร เพ็ชรดี

เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษา  
ตามหลักสูตรปริญญาการศึกษามหาบัณฑิต สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ  
ตุลาคม 2546

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background.....	1
Purposes of the study.....	4
Significance of the study.....	4
Scope of the study.....	5
Procedures of the study.....	5
Expected outcome.....	5
Definition of terms.....	6
2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.....	7
Background of ecofeminism.....	7
Ecofeminism: definitions and concept... ..	8
Research on ecofeminism.....	11
Willa Cather's life.....	12
3 AN ANALYSIS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WOMAN AND NATURE IN WILLA CATHER'S <u>MY ANTONIA</u> .....	15
The female protagonist's subordinate roles.....	15
The new frame of thought.....	22
The relationship between the female protagonist and nature: female innate spiritual growth and a stronger identity.....	26

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

Chapter	Page
4 CONCLUSION AND SUGESSTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES.....	32
REFERENCES.....	37
APPENDIX.....	41
VITA.....	44

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This master's project has been completed with much assistance. First I would like to express my gratitude to Assistant Professor. Penny Disakaprakai, my chair, for her support and encouragement since I first attended the M.Ed. program. I also sincerely thank Dr. Tipa Tep-Akrapong who always supported my efforts and gave encouragement and helps. I am also indebted to the members of my committee, Mrs. Sirinna Boonyasaquon and Assistant Professor Nantawan Chumtanti for their valuable suggestions. I am extremely grateful to Dr. Supaporn Yimwilai, my advisor, for her inspiration, encouragement, and helpful guidance.

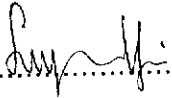
My thanks are given to my friends, Apinya Buacomcote, Rawiwan Chandhorn, and Rattiya Sanjan, whom I regard as 'sisters', for their support and for giving me the willpower to complete this work. I also thank my two dearest friends who are always beside me and make me lively and cheerful.

Finally, I give invaluable thanks to my mother; I cannot be what I am now without her, and to my father who is not here but I know he is always with me.

Wannaporn Petchdee

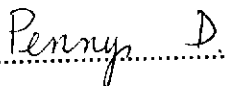
The Master's Project Committee and Oral Defense Committee have approved this Master's Project as partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Education Degree in English of Srinakharinwirot University.

Advisor of the Master's Project

  
.....

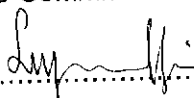
(Dr. Supaporn Yimwilai)

Chair of the Master of Education Degree in English

  
.....

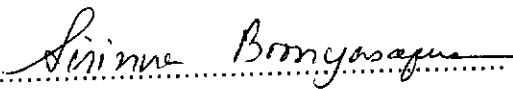
(Assistant Professor Penny Diskaparakai)

Oral Defense Committee

  
.....


Chair

(Dr. Supaporn Yimwilai)

  
.....

Reader


(Mrs. Sirinna Boonyasaquan)

  
.....

Reader

(Assistant Professor Nantawan Chumtanti)

This Master's Project has been approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Education Degree in English of Srinakharinwirot University.

  
.....

Dean of the Faculty of Humanities

(Assoc. Prof. Supha Panjaroen)

October 28, 2003

WOMAN, NATURE AND IDENTITY IN WILLA CATHER'S MY ANTONIA

A MASTER'S PROJECT

BY

MISS WANNAPORN PETCHDEE

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Education degree in English

at Srinakharinwirot University

October 2003

Copyright 2003 Srinakharinwirot University

วรรณพร เพ็ชรดี. (2546). *ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างผู้หญิง ธรรมชาติ และเอกลักษณ์ ในงานเขียนของ วิลลาห์ แคเธอร์ เรื่อง My Antonia*. สารนิพนธ์ กศ.ม. (ภาษาอังกฤษ).  
กรุงเทพฯ: บัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ. อาจารย์ที่ปรึกษา  
นิพนธ์: อาจารย์ ดร.สุภาภรณ์ ยี่มวิลัย.

ในงานวิจัยครั้งนี้ ผู้วิจัยนำแนวคิด อีโคเฟมินิสต์ซีม (Ecofeminism) มาประยุกต์ในการวิเคราะห์ลักษณะความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างผู้หญิงกับธรรมชาติ ผู้วิจัยได้ศึกษาความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างผู้หญิงกับธรรมชาติของตัวละครเอกในนวนิยาย เรื่อง มาย แอนโทเนีย (My Antonia) ของ วิลลาห์ แคเธอร์ (Willa Cather) โดยวิเคราะห์สภาพความเป็นอยู่ และลักษณะนิสัยของตัวละครเอก ซึ่งสัมพันธ์กับธรรมชาติ อันเป็นปัจจัยสำคัญที่ทำให้ตัวละครเอกพัฒนาเอกลักษณ์ของตนเอง

ผลการศึกษาพบว่า ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างผู้หญิงกับธรรมชาติ เป็นปัจจัยสำคัญที่ทำให้ตัวละครเอกประสบความสำเร็จ และดำเนินชีวิตอย่างมีความสุข

จากการที่นวนิยายเรื่องนี้ถ่ายทอดลักษณะแนวคิด Ecofeminism ผู้วิจัยจึงจัด My Antonia เป็นงานเขียนในแนว Ecofeminism เรื่องหนึ่ง

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Willa Cather is ranked as the most important American female writer in the nineteenth century (Molinelli 281; Woodress 132). Her works are notable since her novels rely on the setting of America's Southwest. One of her best-known fictions is My Antonia which treasures the beauty of the land. More than that, the important American history background is clearly seen. As the rising of industrialization, the U.S. government tried to explore and discover a new area in order to widen distribution of their products and find raw materials for their factories. Therefore, the U.S. government encouraged both American and European people to settle down in the frontier area. As a result, Europeans, rather than Africans and Asians, immigrated to the United States in increasing numbers (Jareonsuk 22). My Antonia reveals the experiences of these European immigrants. This novel illustrates difficulties, struggles for existence, survival, and adjustment to their harsh new world.

What is unique in this story is that it presents "the realities of the life of pioneer immigrants on the Great Plains" (Nissila 13). The novel emphasizes success of a female immigrant, Antonia Cuzak, a protagonist. She is a Bohemian who moves to live in the frontier of Nebraska. According to Elaine Showalter, feminist novelists in the nineteenth century are divided into three generations (19-20). The first generation is the female writers born from 1800 to 1820. Most of these female writers present suffering of the subordinate status and oppression of women. The second generation is

the female writers born between 1820 and the years of 1840. In this period, their works are less popular because they follow the plots and styles of the first generation (20).

The last generation is the female writers born between 1840 and 1860. This period is the beginning of children's literature. In addition, female writers in this period put considerable effort to cope with the problems of women's roles; they have more freedom in expressing their thoughts and feelings. Their plots and styles are varied. Cather is a female novelist in the third generation. Her works present the idea of strength and endurance of women. My Antonia is one of these works.

Clearly, in My Antonia, Antonia, the main female character, confronts a hard time like other immigrants; however, she later has a happy life with a large family on her land with plenty of fruits and trees. She works hard on the farm as 'the men do' and becomes successful in life. Cather makes her female characters equal status to men. Like Kim Wells's idea, My Antonia is a novel presenting an image of working women in domestic fiction. In this way, the feminist ideas come to the core in reading this story.

In addition, this novel shows the significance of farming. Many studies show the importance and beauty of land and nature that Cather expresses in My Antonia. Carol Leavitt Altieri studies the symbolism of land and farms in "Willa Cather's My Antonia: the Happiness and the Curse." Altieri states that land and farm mean permanence, freedom of spirit, timelessness and a sense of endurance (Altieri 3). At the same time, the harsh frontier land of Nebraska represents difficulties, obstacles in living, loneliness and failure of life. The rich land is the reward of survival, while losing and separation belong to those who cannot fight the hard life. Marrie P. Nissila, in "A Comparison of

Willa Cather's My Antonia and Jane Smiley's A Thousand Acres," compares the picture of American farms in these two stories. She finds that the farms well reflect the environmental situation. My Antonia shows the prosperity of agriculture in 1870s; while A Thousand Acres reflects the pollution and soil problem in 1970s. Moreover, she sees woman's role on the farm, again in the feminist idea, woman's conquests of land. Anne Raine explores the relationship between American literary modernism and the popular nature movement in "A Thing Wide Open: Nature, Modernity, and American Women Writers". She finds out that the authors, including Cather, use the experimental literary forms to generate a modern understanding of nature. In another field, Babak Elahi, in "Real Americans: Immigration into Modernity, 1900-1920," surveys the process of the reconstruction of the self and the self's migration into modernity of the immigrants through the four American authors: Henry James, Willa Cather, Mary Antin, and Abraham Cahan. Also, My Antonia is brought to compare with a painting in Kathryn Faber's work, "Willa Cather and Georgia O'Keefee: Modernism and the Importance of Place in Color, Light, and Imagery." Faber sees the similarities between Cather's works and O'Keefee's painting.

Although a lot of research shows significance of woman and land, nobody has studied the relationship between them yet. The researcher would like to take a step further by pointing out the relationship between woman and nature. The researcher argues that My Antonia is not only viewed in the feminist way but also an ecofeminist.

Ecofeminism is a new trend of feminist critique. According to Pamela Smith, "the term 'ecofeminist' expresses the perception that the degradation of the Earth is a piece with the subordinating and bullying of women, racial minorities, the poor, and the

marginalized” (qtd in Delveaux 5). The researcher believes that Cather uses the concept of ecofeminism as a way of solving gender problems. The story suggests a life that harmonizes with nature in building an identity of females and makes life successful. Cather applies balanced and healthy ecosystems, suffused by affection and love or spiritual matter to redefine humankind’s relationship with nature. In this way, the researcher classifies My Antonia as ecofeminist writing.

### **Purposes of the Study**

1. To examine the main female character in Willa Cather’s My Antonia in the following aspects:
  - 1.1 Oppression of the main female protagonist by men and society.
  - 1.2 Cather’s presentation of the new frame of thought—non-hierarchic system.
  - 1.3 The relationship between woman and nature that makes the protagonist develops her identity and spiritual matter.
2. To classify Willa Cather’s My Antonia as ecofeminist writing.

### **Significance of the Study**

1. This study will help readers to better understand Willa Cather’s My Antonia.
2. This study will help readers to better understand the concept and history of ecofeminism.
3. This study can be used as a guideline for further studies.

## **Scope of the Study**

The concept and history of ecofeminism are explored, and Willa Cather's My Antonia is analyzed in three ecofeminist perspectives.

## **Procedures of the Study**

1. Survey related literature as follows:

1.1 Study the concept and history of ecofeminism.

1.2 Study research on ecofeminism.

1.3 Study Cather's life.

2. Examine and analyze Cather's My Antonia by applying the ecofeminist

concept as following:

2.1 The main character's life and her subordinate role.

2.2 Cather's presentation of the new frame of thought.

2.3 The relationship between the female protagonist and nature that makes the protagonist develops her identity and female spirit.

3. Conclude the result of the study.

4. Suggest topics for further studies.

## **Expected Outcome**

My Antonia is classified as ecofeminist writing, showing that land and nature are the place where woman can develop her identity and female spirit.

## Definition of terms

1. Ecofeminism refers to new trend in feminist critique concerning the relationship between women and environment. Ecofeminists view that patriarchal and hierarchic system cause the suffering of women and the degradation of the environment. There are three main perspectives of ecofeminism:

1.1 Woman and the environment share a common inferior position. Both of them are oppressed and devalued by Western patriarchy and male power.

1.2 Ecofeminists suggest a "new intellectual frames of thought" that there is non-dualistic or non-hierarchical structure.

1.3 Ecofeminists propose an innate female spiritual nurturing and protecting nature. Women's spirit and body are capable of caring for nature.

2. Fallen woman refers to a woman who behaves differently from the expectation of the society or the ideal of womanhood in the nineteenth century: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. This makes her becomes an unrespectable woman.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter is an overview of the related literature including the history, the concept and research on ecofeminism.

#### Background of Ecofeminism

Before the nineteenth century, women's roles were seen as secondary to those of men. However, in the latter half of the twentieth century, many countries, especially the United States of America and many countries in Europe, had been developed in many aspects: economic, political, social, and industrial. As a result, the current of women's movements increased dramatically. Many organizations began to link women's issues to their development and the environmental concerns (Mainon 2). Because of worrying about ecological damages due to increasing industrialization and results of wars, the awareness of environmental problems emerged (Delveaux 3). In this way, the environment or nature became an issue of feminism. Feminists who were interested in or studied the connections between women and the environment were called ecological feminists or ecofeminists. The time when they formulated the theory, the green movement was popular. Ecological ethics were the primary concern (qtd. in Manion 4). They saw that nature, knowledge, and social practices gave women a closer view of environmental and gender problems. Ecofeminists linked the exploitation and degradation of the environment to the subordination and oppression of woman (Hui

2). Consequencely, they believed that women's spirit could solve these problems (Warren 2).

The term 'ecofeminism' was coined in France in 1974 by d'Eaubonne in her book, Le Feminisme ou la Mort (Feminism or Death). It was used in this study retrospectively to explore ecofeminist ideas in My Antonia which was published in 1918. Francois D'Eaubonne, a French feminist, called for a feminist revolution to assure global ecological survival (Howell 1). D'Eaubonne stated that the oppression of women and nature was from the patriarchal system and male power or male development. She called for the destroying of male power, "not for female power or matriarchy, but for new egalitarian gender relations between men and women and between humans and nature" (qtd. in Howell 1). Although the term appeared in the United States in 1980, the idea of ecofeminism started to spread at the time of the publication of d'Eaubonne's book. Then ecofeminism became an issue in academic study, especially among women.

### **Ecofeminism: Definitions and Concept**

There are various definitions of ecofeminism. However, most ecofeminists would agree with the meaning that ecofeminism concerns the connections between the domination of women and the domination of nature. Ecofeminists focus on these connections and analyze how women and nature are devalued and oppressed.

According to d'Eaubonne's idea, the oppression of women and nature emerges from a Western ideology called patriarchy. The origin of Western patriarchy arose roughly 5,000 years ago. It was based on "dualism," a view that split body from mind,

reason from emotion, culture from nature, human from animal, male from female, subject from object, individuality from interconnection, and public-male from private-female (Howell 2). As a result, the dualism pattern created a hierarchy of value: God, Man, Woman, Children, Animals, and Nature (McGuire 2). Hierarchy was required in order to maintain dominance. Therefore, Western culture was identified as master, and the 'otherness' was made to internalize a sense of inferiority in order to maintain the valuation of the center. In addition, nature was viewed as everything that is 'not-me,' a construction of the self that depended on a radical splitting off of the mind from the human body and the body of earth (Myers 15). In the human/nature dualism, human beings were more valuable than nature. Similarly, in the hierarchy system, women, people of color, and indigenous people were believed that they were close to nature, and therefore, they were less worth than men (Hui 2).

According to ecofeminists, dualism and hierarchy thinking cause sufferings to women and nature. Therefore, ecofeminists have formed a theory for solving the environmental problems and tensions of gender. Ecofeminism is analyzed and criticized in many aspects such as science, politics, economics or religion. As a result, the principles of ecofeminism vary according to each aspect.

For example, Bina Agarwal describes four main overlying precepts in ecofeminism. First, ecofeminists explore the commonalities between gender oppression and environmental degradation mainly caused by male Western dominance. Next, men are more related to culture while women are related to environment. Men and culture are seen as superior. Thus, women and the environment share a common inferior

position. Third, "the oppression of women and the oppression of nature have occurred simultaneously and thus women have a responsibility to cease male domination over both." Finally, ecofeminists seek to combine feminism and ecological thoughts, as they both work towards egalitarian, non-hierarchical structures (qtd.in Manion 4). Similarly, Dzintra Ilisko proposes a model for religious education in ecofeminist perspectives. She uses four perspectives in establishing the model; one of her perspectives is related to spiritual matter. She states that the spirituality will offer a new vision of sustainable religion classroom community (14).

Although there are many various views in ecofeminism, three main perspectives are applied in this study. Firstly, woman and the environment share a common inferior position. Both of them are oppressed and devalued by Western patriarchy and male power. Secondly, as patriarchy, dualism, and hierarchy cause oppression, ecofeminists expect a "new intellectual frames of thought" that there is no non-dualistic or non-hierarchical structure. They want to integrate the false separation of dualism. Lastly, ecofeminists propose an innate female spiritual nurturing and protecting nature. Women's spirit and body are capable of caring for nature. For example, women's body is created for the source of life-giving processes. Women's mind has more strength in upbringing, nurturing and protection of a child. Women have an innate will in caring for and protecting the environment (Warren 2; Howell 2; Ilisko 13; Manian 4). Therefore, spiritual matter is a way to solve gender oppression.

In this study, the researcher applies these three perspectives to analyze a female protagonist's experiences in My Antonia. The researcher also studies the

relationship between woman and nature and the result of this relationship. The researcher argues that the relations between woman and farm develop the character's identity and spirit.

### **Research on Ecofeminism**

There is an amount of research on ecofeminism in various fields. For example, Jennifer Micale, in "Strange New Worlds: Ecofeminism and Science Fiction," studies a science fiction novel, The Color of Distance by Amy Thomson. She concludes that this science fiction differs from other science fictions since it presents ecofeminist theory. While other stories present science and technology, The Color of Distance presents a picture of hierarchical, otherness and dominator culture, and provides a blueprint for the constructions of self, community, culture, and identity. The story also persuades the readers to save the rainforests, environment, and local people. Also, in "Converging Stories: Race and Ecology in American Literature, 1785-1902," Jeffrey Myers studies the writings of five American writers: Thomas Jefferson, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Charles Waddell Chesnutt, and Zitkala-Sa. She finds that these authors link problems of race to the environment in their works. Especially in My Antonia, Myers indicates that Cather shows concern for the value of nature and gives respects to the natural processes of the land. In addition, Martin Delveaux explores the relationship of race and gender in "Alice Walker's The Color Purple, and Horses Make a Landscape Look More Beautiful." He concludes, "Walker transcends the concept of ecofeminism by bringing this idea as a way of solving tensions of gender and placing

human beings and nature on the same plane" (4-6). In "Finding Ourselves in Empty Places: Life and Literature of the Midwest," Virginia Wright-Peterson explores how human identities are influenced by the environment. She concludes that her sources represent an ecological approach to literature, history, natural history, geography, and human relationships. Also, ecofeminism is expanded to religious thinking. In "An Ecological Model for Religious Education in Latvia: An Ecofeminist Perspective," Ilisko explores women's place in the existing models of religious education in Latvia. Ilisko designs a model by enlarging the women's role and placing it in religious education. She also stresses the interconnection of women, men, and the Earth.

As discussed above, ecofeminism is receiving great attention from many fields. Therefore, the researcher proposes to study ecofeminist ideas in Cather's My Antonia. The researcher would like to argue that My Antonia well reflects the concept of ecofeminism.

### **Willa Cather's Life (1873-1947)**

Willa Sibert Cather or Willa Cather was born on December 7, 1873 in Virginia. When she was about eight or nine, she moved to a farm near Red Cloud, Nebraska. Her first two years on the farm were the most important for her as a writer (Kazin 250). Two immigrant neighbors, Grieg and Liszt, taught her Latin. Also, her grandmother taught her to read English at home. Cather learned to appreciate Henry James. Years later, the family left the farm to live in the town of Red Cloud, so the children could attend school. In 1890, she attended the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. She was

very interested in botany, astronomy and chemistry. However, she began to turn her thoughts toward writing when an instructor sent an essay she had written to the Nebraska State Journal, the town's paper, without her consent. He also sent it to the student magazine called The Hesperian. Later, Cather became an editor for The Hesperian. Throughout her college years, Cather continued to write for the Nebraska State Journal. In addition, Cather did some practice teaching during her senior year. In 1895, Cather graduated from the University. She returned home to Red Cloud and began to write for the Courier, the local newspaper. A year later, when she was about 23, she left home again to work as an editor for Home Monthly, a magazine in Pittsburgh. She also was offered a job at the Pittsburgh Leader. She took the job, but continued to write for Home Monthly under another name. Cather's newspaper career ended in 1901. From 1901 to 1906, she was a Latin teacher at Central High School in Pittsburgh. She later taught English and transferred to Allegheny High School. During this time, she wrote and published April Twilights. Encouraged by this publishing, she wrote The Troll Garden, and it was published in 1905. Then, McClure's Magazine in New York hired her as editor in 1906, and as managing editor from 1908 until 1911. Cather totally worked for McClure's Magazine from 1906 to 1912. During her time at McClure's Magazine, she worked in Boston and Europe and wrote McClure's biography. She was responsible for reading the manuscripts that came in and also editing articles sent in by semi-literate people who knew a lot about copper mines in the West but did not write well. She became the leading magazine editor of her day. Therefore, she

had very little time to write. She quit her job as editor in order to devote all her time to writing, and in 1912 her first novel, Alexander's Bridge, was published.

Cather's primary inspiration was her hometown of Red Cloud. Also, Cather was influenced by Henry James whom Cather considered as 'the perfect writer.' Moreover, many of her characters were based on her sexual orientation. There was no proof that Cather ever came close to marriage; the men she loved most were her father and brothers. Sharon O'Brien, a writer and critic, found Cather's relationship with Louise Pound, her best friend and stated: "Willa Cather was a Lesbian" (Poupard 90). After the affair with Pound ended, Cather had "more enduring and supportive relationships" with Isabelle McClung and later with Edith Lewis (90). Nevertheless, Cather never declared publicly that she was in fact a lesbian.

Cather died in 1947 at the age of 74. She produced fourteen works of prose, including novels, short story collections, and a collection of essays.

## CHAPTER 3

### AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A FEMALE PROTAGONIST, NATURE, AND IDENTITY IN MY ANTONIA

In this chapter, three ecofeminist perspectives are applied to analyze the ecofeminist ideas in Willa Cather's My Antonia. The researcher explores the subordinate roles of Antonia, the female protagonist, and analyzes Antonia's success, the result of the relationship between Antonia and nature.

#### **The Female Protagonist's Subordinate Role**

In this part, the researcher examines the subordinate roles through the life of Antonia, the female protagonist. My Antonia not only reflects the life of European ✕ / immigrants in the United States but also includes the beliefs and attitudes of people at that time. The expectation on women image or ideal of womanhood can be seen clearly in the story. The idea of womanhood, which relies on hierarchic thinking and patriarchy system, makes women at that time belong to the subordinate position. Similar to one of the ecofeminist perspectives, women are oppressed and devalued by male power. Therefore, the researcher would like to point out the subordinate position of Antonia and her suffering.

In the nineteenth century, wifery and motherhood were regarded as women's most significant professions (Dorothy 2). This means that people at that time preferred

women to be a perfect wife and mother. Women are innately framed to follow this attitude, the ideal of womanhood. Consequently, from this belief, they are judged whether they are good women by their family, husband, and society, which it influences them to see and judge themselves in that way too.

According to Barbara Welter, there are four aspects of true womanhood in the nineteenth century: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity (152). Piety or religion is "the core of women's virtue, the source of her strength" (152). The society views women as 'naturally religious'. Charles Meigs states that is because "hers is a pious mind. Her confiding nature leads her ore readily than man to accept the proffered grace of the Gospel" (qtd. in Welter 153). The society believes that religious women could bring men back to the religious world. Therefore, being close to religion make women feel more proud and more powerful than men. Moreover, religious works can keep women in the proper place that is their home. Another aspect is purity. It seems that purity destines a woman's life. Welter writes, "without it she was, in fact, no woman at all, but a member of some lower order" (154). The woman who is not virgin is perceived as a "fallen woman"; she becomes worthless. Submissiveness is the next aspect. Women are under the control of men. They are required to have a spirit of obedience, pliability of temper, and humility of mind for the right kind of true women; they are passive (159). The last aspect is domesticity. The true woman's place is by her own fireside, at home (162). This aspect is also related to one of women's duties, that is being a comforter to men. Thus, women's roles are being daughters, sisters, and importantly, wives and mothers.

✓ ✱ In the novel, Antonia's life well represents the idea of true womanhood in two aspects: domesticity and submissiveness. <sup>Antonia</sup> <sup>marital, personal, social</sup> The expectation of family and society about the ideal of true womanhood causes Antonia suffer. Her own desire is limited, and she is oppressed by men.

In term of domesticity, her mother expects Antonia to get married in the future. This expectation is obviously seen in Book I. The important reason that makes Shimerdas, a bohemian family, immigrate to the United States is for the better future of their children. Antonia tells Jim about her mother's words that, "America big country; much money, much land for boys, much husband for my girls...my mama, she want Ambrosch for be rich, with many cattle" (59). In Mrs.Shimerda's view, the future of her daughters is to marry. Therefore, Antonia is kept at home and is responsible for the housework. Cather illustrates this idea through Jim's eyes when he visits Shimerdas' house: "Antonia was washing pans and dishes in a dark corner" (49), and again at Mr.Shimerda's funeral, "...Antonia was washing dishes" (74). Whenever Jim sees Antonia in the house, she is always doing domestic work. In addition, Mrs.Shimerda tries to keep her daughters in the house. If the girls go outside the house, she will be upset. For example, when Jim and the girls, Antonia and Yulka, her sister, go around and survey cornfields and prairie, Jim comments that: "...their mother's scolding that they begged me to go on and on" (43). Another example is: "Almost everyday she came running across the prairie to have her reading lesson with me. Mrs.Shimerda grumbled, but realized it was important that one member of the family should learn

English" (22). These examples show that Antonia is not supposed to be away from home and to do anything else except the proper domestic work, housekeeping.

In terms of submissiveness, Cather presents it through Antonia's life under the control of her family and Mrs. Harling, Jim's neighbor, and unavoidably Antonia accepts the inferior position. Mrs. Shimerda is so proud of Ambrosch, Antonia's brother and pays attention to him. He is the main reason for the family to settle down in the United States. Antonia is aware of her position in the family and, as well as her mother, sees Ambrosch as the center of the family. Once she questions Jim, "Why not he not help my papa? Ambrosch be rich, too, after while, and he pay back. He is very smart boy. For Ambrosch my mama come here" (59).

Furthermore, after the death of Mr. Shimerda, Antonia is absolutely under the control of Ambrosch. Jim expresses his idea as follows:

Since the father's death, Ambrosch was more than ever the head of the house, and he seemed to direct the feeling as well as the fortunes of his women-folk. Antonia often quoted his opinion to me, and she let me see that she admired him... (82)

This is the picture of Antonia's passiveness. She is obedient to Ambrosch and follows Ambrosch's thoughts; even though, he does not take care of her well. "Grandmother thought Antonia needed shoes more than Mr. Shimerda needed prayers..." (86). She is "barefoot and ragged" (99). This shows that she has no proper clothes for the changeable weather and for working in the fields. Ambrosch keeps all of her wages. When Mrs. Harling has an argument with Ambrosch, she says, "It was his plan that

every cent of his sister's wages should be paid over to him each month, and he would provide her with such clothing as he thought necessary" (99). After the death of the father, the woman belongs to her brother. Similarly, Antonia is controlled by her brother. She is not allowed to keep her own money; she has no rights to destine her life. Certainly, Antonia is an intelligent girl, and she is eager to learn new things. However, she cannot show her ability. Her enthusiasm to learn is shown at the opening of the story. "They ain't any of them speak English, except one little girl..."(6). As being a new immigrant, no one teaches English to her. She has to learn by herself: listening and observing other people. When the family moves to settle down at Nebraska by train, she is only one of the family who can speak some English and tell a railway officer their destination. In fact, she is smart and likes advancement. However, she is forced to quit her education because she has to help her brother in the farm. She says bitterly, "I ain't got time to learn...My mother can't say no more how Ambrosch do all and nobody to help him" (80). Although she does not admit her sadness, Jim observes her long silence: "I felt something tense in her silence, and glancing up I saw that she was crying. She turned her face from me and looked off at the red streak of dying light, over the dark prairie" (80). The picture of hiding her sorrow well reflects the hierarchic system which limits her roles.

In addition, Antonia faces the expectation of the society. Mrs.Harling represents this kind of control. Although she works happily in the Harlings' house and Mrs.Harling treats Antonia like her daughter, she is watched over by Mrs.Harling in order to keep her life in the proper place. The society's expectation of women can be seen clearly.

After the death of Mr. Shimerda, Antonia becomes a young woman. However, she works hard like a man in the farm. Therefore, she does not fit into the image of womanhood in the society. Society tries to bring her back to the proper sphere, domesticity. Jim's grandmother encourages Mrs. Harling to employ Antonia to be a caretaker at her home. "Grandmother entreated them to try Antonia" (98). Jim's grandmother is very pleased to see Antonia work in town as she says, "God bless you child! Now you've come, you must try to do right and be a credit to us"(100). This shows that Antonia's neighbors believe that her work in the farm is not suitable. People in the society want to polish Antonia. "The girl will be happy here, and she'll forget those things, said Mrs. Harling confidently" (100). Clearly she has to follow the expectation of the society when she lives in the Harlings. If she does not, she will embarrass them. Her duties are cleaning the house, preparing the food, gardening, and nurturing the Harlings' children. This is the proper place for a girl.

However, Antonia becomes a 'fallen woman' when she goes out to dance. A 'fallen woman' is a woman who behaves differently from the ideal of true womanhood. Antonia is the case. When she works for Mrs. Harling and starts going out dancing with her friends, it means that she is away from the proper sphere and being out of control. When she returns home with a young man from dancing, he tried to kiss her. Antonia opposes and has an argument with him. Mr. Harling sees this situation. The worst thing is that this young man will get married soon. Therefore, Mr. Harling is angry: "This is what I've been expecting, Antonia. You've been going with girls who have a reputation

for being free and easy, and now you've got the same reputation" (132). Although this situation has not occurred yet, Mr. Harling has already judged Antonia in the bad way.

In addition, Antonia is oppressed by men because she is judged as a fallen woman. The first is a young man who dances with her and tries to kiss her when they walk home. The second is Wick Cutter, a moneylender and her new boss. He behaves unsuitable when he tries to ravish her. He plans to get his wife away and tricks Antonia that he will not be at home. However, she is aware of it and runs away to Jim's house. "...She felt uncomfortable about staying there alone. She hadn't liked the way he kept coming into the kitchen to instruct her, or the way he looked at her" (157). The last man who seduces her is Larry Donovan, a passenger conductor. She falls in love with him. Unfortunately, he never wants to marry Antonia and runs away from her. "He lived with me till my money gave out, and afterward I found out he hadn't really been hunting work at all. Then he just didn't come back" (201). Obviously, Larry does not plan to have any serious relationship with her. He judges Antonia as a fallen woman and treats her in the most terrible way. The result is that Antonia comes back home, being pregnant.

From the above discussion, the researcher believes that the ideal of true womanhood is based on the hierarchic system. Man is more valuable than woman, children, animals, and nature. The ideal also includes the patriarchal thinking that males are given all of life's opportunities and regarded as the king of the family. According to the ecofeminist idea, hierarchic system, and the ideal of true womanhood cause women suffer. Antonia is a good example: her role is limited, and she is oppressed by men.

One of the ecofeminist perspectives reveals that woman and the environment share a common inferior position; they are oppressed and devalued by male power. Nature is considered as an urban perspective as well as women (Raine 8). They are seen as worthless. Cather presents the inferior position and the suffering of women, caused by the western patriarchal system through Antonia's experiences. At the same time, Cather presents the degradation of the environment image as she describes the land that "...there was only red grass like ours, and nothing else" (Cather 15). It expresses the fruitless land. Both Antonia and land share the same function: suffering from the inferior position. On the other hand, at the end of the story, when Antonia is successful and prosperous, the land is too. This relationship between Antonia and land will be discussed later.

### **The New Frame of Thought**

According to one of the ecofeminist perspectives, hierarchy is the base of gender problems and sufferings. Therefore, ecofeminists suggest creating the new intellectual frames of thought, destroying hierarchic structure. The belief that male is the center or at the top is unnecessary; like other feminist ideas, females should have more rights to choose or decide for their own lives. In My Antonia, Cather presents this new frame of thought. Cather strengthens her female characters; and outstandingly, she shifts the images of males in the novel.

On the contrary to many novels, Cather presents weakness of her male characters. Four male characters are raised here for analysis: Mr. Shimerda, Ambrosch,

Jim Burden, and Anton Cuzak. Mr. Shimerda, as the leader of family, should be strong and decide what to do for his family. However, he cannot solve the family problems. Cather characterizes him as a neat, nice and polite old man: "...his thick, iron-gray hair was brushed straight back from his forehead. It was so long that it bushed out behind his ears, and made him look like the old portraits...I noticed how white and well-shaped his own hands were" (18). However, he is in poor condition: starving, coldness, and living in the poor place that Jim calls their house as a 'hole'. He dresses too elaborately when compares to his daughter's clothes: she is barefoot and ragged.

Moreover, he cannot decide when the family faces the bad situation during the first months that the Shimerdas live in the new land, they have to live with Krajiek, their interpreter who cheats them.

They hated Krajiek, but they clung to him because he was the only human being with whom they could talk or from whom they could get information...They kept him in their hole and fed him for the same reason that the prairie dogs and the brown owls house the rattlesnake—because they did not know how to get rid of him (23)

This means they know Krajiek is defrauding. However, Mr. Shimerda cannot drive him away or make an agreement with him. Actually, as the leader of the family, he should decide to do something with Krajiek. He stays still; he does not know what to do with Krajiek and allows Krajiek to exploit them. More importantly, Mr. Shimerda cannot adjust himself to the new environment and later he commits suicide. This shows that he is weak.

The next person is Ambrosch. Even though he and Antonia work together in the farm, it seems that his work cannot be comparable to Antonia's. Jim expresses that: "...the farmers liked her and were kind to her; said they would rather have her for a hand than Ambrosch" (95). This sentence reflects the working ability of Ambrosch. He is not the first choice for the farmers to employ for their farm; Antonia is more preferred.

The third example of the weak man is Anton Cuzak, Antonia's husband. Anton has less sense of enduring. Also, he has a less willpower than Antonia. He tells Jim, "Sometimes I git awful sore on this place and want to quit, but my wife she always say we better stick it out" (234). He accepts his weakness and often wants to give up farming. This implies that he cannot stand the hardship. Jim observes their condition in the family that "Clearly, she (Antonia) was the impulse, and he (Anton) the corrective" (229).

Jim Burden, the narrator, is the last example. His life seems to be perfect; he is well educated, employed, and married. He attains professional success as "a legal counsel for one of the great Western railways" (1). Because of his work, he has to travel all the time. He feels lonely, and he is not happy with his life. Although, he has a family, he seems to be unhappy in his marriage life. His wife "seems unimpressionable and temperamentally incapable of enthusiasm" (1). Furthermore, they have no child. When Jim comes to visit Antonia at the end of the story, he is happy with Antonia and her children. The warm family of Antonia makes Jim happy and feels that he is at home again: "I had the sense of coming home to myself" (238). When he

leaves Antonia's house, he thinks of the next meeting so that he will meet the children: "...my mind was full of pleasant; trips I meant to take with the Cuzak boys" (237). In this sense, Jim fails in his marriage life although he succeeds in his career.

On the contrary to her male characters, Cather strengthens her female characters. The researcher considers three female characters: Frances Harling, Mrs. Harling's daughter, Lena Lingard, Antonia's friend, and Antonia Shimerda Cuzak.

Regarding the ideal of true womanhood, Welter states that the professions of women at that time are limited; they are prepared to be teachers, governesses, or housekeepers. In this way, women rarely run their own businesses. In My Antonia, Frances Harling works as her father's chief clerk and runs her father's business when he leaves home for his trade. "Because of her unusual business ability, he was stern and exacting with her. He paid her a good salary, but she had few holidays and never got away from her responsibilities" (97). The passage shows that Frances earns money from what she does. She can handle the man's business and does it well.

Also, Lena Lingard is an interesting example. She is a fallen woman in the society. Therefore, people in the society judges her that she is worthless. However, she has a strong will to be a successful dressmaker. She gives up working on farm with her mother and practices sewing in town. She remains single and runs business on her own without any help from others. Surprisingly, Jim says, "Lena's success puzzled me. She was so easy-going; had none of the push and self-assertiveness that get people ahead in business" (178). Moreover, she has no will to marry. "I've seen a good deal of married life, and I don't care for it" (105). According to Welter, there are

two reasons that a woman is still being unmarried; "the premature death of a fiancée, or she is chosen through fidelity to some high mission" (169). Nevertheless, Lena is not the case. She sees that marriage's life is not her destination, and maybe it can interrupt her desire. Cather makes this character choose her own life. Cather suggests that marriage should be a personal choice, not an inevitable destiny (Benet 176).

Lastly, Cather empowers her protagonist. In Book I 'The Shimerdas', Antonia's male role is shown. After her father's death, she loves to work on the farm with her brother. She dresses like a man. "She wore the boots her father had so thoughtfully taken off before he shot himself, and his old fur cap" (79). Moreover, Antonia behaves herself like a man in terms of her interests, and the way of her talking and eating. "Antonia ate so noisily now, like a man...Nowadays Tony could talk of nothing but the prices of things, or how much she could lift and endure. She was too proud of her strength" (81). She feels that working outside the house makes her independent, free and strong.

"Oh, better I like to work out-of doors than in a house!" she used to sing joyfully. "I not care that your grandmother say it makes me like a man. I like to be like a man." She would toss her head and ask me to feel the muscles swell in her brown arm (89)

Although Antonia does well in both roles: male and female. She does not judge which one is good or bad for her; she accepts and balances the two roles as the core for living. And this leads to her success.

The purpose of ecofeminists to create a new intellectual form of thought and destroy the hierarchic structure does not mean to promote the matriarchal way or to conquer the power of men. Like the idea of D'Eaubonne, the first ecofeminist, Cather calls for the new egalitarian gender relations between man and woman. The success of these women suggests that women should be allowed to have the same choices as men. Cather asserts that there should be no limitations on women's potential. In addition, Cather presents that nature, or land and farm, plays an important part to solve the problem of gender discrimination, which the researcher discusses in the next part.

### **The Relationship between the Female Protagonist and Nature: Female Innate Spiritual Growth and a Stronger Identity**

In this part, the researcher analyzes the relationship between Antonia and nature to discover how nature associates with her life. The researcher believes that nature is the place where Antonia recovers from her weakness and discovers her own ability. Consequently, her female innate spirit develops and her identity becomes stronger. This leads to the happiness and success of her life.

The relationship between Antonia and nature is divided into two aspects. Firstly, nature is the place where Antonia can recover her sadness and gives her strength. Antonia relieves her frustration when she stays with nature-- prairie and land. For example, Jim says, "We knew that things were hard for our Bohemian neighbors...They were always ready to forget their trouble at home, and to run away with me over prairie..." (23), and "But they were so glad to get away from their ugly

cave..." (43). In the story, Antonia likes to travel and explore around prairies, cornfields, and the other places with Jim. Staying in these places, she is happy and cheerful; she feels comfortable there. Furthermore, Antonia recovers from her sadness about the death of her father when she is close to nature, in the farm. Antonia is counted as the closest child and the most beloved daughter. She is the only one Mr. Shimerda begs Jim to teach English to and brings her to see his friends on the cornfields. Therefore, Antonia is the saddest person when Mr. Shimerda dies. Although she does not show her sadness, there is a evidence in the story to show that she feels sad. For example, she wears her father's clothes. However, when she works on the farm, she feels better. This means that nature can be a comforter.

Next, when Antonia is ruined and abandoned by Larry, nature can heal her again. When she is abandoned and is pregnant, she is judged as a fallen woman. The neighbors gossip about her. However, Antonia pays all of her attentions to harvest and thrashing. Also, she always stays at her home—on the farm and never comes to town. "All that spring and summer she did the work of a man on the farm; it seemed to be an understood thing" (202). After severe determination in farming for a while, she becomes stronger so Mrs. Steavens, a neighbor, notices that she is a strong woman and says, "I marvelled at her calm" (202). At this part, Antonia is not judged as a worthless person anymore. "Folks respected her industry and tried to treat her as if nothing had happened" (202). They accept Antonia's condition and respect her decision to solve her own troubles. This not only means that Antonia understands her life but also means that people in the society understand her life and living. From this

situation, Cather attempts to suggest that nature is a way to solve the problem. Antonia faces a troubled life, and then she turns to nature, gets better, and gains respect from other people.

Secondly, nature is where Antonia finds out her ability and establishes her identity. She knows that she works well in farming. When she works on the farm, she knows that she has her ability in farming. It seems that it is necessary for her to help her brother work on the farm at first, but later Antonia becomes fond of it. "Oh, better I like to work out-of doors than in a house!" (89). She knows herself that she can work like a man and does it well. She feels confident when she is close to nature. Once when she is leaving to live with Larry in town, she feels confused as she says: "I doubt if I'll be able to manage so well for him in a city. I was counting on keeping chickens, and maybe a cow" (199). This shows that she knows where she should belong to. On the farm, she feels familiar and is safe. "I'd always be miserable in a city. I'd die of lonesomeness. I like to be where I know every stack and tree, and where all the ground is friendly" (206).

As a result, Antonia develops her female innate spirit, the sense of motherhood. The female spirit is already inside every woman. For example, "Tony made a warm nest for him (an insect) in her hand; talked to him gaily indulgently in Bohemian. Presently, he began to sing for us...She held him close to her ear and laughed..." (27). Jim describes Antonia's action when she is saving a little insect falling from trying to leap into a bunch, waiting to die. Jim sees the dying of an insect as a normal way of the world, but Antonia tries to save the insect's life. Antonia puts her efforts into

nurturing the insect and feels cheerful when she knows he survives. This example illustrates that Antonia has a sense of motherhood that is serving, caring, nurturing, and protecting.

Getting close to nature, Antonia becomes what ecofeminists call 'mother-earth'. At the end of the story, Antonia has her own farm. She has to take care of seeds, nurture them until harvest time, and protect them from the damage. In other words, she develops a sense of mother-earth. This sense is expressed vividly at the end of the story as follows:

I love them (trees) as if they were people,...There wasn't a free here when we first come. We planted every one, and used to carry water for them...But I couldn't feel so tired that I wouldn't fret about these trees when there was a dry time. They were on my mind like children. Many a night after he asleep I've got up and come out and carried water to the poor thing (219)

The quotation shows the sense of caring, nurturing, and protecting. She treats trees like her children and she never stops taking care of them no matter how hard it is to grow them. This quotation also reveals a strong will of Antonia. She has to carry water without any help. This action shows Antonia's male role: strong and fighting hardship.

At the same time, she does not discard the female role; she is a good mother: "I learned nice ways at the Harlings', and I've been able to bring my children up so much better" (221). While at the Harlings', she brings up the Harlings' children because it is her duty, in this section, she does it from her heart.

In addition, Antonia's identity becomes stronger. According to Sherilyn MacGregor, he states, "a woman is an internally diverse concept and that women have multiple and shifting identities" (18). Cather expresses this idea through Antonia's life. In the last section, after not seeing her for a long time, Jim meets her again and finds her grown identity. For example, "There was a new kind of strength in the gravity of her face" (205), and "As I confronted her, the changes grew less apparent to me, her identity stronger. She was there, in the full vigour of her personality, battered but not diminished..." (214). Antonia repeats her proper place again to Jim, "I belong on a farm. I'm never lonesome here like I used to be in town" (221). She knows that she belongs to nature and likes to be surrounded by the trees. As her identity has developed, Antonia has a happy life with her many children and abundant trees on her own farm.

As a result, there is no gender discrimination between Antonia and her family; they are harmonious. Jim observes the harmony between Antonia and her husband: "... curious to know what their relations had become—or remained. The two seemed to be on terms of easy friendliness, touched with humour" (229). The harmony in this family is strange for Jim. Compare with his marriage, he does not feel comfortable with his wife. He uses the term 'remained' which means he sees this kind of relationship in the positive way and wants to be like that. Also, the portrait of Antonia's family surprises him. "I was conscious of a kind of physical harmony. They leaned this way and that, and were not afraid to touch each other" (224). Jim also describes:

Cuzak sat down behind the stove and watched his women-folk and the little children with equal amusement. He thought they were nice, and he thought they were funny, evidently. He had been off dancing with the girls and forgetting that he was as old fellow... (230)

From the quotation, Jim observes that Anton is happy with his family: he can play and dance with his children. And Jim senses it. It is clear that love is the tie that binds them all together (Randall 140). These examples represent the result of deleting the patriarchal and hierarchic system. When there is no 'particular socialty-assigned', there is no domination, oppression, or discrimination on the member of the family, especially women. Like Delveaux, love and care or female spirituality are the way to prevent and solve the problems concerning nature and gender (6). According to James C. Malin, an ecologist, states: "when human beings and nature can accommodate each other without attempting to stretch one another beyond their innate capabilities, people and the land prosper together" (qtd. in Wright-Peterson 16). And Cather's Antonia is a good example; Cather illustrates this synergy through Antonia's life. Therefore, Cather ends her story with an impressive picture of her protagonist:

she had only to stand in the orchard, to put her hand on a little crab tree and look up at the apples, to make you feel the goodness of planting and tending and harvesting at last. All the strong things of her heart came out in her body, that had been so tireless in serving generous emotions (227)

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

The relationship between Antonia and nature influences her identity development and spiritual growth. As a result, Antonia has a happy and successful life with a plenty of trees and many children.

In My Antonia, Cather shows ecofeminist perspectives by presenting the subordinate role of women through the main character's life. She also points out the suffering from the role in which it relies on the hierarchic thinking. The story reveals the parallel forms of female domination and degradation of the environment. In Book I, when Antonia suffers from the domesticity, land and prairie are depressed and barren. Reversal in Book V, when Antonia is abundant with eleven children, many trees grow and blossom. Then, Cather deconstructs the hierarchic system by empowering female characters and defeating male characters. In addition, the story presents the result of non-superior/inferior structure by illustrating a happy and successful life of the protagonist. Finally, according to the hierarchy structure, male is regarded as superior. Ecofeminists suggest deconstructing this structure and offer the spirituality to solve the gender problems. My Antonia shows the complete outcome of ecofeminist thought in the last section. As Antonia is close to nature, her female spirit develops, and her identity becomes stronger. Therefore, Antonia's success is vividly reflected. There is no domination among the members of the family; they live in a harmonious and comfortable way. Antonia is in peace and seen as a pioneer: the pioneer on the land

and the pioneer of the spirit. As a result, she becomes earth mother or fertility goddess.

Clearly, Cather's My Antonia shows the ecofeminist perspectives. Therefore, the researcher counts this novel as ecofeminist writing.

In this research, the researcher finds out many worthy things. The grassroots of ecofeminism concern the environment problems in which everyone should recognize the concepts and try to save the environment. Furthermore, it is fortunate that nowadays women have more rights and opportunities than the women in the past. There is less limitations on women's lives. Therefore, women should take this chance to learn and find out who they really are and what they really want to do and do it with their best like Antonia. More than that, the researcher is impressed with her diligence and endurance, including her unwillingness to surrender. When Antonia's life falls down, she does not give up. We can learn from the story that not only the society gives chances to us, but also we should give it to ourselves. Opportunities and willingness to fight the problems in our life bring success to us.

### **Suggestions for Further Studies**

There are many interesting topics in My Antonia that should be discussed or studied further, depending on individual interest. The researcher would like to suggest some interesting points: character analysis, definition of success, and the importance of education.

The three characters that should be studied are Mr. Shimerda, Lena Lingard, and Jim Burden. The first character is Mr. Shimerda. He commits suicide since he cannot adjust himself to the new environment. What are the factors of this situation? Furthermore, it is possible to think that he sacrifices himself for the better conditions of his family. The researcher observes that after his death, the neighbors gather around to help the rest of the family arranging the funeral, building a new house, and giving some advices about farming. What are the reasons of his death? Also, Krajiak who lives with the family leaves their home. In Mr. Shimerda's case, it can lead to the idea of Darwinism, the survival of the fittest. So, we can compare Mr. Shimerda's life to Antonia's life and study the meaning of adjustment and survival. In addition, we might consider Lena Lingard's life. As her refusing to marry, the idea and the importance of marriage in the nineteenth century are interesting to study. Why does she choose to be a single? Her background and personalities should be discussed. Lastly, Jim Burden is another interesting character to study in terms of psychoanalytic study. He is an orphan and is close to many strong women, especially Antonia; these backgrounds might affect his personalities. He is a sensitive and imaginative boy. Also, he travels around, has no child, and appreciates only in Antonia's boys. We can look at him in relevant to the term of 'queer'.

Also, the definition of success and the importance of education are interesting topics. We can compare the three characters' success: Jim Burden, Lena Lingard, and Antonia Cuzak. The definition of success in the nineteenth century involving with the term of 'American dream' should be brought for discussion.

There are also other suggestions. Ecofeminist ideas refer to not only the gender relation problem but also to the term of 'otherness' and other forms of oppression and domination. The problem in race, ethnicity, and marginalization in My Antonia should be discussed. Are the differences in culture, religion and belief the conflicts of the story?

Cather is defined as a regionalist writer. William Benet comments in The Reader's Encyclopedia, "She was, according to Maxwell Geisman, 'an aristocrat in an equalitarian order, and agrarian writer in an industrial materialistic order, a defender of the spiritual graces in the midst of an increasingly materialistic culture" (175). Therefore, the civilized world in town and city and the conditions in rural life should be surveyed. What are their connections and how do they affect the lives of characters? The last interesting point for a study is whether the other works of Cather present the ecofeminist idea.

## REFERENCES

## REFERENCES

- Altieri, Carol. "Willa Cather's My Antonia: the Happiness and the Curse." Online.  
17 Feb. 2003. Available: [www.cis.yale.edu/ynti/curriculum/units/1987](http://www.cis.yale.edu/ynti/curriculum/units/1987).
- Benet, Rose William. The Reader's Encyclopedia. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Thomas Y.  
Crowell Company, 1965.
- Blackall, Jean Frantz. "My Antonia." Reference Guide To American Literature. Ed. Kirk  
Patrick. Chicago: St. James Press, 1987. 666.
- Cather, Willa. My Antonia. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1995.
- Delveaux, Martin. "Transcending Ecofeminism: Alice Walker. Spiritual  
Ecowomanism, and Environmental Ethics." Diss. U. of Exeter, 2001.
- Elahi, Babak. "Real Americans: Immigration into Modernity, 1900-1920." Diss.  
U. of Rochester, 2001.
- Faber, Kathryn Hourin. "Willa Cather and Georgia O'Keeffe: Modernism and the  
Importance of Place in Color, Light, and Imagery." Diss. Drew U., 2002.
- Gates, Barbara. "A Root of Ecofeminism." Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory,  
Interpretation. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999.
- Hartman, Dorothy. "Life in the 1880's: Women's roles in the Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century." Online.  
9 Jul. 2003. Available: [www.connerprairie.org/historyonline/1880wom.html](http://www.connerprairie.org/historyonline/1880wom.html).
- Heiney, Donald. "Between the Wars: Regionalism and Rural Naturalism." Recent  
American Fiction in The Twentieth Century. New York: Aror's Educational  
series, Inc, 1958.
- Howell, R. Nancy. "Ecofeminism: What one needs to know." John Templeton

Foundation: Journal of Religion & Science. Online. 26 Apr. 2003.

Available: [www.templeton.org/science/jun972.asp](http://www.templeton.org/science/jun972.asp).

Hui, Stephen. "De/colonizing Nature: Postcolonialist and Ecofeminist Perspectives on Human-Environment Relations." Online. 9 Jul. 2003. Available:

[www.aquapalse.net/knowledge/nature](http://www.aquapalse.net/knowledge/nature).

Ilisko, Dzintra. "An Ecological Model for Religious Education in Latvia: An Ecofeminist Perspective." Diss. Fordham U., 2001.

Kazin, Alfred. "Elegy and Satire: Willa Cather and Ellen Glasgow," On Native Grounds: An Introduction of Modern American Prose Literature, Part II: The Great Liberation (1918-1929). New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942. 247-264.

Lee, Elizabeth. "Fallen Women in Victorian Art," 1997. Online. 2 Oct. 2003. Available: [www.victorianweb.org/gender/fallen.html](http://www.victorianweb.org/gender/fallen.html).

MacGregor, Sherilyn. "Beyond Mothering Earth: Ecological Citizenship and the Gendered Politics of Care." Diss. York U. (Canada), 2002.

Manion, H.K. "Ecofeminism within Gender and Development," 2001. Online. 10 Feb. 2003. Available: [www.ecofem.org/journal](http://www.ecofem.org/journal).

Micale, Jennifer Rebecca. "Strange New Worlds: Ecofeminism and Science Fiction." Diss. Drew U., 2002.

Molinelli, Lisa. "Willa Cather's Life and Works," The American Novel, 1958.

Myers, Jeffrey Scott. "Converging Stories: Race and Ecology in American Literature, 1785-1902." Diss. Tufts U., 2002.

Nissila, Phyllis Marrie. "A Comparison of Willa Cather's My Antonia and Jane

- Smiley's A Thousand Acres." Diss. California State U., Dominguez Hills, 2001.
- Poupard, Dennis. ed. Twentieth Century Literary Criticism. Michigan: Gale Research Company, 1983.
- Raine, Anne Elizabeth. "A Thing Wide Open: Nature, Modernity, and American Women Writers." Diss. U. of Washington, 2002.
- Randall, H. John III. "The Fruition of the Soil: The Garden of The World". The Landscape and The Looking Glass. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960.
- Showalter, Elaine. A Literature of Their Own. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977.
- Twine, Richard. "Ecofeminisms in Process," 2001. Online. 8 Feb. 2003. Available: [www.ecifem.org/journal](http://www.ecifem.org/journal).
- Wells, Kim. "Hired Girls and Country Doctors: Working Women in the Domestic Fiction of Sarah Orne Jewett and Willa Cather," 1998. Online. 19 Jun. 2003. Available: [www.womenwriters.net/domesticgoddess/pdf/catherjewett.pdf](http://www.womenwriters.net/domesticgoddess/pdf/catherjewett.pdf).
- Welter, Barbara. "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860." American Quarterly, 1966. 151-174.
- Wooddress, Jame. "Cather." Reference Guide To American Literature. Ed. Kirk Patrick. Chicago: St. James Press, 1987. 132-133.
- Wright-Peterson, M. Virginia. "Finding Ourselves in Empty Places: Life and Literature of the Midwest." Diss. U. of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2002.
- แก้วตา เจริญสุข. "วิเคราะห์ตัวละครในเรื่องสั้นของวิลลา แคธอร์." ปริญญาานิพนธ์ มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ, 2532.

## **APPENDIX**

**APPENDIX****Cather's principal works****Novel**

Alexander's Bridge	1912
O Pioneers!	1913
The Song of the Lark	1915
My Antonia	1918
One of Ours	1922
A Last Lady	1923
The Professor's House	1925
My Mortal Enemy	1926
Death Comes for the Archbishop	1927
Shadows on the Rock	1931
Lucy Gayheart	1935
Sapphira and the Slave Girl	1940

**Short stories**

The Troll Garden	1905
Youth and the Bright Medusa	1921
The Fear that Walks by Noonday	1931
Obscure Destinies	1932
The Old Beauty and Others	1956
April Twilights	1903 (Poetry)

**VITA**

**VITA**

**Name:** Miss Wannaporn Petchdee  
**Date of Birth:** December 13, 1979  
**Place of Birth:** Bangkok  
**Address:** 21/71 Moo. 2 Bang Kruai, Nonthaburi 11130

**Educational Background:**

2003	Master of Education (English) from Srinakharinwirot University
2000	Bachelor of Arts (English) from the University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce
1995	High school Certificate from Benjamarachalai School