

From Clover to Cemetery: The View of Life in 'Neighbour Rosicky'

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(Summary)

This paper investigates the view of life in 'Neighbour Rosicky' (1928) written by Willa Cather (1873-1947). She depicted the daily life of a family who emigrated from Europe to North America, portraying with her restrained writing style how they achieved a productive life through working close to the earth. She also described the hardship and happiness they experienced and outlined the personality of Anton Rosicky, the protagonist, particularly his gentleness. Rosicky is detached from worldly desires and shows consideration for his family members as a virtuous old farmer. He prefers to be surrounded by nature rather than by modern construction such as factories and railroads. He is compared to a tree taking root in the earth, partly because Cather's artistic sensibility highlights the favorable interaction of humans and nature. As for literary devices, natural imagery is effectively used to evoke nostalgia. The strong blue-green color of alfalfa growing on a farm reminds Rosicky of the fields in Czechoslovakia, his native land. In addition, country cemeteries are well integrated with the landscape so that the locals and the dead can watch the changing seasons together. On the other hand, city cemeteries are more like monuments ~~than~~ as resting places for the dead. At the conclusion, Rosicky is buried in the cemetery, and the same starry night he once admired is observed from a third person perspective. The story ends with the sentence, 'Rosicky's life seemed to him [the observer] complete and beautiful'. This is a typical Cather phrase in that she described the harmony of humans and nature, which is similar in effect to the epilogues in her novels in that they show an objective view through historical distance.

Key words: Willa Cather, Characterization of Rosicky, Harmony with Nature

(和文要旨)

本稿は、米国の女流作家 Willa Cather (1873-1947)による短編小説 'Neighbour Rosicky' (1928)における生命観を考察する。そのなかで、Cather は欧州から新大陸へ移民した家族の日常生活を抑制のきいた文体であらわし、地に足をつけて働くことで生産的な人生が達成できることを描いた。また、彼らの経験した困難や幸福と主人公 Anton Rosicky の人格について、とりわけ、彼の優しさを表現した。Rosicky は家族への思い遣りをもち、世俗の欲望にたいして恬淡とした農夫で、工場や鉄道のような近代的建造物よりも自然に囲まれることを好み、土地に根を下ろした木のような佇まいをしている。Cather の芸術的感性は人と自然の好ましい関係を明らかにしており、植物が文学手法として効果的に用いられている。農場のクローバーの青緑は彼が幼いころに祖国でふれた野原を想起させ、また死者をお払い箱とするような都市の墓地とは対照的に田舎の墓地は、風景の一部となって地元民と季節の推移を見守る存在としてある。結びには、Rosicky の人生が十全で美しいものであったことが三人称の視点から語り直されており、これは、Cather が人と自然との調和を述べるときの定型句である。それは、長編小説の末尾で歳月の経過を挟むことによる客観的な語りと同様の効果をもたらしている。

キーワード: キャザー、ロジキーの人物造形、自然との調和

Introduction

'Neighbour Rosicky' (1928) was published in *Obscure Destinies* (1932) with two other short stories, around the time Cather lost her father. Shibata Kyoko, a Japanese scholar, considered that the image of her father was projected onto the protagonist^①. As is often the case with late works, this proved to be highly retrospective and contained semi-biographical factors.

It was the time when modernization started destroying old traditions, causing the emergence of monopoly enterprises and increase of racial tension. Invention of machinery also changed agricultural life. 'Various machines were invented in the nineteenth century to strip the corn kernels from the cob; turning the crank that operated the machine was hard work'^②. Rosicky suffers from heart disease, so Mr. Burleigh, his home doctor, advises him not to use the machine and to help Mary, his wife, with kitchen work instead.

New transportation systems enabled Americans to move freely. Cather's hometown, Omaha in Nebraska, became the starting point of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869. She often described railroads in her works. For example, 'Bohemian Girl' (1912) opens with a stout man standing in the observation car as he returns home from the East. Nils Ericson, an ambitious young man in the story, cannot bear to stay home and be tied up by household

chores. Nils complained 'All the rest of you [The Ericsons] were working yourselves to death, and the houses were mostly a mess, full of babies and washing and flies' (107). In the same way, Rudolf, the oldest son of the family, is dissatisfied with laborious farming.

As a genre, 'Neighbour Rosicky' is an example of immigrant literature along with *My Antonia* (1918) and *The Shadows on the Rock* (1931). Immigrants succeeded in life and business by showing their pioneer spirit. The former is one of the 'prairie trilogy' novels, and the heroine finally settled on a farm and became a mother of ten children. The latter is a coming-of-age story about a girl who supports her father and begins a relationship with a promising young Canadian with practical skills.

These stories share the values of medieval romances in the past and fantasy stories today. In both romance and fantasy, there is a solitary hero who wanders from country to country to defeat evildoers. For example, in *The Lord of the Rings* (1954), the interracial party travel around the world to complete their mission, accompanying the elves and dwarves. The Mythopoeic Society studies the works of Lewis Carroll (1832-1898), and Charles Williams (1886-1945) as well as John Tolkien (1892-1973). It defines such literature as one 'that creates a new and transformative mythology, or incorporates and transforms existing mythological material.'^③ Use of magic corresponds to the power of civilization in immigrant literature.

As for the view of nature, harmony with nature underlies 'Neighbour Rosicky' in the same way as in *O Pioneers* (1913) and *My Ántonia* (1918).^④ For Rosicky, the beautiful country cemeteries and windy fields are dearer to him than modern architecture and values, since a pastoral landscape is not just a place to relax or to enjoy leisure but somewhere sublime.

Although scientific knowledge seemed to drain certain traditional religious myths of their cogency and power, so that it no longer was quite possible to read Genesis as it once had been read, the same knowledge enabled artists to invest the natural world with fresh mythopoetic value... It was not enough to call this newly discovered world beautiful; it was sublime.^⑤ (96)

Cather encountered the forces of modernization in the 1920s, and she described something sublime rather than modern values through the characters and landscapes in her novels, poems and short stories.^⑥

Willa Cather and Her Writing Style

Willa Cather (1873-1947) was born in a hilly terrain of Back Creek Valley, Virginia one of the oldest states in the US. Her family then moved to Nebraska, the Midwest, where she was educated and had regular interaction with immigrants from Europe in the plains. Nebraska was a staging post to New Mexico and has strong winds and severe heat. After working for a press company and teaching at a high school in her twenties in Pennsylvania, Cather moved to *McClure's Magazine* in New York as a writer. Memories of her early childhood bore fruit in her last work, *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* (1940).

Among Cather's twelve novels the 'prairie trilogy' and *One of Ours* (1922), which won the Pulitzer Prize, are particularly well known. Cather showed her artistic ability and ideas of anti-civilization in about sixty short stories. For example, *The Troll Garden* (1905), a collection of the early short stories, in which the epigraph quotes *Goblin Market* (1862) by Christina Rossetti (1830-1894). It reads 'We must not look at goblin men, We must not buy their fruits: Who knows upon what soil they fed, Their hungry thirsty roots?'. A Goblin implies greed and the soil represents the surroundings where we live. This is a warning for humans not to be corrupted by dangerous temptations: consumer society and materialism.^⑦ Cather believed in an eternal world like the Romantics and in *April Twilights* (1903), the beautiful scenery of the land is described in blank verse.

A crimson fire that vanquishes the stars;
 A pungent odor from the dusty sage;
 A sudden stirring of the huddled herds;
 A breaking of the distant table-lands
 Through purple mists ascending, and the flare
 Of water ditches silver in the light;
 A swift, bright lance hurled low across the world;
 A sudden sickness for the hills of home.^⑧ (172)

The swiftness of the water illumined by the light reminds us of a noble knight and the impact of breaking the lands implies a herald of civilization. James Woodress (1916-2010), the biographer of Cather, suggested that 'The landscape in this poem is probably Colorado or

Wyoming, not the corn and wheat fields of the Divide, and "A sudden sickness for the hills of home" is no doubt a reference to her native Virginia' (169).^⑨ While the dawn described in blank verse appeals to the sense of vision more directly than it would in prose and causes nostalgia, dusk in prose seems more plaintive.

Now they [Cécile and Jacques] had the hill all to themselves, – and this was the most beautiful part of the afternoon. They thought they would like to go down once more. With a quick push-off their sled shot down through constantly changing colour; deeper and deeper into *violet, blue, purple, until at the bottom it was almost black*. As they climbed up again, they watched the *last flames of orange light burn off the high points of the rock*. (116-117) [*Italics mine*]

Cather also appreciated colours in art as *The Shadows on the Rock* shows. 'Between the tall silver candlesticks stood a crystal bowl full of glowing fruits of coloured glass: purple figs, yellow-green grapes with gold vine-leaves, apricots, nectarines, and a dark citron stuck up endwise among the grapes' (69).^⑩

Phyllis Rose, commented on Cather's writing style. 'The prose is by no means flowery, but neither is it as stark as it might be, as Hemingway's is, for example. There is a softness about it which comes from Cather's willingness to offer neutral elaboration' (150). Both Edith Wharton (1862-1937) and Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) were her contemporaries. While Wharton was a faithful follower of Henry James (1843-1916), Hemingway wrote short stories based on his experience in World War I as a member of the Red Cross.

Wharton cherished European tradition and shed light on the value of the brilliant social circles of America's upper class. She also used more personified nature or filtered nature. The protagonist mishears the cries of a bird as the voice of a beloved in *Ethan Frome* (1911). In this way, natural images often express a human-centric point of view. On the other hand, in Cather flying clouds and a vast plain are described in the poems as they are. Juniper trees stand out in a dry landscape in *Death Comes for Archbishop* (1927) and the Canadian forest *Shadows on the Rock*.^⑪

Hemingway, from a younger generation than Cather, described how the old man gave a wallop to the shark on the forehead in *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952) with verisimilitude. 'He [the old man] felt the rubbery solidity as the club came down' (113). It reflects his theme

of 'grace under pressure', that is to say, how to maintain a cool head and iron nerves in adversity. While Hemingway mentioned the influence of mob mentality on individuals in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), Cather questioned the exclusiveness and indifference of rural people to artistic values in 'The Sculptor's Funeral' (1905).

Cather portrayed the gentleness of old people as well as the impetuosity of young men. Bishop Laval (1623-1708), the actual missionary, is said to be a rigid missionary in *Bishop Laval* (1912), the biography. However, Cather imagined him as a more considerate man in *Shadows of the Rock*, her historical novel about immigrants from France to Canada, during the age of Enlightenment.

Whenever she [Cecile, the only daughter of the Auclairs] heard the early bell, it was as if she could see the old Bishop with his lantern at the end of the bell-rope, and the cold of the church up there made her own bed seem the warmer and softer. In winter the old man [Bishop Laval] usually carried a little basin as well as his lantern. It was his custom to take the bowl of holy water from the font in the evening, carry it into his kitchen, and put it on the back of the stove, where enough warmth would linger through the night to keep it from freezing. Then, in the morning, those who came to early mass would not have a mere lump of ice to peck at. (122-123)

Imagining the Bishop tolling the bell and keeping the church entrance clean, the villagers feel secure. In the same way, Rosicky is kind enough to perform odd jobs and warm the room for Rudolf and Polly, his son and daughter-in-law, when they go to the theatre. 'He [Rosicky] scoured the pots and pans and put away the milk and swept the kitchen. He put some coal in the stove and shut off the draughts, so the place would be warm for them when they got home late at night' (35-36). He even encouraged Polly to go out for a change to enjoy herself lest she should get fed up with the chores of rural life. Furthermore, Rosicky went to great lengths to please Polly by offering her a gift. 'Rosicky thought he would come over and do a little carpentering for Polly after the New Year. He guessed she needed jollying. Rudolph was a serious sort of chap, serious in love and serious about his work' (37). In any case, Rosicky made them happy not just with material comforts but through casual kindness.

However, despite Rosicky's effort, his oldest son Rudolf, is frustrated with farming as the family business, because it is not only laborious but also unstable and at the mercy of

climatic conditions. He would like to switch to an emerging industry such as the packing-house industry or railroad business instead, because they are steadier and more profitable than agriculture. Cather draws an image of a railroad man in *The Song of the Lark*, 'he [Ray] was an aggressive idealist, a freethinker, and, like most railroad men, deeply sentimental' (57-58). While Rudolf is assertive enough to pursue profit and voiced opposition to the way of his father, Rosicky with no interest in saving money calmly accepted the need to quit the family business.

Rosicky filled his pipe. "You boys don't know what hard times is. You don't owe nobody, you got plenty to eat an' keep warm, an' plenty water to keep clean. When you got them, you can't have it very hard." Rudolph frowned, opened and shut his big right hand, and dropped it clenched upon his knee. "I've got to have a good deal more than that, Father, or I'll quit this farming gamble. I can always make good wages railroading, or at the packing house, and be sure of my money." "Maybe so," his father answered dryly (40-41).

Rudolph's large right hand may be the result of hard work on the farm, and the clasped hand implies suppression of his anger. In this way, Cather uses implicit rather than explicit descriptions. Without adventurous action or violence, she succeeded in showing the emotional conflicts within the characters. She paid attention not only to the facial and verbal expressions of characters but to other parts of the body such as hands. Their subtle gestures often betray the mood of a person. Look, for example, at the description of hands in 'Two Friends' of *Obscure Destiny*.

I remember Mr. Dillon's hand used to linger in the air above the board before he made a move; a well-kept hand, white, marked with blue veins and streaks of strong black hair. Trueman's hands rested on his knees under the desk while he considered; he took a checker, set it down, then dropped his hand on his knee again. He seldom made an unnecessary movement with his hands or feet. Each of the men wore a ring on his little finger. Mr. Dillon's was a large diamond solitaire set in a gold claw, Trueman's the head of a Roman soldier cut in onyx and set in pale twisted gold; it had been his father's, I believe. (166)

Dillon, the ambitious Irish man, and Trueman, the typical American, are characterized by hand movements. The items they wear also indicate their personality. While Dillon wears a stylish ring, Trueman cherishes the inheritance handed down from his father. In this way, Cather contrasted the personality of the two men through their gesture and ornaments. Polly, his daughter-in-law observed Rosicky's hands.

She [Polly] wondered if it wasn't a kind of gypsy hand, it was so alive and quick and light in its communications, — very strange in a farmer. Nearly all the farmers she knew had huge lumps of fists, like mauls, or they were knotty and bony and uncomfortable-looking, with stiff fingers. But Rosicky's was like quicksilver, flexible, muscular, about the colour of a pale cigar, with deep, deep creases across the palm. (57)

Working as a tailor in London in his youth made his hands skillful, and farming in Nebraska made them tougher and darker with creases. The suntan and wrinkles suggest not physical decline, but warmth and maturity like old trees. That Rosicky raised the crops and his family by hand, makes his achievement all the more precious.

Instead of sensual expressions, Cather described romantic feelings artistically. For example, Cecile's fiancé kisses her softly on the forehead as a sign of affection in *Shadows on the Rock*. In the case of Rosicky and Polly, hardly had he fallen down with a heart attack, when she dashed to support him as swiftly as a greyhound and was sitting by his bed to nurse him. She was struck by a feeling of intimacy.

She [Polly] had a sudden feeling that nobody in the world, not her mother, not Rudolph, or anyone, really loved her as much as old Rosicky did. It perplexed her. She sat frowning and trying to puzzle it out. It was as if Rosicky had a special gift for loving people, *something that was like an ear for music or an eye for colour*. It was quiet, unobtrusive; it was merely there. You saw it in his eyes, — perhaps that was why they were merry. (57)

[Italics mine]

Polly bore intimate feelings for Rosicky which she had never felt for her own mother, brought out by his natural and artistic demeanor. Another implicit romantic scene is shown when Rosicky encourages her to go to the theatre by dressing her up. Such loving care made

her feel like giving herself up to Rosicky when he relieved her of doing dishes and dressed her up.

That kind, reassuring grip on her [Polly] elbows, the old man's funny bright eyes, made Polly want to drop her head on his shoulder for a second. She restrained herself, but she lingered in his grasp at the door of her room, murmuring tearfully: "You always lived in the city when you were young, didn't you? Don't you ever get lonesome out here?" (34)

Polly almost yielded herself to Rosicky, because the force of nature gives her assurance which is derived from his appearance: 'He [Rosicky] was a very simple man. He was like a tree that has not many roots, but one tap-root that goes down deep' ⁽³⁵⁾ (30). Rosicky has a non-aggressive and non-resisting attitude, as follows:

Rosicky's face had the habit of looking interested, — suggested a contented disposition and a reflective quality that was gay rather than grave. This gave him a certain detachment, the easy manner of an onlooker and observer. (8)

To understand the significance of life, John Ruskin (1819-1900) in *Modern Painters* (1843) explained the mechanism of botanical life. Organic plants are so delicate that one injury may be fatal to the whole body whether it is infectious or not. Although the plants are vulnerable to external invasion, at the same time life has the power to invigorate and revitalize other parts.

In substance which we call "inanimate," as of clouds, or stones, their atoms may cohere to each other, or consist with each other, but they do not help each other. The removal of one part does not injure the rest. But in a plant, the taking away of any one part does injure the rest. Hurt or remove any portion of the sap, bark, or pith, the rest is injured. If any part enters into a state in which it no more assists the rest, and has thus become "helpless," we call it also "dead." The power which causes the several portions of the plant to help each other, we call life. (150-151)

Plants are so delicate and immobile that they are vulnerable to damage, disease and the

weather. Rosicky is well aware of the need to prepare for an invasion of alien species in order to protect the crops. [D]uring that open windy winter a great many Russian thistle plants had blown in there and lodged. He kept asking the boys to rake them out; he was afraid their seed would root and "take the alfalfa." (53).

A similar sort of moderate and domestic person is Mr. Auclair in *The Shadows on the Rock* (1931). He is a passive apothecary living with his only daughter. Both Rosicky and Auclair are city-bred, and have a good time with their beloved wife and lovely children. Auclair is described as follows: 'It was a strange thing, indeed, that a man of his mild and thoughtful disposition, city-bred and most conventional in his habits, should be found on a grey rock in the Canadian wilderness' (4). Rosicky is a sophisticated man and has worsened his loneliness through city life. Both have a 'negative capability' to overcome difficulty, not by defeating or chastising enemies like conquerors but through enduring adversities optimistically and telling old stories to their kids.¹⁵

Mary, Rosicky's wife, is a farmer's wife, and she is keen to socialize with others. She is so sympathetic that she even advised the young doctor Edward, her old acquaintance, how to stay youthful looking by dyeing his hair.

"... I don't like to see a young man getting grey. I'll tell you something, Ed; you make some strong black tea and keep it handy in a bowl, and every morning just brush it into your hair, an' it'll keep the grey from showin' much. That's the way I do!" (16)

Mary also tries to bring about a reconciliation between Rudolf and Rosicky when they are arguing. However, her kindness could be a burden to Polly, the daughter-in-law. The new generations were attracted to an emerging industry, and they preferred individualism. Psychologically, Polly may be afraid that she will lose her identity by being assimilated into Mary's 'ordinary' way. To use R. D. Laing's term, this is 'engulfment' in *The Divided Self*.

A firm sense of one's own autonomous identity is required in order that one may be related as one human being to another. Otherwise, any and every relationship threatens the individual with loss of identity. One form this takes can be called engulfment (44).

If Laing's theory is applied to Polly's case, she is afraid of being treated in an intimate

manner by her step-mother. Matsuoka Shinya, a Faulkner specialist, described the matriarchal system in the context of literature with regard to the American South through the image of honeysuckle.

Vines of honeysuckle well represent the complicated social relations in the South, that reflects the reality of the South which is totally different from that of the North which can be explained by the use of the tree metaphor; it represents a well-organized vertical system in which powers are inherited and orders come in through fixed and predicted ways like father to son, elders to youth, males to females or whites to blacks.¹⁹

In contrast to the well-organized system, vines represent complexity and are multi-layered. They represent female strength. The doctor, as a narrator, observes the family from a third person perspective. He admires the way Mary runs the household. Mary is good at household chores. She bakes cakes and prepares delicious coffee for the guest and she is a good caretaker of the plants.

While the boys were getting the Doctor's horse, he went to the window to examine the house plants. "What do you do to your geraniums to keep them blooming all winter, Mary? I never pass this house that from the road I don't see your windows full of flowers." (15)

To foster plants has something to do with nurturing, sheltering, clipping and feeding. However, pushed by modern customs such as a bank account, even people in rural areas started saving money, which sometimes led to negligence of their children.

They [Rosicky and Mary] saw their neighbours buy more land and feed more stock than they did, without discontent. Once when the creamery agent came to the Rosickys to persuade them to sell him their cream, he told them how much money the Fasslers, their nearest neighbours, had made on their cream last year. "Yes," said Mary, "and look at them Fassler children! Pale, pinched little things, they look like skimmed milk. I'd rather put some colour into my children's faces than put money into the bank." (24)

Rosicky and Mary agree on the upbringing and education of their children, having a cozy chat during a meal with them and affording their guests hospitality with a cup of strong coffee. Though it seems just an idealistic interaction of the community from a modern standard, Cather regarded the life of immigrants as optimistic and eco-friendly.

Unification with Nature

Though Takahashi (1987) concluded that a life in a big city and one on the prairie are not mutually exclusive but can compensate each other in *My Ántonia*, they are contradictory in terms of appreciation of nature. While the lands are exploited and measured off for building civilization, Cather's ecological thinking tells us that we are a part of nature.

In *My Ántonia*, leaning against a big pumpkin warmed by sunbeams, the protagonist feels himself to be a part of the earth.

I [Jim] was something that lay under the sun and felt it, like the pumpkins, and I did not want to be anything more. I was entirely happy. Perhaps we feel like that when we die and become a part of something entire, whether it is sun and air, or goodness and knowledge. At any rate, that is happiness; to be dissolved into *something complete and great*. When it comes to one, it comes as naturally as sleep. (18)¹⁷ [Italics mine]

In contrast, Rosicky used to be a theatregoer and went on a spree on the weekend in New York, but he was not free from isolation and loneliness. He drew a lesson in London. 'Dem big cities is all right fur de rich, but dey is terrible hard fur de poor' (36). Thus, prosperity and urban architecture did not contribute to his welfare.

It struck young Rosicky that this was the trouble with big cities; they built you in from the earth ~~itself~~, cemented you away from any contact with the ground. You lived in an unnatural world, like the fish in an aquarium, who were probably much more comfortable than they ever were in the sea. (29)

Alfalfa clover arouses nostalgia for Rosicky and fosters a sense of affinity. The green leaves of clover remind Rosicky of his childhood.

It [alfalfa] was a feed you could depend on, — and there was some deeper reason, vague, but strong. The peculiar green of that clover woke early memories in old Rosicky, went back to something in his childhood in the old world. When he was a little boy, he had played in fields of that strong blue-green colour. (53-54)

Unifying with the earth and attaining the sense of 'something complete and great' in *My Ántonia* accords with Rosicky resting in peace in 'Neighbour Rosicky'. For Rosicky, the graveyard is not a repulsive place, but a peaceful place like lying on a prairie.

It was a nice graveyard, Rosicky reflected, sort of snug and homelike, not cramped or mournful, — a big sweep all round it. A man could lie down in the long grass and see *the complete arch of the sky* over him, hear the wagons go by; in summer the mowing-machine rattled right up to the wire fence. And it was so near home. Over there across the cornstalks his own roof and windmill looked so good to him that he promised himself to mind the Doctor and take care of himself. (29) [Italics mine]

When Dr. Burleigh paid a visit to Rosicky's family after his death, it was a soft and warm moonlight night in early summer. It struck the doctor that the graveyard was as beautiful as Rosicky used to think daytime was.

For the first time it struck Doctor Ed that this was really a beautiful graveyard. He thought of city cemeteries; acres of shrubbery and heavy stone, so arranged and lonely and unlike anything in the living world. Cities of the dead, indeed; cities of the forgotten, of the "put away." (60-61)

Not only did Dr. Burleigh appreciate the value of pastoral scenes, he also perceived the flaws of city life as Rosicky did.

Conclusion

Cather described natural landscapes such as the dawn and the starry night in a realistic way.

These descriptions take place in a pastoral setting, which evokes an unfamiliar but comfortable feeling for modern readers. In terms of her worldview of nature, she often adopted a pagan attitude. For example, Marie, the heroine of *O, Pioneers*, appreciates tree-worship in pre-Christian times, because trees seem not to struggle against their destiny and may be able to read human minds. 'I [Marie] like trees because they seem more resigned to the way they have to live than other things do. I feel as if this tree knows everything I ever think of when I sit here' (130). Resting on a sunny part of the prairie, Jim had a sense of unification with nature in *My Ántonia*. In the same way, buried in a peaceful graveyard, Rosicky became a part of nature close to a windmill and an orchard in 'Neighbour Rosicky'. Just as Rosicky makes daily items for his family members by hand and endures adversities with patience instead of trying to overcome them in Nebraska, the characters in *Shadows on the Rock* live close to nature and acquire practical skills in Canada. Cather's ability to describe nature can be compared to her contemporaries the Barbizon painters such as Jean-François Millet (1814-1875) and Camille Corot (1796-1875), who depicted desolate or forlorn landscape. In the modern world we are alienated from natures, but Cather reminds us of the benefits and virtues of the rural life of the past.

All quotations from 'Neighbour Rosicky' are taken from *Obscure Destinies*, Scholarly Edition, University of Nebraska Press, 1998.

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Notes

- ① Shibata (1987)
- ② The note for 'shelling corn' of 'Neighbour Rosicky' (272).
- ③ The official definition of 'mythopoetic' from <http://www.mythsoc.org/about.htm>.
- ④ Campbell (2006) suggests that the natural view of Cather is close to the Native American view of the wholeness of the earth: 'The abundant wholeness at the centre of this ritual imagery is contained in the metaphorical 'sacred hoop' or circle of being, which is 'dynamic and encompassing' '(147).
- ⑤ Marx (1964). See Fujimoto (2019)
- ⑥ North (1999)
- ⑦ See Takahashi (2019)
- ⑧ 'Prairie Dawn' in *April Twilight* (1923). See also 'Macon Prairie'.
- ⑨ Woodress (1989)
- ⑩ Other examples of natural scenes are 'the mighty St. Lawrence, rolling north toward the purple line of the Laurentian mountains' (7). 'Across the river there was already a red and purple glow above the black pines; but overhead spread the dark night sky, like a tent with its flap up, letting in a new day, —the most important day of the year' (233).
- ⑪ 'They were so exactly like one another that he seemed to be wandering in some geometrical nightmare; flattened cones, they were, more the shape of Mexican ovens than haystacks—yes, exactly the shape of Mexican ovens, red as brick-dust, and naked of vegetation except for small juniper trees'. 'That was the dead, sealed world of the vegetable kingdom, an uncharted continent choked with interlocking trees, living, dead, half-dead, their roots in bogs and swamps, strangling each other in a slow agony that had lasted for centuries. The forest was suffocation, annihilation' (7).
- ⑫ O'Callaghan (1990) mentioned typical occupations of the immigrants of the mid 19th century. 'The immigrants found in busy cities like New York, Chicago Pittsburg—stitching garments, feeding furnaces, laboring on factory assembly lines, hacking out coals' (78).
- ⑬ The physical traits of Rosicky are 'There wasn't anything brutal in the short, broad-backed man [Rosicky] with the three-cornered eyes and the forehead that went on to the top of his skull' (24).
- ⑭ 'He was city-bred, and she was country-bred; she often said she wanted her boys to have their papa's nice ways' (23). 'He was a city man, a gentle man, and though he had married a rough farm girl, he had never touched her without gentleness' (24).
- ⑮ 'Negative Capability' originated from the letter of John Keats. 'I mean *Negative Capability*.

that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason. Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetrallium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge' (50).

⑮ Matsuoka (2007), slightly amended.

⑰ Lafcadio (1902) shows the same personal experience. 'While resting under the pines that fringed the beach, something in the vital warmth and luminous peace of the hour—some quivering rapture of wind and light—very strangely bestirred an old belief of mine: the belief that all being is One' (113). See Dougill (2019)

⑱ 'But this was the complete dome of heaven, all there was of it. I did not believe that my dead father and mother were watching me from up there; they would still be looking for me at the sheep-fold down by the creek, or along the white road that led to the mountain pastures. I had left even their spirits behind me' (7-8).