

‘ROSICKY ASKED HER IN CZECH [...] SHE REPLIED IN
ENGLISH’: LINGUISTIC BORDER CROSSINGS IN WILLA
CATHER’S FICTION

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ABSTRACT

‘Rosicky asked her in Czech [...] She replied in English’: Linguistic Border Crossings in Willa Cather’s Fiction

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In 1919, Cather’s home state of Nebraska banned the teaching of foreign languages in schools. In 1921, Cather denounced this law, asking: would it make children any ‘less American to know one or two other languages’? Whilst Cather believed that English should be the United States’ primary language, she disagreed that it should be the only language spoken there. In this thesis I will explore the impact of Cather’s ‘English first, but not English-only’ language politics upon her fiction. Specifically, I will argue that, in terms of their vocabulary, grammar, narrative structures and subject matter, Cather’s texts are constructed from four types of carefully controlled ‘linguistic border crossings’ between her characters’ native languages and English: namely, code-switching, Cather’s inclusion of foreign words within her predominantly English-language texts, translation and cross-linguistic influence.

Breaking new methodological ground, I will apply translation, sociolinguistic and polylingual discourse theories to Cather’s work in order to explore how she crossed linguistic borders without alienating Anglophone readers. Analysing hitherto undiscussed archival material (particularly annotations in Cather’s French textbooks) alongside Cather’s overlooked translation work, I will outline her surprisingly modern theory of translation, as well as the literary inspirations underpinning her cross-linguistic experiments. In doing so, I will offer new insights into how Cather’s fiction enacts her aesthetic theory of simplification and demonstrate that her writing is more political than her critical reputation suggests. By comparing Cather’s linguistic border crossings to those made by Pound and Hemingway, I will add a fresh perspective to the debate regarding her relationship with literary modernism. Finally, I will argue that, although they put English first, Cather’s texts are inherently multilingual and should, therefore, be included in the canon of polyglot American fiction – a categorisation which adds a new dimension to the ongoing reassessment of American literature in light of linguistic diversity.

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INTRODUCTION

‘WILLA CATHER RAPS LANGUAGE LAW’

Although they are predominantly written in English, Willa Cather’s (1873-1947) novels and short stories are full of linguistic border crossings. In the following conversation between Thea Kronborg and her music teacher, Herr Wunsch, in *The Song of the Lark* (1915), for example, four linguistic border crossings take place:

as they walked between the flower-beds [Wunsch] took Thea’s hand.
“*Es flüstern und sprechen die Blumen*,” – he muttered. “You know that von Heine? *Im leuchtenden Sommermorgen*?” [...]
“No, I don’t know it. What does *flüstern* mean?”
“*Flüstern*? – to whisper. You must now begin to know such things. That is necessary. How many birthdays?”
“Thirteen. [...] But how can I know words like that. I only know what you say at my lessons. They don’t teach German at school. [...]”¹

Wunsch makes the first linguistic border crossing in this exchange when he code-switches between his native language, German, and English: “‘*Es flüstern und sprechen die Blumen* [...] You know that [...]?’”. In order to record Wunsch’s speech accurately, Cather incorporates untranslated fragments of German into her otherwise English-language text; in doing so, she makes the passage’s second linguistic border crossing.

The third linguistic border crossing in this passage is translation: “‘*Flüstern*? – to whisper [...]’”. The final linguistic border crossing is cross-linguistic influence, a bilingual phenomenon which explains Wunsch’s tendency to arrange his English words according to the rules of German grammar. For example, his sentence “‘You must *now* begin to know such things. [...]’ [my emphasis]’ sounds unidiomatic because its grammar reflects the typical placement of the adverb ‘now’ (‘jetzt’) in German: ‘Du musst *jetzt* anfangen, solche Dinge zu wissen’.

In this thesis, I will argue these four types of linguistic border crossing – code-switching, Cather’s use of foreign words within her otherwise English-language texts, translation and cross-linguistic influence – are fundamental to the content, vocabulary, grammar, structure and style of Cather’s fiction. In order to do so, I will first investigate

¹ Willa Cather, *The Song of the Lark*, in *Early Novels and Stories*, ed. by Sharon O’Brien (New York: Library of America, 1987), pp. 291-706 (pp. 359-60). Further references given in the text.

why Cather, an Anglophone American, was interested in interactions between English and other languages. A vital clue to this interest is evident in Thea's complaint that they 'don't teach German at school'. At the start of the twentieth century, Cather's home state of Nebraska banned the teaching of foreign languages. Although rarely outspoken on political matters, Cather publicly contested this legislation.

In 1921, the Omaha Fine Arts Society's first lecture of the Autumn season took place on Saturday 29th October. At four o' clock that afternoon, a large audience gathered in the ballroom of the Hotel Fontenelle in Omaha to hear Nebraska's most famous novelist, Willa Cather, give a lecture on the 'Standardization of Literature and Art' – or 'something like that'. As Cather had admitted to the *Omaha World-Herald* earlier that day, she wasn't entirely sure what she was going to talk about and had been 'too lazy to make up a good title'.²

Whether she really was unrehearsed or she was bluffing, Cather's speech made headline news: 'WILLA CATHER RAPS LANGUAGE LAW', 'NEBRASKA SCORED FOR ITS MANY LAWS BY WILLA CATHER'.³ Unexpectedly, Cather used her moment in the spotlight to 'denounce' the Siman Act, a law ratified in Nebraska in 1919 which banned the state's schools from teaching foreign languages 'under the eighth grade'.⁴ This law, which was intended to encourage Nebraska's large, multilingual immigrant population to become loyal, Anglophone American citizens was, in Cather's opinion, ludicrous. 'Will it make a boy or girl any less American', she asked her Omaha audience, 'to know one or two other languages?'.⁵ With this question, Cather entered into a hotly-contested contemporary debate about American language politics.

'Although English may be the common, national language of the United States', Dennis Baron notes, 'it is not and never has been the exclusive language of the country',

² 'Willa Cather Will Speak to Omaha Fine Arts Society Today', *Omaha World-Herald*, 29 October 1921, in *Willa Cather in Person: Interviews, Speeches, and Letters*, ed. by L. Brent Bohlke (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), pp. 28-29 (p. 29).

³ 'Willa Cather Raps Language Law and Antles' Boxing Regulations', *Omaha World-Herald*, 31 October 1921, in Bohlke, pp. 146-47 (p. 146); Myrtle Mason, 'Nebraska Scored for its Many Laws by Willa Cather', *Omaha Bee*, 30 and 31 October 1921, in Bohlke, pp. 148-50 (p. 148).

⁴ 'State Laws Are Cramping', *Lincoln Evening State Journal*, 31 October 1921, in Bohlke, pp. 147-48 (p. 148).

⁵ Ibid.

and this was especially true during the period when Cather was writing.⁶ Indeed, as Joshua Miller argues, the early twentieth century was one of the most ‘polyglot moments’ in American history.⁷ This was due to the immigration boom which occurred between 1890 and 1924 (when the Johnson-Reed Act placed limits on immigration). During this period, ‘twenty-two and a half million newcomers’ arrived in the United States, ‘more than twice as many’ as had arrived during the previous fifty years.⁸

Not only was the scale of immigration during these decades unprecedented, so too was its source. Whereas the majority of settlers arriving before 1890 had hailed from northern and western Europe, the so-called ‘New Immigrants’ arrived from southern, central and eastern Europe. For Frank V. Thompson writing in 1919, this geographic shift explained the fact that:

Between 1890 and 1910 the number of immigrants unable to speak English increased by 1,581,967, or 115 percent, as opposed to 47 percent, the rate of increase of the total foreign-born population [...].⁹

According to the 1910 census, ‘of the 13,366,407 foreign-born whites’ living in the United States, ‘only 3,907,021 spoke English as their native language’.¹⁰ The fact that such large numbers of immigrants continued to speak their native languages in the United States meant that it was by no means ‘certain’ at the start of the twentieth century that English would remain ‘the country’s primary language’:

German was the primary language in parts of Pennsylvania and in many communities throughout Ohio and the Midwest; French was spoken in New Orleans, [and] in rural communities in New England [...] Dutch enclaves still existed in upstate New York; Swedish and Finnish were spoken in the northern Midwest; Spanish predominated in California and the Southwest; and Hebrew and Yiddish were very strong in New York City [...].¹¹

⁶ Dennis Baron, *The English-Only Question: An Official Language for Americans?* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 3.

⁷ Joshua L. Miller, *Accented America: The Cultural Politics of Multilingual Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 9.

⁸ Frank V. Thompson, *Americanization Studies: The Acculturation of Immigrant Groups into American Society*, ed. by William S. Bernard (Montclair, NJ: Patterson Smith, 1971), pp. ix-x.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

¹⁰ H. L. Mencken, *The American Language: An Inquiry into the Development of English in the United States* (New York: Knopf, 1949), p. 213.

¹¹ Edwin Gentzler, *Translation and Identity in the Americas: New Directions in Translation Theory* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 24.

Cather's fiction captures this diverse linguistic landscape. In her Midwestern *Prairie Trilogy* (1913-1918), for example, immigrant characters speak Swedish, Czech, German and Norwegian. In *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927), which is set in New Mexico, characters speak Spanish, French and Navajo. Meanwhile, Cather's short stories encompass settings as diverse as the sinophone Chinese Quarter in San Francisco ('A Son of the Celestial', 1893) and a New York City building site populated by Italian-speaking workers ('Behind the Singer Tower', 1912). From coast to coast, Cather's America is inherently multilingual.

Cather's fictional representations of the United States' multilingualism reflect the fact that, growing up in Nebraska in the 1880s and 1890s, she gained first-hand experience of the country's growing ethnic and linguistic diversity. As she recalled in her essay 'Nebraska: The End of the First Cycle' (1923), 'foreign stock' from Scandinavia, Germany, the Czech Republic, Russia and French Canada, lured to Nebraska by the Burlington Railroad Company's promise of cheap farmland, outnumbered 'native stock [...] nine to three' at the turn of the twentieth century. Continuing to speak their Old-World languages in the New World, these immigrants made the counties of Nebraska seem, to the young Cather, like a linguistic microcosm of the countries of Europe:

On Sunday we could drive to a Norwegian church and listen to a sermon in that language, or to a Danish or a Swedish church. We could go to the French Catholic settlement in the next county and hear a sermon in French, or into the Bohemian township and hear one in Czech, or we could go to church with the German Lutherans.¹²

A biographical sketch of Cather published in 1926 (which David Porter suggests was written by Cather herself) notes that she found her immigrant neighbours' 'foreign speech [...] intensely interesting'.¹³ Had Cather 'been born' in Nebraska, the sketch argues, she 'doubtless would have taken' this polyglot environment 'for granted'; however, being transplanted there from her native Virginia (which was comparatively monolingual and Anglophone) at the age of nine gave her a lifelong curiosity about

¹² Willa Cather, 'Nebraska: The End of the First Cycle', in *Roundup: A Nebraska Reader*, ed. by Virginia Faulkner (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1957), pp. 1-8 (p. 5).

¹³ 'Willa Cather: A Biographical Sketch, an English Opinion, and an Abridged Bibliography', quoted in David Porter, *On the Divide: The Many Lives of Willa Cather* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), pp. 17-20 (p. 17).

linguistic diversity which, I will argue, shaped not only the subject matter of her fiction, but its structure, grammar and vocabulary.¹⁴

However, not everyone shared Cather's curiosity about the United States' growing multilingualism. As Guy Reynolds argues, 'Cather came to writerly maturity at a time when much of Nebraska's polyglot diversity was under threat'.¹⁵ To understand why this was the case, it is helpful to examine the state of American language politics at the start of the twentieth century. In *Language in the USA* (1981), Ferguson and Heath argue that whenever non-Anglophone individuals are 'viewed as politically, socially, or economically threatening' in the United States, 'their language[s]' typically become 'a focus for arguments in favour of [...] the imposition of standard English'.¹⁶ Linguistic diversity initially came to the fore as 'a political issue' during Cather's lifetime when the American government targeted 'the preponderance of Spanish-speaking New Mexicans as a major reason to deny statehood to [that] territory'.¹⁷ In 1910, Albert Beveridge, chair of the Senate Committee on Territories, reported that:

One of the most serious difficulties of [...] the territory of New Mexico [...] is the disposition of the Mexican population to continue the Spanish language from generation to generation. [...] Since we are about to admit this territory as a state of the Union, the disposition of its citizens to retain their racial solidarity, and in doing so to continue the teaching of their tongue, must be broken up.¹⁸

For Beveridge, Mexicans' willingness to speak English (or lack thereof) was a gauge of their loyalty to the United States.

In 1917, concerns regarding the supposed correlation between language and national loyalty were extended to non-Anglophone immigrants living throughout the country. As Orm Øverland argues, the United States' entry into World War I in 1917 made 'Americanization' – the conversion of immigrants into integrated American citizens – and the related 'question of [the] loyalty of those who spoke

¹⁴ 'A Biographical Sketch, an English Opinion, and an Abridged Bibliography', p. 17.

¹⁵ Guy Reynolds, 'Willa Cather's Translated World', in *Willa Cather and European Cultural Influences*, ed. by Helen M. Dennis (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1996), pp. 97-110 (p. 101).

¹⁶ Charles A. Ferguson and Shirley Brice Heath, *Language in the USA* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 10.

¹⁷ Baron, p. 96

¹⁸ US Senate, 'Report on an act enabling the people of New Mexico and Arizona to form a Constitution and State Government' (1910), US Serials 5583, report 454, pp. 25-26.

incomprehensible languages a crucial issue'.¹⁹ Miller concurs that the 'anti-immigrant groundswell' generated by the United States' entry into the war triggered a political climate in which 'linguistic alterity became [...] a surrogate for racial [...] differences', meaning that 'people who could not or chose not to speak English or who spoke it in unfamiliar accents' – especially German speakers – were viewed as 'threats to national unity'.²⁰

In addition to being viewed as a gauge of immigrants' assimilation (and, by extension, the threat that they posed to national unity), the English language was also regarded at the start of the twentieth century as a vital tool for converting 'aliens' into loyal Americans. In 1916, Royal Dixon, a prominent advocate of the Americanisation movement, argued that 'approaching the foreigner and teaching him English' was the 'key to [...] converting [him] from an alien to an American'.²¹ John J. Mahoney and Charles M. Herlihy, authors of *First Steps in Americanization: A Handbook for Teachers* (1918), agreed that the 'first step in making a unified people [...] [was] to teach the foreigner English'.²² Likewise, in 1918, Franklin K. Lane, Secretary of the Interior (1913-1920), argued that, in order to support the war effort and encourage national unity, 'all Americans must be taught to read, write and *think* in one language'.²³

To encourage Americans to '*think* in one language', many states introduced laws designed to promote Anglophone monolingualism. In Ohio, 'a \$25 fine was imposed for speaking German in public' and in 1918 Iowa forbade 'the use of any foreign language in the schools, in public, or on the telephone'.²⁴ In 1919, Cather's home state of Nebraska ratified 'an open meeting law [...] requiring that discussions of "political or non-political subjects or questions of general interest" be conducted in English'.²⁵ At the same time, it passed 'An act relating to the teaching of foreign

¹⁹ Orm Øverland, 'From Melting Pots to Copper Kettles: Assimilation and Norwegian American Literature', in *Multilingual America: Transnationalism, Ethnicity and the Languages of American Literature*, ed. by Werner Sollors (New York: New York University Press, 1998), pp. 50-63 (p. 59).

²⁰ Miller, p. 42.

²¹ Royal Dixon, *Americanization* (New York: Macmillan, 1916), p. 47.

²² John J. Mahoney and Charles M. Herlihy, *First Steps in Americanization: A Handbook for Teachers* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1918), p. 3.

²³ Franklin K. Lane, 'Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1918', in *Reports of the Department of the Interior for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1918* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918), pp. 3-24 (p. 16).

²⁴ François Grosjean, *Life with Two Languages: An Introduction to Bilingualism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 61; Baron, p. 111.

²⁵ Baron, p. 143.

languages in the State of Nebraska' (the Siman Act), which banned schools from 'teaching any subject to any person in any other language than the English language' and prohibited the teaching of 'Languages other than the English language [...] as languages' before the eighth grade.²⁶ Punishment for violating this law was 'a fine of not less than twenty-five (25) dollars' or imprisonment for thirty days.²⁷

In 1920, Nebraskan teacher Robert T. Meyer was fined \$25 for reading to a ten-year-old pupil in German. Rejecting Meyer's appeal against this verdict (which was, however, later overturned by the United States Supreme Court), the Nebraska Supreme Court stated that:

The salutary purpose of the statute [the Siman Act] is clear. The Legislature had seen the baneful effects of permitting foreigners, who had taken residence in this country, to rear and educate their children in the language of their native land. The result of that condition was found to be inimical to our own safety. To allow the children of foreigners [...] to be taught from early childhood the language of the country of their parents was [...] to educate them so that they must always think in that language, and, as a consequence, naturally inculcate them in the ideas and sentiments foreign to the best interests of this country.²⁸

A product of war-induced nativism, the Siman Act decreed linguistic diversity a threat to national security and American values.

However, not everyone supported Nebraska's language laws. In July 1921, *The New York Times* humorously noted that if Francophone war hero Marshal Ferdinand Foch were to accept the Governor of Nebraska's invitation to 'deliver an address at the International Hero Congress in Omaha' he would, by speaking French, unfortunately violate the law decreeing that 'all public meetings held within the State of Nebraska' should 'be conducted in the English language and therefore be 'liable to a fine of "not less than \$10 [...]". The *Times*'s columnist drolly concluded his/her article by expressing his/her sincere hope that 'if [Foch went] to Omaha, [he would] be able to scrape up enough English to tell the Nebraskans what he [thought] of their silly laws'.²⁹

²⁶ 'An act relating to the teaching of foreign languages in the State of Nebraska', quoted in 'Meyer v. State of Nebraska', *Legal Information Institute* <<https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/262/390>> [accessed 09/07/2019].

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ 'Topics of the Times: Marshal Foch and the Law', *New York Times*, 30 July 1921, pp. 5-6.

Cather agreed that the Siman Act was ‘silly’ and, addressing the Omaha Fine Arts Society in 1921, she told her fellow Nebraskans so. Although no transcript of Cather’s speech survives, reports in the *Omaha World-Herald*, *Lincoln Evening State Journal*, *Omaha Bee* and *Nebraska State Journal* enable us to piece together its content. According to these papers, Cather’s central argument was that the Siman Act represented a ‘cramping’ form of state-led ‘standardization’.³⁰ For Cather, the increasing ‘standardization’ of American life was a very serious issue. From fashion trends (‘It is not necessary [...] for a stout woman to wear an absurdly short skirt [...] because that is supposed to be the style’) to horticulture (‘It is not necessary [...] to plant the same kind of trees as everybody else’) and from orthodontics (‘Mouths should be left as nature made them [...] but dentists [insist] on deadly conformity’) to the early twentieth century’s ‘passion for Americanizing everything and everybody’ (which she described as a ‘deadly disease’), Cather was horrified by her compatriots’ ever-increasing fear ‘of not being standard’.³¹

Not only did Cather regard ‘standardization’ as an affront to ‘personal liberty’, she also believed that it was a ‘bar to the real development of art’.³² In 1920, Cather argued in her essay ‘On the Art of Fiction’ that art, ‘which is always a search for something new’, could ‘have nothing to do with standardized values’.³³ In 1921, Cather reiterated this point, telling her Omaha Fine Arts Society audience that: ‘Art can find no place in such an atmosphere as these laws create [...] Art must have freedom’.³⁴ As I will demonstrate throughout this thesis, linguistic diversity – the very thing that Nebraska’s Siman Act aimed to reduce and ‘standardize’ – was vital to the development of Cather’s own literary art.

Two years after giving her Fine Arts Society speech, Cather reiterated her criticism of the Siman Act in her essay ‘Nebraska: The End of the First Cycle’ (1923), noting with regret that ‘lawmakers’ with a ‘rooted conviction that a boy can be a better

³⁰ ‘State Laws are Cramping’, p. 146; ‘Nebraska Scored for its Many Laws’, p. 149.

³¹ ‘Miss Cather in Lincoln’, *Lincoln State Journal*, 2 November 1921, in Bohlke, pp. 40-41 (p. 41); Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, *Willa Cather: A Memoir* (New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1953), p. 117; Willa Cather, quoted in Rose C. Feld, ‘Restlessness Such as Ours Does Not Make for Beauty’, *New York Times Book Review*, 21 December 1924, p. 11, in Bohlke, pp. 68-72 (p. 72); ‘Nebraska Scored for its Many Laws’, p. 149.

³² ‘Willa Cather Raps Language Law’, p. 147.

³³ Willa Cather, ‘On the Art of Fiction’, in *Stories, Poems, & Other Writings*, ed. by Sharon O’Brien (New York: Library of America, 1992) pp. 939-40 (p. 940).

³⁴ ‘State Laws Are Cramping’, p. 148.

American if he speaks only one language than if he speaks two' had 'done away with' the state's linguistic diversity.³⁵ The other place in which Cather challenged linguistic standardisation – and, in particular, the supposed correlation between speaking English and being a loyal American – was in her fiction. In her 1921 speech, Cather asked, 'Will it make a boy or girl any less American to know one or two other languages?'; in her novels and short stories she demonstrated that the answer to that question was a resounding 'no'.

In one of Cather's earliest short stories, 'The Clemency of the Court' (1883), for example, Russian immigrant Serge Povolitchky's inability 'read or talk English' belies his tremendous loyalty to 'the State'.³⁶ Serge's American bosses, Mr. and Mrs. Davies, 'treat [...] him very much as they did the horses' and consequently his only friend is 'Matushka' the dog, who, as the English translation of her Russian name suggests, functions as a surrogate for Serge's dead mother.³⁷ Serge's other surrogate mother is 'the State', which he personifies as 'a woman with kind eyes':

He always took off his hat when he passed the court house in town, because he had the idea that it had something to do with the State someway. He thought he owed the State a great deal for something, he did not know what; that the State would do something great for him some day, because he had no one else.³⁸

Despite Serge's loyalty, the State fails to protect him from both an abusive childhood and a brutal death.

Such is Serge's love for Matushka that, when Mr. Davies kills her, Serge retaliates by killing Mr. Davies. Sentenced to life in prison for his boss's murder, Serge is tied up and left to asphyxiate alone in a cell. Unable to speak English, Serge is unable to explain his actions to the court and claim the clemency which, Cather implies, he thoroughly deserves: 'love was love, even if it was for a dog'.³⁹ Even as he is dying, however, Serge remains adamant that the State will save him: 'the State would surely come soon, she would not let them kill him. His mother, the State!'.⁴⁰ Contrary to the views of Dixon and Lane, Cather suggests in this story that the language an immigrant

³⁵ 'Nebraska: The End of the First Cycle', p. 4.

³⁶ Willa Cather, 'The Clemency of the Court', *The Hesperian*, 26 October 1893, pp. 3-7 (p. 4), in *The Willa Cather Archive* <<https://cather.unl.edu/ss024.html>> [accessed 04/02/2018].

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 4-5.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 6.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 7.

speaks is a very poor measure of his/her loyalty to the United States. Even though Serge cannot speak English, he regards America as his motherland and has complete (although sadly misplaced) faith in its justice system.

In Cather's second novel, *O Pioneers!* (1913), bilingual immigrant Alexandra Bergson's language choices are an equally unreliable gauge of her loyalty to the United States. At the pivotal moment when she decides to 'have faith in the high land' and expand her family's Nebraskan farmstead (even though many of her neighbours have given up on the region), Alexandra conspicuously switches from English to her native Swedish:

"I want to hold on harder than ever, and when you're a man you'll thank me." She urged Brigham forward.

When the road began to climb the first long swells of the Divide, Alexandra hummed an old Swedish hymn [...].⁴¹

Even though Alexandra hums a Swedish hymn rather than an English one, she shows more commitment to Nebraska in this moment than 'All the' Anglophone 'Americans [who] are skinning out' in search of easier land to farm (p. 166). Indeed, it is Swedish-speaking Alexandra, not her Anglophone American neighbours, who is the first person to look upon the Nebraska Divide with 'love and yearning' since it 'emerged from the waters of geologic ages'; she alone recognises its potential (p. 170). Even though she continues to speak her native language, Alexandra is – contrary to the beliefs of Lane, Dixon and Nebraska's lawmakers – clearly committed to her future in the United States.

In addition to challenging the supposed link between immigrants' use of their native languages and their loyalty to the United States, Cather also criticised the Siman Act in her fiction by demonstrating the benefits that characters, especially American-born Anglophone characters, derive from learning foreign languages – the specific activity that the law sought to prohibit. In her 1921 speech, Cather censured Nebraska's ban on foreign language lessons in schools on the basis that a child's 'formative years' were the 'only period' in which he or she could 'really lay a foundation for a thorough understanding of a foreign tongue': 'No Nebraska child now growing up', Cather lamented, '[would] ever have a mastery of a foreign tongue'.⁴² Some of Cather's contemporaries shared this view. In 1919, Frank V. Thompson wrote that:

⁴¹ Willa Cather, *O Pioneers!*, in *Early Novels*, pp. 133-290 (p. 170). Further references given in the text.

⁴² 'Willa Cather Raps Language Law', p. 147.

Laws prohibiting the use of a foreign language below the high school [...] depriv[ed] native-born children of the opportunity of studying French, or Italian, or Spanish, or German, at an age when a mastery of foreign idiom and pronunciation is most readily acquired [...].⁴³

Justice James Clerk McReynolds, who overturned Robert T. Meyer's conviction in the United States Supreme Court in 1923, concurred:

It is well-known that proficiency in a foreign language seldom comes to one not instructed at an early age, and experience shows that this is not injurious to the health, morals or understanding of the ordinary child.⁴⁴

In her short stories and novels, Cather demonstrates that, far from being 'injurious', learning a foreign language is a vitally important step in characters' transition from childhood to adulthood.

When fifteen-year-old American-born protagonist Vickie Templeton wins a college scholarship in Cather's short story 'Old Mrs Harris' (1932), for example, her neighbour, Mr. Rosen, who speaks German and French, rewards her with her 'first French lesson':

Listen: a great man once said: "*Le but n'est rien; le chemin c'est tout.*"
That means: The end is nothing, the road is all. Let me write it down for you and give you your first French lesson.⁴⁵

This combined French and life lesson catalyses Vickie's maturation in three ways. Primarily, it stimulates her intellectual maturation because it represents her first step towards achieving her dream of being able to read 'any' of the French-language books in the Rosens' library (p. 634). Secondly, accompanied by a sophisticated meal of tomatoes with an 'oil dressing' (which Mrs Rosen declares that Vickie must 'learn to like' if she is 'going off into the world'), the lesson is Vickie's induction into the cosmopolitan world that she will enter when she leaves her small, Midwestern hometown for college; as such, it catalyses her cultural maturation (p. 658). Thirdly, and most importantly, the lesson provides Vickie with an 'corrective' for some of the problems she may face in her new adult life. Mr. Rosen, who is 'wiser than professors', recognises that college might not live up to Vickie's expectations. He therefore offers Michelet's aphorism as 'a corrective for whatever colleges might do to her' (p. 657).

⁴³ Thompson, p. 290.

⁴⁴ 'Meyer v. Nebraska, 262 U.S. 390 (1923)', quoted in Baron, p. 148.

⁴⁵ Willa Cather, 'Old Mrs. Harris', in *Stories, Poems, & Other Writings*, pp. 619-72 (p. 657). Further references given in the text.

As such, not only does Vickie's first French lesson mark her first step from childhood to adulthood, it also arms her with a philosophy that will, Mr. Rosen hopes, make that transition a little easier.

In *The Song of the Lark*, Thea's coming-of-age is likewise marked by her first language lesson. Thea and Wunsch's exchange about '*Im leuchtenden Sommermorgen*' (quoted earlier) occurs on Thea's thirteenth birthday and it represents a significant turning point in her young life:

"[...] They don't teach German at school? How can I learn?"
"It is always possible to learn when one likes," said Wunsch.
[...] "There is always a way. And if some day you are going to sing, it is necessary to know well the German language." (p. 360)

Up until this point in the novel, Thea has kept her ambition of becoming a singer a secret; it is something that 'the very roses on her wall-paper [have] never heard', let alone Wunsch (p. 360). However, by teaching her to translate Heine's poem (which was set to music by Schumann) on her birthday morning, Wunsch pushes Thea to articulate her ambition and sets her on the path towards achieving it: 'sit down and I will teach you for your birthday that little song' (p. 360). By beginning to teach her German (and, more specifically, a German song), Wunsch introduces Thea to a skill which will later enable her to study in Germany, learn the lieder and become a famous opera star.

As they translate the German poem, Wunsch and Thea analyse it. It is through this analysis that thirteen-year-old Thea's position hovering on the border between childhood and adulthood becomes apparent. The speaker of '*Im leuchtenden sommermorgen*' is a 'sorrowful, death-pale man' ('*Du trauriger, blasser Mann!*') who wanders in a garden amongst flowers that 'whisper and murmur' ('*Es flüstern und sprechen die Blumen*') and beg him to 'be not harsh to [their] sister' ('*Sei unserer Schwester nicht böse*') (p. 361). Asking Thea 'What [...] the flowers mean' by this and why the man is '*trauriger*' and '*blasser*', Wunsch uses the poem to probe her understanding of romantic relationships.

Perceptively, Thea deduces that the flowers 'are asking' the man 'not to be harsh to his sweetheart – or some girl they remind him of' and that he is pale because 'he ha[s] been awake all night, thinking about her' (p. 362). Thea's 'surprise' when she makes these deductions indicates that she understands more about romantic love

than she realised and that she has already begun to cross the border between childhood and adulthood (p. 362). Thea's surprisingly mature interpretation of Heine's poem is even more significant because it foreshadows the complicated romantic life that awaits her in adulthood. When the adult Thea refuses to live with Fred Ottenburg (having discovered that he is already married), Cather describes him as 'pale and drawn' and 'pale and [...] somewhat chastened' – descriptions which recall Heine's '*trauriger, blasser Mann*' (p. 648, p. 656).

By using a translation exercise to test Thea's emotional maturity, Wunsch draws parallels between crossing linguistic borders and crossing the border between innocence and experience. By the end of her first German lesson, Thea's ability to understand Heine's poem enables her to glimpse some of the secrets of the adult world and the romantic entanglements that await her there. Consequently, not only does learning German – something which Thea cannot do at school – arm her with a skill necessary for her future career, it also catalyses her emotional maturation. Even though *The Song of the Lark* predates Cather's public denouncement of the Siman Act, it nonetheless foregrounds the inimical effects – both cultural and personal – of banning language learning in schools.

Learning foreign languages played a significant role in Cather's own transition from childhood to adulthood. As Mildred Bennett notes, Cather made her first linguistic border crossing in 1884 when, at the age of eleven, she began to 'read Latin with "Uncle William Drucker," a well educated Englishman' living in her hometown of Red Cloud, Nebraska.⁴⁶ This reading paid off, because on the last day of 'the school year' in 1889, Cather won 'the prize for the best Latin translations'.⁴⁷ It was around this time – when Cather was 'fifteen or sixteen' – that her neighbours, Mr and Mrs Wiener (the models for Mr and Mrs Rosen in 'Old Mrs. Harris'), taught her to read French literature.⁴⁸ During Cather's visits to the Wieners' library, 'Mrs. Wiener told [her] about the French novels, reading them to her and translating as she went along'.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Mildred Bennett, *The World of Willa Cather* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), p. 119.

⁴⁷ Willa Cather, 'To Helen Stevens Stowell, May 31, 1889', in *The Selected Letters of Willa Cather*, ed. by Andrew Jewell and Janis Stout (New York: Vintage, 2014), pp. 8-9 (p. 8).

⁴⁸ Willa Cather, 'To Albert G. Feuillerat, November 6, 1929', in *Letters*, pp. 419-20 (p. 419).

⁴⁹ Bennett, p. 119.

In 1890, Cather left Red Cloud to attend prep school and then university in Lincoln, Nebraska. Although she majored in English, she took ‘three years of Greek; two years each of Latin and French; and a year [...] of [...] German’.⁵⁰ After graduating, she continued to read French and German texts with her Pittsburgh friend George Seibel and she put her linguistic skills to use working as a French-English translator in Washington and as a high school teacher of Latin and English in Pittsburgh. In interviews and biographical statements, Cather often boasted about her foreign-language skills. A ‘Literary Note’ included with the 1903 edition of *April Twilights*, Cather’s poetry collection, stated that she read ‘voraciously [...] in French’.⁵¹ Likewise, an article published in the *Webster County Argus* in 1921 affirmed that ‘Miss Cather [was] very familiar with the French tongue’.⁵²

This impressive linguistic résumé has led critics such as Susan Rosowski to conclude that Cather’s ‘command’ of foreign languages, especially French, ‘was good’.⁵³ James Woodress agrees that Cather was ‘fluent in written French’.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, Michel Gervaud argues that ‘it may be safely assumed that [Cather] [...] had little trouble understanding [French] when it was spoken by educated people’.⁵⁵ However, a letter from Cather to her friend Dorothy Canfield Fisher in 1921 challenges the safety of this assumption. Questioning the quality of Victor Llona’s French translation of *My Ántonia* (1918), Cather disparaged her linguistic abilities:

it seems to me about the sort of translation I could make myself with a dictionary – which must mean that it is bad enough!⁵⁶

⁵⁰ James R. Shively, ed., *Writings from Willa Cather’s Campus Years* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1950), p. 16.

⁵¹ ‘Literary Note, 1903’, quoted in Porter, p. 5. Porter argues that this note was actually written by Cather.

⁵² ‘A Talk with Miss Cather’, *Webster County Argus*, 29 September 1921, in Bohlke, pp. 26-28 (p. 27).

⁵³ Susan Rosowski, *The Voyage Perilous: Willa Cather’s Romanticism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), p. 7.

⁵⁴ James Woodress, ‘Willa Cather: American Experience and European Tradition’, in *The Art of Willa Cather*, ed. by Bernice Slote and Virginia Faulkner (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1974), pp. 43-62 (p. 56).

⁵⁵ Michel Gervaud, ‘Willa Cather and France: Elective Affinities’, in *The Art of Willa Cather*, pp. 65-81 (p. 69).

⁵⁶ Willa Cather, ‘To Dorothy Canfield Fisher, April 20, 1921’, quoted in Caterina Bernardini, ‘“People in countries who read in the strangest languages”: The International Reception of *My Ántonia*’, in *Something Complete and Great: The Centennial Study of My Ántonia*, ed. by Holly Blackford (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2018), pp. 41-61 (p. 56).

Similarly, in her essay ‘A Chance Meeting’ (1936), Cather described herself as ‘a poor linguist’.⁵⁷ So, was Cather a ‘poor’ linguist or a fluent one?

Combining anecdotal and archival evidence indicates that Cather’s true abilities hovered somewhere between these two extremes. Whilst Cather was eager to develop a reputation for being a talented linguist, she was not a naturally-gifted student. According to her partner and editor, Edith Lewis, for example, Cather only retained her place at the top of her school class in Latin by ‘get[ting] up at five o’ clock to study’.⁵⁸ During her career as a Latin teacher in Pittsburgh, Cather’s ongoing struggle to keep ‘ahead’ of her students caused her to ‘lo[se] twenty pounds’ in weight.⁵⁹ Annotations in the French-language texts owned by Cather confirm that she found language learning arduous.

For example, Cather’s personal copy of *Introduction to Modern French Lyrics* (1894) – the flyleaf of which states that it was a textbook belonging to ‘W. Cather, State University, Lincoln’ – is covered in notes indicating that, whilst studying, she had to pause several times per line in order to look up unfamiliar French words (some of which – for example, ‘la fraise’ and ‘un hibou’ – are surprisingly elementary).⁶⁰ Cather’s copy of Victor Hugo’s ‘La Chute’ (a section of *Les Misérables* published by H. C. O. Huss in 1907) is likewise heavily annotated.⁶¹ Most strikingly, the blank pages lining the back cover are completely covered with lists of French vocabulary, again indicating that Cather had to stop frequently in order to look up new words as she read. From these scribbled notes, it is evident that Cather’s ‘voracious’ reading in foreign languages entailed a painstaking amount of effort. At the same time, the fact that Cather purchased and annotated ‘La Chute’ after 1907 (by which time she was working for

⁵⁷ Willa Cather, ‘A Chance Meeting’, in *Stories, Poems, & Other Writings*, pp. 815-33 (p. 815).

⁵⁸ Edith Lewis, *Willa Cather Living: A Personal Record* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), p. 30.

⁵⁹ Willa Cather, ‘To George and Helen Seibel, July 17, 1901’, quoted in Bennett, p. xxii.

⁶⁰ Red Cloud, NE, National Willa Cather Center Collections and Archives, Cather Family Book Collection, Willa Cather’s annotations in her copy of B. L. Bowen, *Introduction to Modern French Lyrics* (Boston, MA: D. C. Heath, 1894), flyleaf and p. 115. See Appendix, Figure 1.

⁶¹ Red Cloud, NE, National Willa Cather Center Collections and Archives, Cather Family Book Collection, Willa Cather’s annotations in her copy of Victor Hugo, ‘La Chute’ from *Les Misérables*, ed. by H. C. O. Huss (Boston, MA: D. C. Heath, 1907). See Appendix, Figures 2 and 3.

McClure's in New York City) reveals that she remained dedicated to developing her linguistic skills long after she had left full-time education.

In summary, given time, a dictionary and the help of bilingual friends like the Wieners and Seibel, Cather could read and translate Latin and French texts well and German and Greek texts competently. Her French and Latin skills were certainly good enough for her to be briefly employed as a language teacher and a translator of documents. However, contrary to Woodress, Rosowski and Gervaud's view, Cather's 'command' of French and the other languages she learned (written or spoken) was by no means fluent; in particular, she struggled to speak them under pressure. This became frustratingly apparent during Cather's first trip to Europe in 1902. During this vacation, Cather was embarrassed by her imperfect French skills – an issue that she blamed on the fact that she, like Thea Kronborg, had been unable to learn foreign languages from an earlier age.

In 1902, Cather visited Dorothy Canfield Fisher, who 'was doing research at the Sorbonne', in Paris.⁶² Cather's opportunities to practise speaking French (rather than simply reading it) at university had been limited and, as such, she found it exasperatingly difficult to 'understand' Parisians when they spoke to her.⁶³ In contrast, Fisher, who had 'attended French schools' as a child 'while her mother studied art in Paris', was fluent in the language.⁶⁴ Cather's jealousy of her younger friend's superior French-language skills made her, by her own admission, 'ill tempered and ungrateful'; in turn, this ungracious behaviour contributed to a twenty-year 'snarl' in their friendship.⁶⁵

The 'snarl' finally unravelled in 1922 when Cather sent Fisher the proofs of her new novel, *One of Ours* (1922), and sought her advice on the sections set in France. In the chain of correspondence that followed, Cather apologised for her behaviour in Paris and explained that her descriptions of protagonist Claude Wheeler and his friend David Gerhardt's relative competencies in French (as well as the effect that this has on their

⁶² Elsa Nettels, "'The Bravest Act of His Life": Cather, Claude, and the Disadvantages of a Prairie Childhood', *Cather Studies*, 8 (2010), in *The Willa Cather Archive* <https://cather.unl.edu/cs008_elsanettels.html> [accessed 04/02/18] (para. 9 of 25).

⁶³ Willa Cather, 'To Dorothy Canfield [Early March 1904]', in *Letters*, pp. 76-79 (p. 76).

⁶⁴ Nettels, para. 8 of 25.

⁶⁵ 'To Dorothy Canfield [Early March 1904]', p. 76; Mark J. Madigan, 'Willa Cather and Dorothy Canfield Fisher: Rift, Reconciliation, and *One of Ours*', *Cather Studies*, 1 (1990) <https://cather.unl.edu/cs001_dorothy.html> [04/02/2018].

relationship) were an ‘emotional picture of you and I [Fisher and Cather], in France, twenty years ago’.⁶⁶

Before he is deployed to France to fight in World War I, Nebraskan-born Claude, who represents Cather in this ‘emotional picture’, diligently studies ‘a French phrase-book’, hoping to converse with the locals.⁶⁷ However, despite successfully managing to purchase some ‘*fromage*’ using his newly-learned phrases, Claude, like his creator, finds it difficult to speak French spontaneously (p. 1190). When a ‘little boy’ asks him for the time (‘*Voulez-vous me dire l’heure, s’il vous plaît, M’sieu’ l’soldat?*’), for example, Claude’s ‘tongue [goes] dry’ and he cannot answer (p. 1192).

For Claude, this failed interaction is especially galling because his interlocutor is a young boy who looks at his soldier’s uniform with ‘admiring eyes’: ‘He wouldn’t mind being dumb to a man, or even to a pretty girl, but this was terrible’ (p. 1192). More used to admiring other people (for example, the Erlich boys and David Gerhardt) than being admired himself, Claude has – for the first time in his life – a modicum of power over someone else. However, his struggle to cross the border between English and French (or to gracefully admit that he cannot do so) means that he loses this power almost as soon as he gains it. Unable to formulate a response to the question, Claude begins to turn ‘red’ and ‘[look] angry’ – a reaction which prompts the boy to disappointedly decide that ‘this soldier must be ill, or wrong in the head’ (pp. 1192-93).

Claude’s feelings of failure and linguistic powerlessness are exacerbated when he meets Lieutenant David Gerhardt, who, much to his irritation, crosses the border between French and English with ease:

Lieutenant Gerhardt introduced him to Madame Joubert. [Claude] was quite disheartened by the colloquy that followed. Clearly his new fellow officer spoke Madame Joubert’s perplexing language as readily as she herself did, and he felt irritated and grudging as he listened. (p. 1208)

Just as Cather’s jealousy of Fisher’s superior French-language skills made her ‘ill tempered and ungrateful’ in 1902, Claude’s envy of David’s bilingualism makes him ‘irritated and grudging’.⁶⁸ Moreover, Claude’s jealousy of David, much like Cather’s

⁶⁶ ‘To Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Friday [probably April 7, 1922]’, in *Letters*, pp. 317-19 (p. 318).

⁶⁷ Willa Cather, *One of Ours*, in *Early Novels*, pp. 939-1297 (p. 1131). Further references given in the text.

⁶⁸ ‘To Dorothy Canfield [Early March 1904]’, p. 76.

jealousy of Fisher, is entwined with his feelings of cultural inadequacy. Describing herself and Claude as ‘sensitive roughnecks’, Cather explained to Fisher in their correspondence that she had:

accomplished something if after twenty years I’ve got across to you what the roughneck, the sensitive roughneck, really does feel when he’s plunged into the midst of --- everything. [...] he feels as if he has been cheated out of everything, the whole treasure of the ages, just because he doesn’t know some language or play some instrument or something.⁶⁹

In this paragraph, Cather reiterates the conclusion that Claude reaches when he listens to David play the violin for Madame Fleury in Book V, Chapter XIV of *One of Ours*: because ‘nobody [took] the trouble’ to teach him to play an instrument or speak French as a child, Claude muses, he is ‘tongue-tied, foot-tied, hand-tied’ and exiled from the worlds of European art, music and culture in which people like David (and, of course, Fisher), who did receive this early instruction, move freely (p. 1264).

Claude’s sense that he has been ‘cheated’ out of a linguistic education recalls the argument underpinning Cather’s denouncement of the Siman Act in her Omaha Fine Arts Society speech. Cather contested the law on the grounds that a child’s ‘formative years’ were the ‘only period’ in which he or she could ‘lay a foundation for a thorough understanding of a foreign tongue’.⁷⁰ As Claude’s experience demonstrates, being denied this early tuition is not only a practical disadvantage, it is also a significant cultural disadvantage.

Given that Cather addressed the Omaha Fine Arts Society in 1921 and *One of Ours* was published in 1922, it is possible that, in addition to being an ‘emotional picture’ of herself in Paris in 1902, Nebraskan Claude Wheeler is also a portrait of one of the ‘tongue-tied’ cultural exiles that Cather envisaged growing up as a result of Nebraska’s language legislation. Read in light of Cather’s speech, Claude’s struggle to cross linguistic borders and the damage that this does to his self-esteem is not simply an autobiographical exploration of Cather’s personal feelings of linguistic and cultural inadequacy, it is also a literary repudiation of Nebraska’s efforts to discourage its children from learning foreign languages and crossing both linguistic and cultural borders.

⁶⁹ ‘To Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Friday [probably April 7, 1922]’, p. 317.

⁷⁰ ‘Willa Cather Raps Language Law’, p. 147.

Not English-Only, But English First: Cather's Language Politics

In the preface to her essay collection *Not Under Forty* (1936), Cather declared that 'in 1922' – the year in which *One of Ours* was published – 'the world broke in two' and that she wrote 'for the backward' rather than the 'forward-goers'.⁷¹ This reactionary statement helped to cement the view, first proposed by Marxist critics in the 1930s, that Cather was an author curiously disengaged from the moment in which she was writing. In 1933, for example, Granville Hicks argued that Cather had 'been barred from [...] the expression of that which is central and fundamental in her own age'.⁷² Likewise, Maxwell Geismar accused Cather of retreating 'from the real issues of her time'.⁷³

More recently, critics have begun to contest this view of Cather. Janis P. Stout, for example, has demonstrated that Cather was 'deeply engaged with contemporary politics', especially twentieth-century debates 'over immigration'.⁷⁴ Likewise, Guy Reynolds reads Cather 'as an *engagée* author' whose fiction was 'enmeshed within many of the key cultural and intellectual debates of early twentieth-century America', including 'progress', 'Americanisation' and 'multiculturalism'.⁷⁵ In addition to demonstrating that Cather was engaged with the 'real issues' of her day, these critics also characterise her as a 'a cosmopolitan' author who 'call[ed] for diversity and pluralism' at a time when both were under threat due to Americanisation.⁷⁶ Developing these lines of argument, I will demonstrate in this thesis that recognising the challenge that Cather poses to the Siman Act in texts such as *One of Ours* reveals a complementary way in which her fiction engages with the key intellectual debates of the early twentieth-century; moreover, I will argue that it strengthens the image of her as an author committed to linguistic and cultural diversity.

Not all critics, however, agree that Cather was a pluralist. Most famously, Walter Benn Michaels argues that Cather's works express deep fears about the threat that immigration posed to American racial purity. For example, he proposes that one

⁷¹ Willa Cather, *Not Under Forty*, in *Stories, Poems, & Other Writings*, pp. 811-884 (p. 812).

⁷² Granville Hicks, 'The Case Against Willa Cather', *The English Journal*, 22.9 (1933) 703-10 (p. 708).

⁷³ Maxwell Geismar, *The Last of the Provincials: The American Novel 1915-1925* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1949), p. 186.

⁷⁴ Janis P. Stout, *Willa Cather: The Writer and her World* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), p. 152.

⁷⁵ Guy Reynolds, *Willa Cather in Context: Progress, Race, Empire* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), p. vi.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

of the ‘central concerns’ of Cather’s novel *The Professor’s House* (1925) is ‘who can [...] belong to the Professor’s family’ and, by extension, the United States.⁷⁷ Tom Outland, who imagines himself to be descended from Native Americans (a lineage which would make him a ‘pure’ American), can belong; in contrast, Jewish ‘Louie [Marsellus] can’t’.⁷⁸ For Michaels, the novel’s anxiety about keeping ‘strangers’ – particularly Jewish strangers – out of the family/nation echoes the reactionary ideology of the Johnson-Reed Act (1924), which transformed American citizenship ‘from a condition that could be achieved through one’s own actions (immigrating, becoming “civilised,” getting “naturalized”) to an identity that could better be understood as inherited’.⁷⁹ Consequently, for Michaels, Cather’s works do not belong to the discourse of pluralism, but to ‘the discourse of [...] nativist modernism’.⁸⁰

On the one hand, it is difficult to reconcile Cather’s apparently pluralist opposition to conservative language politics at the start of the twentieth century (expressed in her Omaha Fine Arts Society speech) with Michaels’s view that she was a nativist author deeply concerned with racial and cultural purity. There is, however, a significant caveat to Cather’s open-mindedness about American multilingualism which, arguably, situates her language politics halfway between pluralism and nativism. Although Cather supported foreign-language learning and demonstrated in her fiction that speaking foreign languages was compatible with an American identity, she firmly believed that immigrants who used their native languages in the United States must also learn to speak English fluently and with feeling.

This caveat is evident in the very language of Cather’s Omaha Fine Arts Society speech, in which she argued that it would not ‘make a boy or girl any less American to know one or two *other* languages [my emphasis]’. Significantly, Cather does not advocate unrestricted linguistic diversity here; rather, she advocates a controlled, contained American multilingualism whereby immigrants are permitted to speak ‘one or two other languages’ *in addition* to English. Consequently, whilst it is clear that Cather did not support the reactionary English-only movement which was gaining

⁷⁷ Walter Benn Michaels, ‘The Vanishing American’, *American Literary History*, 2.2 (1990), 220-41 (p. 223).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

⁸⁰ Walter Benn Michaels, *Our America: Nativism, Modernism, and Pluralism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 2.

traction at the start of the twentieth century, she did advocate a language politics which put English first.

In this respect, Cather's views on America's linguistic diversity tally with those of the philosopher Horace Kallen. In 1915, Kallen argued that, in their 'emotional and voluntary lives', immigrants should be permitted to use their 'own language'. However, he also believed that it was vital for immigrants to learn English, the 'common language of the commonwealth', so that they could fulfil 'the economic contacts of daily life in America'.⁸¹ Whilst this stance on language politics is more liberal than that of Dixon, Lane and Nebraska's lawmakers, it nonetheless promotes a hierarchical American multilingualism whereby some languages (English) are more equal than others (immigrants' native languages). As such, it shares the Siman Act's overall aim of preserving English's status as the dominant language of the United States.

Cather's Kallenesque belief that English should be the primary (but not the only) language of the United States is evident in her articles, essays and short stories. Before she became a full-time novelist in 1913, Cather worked as a journalist and editor for titles such as the *Nebraska State Journal*, *Home Monthly*, *Pittsburg Leader* and *McClure's Magazine*.⁸² Writing an article entitled 'A Factory for Making Americans' under one of her regular pseudonyms, Henry Nickelmann, in 1902, Cather praised a Pittsburgh school for 'correct[ing] Italian, Russian and Polish' children's 'habits of speech' in English so that they could live under 'one flag' and speak 'one language'.⁸³ Given that Cather created Henry Nickelmann in order to write about contemporary issues in the style of muckraking journalist Jacob Riis, it would be disingenuous to argue that the views she expressed in 'his' articles were an accurate reflection of her own. Nonetheless, Cather's emphasis on 'correcting' immigrant children's English and unifying their speech in this piece does make her sound surprisingly like Lane, Dixon or, indeed, Michaels' nativist Cather.

⁸¹ Horace Kallen, 'Democracy Versus the Melting Pot II: A Study of American Nationality', *Nation*, 100 (1915) 217–20 (p. 217).

⁸² Until 1914 the *Pittsburgh Leader* was published as the *Pittsburg Leader*, and Cather would have known it as such.

⁸³ Henry Nickelmann, 'A Factory for Making Americans: How Grant Street School Takes the Raw Material and Converts it into Practical Citizens', *Pittsburgh Gazette*, 7 June 1902, p. 9, in *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Archive* <<https://archives.post-gazette.com>> [accessed 21 August 2019].

This was not the only occasion when Cather expressed a belief that bilingual immigrants living in the United States should develop their English-language skills. In her essay ‘Miss Jewett’ (1936), for example, Cather, writing under her own name, criticised the emotionless way in which bilingual young men ‘of foreign descent’ living ‘in New York City’ spoke her native tongue:

To him, English is merely a means of making himself understood [...]. He may write and speak American English correctly, but only as an American may learn to speak French correctly. It is a surface speech: he clicks out the words as a bank clerk clicks out silver when you ask for change.⁸⁴

For Cather, bilingual immigrants’ tendency to speak English mechanically ‘like a bank clerk clicks out silver’ was problematic because it prevented them from developing a full appreciation of English-language literature. In ‘Miss Jewett’, Cather blames the fact that her mentor Sarah Orne Jewett’s New England stories have fallen out of fashion upon immigrant critics’ practical, transactional relationship with the English language: ‘For [them] the language has no emotional roots. How could [they] find the talk of the Maine country people [which Jewett was famous for recording] anything but “dialect”?’⁸⁵ Cather was not opposed to immigrant readers’ bilingualism; however, she was troubled the fact that it might lead them to show insufficient reverence for the English language and, therefore, preclude them from appreciating some of her favourite works of English-language literature (and, we might infer, her own English-language works of fiction).

In her short story ‘A Son of the Celestial’ (1893), Cather’s focal character, Ponter, a former professor of Sanskrit ‘in a western university’, expresses similar concerns.⁸⁶ Keen to share one of his favourite works of fiction with his friend Yung Le Ho, a Chinese immigrant living in San Francisco, Ponter reads ‘Hamlet aloud’:

When he finished, Yung stared at him with a troubled look and said in Chinese:

“Yes, it is a great book, but I do not understand. If I were a young man I might try, but it is different. We cut our trees into shape, we bind our women into shape, we make our books into shape by rule.

⁸⁴ Willa Cather, ‘Miss Jewett’, in *Stories, Poems, & Other Writings*, pp. 849-57 (pp. 856-57).

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 857.

⁸⁶ Willa Cather, ‘A Son of the Celestial’, *The Hesperian*, 15 January 1893, pp. 7-10 (p. 8), in *The Willa Cather Archive* <<https://cather.unl.edu/ss022.html>> [accessed 04/02/2018].

Your trees and women and books just grow, and yet they have shape. I do not understand. [...]"⁸⁷

For Yung, the differences between Chinese and Anglo-American language and culture mean that *Hamlet* simply does not appeal to his 'instinct and his training'.⁸⁸ Ponter, however, is 'disgusted' by his friend's lacklustre response to the play and unexpectedly launches into a discriminatory diatribe reminiscent of Cather's own attack on people of 'foreign descent' in 'Miss Jewett'. Focusing like Cather on immigrants' emotional responses to English literature (or lack thereof), Ponter describes the Chinese as 'a terrible people' without 'human feeling': 'you are as heartless [...] as your accursed stone gods'.⁸⁹

A 'linguistic scholar' himself, Ponter is by no means opposed to Yung's multilingualism; he admires the fact that native Chinese-speaker Yung knows 'more Sanskrit than Muller ever dreamed of knowing' and often goes to him for advice about that language, thus benefiting from his ability to cross the borders between Chinese, Sanskrit and English. Nonetheless, Ponter, much like Cather in 'Miss Jewett', is shaken by Yung's lack of 'feeling' for the English language and the way that this prevents him from appreciating a 'great' work of English literature.⁹⁰ Despite respecting Yung's multilingualism, then, Ponter somewhat unfairly expects him to revere English above all of the other languages that he speaks.

The English-first (although not English-only) politics at play here is reflected in Cather's depictions of bilingual immigrants throughout her oeuvre more widely. As a general rule, in order to thrive in Cather's texts, immigrant characters must be able to speak English alongside their native language. Characters who are unable to do so typically become embroiled in misunderstandings which lead to their mental and physical confinement. In 'The Clemency of the Court', for example, Serge's metaphorical confinement within the borders of his native language means that he cannot defend himself in court – something which leads to his physical incarceration in a prison cell.

Likewise, in *My Ántonia*, the Shimerdas – a family of Bohemian immigrants living in Nebraska – find themselves similarly confined within an enclosed physical

⁸⁷ 'A Son of the Celestial', p. 9.

⁸⁸ Ibid, pp. 8-9.

⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 9.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 7, p. 9.

space due to their inability to cross the border between their native language, Czech, and English. Lacking the English words to ‘make their most pressing wants known’ when they first arrive in the United States, the Shimerdas are forced to rely upon the services of Krajiek, an unscrupulous bilingual (and, therefore, more powerful) Bohemian immigrant who steals their savings whilst acting as their interpreter.⁹¹ Destitute and unable to ‘ask’ their Anglophone neighbours ‘for advice’ about housebuilding and farming, the Shimerdas have little choice but to spend their first winter in Nebraska living in a cramped earth dugout which resembles a ‘badger hole’ (p. 725). It is in order to help release his family from this miserable confinement that Mr. Shimerda begs Jim Burden to ‘Te-e-ach, te-e-ach my Ántonia’ English (p. 729).

Unable to speak English, Serge and the Shimerdas are trapped and powerless. In contrast, immigrant characters who can cross the border between their native language and English are amongst the most powerful in Cather’s fiction. For example, once she learns to traverse the border between Czech and English, Ántonia Shimerda’s linguistic power increases dramatically. As Judith Butler argues, when ‘Ántonia is first introduced’ in the novel she is ‘in a situation of linguistic exile’, much like Claude Wheeler is in France.⁹² ‘Fairly blazing with things she [can]not say’ (a description which recalls the way that Claude turns red when he cannot find the French words he needs), Ántonia is utterly reliant upon Jim Burden to ‘g[i]ve her the word[s]’ she requires to express herself: “‘Name? What name?’” (pp. 728-29).

Using the verb ‘gave’ to describe his teaching methods (‘I gave her the word’), Jim styles himself as Ántonia’s linguistic benefactor: he offers her English words which she gratefully accepts (p. 729). However, Ántonia’s response to Jim’s tuition suggests that she is uncomfortable with her role as beneficiary. Offering Jim a ‘chased silver ring’ in exchange for the words ‘Blue sky, blue eyes’ during their first English lesson, Ántonia attempts to redress the balance of power between them by transforming his linguistic gift into a transaction (p. 729). However, by refusing to take the ring and complete the transaction, Jim retains the power to decide when she receives new vocabulary.

⁹¹ Willa Cather, *My Ántonia*, in *Early Novels*, pp. 707-938 (p. 725). Further references given in the text.

⁹² Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 149.

Nonetheless, Ántonia ‘soon’ learns enough English to ‘make’ her opinions ‘known’ without Jim’s assistance and, as she becomes increasingly bilingual, the balance of linguistic power shifts in her favour (p. 731). Indeed, when Jim and Ántonia overhear Pavel telling the harrowing story of the wolves and the wedding party in his native Ukrainian dialect, their roles as linguistic benefactor and beneficiary are inverted. Whilst Ántonia understands the story immediately, Jim has no idea what Pavel is saying. Consequently, as Pavel’s story unfolds, Ántonia is able to tease Jim with hints about its horrifying plot: “‘It’s wolves, Jimmy,” Ántonia whispered’ (p. 747). Just as Jim drip-fed Ántonia new English words at the start of the novel, she makes him wait until they are riding home in the wagon before offering him a more detailed translation. Even then, Ántonia does not tell Jim everything at once: ‘What she did not tell me then, she told me later’ (p. 748). Utterly reliant upon Ántonia’s ability (and willingness) to cross the border between her native language and English in order to translate Pavel’s tale, Jim experiences the same feelings of linguistic powerlessness that she felt towards him during their initial English lessons.

The power shift that occurs between Jim and Ántonia’s first English lesson and this translation scene confirms two key facts about hierarchies of language in Cather’s fiction. Primarily, it confirms that – in accordance with Cather’s belief that English should be America’s primary language – monolingual English speakers (like the young Jim Burden) are more powerful than monolingual speakers of other languages (like Ántonia at the start of the novel). However, it also confirms that, in Cather’s America, characters who can speak ‘one or two other languages’ *in addition to English* (like bilingual Ántonia) are more linguistically powerful than their monolingual peers – even their monolingual Anglophone peers. In summary, whilst Cather’s texts put English first, they simultaneously challenge the belief that English should be the United States’ only language.

The Tension Between English and Other Languages in Cather’s Fiction

Critics have characterised Cather as ‘a person of dual and conflicting urges’.⁹³ Porter, for example, has argued that she was divided ‘between public and private concerns’ and between her desire to be a great artist as well as a commercially successful author.⁹⁴

⁹³ Stout, *The Writer and her World*, p. 10.

⁹⁴ Porter, p. 4.

His argument echoes Woodress's belief that Cather was 'pulled' between 'polarities' (for example, her conflicting affinities for New York and the Midwest) and Hermione Lee's similar assessment of Cather as an author:

pulled between the natural and the artificial, the native and the European. She is a democrat and an élitist. She relishes troll-like energy and primitivism as much as delicacy and culture.⁹⁵

For Lee, these conflicting urges are reflected in Cather's writing, which 'gets its energy from contraries'.⁹⁶ M. Catherine Downs agrees, suggesting that Cather created pseudonymous alter-egos such as Henry Nickelmänn during her career as a journalist in order to explore topics from opposing perspectives (something which may explain the surprisingly hard-line tone of her 'Factories for Making Americans' article).⁹⁷ Reynolds, meanwhile, identifies thematic 'contraries' in Cather's writing, characterising *The Professor's House* and *Death Comes for the Archbishop* as texts which attempt to 'harmonise conflicting aspects of America', for example 'business and art'.⁹⁸ Most recently, Julie Olin-Ammentorp has identified another 'contrary' in Cather's writing, arguing that her characters are 'pull[ed] between the desire to see the world and the need for a place that feels like home'.⁹⁹

Developing this line of argument, I will demonstrate in this thesis that Cather's 'English first, but not English-only' language politics is another, hitherto unexplored 'contrary' which energises her fiction. My aim is to analyse how the tension between Cather's desire to advocate linguistic diversity and her concurrent desire to hold it in check in order to preserve the dominant status of the English language in the United States shapes the subject matter, vocabulary, structure and grammar of her novels and short stories. Broadly, I will argue that, in Cather's fiction, the English language is a 'centripetal' force (to borrow Mikhail Bakhtin's terminology) which is used to frame,

⁹⁵ James Woodress, *Willa Cather: A Literary Life* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), p. 112; Hermione Lee, *Willa Cather: A Life Saved Up* (Virago: London, 1989), p. 16.

⁹⁶ Lee, p. 16.

⁹⁷ M. Catherine Downs, *Becoming Modern: Willa Cather's Journalism* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1999), p. 66.

⁹⁸ *Willa Cather in Context*, p. 124.

⁹⁹ Julie Olin-Ammentorp, *Edith Wharton, Willa Cather, and the Place of Culture* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019), p. 19.

contain and limit – yet also to showcase and celebrate – the ‘centrifugal’ force of American multilingualism and make it accessible to Anglophone readers.¹⁰⁰

In order to do so, I will explore four types of linguistic border crossing between English and other languages which underpin four different elements of the content, style and structure of Cather’s fiction. The term ‘linguistic border crossing’ is one that I have borrowed from the field of sociolinguistics. As Mario Saraceni notes, ‘Over the last decade sociolinguistics has seen a noticeable burst of academic activity around the topic of [...] “linguistic border crossings”’.¹⁰¹ In this field, a language border is, as Dagna Zinkhahn Rhobodes explains, ‘the dividing line’ or ‘structural border between two language systems’ which is ‘passed through by moving from one language to another’.¹⁰² In her work, Zinkhahn Rhobodes builds upon that of Greco, Renaud, Taquechel, Hinnenkamp, Meng, Rampton, Cunha and Gogolin, who also conceive of the process of moving between languages (or ‘leaving one language space for another’) as a ‘border-crossing’ or ‘border-jumping’ (‘Sprachgrenzen überspringen’, ‘Überschreiten von Sprachgrenzen’, ‘sprachliches Grenzgängertum’).¹⁰³ For these sociolinguists, this metaphor is useful because, whilst borders separate different places or languages, they can also be opened and passed. As Zinkhahn Rhobodes notes, it is the simultaneous divisiveness and ‘permeability of language borders’ which causes the ‘emergence of language mixing phenomena’ and ‘hybrid language forms’.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), p. 270.

¹⁰¹ Mario Saraceni, ‘World Englishes and Linguistic Border Crossings’, in *World Englishes: Rethinking Paradigms*, ed. by Ee Ling Low and Anne Pakir (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 114-31 (p. 114).

¹⁰² Dagna Zinkhahn Rhobodes, ‘The Permeability of Language Borders on the Example of German-Polish Language Mixing’, in *Linguistic Construction of Ethnic Borders*, ed. by Konstanze Jungbluth, Peter Rosenberg and Zinkhahn Rhobodes (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2015), pp. 229-49 (p. 230).

¹⁰³ Luca Greco, Patrick Renaud and Roxana Taquechel, ‘The Practical Processing of Plurilingualism as a Resource in Professional Activities’, in *Exploring the Dynamics of Multilingualism: The DYLAN Project*, ed. by Anne-Claude Berthoud, François Grin and Georges Lüdi (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2013), pp. 33-58 (p. 36); Volker Hinnenkamp and Katharina Meng, eds, *Sprachgrenzen überspringen. Sprachliche Hyvridität und polykulturelles Selbstverständnis* (Tübingen: Narr, 2005); Ben Rampton, *Crossing: Language and Ethnicity Among Adolescents* (London: Longman, 1995); Conceicao Cunha, *Über Grenzen sprechen. Mehrsprachigkeit in Europa und der Welt* (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 2012), p. 13; Ingrid Gogolin, ‘Sprachen rein halten – eine Obsession’, in *Über Mehrsprachigkeit*, ed. by Gogolin, Günther List and Sabine Graap (Tübingen: Stauffenburg-Verlag, 1998), pp. 71-96 (p. 75).

¹⁰⁴ Zinkhahn Rhobodes, pp. 229-30.

In this thesis, I will argue that Cather's prose is shaped by four language mixing phenomena which are, in turn, created by four different types of linguistic border crossings between English and her characters' native languages: namely, code-switching, Cather's use of untranslated foreign words within her predominantly English-language texts, translation and, finally, cross-linguistic influence. In the four chapters that follow, I will investigate how each of these four types of linguistic border crossing is shaped by the centripetal and centrifugal forces of the English language and linguistic diversity, how it is entwined with Cather's theories of art and how it reflects her engagement with the political and artistic moment in which she was writing. In doing so, I will demonstrate that Cather's prose, although predominantly written in English, is frequently a subtle hybrid of that language and elements of various other languages, including French, German, Italian, Spanish, Czech and Norwegian.

In Chapter One I will focus on linguistic border crossings as a subject of Cather's fiction, analysing how and to what literary effect she represents the instances when her bilingual characters code-switch between English and other languages. To do so, I will adopt a sociolinguistic approach to Cather's work, using theories of bilingual language choice to examine the relationship between (controlled) linguistic diversity and space in her fiction, as well as its political ramifications. By applying this sociolinguistic theory to Cather's work, I will not only explore new ground within Cather studies, I will also introduce her fiction into a larger, evolving conversation concerning the value of pursuing interdisciplinary connections between literature and sociolinguistics.

Shifting focus from the subject of Cather's works to their vocabulary, in Chapter Two I will investigate the connections between her technique of weaving foreign words into her predominantly English-language prose and her aesthetic theory of simplification. Considering how Cather balances the defamiliarising effect of these untranslated foreign words with efforts to make them accessible to Anglophone readers, I will argue that this second type of linguistic border crossing reveals an unexplored overlap between her writing and that of multilingual modernist authors, especially James Joyce.

In Chapter Three, I will analyse Cather's oft-overlooked translation work in order to reveal the surprising correspondences between her theory of translation and that of modernist author-translators like Ezra Pound. In doing so, I will extend my

exploration, begun in Chapter Two, of how the linguistic border crossings in Cather's fiction illuminate her complex relationship with literary modernism. I will propose that Cather's modernist theory of translation enabled her to create works of fiction which are palimpsests of interlingual, intralingual and intersemiotic (pseudo)translations. Moreover, I will investigate how the translational narrative structures of her works enable Cather to balance the centripetal and centrifugal forces of the English language and American multilingualism.

In Chapter Four, I will focus on the structure of Cather's sentences and use the sociolinguistic concept of cross-linguistic influence to explore how she infuses her English-language prose with grammatical elements borrowed from other languages. I will argue that, by transposing other languages' grammar and syntax onto English, Cather created a medium of expression which reflected both her pluralistic vision of the American idiom at the start of the twentieth century and the centripetal/centrifugal tension between the English language and American multilingualism which underpins her oeuvre more broadly. Finally, I will propose that this method of foreignising English from within represents a hitherto unexplored way in which her work can be compared to that of her great rival Ernest Hemingway, and to the experimental cross-linguistic practice of modernist authors more widely.

In each chapter, I will reflect on overarching questions of how Cather, who was by no means an expert linguist, represented the United States' linguistic diversity upon the pages of her English-language texts, as well as the demands that this makes of monolingual Anglophone readers. In order to do so, I will not only draw upon sociolinguistic models and translation theory, I will also read Cather's work in light of polylingual discourse critic Meir Sternberg's theory of 'translational mimesis'.¹⁰⁵ This theory, which I will explore in more detail in Chapters One, Two and Four, outlines a variety of techniques that authors may use to accessibly represent polylingual discourse within predominantly unilingual texts; as such, it offers a useful framework for understanding how Cather harmonises the centrifugal and centripetal forces of the English language and American multilingualism in her fiction.

Although Sternberg is a key figure in multilingual literary studies (his work has been used as a 'roadmap' by scholars of multilingual literature such as James Williams,

¹⁰⁵ Meir Sternberg, 'Polylingualism as Reality and Translation as Mimesis', *Poetics Today*, 2.4 (1981), 221-39.

Juliette Taylor-Batty and Anjali Pandey), his theory of ‘translational mimesis’ has never been applied to Cather’s fiction.¹⁰⁶ One reason for this is that multilingualism is a largely unexplored aspect of Cather’s writing. That is not to say that scholars have completely overlooked the interactions between English and other languages in Cather’s fiction; however, their investigations into this topic typically focus on thematic aspects of Cather’s engagement with foreign languages in individual texts rather than the overall picture. For example, critics discussing immigration in Cather’s fiction frequently note the connection between language and issues of assimilation in her early novels. Diane Prenatt and Hermione Lee, for example, argue that Cather uses translation and ‘struggles with language’ to explore ‘the social transplantation of *Ántonia*’s family’ in *My Ántonia*.¹⁰⁷ Arguing that translation is a recurring theme in Cather’s oeuvre, Reynolds notes that Cather’s sensitive depiction of ‘bilingual communities’ in *My Ántonia* is a ‘rebuff to [...] hard-line Americanisationists’ and their ‘rejection of foreign languages’ and cultural diversity.¹⁰⁸

Looking beyond the subject matter of Cather’s fiction to its construction, however, it is rare to find critics who explore the complex stylistic aspects of her attempts to represent polylingual communities on the pages of her predominantly-unilingual texts. Three Francophone critics, Stéphanie Durrans, Françoise Palteau-Papin and Marc Chénétier, have made some headway in this field, but only in relation to Cather’s use of French words and grammatical constructions in her later novels *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927) and *Shadows on the Rock* (1931).¹⁰⁹ In Chapters Two and Four of this thesis especially, I will use sociolinguistic theories of language choice and cross-linguistic influence to develop these critics’ observations, demonstrating that Cather’s use of foreign words and constructions extends to a broad range of languages, not just French, and, moreover, intersects with her theories of art.

¹⁰⁶ James Williams, ‘Polyglot Passages: Multilingualism and the Twentieth Century Novel’ (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Queen Mary, University of London, 2017), p. 21.

¹⁰⁷ Lee, p. 148; Diane Prenatt, ‘*Ántonia*’s Mother Tongue’, in *Something Complete and Great: The Centennial Study of My Ántonia*, pp. 63-78 (pp. 64-65).

¹⁰⁸ *Willa Cather in Context*, p. 81, p. 83.

¹⁰⁹ Stéphanie Durrans, *The Influence of French Culture on Willa Cather: Intertextual References and Resonances* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2007); Françoise Palteau-Papin, ‘The Hidden French in Willa Cather’s English’, *Cather Studies*, 4 (1999) <https://cather.unl.edu/cs004_palleau-papin.html> [accessed 01/05/2019]; Marc Chénétier, ‘Shadows of a Rock: Translating Willa Cather’, in *Cather Studies*, 8 (2010), in *The Willa Cather Archive* <https://cather.unl.edu/cs008_chenetier.html> [accessed 06/05/2019].

Whilst some critics have explored thematic connections between immigration and language in Cather's early novels and others have investigated the stylistic impact of French upon the prose of her later novels, only one critic, Li Zhu, has made the case that 'language contact is a unifying theme underlying all Cather's major works'.¹¹⁰ However, whilst Zhu acknowledges that 'Cather shows special interests in the multilingual phenomenon in the New World', the focus of her research extends to interactions between different 'social, regional and ethnic dialects' (for example, African American speech and Midwestern speech) in Cather's writing.¹¹¹ Like Zhu, I will argue that language contact shapes Cather's entire oeuvre; however, unlike her, I will focus entirely on how contact between different national languages – rather than different dialects – energises the style, structure and subject matter of Cather's fiction.¹¹²

In summary, by exploring how Cather uses the centripetal force of English to frame and contain but also to showcase the centrifugal force of linguistic diversity in texts ranging from her earliest short stories to her later novels, I will offer in this thesis the first dedicated, comprehensive (stylistic and thematic) evaluation of the impact of American multilingualism on her writing. Moreover, I will draw Cather for the first time into critical conversations about multilingual American literature. Since the late-1990s, critics such as Øverland, Marc Shell, Werner Sollors, Lawrence Rosenwald and Maria Lauret have called for a major 're-examination of American literature [...] in light of multilingualism'.¹¹³ Typically, this 're-examination' has focused on texts written either partly or wholly in languages other than English by bilingual immigrant, enslaved or colonised authors living in the United States.

Given that Cather was neither fully bilingual nor an immigrant, she has never been classified as a multilingual American author. In this thesis, I will propose that she is, nonetheless, a valid subject for multilingual literary criticism. Demonstrating the value of reading Cather's in light of sociolinguistic models and translation theory, I will suggest that the current re-examination of American literature in light of linguistic

¹¹⁰ Li Zhu, 'Willa Cather and the American Idiom' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Marquette University, 1998), p. ii.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid., pp. vi-vii.

¹¹³ Werner Sollors, 'Introduction: After the Culture Wars; or, From "English Only" to "English Plus"', in *Multilingual America: Transnationalism, Ethnicity and the Languages of American Literature*, ed. by Sollors, pp. 1-16 (p. 7).

diversity should be broadened to take into account more texts which seem, on first glance, to be unpromisingly monolingual but which are, in fact, built from layers of subtle linguistic border crossings.

In addition to beginning a new critical conversation about Cather's relationship to multilingual American literature, this thesis will also contribute to an existing critical discussion regarding Cather's relationship to literary modernism. As Stout notes in *Cather Among the Moderns* (2019), 'Cather's modernism or lack of it has been a far from unanimously agreed-on judgement' and continues to be the subject of critical debate.¹¹⁴ On the one hand, 'linking Cather to "the modern" or more narrowly to literary modernism still seems an eccentric proposition' to many critics.¹¹⁵ As Michael North summarises, Cather's fiction ostensibly epitomises 'the kind of writing that literary modernism notoriously sought to displace [...]: stylistically conventional, popular, nostalgic and regional at a time when writers like Eliot and Pound were demanding that literature be difficult, up-to-date, and international.'¹¹⁶

This critical view is compounded by the fact that Cather herself was very dismissive of modernist literature. As her friend Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant noted, 'nothing interested [Cather] less than what the French call *le mouvement* in poetry or novels' and she vehemently 'disliked the free-verse bunch from the Middle West'.¹¹⁷ She 'dismissed' the Imagists 'severally and en masse' and wondered: 'why was everybody reading' Freud?¹¹⁸ In 1920, Cather argued that the 'modern novelist' became 'ridiculous when he carrie[d] too far the process of chopping up his character on the Freudian psycho-analytical plan'.¹¹⁹

Despite her apparent resistance to literary modernism, however, critics are beginning to recognise that Cather 'tried and succeeded in her own quiet experiments at many of the techniques we now call modern'.¹²⁰ Stout, Sharon O'Brien and Phyllis

¹¹⁴ Janis P. Stout, *Cather Among the Moderns* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2019), p. 208.

¹¹⁵ Melissa Homestead and Guy Reynolds, 'Introduction', *Cather Studies*, 9 (2011) <http://cather.unl.edu/cs009_intro.html> [accessed 30/10/2016] (para. 1 of 21).

¹¹⁶ Michael North, *Reading 1922: A Return to the Scene of the Modern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 173.

¹¹⁷ Shepley Sergeant, p. 114, p. 133.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 166, p. 163.

¹¹⁹ 'Today's Novels Give Much Hope to Miss Cather', *New York World*, 21 May 1921, in Bohlke, pp. 57-58, (p. 58).

¹²⁰ Jo Ann Middleton, *Willa Cather's Modernism: A Study of Style and Technique* (Toronto: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990), p. 37.

Rose, for example, argue that Cather's work is shaped by a 'modernist urge to simplify' – something which I will discuss in relation to her use of foreign words in her fiction in Chapter Two.¹²¹ Stout also proposes that the 'breaks and discontinuities and reliance on silences' in Cather's fiction mean that it cannot be regarded 'as a belated survival' of the Victorian era.¹²²

Adopting a thematic rather than a stylistic approach to the problem, Richard Millington argues that Cather's modernism lies in 'the relation between the content of [her] fiction and the context of her society and culture'.¹²³ Stout agrees that Cather's modernism is apparent in the ways in which her writing intersects with 'the experiences that characterized modernity'.¹²⁴ For example, Stout finds Cather's modernism in her 'depictions of citydwelling' in works such as 'Paul's Case' (1905), in her re-examination of gender roles in *O Pioneers!* (the plot of which 'defies Victorian conventions for women') and in her response to one World War I in *One of Ours*.¹²⁵ I will argue in this thesis that Cather's modernism is also present in her tempered criticism of efforts to reduce the United States' growing multilingualism at the turn of the twentieth century.

The current critical consensus regarding Cather's modernism is that, whilst her 'way of "making it new"' was not the conspicuous, startling way of a Joyce or a Dos Passos', whilst her language was not 'as terse as Hemingway's' and whilst she was 'not so steeped in contemporary angst as Fitzgerald', there are, nonetheless, striking 'commonalities' between Cather's writing and that of her modernist peers.¹²⁶ Consequently, although she was never part of a modernist coterie, Cather is increasingly regarded as a 'transitional modernist' (Rose), a 'crypto-modernist' (Ledy), or a 'semidetached' modernist (Plotz) whose work hovers, as Morley notes, "'on the Divide'" – both stylistically and thematically – 'between the regional world

¹²¹ Phyllis Rose, 'The Case of Willa Cather', in *Modernism Re-Considered*, ed. by Robert Kiely (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 123-45 (p. 124); Sharon O' Brien, *Willa Cather: The Emerging Voice*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 218; Stout, *The Writer and her World*, p. 191.

¹²² *The Writer and her World*, p. 292.

¹²³ Richard Millington, 'Willa Cather's American Modernism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Willa Cather*, ed. by Marilee Lindemann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 51-65 (p. 52).

¹²⁴ *Cather Among the Moderns*, p. xii.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50, p. 66, p. 148.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

and the terrain of international modernity' and between late-Victorian and modern literary culture.¹²⁷

One significant critical approach that these critics have overlooked in this evolving investigation of Cather's modernism, however, is investigating her engagement with and representations of American multilingualism. As Daniel Katz argues, 'the last decade or so has seen a new emphasis on the importance of [...] multilingualism to modernism'.¹²⁸ Gayle Rogers agrees that literary modernism, particularly expatriate literary modernism, is characterised by 'multilingualism, foreign-language juxtapositions and translingual fusions'.¹²⁹ Likewise, Steven G. Yao quips that Ezra Pound's phrase 'make it new' 'seems in large measure to have meant "make it foreign"', whilst Taylor-Batty notes that modernist literature is 'marked' by an 'increase in multilingual literary experimentation'.¹³⁰

Katz, Yao and Rebecca Beasley, meanwhile, highlight 'the centrality of translation' to literary modernism, arguing that the 'practice of translation and theoretical reflection on it' was 'crucial' to the 'larger modernist project of cultural translation'.¹³¹ This is something that I will explore in Chapter Three in relation to Cather's translation work. Lastly, seeking connections between multilingual modernism and twentieth-century language politics, Miller argues that authors such as Gertrude Stein and John Dos Passos wrote 'highly stylised literary Englishes' which were infused with 'the presence of multiple languages' in order to challenge 'linguistic

¹²⁷ Rose, p. 124; Michael Leddy, "'Distant and Correct": The Double Life and *The Professor's House*', *Cather Studies*, 3 (1996) <https://cather.unl.edu/cs003_distant.html> [accessed 25/08/2016] (para. 3 of 25); John Plotz, 'Overtones and Empty Rooms: Willa Cather's Semidetached Modernism', *Novel*, 50.1 (2017) 56-76 (p. 61); Catherine Morley, *Modern American Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 114.

¹²⁸ Daniel Katz, *American Modernism's Expatriate Scene: The Labour of Translation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 2.

¹²⁹ Gayle Rogers, *Incomparable Empires: Modernism and the Translation of Spanish and American Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), p. 2.

¹³⁰ Steven G. Yao, *Translation and the Languages of Modernism: Gender, Politics, Language* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002), p. 6; Juliette Taylor-Batty, *Multilingualism in Modernist Fiction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2013), p. 4.

¹³¹ Daniel Katz, 'Translation and the American Modernist Novel', in *The Cambridge Companion to the American Modernist Novel*, ed. by Joshua L. Miller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 194-209 (p. 194); *American Modernism's Expatriate Scene*, p. 2; Rebecca Beasley, 'Modernism's Translations', in *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*, ed. by Mark Wollaeger and Matt Eatough (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 551-70.

standardization’ – a line of inquiry that I will investigate in relation to Cather’s cross-linguistic sentence structures in Chapter Four of this thesis.¹³²

By analysing the similarities between the subtle linguistic border crossings, translations, code-switches and verbal transpositions which underpin Cather’s quietly multilingual works and those which underpin more profoundly multilingual works by Joyce, Pound and Hemingway, I will open up a fresh line of inquiry in this thesis in support of the argument that she was a ‘transitional modernist’; moreover, I will make a case for her future inclusion in studies not only of multilingual American literature, but in studies of multilingual modernism. In this way, I will demonstrate that, despite her traditional, conventional, nostalgic image, Cather was an author more experimentally engaged (on both a thematic and a stylistic level) with the artistic and political moment in which she was writing than critics have previously imagined.

¹³² Miller, p. 23, p. 29.

CHAPTER ONE

‘She replied in English, as being somehow the right language for transacting business’: Who Speaks What Language to Whom, When and Where?

In 1965, the sociolinguist Joshua Fishman, who was studying patterns of bilingual speech, famously asked ‘Who speaks what language to whom and when?’ and concluded that, in ‘multilingual settings’, ‘habitual language choice is far from [...] a random matter of momentary inclination’.¹ Rather, a bilingual individual’s choice of language is, Fishman argued, shaped by a variety of factors including their interlocutor, situation and topic of conversation. Although Willa Cather’s fiction pre-dates Fishman’s study by more than twenty years, she tracks ‘who speaks what language to whom and when’ in her texts in the manner of a sociolinguist observing bilingual subjects.

In her short story ‘Neighbour Rosicky’ (1928), for example, Cather carefully records Mr. and Mrs. Rosicky’s switches between Czech, their native language, and English. At the start of the story, Mr. Rosicky addresses Doctor Ed in English: ‘I got a little asthma, maybe’.² Returning home after his appointment, Rosicky switches languages, asking his wife ‘in Czech if she [is] going to have any coffee’ (p. 595). Rather than replying in the same language, however, Mrs. Rosicky addresses her husband:

in English, as being somehow the right language for transacting business: “Now what did Doctor Ed say, Anton? You just tell me what.” (p. 595)

Later in the story, Mr. Rosicky joins his wife in speaking English when he tells his family about the ‘hard times’ that he endured in London. Although he finds it ‘bothersome’ to tell a long story in English (‘he nearly always talked to the boys in Czech’), Rosicky makes a special effort to do so because he wants his Anglophone daughter-in-law, Polly, to ‘hear this one’ (p. 610). In this chapter, I will argue that analysing Cather’s subtle running commentary on her bilingual characters’ language

¹ Joshua A. Fishman, ‘Who speaks what language to whom and when? (1965)’, in *The Bilingualism Reader*, ed. by Li Wei (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 82-98 (p. 82).

² Willa Cather, ‘Neighbour Rosicky’, in *Stories, Poems, & Other Writings*, ed. by Sharon O’Brien (New York: Library of America, 1992), pp. 587-618 (p. 587). Further references given in the text.

choices in light of sociolinguistic theory offers new insights into their complex emotions and motivations. I will also propose that Cather's proto-sociolinguistic commentary is political, demonstrating the psychological, cultural and artistic benefits of Americans being able to speak 'one or two other languages' in addition to English at a time when multilingualism was increasingly maligned as a threat to national unity.³

Using the sociolinguistic concepts of language choice and code-switching as a theoretical framework, I will argue that – in line with Fishman's conclusions – the moments when Cather's bilingual characters cross linguistic borders in their dialogue are 'far from [...] random'. However, given that Cather lived and wrote several decades before sociolinguists like Fishman first theorised language choice and code-switching, I will primarily investigate how she learned about the characteristics of bilingual speech. Examining evidence in her letters and essays, I will demonstrate that Cather possessed a sociolinguist's ear for bilingual speech and used it to make her characters' dialogue psychologically realistic. In doing so, I will connect Cather's fiction to an emerging area of interdisciplinary research which investigates the overlap between sociolinguistics and literature.

As sociolinguists Penelope Gardner-Chloros and Daniel Weston note, although the 'attention paid to spoken CS [code-switching]' and the factors influencing language choice in bilingual studies is 'long-standing', it is 'only recently' that scholars have begun to investigate literary representations of code-switching. They attribute this trend to the fact that 'sociolinguistic tradition [...] emphasize[s] the primacy of spoken language' whilst literary tradition focuses on 'monolingualism as the "norm"'.⁴ As a general rule, these ground-breaking investigations of code-switching in fiction tend to be written by sociolinguists rather than literary scholars and they tend to focus on the works of bilingual immigrant authors, particularly LatinX authors such as Junot Díaz and Gloria Anzaldúa. Typically, they examine 'the extent to which the models developed for spoken code-switching can be applied to writing', concentrating on the accuracy of authors' renditions of bilingual speech.⁵

³ 'State Laws are Cramping', *Lincoln Evening State Journal*, 31 October 1921, in *Willa Cather in Person: Interviews, Speeches, and Letters*, ed. by L. Brent Bohlke (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), pp. 147-48 (p. 148).

⁴ Penelope Gardner-Chloros and Daniel Weston, 'Code-switching and Multilingualism in Literature', *Language and Literature*, 24.3 (2015), 182-93 (p. 183, p. 187).

⁵ See, for example, Cecilia Montes-Alcalá, 'Code-Switching in US Latino Literature: The Role of Biculturalism', *Language and Literature*, 24.3 (2015), 264-81 (p. 274).

Whilst I am certainly interested in the extent to which Cather's literary representations of code-switching and language choice correspond with recognisable sociolinguistic models, I am also concerned with the literary effects that Cather – who was not a bilingual immigrant – created by tracking 'who speaks what language to whom and when' in her texts. In particular, I am interested in what J. M. Lipski has described as the 'vast amount of [...] psychological, and aesthetic information' that can be 'obtained from a careful consideration' of fictional representations of language choice and code-switching.⁶ Li Zhu has already observed that, in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927), bilingual characters' language choices are telling, revealing their desire to 'show off' or express their 'solidarity' with others.⁷ Using sociolinguistic theory to build upon these observations, I will analyse how Cather uses linguistic border crossings throughout her oeuvre to mark significant changes in characters' psychological or physical state. In doing so, I will argue that Cather not only accurately depicted the sociolinguistic phenomena of code-switching and language choice, she also exploited the expressive potential of these linguistic border crossings in order to illuminate her characters' inner lives.

Seeking further interdisciplinary connections between linguistics and Cather studies, I will also explore a topic of investigation which is common to both sociolinguists and Cather critics: place. Sociolinguists such as Fishman, Jan-Petter Blom, John J. Gumperz and François Grosjean have investigated the impact of place upon bilingual individuals' language choices; likewise, there is a large body of scholarship dedicated to representations of space and place in Cather's fiction. Linking these two fields of research, I will use the concepts of code-switching and language choice to explore the interface between linguistic and spatial borders in Cather's texts: who speaks what language to whom and *where* in Cather's fiction? I will argue that, by crossing the border between English and their native languages when they cross the threshold of their homes, Cather's bilingual immigrant characters create pockets of the Old World in the New: marginal linguistic spaces which benefit immigrant and American-born characters alike by helping to preserve valuable Old-World cultures in the New World. I will propose that Cather's focus on the benefits of these non-

⁶ J. M. Lipski, 'Spanish-English Language Switching in Speech and Literature: Theories and Models', *The Bilingual Review*, 9.3 (1982), 191-212 (p. 192).

⁷ Li Zhu, 'Willa Cather and the American Idiom' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Marquette University, 1998), pp. 155-56.

Anglophone spaces is a political comment on the advantages of American multilingualism.

However, I will also question whether Cather's specific celebration of contained, marginal *pockets* of Old-World languages reflects the tension (discussed in the Introduction to this thesis) between her desire to preserve the linguistic diversity introduced into the United States by immigrants and her desire to ensure that her native language, English, retained its position at the top of the hierarchy of languages spoken there. Examining Anglophone Jim Burden's reactions to bilingual *Ántonia* Shimerda's linguistic border crossings in two contrasting locations in *My Ántonia* (1918), I will suggest that language choice is not an entirely free choice in Cather's America. Indeed, whilst Cather's texts celebrate multilingualism as a valuable expressive and cultural resource, they always put English first.

Cather's Ear for Bilingual Speech

As sociolinguist Charlotte Hoffman explains, 'one way of looking at language in society is to see it in terms of making choices'.⁸ Anat Stavans agrees that bilingual and multilingual individuals are constantly [...] making conscious or unconscious choices about which of their 'available languages or language varieties' to use; meanwhile, Florian Coulmas concurs that 'speakers make choices from the variety of expressive means offered in their environment'.⁹

The factors affecting bilingual individuals' language choices are wide ranging and, as Grosjean notes, include the 'participants' of a particular conversation and their 'proficiency' in the available languages; the 'situation' in which a conversation takes place, including its 'setting' and 'degree of formality' or 'intimacy'; the 'topic' of conversation and, finally, the 'function' of the interaction taking place (examples of which include: creating 'social distance, excluding interlocutors and making commands').¹⁰ Focusing on the latter of these factors, function, René Appel and Pieter Muysken explain that:

⁸ Charlotte Hoffman, *An Introduction to Bilingualism* (New York: Longman, 1991), p. 175.

⁹ Anat Stavans and Charlotte Hoffmann, *Multilingualism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 267; Florian Coulmas, *Sociolinguistics: The Study of Speakers' Choices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 14.

¹⁰ François Grosjean, *Life with Two Languages: An Introduction to Bilingualism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 135-36.

different languages may fulfil different functions in the lives of bilingual speakers, and in bilingual conversations a choice for one particular language may signal the primary functions [for example, ‘directive’, ‘expressive’, ‘poetic’ and ‘making one’s feelings known’] appealed to by that language’.¹¹

As I will demonstrate in this chapter, in Cather’s fiction, linguistic border crossings typically signpost shifts to interactions which are expressive and directive.

If bilingual individuals change languages ‘in the course of the same conversation’, speech act or text, they are said to have ‘code-switched’.¹² In real life and in Cather’s texts, code-switching occurs at three levels: ‘word’ level, ‘sentence level’ and at ‘the level of blocks of speech’.¹³ In *The Song of the Lark* (1915), for example, Herr Wunsch code-switches from English to German at word level: “‘She was the most – [...] *künst-ler-isch!*’” (p. 363).¹⁴ In *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927), Doña Isabella code-switches between English and French at sentence level:

“[...] And I don’t care about the money. *Ah, mon père, je voudrais mieux être jeune et mendiante, que n’être que vieille et riche, certes, oui!*”¹⁵

In ‘Neighbour Rosicky’, Mr. Rosicky and his wife code-switch between Czech and English ‘at the level of blocks of speech’: when Mr. Rosicky asks his wife ‘*in Czech* if she wasn’t going to have any coffee’, she ‘replie[s] *in English* [...] “Now what did Doctor Ed say, Anton? [...]” [my emphasis]’ (p. 595).

As sociolinguist Colin Baker argues, ‘attitudes’ towards code-switching are frequently ‘negative’: ‘Some monolinguals [...] [believe] that it shows a communication deficit’ whilst ‘bilinguals themselves may [...] attribute it to laziness or sloppy language habits’.¹⁶ Angel Y. M. Lin and David C. C. Li concur that:

¹¹ René Appel and Pieter Muysken, *Language Contact and Bilingualism* (London: Edward Arnold, 1987), p. 30.

¹² Stavans and Hoffman, p. 175.

¹³ Colin Baker, *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* (Buffalo, NY: Multilingual Matters, 2011), p. 107.

¹⁴ Willa Cather, *The Song of the Lark*, in *Early Novels and Stories*, ed. by Sharon O’Brien (New York: Library of America, 1987), pp. 291-706 (p. 363). Further references given in the text.

¹⁵ Willa Cather, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, in *Later Novels*, ed. by Sharon O’Brien (New York: Library of America, 1990) pp. 273-460 (p. 393). Further references given in the text.

¹⁶ Baker, p. 106.

There continues to be a widespread popular belief [...] that code-switching is linguistically anomalous, or simply ‘bad’, as it reflects that speaker-writer’s inability to express themselves in one ‘pure’ language or another.¹⁷

Focusing on the ‘pejorative names’ given to the mixed languages created by code-switching, for example ‘Franglais’ and ‘Tex-Mex’, Coulmas agrees that ‘monolinguals have long had a very negative attitude toward code-switching’, especially at the start of the twentieth century when code-switching was seen in the United States as a form of resistance to Americanisation’s project of transforming multilingual immigrants into Anglophone Americans.¹⁸

In contrast, Cather’s attitude towards code-switching and the broader issue of language choice was one of tolerance and curiosity. She was intrigued by the triggers that prompt bilingual individuals to cross linguistic borders and she understood that, rather than being ‘bad’, the ability to voluntarily switch codes was a source of power. Cather recognised that (to borrow John C. Maher’s definition) code-switching was a ‘sophisticated linguistic tool’ revealing both the bilingual individual’s ‘heightened sensitivity to the surrounding linguistic environment and the potential of language for wider expression’.¹⁹ Indeed, as this chapter will demonstrate, characters’ choice of language in Cather’s fiction is often just as meaningful as the words they speak.

Nonetheless, language choice and code-switching are not terms that Cather, who died in 1947, would have recognised. Language choice was first theorised by sociolinguists in the late-1960s and early-1970s when Fishman proposed the concept of domain specific language choice (1965), Gillian Sankoff introduced the ‘decision tree’ model of language choice (1972) and Howard Giles developed his ‘international speech accommodation theory’ (1973).²⁰ Likewise, until sociolinguists Blom and Gumperz published their ground-breaking study of code-switching in a Norwegian fishing village, ‘Social Meaning in Linguistic Structure: Code-switching in Norway’

¹⁷ Angel Y. M. Lin and David C. C. Li, ‘Codeswitching’, in *The Routledge Handbook of Multilingualism*, ed. by Marilyn Martin-Jones, Adrian Blackledge and Angela Creese (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 470-81 (p. 470).

¹⁸ Coulmas, p. 146.

¹⁹ John C. Maher, *Multilingualism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 72.

²⁰ Fishman, ‘Who Speaks What Language to Whom and When?’; Gillian Sankoff, *Language Use in Multilingual Societies* (London: Penguin, 1972); Howard Giles, ‘Accent Mobility: A Model and Some Data’, *Anthropological Linguistics*, 15.2 (1973), 87-105.

(1972), code-switching ‘remained more or less “invisible” in research on bilingualism’.²¹ However, just as Cather believed that Tolstoy (1828-1910) – despite his unawareness of various psychological ‘isms’ – ‘knew as much about psychology’ as Freud (1856-1935), her writing indicates that she – despite her ignorance of modern sociolinguistic terminology – knew almost as much about code-switching triggers and the factors influencing bilingual language choice as these early theorists.²²

Cather’s interest in this subject may have been influenced by her friendships with the folklorist Louise Pound and the anthropologist Franz Boas, two people who had strong ‘connections to the emergent fields of linguistics and anthropology’ (indeed, Boas’s work on linguistics inspired that of Gumperz).²³ However, it is more likely that Cather’s interest in bilingual language choice stemmed from the fact that – although she did not come from a bilingual family background – she was surrounded from her earliest childhood by people who negotiated a repertoire of two or more languages.

Until she was nine years old Cather lived in Virginia and, writing to her friend Dorothy Canfield Fisher in 1940, she recalled how the African American ‘house servants’ employed by her family there:

spoke two languages: one with white people and one with their fellow negroes. But when they were very much excited or in sorrow they nearly always reverted to the cabin idiom.²⁴

Of course, the Cather family’s servants were not really speaking ‘two languages’ but two dialects of English. Nonetheless, the triggers which Cather identified as causing them to switch dialects correspond with two factors influencing language choice which have since been extensively theorised by sociolinguists. Primarily, Cather’s recollection that her family’s servants switched dialects in response to the identity of their interlocutor, speaking one language ‘with white people and one with their fellow

²¹ Penelope Gardner-Chloros, *Code-Switching* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 9; Jan-Petter Blom and John J. Gumperz, ‘Social Meaning in Linguistic Structure: Code-switching in Norway’, in *The Bilingualism Reader*, pp. 101-25.

²² Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, *Willa Cather: A Memoir* (New York: J. P. Lippincott, 1953), p. 163.

²³ As Eric Aronoff notes ‘Janis Stout has unearthed letters indicating that Cather knew Boas and his wife’. See Eric Aronoff, *Composing Cultures: Modernism, American Literary Studies, and the Problem of Culture* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013), p. 72.

²⁴ Willa Cather, ‘To Dorothy Canfield Fisher, October 14, 1940’, in *The Selected Letters of Willa Cather*, ed. by Andrew Jewell and Janis Stout (New York: Vintage, 2014), pp. 592-93 (p. 593).

negroes', is consistent with the sociolinguistic distinction between 'we-code' and 'they-code' languages first proposed by Gumperz in 1982. As Kristine Horner and Jean Jacques Weber explain, a 'we-code' language is a 'societal language used at home and among peers' whilst a 'they-code' language is 'a societal majority language used in talk with outsiders'.²⁵ Although Cather's letter predates this terminology, she recognised that her family's servants used a formal 'they-code' version of English when talking to their employers (her family) and their own in-group dialect – 'the cabin idiom' – when talking to each other.

This pattern of linguistic behaviour also corresponds with Giles's 'communication accommodation theory' (1973).²⁶ As Peter Garrett explains:

The basic notions of communication accommodation theory [...] are 'convergence' and 'divergence'. [...] Convergence refers to a strategy of reducing dissimilarities in the communication features used with communication partners, and divergence refers to a strategy of accentuating differences. [...] These strategies can involve a wide range of features, from the language that is used, to phonological variants, accentedness, speech rate [...].²⁷

The pattern of language choice that Cather describes in her letter to Fisher exemplifies the principle of 'convergence': her family's servants matched their dialect to that of their 'communication partners' (speaking one language 'with white people and one with their fellow negroes') in a bid to minimise the linguistic differences between them and thus 'gain' their 'social approval'.²⁸

Cather's secondary observation – that her family's servants also dialect/code-switched when they were 'very much excited or in sorrow' – corresponds with another sociolinguistic theory of bilingual language choice outlined by Simon N. Herman:

²⁵ Kristine Horner and Jean-Jacques Weber, *Introducing Multilingualism: A Social Approach*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2018), p. 111.

²⁶ Giles, pp. 87-105.

²⁷ Peter Garrett, *Attitudes to Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp.105-06.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 107. Cather, too, exhibited this linguistic behaviour, switching dialects in order to win 'social approval'. According to her biographer, partner and editor, Edith Lewis, when Cather 'began for the first time to go to school' in Red Cloud, Nebraska circa 1885 she realised 'at once' that her speech was different from that of the other children due to 'her slight Southern accent' (a souvenir of her Virginian origins). In a bid to win her classmates' friendship, Cather 'hastened' to 'get rid' of her accent and make her speech converge with theirs. See Edith Lewis, *Willa Cather Living: A Personal Record* (New York: Knopf, 2000), p. 18.

When the state of the person is one of extreme fatigue or excessive excitement, or in cases of severe frustration [...] they [...] revert to the language most familiar to them.²⁹

Aneta Pavlenko concurs that bilingual individuals tend to ‘favor’ their native language ‘as the language of emotional expression’.³⁰ Jean-Marc Dewaele agrees that, when bilingual people experience a ‘strong emotion’ or feel threatened or insecure they typically code-switch from ‘LX [one of their acquired languages] to [...] L1 [their native language]’.³¹ There are two reasons for this. Primarily, when bilingual people experience a strong emotion, the ‘activation/inhibition of certain languages is no longer under strict control, and unplanned CS [code-switching] happens’. Secondly, code-switching to their native language allows bilingual people to ‘verbalise’ their emotions more rapidly because they do not have to ‘steer’ them ‘through the bottleneck of [their] [second] language’, which is typically ‘weaker’.³² Although Cather did not know this theory, she had first-hand experience of the linguistic phenomenon it describes thanks to her childhood in Virginia.

When her family moved from Virginia to Webster County, Nebraska in 1883 (first to Catherton and then to the town of Red Cloud one year later), Cather discovered a whole new community of code-switching individuals to observe. However, rather than switching between dialects of English as her family’s servants had done in Virginia, Cather’s immigrant neighbours in Nebraska code-switched between their native European languages and English. In Catherton, for example, Cather’s neighbours, the Lambrechts, spoke German and English; in Red Cloud, Cather’s neighbours, the Wieners, code-switched between English, French and German. It is tempting to imagine that, just as Virginian narrator Jim Burden ‘prick[s] up [his] ears’ when he steps off the train in Black Hawk, Nebraska and hears the Shimerdas speaking Czech in *My Ántonia* (‘it was positively the first time I had ever heard a foreign tongue’), Cather pricked up her own ears when she heard her immigrant neighbours

²⁹ Simon N. Herman, ‘Explorations in the Social Psychology of Language Choice’, *Human Relations*, 14.2 (1961), 149-64 (p. 157). Further references given in the text.

³⁰ Aneta Pavlenko, *Emotions and Multilingualism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 141.

³¹ Jean-Marc Dewaele, *Emotions in Multiple Languages* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2010), p. 214.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 213.

speaking their native tongues.³³ Certainly, whenever Cather encountered bilingual individuals she studied their linguistic behaviour very closely.

For example, when Cather met Gustave Flaubert's multilingual niece Madame Caroline Franklin-Grout in Aix-les-Bains in 1930 – an encounter which she described in her essay 'A Chance Meeting' (1936) – she noted that, although Franklin-Grout typically spoke excellent English, whenever she was 'tired, or deeply moved [she] usually spoke French'.³⁴ The pattern of language choice that Cather identifies in this anecdote echoes that exhibited by her family's servants in Virginia, who also switched languages in response to emotional stimuli. Moreover, it pre-emptively upholds Herman's theory that 'extreme fatigue' causes bilingual individuals to revert to their most 'familiar tongue' (p. 156).

Cather's insightful commentary on her family's servants' and Madame Franklin-Grout's language choices is testament to her keen ear for patterns of speech. Interviews and letters reveal that she was acutely aware of this talent and its value to her as a writer. Speaking to the *Lincoln Daily Star* in 1915, for example, Cather remarked that:

No one without a good ear can write good fiction. [...] It is essential to good writing to be sensitive to the beauty of language and speech, and to be able to catch the tone, phrase, length of syllables, enunciation, etc., of all persons that cross a writer's path.³⁵

Writing to her brother Roscoe in 1940, Cather claimed that her 'brain [was] like a phonograph record' on which she stored examples of people's speech.³⁶ It was the sensitivity of Cather's ear which meant that, even though she lived and wrote several decades before sociolinguists began to theorise language choice and code-switching, she was able to develop a secure understanding of 'who speaks what language to whom and when'.

³³ Willa Cather, *My Ántonia*, in *Early Novels*, pp. 707-938 (p. 716). Further references given in the text.

³⁴ Willa Cather, 'A Chance Meeting', in *Stories, Poems, & Other Writings*, pp. 815-33 (p. 827). Further references given in the text.

³⁵ Willa Cather, quoted in Ethel M. Hockett, 'The Vision of a Successful Fiction Writer', *Lincoln Daily Star*, 24 October 1915, in Bohlke, pp. 12-16 (p. 14).

³⁶ Willa Cather, 'To Roscoe Cather, August 20 [1940]', in *Letters*, pp. 587-88 (p. 587).

‘From that moment on, he spoke only French to those about him’: Language Choice and Code-Switching

When writing her novels and short stories, Cather drew upon her proto-sociolinguistic observations of her acquaintances’ speech and used them to make her bilingual characters’ dialogue psychologically realistic; as such, analysing the instances when her characters cross linguistic borders in light of sociolinguistic theory offers valuable insights into their emotional and physical state, as well as their social motivations. In order to analyse Cather’s fictional representations of code-switching and language choice, however, it is first necessary to pinpoint when and where these bilingual phenomena occur in her texts.

To denote her bilingual characters’ code-switches, Cather used two of the methods of representing multilingual dialogue outlined by Meir Sternberg in his essay ‘Polylingualism as Reality and Translation as Mimesis’ (1981): ‘vehicular matching’ and ‘explicit attribution’. Primarily, ‘vehicular matching’ is a technique for representing polylingual discourse which requires authors to match their language to that of their characters.³⁷ Cather uses this technique in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* when recording Doña Isabella’s code-switches from English to French: “‘I don’t care about the money. *Ah, mon père, je voudrais [...]*” (p. 393). Here, Cather writes the English portions of Isabella’s dialogue in English, the French portions in French and code-switches in time with her character.

Typically, Cather used vehicular matching to denote instances when her characters’ make brief switches into other languages. There were two reasons for this. Primarily, although Cather was keen to expose her Anglophone readers to elements of foreign-languages (see Chapter Two), she did not want to confuse them. Writing to Dorothy Canfield Fisher in 1922, for example, Cather explained that she had purposely restricted the number of French words she used to represent characters’ French dialogue in *One of Ours* (1922) because she was knew that ‘there [was] not one french dictionary [sic]’ in her home town of Red Cloud to help readers to interpret them.³⁸ Secondly, Cather’s use of vehicular matching was restricted by her own limited linguistic

³⁷ Meir Sternberg, ‘Polylingualism as Reality and Translation as Mimesis’, *Poetics Today*, 2.4 (1981), 221-39 (p. 223).

³⁸ Willa Cather, ‘To Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Friday [probably April 7, 1922]’, in *Letters*, pp. 317-19 (p. 317).

capabilities; indeed, most of the instances of vehicular matching in Cather's works denote code-switches into French and German, two of the languages which she had studied at university and felt confident writing. When her characters switch from English to languages which she had not studied (for example, Swedish, Czech and Spanish), Cather typically used a second representational technique which corresponds with a form of 'translational mimesis' which Sternberg calls 'explicit attribution'.

As Sternberg explains, the term 'translational mimesis' signifies any method that authors use to represent one language by means of another.³⁹ In Cather's case, this meant using English to represent her characters' polylingual dialogue. 'Explicit attribution', Sternberg clarifies, is a specific type of 'translational mimesis' which involves an author making 'a direct statement [...] concerning the language [...] in which the reported speech was originally made'.⁴⁰ Cather uses this technique in 'Neighbour Rosicky' when she states that 'Rosicky asked [his wife] *in Czech* if she wasn't going to have any coffee [my emphasis]' (p. 595). Although Cather directly states that Rosicky is speaking Czech, she indirectly reports his speech in English. In doing so, she circumvents the problem of having to write Rosicky's words in their 'original' language and makes his speech instantly comprehensible to Anglophone readers.

As a method of representing polylingual discourse, explicit attribution epitomises Cather's 'English first but not English-only' language politics. As discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, Cather on the one hand criticised measures designed to 'do away' with the United States' linguistic diversity at the start of the twentieth century, for example Nebraska's Siman Act.⁴¹ On the other hand, she believed that immigrants to the United States must learn to speak English fluently and that English's status as the country's primary language should be preserved. Enabling Cather to represent multilingualism via the medium of her native tongue, explicit attribution was a technique which allowed her to put the English language first in her fiction, even as she acknowledged that it was not the only language spoken in the United States.

³⁹ Sternberg, p. 225.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 231.

⁴¹ Willa Cather, 'Nebraska: The End of the First Cycle', in *Roundup: A Nebraska Reader*, ed. by Virginia Faulkner (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1957), pp. 1-8 (p. 4).

The first way in which Cather deployed vehicular matching and explicit attribution in her writing was to chart code-switches precipitated by fluctuations in her characters' emotional state. Like her family's house servants, Cather's bilingual characters instinctively revert to their native language when they are 'in sorrow'. For example, the heart-rending realisation that the man she loves is, in fact, in love with her maid in the short story 'A Singer's Romance' (1900) prompts Cather's protagonist Selma Schumann to abandon English in order to 'rail[...] at Fortune in deep German polysyllables'.⁴² Selma's abrupt switch from English to her native German (which Cather represents using explicit attribution) upholds Dewaele's theory that, when bilingual people experience a strong emotion, the 'activation/inhibition of certain languages is no longer under strict control, and unplanned CS [code-switching] happens' (Dewaele, p. 214). Combined with Cather's use of the violent verb 'railed', Selma's abrupt linguistic border crossing highlights the intensity of her heartbreak and her subsequent loss of emotional (and, by extension, linguistic) control.

Likewise, in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, Doña Isabella's distress upon realising that she must reveal her true age in order to inherit her husband's fortune causes her to involuntarily switch from English to French:

“[...] And I don't care about the money. *Ah, mon père, je voudrais mieux être jeune et mendiant, que n'être que vieille et riche, certes, oui!*” (p. 393)

However, not only is Isabella's code-switch symptomatic of her feelings of humiliation, it also has a secondary function of enabling her to prolong the mystery surrounding her true age. Isabella's interlocutors in this scene, Bishops Latour and Vaillant, are the only other French speakers in Santa Fé. Consequently, by discussing her secret – namely, her wish to maintain the illusion that she is young rather than admit to her true age in order to inherit her husband's riches – in her confessors' language rather than English, Isabella ensures that it remains shrouded in a layer of linguistic secrecy. Indeed, if Cather's readers do not know French, they, too, are temporarily excluded from the truth of the matter.

In addition to underscoring moments of sadness and humiliation, linguistic border crossings also emphasise moments of happiness in Cather's fiction. For

⁴² Willa Cather, 'A Singer's Romance', *The Library*, 28 July 1900, pp. 15-16 (p. 16), in *The Willa Cather Archive* <<https://cather.unl.edu/ss041.html>> [accessed 14/01/18].

example, just as ‘excitement’ prompted the Cather family’s servants to switch dialects, Ántonia’s excitement as she prepares to marry Larry Donovan in *My Ántonia* causes her to involuntarily break out into ‘queer Bohemian songs’ (p. 901). Likewise, when Alexandra Bergson decides to remain on the Nebraska Divide in *O Pioneers!* (1913) and expand her family’s farm, she spontaneously sings ‘an old Swedish hymn’, prompting Emil to ‘wonder [...] why his sister look[s] so happy’.⁴³

After years of struggle toiling for the Harlings and for her own family, Ántonia believes that beginning a new life in the city with Larry will enable her to reclaim some of the happiness that she left behind in Bohemia. Similarly, after watching her father working fruitlessly on his farmstead for eleven years, Alexandra believes that the risk he took in emigrating from Sweden to America is about to pay off. By switching to their Old-World languages as these important changes occur in their New-World lives, Alexandra and Ántonia anticipate corresponding switches in their fortunes. Weaving a linguistic thread between their European past, their American present and their hopes of a brighter future, Alexandra and Ántonia’s language choices are not only psychologically realistic, they are also highly symbolic.

As well as foregrounding changes in their emotional state, involuntary linguistic border crossings also signpost significant changes in Cather’s characters’ physical wellbeing. For example, as in the case of Madame Franklin-Grout, unplanned code-switches can indicate that characters are exhausted; Cather frequently uses this bilingual phenomenon as a device to foreshadow characters’ deaths. In Cather’s short story ‘Behind the Singer Tower’ (1912), for instance, Italian labourer Caesarino’s code-switch from English to his native Italian when he is crushed on a New York City building site gives readers their first indication that he is dying. As his screams fade to whispers and he switches to Italian, it is clear that Caesarino’s strength is failing and that his wounds are making it impossible for him to maintain the conscious effort required to address Fred Hallet (the focal character) in English:

⁴³ Willa Cather, *O Pioneers!*, in *Early Novels*, pp. 133-290 (p. 170). Further references given in the text.

“Curs-a da hole, curs-a da hole, curs-a da build!” he screamed [...] He looked at me – “*Buono soldato*,” he whispered, “*ma, perche?*” Then the haemorrhage from his mouth shut him off, and he began to choke.⁴⁴

Caesarino’s final code-switch from English to Italian is especially poignant because it echoes the emotionally-triggered code-switches he makes earlier in the text whilst excitedly explaining to Hallet that he has saved enough money to visit his mother in Ischia:

His mother, from the *piccola casa* on the cliff, could see all the boats go by to Naples. [...] Possibly he would be able to see her from the steamer [...].⁴⁵

The parallelism between these sets of code-switches, one happy and one tragic, foregrounds the sad fact that this is a journey that Caesarino will never take; although he makes a final code-switch back to his native language, he will never see his native country again.

Using code-switching to presage characters’ deaths is a device that Cather successfully carried over from her early short stories to her later novels. For example, like Caesarino, Lieutenant Tannhauser’s transition from consciousness to unconsciousness and life to death in *One of Ours* is marked by a final switch from English to his native German: “‘Mein’ arme Mutter!” he whispered distinctly’.⁴⁶ Similarly, in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, readers intuit that Archbishop Latour’s death is imminent when, sick with a cold, he suddenly relaxes the ‘rule’ that ‘all conversation in his house should take place in Spanish and English’ (the two most widely-spoken languages in New Mexico) and makes a final switch back to his native tongue: ‘From that moment on, he spoke only French to those about him’ (p. 440). With his cathedral built and the New Mexican diocese secure, Latour’s life’s work is complete; consequently, his return to French is not only a symptom of his sickness and exhaustion, it represents his final withdrawal from public life into a private space of memory and reflection as he prepares to die.

⁴⁴ Willa Cather, ‘Behind the Singer Tower’, *Collier’s*, 18 May 1912, pp. 16-17, p. 41 (p. 17), in *The Willa Cather Archive* < <https://cather.unl.edu/ss045.html> > [accessed 14/01/2018]. This short story prefigures Pietro di Donato’s novel *Christ in Concrete* (1939), set in New York City, in which an Italian-American labourer named Geremio is buried alive in concrete when the building he is working on collapses.

⁴⁵ ‘Behind the Singer Tower’, p. 17.

⁴⁶ Willa Cather, *One of Ours*, in *Early Novels*, pp. 939-1297 (p. 1172). Further references given in the text.

As the above examples demonstrate, the moments when Cather uses vehicular matching or explicit attribution to record her bilingual characters' involuntary code-switches are never arbitrary. Rather, they usually signal symbolic changes in characters' emotional or physical state and, for this reason, they are worthy of interdisciplinary sociolinguistic-literary analysis. Equally worthy of investigation are the instances when her characters switch languages voluntarily. As Appel argues, in addition to serving an 'expressive function' (that is, the expression of emotions), code-switching also 'serves a directive function', the purpose of which is usually to deliberately 'exclude certain persons present from a portion of the conversation'.⁴⁷ Baker concurs that bilingual individuals may purposely use their ability to choose which language they use to 'exclude' monolingual listeners:

when travelling on the metro [...], two people speaking English may switch to their minority language to talk about private matters, thus excluding others from their conversation. Bilingual parents may use one language together to exclude their monolingual children from a private discussion.⁴⁸

As Baker explains, although 'monolinguals' may 'feel threatened' and disempowered when bilingual people voluntarily speak an unfamiliar language in their presence, engendering these feelings 'is usually not the intention of the [bilingual] speakers'.⁴⁹ In Cather's texts, however, it often *is* bilingual characters' intention to assert their power over other characters by making exclusionary language choices.

At the end of *My Ántonia*, for example, Leo Shimerda stages a deliberate attempt to make Anglophone Jim Burden feel unwelcome by speaking Czech in his presence. Whilst Leo's siblings politely speak English as they give Jim a tour of the family's stores of spiced plums ('Mother uses them to make *kolaches*'), Leo rejects this convergence strategy and makes 'some scornful remark in Bohemian' in an attempt to exclude Jim from the conversation and demonstrate that he is not really part of the family (p. 918). Unfortunately for Leo, however, Jim guesses exactly what he said: "“You think I don't know what *kolaches* are, eh? You're mistaken young man. I've eaten your mother's *kolaches* long before that Easter day when you were born”" (p. 918). In this way, Jim proves that he *is* part of Ántonia's inner circle and Leo's

⁴⁷ Appel, p. 119.

⁴⁸ Baker, p. 110.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

linguistic power play falls flat. Ultimately, the only people who are excluded in this scene are readers who do not recognise the Czech word. Such readers may gather from the context in which the word is used that '*kolaches*' are a type of food made with spiced plums but, in the absence of any further information, they know little more than that.

Similarly, in *The Song of the Lark*, bilingual Fred Ottenburg deliberately uses his ability to switch between English and German in order to assert his status as Thea Kronborg's primary love interest. Although Fred loves Thea, he cannot marry her due to the fact that he already has a wife; nonetheless, he cleverly uses code-switching to engineer private conversations with her and exclude his main love rivals. Following Thea's first performance in *Lohengrin*, for example, Dr. Archie (her childhood friend), Landry (her accompanist) and Fred – all of whom adore Thea – visit her apartment in New York City. The third man to arrive, Fred is disappointed not to have caught Thea alone. However, by greeting Thea 'in German' – a language which he and Thea speak fluently, but which Dr. Archie and Landry do not understand – Fred makes a linguistic bid to monopolise Thea's attention (p. 656). When Thea replies to Fred in German (pointedly making her speech converge with Fred's and diverge from Dr. Archie and Landry's), the others understand that their presence is no longer required and they discreetly withdraw to 'the window'.

When tea arrives, Thea switches back from German to English in an attempt to re-integrate Dr. Archie and Landry into the conversation: "'Come, Mr. Ottenburg is calling on all of us. Here's the tea'". However, when the party subsequently returns to the music room, Fred seizes another opportunity to physically and linguistically isolate Thea from the rest of the group. Quickly switching from English to German, he is able to waylay Thea whilst she is 'standing in the doorway' and flirt with her 'furiously, for a full five minutes', despite the fact that Dr. Archie and Landry remain within earshot: 'she did not really try to pass, and her color deepened. Fred spoke in German and Archie caught from her an occasional *ja? So?*' (pp. 656-57). Like Leo's attempt to exclude Jim, this is a clear linguistic power play. Capitalising upon his bilingualism – and, more importantly, Dr. Archie and Landry's monolingualism – Fred deftly uses his language choices to manipulate a complex social situation to his own advantage.

Like Fred, Lars Ebbeling – a bilingual ship's engineer with a 'roving eye' in Cather's short story 'On the Gulls' Road' (1908) – also uses his ability to cross

linguistic borders in order to surreptitiously flirt in public places.⁵⁰ Keenly aware that his wife (who is travelling on board with him) cannot speak English, Lars deliberately switches from their 'Scandinavian tongue' to English in order to heartlessly flirt with other passengers in her presence:

He hurried down the deck, taking stock of the passengers as he went, and stopped before a thin girl with frizzed hair and a lace coat, asking her a facetious question in thick English.⁵¹

Given that Fred's first wife is a cruel woman full of 'restless spite' and that he clearly loves Thea, readers can sympathise with his creative use of linguistic border crossings in order to engineer opportunities to talk to her (p. 581). In contrast, Mrs. Ebbing is intelligent, beautiful and dying. Consequently, Lars's deliberate, deceptive and exclusionary use of English strikes readers as a callous abuse of the linguistic power that he holds over her.

Foregrounding subtle tensions inherent in characters' personal relationships – for example, Leo's unexpected jealousy of Jim's relationship with Antonia and Fred's wariness of Dr. Archie and Landry as love rivals – Cather's representations of the bilingual phenomena of code-switching and language choice are not only linguistically realistic, they are highly significant in terms of her character development and plots. Moreover, they are inherently political, representing a clear link between Cather's fiction and the moment in which it was written. As Cecelia Montes-Alcalá argues, authors who include representations of code-switching in their texts 'legitimize' a 'much-maligned' linguistic practice.⁵² By tracking her characters' linguistic border crossings and revealing them to be a source of great expressive power, Cather legitimised bilingualism in her fiction at a time when commentators such as Franklin K. Lane and Royal Dixon were maligning it in their bid to reduce the United States' linguistic diversity. Cather's sociolinguistic commentary is, therefore, politically subversive. This subversiveness is, however, moderated by the fact that, thanks to her use of techniques like explicit attribution, Cather legitimised the practice of crossing linguistic borders in texts which are predominantly written in English – a contradiction

⁵⁰ Willa Cather, 'On the Gulls' Road: The Ambassador's Story', *McClure's*, December 1908, pp. 145-52 (p. 150), in *The Willa Cather Archive* <<https://cather.unl.edu/ss007.html>> [accessed 19/08/2018].

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

⁵² Montes-Alcalá, p. 266.

in style and content which perfectly epitomises her ‘English first, but not English only’ language politics.

Linguistic and Spatial Borders in Cather’s Fiction

In ‘Christianity and Culture’ (1949), T. S. Eliot argued that ‘for the transmission of a culture – a peculiar way of thinking, feeling and behaving – and for its maintenance, there is no safeguard more reliable than a language’.⁵³ Sociolinguist Harold Schiffman concurs that ‘culture’ resides in the ‘consciousness (or memory, or shared knowledge, or imagination) of linguistic communities’.⁵⁴ In *Linguistic Justice for Europe and the World* (2011), Philippe van Parijs makes a similar case for the link between language and culture, arguing that ‘linguistic diversity is the firmest and increasingly the only serious protection of the diversity of cultures’ because the borders between different languages help to sustain ‘niches’ in which the cultures associated with those languages can flourish.⁵⁵ Citing the example of government-led efforts to sustain Welsh culture by promoting the use of the Welsh language, Don Cartwright agrees with van Parijs that ‘the expansion of domains’ in which a particular language is used can be a useful way of ‘fortifying’ the ‘cultural identity’ of the groups who speak that language.⁵⁶

In Cather’s fiction, immigrant characters’ ability to cross linguistic borders facilitates the creation of ‘niches’, ‘domains’ or pockets of their native Old-World culture in the New World. These pockets are marginal cultural and linguistic spaces which offer significant benefits to immigrant and American-born characters alike. In order to understand how these pockets are established (and also how language choice and code-switching contribute to their formation), it is first necessary to explore the correlation between linguistic and spatial borders in Cather’s fiction.

⁵³ T. S. Eliot, *Christianity and Culture: The Idea of a Christian Society and Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1977), p. 130.

⁵⁴ Harold Schiffman, ‘Language Policy and Linguistic Culture’, in *An Introduction to Language Policy*, ed. by Thomas Ricento (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 111-25 (p. 111).

⁵⁵ Philippe van Parijs, *Linguistic Justice for Europe and the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 192.

⁵⁶ Don Cartwright, ‘Geolinguistic Analysis in Language Policy’, in *An Introduction to Language Policy*, pp. 194-209 (p. 194).

As critics such as Diane D. Quantic, Melissa Ryan and Conrad Eugene Ostwalt Jr have noted, configurations of space are highly significant in Cather's texts.⁵⁷ Most recently, Julie Olin-Ammentorp has argued that Cather invokes the 'cultural meanings' of particular places (such as New York City, the West and France) in her texts in order to express her 'concerns about American culture' at the start of the twentieth century, for example 'the American overemphasis on sheer moneymaking and the concomitant undervaluing of beauty'.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, focusing on configurations of public and private space, Janis P. Stout, Ronna Privett, Cynthia K. Briggs, Guy Reynolds and others agree that, in order to thrive in Cather's texts, characters must create 'private space[s]', 'womblike spaces', 'turned-in spaces', places of 'sheltered privacy' and 'personal sanctuaries' in which their 'souls can thrive and dream'.⁵⁹ The most commonly-cited example of a Catherian sanctuary space is Thea Kronborg's attic bedroom in *The Song of the Lark*. Modelled upon Cather's own childhood bedroom in Red Cloud, this room offers Thea the privacy that she needs in order to become 'a different person' and an artist (p. 345).

Something that critics have not discussed, however, is the way that Cather's bilingual characters use code-switching and language choice to mark and reinforce the boundaries between public spaces and their private sanctuary spaces. The correlation

⁵⁷ Diane D. Quantic, 'The Open Window: Domestic Landscapes in Willa Cather's *My Ántonia* and *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*', *American Studies*, 43.2 (2002), 103-22; Melissa Ryan, 'The Enclosure of America: Civilization and Confinement in Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!*', *American Literature*, 75.2 (2003), 275-303; Conrad Eugene Ostwalt Jr, *After Eden: The Secularization of American Space in the Fiction of Willa Cather and Theodore Dreiser* (Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1990).

⁵⁸ Julie Olin-Ammentorp, *Edith Wharton, Willa Cather, and the Place of Culture* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019), p. 18.

⁵⁹ Janis P. Stout, *Willa Cather: The Writer and her World* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), pp. 10-13, p. 26; Ronna Privett, 'One Passion and Four Walls: Thea Kronborg's Artistic Development', *The Midwest Quarterly*, 54.2 (2013), 186-92 (p. 186); Cynthia K. Briggs, 'Insulated Isolation: Willa Cather's Room with a View', *Cather Studies*, 1 (1990) <http://cather.unl.edu/cs001_insulated.html> [accessed 18/11/2016] (para. 2 of 25); Guy J. Reynolds, 'Modernist Space: Willa Cather's Environmental Imagination in Context', *Cather Studies*, 5 (2003) <https://cather.unl.edu/cs005_reynolds.html> [accessed 17/09/2016] (para. 12 of 30). See also: Laura Winters, *Willa Cather: Landscape and Exile* (Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1993), p. 11; Ann Romines, *The Home Plot: Women, Writing and Domestic Ritual* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), p. 146; Judith Fryer, *Felicitous Space: The Imaginative Structures of Edith Wharton and Willa Cather* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986); Susan Rosowski, 'Writing Against Silences: Female Adolescent Development in the Novels of Willa Cather', *Studies in the Novel*, 21 (1989), 60-77 (p. 64); Danielle Russell, *Between the Angle and the Curve: Mapping Gender, Race, Space, and Identity in Willa Cather and Toni Morrison* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 109.

between place and language choice is, however, something that sociolinguists have theorised extensively. As Coulmas argues, for bilingual individuals, certain ‘locations [...] are associated with a certain language’.⁶⁰ Hoffman agrees that ‘there are certain areas where a particular language is more likely to be used than another, for example the home’.⁶¹ Meanwhile, geolinguists like Cartwright conduct ‘field research’ designed to ‘uncover and analyze places (domains) where a minority language is used or not used’.⁶²

Cather, too, understood that there was a strong relationship between place and language choice. Describing her Nebraskan childhood in her essay ‘Nebraska: The End of the First Cycle’ (1923), she wrote:

On Sunday we could drive to a Norwegian church and listen to a sermon in that language, or to a Danish or a Swedish church. We could go to the French Catholic settlement in the next county and hear a sermon in French, or into the Bohemian township and hear one in Czech [...].

Similarly, she remembered that:

In Wilber, in the old days, behind the big, friendly brick saloon [...] there was a [...] theatre where the boys and girls were trained to give the masterpieces of Czech drama in the Czech language.⁶³

These paragraphs demonstrate Cather’s awareness of the fact that, whilst the common language of Webster County was English, there were private, hidden spaces (such as community-specific churches and theatres tucked away ‘behind’ saloons) in which her immigrant neighbours continued to speak their Old-World languages. Moreover, these paragraphs reveal Cather’s understanding of the fact that speaking their native languages in these places helped her neighbours to establish and sustain ‘niches’ of their Old-World culture, literature and religion in the United States.

In Cather’s fiction, bilingual immigrant characters demonstrate a corresponding tendency to speak English in public and switch to their native languages when they cross the threshold of places which they consider to be private, especially their homes. In *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, for instance, Eusabio speaks English whilst working as Father Latour’s guide and Navajo when he is off-duty at home: ‘Father

⁶⁰ Coulmas, p. 13.

⁶¹ Hoffman, p. 178.

⁶² Cartwright, p. 194.

⁶³ ‘Nebraska: The End of the First Cycle’, p. 5.

Latour found Eusabio seated beside his doorway, singing in the Navajo language' (p. 418). As Zhu notes, Latour similarly speaks English and Spanish at work in the 'parish' and French only ever at 'home'.⁶⁴ Likewise, although Mr. and Mrs. Rosen speak English when they attend 'ice-cream socials' or visit the Templetons in 'Old Mrs. Harris' (1931), they instinctively revert to German when they enter their house: 'Mrs. Rosen came into the back parlour [...] She spoke to her husband rapidly in German'.⁶⁵ Ántonia's Czech-speaking 'little ones' do not even learn English until they venture out into the public sphere for the first time to go 'to school' (p. 916).

As a general rule, the physical thresholds between the spaces that Cather's bilingual characters regard as public and those which they regard as private correspond with the linguistic threshold which divides English and their native languages. So significant is this correlation between language and space that when Cather's bilingual immigrant characters speak English in the private space of their homes it typically heralds a moment of crisis. For example, when native Czech speaker Mrs. Rosicky speaks English in the private space of her kitchen in 'Neighbour Rosicky', readers immediately understand that something is amiss.

Returning home after his appointment with Doctor Ed, Mr. Rosicky switches from English (the language he used to address the doctor) to his native language, asking Mrs. Rosicky 'in Czech if she wasn't going to have any coffee' (p. 595). This linguistic border crossing marks his transition from public space (town and the doctor's surgery) to private space (the sanctuary of his home). Rather than greeting her husband in the same language, however, Mrs. Rosicky unexpectedly addresses him:

in English, as being somehow the right language for transacting business: "Now what did Doctor Ed say, Anton? You just tell me what."
(p. 595)

Speaking English rather than her native language in the private space of her kitchen and making her language diverge from (rather than converge with) that of her husband, Mrs. Rosicky's linguistic behaviour is – by both Catherian and sociolinguistic standard – highly unusual. Nonetheless, it can be explained by the 'domain specific' model of code-switching developed by sociolinguists during the 1960s and 1970s.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Zhu, p. 144.

⁶⁵ Willa Cather, 'Old Mrs. Harris', in *Stories, Poems, & Other Writings*, pp. 619-72 (p. 656).

⁶⁶ See G. Schmidt-Rohr, *Muttersprache* (Jena: Eugen Diedrichs, 1963); Blom and Gumperz, pp. 101-25; Fishman, pp. 82-98.

According to this model of code-switching – which, once again, post-dates Cather’s fiction – bilingual individuals use different languages in different conversational contexts or ‘domains’, some of which are public (for example, ‘the playground and street, the school [...], the church, literature, the press, the military, the courts’ and the ‘business’ or ‘work-sphere’) and some of which are private (for example, ‘the family’).⁶⁷ As Janet Holmes explains, a ‘domain’ consists of three components: a setting, an interlocutor and a topic of conversation. A ‘typical’ conversation in the family domain will ‘be located in the setting of the home; the typical participants will [...] be family members; and typical topics would be family activities’.⁶⁸ The typical language would be the family’s native language.

For the Rosickys, visiting the doctor falls under the conversational domain of ‘business’, which they associate with the public setting of town and the English language. In contrast, speaking to each other in their kitchen falls under the conversational domain of ‘family’ – a domain which they associate with the private space of their home and the Czech language. By choosing not to reciprocate her husband’s use of Czech when he returns home, Mrs. Rosicky prevents him from fully transitioning from the public conversational domain of business to the private conversational domain of family before he has revealed Doctor Ed’s diagnosis: “‘Well, what is the matter? And don’t try to put me off.’” (p. 595). In this way, Mrs. Rosicky uses her choice of language to signal her intention to discuss Mr. Rosicky’s health (a potentially emotive subject) frankly, as though they were in fact ‘transacting’ a ‘business’ matter.⁶⁹

When Mr. Rosicky admits that Doctor Ed’s diagnosis is bad (‘my heart ain’t so good like it used to be’), speaking English rather than Czech helps Mrs. Rosicky to cope with the worrying news in two ways (p. 595). Primarily, using a language which is more ‘congruent’ (to borrow Holmes’s term) with the practical domain of business

⁶⁷ Fishman, pp. 86-87.

⁶⁸ Janet Holmes, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, 4th edn (London: Routledge, 2013) pp. 21-22.

⁶⁹ Interestingly, in ‘Social Meaning in Linguistic Structure: Code-switching in Norway’ (1972), Blom and Gumperz echo Cather’s vocabulary when they describe how the residents of the fishing village that they studied ‘*transact[ed] their business*’ at the ‘community office’ using a high-prestige dialect of Norwegian before ‘turning to one of the clerks and asking him to step aside for a private chat’ in a lower-prestige, more colloquial dialect [my emphasis] (p. 115). Again, Cather prefigures the findings of these early code-switching theorists with an impressive degree of accuracy.

than the emotional domain of family helps Mrs. Rosicky to keep her feelings of distress in check and focus on practicalities: ‘Mary wanted to jump up, but she sat still. [...] “[...] Didn’t he give you no advice?”’ (p. 595).⁷⁰ Mary would neither ‘jump up’ nor speak Czech during a business transaction and she follows the same code of conduct (both linguistic and behavioural) in this ‘pretend’ business meeting – a strategy which helps her to get to the facts of the matter: “[...] Didn’t he give you no advice?”’.

Secondly, speaking English rather than Czech enables Mrs. Rosicky to linguistically quarantine the prospect of her husband’s impending heart failure. By keeping the bad news contained within the borders of the English language and the corresponding conversational domain of business, she prevents it from contaminating the Czech-language family domain and its associated setting – the happy, private space of her home – for just a little while longer. In this respect, her unusual language choice functions as a defensive strategy designed to ensure that her Czech-language home remains a place of refuge from the problems of the outside world. As long as Mrs. Rosicky speaks English when discussing it, Mr. Rosicky’s troubling diagnosis remains an external ‘business’ problem rather than an internal and potentially heart-breaking ‘family’ problem. The fact that readers are able to derive these insights into Mrs. Rosicky’s complex emotions and motivations from the simple fact that she speaks ‘in English’ in her kitchen once again highlights the value of reading Cather’s work in light of sociolinguistic theory.

Whilst Mrs. Rosicky uses her choice of language to temporarily transform a private, family space into a public business-like one, other characters in Cather’s oeuvre use code-switching to make the opposite transformation and convert a public space into a private one. For example, when Fred deliberately speaks German in order to monopolise Thea Kronborg’s attention in *The Song of the Lark*, he uses his choice of language to transform the semi-public, Anglophone space of Thea’s music room (a space for receiving visitors) into a private, German-language space in which they can talk to each other as if they were, in fact, alone.

In addition to using language to transform public spaces into private ones and vice versa, Cather’s bilingual immigrant characters also use their ability to choose which language they speak to create ‘niches’ or pockets of their Old-World culture in

⁷⁰ Holmes, p. 25.

the New World, just as her immigrant neighbours did when they established foreign-language theatres and churches in Nebraska. The process of using code-switching to establish pockets of Old-World language and culture in the New World is exemplified by the changes that occur in Latour and Vaillant's dining room when they permit themselves the rare treat of speaking French there on Christmas Day in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*.

Although the episcopal residence in Santa Fé is Bishop Latour's home, it is, first and foremost, the headquarters of the New Mexican diocese – a public space in which he 'entertain[s] [...] priest[s] from [...] distant parishes', trains missionaries and sends and receives reports about the state of the Catholic Church in New Mexico (p. 421). Out of courtesy to the members of his diocese, Latour decrees that the residence's official languages are English and Spanish. Until he realises that he is dying, he deliberately avoids speaking his native language, French, there, even to his fellow Frenchman, Father Vaillant:

For years they had made it a practice to speak English together except on very special occasions, and of late they conversed in Spanish, in which they both needed to gain fluency. (p. 300)

One of these 'very special occasions' is the night of Latour and Vaillant's first Christmas in Santa Fé when, having completed their public duties, they 'permit' themselves to speak 'their native tongue' over dinner – a language choice which Cather represents using vehicular matching: "*Monseigneur est servi! Alors, Jean, veux-tu apporter les bougies.*" (p. 300, p. 298).

The title of the chapter which describes this 'special occasion', 'The Bishop Chez Lui' ('The Bishop at Home'), is revealing (p. 295). Primarily Cather's own code-switch in-between the words 'Bishop' and 'Chez Lui' foreshadows Latour and Vaillant's corresponding switch from English to French. Secondly, the fact that Cather's code-switch is seemingly triggered by the words 'Chez Lui' (meaning 'at Home') foreshadows the ways in which the priests' linguistic border crossing changes the character of the residence's dining room, making it feel more private, homely and, indeed, more French than usual.

Firstly, Latour and Vaillant's switch from English to French makes the residence feel more intimate than usual because it ensures that, even if their English- and Spanish-speaking New Mexican acquaintances (aside, of course, from

Francophone Doña Isabella) joined them, they would be unable to participate in their conversation. Like Fred Ottenburg, Latour and Vaillant use their ability to choose which language they speak to exclude unwanted listeners and temporarily transform a public space into a private one.

Secondly, Latour and Vaillant's switch from English to French makes the residence feel homelier than usual because it marks a corresponding shift from the conversational domain of business to that of friendship. Whereas the residence's dining room is usually a setting in which Latour and Vaillant discuss their public duties in English or Spanish (the 'right language[s] for transacting business' in New Mexico, to borrow Mrs. Rosicky's phrase), it temporarily becomes a space in which they discuss domestic, personal and more trivial matters such as 'French wine' and the scarcity of 'salad' in Santa Fé in their native tongue (p. 299). Consequently, not only do Latour and Vaillant introduce a new language into the residence's dining room, they also temporarily link the space to a new topic of conversation and a new conversational domain, just as Mrs. Rosicky does when she discusses the business of her husband's diagnosis in English in the normally Czech-language family space of her kitchen.

In addition to transforming the dining room from a public, business-like space into an intimate, domestic one, Latour and Vaillant's code-switch also transforms the room from a New Mexican space into a French one. This transformation occurs partially due to the fact that speaking French prompts the men to allow themselves the further Christmas indulgence of unlocking and 'linger[ing] over' their memories of France – memories which they usually carefully suppress alongside their native tongue (p. 299, p. 301). Indeed, as the men speak French and reminisce, the New Mexican dining room seemingly dissolves into their shared recollection of their old French village: 'Their thoughts met in that tilted cobble street, winding down a hill, with the uneven garden walls and tall horse-chestnuts on either side' (p. 301). As their memories unfold, it becomes increasingly unclear whether the words 'Chez Lui' in the chapter title refer to the episcopal residence in Santa Fé or the 'old Latour' house in Auvergne (p. 301). For the duration of Latour and Vaillant's code-switch, the New World is overlaid with an image of the Old and the residence's dining room becomes a pocket (or 'niche') of French language, culture, food and memories in New Mexico.

For Eliot, van Parijs and Cartwright, the 'maintenance' of a particular culture depends upon the continued use of the language most closely associated with it;

likewise, the existence of Latour and Vaillant's pocket of France in New Mexico is contingent upon the duration of their linguistic border crossing from Spanish/English to French. When the men switch back to Spanish/English in order to grant 'an audience to [...] a native priest from the Indian Mission at Santa Clara' the following morning, they fold their memories of the Old World away with their native language (p. 303). As they do so, the niche of French culture that they created the night before disappears. No longer a pocket of the Old World in the New, the dining room morphs back into the English- and Spanish-language headquarters of the New Mexican diocese – a public, New Mexican space associated with the conversational domain of church business.

Latour and Vaillant are not the only characters in Cather's oeuvre who establish pockets or 'niches' of Old-World culture by speaking their native languages in the New World. For example, by crossing the border between English and Czech whenever they cross the threshold of their Nebraskan home, *Ántonia* and her husband Anton Cuzak create and maintain within its boundaries a pocket of Bohemian language and culture in which they read Bohemian papers, eat Bohemian '*kolaches*', play 'Bohemian airs' on the flute and, as Eliot suggested, transmit their Bohemian heritage to their children (p. 923). As Guy Reynolds observes, *Ántonia* 'preserves European culture at home and in her language' creating a 'domestic culture that is solidly European'.⁷¹

However, the fact that *Ántonia* and Anton *consistently* code-switch to their native language each time they enter their home (rather than speaking it only on 'very special occasions') means that the pocket of Old World in the New that they create there is more permanent and stable than the temporary pocket of the Auvergne created by the bishops in their New Mexican dining room. Something else which makes the Cuzaks' pocket of Bohemian language and culture especially stable is the fact that *Ántonia* uses landscaping to bind it (that is, a linguistic space created by consistent domain-specific code-switching) to the physical space of her Nebraskan home.

Whilst Eliot, van Parijs and Cartwright believe that language is essential for the safeguarding and maintenance of a particular culture, Cather scholar Ann Romines argues that, in Cather's texts, 'housekeeping [is] the medium in which a culture [is] preserved, whether in Mrs. Shimerda's feather beds, *Ántonia*'s *kolaches* or Mrs.

⁷¹ Guy Reynolds, *Willa Cather in Context: Progress, Race, Empire* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), p. 83.

Rosen's salad dressing'.⁷² Using a formidable combination of housekeeping *and* code-switching, Ántonia makes her pocket of Bohemian culture in Nebraska doubly secure.

At the centre of her Nebraskan garden, for example, Ántonia establishes a 'grape arbour, with seats built along the sides and a warped plank table' which is a facsimile of the garden with a 'green bench and a table under the bushes' that her father loved in Bohemia:

In summer [...] he used to sit there with his friend that played the trombone. When I was little I used to go down there to hear them talk – beautiful talk, like what I never hear in this country. (p. 919, p. 860)

By recreating this space in America and encouraging her American-born children to speak their grandfather's native language in it, Ántonia grafts the pocket of Bohemian culture that she sustains by consistently speaking Czech in the United States onto the Nebraskan landscape and, in doing so, cultivates a linguistic *and* physical environment which connects her Bohemian past to her American present.

Ántonia is not the only immigrant character in Cather's oeuvre who establishes a stable pocket of the Old World in the New in this way. In *The Song of the Lark*, Herr Wunsch's landlady, Mrs. Kohler, grafts the pocket of German culture which she safeguards by consistently speaking her native language in her Colorado home (a linguistic and cultural space) onto the landscape (a physical space) by carefully 'reproduc[ing]' in her garden 'a bit of her own village in the Rhine Valley' (p. 315, p. 313). Likewise, in *Shadows on the Rock* (1931), French-born apothecary Euclide Auclair and his daughter, Cécile, bind their pocket of Parisian-French language and culture (which Euclide reinforces each evening when he corrects Cécile's Parisian accent as she reads 'aloud [...] the fables of La Fontaine') to their Canadian environment by making the 'salon' of their home in Quebec 'very much like their old salon in Paris'.⁷³ Three enclosed, private physical spaces, Ántonia's arbour, Mrs. Kohler's garden (which is protected by a 'high tamarisk hedge') and the Auclairs' snug Canadian salon exist in a closely symbiotic relationship with the pockets of Old-World culture maintained within them with domain-specific code-switching.

⁷² Romines, p. 140.

⁷³ Willa Cather, *Shadows on the Rock*, in *Later Novels*, pp. 461-642 (p. 478, p. 474). Further references given in the text.

At the start of the twentieth century, the notion that immigrants like *Ántonia* might preserve their native languages in the United States and use them to establish unassimilated pockets of Old-World culture troubled advocates of hard-line Americanisation. Theodore Roosevelt, for example, worried that immigrants who spoke their native languages would never Americanise, causing the United States to become a ‘polyglot boarding house’ rather than a cohesive society.⁷⁴ In 1926, the psychologist Florence Goodenough argued that ‘The use of a foreign language in the home [was] one of the chief factors in producing mental retardation’ amongst the children of immigrants.⁷⁵ Cather, on the other hand, believed that, with their capacity to safeguard immigrants’ native cultures in the United States, pockets of the Old World in the New – and, by extension, the bilingualism which sustained them – offered psychological, cultural and intellectual benefits to immigrants and American-born citizens alike.

In order to understand the benefits that Cather’s characters derive from pockets of Old-World language and culture, it is helpful to consider them in light of Briggs, Stout and Danielle Russell’s observations about restorative physical (as opposed to linguistic) spaces in Cather’s fiction. As Briggs notes, the most invigorating physical spaces in Cather’s texts are those which offer characters a seemingly paradoxical combination of ‘insulated isolation’ and an ‘open and expansive view’.⁷⁶ Stout concurs that Cather’s characters thrive in ‘sheltered spaces [...] with large openings affording a visual sense of expansiveness’, whilst Russell agrees that ‘A key attribute of Cather’s sheltering spaces is the view they afford’.⁷⁷ For these critics, Professor St Peter’s attic study in *The Professor’s House* (1925) is an ideal sanctuary space because, although snug and private, it has a window which is ‘open to the blue air and memories of the Blue Mesa’ – a feature which creates the feeling of expansiveness that St Peter needs in order to write.⁷⁸ Likewise, Thea’s ‘open-windowed’ attic bedroom in *The Song of*

⁷⁴ Theodore Roosevelt, ‘To Richard Melancthon Hurd, January 3, 1919’, in *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt: The Days of Armageddon, 1909-1919*, ed. by Elting Elmore Morison, 8 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954), VIII, p. 1422.

⁷⁵ F. Goodenough, ‘Racial Differences in the Intelligence of Schoolchildren’, *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 9 (1926), 388-97 (p. 393).

⁷⁶ Briggs, para. 18 of 25.

⁷⁷ Stout, *Willa Cather: The Writer and her World*, pp. 10-11; Russell, p. 109.

⁷⁸ Briggs, para. 18 of 25.

the Lark insulates her from ‘the confusion of the Kronborg household’ whilst simultaneously offering her an expansive ‘view of the world’ which ‘feeds her spirit’.⁷⁹

Although they are linguistic and cultural spaces rather than physical spaces (although they are yoked to physical spaces with domain-specific code-switching and landscaping), the pockets of the Old World in the New created by Cather’s bilingual characters are similarly restorative. This is because they, too, provide their occupants with a seemingly paradoxical combination of insulation and expansiveness. On the one hand, pockets of the Old World in the New are insulating spaces because they offer their bilingual inhabitants psychological respite from the conscious effort of speaking an acquired language – a process which Mr. Rosicky for one describes as ‘bothersome’ (p. 610).

The psychological relief that bilingual immigrant characters experience when they switch from English to their native language in pockets of the Old World in the New is something that Cather illuminates by drawing comparisons between language and clothing.⁸⁰ As Mildred Bennett notes, Cather harboured ‘an intense dislike for the corseted discomfort of “civilised” apparel’ and in her texts she frequently used the physical discomfort of restrictive clothing as a metaphor for psychological discomfort, including that which is experienced by bilingual characters when they are unable to code-switch freely.⁸¹

In *O Pioneers!*, for example, Swedish immigrants Annie Bergson and her mother, Mrs. Lee, are banned from speaking their native language at home. This is because Annie’s husband, Lou Bergson, and his brother, Oscar, encourage the family to speak English at all times in a bid to keep up with the neighbours and please Oscar’s Missouri-born wife, who is ‘ashamed of marrying a foreigner’ (p. 186). ‘[A]fraid of being “caught”’ speaking Swedish, Annie devotes a huge amount of energy to ensuring that she does not accidentally code-switch. The self-discipline required to police her linguistic behaviour in this way is visibly manifested in Annie’s clothing. Trussed up with ‘rings and chains’, pricked by “beauty pins” and pinched by ‘tight’ shoes which

⁷⁹ Briggs, para. 11 of 25.

⁸⁰ For further discussion of the ‘connection between language and clothes’ in Cather’s fiction (especially in relation to ‘social identity’) see Elsa Nettels, *Language and Gender in American Fiction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), pp. 132-33.

⁸¹ Mildred Bennett, *The World of Willa Cather* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), p. 31.

‘give her an awkward walk’, Annie’s outfits prevent her from moving and behaving naturally; likewise, the pressure to avoid slipping into her native language prevents her from talking naturally. Always ‘more or less preoccupied with her clothes’ and her language, Annie is restricted, hobbled and disempowered by her husband’s self-imposed language law (p. 186).

Annie’s mother, Mrs. Lee, is also subject to the Bergson brothers’ war on Swedish. However, unlike Annie, she is able to escape once a year to the sanctuary of Alexandra Bergson’s farm, a pocket of Swedish language and culture in Nebraska where she is permitted to speak whichever language she chooses. The psychological relief that Mrs. Lee feels when she is able to speak Swedish without fear of reprisal is, Cather implies, comparable to the physical relief that she feels when her host permits her the further liberty of swapping her ‘civilised’ (to borrow Bennett’s term) shoes for a comfy yet ‘uncivilised’ ‘pair of Emil’s old boots’ (p. 230). With this reference to footwear, Cather draws a pointed comparison between Mrs. Lee and her daughter. Whilst Annie must remain by her husband Lou’s side wearing respectable ‘tight, high-heeled shoes’ (which are ‘civilised’ but painful) and speaking English, Mrs. Lee is – for the duration of her stay in Alexandra’s pocket of the Old World in the New – linguistically and sartorially free (p. 186).

Cather draws a similar comparison between language and clothing in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. In his official role as the Bishop of New Mexico, Latour wears a formal ‘frock-coat’ and speaks Spanish – a language which, like his coat, he finds slightly uncomfortable (p. 290). In contrast, during his leisure time – for example, when he writes letters in French to his sister or creates a pocket of the Old World in the New with Vaillant on Christmas Eve – Latour wears his comfy ‘old cassock’ from France (p. 297). Whilst Latour characterises Spanish as a ‘halting’ language, he describes French as a ‘light and elastic mesh’ – a fabric metaphor which calls to mind the comfort of the cassock that he wears when he writes or speaks it (p. 290, p. 444). With this metaphor, Cather once again suggests that, for multilingual characters like Latour, speaking their native language feels natural and comfortable whilst speaking their second language feels like wearing formal but uncomfortable clothes. Consequently, just as Thea Kronborg and Professor St. Peter’s attic rooms offer them physical insulation from their chaotic families, pockets of the Old World within the

New (even temporary ones) offer Mrs. Lee and Bishop Latour psychological insulation from the discomfort of speaking their second languages.

In addition to offering Cather's immigrant characters insulation from the pressures of speaking ill-fitting second languages, pockets of the Old World in the New also offer both immigrant and American-born characters a concurrent and contrasting sense of expansiveness, just like the physical snug rooms with a view identified by Briggs, Stout and Russell. This is because, just as Professor St Peter's square window lets 'the blue air and memories of the Blue Mesa' into his stuffy study and Thea's window lets 'life' into her tiny attic bedroom, pockets of the Old World in the New let vital European culture into the United States.⁸²

For immigrant characters, the windows onto Europe opened by these linguistic spaces are beneficial because they make their pre-American lives seem less 'far away' than usual (*O Pioneers!*, p. 230). For example, Mrs. Lee finds it much easier to reminisce about her former 'life on a dairy farm in Gottland' in Alexandra Bergson's pocket of Swedish language and culture than she does in her daughter's Anglo-American home; for her, re-establishing this connection to the past is very comforting (p. 230). For American-born, Anglophone characters, on the other hand, the windows onto Europe opened by pockets of the Old World in the New are beneficial not because they provide reassuring links to the past, but because they broaden their cultural and intellectual horizons and, in some cases, inspire and unlock their futures.

In 'Old Mrs. Harris', for example, visiting the pocket of Old-World language and culture that Mr. and Mrs. Rosen establish by consistently speaking French and German in their Midwestern home sparks Vickie Templeton's desire to win a college scholarship, leave home and learn to read those languages for herself: "What I want is to pick up any of these [French and German] books and just read them, like you and Mr. Rosen do." (p. 634). Whilst the Rosens' pocket of French and German language and culture insulates them from the pressures of speaking English and conforming to Anglo-American customs, it productively unsettles Vickie, broadening her outlook, offering her a tantalising glimpse of the world which exists beyond her hometown and stoking her ambitions to one day explore it for herself.

⁸² Briggs, para. 11 of 25.

Nebraskan-born Claude Wheeler's cultural horizons are similarly stretched by his visits to the pocket of German language and culture established by the Erlich family in their Nebraskan home in *One of Ours*. Hearing 'German songs' ('*Spinn, spinn, du Tochter mein*') and gaining a taste for 'complicated [German] cookery' in this Germanophone environment catalyses Claude's wanderlust: 'Everything Mrs. Erlich told me about Germany made me want to go there' (p. 1073).

Lastly, American-born Thea Kronborg's visits to various pockets of the Old World in the New in *The Song of the Lark* unlock her future by furnishing her with the raw artistic material that she needs in order to leave Moonstone, Colorado and become an opera singer. As Marilee Lindemann argues, Thea's development as an artist is, to a large extent, 'predicated' on her "'filling [up]" on the [...] cultures [and languages] of other people'.⁸³ Visiting the Kohlers' pocket of German language and culture, for example, Thea fills up on the German words and songs that she will one day need in order to sing professionally. Likewise, when she visits Spanish Johnny's house – a pocket of Mexican rather than European culture in Colorado – Thea fills up on 'Mexican serenade[s]' which enable her to develop her '*voz contralto*' (p. 490). Nourished by her visits to these pockets of German and Mexican language and culture in the United States, Thea Kronborg becomes the 'new kind of artist' that Cather predicted 'would "come out of the old peoples in a new world"'.⁸⁴

Like Thea, Cather's own artistic development was shaped by her interactions with 'old peoples in a new world'. As Dorothy Canfield Fisher perceptively observed, 'European culture' imported into the United States by immigrants was 'food' which Cather, like Thea, filled up on, 'absorbed and transformed into a new product' – namely, novels and short stories populated by characters who are themselves bilingual immigrants.⁸⁵ Like Thea, Cather found her artistic food in pockets of the Old World within the New established by her immigrant friends and neighbours. In several cases, the real-life cultural and linguistic niches that Cather visited provided her with direct models for the fictional pockets of Old-World language and culture created by her characters.

⁸³ Marilee Lindemann, *Willa Cather: Queering America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 59.

⁸⁴ Willa Cather, 'To Roscoe Cather, June 5 [1914]', in *Letters*, pp. 191-92 (p. 191).

⁸⁵ Dorothy Canfield Fisher, quoted in Eva Mahoney, 'How Willa Cather Found Herself', *Omaha World-Herald*, 27 November 1921, in Bohlke, pp. 33-39 (p. 38).

For example, Mr. and Mrs. Rosen's pocket of French and German language and culture in 'Old Mrs. Harris' was inspired by the real-life cultural niche created by her trilingual Red Cloud neighbours, Mr. and Mrs. Wiener. It was in the Wieners' pocket of the Old World in the New that Cather, like Vickie Templeton, first learned about French literature: 'Mrs. Wiener told Willa about the French novels, reading them to her and translating as she went along'.⁸⁶ Similarly, Cather modelled the Erlichs' pocket of German language and culture in *One of Ours* upon the home of her German friends the Westermann family – another real-life pocket of the Old-World in the New which provided a sanctuary for Cather during her university years in Lincoln, Nebraska. Lastly, thanks to the ministrations of their Francophone housekeeper, Josephine Bourda, Cather and Edith Lewis's Bank Street apartment was a pocket of French language and culture in New York City. In Lewis's opinion, this environment undoubtedly 'contributed' to the French 'atmosphere' of 'novels like *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Shadows on the Rock*'.⁸⁷

To understand why Cather found these Old-World niches so inspiring, it is helpful to consider them in light of her views on the nature of artistic material. Outlining her creative process in a 1921 interview with the *Lincoln Sunday Star*, Cather explained that 'Art springs out of the very stuff that life is made out of' – an aesthetic theory which echoes Thea Kronborg's belief that art should capture 'the shining, elusive element which is life itself' (p. 552).⁸⁸ However, not all ways of life were, in Cather's opinion, aesthetically equal. The 'older and more established the civilisation', Cather argued, 'the better a subject it [was] for art' because there had been more time for 'associations to gather' and 'interesting types to develop'.⁸⁹ Representative of 'older', 'more established' civilisations than the United States, the European ways of life that the Wieners, the Westermanns and Josephine Bourda preserved with combinations of housekeeping and domain-specific code-switching in their pockets of the Old World in Red Cloud, Lincoln and New York City were – in Cather's opinion – infinitely more valuable as artistic subjects than their modern Anglo-American equivalents.

⁸⁶ Bennett, p. 119.

⁸⁷ Lewis, pp. 88-89.

⁸⁸ Eleanor Hinman, 'Willa Cather, Famous Nebraska Novelist, Says Pioneer Mother Held Greatest Appreciation of Art', *Lincoln Sunday Star*, 6 November 1921, in Bohlke, pp. 42-49 (p. 46).

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Consequently, not only do Cather's texts describe the psychological and cultural benefits of bilingualism and domain-specific code-switching, they are also the 'product' (to borrow Canfield Fisher's term) of Cather's own exposure to the United States' linguistic diversity at the end of the nineteenth century and the real-life pockets of Old-World language and culture that it helped to sustain. Reading texts like 'Old Mrs. Harris' as products as well as celebrations of American bilingualism adds another dimension to Cather's belief – expressed in her 1921 speech denouncing Nebraska's language law – that all Americans should be encouraged to speak 'one or two other languages' in addition to English. For Cather, bilingualism was not simply an expressive resource; by helping to preserve pockets of Old-World culture in the New World, it ensured the maintenance of her artistic food supply.⁹⁰

There was, however, a significant problem with the pockets of Old-World culture that Cather visited and later valorised in her fiction: they were fundamentally unsustainable. Cather was keenly aware of this. In 1923, for example, she regretfully noted that, thanks to the effects of Nebraska's language laws and the increasing pressure placed upon immigrants to speak English, the days when it was possible to walk 'about the streets of Wilber' – a town-sized pocket of Bohemian language and culture in Nebraska – 'without hearing a word of English spoken' were over.⁹¹ John Edwards confirms that the pockets of multilingualism which inspired Cather during her formative years in Red Cloud, Lincoln and Pittsburgh in the late nineteenth-century were of a 'transitional variety' – a 'generational way-station on the road between two unilingualisms' (namely, immigrants' native languages and English).⁹²

Although *My Ántonia*, *The Song of the Lark*, *One of Ours* and 'Old Mrs. Harris' were published between 1915 and 1932, they are set in the 1890s. Consequently, when Cather wrote these texts, she knew that the linguistic diversity that she described in them was under threat, if not already lost. Her awareness of this is reflected in the fact that, even as she celebrates pockets of the Old World in the New in these works, she simultaneously foreshadows their loss. In 'Old Mrs. Harris', for example, the Rosens' most 'bitter sorrow' is that they have no children; this means that there will be no one to inherit and preserve their pocket of French and German language and culture in

⁹⁰ State Laws Are Cramping', p. 148.

⁹¹ 'Nebraska: The End of the First Cycle', p. 4.

⁹² John Edwards, *Multilingualism* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 83.

Nebraska after they are gone (p. 631). In *The Song of the Lark*, the Kohlers do have children, but it is unlikely that they will maintain their parents' pocket of German language and culture in Colorado. Indeed, 'the Kohler sons' are so 'ashamed of their old folks' that they deliberately 'forg[e]t the past' and their German heritage at the earliest opportunity (p. 314).

In contrast, Ántonia's children are proud of their Bohemian home; during Jim's visit, they are all (apart from Leo, of course) eager to show off their store of 'spiced plums' and '*kolaches*' because 'Americans don't have those' (p. 918). Nonetheless, there is still no guarantee that they will pass their mother's language and the culture that it safeguards on to their own children. At the end of the novel, Ántonia's eldest daughter, Martha, has already left home to form her own household, the Anglo-American conventionality of which is hinted at by the fact that she and her husband own 'a Ford car' (p. 927). As one of the first companies to enforce compulsory English classes for its large immigrant workforce in 1915, Ford played a key role in the Americanisation and English-only movements – a clue, perhaps, that Martha is less anxious to preserve her Bohemian language and heritage than her mother.⁹³

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, one of the major criticisms levelled against Cather during her lifetime was that she was unfashionably nostalgic. Halford E. Luccock, for example, accused Cather of 'conduct[ing] one of the most conspicuous retreats from contemporary life of any first-class artist in her time'.⁹⁴ Clifton Fadiman agreed that Cather had 'no report to make us on the America of her time'.⁹⁵ Cather's decision to turn away from the increasingly monolingual and Anglophone present to look back upon the multilingual Nebraska of the 1890s and its pockets of the Old World in the New with regret in *The Song of the Lark*, *My Ántonia* and 'Old Mrs. Harris' could indeed be characterised as nostalgia. However, rather than looking to the past in order to avoid dealing with the present, as Fadiman and Luccock suggest, Cather actually used nostalgia to make a compelling case against reactionary

⁹³ As Higham notes, 'Ford [...] compelled his foreign employees to attend [the Ford English School] before and after work two days a week'. See John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925* (New York: Atheneum, 1969), p. 244.

⁹⁴ Halford E. Luccock, *American Mirror: Social, Ethical and Religious Aspects of American Literature, 1930-1940* (New York: Macmillan, 1940), p. 47.

⁹⁵ Clifton Fadiman, 'Willa Cather: The Past Recaptured', *Nation*, 35 (1932), pp. 563-65, in *Willa Cather: The Contemporary Reviews*, ed. by Margaret Anne O'Connor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 430.

twentieth-century language politics. Indeed, by outlining the benefits of nineteenth-century linguistic diversity in these texts, Cather was able to highlight the cultural and artistic losses which, in her estimation, were the inevitable result of restrictive measures such as Nebraska's Siman Act. Read in light of Cather's 1921 speech criticising attempts to discourage Americans speaking from 'one or two other languages' in addition to English, Cather's nostalgia is not a retreat but a subversive political statement in favour of linguistic diversity.⁹⁶

That being said, there are limits to Cather's subversiveness which are evident in her specific focus on the benefits of *pockets* of Old-World language and culture in the New World. Although Cather's texts showcase the value of being able to cross linguistic borders, they do not advocate unrestricted linguistic diversity, and this is particularly evident in Jim's responses to *Ántonia's* use of Czech in different locations in *My Ántonia*. For example, when Jim hears *Ántonia* speaking Czech to her children in her home, he admiringly describes it as a 'rich old' language (p. 924). In this private, safe, domestic situation in which it is not vital that Jim understands what is being said, he is able to conceive of Czech as an aesthetically-valuable safeguard for *Ántonia's* Old-World culture.

In contrast, when *Ántonia* uses Czech in public and, moreover, in a situation in which it is vitally important that he understands her, Jim's response is strikingly different. Indeed, when *Ántonia* involuntarily code-switches, warning Jim about an approaching rattlesnake in Czech rather than English during their trip to the prairie dog-town, he angrily describes her native language as meaningless 'jabber': "'What did you jabber Bohunk for? You might have told me there was a snake behind me!'" (p. 741). The harshness of Jim's reprimand to *Ántonia* for using the wrong language at the wrong time and in the wrong place is compounded by his uncharacteristic use of a racist slur ('Bohunk') to denigrate her native tongue. Outside of her pocket of the Old World in the New and in the context of day-to-day life on the prairie, *Ántonia's* native language is – in Jim's estimation – at best an inconvenience and at worst a source of considerable danger.

Jim's differing responses to the Czech language in these two locations (one public and one private) confirms that, in Cather's fiction, the value of bilingualism and

⁹⁶ 'State Laws Are Cramping', p. 148.

code-switching is determined by a spatio-linguistic hierarchy which prioritises English as the primary language of America's public spaces. In Cather's America, foreign languages are valuable when they are safely contained in marginal pockets of the Old World in the New; however, when they leak out of these pockets into shared, public spaces (for example, the prairie) – and especially when they put Anglophone characters like Jim at a disadvantage in these spaces – their value drops significantly. Consequently, although Cather's literary celebration of the recent multilingual past is more radical than nostalgic and whilst it challenges the 'English only' politics gaining traction at the start of the twentieth century, the alternative, linguistically-diverse America that her texts depict is, nonetheless, one in which English always comes first.

CHAPTER TWO

‘Blázne’, ‘kreutzer’ and ‘handworkers’: The Role of ‘Foreign’ Words in Willa Cather’s English-Language Fiction

‘All middle westerners hate foreign words,’ Cather told her publisher Alfred A. Knopf, ‘especially French, because they are uncertain how to pronounce them’.¹ It was for that reason that she advised him against including French words in his advertisement for Joseph Kessel’s new novel *Army of Shadows* (1944). Whilst Cather did not hate French words (indeed, she regarded the French language as ‘something to feed the soul upon’), she was amongst those ‘middle westerners’ who found French pronunciation tricky.² The pencilled annotations in her copy of *Introduction to Modern French Lyrics* (1894), one of the set texts for her university French classes, reveal her grappling with how to pronounce the letter ‘o’ in French:

o || ou
long || oo³

Despite her own battles with French pronunciation, Cather did not follow the advice that she gave to Knopf. Instead, she peppered her texts with liberal handfuls – and sometimes whole paragraphs – of French vocabulary:

*“Edmond était tout enfant un modèle de vertu, grâce aux tendres soins de sa pieuse mère. On ne le voyait qu'à l'école et à l'église, partageant ses journées entre la prière et l'étude, et se privant des plaisirs les plus innocents pour s'entretenir avec Jésus et sa divine Mère à laquelle il voua un culte tout spécial. [...]”*⁴

In addition to French words, Cather’s predominantly English-language texts contain untranslated fragments of German (‘*Aber nicht die Americanischen Fräulein*’), Spanish (‘*Blanco y oro, semejante la Pascua!*’), Czech (‘*Blázne!*’), Italian (‘*Ecco una cosa*

¹ Alfred A. Knopf, ‘Miss Cather’, in *The Art of Willa Cather*, ed. by Bernice Slote and Virginia Faulkner (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1974), pp. 205-24 (p. 220).

² Lincoln, NE, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries, Archives and Special Collections, MS 228 James R. and Susan J. Rosowski Cather Collection, Box 1 Fol. 8 Willa Cather Correspondence to Misc People, 1940-1946, Letter to ‘May’, Dec 30, 1940.

³ Red Cloud, NE, National Willa Cather Center Collections and Archives, Cather Family Book Collection, Willa Cather’s annotations in her copy of B. L. Bowen, *Introduction to Modern French Lyrics* (Boston, MA: D. C. Heath, 1894), p. 31. See Appendix, Figure 4.

⁴ Willa Cather, *Shadows on the Rock*, in *Later Novels*, ed. by Sharon O’Brien (New York: Library of America, 1990), pp. 460-642 (p. 518).

molto bella'), Swedish ('*dragharmonika*') and Norwegian ('*Gud!*').⁵ Typically, these fragments appear in Cather's narratives describing bilingual or non-Anglophone characters living in polylingual settings – for example, *The Prairie Trilogy* (1913-18), *One of Ours* (1922) and *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927).⁶

Whilst these untranslated fragments of foreign languages are usually short in length (the paragraph of *Shadows on the Rock* (1931) partially-quoted above being by far the longest foreign-language passage in Cather's oeuvre), their prevalence in her fiction combined with her limited linguistic training meant that her manuscripts required specialised editing. In 1912, Cather wrote to her then-publisher, Houghton Mifflin, to request the services of a proof-reader 'who kn[ew] Spanish' to help edit *The Song of the Lark* (1915): 'Will you ask your proof-reader to check [the Spanish words] up with severity, and to regard with suspicion the German used in the music lessons?'.⁷ Likewise, the typescript of *Shadows on the Rock* housed in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Cather Archive reveals that Edith Lewis made extensive corrections to Cather's French:

Before she had left her fair Normandy (avant ^ qu'elle a ^ait quitté sa belle Normandie)⁸ [accents and above-line amendments added by Lewis in pencil].

Despite the additional editing work that it entailed, Cather persevered in making multilingualism a hallmark of her otherwise English-language prose. The aim of this chapter is to investigate her stylistic and political reasons for doing so.

In his famous defence of the use of foreign words in otherwise German-language discourse, 'Words from Abroad' (1959), Theodor Adorno argued that 'outrage over foreign words' – such as that expressed by Cather's middle westerners –

⁵ Willa Cather, *The Song of the Lark*, in *Early Novels and Stories*, ed. by Sharon O'Brien (New York: Library of America, 1987), pp. 291-706 (p. 363, p. 494); Willa Cather, 'The Bohemian Girl', *McClure's*, August 1912, pp. 420-43 (p. 423), in *The Willa Cather Archive* <<https://cather.unl.edu/ss004.html>> [accessed 18/02/2018]; Willa Cather, *Lucy Gayheart*, in *Later Novels*, pp. 643-774 (p. 671); Willa Cather, *O Pioneers!*, in *Early Novels*, pp. 133-290 (p. 275, p. 172). Further references to these works given in the text.

⁶ In this thesis, the term 'foreign words' refers to vocabulary which Cather imported from languages other than English into her predominantly English-language prose.

⁷ Willa Cather, 'To R. L. Scaife, May 12 [1915]', in *The Complete Letters of Willa Cather* <<https://cather.unl.edu/letters/let0304>> [accessed 01/05/2019].

⁸ Lincoln, NE, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries, Archives and Special Collections, MS 77 Philip L. and Helen Cather Southwick Collection, Box 1 Fol. 13 *Shadows on the Rock* 1931, manuscript, pp. 1-34 (p. 32).

was usually ‘a case of sour grapes’ which could be explained ‘in terms of the psychic state of the one who is angry, for whom some grapes are hanging too high up’.⁹ Discussing Cather’s multilingualism with scholars of her work often elicits the view that she used foreign words in her fiction simply to show off her ability to access some of Adorno’s metaphorical grapes. As Guy Reynolds has argued, Cather possessed an ‘edgy desire to show herself knowledgeable’ and occasionally slipping into a foreign language was certainly one way in which she might have achieved this.¹⁰ Sharon O’Brien agrees, proposing that Cather’s decision to conclude her essay ‘A Chance Meeting’ (1936) with an untranslated French-language obituary for Madame Franklin-Grout (‘*Nous apprenons avec tristesse la morte de Mme. Franklin-Grout*’) is intended to make ‘the reader [...] unversed in French’ feel as linguistically inadequate as Cather did ‘vis-à-vis’ the multilingual Franklin-Grout.¹¹

For Adorno, however, the use of foreign words in otherwise monolingual discourse was more than just showboating. He argued that a well-chosen foreign word could ‘bring out what [was] intended but obscured by the bad generality of language’ and thus ‘serve the expression of truth’.¹² More recently, Maria Lauret has made a similar case for the value of ‘fragments of other languages’ which ‘wander’ into ‘American English texts’, arguing that they perform ‘wonders of poetic signification’ and should, therefore, never be ‘ignored’ by readers.¹³

Francophone critics Stéphanie Durrans and Françoise Palteau-Papin have already paid some critical attention to Cather’s inclusion of French vocabulary in her fiction. They argue that Cather’s use of French words in texts focalised through Francophone characters (such as *Shadows on the Rock*) helps her to blur ‘the boundaries between French and English’ in order to convey the peculiarly French ‘reality’

⁹ Theodor W. Adorno, ‘Words from Abroad’, in *Notes to Literature Volume One*, trans. by Shierry Weber Nicholson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), pp. 185-99 (p. 186).

¹⁰ Guy Reynolds, *Willa Cather in Context: Progress Race, Empire* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), p. 68.

¹¹ Willa Cather, ‘A Chance Meeting’, in *Stories, Poems, & Other Writings*, pp. 815-33 (p. 833); Sharon O’Brien, *Willa Cather: The Emerging Voice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 327.

¹² ‘Words from Abroad’, p. 189.

¹³ Maria Lauret, *Wanderwords: Language Migration in American Literature* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 1.

experienced by those characters.¹⁴ Julie Olin-Ammentorp agrees that Cather's use of 'French diction within American English' is more than 'a mere flourish'. She argues that Cather's use of French words not only enabled her to describe the lives of 'French immigrants in North America', it was also an expression of her admiration for French culture, which she equated with 'beauty and art' – two things which she believed were 'lacking in the United States'.¹⁵ In this chapter, I will extend Durrans, Palteau-Papin and Olin-Ammentorp's observations, applying them to a wider range of foreign languages in Cather's fiction and arguing that the function of foreign words in her texts stretches beyond character development, local colour and cultural commentary; indeed, I will demonstrate that foreign words are a fundamental element of Cather's literary style which is interconnected with her theories of art. Moreover, I will demonstrate that the carefully-chosen foreign words in Cather's fiction often possess a 'poetic' 'power' or 'force' – to borrow Laurot and Adorno's terms – which outweighs that of the more familiar English words which surround them on the page.¹⁶

To do so, I will firstly identify the roles that foreign words play in Cather's fiction. Using Meir Sternberg's theories of 'translational mimesis' and 'selective reproduction' as a framework, I will explore how Cather used limited numbers of foreign words as 'mimetic synecdoches' to indicate which language her characters are speaking without alienating Anglophone readers.¹⁷ Moreover, I will examine how Cather's use of this technique illuminates the tension between her desire to promote and celebrate American multilingualism and her desire to preserve the dominant status of the English language in the United States (her 'English first, but not English-only' language politics).

Secondly, by analysing the words '*kreutzer*' and '*handwerkers*' – which Cather deploys in '*Peter*' (1892) and *O Pioneers!* (1913), respectively – in light of the

¹⁴ Stéphanie Durrans, *The Influence of French Culture on Willa Cather: Intertextual References and Resonances* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2007), p. 224; Françoise Palteau-Papin, 'The Hidden French in Willa Cather's English', *Cather Studies*, 4 (1999) <https://cather.unl.edu/cs004_palleau-papin.html> [accessed 01/05/2019] (para. 5 of 33).

¹⁵ Julie Olin-Ammentorp, *Edith Wharton, Willa Cather, and the Place of Culture* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019), pp. 205-06.

¹⁶ Theodor W. Adorno, 'On the Use of Foreign Words', in *Notes to Literature Volume Two*, trans. by Shierry Weber Nicholson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), pp. 286-91 (p. 286, p. 291).

¹⁷ Meir Sternberg, 'Polylingualism as Reality and Translation as Mimesis', *Poetics Today*, 2.4 (1981), 221-39 (p. 225).

sociolinguistic concepts of code-switching due to lexical gaps and cultural need, I will argue that, in addition to their mimetic role, the foreign words in Cather's texts also function as synecdoches for her immigrant characters' pre-American lives and, by extension, the challenges of immigration.¹⁸ Connecting Cather's multilingual style to her aesthetic theories, I will then demonstrate that, dense with information about her characters' unwritten backstories, synecdochic foreign words such as '*kreutzer*' and '*handworkers*' were a device that Cather used to fulfil her belief that 'art ought to simplify'.¹⁹ Moreover, linking Cather's multilingualism to her views on the importance of reader engagement, I will offer a reading of 'The Bohemian Girl' (1912) which reveals how she used foreign words to de-automate her readers' response to language.

Finally, I will argue that a close stylistic analysis of the foreign words in Cather's fiction adds a fresh perspective to the ongoing critical debate regarding her status as a modernist author. I will not argue that Cather's texts are as radically or challengingly multilingual as those written by modernist writers such as Joyce, Stein and Pound, but I will suggest that, like them, Cather capitalised on the 'defamiliarizing' effects of crossing linguistic borders within her predominantly monolingual prose.²⁰

'I always felt as if every word they said to me counted for twenty': Foreign Words as Mimetic Synecdoches

Throughout her career, Cather estimated the value of words. As editor of the *Home Monthly* (1896-97) and managing editor of *McClure's Magazine* (1906-11), Cather assessed the 'commercial value' of words.²¹ As an author, Cather weighed their aesthetic value. Some words she deemed 'good', 'safe' or 'literary', whilst others were

¹⁸ Willa Cather, 'Peter', *The Hesperian*, 24 November 1892, pp. 10-12 (p. 11), in *The Willa Cather Archive* <<https://cather.unl.edu/ss019.html>> [accessed 10/10/2016]; *O Pioneers!*, p. 148. Further references given in the text.

¹⁹ F. H., 'Willa Cather Talks of Work', *Philadelphia Record*, 10 August 1913, in *Willa Cather in Person*, pp. 7-11 (p. 8).

²⁰ The term 'defamiliarization' was coined by Viktor Shklovsky in 'Art, as Device (1917)', trans. by Alexandra Berlina, *Poetics Today*, 36.3 (2015), 151-74 (p. 163).

²¹ Willa Cather, 'To Norman Foerster, July 20, 1910', in *The Selected Letters of Willa Cather*, ed. by Andrew Jewell and Janis Stout (New York: Vintage, 2014), pp. 132-34 (p. 133).

‘bookish’, ‘Weighty’ or ‘the right kind of poetic’.²² For Cather, some words were so evocative that they seemed to ‘[count] for twenty’.²³

The notion that some words ‘counted’ for more than others was one that Cather articulated in an interview with the *Philadelphia Record* in 1913. Describing how the stories told by her immigrant neighbours in Nebraska had shaped her fiction, Cather noted that:

Even when they spoke very little English, the old women somehow managed to tell me a great many stories about the old country. [...] I always felt as if every word they said to me counted for twenty.²⁴

Given that Cather’s neighbours ‘spoke very little English’, it is likely that their stories contained words imported from their native languages. In terms of Cather’s development as a multilingual author, this was very important. Although Cather did not understand all of the words her neighbours used, their stories still gave her the ‘feeling’ of ‘an older world beyond the sea’; from this, Cather learned that foreign words could be just as valuable as familiar English words in terms of their ability to evoke a particular ‘feeling’: ‘every word they said to me counted for twenty’.²⁵

The first way in which the foreign words present in Cather’s own stories ‘count’ is by enabling her to mimetically denote instances when her bilingual characters speak a language other than English. As discussed in Chapter One, one method that Cather used to represent polylingual dialogue was ‘vehicular matching’ or matching her language to that of her characters: “‘I don’t care about the money. *Ah, mon père, je voudrais mieux être jeune [...]*!’” (*Death Comes for the Archbishop*, p. 393).²⁶ However, using this technique tested both Cather and her Anglophone readers’ linguistic capabilities and so, in order to represent longer passages of polylingual discourse, she supplemented it with the form of ‘translational mimesis’ (that is, the method of representing one language by means of another) that Meir Sternberg calls ‘explicit attribution’. As Sternberg explains, explicit attribution involves the author

²² Cather describes words as ‘good’, ‘safe’, ‘bookish’, ‘literary’ and ‘the right kind of poetic’ in ‘A Chance Meeting’, p. 817; she describes the word ‘extremist’ as ‘Weighty’ in ‘A Gold Slipper’, *Harper’s Monthly*, January 1917, pp. 166-74 (p. 172), in *The Willa Cather Archive* <<http://cather.unl.edu/ss059.html>> [accessed 21/09/2016].

²³ ‘Willa Cather Talks of Work’, p. 10.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Sternberg, p. 223.

making a ‘statement [...] concerning the language’ that his or her characters are speaking before recording their dialogue in the text’s primary language, thus negating the need to cross linguistic borders altogether: ‘Rosicky asked [his wife] *in Czech* if she wasn’t going to have any coffee [my emphasis]’.²⁷

For Sternberg, however, a significant disadvantage of explicit attribution is that representing polylingual discourse using only the author’s primary language unavoidably ‘homogenizes’ that discourse.²⁸ He argues that a compromise between vehicular matching (recording dialogue in the language in which it was ‘originally’ spoken) and explicit attribution (‘translating’ dialogue into the text’s primary language) can be found in a second form of translational mimesis requiring the quotation of only small handfuls of foreign words: ‘selective reproduction’. As Sternberg elaborates, ‘selective reproduction’ requires authors to ‘translate’ the majority of their characters’ foreign words into their text’s primary language whilst ‘intermittent[ly]’ quoting (or ‘selectively reproducing’) some of those words in the language in which they were ‘originally spoken’ in order to highlight the dialogue’s ‘translated’ status.²⁹ Cather made extensive use of this technique throughout her oeuvre.

In *O Pioneers!*, for example, Cather employs selective reproduction when Ivar tells Alexandra Bergson, ‘*Gud!* You are enough to frighten us, mistress’ (p. 275). Given that Ivar has ‘never learned to speak English’, he cannot code-switch from Norwegian to English after the word ‘*Gud!*’ (p. 181). Instead, the switch in languages in the middle of Ivar’s dialogue simply marks the point at which the narrator moves from selectively reproducing his words in Norwegian to ‘translating’ them into English.

Likewise, in the following exchange between Euclide and Cécile Auclair in *Shadows on the Rock*, the narrator switches from French to English after the words ‘*Beaucoup de clients*’, but Francophone Cécile does not:

“*Pas de clients?*” he asked.

“*Mais, oui! Beaucoup de clients.* But they all wanted very simple things [...].” (p. 469)

This time the word ‘But’ represents the point at which the narrator’s ‘translation’ of Cécile’s French speech begins. In these examples, the limited numbers of French and

²⁷ Sternberg, p. 231; Willa Cather, ‘Neighbour Rosicky’, in *Stories, Poems, & Other Writings*, pp. 587-618 (p. 595).

²⁸ Sternberg, p. 224.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

Norwegian words that Cather quotes are simply cues reminding the reader to imagine that the dialogue ‘originally’ took place entirely in those languages. In this respect, these words function ‘as a kind of mimetic synecdoche’: although they are only small *parts* of a language (French or Norwegian), they stand – in the context of the conversations in which they are quoted – for the *whole* of those languages.³⁰ Consequently, Cather’s ‘selectively reproduced’ foreign words do not simply ‘[count] for twenty’, they count for entire languages of other words.

Given that Sternberg’s theory of translational mimesis was published in 1981, Cather would not have recognised the term selective reproduction. Nonetheless, she would have recognised the technique it describes thanks to her knowledge of the works of Prosper Mérimée. At university (1891-1895), one of Cather’s set texts for her French classes was *Le Romantisme Français: A Selection from Writers of the French Romantic School* (1880). Annotations in Cather’s personal copy of this book reveal that one of the stories she studied in class was Mérimée’s ‘Mateo Falcone’ (1829), a tale which, although predominantly written in French, is interspersed with untranslated fragments of Corsican.³¹ In an interview published in 1940, Cather recalled that, after reading this short story, she followed her French tutor Dr. Hjalmar Edgren’s ‘suggest[ion] that [she also] read’ Mérimée’s novellas *Colomba* (1841) and *Carmen* (1845).³² Writing to Knopf in 1938, Cather acknowledged the impact of this reading upon her own experiments with multilingualism. Cather’s use of handfuls of Spanish words (for example, ‘casa, arroyo, [and] hacienda’) in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* was, she argued, justified by the fact that Mérimée – an excellent writer – had ‘peppered’ the ‘pages’ of *Carmen* and *Colomba* (which are predominantly written in French) ‘with Spanish words, and whole sentences in the Gypsy language’.³³

In addition to offering Cather a precedent for quoting foreign words in her fiction, Mérimée also gave her a precedent for using foreign words as mimetic synecdoches. In *Carmen*, Mérimée, like Cather, uses vehicular matching to denote

³⁰ Sternberg, p. 225.

³¹ Red Cloud, NE, National Willa Cather Center Collections and Archives, Cather Family Book Collection, Willa Cather’s annotations in her copy of Thomas Frederick Crane, ed., *Le Romantisme Français: A Selection from Writers of the French Romantic School* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1886), p. 249. See Appendix, Figure 5.

³² Stephen Vincent and Rosemary Benét, ‘Willa Cather: Civilized and Very American’, *New York Herald Tribune Books*, 15 December 1940, in *Willa Cather in Person*, pp. 132-37 (p. 133).

³³ Willa Cather, ‘To Alfred A. Knopf, April 19, 1938’, in *Letters*, pp. 546-48 (p. 547).

instances when the eponymous character makes brief code-switches to Basque: ‘*Agur laguna, dit-elle*’.³⁴ In contrast, when Carmen makes longer speeches in Basque, Mérimée, like Cather, represents them using selective reproduction. For example, when Carmen says ‘*Laguna, ene bihotsarena, camarade de mon coeur [...] êtes-vous du pays?*’, she does not code-switch from Basque to ‘Spanish’ (represented here by French) between the words ‘*bihotsarena*’ and ‘*camarade*’; rather, she continues to speak in the former language.³⁵

Inspired by Mérimée’s nineteenth-century multilingual novellas and short stories, Cather copied his techniques for representing polylingual discourse but used them to express her views on twentieth-century American language politics. As I argued in Chapter One, Cather’s ‘English first, but not English only’ philosophy is evident in the way that she foregrounded the benefits of bilingual language choice and code-switching in her fiction whilst simultaneously advocating the enclosure of linguistic diversity within controlled, contained pockets. Her conflicting impulses to celebrate and, at the same time, control and limit American multilingualism are also at play in her use of selective reproduction.

For example, by selectively reproducing some of her characters’ ‘original’ foreign-language words in their dialogue, Cather makes linguistic diversity a prominent feature of her prose. However, by reproducing only *limited numbers* of her characters’ foreign words at any one time, Cather ensures that English remains the primary language of her texts. In this way, she gives Anglophone readers a taste of her characters’ polylingual discourse whilst ensuring that they are never confused by it. In this respect, Cather’s use of selective reproduction is what Anjali Pandey calls a ‘shallow multilingual strateg[y]’ – one which creates a safe, surface representation of multilingualism rather than an overwhelming, disorienting linguistic experience (such as that generated in more radically multilingual texts like James Joyce’s 1939 work *Finnegans Wake*).³⁶

The foreign words that Cather selectively reproduces in her characters’ dialogue are, therefore, the stylistic equivalent of the pockets of the Old World in the New

³⁴ Prosper Mérimée, *Carmen*, in *Oeuvres Complètes de Prosper Mérimée* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1927), pp. 3-95 (p. 46).

³⁵ Ibid., p. 40.

³⁶ Anjali Pandey, *Monolingualism and Linguistic Exhibitionism in Fiction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2016), p. 110.

created by her bilingual immigrant characters. Just as pockets of the Old World in the New are controlled, contained niches of linguistic and cultural diversity which exist within the predominantly-Anglophone landscape of the United States, Cather's selectively-reproduced foreign words are controlled, contained pockets of linguistic diversity which exist within the framework of a linguistic system (namely, Cather's prose) which prioritises the English language above all of the other languages quoted within it. As such, selective reproduction is a literary technique which neatly embodies Cather's belief that English should be the primary – but not the only – language spoken in the United States. Not only is Cather's selective reproduction of foreign words mimetic, then, it is also political.

Whilst the concept of selective reproduction helpfully elucidates a key method that Cather used to make her characters' polylingual discourse accessible to her Anglophone readers, there is one significant difference between her use of selective reproduction and Sternberg's definition of it. In Sternberg's view, the sole purpose of selectively reproduced words is to indicate the 'original' language in which a passage of dialogue was spoken. As such, the words themselves 'have little intrinsic importance'. Consequently, for Sternberg, simple 'expressive interjection[s]' such as 'the French "Parbleu!" [...] or the German "Donnerwetter!"', although not inherently meaningful, make perfectly good 'mimetic synecdoche[s]' because it is their capacity to 'gesture' to other languages rather than the ideas that they signify which is important.³⁷

On the one hand, Ivar's Norwegian word '*Gud!*' in *O Pioneers!* fits this pattern: it is an 'expressive interjection', the primary function of which is to highlight the fact that Ivar is speaking Norwegian (p. 275). On the other hand, the word has considerable 'intrinsic importance' supplementary to its mimetic function. Ivar's strongest character trait is his piousness ('You know my spells come from God'); consequently, it seems apt that the one Norwegian word that Cather selectively reproduces in his dialogue means 'God' (p. 182). Indeed, the way that '*Gud!*' seemingly resists translation into English in Cather's sentence symbolises the way that Ivar's religion is the one non-negotiable, untranslatable element of his personality.

³⁷ Sternberg, pp. 225-26.

Contrary to Sternberg's argument, then, the foreign words that Cather uses to represent her characters' foreign-language speech (either by selective reproduction or vehicular matching) and which she weaves into her narrators' prose (for example in the sentence, 'Mary took out of the oven a pan of *kolache*') generally do have a great deal of 'intrinsic importance' supplementary to their mimetic function.³⁸ For example, of the one hundred and forty-six thousand words that comprise *The Song of the Lark*, the German adjective '*künst-ler-isch*' ('artistic') is one of the most significant in terms of the novel's plot, and not simply because it denotes a character's code-switch from English to German (p. 357).³⁹

Searching for a word to describe 'the greatest singer [he] ever heard', Thea Kronborg's music teacher, Herr Wunsch, 'lift[s] his hand over his head and snap[s] his fingers noiselessly in the air' before code-switching from English to German as he 'fiercely' announces that, "'She was the most – [...] '*künst-ler-isch*!'". As Wunsch snaps his fingers something magical happens: he seemingly brings the German word '*künst-ler-isch*' into existence as a tangible object that he can hold 'in his uplifted hand'.⁴⁰ Offering the word-object to Thea, it 'glitter[s]' on his palm like a jewel (p. 357).

Having yet to learn German, Thea does not know what '*künst-ler-isch*' means, and it is possible that Cather's Anglophone readers do not recognise the word, either. Nonetheless, it is clear from the word's strange tangibility, its glittering patina and the way that Wunsch holds it aloft whilst carefully enunciating its syllables that it represents something valuable, mysterious and significant – something that Wunsch treasures and Thea desires – and that it counts, aesthetically and in terms of its meaning, for more than the familiar English words that surround it on the page.

The mysterious and valuable thing that '*künst-ler-isch*' represents is Thea's future. *The Song of the Lark* is a Künstlerroman charting Thea's journey to becoming an opera star so '*künst-ler-isch*' that her reputation will eventually outshine that of

³⁸ 'Neighbour Rosicky', p. 595.

³⁹ James Woodress estimates the length of this novel in *Willa Cather: A Literary Life* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), p. 272.

⁴⁰ For Cather, too, words were something that one could reach out and grasp. Interviewer Alice Booth described how, when 'groping for a word' in her mind, Cather would 'fl[i]ng out a fine, strong hand' as though she – like Wunsch – could reach out and take hold of it. See Alice Booth, 'America's Twelve Greatest Women', *Good Housekeeping*, September 1931, pp. 196-98, in *Willa Cather in Person*, pp. 121-26 (p. 121).

Wunsch's favourite singer. For thirteen-year-old Thea, that destiny is a secret, half-formed ambition. However, when Wunsch (whose name has an 'intrinsic importance' of its own because it is the German word for 'wish' – a moniker which symbolises his role as a sort of fairy godfather to Thea in this passage) pronounces the word '*künst-ler-isch*', seemingly turning it into a physical object on the palm of his hand, Thea's dream feels similarly concrete. Whatever bright possibility '*künst-ler-isch*' represents, Thea can almost reach out and take it from her teacher's outstretched hand. As the novel reveals, this is exactly what she does. Unfamiliar and strangely weighty, the German adjective '*künst-ler-isch*' has an 'intrinsic importance' beyond its mimetic function because it represents Thea's destiny.

As well as having an 'intrinsic importance' because they foreshadow characters' futures, some of the foreign words that Cather imports into her English-language prose have an 'intrinsic importance' because they are synecdoches for immigrant characters' pasts. In addition to enabling Cather to represent polylingual dialogue, this is the second way in which foreign words 'count' in her fiction. To understand this second role fully, it is helpful to read Cather's use of foreign words in light of Priscilla Wald's argument regarding the presence of 'untold stories' in the works of Melville, Du Bois and Stein. For Wald, the 'pressure' of these untold stories is 'mark[ed]' by the presence of 'unexpected words, awkward grammatical constructions, [and] rhetorical or thematic dissonances' which disrupt those authors' narratives.⁴¹ For example, the 'blank space between the second and third paragraphs' of Stein's *The Making of Americans* (1925) 'represents' the untold story of the 'ocean voyage, the sea change from which Americans emerge'.⁴²

Developing this argument, the foreign words in Cather's predominantly English-language fiction are stylistic dissonances which mark the pressure of immigrant characters' untold backstories. As Guy Reynolds has argued, 'the hinterland of the immigrant's past' is rarely described in detail in Cather's texts. This is because the pre-American portions of Cather's immigrant characters' lives typically take place before her narratives begin and are only intermittently 'shadowed forth' in the 'fractured tales' that those characters tell about their pasts.⁴³ In *My Ántonia*, for

⁴¹ Priscilla Wald, *Constituting Americans: Cultural Anxiety and Narrative Form* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 1.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 257.

⁴³ *Willa Cather in Context*, p. 86.

example, the Shimerdas' pre-immigration lives are never described in detail and are merely 'shadowed forth' in the fragmentary tales that Antonia tells Jim, for example the story of Old Hata. Building upon Reynolds's point, the 'hinterland of the immigrant's past' is also 'shadowed forth' in the synecdochic foreign words which Cather associates with particular immigrant characters.

The sociolinguistic concepts of code-switching due to 'lexical gaps' and 'cultural need' shed some light on how these foreign words represent the 'hinterland' of immigrant characters' untold European backstories. As discussed in Chapter One, code-switching is the term that sociolinguists use to describe instances when bilingual people use 'more than one language in the same interaction'.⁴⁴ In addition to being prompted by emotional and psychological triggers, code-switching also occurs when bilingual individuals encounter a 'gap' in one of their languages.

Primarily, this gap can be 'lexical'. The term 'lexical gap' is 'used in linguistics to refer to the absence of a linguistic unit [...] where one might have been expected'.⁴⁵ As Cecilia Montes-Alcalá and Colin Baker observe, when bilingual people encounter a 'lexical gap' in one of their languages they tend to code-switch in order to circumvent it.⁴⁶ For example, 'a French-English bilingual living in Britain may use words like "pub" and "bingo" when speaking French because there are no exact French equivalents for these words'.⁴⁷ Although Cather lived and wrote approximately twenty years before sociolinguists began to theorise code-switching, the letter she wrote to Knopf in 1938 defending her use of Spanish in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* by comparing her prose to Mérimée's indicates that she was familiar with the concept of 'lexical gaps' (if not the term) and the fact that they could be side-stepped by code-switching. Cather had to use Spanish words like 'casa, arroyo, hacienda, etc.' to describe the Southwestern landscape, she told Knopf, because they had 'no English [...] equivalents'.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Li Wei, 'Codeswitching', in *The Oxford Handbook of Sociolinguistics*, ed. by Robert Bayley, Richard Cameron and Ceil Lucas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 362-76 (p. 361).

⁴⁵ 'lexical gap', in *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*, ed. by David Crystal (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), p. 206.

⁴⁶ Cecilia Montes-Alcalá, 'Code-Switching in US Latino Literature: The Role of Biculturalism', *Language and Literature*, 24.3 (2015), 264-81 (p. 274).

⁴⁷ Colin Baker, *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* (Buffalo, NY: Multilingual Matters, 2011), p. 108.

⁴⁸ 'To Alfred A. Knopf, April 19, 1938', p. 547.

As Palleau-Papin notes, Cather may have gleaned the notion that some words have no ‘equivalents’ in other languages from another nineteenth-century French author who experimented with multilingualism, Pierre Loti.⁴⁹ We know that Cather was familiar with Loti’s work because his novel *Pêcheur d’Islande* (1886) was one of the texts that her Pittsburgh friend George Seibel listed as having read with her during their weekly French and German reading sessions (which took place between 1896-1906).⁵⁰ Furthermore, as Palleau-Papin observes, Cather’s defence of her use of Spanish words in *Archbishop* in her letter to Knopf strongly echoes Loti’s justification of his use of the French transliteration of the Japanese word ‘shamisen’ (*‘chamécen’*) in another of his novels, *Madame Chrysanthème* (1887):

Jusqu’à présent j’avais toujours écrit sa *guitare*, pour éviter ces termes exotiques dont on m’a reproché l’abus. Mais ni le mot *guitare* ni le mot *mandoline* ne désignent bien cet instrument mince avec un si long manche, dont les notes hautes sont plus mièvres que la voix des sauterelles; — à partir de maintenant, j’écirai *chamécen*.⁵¹

In this passage, Loti justifies his resolution to use foreign words (‘termes exotiques’ like *‘chamécen’*) on the basis that their French translations (in this case, *‘guitare’*) are unsatisfactory equivalents. The similarity between this statement and Cather’s belief that some foreign words had ‘no English [...] equivalents’ indicates that, whilst Mérimée’s fiction taught Cather how to selectively reproduce foreign words, Loti’s writing taught her about lexical gaps and how to use code-switching to circumvent them.

In addition to code-switching in order to avoid ‘lexical gaps’, bilingual individuals also code-switch in order to circumvent cultural gaps. As Baker argues, bilingual people often ‘switch to one language to express a concept which has no equivalent in the culture of the other language’.⁵² Montes-Alcalá agrees that some words can be easily translated and yet they still prompt bilingual people to ‘code-switch’ because the ideas that they represent are more ‘culturally-bound’ to one

⁴⁹ Françoise Palleau-Papin, ‘Pierre Loti and Willa Cather’s Journey Home: So Near, So Far’, *Willa Cather Newsletter and Review*, 58.2 (2015), 35-38 (p. 36)

⁵⁰ George Seibel, ‘Miss Willa Cather from Nebraska’, *New Colophon*, 2.7 (1949), 195-208, in *Willa Cather Remembered*, ed. by Sharon Hoover and L. Brent Bohlke (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), pp. 11-21 (p. 13).

⁵¹ Pierre Loti, *Madame Chrysanthème* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1927), pp. 256-57.

⁵² Baker, p. 108.

language than another.⁵³ For example, the word ‘subway’, Montes-Alcalá argues, tends to be written in English in LatinX literature – even though it can easily be translated into Spanish (‘el metro’) – because it represents something more firmly associated with American cities and English than with Cuba or Puerto Rico and Spanish.⁵⁴

Once again, Cather seemingly had a prescient understanding of this sociolinguistic phenomenon. In *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, for example, Cather’s narrator deploys a French word to circumvent a cultural gap when he/she notes that ‘Father Vaillant had his *gigot* [a roast leg of meat] to himself’ when dining at Manuel Lujon’s house (p. 311). Whilst there is no ‘lexical gap’ in either Spanish or English for the word ‘*gigot*’, the method of cooking that it represents is so alien to Lujon’s New-Mexican household that it causes outrage in his kitchen: “‘Cook a roast in an hour! [...] Mother of God, Padre, the blood will not be dried in it!’” (p. 311). Consequently, although the word ‘*gigot*’ can *technically* be translated into Spanish or English, it is so ‘culturally-bound’ to the French language that Cather’s narrator (who is telling the anecdote from Frenchman Vaillant’s perspective) briefly code-switches in order to avoid doing so.

In the same way that cultural or lexical gaps trigger bilingual individuals to code-switch, gaps or discrepancies between immigrant characters’ Old- and New-World lives trigger Cather to code-switch and insert foreign words into her predominantly English-language prose. Consequently, just as the words ‘casa, arroyo, hacienda’ and ‘*gigot*’ represent ideas which are lexically- or culturally-bound to Spanish and French, the foreign words that Cather deploys in her texts in relation to her immigrant characters (either in their dialogue or in her descriptions of them) frequently signify concepts which those characters perceive to be inextricably tied to the ‘hinterland’ of their former lives in the Old World.

However, unlike the words ‘bingo’, ‘subway’ and ‘*gigot*’, the foreign words that Cather uses in relation to her immigrant characters are not un-translatable: they do not represent concepts that are culturally alien to the United States, nor do they represent things that cannot be expressed in the English language. Rather they represent systems of values, jobs and roles in society for which her immigrant characters *personally* struggle to find equivalents in their new lives in America. For

⁵³ Montes-Alcalá, p. 274.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

example, the words ‘*kreutzer*’ and ‘*handworkers*’, which Cather deploys in ‘Peter’ and *O Pioneers!*, represent things that Peter Sadelack and Mr. Bergson – two immigrant characters who struggle to adapt to life in the United States – possessed in Europe but lost in the process of immigration, leaving significant gaps in their New-World lives (‘Peter’, p. 11; *O Pioneers!*, p. 148). Fragments of these characters’ native languages, ‘*kreutzer*’ and ‘*handworkers*’ are comparable to the ‘fragments’ of Anasazi pottery that Thea Kronborg discovers during her sojourn in Panther Canyon in *The Song of the Lark* (*Lark*, p. 551).

Primarily, like Thea’s pottery fragments, these fragments of Old-World languages are relics from a pre-American way of life: whilst Thea’s artefacts are the archaeological remains of a time before America was colonised by Europeans, ‘*kreutzer*’ and ‘*handworkers*’ are the linguistic remains of the lives that Peter and Mr. Bergson led in Bohemia and Sweden before they emigrated. Moreover, just as Thea’s pottery fragments have resisted erosion over thousands of years, ‘*kreutzer*’ and ‘*handworkers*’ represent elements of Peter and Mr. Bergson’s European lives which have stubbornly resisted translation into American life.

A further similarity between Thea’s fragments of pottery and these fragments of foreign languages is that they are highly synecdochic. When Thea examines her pottery fragments (which are the remains of water jars), she is able to imagine what they would have looked like whole and how the Cliff-Dweller women would have filled them from the stream at the bottom of the Canyon. So immersive are Thea’s imaginings, she can even ‘feel the weight of an Indian baby hanging to her back’ as she follows in the women’s footsteps along the ancient water trails (p. 550). From shattered fragments of pottery, Thea is, therefore, able to extrapolate a detailed impression of the ancient Cliff-Dweller women’s daily routine.

Similarly, if Cather’s readers imagine the Old-World contexts in which Peter and Mr. Bergson might have used the words ‘*kreutzer*’ and ‘*handworkers*’, they are able to extrapolate from these linguistic fragments an impression of the lives, jobs and routines that the men left behind in their native countries. Shedding some light on the ‘hinterland’ of Peter and Mr. Bergson’s former lives, these words offer readers valuable clues as to why they struggle to adapt to their new lives in the United States. In this

respect, these words fit Wald's definition of stylistic 'discontinuities' which represent elements of a narrative that have 'been repressed'.⁵⁵

Both Peter and Mr. Bergson are based on a real-life model, Francis Sadilek, who was the father of Cather's Bohemian friend Annie Pavelka (her model for *Antonia* Shimerda). Shortly before the Cather family arrived in Nebraska in 1877, Francis Sadilek committed suicide. As Cather noted in 1934, the:

first thing I heard of when I got to Nebraska at the age of eight was Mr. Sadalaak's [Sadilek's] suicide [...]. It made a great impression on me. People never stopped telling the details.⁵⁶

Neither did Cather. Throughout her career, Cather told and retold the story of Sadilek's failure to adapt to life in America, first in the short story 'Peter' (1892) and later in *My Antonia* (1918). Although he does not commit suicide, Alexandra Bergson's father John Bergson in *O Pioneers!* (1913) is haunted by shades of Francis Sadilek's discontent.

In Cather's earliest version of Francis Sadilek's story, 'Peter', the gaps between the eponymous character's pre- and post-immigration lives are epitomised by the word '*kreutzer*' – a loan word of Germanic origin used in Peter's native Czech to signify a unit of currency which circulated Bohemia, South Germany and Austria until the 1890s; as such, the word represents a measure of value. In the story, Peter Sadelack (whose surname closely echoes that of his real-life counterpart, Sadilek), lives in Nebraska with his wife and family but is 'very homesick for Bohemia' (p. 10). His misery in the New World is exacerbated by 'a stroke of paralysis' which prevents him from playing his cherished violin (pp. 10-11). Crushed by this and his son Antone's threat to sell the instrument he can no longer play, Peter breaks his violin and kills himself, lamenting that his son will not pay a single '*kreutzer* to pray for my soul, not one *kreutzer*, he is so careful of money' (p. 11).

The *kreutzer* was a low value coin and so, most simply, Peter is lamenting the fact that his miserly son will not spend even the smallest amount of money on him. However, it is significant that *kreutzer* is the only word of Czech (via German) origin used in the entire story. Just as the narrator of *Death Comes for the Archbishop* quotes

⁵⁵ Wald, p. 254.

⁵⁶ Willa Cather, 'To Carrie Miner Sherwood, January 27, 1934', in *Letters*, pp. 492-93 (p. 492).

the word ‘*gigot*’ in French because the method of cooking it signifies is culturally-bound to that language, Peter’s conspicuous use of the word ‘*kreutzer*’ rather than ‘cent’ or ‘dollar’ in an otherwise English-language story suggests that value and worth are concepts that he associates more firmly with his old life in Bohemia than with his new life in America.

Indeed, Peter finds Nebraskan life worthless: he likes neither ‘the country, nor the people’ (p. 10). He left everything that he does value – ‘parties’, ‘dress coat[s]’ and tickets to see ‘Rachel’ (things which he could purchase with a pocketful of ‘*kreutzer*’ in Prague but which no amount of money would enable him to purchase in Nebraska) – behind in Europe when he emigrated (p. 11). Consequently, Peter’s inability to translate ‘*kreutzer*’ into dollars is seemingly a linguistic reflection of his inability to convert his European system of values into an American one – something which precludes him from seeing value in his new life in the United States.

Furthermore, the untranslated word ‘*kreutzer*’ draws attention to the devastating gap between Peter’s Old- and New-World occupations. Recalling the title of Leo Tolstoy’s novella *The Kreutzer Sonata* (a text which Cather read when she was fourteen), the word ‘*kreutzer*’ has strong connections with Peter’s former career as ‘a second violinist in the great theatre at Prague’ (p. 10).⁵⁷ Indeed, Tolstoy’s novella was named after Beethoven’s Sonata in A minor for piano and violin, ‘The Kreutzer Sonata’ – a piece which was, in turn, named after the famous violinist Rodolphe Kreutzer. In Prague, Peter, like Kreutzer, was an excellent violinist who was praised for his fine ‘touch’; in contrast, in Nebraska he is regarded as a ‘lazy old man’ and a drag on his son (p. 10, p. 11). A musician who cannot play but who resists manual labour (and who, therefore, no longer has any earning power), Peter has no currency in Nebraska. As such, it seems fitting that masses for his stubbornly European soul should be purchased in ‘*kreutzer*’ – the coin of the last place that he valued and which valued him in return.

Like Peter, Swedish-born immigrant Mr. Bergson’s struggle to adapt to Nebraskan life in *O Pioneers!* is exacerbated by a loss of vocation – something that

⁵⁷ Sharon Hoover and Melissa Ryan, eds, ‘Leo Tolstoy’, in ‘Bibliography of Willa Cather’s Reading’, in *The Willa Cather Archive* <http://cather.unl.edu/reading.bibl_author_Tolstoy_L.html> [accessed 21/09/2016]; ‘Rodolphe Kreutzer’, in *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online* <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Rodolphe-Kreutzer>> [accessed 21/09/ 2016].

Cather highlights by using a conspicuously untranslated ‘Swedish’ word, ‘*handwerkers*’, to denote his Old-World profession. As Cather’s narrator notes, Mr. Bergson and his immigrant neighbours ‘had been *handwerkers* at home; tailors, locksmiths, joiners, cigar-makers, etc. Bergson himself had worked in a shipyard’ (p. 148).

Whilst it is clear from her use of italics that Cather is quoting a foreign language in this sentence, the exact origins of the word ‘*handwerkers*’ are unclear. ‘*Handwerkers*’ is the genitive form of the German noun ‘handwerker’, meaning ‘craftspeople’ (indeed, Cather may have mistakenly added an ‘s’ to the end of the word believing that was the way to pluralise it).⁵⁸ However, given that Mr. Bergson’s native language is Swedish, it is more likely that ‘*handwerkers*’ is Cather’s phonetic transcription of the Swedish word for ‘craftspeople’, ‘*hantverkare*’; indeed, when Hildegard Wieselgren translated Cather’s novel into Swedish in 1919 she simply exchanged ‘*handwerkers*’ for ‘*hantverkare*’.⁵⁹ As Cather explained to her friend Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, she often wrote foreign words ‘down by ear’ and so did not always know how to spell them; in this instance, it seems that Cather’s editors also missed her mistake.⁶⁰ Regardless of which language Cather intended to quote, it is clear that ‘*handwerkers*’ is a fragment of an Old-World language which represents a part of Mr. Bergson’s Old-World life which he cannot translate into a part of his new life in the United States.

In order to survive on the landlocked Nebraska Divide, Mr. Bergson is forced to abandon his old career of shipbuilding for farming. A poor agrarian, Mr. Bergson spends ‘his first five years on the Divide’ getting into debt, the following ‘six getting out’ and dies exhausted in exactly the same position as he started (p. 148). Just as the word ‘*handwerkers*’ seemingly resists translation into English in Cather’s sentence, Mr. Bergson’s struggle to thrive in the United States boils down to his inability to translate his Old-World shipbuilding skills into the farming skills that he needs to solve the ‘enigma’ of the Nebraskan landscape (p. 148). Unable to translate himself from a

⁵⁸ ‘handwerker, n’, in *Oxford German Dictionary*, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 341.

⁵⁹ See ‘hantverk, n’, in *Modern Engelsk-Svensk Ordbok*, ed. by Bror Danielsson (Stockholm: Bokförlaget Prisma, 1987), p. 173; Willa Cather, *Hell, Banbrytare!*, trans. by Hildegard Wieselgren (Copenhagen: Egmont, 2019), location 194 of 2565 (Kindle Edition).

⁶⁰ ‘To Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, April [actually March] 22 [1913]’, in *Letters*, pp.174-76 (p. 175).

'*handwerker*' into a farmer, Mr. Bergson is unable to translate himself from a European into an American. It is for this reason that, even after eleven years in Nebraska, he still regards Sweden as 'home' (p. 148). Like '*kreutzer*', then, the word '*handworkers*' epitomises a way of life that Mr. Bergson lost in translation between the Old World and the New.

In addition to functioning as synecdoches for the lives that Peter and Mr. Bergson left behind, the words '*kreutzer*' and '*handworkers*' reveal that Cather conceived of immigration and Americanisation as processes of translation. For Cather, the untranslatability of certain elements of immigrants' past lives had both positive and negative consequences. In her retellings of Francis Sadilek's depression, Cather demonstrates that immigrants' failure to translate their Old-World systems of values and occupations into elements of their New-World lives had devastating consequences for their mental health. On the other hand, Cather's texts indicate that small failures of translation, for example Father Vaillant's stubborn refusal to abandon French methods of cooking in New Mexico, offered a healthy antidote to the 'deadly' standardisation of culture which, in her opinion, blighted modern American life and threatened to cut off her artistic food supply: 'This passion for Americanizing everything and everybody is a deadly disease with us'.⁶¹

In order to thrive in Cather's texts, immigrant characters must yield to America's prevailing language and culture by learning English and adapting to their new occupations. However, they must also leave some elements of their old lives and languages (for example, methods of cooking, crafts, stories and songs) untranslated in order to maintain a sense of fluency between their European past and their American present. By weaving small, untranslated fragments of foreign languages into her predominantly English-language prose, Cather created a prose style which epitomised this paradox and, by extension, her desire to celebrate America's linguistic diversity whilst at the same time controlling and containing it within the framework of her own native language.

In summary, the unfamiliar foreign words that Cather imported across linguistic borders and into her English-language texts 'count' for two reasons.⁶² Firstly,

⁶¹ Rose C. Feld, 'Restlessness Such as Ours Does Not Make for Beauty', *New York Times Book Review*, 21 December 1924, p. 11, in *Willa Cather in Person*, pp. 68-72 (p. 72).

⁶² 'Willa Cather Talks of Work', p. 10.

functioning as ‘mimetic synecdoche[s]’ indicating which language her bilingual characters are speaking, they count for entire languages of other words.⁶³ Secondly, functioning as synecdoches for immigrant characters’ Old-World lives, they are stylistic dissonances evoking untold backstories of immigration and loss which would require hundreds of words to write in detail. Just as the words in Cather’s neighbours’ stories gave her the ‘feeling of an older world beyond the sea’, the foreign words in her texts give her readers the feeling of the old lives that her immigrant characters left behind when they crossed the Atlantic.⁶⁴ In Ezra Pound’s phraseology, then, these foreign words are ‘charged’ with meaning – a property which helped Cather to enact her most famous theory of art: simplification.⁶⁵

Foreign Words and Simplification

Cather first discussed her theory of simplification publically in 1913 when she explained to the *Philadelphia Record* that ‘Whether it is a pianist, or a singer, or a writer, art ought to simplify’.⁶⁶ However, her letters indicate that the seeds of this theory were sown several years earlier. Writing to Ida Kleber Todd in 1934, Cather recalled that:

Once, long ago, in some discussion, you said, half under your breath,
“Oh yes, of course, art simplifies.” I had never thought of that before; I
have been trying to live by that remark ever since.⁶⁷

Cather does not indicate in this letter when ‘Once, long ago’ was. However, the fact that Ida Kleber was the daughter of a famous Pittsburgh musician, Henry Kleber, suggests that this important ‘discussion’ took place during the ten years that Cather lived in Pittsburgh, 1896-1906.⁶⁸ This means that Cather may have conceived of her theory of simplification as early as 1896, making it almost as fundamental to her fiction as her use of foreign words, which appear in her published texts from 1892 onwards.

⁶³ Sternberg, p. 225.

⁶⁴ ‘Willa Cather Talks of Work’, p. 10.

⁶⁵ Ezra Pound, ‘How to Read’, in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), pp. 15-40 (p. 25).

⁶⁶ ‘Willa Cather Talks of Work’, p. 8.

⁶⁷ Willa Cather, ‘To Ida Kleber Todd, December 28 [1934]’, in *Letters*, p. 504.

⁶⁸ Edward G. Baynham, ‘Henry Kleber, Early Pittsburgh Musician’, *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, 25 (1942) 113-20 (p. 114).

In addition to Ida Kleber Todd, another likely influence upon Cather's belief that art should simplify was S. S. McClure, her boss during the six years (1906-1912) that she worked at *McClure's Magazine*. After she left the magazine, Cather ghost-wrote *The Autobiography of S. S. McClure* (published serially in *McClure's Magazine* between October 1913 and May 1914) and in it she expressed McClure's opinion that a good author was one who would 'cut' his work if it was 'congested'.⁶⁹ Similarly, recording McClure's views on Robert Louis Stevenson, Cather wrote:

[Stevenson] would have been very much ashamed of a style that condensation could hurt. He often lamented that Balzac did not have somebody to edit and condense his novels for him.⁷⁰

McClure's editorial preference for excision and condensation may well have reinforced Cather's own preference for succinctness and simplification. Alternatively, when Cather wrote her boss's autobiography, she may have chosen to foreground the aesthetic theories of his which most closely aligned with her own. Indeed, when Cather outlined her own theories of art in 'The Novel Demeublé' (1922), she once again referred to Stevenson's views on Balzac ('Stevenson wanted to blue-pencil a great deal of Balzac's "presentation"'), raising the question of whether this was, in fact, her anecdote rather than McClure's.⁷¹

It was in her essays 'The Novel Demeublé' and 'On the Art of Fiction' (1920) that Cather wrote most extensively about her theory of simplification. In 'On the Art of Fiction', Cather argued that, for a writer, 'very nearly the whole of the higher artistic process' was:

finding what conventions of form and detail one [could] do without and yet preserve the spirit of the whole – so that all that one has suppressed and cut away is there to the reader's consciousness as if it were in type upon the page.⁷²

In 'The Novel Demeublé' Cather developed this idea, introducing the concept of 'the thing not named':

⁶⁹ Willa Cather, *The Autobiography of S. S. McClure* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), p. 196.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

⁷¹ Willa Cather, 'The Novel Demeublé', in *Stories, Poems, & Other Writings*, pp. 834-37 (p. 835).

⁷² Willa Cather, 'On the Art of Fiction', in *Stories, Poems, & Other Writings*, pp. 939-40 (p. 939).

Whatever is felt upon the page without being specifically named there – that, one might say, is created. It is the inexplicable presence of the thing not named, the overtone divined by the ear but not heard by it, the verbal mood, the emotional aura of the fact or the thing or the deed, that gives high quality to the novel or the drama, as well as to poetry itself.⁷³

These essays reveal that Cather's theory of simplification hinges upon a paradox akin to that which underpins her use of selective reproduction. When Cather used selective reproduction, she aimed to introduce linguistic diversity into her texts whilst simultaneously using as few foreign words as possible, thus ensuring that English remained the primary language of her prose. Likewise, when Cather simplified her texts, her aim was to eliminate detail whilst simultaneously preserving the feeling ('the overtone', 'the emotional aura') of the things she chose not to name.⁷⁴ In both cases, Cather was split between an impulse to cut words from her texts and an impulse to conserve the feeling (or the linguistic diversity) that those words produced.

Arguably, when Cather imported highly synecdochic foreign words into her prose, she achieved the ideal balance between excising detail and simultaneously ensuring that it remained 'there to the reader's consciousness'.⁷⁵ For example, when Cather deployed synecdochic foreign words like '*kreutzer*' and '*handworkers*' in her fiction, she was able to make immigrant characters' Old-World lives 'felt upon the page' without 'specifically' describing them there.⁷⁶ As Reynolds has argued, 'the hinterland of the immigrant's past' is one 'of the thing[s] not named' in detail in Cather's fiction; however, if readers consider the significance of Cather's untranslated foreign words in tandem with the brief anecdotes that her characters tell about their past lives, an impression of that 'hinterland' (an image of the lives and roles in society that those characters left behind) becomes available to their 'consciousness'.⁷⁷ Enabling her to write succinctly whilst ensuring that the detail she 'suppressed and cut away' was still there in her texts, foreign words which seemingly 'count[ed] for twenty' were a literary device that helped Cather to put her theory of simplification into practice.⁷⁸

⁷³ 'The Novel *Démeublé*', p. 837.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ 'On the Art of Fiction', p. 939.

⁷⁶ 'The Novel *Démeublé*', p. 837.

⁷⁷ *Willa Cather in Context*, p. 86; 'The Novel *Démeublé*', p. 837; 'On the Art of Fiction', p. 939.

⁷⁸ 'On the Art of Fiction', p. 939.

A further paradox inherent in Cather's theory of simplification is that, although it is a theory that she claimed to 'live by', not all of her texts appear to uphold its principles.⁷⁹ In *Cather Among the Moderns* (2019), for example, Janis Stout struggles to reconcile the length of *The Song of the Lark* with the principles that Cather expresses in 'The Novel D  meubl  ': 'one would never guess from reading the essay that she had published novels of such fullness and detail as *The Song of the Lark*'.⁸⁰ Nonetheless, it is evident from Cather's letter to Ida Kleber Todd and her interview with the *Philadelphia Record* (1913) that she had already formulated her theory of simplification at least two years before *The Song of the Lark* was published. So, how can critics square Cather's theory with her practice?

Arguably, Cather's use of foreign words offers a solution to this problem. Whilst the principles of simplification are evident in neither the length of *The Song of the Lark* nor its detail, they are evident in Cather's use of foreign words throughout it and earlier texts including *O Pioneers!* (1913) and 'Peter' (1892). For example, when Cather deploys the German adjective 'k  nst-ler-isch' ('artistic') in *The Song of the Lark*, she gives readers a glimpse of Thea's future without – at that point in the novel – describing it in detail 'upon the page' (p. 357).⁸¹ At the same time, the word offers readers clues about two further 'thing[s] not named' in the novel: Herr Wunsch's former life in Germany and the reasons for his unhappiness in America.⁸²

The fact that Wunsch makes a circumventory code-switch from English to German when he uses the word 'k  nst-ler-isch' ("She was the most – [...] "k  nst-ler-isch!")") indicates that 'art' is something that he associates more strongly with the Old World than with the New (p. 357). This is corroborated by Wunsch's argument that, unlike the singers he knew in Europe, the 'Americanischen Fr  uline' he teaches in Colorado have 'nothing inside them' which is conducive to art (p. 363). It is Wunsch's struggle to find anything 'k  nst-ler-isch' in the New World and the distressing gap that this creates between his pre- and post-immigration lives which, Cather implies, causes his alcoholism and prevents him from settling in Moonstone. Condensing Wunsch's past and Thea's future into a single, highly synecdochic German word, Cather 'cut

⁷⁹ 'To Ida Kleber Todd, December 28 [1934]', p. 504.

⁸⁰ Janis P. Stout, *Cather Among the Moderns* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2019), p. 152.

⁸¹ 'On the Art of Fiction', p. 939.

⁸² 'The Novel D  meubl  ', p. 837.

away' detail from her text whilst simultaneously making it available 'to the reader's consciousness' – if, of course, that reader is willing to pause, translate the word '*künstlerisch*' and unpack its significance in relation to the novel's plot.⁸³ Although *The Song of the Lark* may not on first glance seem like a minimalist text, it does, contrary to Stout's belief, uphold Cather's theory of simplification.

In summary, Cather's use of foreign words which 'count for twenty' illuminates a hitherto unexplored way in which her fiction fulfils her most famous theory of art. Furthermore, it raises the possibility that Cather's early experiments with multilingualism in texts such as 'Peter' and *The Prairie Trilogy* may even have contributed to the development of her theory of simplification. For example, when Cather deployed words such as '*kreutzer*' and '*handworkers*' in 'Peter' and *O Pioneers!* (both of which predate the publication of 'On the Art of Fiction' and 'The Novel Demeublé' and one of which – 'Peter' – even predates Cather's meeting with Ida Kleber Todd), she learned which 'conventions of form and detail' she could 'do without' whilst still evoking 'the thing not named' in the form of immigrant characters' former lives.⁸⁴ Whether or not Cather consciously connected her experiments with multilingualism to her theory of simplification, it is evident that they are firmly interlocked cornerstones of her literary style.

'What does this mean, please?': Foreign Words, Reader Response and 'Defamiliarization'

After one of her music lessons in *The Song of the Lark*, Thea asks Wunsch for help with the book she is reading. The unnamed text – most likely Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (1604) – is 'all English' except for one line, '*Lente currite, lente currite, noctis equi*', which Thea does not understand (p. 317).⁸⁵ Unwilling to let 'difficult things' 'pass [her] by', Thea copies the unfamiliar words onto a 'slip of paper' and asks Wunsch to translate them: "'What does this mean, please? I guess it's Latin.'" (p. 317).

⁸³ 'On the Art of Fiction', p. 939.

⁸⁴ Ibid; 'The Novel Demeublé', p. 837.

⁸⁵ Doctor Faustus quotes this line from Ovid's *Amores* in his final soliloquy. See Christopher Marlowe, *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (1604), in *Marlowe: The Plays* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 2000), pp. 160-205 (V. 3. 72).

As Lauret argues (and as Thea discovers), the generation of meaning in a multilingual text depends upon ‘the reader’s willingness’ to ‘swim across [linguistic] borders’; Reed Way Dasenbrock concurs that a key effect of literary multilingualism is that it ‘make[s] the reader work harder’.⁸⁶ In order to understand her multilingual book, Thea must actively seek out a translation of the words she does not understand. Likewise, in order to extract the maximum amount of meaning from Cather’s multilingual texts, Anglophone readers must put effort into puzzling out the significance of foreign words like ‘*kreutzer*’ and ‘*handworkers*’. In this respect, Cather’s multilingualism pushes readers to ‘participate [more] actively in the reading process’.⁸⁷ For Cather, eliciting this active reader response was very important. As Jo Ann Middleton argues, Cather ‘anticipates’ in her fiction ‘the integral role of the reader in the creative process of modern literature’.⁸⁸ For Marilee Lindemann, the onus placed upon readers to participate in the creative process is a direct result of Cather’s use of simplification – a technique which makes readers ‘detective[s], searching for evidence of things “not named”’.⁸⁹

The connection between simplification and reader participation is one that Cather herself foregrounded in an interview published in the *Bookman* in 1921. Discussing her ‘new novel’, *One of Ours*, Cather explained that she had been experimenting with a new method of simplifying her prose: ‘juxtaposition’. Her aim in writing her new novel, she explained, had been ‘to cut out all analysis, observation, description’ (thus simplifying her prose) ‘in order to make things and people tell their own story’. To illustrate this technique, Cather asked her interviewer, Latrobe Carroll, to imagine that she had:

put here on the table a green vase, and beside it a yellow orange. [...] Side by side, they produce a reaction which neither of them will produce alone. Why should I try to say anything clever [...]? I want the reader to see the orange and the vase—beyond that, *I* am out of it. [...] One must choose one’s audience, and the audience I try to write for is the one

⁸⁶ Lauret, p. 230; Reed Way Dasenbrock, ‘Intelligibility and Meaningfulness in Multicultural Literature in English’, *PMLA*, 102.1 (1987), 10-19 (p. 14).

⁸⁷ Marilee Lindemann, ‘Introduction’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Willa Cather*, ed. by Lindemann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 1-16 (p. 14).

⁸⁸ Jo Ann Middleton, *Willa Cather’s Modernism: A Study of Style and Technique* (Toronto: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990), p. 65.

⁸⁹ Lindemann, p. 14.

interested in the effect the green vase brings out in the orange, and the orange in the green vase.⁹⁰

In order for her juxtapositions (and, by extension, her simplified prose) to be meaningful, Cather required ‘interested’, engaged readers who would collaborate with her by supplying the connections between objects and people that she had deliberately omitted.⁹¹

As Catherine Morley argues, Cather’s presentation ‘without explanation [of] different languages in tandem’ is simply a specialised form of juxtaposition.⁹² Rather than juxtaposing objects, Cather places foreign words ‘side by side’ with English words and leaves it to readers to decide why she has done so. However, given that Cather never provides translations for the foreign words that she imports into her texts, the meaningfulness of these juxtapositions is primarily contingent upon readers finding out the meaning of unfamiliar words – a task which further slows down the reading process. Cather’s use of multilingualism to slow her readers down in this way represents a hitherto unexamined connection between her fiction and Viktor Shklovsky’s theory of ‘defamiliarization’.

In ‘Art, as Device’ (1917), Shklovsky proposes that art ‘exists in order to restore the sensation of life’; in order to facilitate this recovery of sensation, artists must make the familiar unfamiliar.⁹³ Shklovsky argues that, by doing so, and by ‘increas[ing] the duration and complexity of perception’, artists can productively disrupt their audience’s ‘automatized’ response to the world – a process which he calls ‘defamiliarization’.⁹⁴ One method that authors may use to extend a reader’s length of perception is deploying ‘poetic language’, which Shklovsky defines as ‘a difficult, laborious language which puts the brakes on perception’.⁹⁵ The most unfamiliar, impeding and poetic language an author can use, Shklovsky argues, is a foreign language and, quoting Aristotle, he establishes a clear link between multilingualism and ‘defamiliarization’:

⁹⁰ Willa Cather, quoted in Latrobe Carroll, ‘Willa Sibert Cather’, *Bookman*, 3 May 1921, in *Willa Cather in Person*, pp. 19-24 (p. 24).

⁹¹ ‘Willa Sibert Cather’, p. 24.

⁹² Catherine Morley, ‘Voice of the Prairies? Willa Cather and the International Modernist Scene’, *Willa Cather Newsletter and Review*, 51.1 (2007), 7-10 (p. 8).

⁹³ Shklovsky, p. 162.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

“poetic language” must have the character of the foreign, the surprising. It often is quite literally a foreign language – Sumerian for Assyrians, Old Bulgarian as the basis of literary Russian – or else it might be elevated language, like the almost literary language of folk songs.⁹⁶

It is unclear whether Cather read Shklovsky’s essay; however, by importing fragments of French, German, Spanish, Italian and Norwegian into her predominantly English-language prose, she created a language which, if not exactly ‘laborious’, nonetheless put ‘the brakes’ on Anglophone readers’ immediate understanding. Moreover, as an analysis of her use of the Czech word ‘*Blázne*’ in her short story ‘The Bohemian Girl’ (1912) reveals, Cather used the ‘defamiliarizing’ nature of foreign words not only to slow readers down, but also to push them to consider different ways in which words can convey meaning.

In ‘The Bohemian Girl’, Nils Ericson returns home from Europe to Nebraska in order to reconnect with his old flame, Clara Vavrika, the eponymous ‘Bohemian Girl’. Since Nils’s departure, Clara has married his brother Olaf, but their relationship is strained. Readers catch their first glimpse of Clara when, having just left Nils’s mother’s house, she passes him heading in the opposite direction:

Instantly he flashed out of the road and stood behind a thicket of wild plum bushes that grew in the sandy bed. Peering through the dusk, he saw a light horse, under tight rein, descending the hill at a sharp walk. The rider was a slender woman – barely visible against the dark hillside – [...] As she passed the plum thicket her horse snuffed the air and shied. She struck him, pulling him in sharply, with an angry exclamation, “*Blázne!*” in Bohemian. (pp. 422-23)

Silhouetted against the dusk, Clara is a mysterious figure. Equally intriguing is Nils’s reaction to her. At this stage, readers do not know that Clara and Nils were once in love. However, the fact that he hides when he sees her indicates that he is deliberately avoiding her. Clara’s horse’s behaviour is equally odd: the way that he ‘snuff[s] the air’ when he reaches the place where Nils is hiding suggests that he has recognised the protagonist’s scent – an indication that Clara and Nils know each other (p. 423). Thanks to this curious entrance, the reader is keen to know more about Clara and this makes the one word that she speaks before riding away – ‘*Blázne*’ – all the more intriguing.

By omitting to provide a translation for ‘*Blázne*’, Cather opens up the possibility of different levels (and lengths) of reader engagement. Most obviously, the experience

⁹⁶ Shklovsky, p. 171.

of reading ‘The Bohemian Girl’ will be different for monolingual readers as opposed to readers who speak Czech as well as English. As Dasenbrock notes, when reading multilingual fiction, ‘The bilingual-bicultural reader has an easy time [...] [whilst] the monolingual reader has a more difficult time’.⁹⁷ By choosing not to translate the Czech word, Cather places monolingual readers at a disadvantage. However, as Dasenbrock explains, this disadvantage, ‘far from preventing [the monolingual] reader from experiencing the [multilingual] work justly, is what creates meaning for that reader’.⁹⁸ Indeed, for Cather’s Anglophone readers, the process of working out how to deal with the unknown word ‘*Blázne*’ is almost important as its actual definition.

Firstly, if Anglophone readers do not recognise the Czech word, they must decide whether or not to investigate its meaning. If readers choose to skim over ‘*Blázne*’, it is not detrimental to their understanding of the story; they can still glean from Cather’s comment that the word is an ‘angry exclamation’ that Clara is cross about something (p. 423). However, even if Anglophone readers choose to end their engagement with the Czech word there, their progress through the text has still been temporarily impeded by this moment of uncertainty. ‘[I]ncreas[ing] the duration and complexity of perception’, the Czech word ‘defamiliarizes’ Cather’s prose.⁹⁹

Given that the word ‘*Blázne*’ is one of the first pieces of information that Cather provides about Clara, however, it is likely that some diligent readers will – like Thea – wish to investigate its meaning in more detail. If they follow this route, readers have two options: they can either look at the word and form an evaluation based on the information conveyed by its sound and shape or they can look the word up in a dictionary. In *The Song of the Lark* and *My Ántonia*, Cather models these two responses by describing how her characters respond to unfamiliar words.

The first of these responses – determining the meaning of an unknown foreign word from its sound and shape alone – is a method of translation used by contemporary translator and writer Lydia Davis. When translating the Norwegian novel *Det uoppløselige episke element i Telemark i perioden 1591-1896* (2013), for example, Davis – who knew little Norwegian when she began the project – deliberately avoided using a dictionary and instead ‘figure[d] [...] out’ the language from the novel itself,

⁹⁷ Dasenbrock, p. 16.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 18.

⁹⁹ Shklovsky, p. 162.

approaching it like ‘an egyptologist, deciphering hieroglyphs’.¹⁰⁰ Treating unknown vocabulary like a ‘riddle’ (the answer to which lies in itself) is also the preferred approach of Joe Giddy, Ray Kennedy’s brakeman in *The Song of the Lark*.¹⁰¹

Giddy’s prized possession is a postcard of ‘a naked girl lying on a couch’ entitled ‘The Odalisque’ (p. 393). Although he does not know what ‘Odalisque’ means, Giddy is confident that it signifies ‘something wicked’ because there is a ‘wicked look about the consonants’ (p. 393). Whilst Giddy’s reading may seem superficial, John Ward Powell argues that he is correct in thinking that the consonants of ‘Odalisque’ are unusual. The letter ‘q’, Powell notes, is rarely used in the English language and the combinations of consonants ‘od’ and ‘alis’ are also very uncommon. Something else which makes ‘Odalisque’ unusual is the fact that it ‘contains all five vowels’.¹⁰² To an Anglophone reader, then, the shape of the word ‘Odalisque’ is exotic – a quality which it shares with the postcard picture it describes.

Whilst Giddy looks at unfamiliar words in order to intuit their meaning, *My Ántonia*’s Jim Burden listens to them. For example, when Grandfather Burden reads the Bible, Jim is ‘awed by his intonation of the word “Selah”’. Although Jim has ‘no idea what that word mean[s]’, the sound of it alone convinces him that it is ‘oracular’.¹⁰³ Jim’s use of the adjective ‘oracular’ is apt because, not only does it mean ‘divinely authoritative’, it also means ‘Resembling the ancient oracles in [...] ambiguity’.¹⁰⁴ For Jim, the exact meaning of ‘Selah’ is ambiguous and yet he instinctively knows from its sound that it is ‘the most sacred of words’ (p. 722).

Following Jim and Giddy’s lead, then, what can Anglophone readers learn by examining the sound and shape of the word ‘*Blázne*’? Arguably, the Czech word’s most striking aural quality is its plosive opening syllable. In English, plosives are commonly found at the beginning of oaths, for example ‘blazes’ – the English word which, in terms of its sound and shape, most closely resembles ‘*Blázne*’. This aural

¹⁰⁰ Lydia Davis, quoted in Ane Farsethas, ‘Lydia Davis at the End of the World: On Learning Norwegian and the Beauty of the Dying World’, in *Literary Hub* <<https://lithub.com/lydia-davis-at-the-end-of-the-world/>> [accessed 30/07/2018] (para. 15 of 97).

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² John Ward Powell, *The Spell of the Song: Letters, Meaning, and English Poetry* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004), pp. 162-63.

¹⁰³ Willa Cather, *My Ántonia*, in *Early Novels*, pp. 707-938 (p. 722). Further references given in the text.

¹⁰⁴ ‘oracular, adj.’, in *OED Online* <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/132140>> [accessed 18/02/2018].

connection raises the possibility in Anglophone readers' minds that '*Blázne*' is a curse or expressive interjection meaning something similar to 'blast' or 'blazes' – an idea which corresponds with Cather's description of the word as an 'angry exclamation'.

However, in her discussion of the consonant patterns of the 'dirty dozen' expletives (for example, 'bastard' and 'bitch'), Ruth Wajnryb notes that – due to the particularly 'harsh, emotive quality of sound' that they create – plosives 'lend themselves nicely' not only to general expressions of anger but also to specific terms of 'abuse'.¹⁰⁵ This raises the additional possibility that '*Blázne*' is not a general 'angry exclamation' or oath, but a more specific insult directed at someone or something in particular – the most obvious target being Clara's misbehaving horse. In summary, then, the sound and shape of '*Blázne*' confirm that Clara is cross, but they also raise questions as to the exact function of her dialogue: is she swearing or is she insulting somebody?

Cather's belief that the sound and shape of words like 'Selah' and '*Blázne*' evokes their meaning was inspired by one literary movement (French symbolism) and it connects her work to another (modernism). In her journalism and short stories, Cather frequently expressed her admiration for the attention that the French symbolists paid to the 'material' qualities of language.¹⁰⁶ When Paul Verlaine died in 1896, for example, Cather wrote in the *Nebraska State Journal* that his artistic legacy was the foundation of 'a new verbal art of creating sensations not only by the meaning of words, but of their [...] harmony and sound'.¹⁰⁷ In 'The Bohemian Girl', Cather conducted her own experiment with this 'verbal art', using the disharmonious sound of the word '*Blázne*' to emphasise Clara's anger.

Cather's interest in the aural qualities of language also marks an intersection between her writing and that of the modernist authors James Joyce and Ezra Pound. As Cordell D. K. Yee argues, Joyce demonstrates throughout his oeuvre a curiosity about

¹⁰⁵ Ruth Wajnryb, *Expletive Deleted: A Good Look at Bad Language* (New York: Free Press, 2005), p. 208.

¹⁰⁶ In Cather's short story 'The Count of Crow's Nest' (1896), the focal character, Buchanan, argues that French authors like Théophile Gautier have an unrivalled sense for the 'material beauty' of language. Willa Cather, 'The Count of Crow's Nest (Part I)', *The Home Monthly*, September 1896, pp. 9-11 (p. 10), in *The Willa Cather Archive* <http://cather.unl.edu/ss030_1.html> [accessed 21/09/2016].

¹⁰⁷ Willa Cather, 'The Passing Show', *Nebraska State Journal*, 2 February 1896, p. 9, in *The World and the Parish*, 1, pp. 282-86 (p. 284).

how the ‘meaning of a word can be closely related to its sound’.¹⁰⁸ When Rody Kickham tells Simon Moonan that he is ‘McGlade’s suck’ in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), for example, Stephen deduces the slang insult’s ‘ugly’ meaning from its onomatopoeic qualities:

Suck was a queer word. [...] the sound was ugly. Once he had washed his hands in the lavatory of the Wicklow Hotel and his father pulled the stopper up by the chain after and the dirty water went down the hole in the basin. And when it had all gone down slowly the hole in the basin had made a sound like that: suck.¹⁰⁹

With her use of the word ‘*Blázne*’, Cather, not unlike Joyce, demonstrates that the meaningfulness of language is not always a product of its intelligibility; it can also be a product of its context, sound and shape.

This logic is reminiscent of Pound’s argument, expressed in ‘How to Read’ (1927/8), that there are ‘three kinds of poetry’, one of which is ‘Melopoeia, wherein [...] words are charged, over and above their plain meaning, with some musical property, which directs the bearing or trend of that meaning’.¹¹⁰ Pound makes an overt connection between this phenomenon and multilingualism when he states that ‘melopoeia can be appreciated by a foreigner with a sensitive ear, even though he be ignorant of the language in which the poem is written’.¹¹¹ Arguably, the Czech word ‘*Blázne*’ possesses a cross-linguistic correspondence of sound and sense – or ‘melopoeia’ (with connotations of anger and abuse) – which is particularly noticeable to English-speaking readers.

Juliette Taylor-Batty agrees with Pound that ‘the less we understand [...] words, the more we *hear* them’.¹¹² By omitting to translate the word ‘*Blázne*’ in ‘The Bohemian Girl’, Cather removes her monolingual Anglophone readers’ ability to instantly connect all of the words in her predominantly-English language text to their direct meaning – a process which Dasenbrock describes as ‘blocking automatic

¹⁰⁸ Cordell D. K. Yee, *The World According to James Joyce: Reconstructing Representation* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1997), p. 55.

¹⁰⁹ James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 8.

¹¹⁰ Pound, p. 25.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Juliette Taylor-Batty, *Multilingualism in Modernist Fiction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2013), p. 141.

intelligibility’ – and she pushes readers to listen to her language, instead.¹¹³ In this way, Cather not only complicates and lengthens her readers’ process of ‘perception’, thus ‘defamiliarizing’ her prose, she also modifies their habitual response to language.¹¹⁴

However, in order to ensure that readers are rewarded for adopting a more sensory approach to language, Cather had to carefully weave foreign words into her texts which possessed clear aural or visual correspondences with their English equivalents. Writing to Dorothy Canfield Fisher in 1922, for example, Cather explained that she had worked hard to use French words which were ‘enough like English’ in *One of Ours* (for example, ‘enragé’) that her Anglophone readers ‘could tell what they meant by the look of them’.¹¹⁵ Likewise, many of the Norwegian and Swedish words that Cather quotes in her fiction – for example, ‘*Gud*’ and ‘*handwerkers*’ – look very much like their English translations. In contrast, the Swedish word ‘*Tyst!*’, which Cather deploys in *O Pioneers!*, does not look like a corresponding English equivalent. Nonetheless, its sibilance combined with the context in which it is spoken – in a graveyard by Alexandra to calm a worried Ivar (‘*Tyst!* Ivar. There’s nothing to be worried about’) – reminds English-speaking readers of the words ‘hush’ and ‘shhh’, both of which are accurate English translations (p. 155).

Of course, not all foreign words possess ‘material’ qualities which helpfully evoke their English translations in this way.¹¹⁶ As Pound argues, ‘melopoeia’ is ‘practically impossible to transfer or translate from one language to another’; consequently, if a word and its translation share the same melopoetic qualities, it is a ‘divine accident’.¹¹⁷ However, by purposely deploying some of these ‘divine accidents’ (in the form of words like ‘*Blázne*’ and ‘*Tyst*’) in her texts, Cather was able to ensure that her Anglophone readers were minimally confused by her experiments with writing multilingual prose. Like her use of selective reproduction, then, Cather’s use of ‘divine accidents’ represents another way in which she incorporated linguistic diversity into

¹¹³ Dasenbrock, p. 14.

¹¹⁴ Shklovsky, p. 162.

¹¹⁵ Willa Cather, ‘To Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Friday [probably April 7, 1922]’, in *Letters*, pp. 317-19 (p. 317).

¹¹⁶ Indeed, not all of the foreign words in Cather’s texts do – it would, for example, be impossible to work out the meaning of the 153-word long French-language story of Saint Edmond in *Shadows on the Rock* from its sound and shape alone.

¹¹⁷ Pound, p. 25.

her fiction whilst, at the same time, safely containing it within the framework of her predominantly English-language prose and making it accessible to Anglophone readers. In this respect, her use of untranslated but nonetheless helpfully melopoetic foreign words epitomises her ‘English first but not English-only’ language politics.

Having deduced from its sound, shape and context that ‘*Blázne*’ is, quite possibly, an insult rather than a simple expression of anger, some readers, like Joe Giddy, might be content to conclude their investigation into its meaning there. However, if readers are like Giddy’s exacting boss Ray Kennedy, they will still be keen to find out the word’s exact meaning. Deciding whether or not Giddy is allowed to keep his ‘Odalisque’ postcard, Ray Kennedy not only looks *at* the unfamiliar word, he also looks it *up* in his dictionary. ‘Odalisque’, the *OED* states, denotes the ‘representation of a sexually attractive figure in art’.¹¹⁸ Kennedy does not deem this so ‘wicked’ that Giddy cannot display his postcard and, as such, it is to ‘the dictionary’ that Giddy is ‘indebted [...] for the privilege of keeping his lady’ (p. 393).

Ray Kennedy is not the only Catherian character who reaches for a dictionary when he encounters an unfamiliar word. When he visits New York to see Thea perform, for example, Dr. Archie diligently packs ‘his old “Adler’s German and English”’ so that he can understand her librettos (p. 638). In ‘Consequences’ (1915), Henry Eastman becomes embroiled in a mystery when he borrows a ‘German dictionary’ from his neighbour in order to translate some letters.¹¹⁹ In ‘Ardesa’ (1918), office worker Becky Tietelbaum ‘fairly [wears] the dictionary out’ in a bid to improve her spelling and grammar.¹²⁰ In *One of Ours*, Claude Wheeler clings to his ‘French phrase-book’, whilst Lucy Gayheart (in the novel of the same name) uses ‘an Italian grammar’ to ‘pick up what she [can]’ of Giuseppe’s native language.¹²¹ Even in *The Autobiography of S. S. McClure* (1913-1914), Cather admiringly highlights McClure’s tendency to reach for ‘Lidell and Scott and Curtius’ Etymological Dictionary’ when he encounters unfamiliar words.¹²² Cather, too, was a keen dictionary-user and the very

¹¹⁸ ‘odalisque, n. and adj.’, in *OED Online* <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/130396>> [accessed 21/09/2016].

¹¹⁹ Willa Cather, ‘Consequences’, *McClure’s*, November 1915, pp. 30-32; 63-64 (p. 30), in *The Willa Cather Archive* <<http://cather.unl.edu/ss009.html>> [accessed 30/10/2016].

¹²⁰ Willa Cather, ‘Ardesa’, *The Century*, May 1918, pp. 105-16 (p. 109), in *The Willa Cather Archive* <<http://cather.unl.edu/ss048.html>> [accessed 30/10/2016].

¹²¹ Willa Cather, *One of Ours*, in *Early Novels*, pp. 939-1297 (p. 1131); *Lucy Gayheart*, p. 686.

¹²² *The Autobiography of S. S. McClure*, p. 68.

first purchase that she made after leaving home for university was a ‘French dictionary’.¹²³

The fact that so many characters in Cather’s texts use dictionaries to find out the meaning of unknown words is, arguably, a metafictional clue indicating that, when her readers encounter a foreign word in her prose, they, too, should pause to look it up or, like Thea, ask someone to translate it. Consequently, not only do the foreign words in Cather’s texts prompt readers to pay attention to the ‘material’ qualities of language, they also encourage them to expand their foreign-language vocabularies. Encouraging language learning, Cather’s multilingual prose resonates with her argument (expressed in her 1921 Omaha Fine Arts Society speech) that all Americans should be encouraged to learn ‘one or two other languages’ in addition to English.¹²⁴

If Anglophone readers look up the word ‘*Blázne*’ in a dictionary, they will discover that it is the vocative form of the Czech noun ‘blázen’, meaning ‘fool’, ‘idiot’ or ‘lunatic’.¹²⁵ This definition confirms the suspicions raised by the word’s sound and shape that, rather than a general ‘angry exclamation’, it is a more specific angry insult: Clara is calling someone a fool (p. 423). Whilst the most obvious reading is that Clara is calling her horse an idiot for ‘snuff[ing]’, it is also possible that she is using the insult in relation to herself or her mother-in-law (p. 423). When Clara passes Nils at the start of the story, she is riding away from one of her frequent ‘quarrel[s]’ with Mrs. Ericson, who makes no secret of the fact that she disapproves of her daughter-in-law (p. 424). Consequently, when Clara exclaims ‘*Blázne*’, she could be continuing her latest argument with Mrs. Ericson in monologue form (uttering something that she did not dare say directly to Mrs. Ericson’s face). Alternatively, she could be calling herself a fool for marrying into a cold, emotionally repressed family whose personalities are completely at odds with her own ‘fiery’ character (p. 427).

Having confirmed what ‘*Blázne*’ means, readers can then begin to think about why bilingual Clara makes her exclamation in Czech rather than English. Primarily,

¹²³ Mildred Bennett, *The World of Willa Cather* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), p. 119.

¹²⁴ ‘State Laws Are Cramping’, *Lincoln Evening State Journal*, 31 October 1921, in *Willa Cather in Person*, pp. 147-48 (p. 148). Li Zhu likewise interprets Dr. Archie’s dictionary use as an indication that readers should use ‘their dictionaries’ to understand the foreign words in *The Song of the Lark* (p. 63).

¹²⁵ ‘blázen, n.’, in *Česko-Anglický Slovník*, ed. by Ivan Poldauf, 4th edn (Prague: Státní Pedagogické Nakladatelství, 1965), p. 40. I am grateful to Dr. Michal Peprník for discussing the meaning of ‘blázen’ with me at the 2018 International Cather Symposium in Limavady.

Clara's use of Czech when she is angry corresponds with sociolinguist Simon N. Herman's theory (discussed in Chapter One) that, when bilingual people, are in a state of 'severe frustration', they 'revert to the language most familiar to them'.¹²⁶ Secondly, by using a Czech word to insult her Norwegian in-laws, Clara highlights the cultural divide that exists between them: literally and metaphorically-speaking, Clara and Mrs. Ericson speak different languages. Like the words '*kreutzer*' and '*handwerkers*', then, '*Blázne*' is dense with information about Clara. More than just an expressive interjection or fragment of local colour it is, as Lauret suggests of all foreign words which appear in American texts, worthy of readers' close critical attention.

In summary, if Cather had used the English word 'fool' rather than the Czech word '*Blázne*' in 'The Bohemian Girl', the meaning of Clara's dialogue would have been exactly the same. However, it is unlikely that English-speaking readers, with their ability to instantly connect the familiar signifier 'fool' to its direct meaning, would have paused to puzzle over its sound and shape in relation to the feeling it conveys, nor would they have looked up its exact definition in a dictionary, thus expanding their vocabularies. Furthermore, if Cather had used the word 'fool' rather than '*Blázne*', there would have been no moment of inter-lingual juxtaposition prompting readers to wonder why bilingual Clara speaks Czech rather than English and what this reveals about her relationship with her in-laws. Consequently, the word '*Blázne*' was, for Cather, the more poetic (in Shklovsky's sense of the term) and aesthetically-valuable word. By importing it into her English-language text, Cather was able to slow down her readers' perceptions and de-automate their response to language – something which foregrounds a hitherto overlooked connection between her texts and the modernist moment in which they were written.

Cather's Multilingual Modernism

As Steven G. Yao observes in *Translation and the Languages of Modernism* (2002), Joyce 'redefines the limits of language' in *Finnegans Wake* (1939) by 'investing it with the capacities of some sixty different languages'.¹²⁷ However, Joyce was by no means

¹²⁶ Simon N. Herman, 'Explorations in the Social Psychology of Language Choice', *Human Relations*, 14.2 (1961), 149-64 (p. 157).

¹²⁷ Steven G. Yao, *Translation and the Languages of Modernism: Gender, Politics, Language* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002), p. 4.

fluent in all of those languages and he frequently relied upon friends to supply him with the foreign words that he needed in order to create his multilingual prose.¹²⁸ Samuel Beckett, for example, often sent Joyce postcards listing useful Greek words: ‘Dear Mr. Joyce [...] The infinitive: εκπορευεσθαι’.¹²⁹

Like Joyce, Cather was far from fluent in the foreign languages that she quoted in her fiction. Moreover, like Joyce, she relied on friends to help her to collect foreign words which would, in turn, help her to write her characters’ polylingual dialogue. During their trip to the Southwest in 1925, for example, Cather’s partner and editor, Edith Lewis, jotted down useful Spanish phrases in their shared ‘Composition Book’:

(To introduce myself in a house)
Deo gratias (Thanks be to God)
Ave Maria Purisima (Hail Mary Immaculate)
(answer)
Para siempre bendito sen Dios y las siempre Virgen Maria; pase Adelante (for ever blessed be God and the Holy Virgin Mary; come in)

good morning = buenos dias le dé Dios
good evening = " tardes " " "¹³⁰

Cather later quoted some of these phrases in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. In Book I, Chapter I, for example, a girl named Josepha greets a lost and thirsty Bishop Latour with the phrase: “‘*Ave María Purísima, Señor*. Whence do you come?’” (p. 290).

Manuscript evidence reveals that Lewis also helped Cather to collect French words for *Shadows on the Rock* and, moreover, to weave them into the novel. For example, contrary to the claims of the textual essay supporting the Willa Cather Scholarly Edition of *Shadows on the Rock*, which states that the typescript of the novel housed in the Cather Archives at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (a carbon copy of the setting copy) ‘show no signs of piecing or paste-up’, both that typescript and the matching one located in the New York Public Library (the setting copy) contain material which has clearly been cut and pasted from a pre-existing printed French

¹²⁸ Patricia Hutchins, *James Joyce’s World* (London: Methuen, 1957), pp. 168-69.

¹²⁹ Samuel Beckett, ‘Letter-card to Joyce [no date]’, quoted in Hutchins, p. 169.

¹³⁰ Lincoln, NE, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries, Archives and Special Collections, MS 350 Charles E. Cather Collection, Box 4 Fol. 8 Composition Book 1924-1926(?). See Appendix, Figure 6.

text.¹³¹ This inserted material corresponds with the French-language paragraph in the published novel (quoted at the beginning of this chapter) in which Cécile Auclair tells her friend Jacques the story of Saint Edmond: ‘*Edmond était tout enfant un modèle de vertu, grâce aux tendres soins de sa pieuse mère*’(p. 518).¹³² Next to this imported fragment of French, both typescripts bear a pencilled note in Lewis’s hand asking Cather’s typist, Sarah Bloom, to ‘indent’ the paragraph ‘and set [it] in smaller type’ – a message which confirms her involvement in the cutting and pasting process.¹³³

The French text that Cather and Lewis inserted into the *Shadows* typescripts has thus far proved untraceable; nonetheless, the fact that they had at least two copies of it (one for each typescript) and were willing to cut them up suggests that it was probably a cheap religious pamphlet or tourist brochure that they collected in Quebec during one of the five research visits that they made to the province between 1928 and 1930; the poor quality of the paper on which the French text is printed supports this hypothesis.¹³⁴ As Cather’s constant travel companion, Lewis was most likely with Cather when she found Saint Edmond’s story; as the manuscripts reveal, she was certainly involved in pasting it into the novel.

Given that Cather’s status as a modernist author is, as I outlined in the Introduction to this thesis, a matter of ongoing critical debate, critics have unsurprisingly never drawn direct comparisons between her and Joyce. However, it is clear that there are some intriguing similarities between Cather and Joyce’s processes for writing their multilingual texts: not only did both authors mobilise their friends to help them fill the gaps in their linguistic knowledge and source useful foreign words, they also both collected physical fragments of foreign-language text – for example,

¹³¹ Frederick M. Link, ‘Textual Essay’, in Willa Cather, *Shadows on the Rock*, Willa Cather Scholarly Edition, ed. by Link (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), pp. 553-602 (p. 560).

¹³² Lincoln, NE, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries, Archives and Special Collections, MS 77 Philip L. and Helen Cather Southwick Collection, Box 1 Fol. 14 *Shadows on the Rock* 1931, manuscript, pp. 35-73 (p. 72). I am grateful to Professor Melissa Homestead for sharing her notes on the NYPL typescript with me, which enabled me to compare this section of the two typescripts.

¹³³ See Appendix, Figure 7.

¹³⁴ The Willa Cather Scholarly Edition does not cite any possible French sources for the story. For this hypothesis, I am indebted to Professor Andrew Jewell and Professor Melissa Homestead, who shared their theories about the origins of the French text with me during a research trip to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 2017.

postcards, handwritten lists or pages from pre-existing works – which they later absorbed into their fiction.

There are further (and perhaps even more unexpected) similarities between Cather and Joyce in terms of the role that the foreign words they collected play in their fiction. As this chapter has demonstrated, Cather's incorporation of untranslated foreign words into her predominantly English-language texts enabled her to 'defamiliarize' her prose. Likewise, as Taylor-Batty observes, modernist authors such as Joyce, Pound and Beckett all used foreign words as a tool to 'estrangle' (or 'defamiliarize') their writing.¹³⁵

Focusing on Joyce, Taylor-Batty argues that 'degrees of defamiliarisation' in his work are 'directly linked to degrees of multilingualism':

the largely monolingual style of 'scrupulous meanness' in *Dubliners* is characterised by a certain mimetic clarity; the much stranger styles of *Portrait* are matched by a certain degree of multilingualism; the "cracked looking glass" [...] of *Ulysses*, with its astonishing range of different forms of defamiliarisation, is a highly multilingual text; and *Finnegans Wake*, the extreme culmination of Joycean defamiliarisation, is a novel of Babelian excess [...].¹³⁶

The care that Cather took to ensure that her Anglophone readers were never completely confused by her linguistic border crossings (for example, by using selective reproduction to limit the number of foreign words in her texts or by quoting particularly 'melopoetic' foreign words) means that, unlike Joyce, she did not redefine the limits of language in her fiction; certainly, her texts never reach the disorienting 'Babelian' excesses of a work like *Finnegans Wake*. Nevertheless, as her use of the Czech word 'Blázne' in 'The Bohemian Girl' reveals, Cather, like Joyce, did use foreign words to push (although much more gently than Joyce) readers out of their linguistic comfort zones and encourage them to examine all of the ways in which language can convey meaning, including via its sound and shape. In this respect, Cather's multilingualism can be seen as one of her 'quiet [stylistic] experiments' (to borrow Jo Ann Middleton's phrase) with one of the 'techniques we now call modern' and which we now associate with High Modernist authors like Joyce.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Taylor-Batty, p. 10, p. 14.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 113.

¹³⁷ Middleton, p. 37.

In terms of how we understand Cather's relationship to the artistic moment in which she was writing, her multilingualism is, therefore, very significant. As this chapter has outlined, Cather's use of foreign words was inspired by the mimetic multilingualism of nineteenth-century authors like Mérimée, who used foreign words primarily as a device to represent characters' polylingual dialogue. It also overlaps with the multilingualism of twentieth-century bilingual immigrant authors such as Abraham Cahan and Anzia Yezierska, who incorporated foreign words into their texts in order to explore the themes of immigration and Americanisation. As I have demonstrated, Cather, too, used multilingualism to explore these themes, leaving the words '*kreutzer*' and '*handworkers*' conspicuously untranslated as souvenirs of Peter and Mr. Bergson's European pasts. At the same time, however, Cather's multilingualism, which seeks to modify her readers' response to language, clearly edges towards the more experimental, 'defamiliarizing' multilingualism of twentieth-century modernist authors like Joyce and Pound. In this respect, Cather's controlled, contained use of foreign words within her otherwise English-language texts not only epitomises her 'English first, but not English-only' language politics, it also epitomises her status as an author who hovers 'On the Divide' between Victorian and modernist literary cultures.¹³⁸

¹³⁸ The phrase 'On the Divide' is the title of one of Cather's short stories and it refers to the Nebraska Divide, the area of land between the Little Blue and Republican Rivers where the Cather family settled in 1883. See Willa Cather, 'On the Divide', *Overland Monthly*, January 1896, pp. 65-75 (p. 65), in *The Willa Cather Archive* <<https://cather.unl.edu/ss026.html>> [accessed 31/07/2018].

CHAPTER THREE

‘[T]he other side of the rug’: Willa Cather’s Translational Narrative Structures

In 1925 Willa Cather described *My Ántonia* (1918) as ‘the other side of the rug’.¹ Just as a rug’s underside consists of knots creating a pattern which is not intended to be seen, *My Ántonia*’s narrative, Cather suggested, is the ‘pattern that is not supposed to count in a story’. Containing ‘no love affair, no courtship, no marriage, no broken heart, no struggle for success’, Jim Burden’s fragmentary memoir of his Nebraskan childhood with Ántonia overturns ‘the usual fictional pattern’.² Moreover, just as the knots visible on ‘the other side of the rug’ reveal how its ‘right-side’ pattern was formed, *My Ántonia* contains noticeable narrative knots and threads which reveal Cather’s method of weaving discrete inset stories – for example, Pavel’s tale of the wolves and the wedding party – into the larger pattern of Jim’s narrative.

In addition to illuminating Cather’s vision for *My Ántonia*, the phrase ‘the other side of the rug’ illuminates a connection between her writing and a text that she referred to several times throughout her oeuvre, *Don Quixote* (1605 and 1615).³ In Part II of Miguel de Cervantes’s novel, Don Quixote uses a similar metaphor to Cather when he describes the experience of ‘looking at Flemish tapestries from the wrong side’:

although the figures are visible, they are covered by threads that obscure them, and cannot be seen with the smoothness and colour of the right side.⁴

Rather than comparing looking at the underside of a tapestry (and the ‘pattern that is not supposed to count’) to a particular narrative structure, however, Don Quixote

¹ Willa Cather, quoted in Flora Merrill, ‘A Short Story Course Can Only Delay, It Cannot Kill an Artist, Says Willa Cather’, *New York World*, 19 April 1925, p. 6, in *Willa Cather in Person: Interviews, Speeches and Letters*, ed. by L. Brent Bohlke (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), pp. 73-80 (p. 77).

² Ibid.

³ In ‘Coming, Eden Bower!’ (1920) (republished in *Youth and the Bright Medusa* as ‘Coming, Aphrodite!’ in 1920), Cather’s narrator notes that the priest who took sixteen-year-old Don Hedger ‘to Greensburg, Pennsylvania to keep house [...] taught him to like “Don Quixote”’. In *One of Ours* (1922), Lieutenant Fanning describes Victor Morse as ‘a regular Don Quixote’. See Willa Cather, ‘Coming, Aphrodite!’, in *Stories, Poems, & Other Writings*, ed. by Sharon O’Brien (New York: Library of America, 1992), pp. 357-96 (p. 360); Willa Cather, *One of Ours*, in *Early Novels and Stories*, ed. by Sharon O’Brien (New York: Library of America, 1987), pp. 939-1297 (p. 1169).

⁴ Miguel de Cervantes, *The Adventures of Don Quixote*, trans. by J. M. Cohen (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1950), p. 877.

compares it to the process of ‘translating’ a text ‘from one language to another’.⁵ Just as the crisscrossing threads on the reverse of a tapestry form an ‘obscured’ version of its ‘right side’ image, translations are, in Don Quixote’s estimation, ‘obscured’ versions of their source texts. Although the analogies that Cather and Don Quixote draw from the reversed-rug/tapestry image are different, they nonetheless overlap in a serendipitous way. As this chapter will demonstrate, the patterns and structures of Cather’s apparently wrong-sided narratives – particularly *My Ántonia* – are the result of layers of fictional translations, the interwoven threads of which are clearly visible to her readers.

As Susan Bassnett observes, ‘inherent in the very word translation’ is the ‘notion of transposition’. This is because the word ‘translation’ is ‘derived from the Latin [...] *transfere*, meaning to bring or carry across’.⁶ Whilst Chapter One explored how Cather’s characters cross linguistic borders by code-switching and Chapter Two argued that foreign words imported across linguistic borders are a fundamental element of Cather’s literary style, I will explore in this chapter how Cather carried entire texts across linguistic borders by translating them into English. Moreover, I will investigate how Cather’s translation work shaped her original writing, inspiring her to create narratives comparable to ‘the other side of the rug’ or the ‘wrong side’ of a tapestry.

Although Cather’s original translations of German, French and Latin poems are included in modern editions of her poetry collection, *April Twilights* (1903), and critics such as Guy Reynolds have identified the ‘plethora of references to the business of translation in her texts’, scholars have yet to analyse Cather’s complex views on how to transport texts across linguistic borders.⁷ Only Caterina Bernardini, who has compared different translations of *My Ántonia* in order to analyse its international reception, has acknowledged that Cather was ‘aware of the creative role [...] of literary

⁵ de Cervantes, p. 149.

⁶ Susan Bassnett, *Translation* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 3.

⁷ Willa Cather, ‘Persicos Odi’, ‘The Three Holy Kings’, ‘The Errand’, ‘Had You But Smothered That Devouring Flame’ and ‘In That Voice What Darker Magic’, in *April Twilights*, ed. by Robert Thacker (New York: Knopf, 2013), p. 27, p. 37, p. 38, p. 39, p. 43; Guy Reynolds, ‘Willa Cather’s Translated World’, in *Willa Cather and European Cultural Influences*, ed. by Helen M. Dennis (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1996), pp. 97-110 (p. 100).

translators’.⁸ Reading Cather’s own translations and her reviews of other translators’ work in light of translation theorist Lawrence Venuti’s concepts of ‘foreignization’ and ‘domestication’, I will develop Bernardini’s observation by outlining Cather’s personal theory of translation.⁹ In doing so, I will demonstrate that Cather’s translation theory and practice are strikingly similar to the modernist theories of translation which emerged at the start of the twentieth century and were espoused by authors such as Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot.

I will then explore the impact of Cather’s modernist theory of translation upon her original writing and, in particular, upon the structure of her narratives. Examining the various iterations of the stories of ‘The Forty Lovers of the Queen’ in ‘Coming, Aphrodite!’ (1920) and the wolves and the wedding party in *My Ántonia*, I will demonstrate that Cather’s texts are constructed from layers of fictional ‘interlingual’, ‘intralingual’ and ‘intersemiotic’ translations.¹⁰ I will argue that these layers of translation give Cather’s narratives imaginary chains of provenance which reflect her belief that storytelling was a translational process.

In addition to exploring the importance of translation to the structure of Cather’s texts, I will also investigate its impact upon her creative process. Critics Marilee Lindemann, John J. Murphy, Robert Thacker and others have persuasively argued that Cather’s method of writing involved collecting fragments of ‘prior texts’ and ‘arrang[ing] them into’ new ‘patterns’.¹¹ Developing this argument, I will propose that a fundamental aspect of Cather’s writing process was translating pre-existing foreign-

⁸ Caterina Bernardini, “‘People in countries who read in the strangest languages’: The International Reception of *My Ántonia*”, in *Something Complete and Great: The Centennial Study of My Ántonia*, ed. by Holly Blackford (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2018), pp. 41-61 (p. 56).

⁹ Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation*, 3rd edn (London: Routledge, 2018), p. xiii.

¹⁰ Terms coined by Roman Jakobson in ‘On Linguistic Aspects of Translation (1959)’, in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti, 3rd edn (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 126-31 (p. 127).

¹¹ John J. Murphy, ‘Escaping the Prairie and Approaching Quebec’, *Willa Cather Newsletter and Review*, 51.1 (2007), 3-6 (p. 6). See also: Marilee Lindemann, *Willa Cather: Queering America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 4; Robert Thacker, “‘A Kind of French Culture’: Cather, “Canada”, and the Québécois’, *Willa Cather Newsletter and Review*, 51.1 (2007), 11-14 (p. 12); Merrill Maguire Skaggs, ‘Cather’s Use of Parkman’s Histories in *Shadows on the Rock*’, *Cather Studies*, 2 (1993) <<https://cather.unl.edu/cs002.html>> [accessed 20/08/2016]; David Harrell, ‘Willa Cather’s Mesa Verde Myth’, *Cather Studies*, 1 (1990) <https://cather.unl.edu/cs001_mesaverde.html> [accessed 20/08/2016]; Edward A. Bloom and Lillian D. Bloom, *Willa Cather’s Gift of Sympathy* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962), p. 212.

language narratives into sections of her English-language novels and short stories. Exploring the French and Russo-German origins of the story of the wolves and the wedding party and the Nahuatl-Spanish origins of 'The Forty Lovers of the Queen', I will question whether Cather's translational method of composition constituted a form of literary preservation or commodification.

Throughout this chapter I will examine the relationship between Cather's translational methods of writing and structuring her texts and her 'English first, but not English-only' language politics. Whilst Cather was keen to celebrate the linguistic diversity introduced into the United States by late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century immigrants, she also wanted to preserve the status of the English language as the country's primary language; I will argue that translation was a process which enabled Cather to balance these conflicting impulses.

'French fiction masquerading in English phraseology': Cather's Modernist Theory of Translation

Before she became a full-time author in 1912, Cather worked as a journalist, a magazine editor and a teacher. Less well-known is the fact that, between September 1900 and March 1901, she also worked as a professional translator. On 29th September 1900, Cather wrote to Will Owen Jones, her former editor at the *Nebraska State Journal*, to inform him that, following her resignation from the *Pittsburg Leader*, she had 'Found a job translating'.¹² In 1963, Elsie Cather confirmed that 'sometime during the fall or winter' of 1900 her sister had 'secured a job in a Washington government office as a translator'.¹³ The 'letterhead' that Cather used during this period indicates that her role was 'translating [French language] letters and documents' into English 'for the United States Commission to the Paris Exposition'.¹⁴ In March 1901, however, Cather returned to Pittsburgh in order to accept a high school teaching post.

¹² Willa Cather, 'To Will Owen Jones, September 19, 1900 (Va.)', paraphrased by James Woodress in *Willa Cather: A Literary Life* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), p. 147, p. 527.

¹³ 'Elsie Cather in an interview with the editor, August 16, 1963', quoted in *The World and the Parish: Willa Cather's Articles and Reviews, 1893-1902*, ed. by William M. Curtin, 2 vols (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), II, p. 793.

¹⁴ Woodress, p. 147.

Whilst Cather's career as a professional translator was brief, her interest in translation was lifelong. As established in Chapter Two, Cather, like many of her characters, was an avid dictionary-user and, as such, she was able to produce proficient written translations, even in languages which she could not speak fluently, such as German.¹⁵ Indeed, as Dorothy Canfield Fisher noted, some of Cather's 'first literary successes' were translations.¹⁶ In 1889, Cather won a school prize for writing the 'best Latin translations' and three years later her translation of Horace's 'Persicos Odi' appeared in the University of Nebraska's student newspaper, *The Hesperian*.¹⁷

Of the twenty-four poems by Cather that were published between 1892 (her sophomore year at university) and 1900 (when she moved to Washington), six were original translations. Following the publication of her version of 'Persicos Odi' in 1892, Cather's translation of Heinrich Heine's 'Die heiligen drei Könige' appeared in the *Home Monthly* in 1896.¹⁸ In the same year, her translation of one stanza of Alfred de Musset's 'Rolla' was published in one of her *Nebraska State Journal* articles.¹⁹ Cather's translations of two more poems by Heine ('The Errand' and 'In That Voice What Darker Magic') and four stanzas of Alfred de Musset's 'À la Malibran' were included in articles that she wrote for the *Lincoln Courier* between 1897 and 1900.²⁰

¹⁵ Cather studied German at university. However, when Dorothy Canfield Fisher wrote to Cather in 1947 to enquire whether she recalled translating a German poem by Heine, Cather 'replied that she did not, but that it was just like her [...] to be translating from a language in which she could not have conjugated a single verb'. See 'To Dorothy Canfield Fisher, January 3 [1947]', paraphrased in Woodress, p. 126.

¹⁶ Dorothy Canfield Fisher, 'Novelist Recalls Christmas in Blue-and-Gold Pittsburgh', *Chicago Tribune Magazine of Books*, 21 December 1947, p. 9, in *Willa Cather Remembered*, ed. by Sharon Hoover and L. Brent Bohlke (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), pp. 88-90 (p. 90).

¹⁷ Willa Cather, 'To Helen Stevens Stowell, May 31, 1899', in *The Selected Letters of Willa Cather*, ed. by Andrew Jewell and Janis P. Stout (New York: Vintage, 2014), pp. 8-10 (p. 8); Willa Cather, 'Persicos Odi', in *April Twilights*, p. 27. Originally published in *The Hesperian*, November 1, 1892.

¹⁸ Willa Cather, 'The Three Holy Kings', in *April Twilights*, p. 37. Originally published in *Home Monthly*, December 1896.

¹⁹ Willa Cather, 'The Passing Show', *Nebraska State Journal*, May 17, 1896, p. 13, in *The Kingdom of Art: Willa Cather's First Principles and Critical Statements 1893-1896*, ed. by Bernice Slote (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), pp. 399-404 (p. 404).

²⁰ Willa Cather, 'The Passing Show', *Courier*, November 6, 1897, p. 2, in *The World and the Parish*, II, pp. 514-17 (p. 515); Willa Cather, 'The Passing Show', *Courier*, December 11, 1897, pp. 2-3, in *The World and the Parish*, I, pp. 448-52 (pp. 451-52); Willa Cather, 'The Passing Show', *Courier*, January 6, 1900, pp. 2-3, in *The World and the Parish*, II, pp. 646-50 (p. 646).

Not only did Cather write translations, she also reviewed other authors' translation work, including Teofilo Comba's 1899 version of Guy de Maupassant's *Fort Comme La Mort* and Edward FitzGerald and Jessie Cadell's translations of Omar Kháyyám's *Rubáiyát* (1859 and 1899).²¹ As a general rule, the texts that Cather translated or reviewed were amongst those that she read with her friend George Seibel, a German-born contributor to the *Home Monthly* (which Cather edited between 1896 and 1897) who was at that time writing 'a play based on the *Rubáiyát*' – a clue, perhaps, as to why Cather was interested in FitzGerald and Cadell's translations of that poem.²²

During her residence in Pittsburgh (1896-1906), Cather visited Seibel 'once or twice a week to "read French"'. As Seibel recalled:

The first book we took up was Alphonse Daudet's *Femmes D'Artistes* [...]. The second was Alfred de Musset's *Poésies Nouvelles*, in which we read [...] the "Letter to Malibran" [...] I had a faculty for instantaneous rough-and-ready translation. Each of us held a copy of the French text. I read aloud in English. If anybody dissented, or knew better, I was interrupted.²³

Whilst it is impossible to quantify the extent to which Seibel's 'rough-and-ready' translations of poems like 'À la Malibran' and 'Rolla' shaped Cather's own translations of those works, it is clear that he guided her choice of which texts to translate. As Canfield Fisher recalled in 1947, it was Seibel who first introduced Cather to Heine's 'Die heiligen drei Könige':

That evening, I remember, Mr. Seibel [...] quoted to us a Heine Christmas poem. [...] Willa [...] got the book out from the shelves back of us, copied off all the poem, and before I had gone on from Pittsburgh to Vermont, had made an admirable rhymed translation of it.²⁴

A further clue as to the importance of Seibel's influence is the fact that, when Cather moved to New York in 1906 and her weekly meetings with him ended, her output of original translations ceased.

²¹ Willa Cather, 'The Passing Show', *Courier*, November 4, 1899, pp. 3-4, in *The World and the Parish*, II, pp. 730-32; Willa Cather, 'Books and Magazines', *Pittsburg Leader*, November 25, 1899, p. 6, in *The World and the Parish*, II, pp. 733-34.

²² William M. Curtin, 'Footnote 37', in *The World and the Parish*, II, p. 730.

²³ George Seibel, 'Miss Willa Cather From Nebraska', *New Colophon*, 2.7 (1949), 195-208, in *Willa Cather Remembered*, pp. 11-21 (p. 12).

²⁴ Fisher, p. 90; Woodress questions the accuracy of this recollection because Canfield Fisher visited Pittsburgh in 1897 and Cather's translation of Heine's poem was published in 1896. See Woodress, p. 524.

Cather's interest in translation did not revive until she became a full-time novelist in 1912. As Reynolds observes, 'Few writers' took 'as much pleasure as Cather did in the translation of their fiction into different languages'.²⁵ In 1916, for example, Cather badgered her then-editor, Ferris Greenslet, to investigate the possibility of translating *O Pioneers!* (1913) and *The Song of the Lark* (1915) into Swedish, explaining that there would be a lot of 'satisfaction and stimulus' in it for her.²⁶ Greenslet's letters to Cather reveal that in 1944 (just three years before her death) she was still writing to him with suggestions of possible translators for her novels:

You will recall that on October 13 last you wrote me in regard to the possibility of a Spanish translation of six or more of your books that might be made in Spain itself and from there supplied to the Spanish reading market throughout the world.²⁷

One reason for Cather's continued interest in the commission of foreign-language editions of her novels was the significant income that they generated. Cather's 'Financial Records 1903-1930' reveal that, between June and December 1928, she earned \$1052.71 from sales of English-language copies of *One of Ours* (1922), *My Ántonia* (1918) and *A Lost Lady* (1923) and \$233.07 from sales of German-language copies of those texts. Consequently, the German-language editions alone boosted her income from those books by approximately 22%.²⁸

With this revenue at stake, it is, perhaps, unsurprising that Cather tended to micromanage the writers tasked with translating her work. Speaking to the *Webster County Argus* in 1921, for example, Cather claimed to have saved the French translator of *My Ántonia* (1918) from an embarrassing blunder:

Miss Cather found that when he came to the word 'gopher' at various places in the book he had used the French word meaning 'mole'. This might have passed among the French readers had it not been for a passage where the gophers were spoken of as playing about in the sun.²⁹

²⁵ Reynolds, p. 100.

²⁶ Willa Cather, 'To Ferris Greenslet, December 16 [1916]', in *Letters*, pp. 231-33 (p. 232).

²⁷ Lincoln, NE, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries, Archives and Special Collections, MS 228 James R. and Susan J. Rosowski Cather Collection, Box 1 Fol. 6 Willa Cather Correspondence, Houghton Mifflin, Ferris Greenslet to Willa Cather, November 17, 1944.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Box 1 Fol. 22 Financial Records 1903-1930.

²⁹ 'A Talk with Miss Cather', *Webster County Argus*, 29 September 1921, in *Willa Cather in Person*, pp. 26-28 (pp. 27-28).

By making public statements such as this and by allowing her friend Leonard Charles Van Noppen to quote her ‘favourable comments on [his] translation of Joost van den Vondel’s *Lucifer*’ in his ‘advertising booklet’ for that text (published in 1917), Cather presented herself to the reading public as something of an authority on translation.³⁰ Certainly, she had strong views on the subject. Unlike her theory of simplification, however, Cather did not outline her theory of translation in essays and interviews. Nevertheless, by comparing Cather’s own translations to her reviews of other translators’ work, it is possible to piece together her thoughts on how texts should be carried across linguistic borders.

As Steven G. Yao argues, the twentieth century was ‘an age of translations’.³¹ In order to understand how Cather’s views on translation relate to the translation theories which emerged during this period, it is first necessary to define the concepts of ‘domestication’ and ‘foreignization’. Defined by translation theorist Lawrence Venuti in *The Translator’s Invisibility* (1995), these concepts originate from an 1813 lecture given by the German philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher, who argued that there were ‘only two’ methods of translation:

The translator either (1) disturbs the writer as little as possible and moves the reader in his direction, or (2) disturbs the reader as little as possible and moves the writer in his direction.³²

A translation which ‘disturbs the writer as little as possible’ corresponds with Venuti’s definition of a ‘foreignizing’ translation. Meanwhile, a translation which ‘disturbs the reader as little as possible’ is a ‘domesticating translation’.

For Venuti, all translations are domesticating ‘insofar as’ the fundamental aim of translation is ‘to interpret the source text in terms that are intelligible [...] in the receiving situation’.³³ However, translators can implement strategies to either amplify or reduce this domestication. Domesticating strategies are those which preserve the

³⁰ Timothy Esh and Lucy K. Marks, ‘Drew University Special Collections and University Archives Willa Cather Collection Finding Aid’, in *Willa Cather: New Facts, New Glimpses, Revisions*, ed. by John J. Murphy and Merrill Maguire Skaggs (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2008), pp. 260-313 (p. 284).

³¹ Steven G. Yao, *Translation and the Languages of Modernism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002), p. 4.

³² Friedrich Schleiermacher, ‘On the Different Methods of Translating’, in *Western Translation Theory from Herodotus to Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. by Douglas Robinson, 2nd edn (Northampton, MA: St Jerome, 2002), pp. 225-38 (p. 229).

³³ *The Translator’s Invisibility*, p. xii.

cultural and structural norms of their target language over those of their source text, resulting in translations which strike target-language readers as accessible, transparent and fluent. As Venuti notes, however, such translations only ‘masquerad[e] as true semantic equivalence’ because they ‘inscrib[e] the foreign text’ with an ‘interpretation’ which is ‘partial’ to the ‘values’ of the translator’s target language and culture.³⁴

In contrast, foreignising translation strategies are those which disrupt the ‘codes of the translating language’ in order to ‘register’ the ‘linguistic and cultural differences’ of the source text and produce a slightly ‘alien reading experience’ for target-language readers.³⁵ For example, foreignising translators might ‘translate a foreign text [...] using a marginal discourse’ or modify aspects of their target language (for example, its grammar or syntax) in order to make the ‘translated text a place where a cultural other is manifested’; as a result of this, elements of their translation work are usually visible to the reader.³⁶

From the eighteenth-century onwards, British and American translation has been characterised by a ‘regime of fluency’ and domestication.³⁷ However, at the start of the twentieth century, modernist translators bucked this trend by employing a seemingly-paradoxical mixture of both domesticating and foreignising techniques. Indeed, as Rebecca Beasley summarises, modernist translation practice both ‘disrupt[ed] the [...] norms of English translation practice, [which were] characterized by fluency’ (a foreignising strategy) whilst simultaneously ‘rewriting’ source texts ‘to serve modernist cultural agendas’ (a domesticating strategy).³⁸ The twentieth-century translators responsible for these innovative part-foreignising, part-domesticating strategies included modernist authors such as Basil Bunting (who translated Persian poetry), T. S. Eliot (‘who translated St. John Perse’s *Anabase*’) and Ezra Pound (who translated Chinese, Greek, Latin, French and Anglo-Saxon texts).³⁹ Intriguingly, there are striking overlaps between the translations that these author-translators produced and valorised and those produced and valorised by Cather.

³⁴ *The Translator’s Invisibility*, p. 16.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xiii, pp. 15-16.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

³⁸ Rebecca Beasley, ‘Modernism’s Translations’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*, ed. by Mark Wollaeger and Matt Eatough (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 551-70 (p. 538).

³⁹ Roxana Bîrsanu, ‘T. S. Eliot and the Modernist Approach to Translation’, *Scientia Traductionis*, 9 (2011), 179-89 (p. 180).

On the one hand, twentieth-century modernist author-translators favoured domesticating translation strategies which prioritised ‘the aesthetic autonomy of the translated text’.⁴⁰ As Yao argues, no longer considered to be a ‘linguistic operation limited in scope to simply reproducing the “meaning” of a foreign text’, translation came to be seen during the twentieth century as a ‘generative [...] mode of [...] literary production’ in its own right.⁴¹ Basil Bunting, for example, argued that translations should possess ‘a life of their own’ which was independent to that of their source text.⁴² Similarly, in ‘Guido’s Relations’ (1929), Pound divided his translations into two categories: “‘interpretative translation[s]’” (for example, his translations of Guido Cavalcanti’s sonnets) which were designed to be read ‘alongside’ their source texts and ‘the “other sort”’ (for example, his translation of ‘The Seafarer’) which fell ‘into the domain of original writing’.⁴³

When they wrote translations which they regarded as ‘aesthetic[ally] autonomy[ous]’, original pieces of literature, modernist translators did not consider themselves bound to follow their source material to the letter, nor did they consider themselves bound to interpret it in light of the culture in which it was originally written.⁴⁴ Instead, they were free to put ‘the foreign to domestic uses’ and appropriate, re-interpret and rewrite their source texts in ways which ‘serve[d]’ their own literary and ‘cultural agenda[s]’.⁴⁵ T. S. Eliot summarised this domesticating stance when he stated that that ‘the work of translation [was] to make something foreign, or something remote in time, live within our own life’.⁴⁶

Cather’s 1899 *Pittsburg Leader* review of Cadell and FitzGerald’s translations of Omar Kháyyám’s (1048-1131) Persian poem *The Rubáiyát* reveals that she, too, regarded some translations as ‘aesthetic[ally] autonomy[ous]’ pieces of literature. Moreover, it reveals that she, too, valued domesticating translations which reflected

⁴⁰ *The Translator’s Invisibility*, p. 165.

⁴¹ Yao, pp. 12-13.

⁴² Basil Bunting, ‘Review of E. Stuart Bates’ *Modern Translation*’, *Criterion*, 15 (1936), 714-16 (p. 714).

⁴³ Ezra Pound, ‘Guido’s Relations’, in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti, 3rd edn (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 84-91 (p. 91).

⁴⁴ *The Translator’s Invisibility*, p. 165.

⁴⁵ Lawrence Venuti, ‘1990s’, in *The Translation Studies Reader*, pp. 269-80 (p. 277); *The Translator’s Invisibility*, p. 165.

⁴⁶ T. S. Eliot, ‘Baudelaire in our Time’, in *For Lancelot Andrewes: Essays on Style and Order* (London: Faber and Gwyer, 1928), pp. 86-100 (p. 92).

their translators' (rather than their original authors') 'cultural agenda[s]'.⁴⁷ Unable to read Farsi, Cather could not compare Cadell and FitzGerald's translations (published in 1899 and 1859, respectively) to Kháyýám's original text; nonetheless, she gleaned from the introduction to Cadell's translation that it was more 'literal' than FitzGerald's, which was 'made with regard' for the 'spirit' rather than the 'letter' of the Persian poem.⁴⁸ Despite this, Cather concluded that FitzGerald's was the superior translation because, unlike Cadell's, it was a 'masterpiece' of English literature in its own right – an autonomous 'English *Rubáiyát*' which was aesthetically equal to Kháyýám's Persian *Rubáiyát*.⁴⁹ Indeed, Cather admired FitzGerald's translation so much that, when she gave a copy to her friend Louise Pound in 1892, she claimed to 'love' it 'as much as it is possible to love another persons work [sic]' – a statement which confirms that she read it as a literary work in its own right.⁵⁰

Pound and Bunting (who, having translated Manuchehri Damghani's poetry, had a special interest in Persian literature) admired FitzGerald's translation for exactly the same reasons as Cather. For example, Pound's estimation that FitzGerald's *Rubáiyát* was 'the only good poem of the time' indicates that he, too, read it as an autonomous piece of literature rather than a work derived from a more impressive, more authentic source text.⁵¹ Likewise, Bunting praised FitzGerald for translating 'a poem that never existed' and for making 'Omar utter such things as he would himself have spoken if he had been born in an age still slightly overshadowed by Byron'; in other words, he commended FitzGerald not for translating Kháyýám's poem, but for writing the poem that Kháyýám might have written had he lived in England in 1859.⁵² For Cather, Bunting and Pound, FitzGerald's translation was laudable not because it registered in English the language and culture of Kháyýám's Persian text, but because it was a creditable piece of English literature which fulfilled Eliot's dictum of making 'something foreign, or something remote in time, live within' Victorian life.⁵³

⁴⁷ *The Translator's Invisibility*, p. 165.

⁴⁸ Cather, 'Books and Magazines', November 25, 1899, p. 733.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Willa Cather, 'To Louise Pound, 1:30 PM [June 15, 1892]', in *Letters*, pp. 16-17 (p. 17).

⁵¹ Ezra Pound, 'How to Read', in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), pp. 15-40 (p. 34).

⁵² Bunting, p. 715.

⁵³ Eliot, p. 92.

Cather's own translation practice upheld the theories that she expressed in this review. For example, translating stanzas 20-23 of Alfred de Musset's poem 'À la Malibran' (1837) for publication in the *Courier* in 1897, Cather – like FitzGerald – put 'the foreign to domestic uses' and re-contextualised her source text in accordance with her own literary and 'cultural agenda'.⁵⁴ Annotations in Cather's personal copy of *Le Romantisme Français: A Selection from Writers of the French Romantic School* (1886) indicate that she first encountered 'À la Malibran' during her university French classes.⁵⁵ Later, 'Alfred de Musset's *Poésies Nouvelles* containing 'the "Letter to Malibran"' (1850) was the 'second' text that she read with George Seibel during their weekly reading sessions in Pittsburgh.⁵⁶

In its original form, de Musset's poem is a grief-stricken apostrophe to the opera singer Maria Malibran, who died after collapsing on stage at the age of twenty-eight in 1836. In the stanzas that Cather translates, de Musset's speaker rebukes Malibran for exhausting herself by crying 'vrais pleurs sur la scène' ('real tears on stage') and thus hastening her own demise.⁵⁷ In her translation, however, Cather completely re-contextualises these stanzas by using them to conclude an article reviewing American actress Minnie Maddern Fiske's performance in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

In this article, Cather argues that Fiske (whose 'pinched, pale face' recalls Malibran's 'joue amaigrie' and 'pâleur') will eventually 'feed her art with her life' due to her emotional exertions on stage.⁵⁸ In order to support her argument that Fiske's exhausting style of acting is dangerous, Cather refers readers to the circumstances of Malibran's death by quoting (in the form of her own translation) de Musset's poem: 'de Musset said the same thing much better'.⁵⁹ Consequently, whilst de Musset's original poem is a lament for Malibran alone, Cather's translation of it is a warning to

⁵⁴ '1990s', p. 277; *The Translator's Invisibility*, p. 165.

⁵⁵ Red Cloud, NE, National Willa Cather Center Collections and Archives, Cather Family Book Collection, Willa Cather's annotations on 'À la Malibran' in her copy of *Le Romantisme Français: A Selection from Writers of the French Romantic School*, ed. by Thomas Frederick Crane (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1886), pp. 157-66. In this textbook, de Musset's poem is marked with the word 'This', which was Cather's usual way of highlighting required reading. The section of the poem that Cather translates in her article is also annotated. See Appendix, Figures 8 and 9.

⁵⁶ Seibel, pp. 12-13.

⁵⁷ Alfred de Musset, 'À la Malibran', in *Poésies Nouvelles* (Paris: J. M. Dent, 1914), pp. 81-85 (l. 124).

⁵⁸ 'The Passing Show', December 11, 1897, pp. 450-51; de Musset, l. 141.

⁵⁹ 'The Passing Show', December 11, 1897, p. 451.

all soulful, pallid actors to take better care of their health. In turn, this means that Cather's translation is not a window onto de Musset's original poem so much as it is a mirror reflecting her views on late nineteenth-century styles of acting.

In order to tailor de Musset's poem to fit the argument of her article, Cather made some subtle omissions and tonal changes which are evident in her translation of the following stanza:

Que ne détournais-tu la tête pour sourire,
Comme on en use ici quand on feint d'être ému?
Hélas! on t'aimait tant, qu'on n'en aurait rien vu.
Quand tu chaintais *le Saule*, au lieu de ce délire,
Que ne t'occupais-tu de bien porter ta lyre?
La Pasta fait ainsi: que ne l'imitais-tu?⁶⁰

In these lines, de Musset's speaker criticises Malibran for surrendering to the 'délire' of tragedy and wonders why she did not simply feign emotion on stage like her peers. In her translation, Cather's speaker also criticises Malibran for exhausting herself:

Why did you not smile with averted face,
Like other players, emotion feigning?
Instead of that delirium when you sang the willow song,
Why not merely have held your lyre with grace?⁶¹

However, the tone of Cather's poem is far more equable. By omitting the overwrought exclamation 'Hélas! On t'aimait tant [...]' ('Alas! People loved you so much'), Cather moderates the original poem's tone of angry grief.

Cather also achieves this moderation of tone by converting de Musset's Alexandrines into free verse. In French literature, Alexandrines are strongly associated with tragedy. As Roy Lewis notes:

In the seventeenth century, [...] [the Alexandrine] became the accepted metre for use in stage plays, particularly in classical tragedy, where it held the field unchallenged for the century following.

When the form was subsequently adopted 'by lyric poets' such as de Musset in 'the nineteenth century', it was, therefore, typically associated with 'solemn' and 'serious verse'.⁶² By composing his poem in Alexandrines, de Musset foregrounded the tragedy

⁶⁰ de Musset, ll. 127-32.

⁶¹ Willa Cather, 'Translation of "À la Malibran"', in 'The Passing Show', *Courier*, December 11, 1897, pp. 451-52 (ll. 11-14).

⁶² Roy Lewis, *On Reading French Verse: A Study of Poetic Form* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 43.

of Malibran's demise whilst using the regularity of his chosen metre to counterbalance his speaker's emotional outbursts. In contrast, by jettisoning both the speaker's sighs ('Hélas!') and de Musset's Alexandrines, Cather tempers the poem's tragic mood – a change which befits that fact that, read in conjunction with her article, the purpose of her translation is not to mourn Malibran specifically, but to criticise in a more objective manner the exhausting style of acting that precipitated her death.

Although Cather's status as a modernist author is a matter of debate, her assertion of the translator's right to reinterpret a source text according to his/her domestic agenda means that her translation theory and practice correspond with the first, domesticating impulse of twentieth-century modernist translation theory. In addition to asserting the autonomy of their translations, however, modernist author-translators, especially Pound, simultaneously experimented with modifying their translating language in order to make it 'signify' the 'linguistic and cultural' idiosyncrasies of their source texts – a foreignising strategy at odds with their first, domesticating strategy of asserting the independence of their translations from those source texts.⁶³ Pound formulated a theory of translation which was flexible enough to encompass both of these strategies and, significantly, so did Cather.

As discussed above, Pound's translations fall into two categories: those belonging to 'the domain of original writing' and "'interpretative translation[s]'"'.⁶⁴ Whilst Pound stressed 'the aesthetic autonomy' of translations when he wrote texts which fell 'into the domain of original writing' (a domesticating strategy), his aim when writing "'interpretative translation[s]'" was to modify his translating language in order to 'driv[e] the reader's perception further into the original' source text 'than it would [otherwise] have penetrated' (a foreignising strategy).⁶⁵ When Pound produced his interpretative translations of the *Sonnets and Ballate of Guido Cavalcanti* (1912), for instance, he deliberately used 'pre-Elizabethan English' vocabulary to convey the 'antiquity' of Cavalcanti's thirteenth-century Italian verse.⁶⁶ By doing so and by insisting that his translations were published side-by-side with their source sonnets,

⁶³ *The Translator's Invisibility*, p. 168.

⁶⁴ 'Guido's Relations', p. 91.

⁶⁵ *The Translator's Invisibility*, p. 165; 'Guido's Relations', p. 91; Ezra Pound, "'Cavalcanti' from *Make It New*", in *Pound's Cavalcanti: An Edition of the Translations, Notes, and Essays*, ed. by D. Anderson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 203-53 (p. 221).

⁶⁶ 'Guido's Relations', pp. 90-91.

Pound ensured that his readers were acutely aware of the fact that they were perusing poems derived from pre-existing, foreign-language texts. In this respect, Pound's 'interpretative translations' of Cavalcanti's sonnets are reminiscent of the 'wrong side' of Don Quixote's 'Flemish tapestries': just as the knots and threads on the reverse of a tapestry reveal the weaver's handiwork, Pound's efforts to 'defamiliarize' his English in order to make it convey something of Cavalcanti's Renaissance Italian render his translation work highly visible to the reader (a key trait of foreignising translations).

Although Cather wrote and praised domesticating translations, she, like Pound, also recognised the value of translations which drove 'the reader's perception' towards their source text with foreignising linguistic strategies.⁶⁷ Reviewing Comba's translation of de Maupassant's *Fort Comme La Mort* for the *Lincoln Courier* in 1899, for example, Cather highlighted a problem which arose when translators, aiming to domesticate the language of their source texts and make it accessible to target-language readers, adhered too rigidly to the 'phraseology' of that target language:

French fiction masquerading in English phraseology always reminds one of an English actress – say, that gifted but matronly artist, Mrs. Kendal – disporting herself as Frou-Frou or Denise or Manon Lescaut. There is apt to be something a trifle heavy about it, a trifle brusque, a trifle too direct [...].⁶⁸

With this theatrical analogy, Cather anticipated Walter Benjamin's 1923 argument that:

The fundamental error of the translator is that he holds fast to the state in which his own language happens to be instead of allowing it to be put powerfully in movement by the foreign language.⁶⁹

Cather believed that translating 'French fiction' into rigidly 'English phraseology' was an 'error' because it created a tension between form and sense comparable to the tension between actor and character generated when a dramatic role is miscast. In both cases, the resulting translation or performance is functional, but strikes the reader or audience as slightly false (like a 'masquerade'). In order to produce more aesthetically-satisfying translations, Cather agreed with Pound and Benjamin that – so long as they did not write 'frightful jargon' – translators should bring their source and target languages closer together by permitting the 'phraseology' of their translating language to be

⁶⁷ "'Cavalcanti'" from *Make It New*, p. 221.

⁶⁸ 'The Passing Show', November 4, 1899, pp. 730-32 (p. 731).

⁶⁹ Walter Benjamin quoting Rudolf Pannwitz, in Benjamin, 'The Translator's Task', trans. by Steven Rendall, in *The Translation Studies Reader*, pp. 75-83 (p. 82).

affected (or put ‘in movement’) by the stylistic idiosyncrasies of their source language.⁷⁰

During a trip to the Southwest in 1912, Cather put this foreignising theory into practice when she translated a Spanish serenade, ‘Serenata Mejicana’, for her friend Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant.⁷¹ In this translation, Cather allowed the rules of Spanish prosody to affect her ‘English phraseology’, deliberately ending a line with the slightly awkward conjunction ‘but’:

The eyes of night are shut,
So thine should be;
The tired stars fade *but*
To dream of thee [my emphasis].⁷²

By Cather’s own admission, the heavy stress that this syntactical arrangement placed on such an ‘unimportant’ word made her English sound ‘clumsy’. However, she justified her choice by explaining that Spanish poets:

have a trick of accenting unimportant words [...] as if, after all, the words were a mere convention, and the undertow was as apt to break through at the wrong place as the right.⁷³

By accenting the word ‘but’, Cather (like Pound when he translated Cavalcanti’s sonnets into archaic English in order to replicate the ‘tricks’ of Renaissance Italian) ‘defamiliarized’ her translating language in order to replicate this Spanish ‘trick’ for Sergeant.⁷⁴

Cather also adopted a foreignising approach when she wrote Herr Wunsch’s translation of Heine’s ‘*Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen*’ for *The Song of the Lark* (1915). On Thea’s thirteenth birthday, Wunsch teaches her Heine’s poem (which was

⁷⁰ Willa Cather, ‘Gertrude Hall’s *The Wagnerian Romances*’, in *On Writing: Critical Studies on Writing as an Art* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), pp. 60-66 (p. 63).

⁷¹ The source text for ‘Serenata Mejicana’ is untraceable and, given that Cather did not speak Spanish, it is possible that her guide during this trip, Julio, taught her the poem and was responsible for this translation. Alternatively, Cather may simply have written the poem in English and pretended to have translated it. Whether or not it is a ‘real’ translation, Cather’s letter confirms that it is intended to be foreignising in mode.

⁷² Willa Cather, ‘To Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, June 15 [1912]’, in *Letters*, pp. 161-63 (p. 163).

⁷³ Ibid., p. 162.

⁷⁴ A further similarity between Cather’s translation work here and Pound’s is that she had little knowledge of the language she was translating (Spanish). As Yao argues, modernist translators abandoned the notion that a ‘formal knowledge of the source language’ was an essential ‘requirement’ for a translator. Pound, for example, did not know Chinese when he wrote his translations of Rihaku’s poems in *Cathay* (1915). See Yao, p. 11.

set to music by Schumann) in German and English, translating its opening line, ‘*Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen*’, as ‘In the soft-shining summer morning’.⁷⁵ Whilst there is no conclusive evidence proving that this translation was Cather’s own, the editors of the *Willa Cather Scholarly Edition* attribute it to her – a hypothesis which is strengthened by the fact that Cather read Heine’s works with George Seibel.⁷⁶ Something else which indicates that Cather produced the English version herself is the striking translation of the word ‘*leuchtenden*’ as ‘soft-shining’ – a foreignising word choice which recalls Cather’s foreignising grammatical choices in ‘*Serenata Mejicana*’.

Indeed, whilst many authors translate ‘*leuchtenden*’ as ‘bright’, ‘radiant’ or ‘gleaming’, Cather coins the compound adjective, ‘soft-shining’ – a word which, although slightly unidiomatic in ‘English phraseology’, neatly preserves the tri-syllabic rhythm of Heine’s ‘original’ German word.⁷⁷ This preservation is important because, not only is the poem Thea’s first German lesson, it is also her first singing lesson: ‘if some day you are going to sing, it is necessary to know well the German language’ (p. 361). Not only does Thea need to know the meaning of the German *lieder* in order to sing them, she also needs to know their rhythm; Wunsch’s foreignising translation caters to both of these needs.

Cather/Wunsch also contravenes the norms of ‘English phraseology’ in order to preserve another important aspect of the poem’s sound: its rhyme scheme. For example, by translating the line ‘*Und schau'n mitleidig mich an*’ as ‘And me with compassion they scan’ (thus avoiding the more natural syntactical arrangement of ‘And they scan me with compassion’), Wunsch/Cather preserves in ‘scan’/‘man’ the original text’s cross rhyme between ‘*an*’ and ‘*Mann*’:

“*Es flüstern und sprechen die Blumen
Und schau'n mitleidig mich an:
'Sei unserer schwester nicht böse,
Du trauriger, blasser Mann!'*”

⁷⁵ Willa Cather, *The Song of the Lark*, in *Early Novels*, pp. 291-706 (p. 361). Further references given in the text.

⁷⁶ The explanatory notes in the Willa Cather Scholarly Edition of the *Song of the Lark* state that ‘The flowers they whisper and murmur’ is ‘Cather’s translation’ of the line ‘*Es flüstern und sprechen die Blumen*’. See Ann Moseley, ‘Explanatory note 83’, in Willa Cather, *The Song of the Lark*, Willa Cather Scholarly Edition, ed. by Moseley and Kari A. Ronning (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), pp. 656-57.

⁷⁷ Hal Draper, ‘On a Radiant Summer Morning’, in *Oxford Lieder* <<https://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk/song/876>> [accessed 15/02/2019].

The flowers they whisper and murmur,
 And me with compassion they scan:
 “Oh, be not harsh to our sister,
 Thou sorrowful, death-pale man!” (p. 361)

In doing so, he/she follows Heine’s lead in using rhyme to reinforce the connection between the man’s appearance and the way that the flowers look at him with ‘compassion’. Until the final line of the poem, when it is revealed that the speaker is ‘death-pale’, the reader does not know why the flowers regard the speaker with pity. Consequently, the rhyme ‘an’/‘Mann’ (or ‘man’/’scan’) facilitates the doubling back that readers make as they finally connect the flowers’ whispering and the man’s ‘sorrowful’ appearance. Once again, Wunsch, recognising that Thea needs to understand both the sound and the sense of the original poem in order to one day sing it, preserves both in his translation at the expense of adhering to more idiomatic ‘English phraseology’ – a foreignising strategy.

In addition to employing foreignising prosodic strategies in these two translations, Cather expected the people tasked with translating her novels to allow their ‘phraseology’ to be ‘put powerfully in movement’ by her own stylistic idiosyncrasies.⁷⁸ In 1938, for example, Cather wrote to her publisher Knopf to criticise the translator Marguerite Yourcenar for refusing to allow her translating language (French) to be affected by the multilingual style of *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927) and instead forcing the novel to masquerade in domesticated, ‘beautiful French’ prose.⁷⁹ In particular, Cather was dismayed by Yourcenar’s domesticating decision to translate the novel’s ‘New Mexican-Spanish’ vocabulary (for example, ‘burro, mesa, adobe [...], casa, arroyo, [and] hacienda’) – which, as I argued in Chapter Two, is a hallmark of Cather’s prose style – into French in a bid to make Cather’s language appeal ‘to the French taste’.⁸⁰

In response to Cather’s concerns about Yourcenar’s domesticating translation strategy, Knopf transferred the project of translating *Death Comes for the Archbishop* to another French translator, Christine Carel.⁸¹ However, upon receiving Carel’s

⁷⁸ Benjamin, p. 82.

⁷⁹ Willa Cather, ‘To Alfred A. Knopf, April 19, 1938’, in *Letters*, pp. 546-48 (p. 547).

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ For further discussion of this change of translator see Stéphanie Durrans, ‘The Translation in the Closet: Willa Cather and Marguerite Yourcenar’, *Willa Cather Newsletter and Review*, 58.2 (2015), 50-55.

manuscript in 1939, Cather was frustrated to discover that she, too, had translated the novel's Spanish words into French. This time, Cather wrote to Caryl Phillips directly to demand that she reinstated 'all the foreign words as they occur in the text, simply putting them in italic, not in quotation marks'.⁸²

Whilst Yourcenar and Caryl Phillips wanted to leave their French readers 'undisturbed' (to borrow Schleiermacher's term) and move Cather towards them by translating *Death Comes for the Archbishop* into domesticated, 'beautiful French', Cather hoped for a foreignising translation which would send French readers abroad into the unfamiliar language mix of her New Mexican novel.⁸³ She did not want a translation which struck French readers as fluent, domesticated and transparent, but one which registered her experiments with multilingualism and highlighted the fact that the novel had been transported across the linguistic and cultural borders dividing New Mexico and France.⁸⁴

Cather's desire to control Yourcenar and Caryl Phillips's translation strategies was, arguably, a symptom of her broader desire to manage the ways in which her fiction was presented to the public. In 1942, for example, Cather denied Marjorie Hurlbut of the National Broadcasting Company the rights to produce 'a three or five-day weekly radio program constructed from MY ANTONIA' on the basis that, in doing so, Hurlbut would become her 'censor and final authority'. '[N]o one', Cather argued:

has a right to reproduce and condense, edit, and practically decide the form in which a book shall be presented to the public when that book was written by another person.⁸⁵

Read in light of Cather's translation of 'À la Malibran', however, this statement seems a little hypocritical. When Cather translated de Musset's poem, she edited and

⁸² Lincoln, NE, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries, Archives and Special Collections, MS 350 Charles E. Cather Collection, Box 1 Fol. 10 Correspondence to Mlle Caryl Phillips, 1939, Feb 2.

⁸³ Schleiermacher, p. 229.

⁸⁴ In his modern French translations of her novels, Marc Chénétier follows Cather's wishes and leaves foreign words untranslated, identifying any words which were originally written in French by italicising them in his translations. With this foreignising strategy, Chénétier strives to preserve the 'otherness' of those French words, even though they are (in his translation) written in the same language as the words that surround them on the page. See *Des ombres sur le rocher*, trans. by Marc Chénétier (Paris: Rivages poche, 2001).

⁸⁵ Lincoln, NE, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries, Archives and Special Collections, MS 350 Charles E. Cather Collection, Box 4 Fol. 33 Correspondence, media rights, 1932-1947, Letter (Cather) to Marjorie Ruth Hurlbut, 1942.

condensed it, changed its tone, gave it a new purpose and presented it to the public in an entirely new context. Her views on translation are, therefore, underpinned by an interesting paradox: whilst she reserved the right to produce domesticating translations in which she reinterpreted source texts according to her own cultural agenda, she did not want other translators to domesticate her own texts.

In summary, although Cather's translations and writings about translation pre-date Pound's and although she once claimed that she 'could not take [him] seriously', their views on how to transport texts across linguistic borders are remarkably similar.⁸⁶ Like Pound, Cather valued two seemingly opposing types of translations: those which belonged to 'the domain of original writing' and existed independently of their source texts and "interpretative translation[s]" which employed foreignising strategies to send target-language readers back towards those source texts.⁸⁷ Pulled between domesticating and foreignising impulses, Cather's – like Pound's – thoughts on how to transport texts across linguistic borders epitomise the fundamental principles of modernist translation theory. Consequently, although Cather claimed to be 'writing for the backward' and not 'forward-goers' and although her status as a modernist *author* is debatable, her translations and reviews of other translators' work reveal her to be an early experimenter with the techniques now associated with modernist translation theory.⁸⁸ Just as Cather's use of foreign vocabulary makes her novels and short stories cousins to those written by her multilingual modernist peers, her translations and writings about translation can be read as cousins to those produced by modernist author-translators such as Pound, Eliot and Bunting.

Moreover, oscillating between foreignisation and domestication, Cather's theory of translation reflects her complex views on American language politics at the start of the twentieth century. On the one hand, Cather believed that the United States' linguistic diversity should be preserved and celebrated. When Cather wrote foreignising translations, she achieved this preservation by making her translating language (particularly its grammar and syntax) a place in which the 'cultural' and linguistic other [was] manifested'.⁸⁹ At the same time, however, Cather was keen to

⁸⁶ Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, *Willa Cather: A Memoir* (New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1953), p. 198.

⁸⁷ 'Guido's Relations', p. 91.

⁸⁸ Willa Cather, *Not Under Forty*, in *Stories, Poems, & Other Writings*, pp. 811-83 (p. 812).

⁸⁹ *The Translator's Invisibility*, p. 15.

ensure that English remained the primary language of the United States. When Cather produced domesticating translations, re-writing and re-contextualising foreign-language texts such as ‘À la Malibran’ in accordance with her own, Anglo-American cultural agenda, she asserted the dominance of her native tongue (and culture) over the languages and texts that she translated. This tension between Cather’s foreignising and domesticating impulses when translating mirrors the tension underpinning her ‘English first, but not English-only’ language politics. As such, Cather’s views on translation are not only a product of the artistic moment in which they were formed, they are also a reflection of the socio-political moment in which she was writing.

Cather’s Layered (Pseudo)translations

As Yao argues, in addition to producing translations, modernist authors also used the process of transporting texts across linguistic borders as ‘a compositional procedure and a conceptual structure’ in their original writing.⁹⁰ He notes, for example, that translation ‘figures largely’ in Pound’s *Cantos* (1915-1962) as ‘both technique and subject’.⁹¹ Cather’s translation work also shaped her original writing. Scholars have already noticed, for example, that translation ‘figures largely’ as a ‘subject’ in Cather’s fiction. Diane Prenatt, for instance, argues that translation is ‘a subject’ which ‘calls our attention [...] to the pragmatic difficulties of assimilation’ in *My Ántonia*:

In the Burden home [...] Ántonia is learning to translate in two ways: with Jim, she is translating her native Bohemian language into [...] spoken English, and with his grandmother, she is translating Bohemian domestic culture into American.⁹²

Meanwhile, Marilee Lindemann proposes that translation is a subject that Cather uses in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* to explore the ‘insider-outsider dichotomies’ that Bishop Latour experiences in relation to his Native American guide, Jacinto:

[Latour] was quite willing to believe that behind Jacinto there was a long tradition [...] which no language could translate to him.⁹³

⁹⁰ Yao, p. 16.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 217.

⁹² Diane Prenatt, ‘Ántonia’s Mother Tongue: Reading and Translating (in) *My Ántonia*’, in *Something Complete and Great: The Centennial Study of My Ántonia*, pp. 63-78 (p. 63, p. 65, p. 68).

⁹³ Lindemann, p. 128; Willa Cather, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, in *Later Novels*, ed. by Sharon O’Brien (New York: Library of America, 1990), pp. 273-460 (p. 332).

Something that critics have yet to explore, however, is the importance of translation as a ‘technique’ – and, in particular, as a structural technique – in Cather’s writing.

The structure of Cather’s narratives has, however, received extensive critical attention. Summarising a key critical trend, Evelyn Funda argues that Cather’s texts are composed of ‘layers of narrative voices’.⁹⁴ Deborah Carlin concurs that the ‘skeleton[s]’ of Cather’s narratives are formed of ‘multiple layers of storytelling’.⁹⁵ In *My Ántonia*, for example, Ántonia tells the story of her failed elopement to the Widow Steavens, who relates it to Jim Burden, who passes it to the novel’s unnamed first narrator in the form of his manuscript, thus producing a multi-layered story. Building upon these critics’ observations, I will argue that the narrative layers in Cather’s texts frequently correspond with layers of translation, which, in accordance with her modernist theory of translation, are both foreignising and domesticating in mode.

A useful theoretical lens through which to analyse the layers of translation in Cather’s fiction is Roman Jakobson’s essay, ‘On Linguistic Aspects of Translation’ (1959). In this text, Jakobson argues that there are ‘three ways of interpreting a verbal sign’: ‘Interlingual translation or *translation proper*’, which is ‘an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language’; ‘Intralingual translation or *rewording*’, which is the ‘interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language’; and ‘Intersemiotic translation or *transmutation*’, which is ‘an interpretation of verbal signs by means of nonverbal sign systems’, for example the translation of words into music.⁹⁶ Although Cather, who died in 1947, would not have known these terms, she constructed her narratives from all three of these types of translation.

The first layer of translation in Cather’s texts is established by her narrators, who are foreignising intra- and interlingual translators. Primarily, Cather’s narrators are intralingual translators because of their tendency to paraphrase (in English) their

⁹⁴ Evelyn I. Funda, ‘“The Breath Vibrating Behind It”: Intimacy in the Storytelling of Ántonia Shimerda’, *Western American Literature*, 29.3 (1994), 195-216 (p. 195).

⁹⁵ Deborah Carlin, *Cather, Canon, and the Politics of Reading* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), p. 64. For further discussion of Cather’s layered narrative structures see Keith Wilhite, ‘Unsettled Worlds: Aesthetic Emplacement in Willa Cather’s *My Ántonia*’, *Studies in the Novel*, 42.3 (2010), 269-86; Terence Martin, ‘The Drama of Memory in *My Ántonia*’, *PMLA*, 84.2 (1969), 304-11; Derek Driedger, ‘Writing Isolation and the Resistance to Assimilation as “Imaginative Art”: Willa Cather’s Anti-Narrative in *Shadows on the Rock*’, *Journal of Narrative Theory*, 37.3 (2007), 351-74; Richard Millington, ‘Willa Cather and “The Storyteller”: Hostility to the Novel in *My Ántonia*’, *American Literature*, 66.4 (1994), 689-717.

⁹⁶ Jakobson, p. 127.

characters' English-language words. In *My Ántonia*, for example, Jim Burden retells Otto Fuch's emigration story in his own words. This act of intralingual translation is highlighted by Jim's selective reproduction of small, 'untranslated' snippets of his 'source text' (namely, Otto's 'original' English words), which he encloses in inverted commas:

When Otto left Austria to come to America, he was asked by one of his relatives to look after a woman who was crossing on the same boat [...]. Fuchs said he 'got on fine with the kids' and liked the mother, though she played a sorry trick on him. In mid-ocean she proceeded to have not one baby, but three! [...] When the triplets were taken ashore at New York, he had, as he said, 'to carry some of them' [...]. (pp. 755-56)

Driving readers' thoughts towards this underlying 'source dialogue', Jim's strategy of quoting some of Otto's original phrases makes his intralingual translation foreignising in mode.

Jim is not the only Catherian narrator to employ this foreignising intralingual translation technique. In *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* (1940), for example, Cather's narrator intersperses his/her paraphrases of Henry Colbert's words with portions of that character's 'original' language: 'He would 'limber up' in a few days, he told his wife'.⁹⁷ Similarly, in *Lucy Gayheart* (1935), Cather's narrator paraphrases Pauline Gayheart's enquiries about the breakdown of Lucy and Harry's relationship, but draws attention to this process of intralingual translation by quoting fragments of her 'original' language in inverted commas: 'Everyone in Haverford was 'talking.' [...] They had always believed his 'intentions' were serious. [...] What did Lucy wish her to say 'under the circumstances'?' (p. 129).⁹⁸ Typically, the fragments of language or dialogue which Cather's narrators quote directly are those which are particularly evocative of the speaking characters' personalities and idiolects. For example, the euphemistic nature of the phrases 'intentions' and 'under the circumstances' epitomises Pauline's small-town propriety and keenness to avoid scandal.

The switches between paraphrase and direct quotation made by Cather's intralingual narrator-translators are significant because they evoke the effects that time and memory have wrought upon the stories that they tell. For Cather, writing was a

⁹⁷ Willa Cather, *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, in *Later Novels*, ed. by Sharon O' Brien (New York: Library of America, 1990), pp. 775-940 (p. 895).

⁹⁸ Willa Cather, *Lucy Gayheart*, in *Later Novels*, pp. 643-774 (p. 718).

process entwined with remembering. In 1894, Stephen Crane told Cather that, for him, writing involved allowing ‘The detail of a thing’ he described to ‘filter through [his] blood’.⁹⁹ The notion that the writer must absorb experiences, reflect on them and filter out the most important details clearly made an impression on Cather because, writing in 1927, she described her own writing process in very similar terms: ‘Nearly all’ of her ‘books’, she argued, were ‘made out of old experiences that have had time to season, memory keeps what is essential and lets the rest go’.¹⁰⁰

Correspondingly, the sections of characters’ dialogue that Cather’s narrators quote directly are those which they recall most clearly (most likely because they are the words and phrases most evocative of those characters’ idiolects). In contrast, the words that they paraphrase are those which they have, for the most part, let go. By making her narrators intralingual translators who adopt foreignising strategies involving both paraphrase and direct quotation, Cather creates the impression that they do not invent the stories they tell; rather, they retell stories which they have heard, filtered, given time to season and remembered. In this way, Cather uses foreignising intralingual translation to give her narrator’s stories a feeling of age, authenticity and provenance.

In addition to acting as intralingual translators, Cather’s narrators are also (as discussed in Chapter Two in relation to Cather’s use of selective reproduction) foreignising interlingual translators who convert bilingual or non-Anglophone characters’ foreign-language dialogue into English. Cather’s most conspicuous interlingual translator is the narrator of *Shadows on the Rock*. This is because all of the characters in this novel, which is set in Quebec, are French speakers; consequently, whenever the narrator quotes their dialogue in English, it is implied that he/she has ‘translated’ it from French. The narrator’s translation work is especially noticeable thanks to his/her selective reproduction of characters’ ‘original’ French words in parentheses. For example:

“Before she had left her fair Normandy (*avant qu’elle ait quitté sa belle Normandie*) [...]”

and:

⁹⁹ Willa Cather, ‘When I Knew Stephen Crane’, *Library*, June 23, 1900, pp. 17-18, in *The World and the Parish*, II, pp. 771-78 (p. 776).

¹⁰⁰ Willa Cather, ‘To Stephen Tennant, 28 March 1927’, in *Letters*, pp. 392-93 (p. 393).

His silence was so dreadful that it was a relief when he began to thunder and tell her that even the beasts of the forest protected their young (*Les ourses et les louves protègent leurs petits*).¹⁰¹

By quoting characters' 'original' French words *after* their English equivalents (and thus reversing the usual progress of a translation from source to target language), Cather's narrator draws readers' attention to the fictional layer of French 'source' dialogue which underpins his/her 'translation' and, by extension, the fact that a translation has taken place (a foreignising strategy).

However, characters' 'original' French-language dialogue is not the only imaginary 'source text' that the narrator of *Shadows on the Rock* translates. In 1931, Cather explained to her brother Roscoe that she had 'tried to make' the *entire* novel 'sound like a translation from the French'.¹⁰² Indeed, *Shadows on the Rock* as a whole is a 'pseudotranslation' – a text which is 'presented as [a translation] with no source ever having existed'.¹⁰³ As Rebecca Walkowitz elaborates, pseudotranslations, or 'born-translated' novels, are:

written as translations, pretending to have taken place in a language other than the one in which they have, in fact, been composed. Sometimes they present themselves as fake or fictional editions: subsequent versions (in English) of an original text (in some other language), which doesn't really exist.¹⁰⁴

To cite one famous example that Cather would have recognised, *Don Quixote* is, Cervantes pretends, an 'extempore' translation 'from the Arabic into Castilian' of a text entitled 'the *History of Don Quixote de la Mancha*, written by Cide Hamete Benengeli, Arabic historian'.¹⁰⁵

Unlike Cervantes, Cather does not announce that *Shadows on the Rock* is a translation; rather, she subtly creates the conceit that it is a subsequent English-language version of a pre-existing French text by offering readers occasional glimpses

¹⁰¹ Willa Cather, *Shadows on the Rock*, in *Later Novels*, pp. 461-642 (p. 478, pp. 512-13). Further references given in the text.

¹⁰² Lincoln, NE, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries, Archives and Special Collections, MS 316 Roscoe and Meta Cather Collection, Box 1 Fol. 7 Roscoe Correspondence, 1931-1932, Letter 289 [1931, July or August].

¹⁰³ Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins, 1995), p. 40.

¹⁰⁴ Rebecca Walkowitz, *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), p. 4.

¹⁰⁵ de Cervantes, p. 77.

of the shadowy, nameless, fictional French ‘source text’ that hovers behind it. For example, when the narrator describes Euclide Auclair’s method of ‘boiling pine tops (*bourgeons des pins*)’, the words ‘*bourgeons des pins*’ are not quoted from a character’s ‘original’ French-language dialogue (p. 518). Instead, they are spoken/written in the narrator’s voice: ‘The apothecary went back into his shop, where he was boiling pine tops (*bourgeons des pins*) to make a cough syrup’ (p. 518). As such, the French words seem to be a fragment of the pre-existing French version of the narrative that the narrator is translating.

Arguably, Cather’s narrator quotes the ‘original’ French text at this point in his/her ‘translation’ in a bid to achieve scholarly clarity. ‘[P]ine tops’ are an obscure apothecary’s ingredient and so, by quoting the ‘original’ French term for them, the narrator gives readers the opportunity to verify his/her translation work against his/her ‘source text’ – a foreignising strategy which recalls Pound’s method of publishing his interpretative translations of Cavalcanti’s sonnets side-by-side with their source texts so that readers could compare them. In Thomas Carlyle’s pseudotranslation *Sartor Resartus* (1836), the unnamed Editor uses a very similar strategy when he ‘translates’ the fictional German-language text ‘*Die Kleider, ihr Werden und Wirken*’ by Diogenes Teufelsdröckh into English. Like the narrator of *Shadows on the Rock*, Carlyle’s narrator retrospectively ‘quotes’ fragments of his German ‘source text’ in places where he feels that clarity is required – for example, when Teufelsdröckh deploys technical terms or neologisms: ‘My Active power (*Thatkraft*) was unfavorably hemmed in’.¹⁰⁶ By showing the reader fragments of his extradiegetic narrator’s ‘source text’, Carlyle, like Cather, reinforces the conceit that it really exists.

We know that Cather was familiar with Carlyle’s pseudotranslation because she referred to Teufelsdröckh in her essay ‘Concerning Thos. Carlyle’ (1891): ‘It is very likely that Carlyle used violent language when interrupted in one of the soliloquies of Teufelsdröckh to be informed that his coffee was ready’.¹⁰⁷ However, whilst the art of pseudotranslation is something that Cather may have learned from the Victorian Carlyle, it is a technique which also connects her writing to literary modernism. As Joshua Miller argues, many modernist texts have ‘the qualities of translations with no

¹⁰⁶ Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus: The Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdröckh* (New York: Scribner, 1899), p. 78.

¹⁰⁷ Willa Cather, ‘Concerning Thos. Carlyle’, *Nebraska State Journal*, March 1, 1891, p. 14, in *The Kingdom of Art*, pp. 421-25 (p. 423).

source text'.¹⁰⁸ Juliette Taylor-Batty concurs, noting that Jean Rhys's novels *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* (1930) and *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939) are 'characterised [...] by a frequent and disquieting sense of [...] being derived from some absent 'original' source text and language'.¹⁰⁹ A pseudotranslation without a source text, *Shadows on the Rock* not only provides evidence of the impact of Cather's theory of translation upon her fiction (something which, in itself, connects her work to that of her modernist peers), it also highlights her status as an author who hovers 'On the Divide' between Victorian and modernist literary cultures.¹¹⁰

In summary, by mimicking foreignising translation strategies in her narrators' prose and establishing the conceit that they are intra- and interlingual translators, Cather gives her narratives an invented provenance and, by extension, a feeling of age, authenticity and value. *Shadows on the Rock* is not, Cather pretends, a new story, but an old one which has been deemed worthy of being translated into a new language in order to be shared with a wider audience of foreign-language readers. Typically, the process by which a story is written and translated, as well as its history of prior ownership or authorship, are 'pattern[s]' which do not 'count' within a work of fiction. However, by using the conceit of pseudotranslation to shine a light on these usually-hidden patterns, Cather creates narratives with structures comparable to another 'pattern that is not supposed to count' – that which is found on 'the other side of the rug'.¹¹¹

These invented patterns of provenance are made more intricate still by the fact that, within the narratives told by Cather's narrators, there are further intradiegetic layers of translation.¹¹² For example, Cather's short story 'Coming, Aphrodite!' contains an inset story entitled 'The Forty Lovers of the Queen' which is underpinned by four layers of fictional translations.¹¹³ Told by Cather's focal character and intradiegetic narrator, Don Hedger, to Eden Bower, this inset story describes an Aztec

¹⁰⁸ Joshua L. Miller, *Accented America: The Cultural Politics of Multilingual Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 231.

¹⁰⁹ Juliette Taylor-Batty, *Multilingualism in Modernist Fiction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2013), p. 81.

¹¹⁰ Willa Cather, 'On the Divide', *Overland Monthly*, January 1896, pp. 65-75 (p. 65), in *The Willa Cather Archive* <<https://cather.unl.edu/ss026.html>> [accessed 31/07/2018].

¹¹¹ 'A Short Story Course Can Only Delay', p. 77.

¹¹² The term 'intradiegetic' was coined by Gérard Genette in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 228.

¹¹³ 'Coming, Aphrodite!', p. 382. Further references given in the text.

King who executes his wife for secretly inviting lovers to the private fortress in which she ‘entreat[s] the rain gods’ (p. 383). Hedger does not, however, invent the tale in order to tell it to Eden; instead, he notes that it was originally ‘told’ to him by ‘a Mexican priest’ who ‘found it in a monastery [...], written by some Spanish missionary’. In turn, this missionary ‘got his stories from the Aztecs’ (p. 382). Consequently, readers are led to imagine that the tale was originally told in Nahuatl, translated into Spanish by the missionary, and translated from Spanish to English by the Mexican priest for Hedger.

These two interlingual translations form the basis of a third, intersemiotic translation: artist Hedger’s conversion of the story from words into a painting entitled ‘Rain Spirits, or maybe, Indian Rain’ (p. 382). It is Eden’s interest in this ‘queer’ picture which prompts Don to translate the story from an image back into words (a final intersemiotic translation) in order to share it with her (p. 382). The implied translations which hover behind this final version of the ‘The Forty Lovers of the Queen’ give the story an even more complex invented history of tellings and retellings than *Shadows on the Rock* and, by extension, an even greater feeling of age, authenticity and value.

In *My Ántonia*, Cather uses layers of translation to establish a similar chain of provenance for the story of Peter, Pavel and the wolves. In 1965, Louis Auchincloss famously described the inset story as a ‘horrifying little piece that has nothing to do with anything else in the novel’.¹¹⁴ On the contrary, the story is the source text for a complex chain of translations connecting Pavel to the novel’s first narrator. In its original form, the story is a deathbed confession. ‘[U]nburden[ing] his mind to Mr. Shimerda’, Pavel recalls (in his ‘West Ukrainian’ dialect of Russian) how he threw a friend and his bride ‘over the side’ of his sledge in order to save himself and Peter from a wolf pack.¹¹⁵ ‘[A] few days after’ making this revelation, Pavel dies.¹¹⁶ Nonetheless, his story lives on as a source text underpinning four layered translations which – in

¹¹⁴ Louis Auchincloss, *Pioneers and Caretakers: A Study of Nine American Women Novelists* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1965), p. 103.

¹¹⁵ As Paul Schach argues, ‘Russian and Czech are not mutually understandable. For the sake of Cather’s story we must assume that Pavel and Peter spoke a West Ukrainian dialect that could have been comprehended by the Czech-speaking Shimerda family’. See Schach, ‘Russian Wolves in Folktales and Literature of the Plains: A Question of Origins’, *Great Plains Quarterly*, 3.2 (1982), 67-78 (p. 77).

¹¹⁶ Willa Cather, *My Ántonia*, in *Early Novels*, pp. 707-938 (p. 750). Further references given in the text.

accordance with Cather's modernist theory of translation – are both domesticating and foreignising in mode.

The first translation of Pavel's story is interlingual. 'On the way home' from Peter and Pavel's house, Ántonia (who overhears Pavel's confession) translates the story from Russian to English for Jim Burden (p. 748). Given that her Bohemian family speak very little English, bilingual Ántonia is a prolific interlingual interpreter and, typically, her translations are domesticating in mode. For example, when Ántonia relays Mr. Shimerda's promise to make her a rabbit-skin hat to Jim Burden in Book I, Chapter VI of *My Ántonia*, she turns his words – which were originally delivered in Czech with 'a wintry flicker of a smile' – into a 'joyful' English exclamation: "My *tatine* make me little hat with the skins, little hat for win-ter!" (p. 728). Just as Cather tempered the tragic tone of de Musset's 'À la Malibran' to make it fit her agenda as a drama critic, Ántonia amplifies the gently optimistic tone of her father's speech in accordance with her own ebullient mood.

Ántonia's translation of Pavel's confession is similarly domesticating because, again, she adapts its tone and genre to suit her own agenda. As Judith Fryer observes, Ántonia firstly translates Pavel's story from a harrowing confession into a thrilling story (a source of 'painful and peculiar pleasure') which she and Jim tell each other to '[pass] the time': 'It's wolves, Jimmy [...]' (p. 751, p. 747).¹¹⁷ Secondly, Ántonia translates the tale from an autobiographical confession into something more 'fabular'.¹¹⁸ As she and Jim tell and retell her translation 'for days' on end, it seems decreasingly like a tragedy which happened to their friend in the recent past and increasingly like a fairy-tale which took place in a faraway country on a 'night long ago' (p. 748, p. 751). Losing its connection to Pavel's life and reality, Ántonia's version of the story – much like FitzGerald's translation of Kháyýám's *Rubáiyát* and Cather's translation of 'À la Malibran' – begins to take on an independent life of its own.

The second translation of Pavel's story is intersemiotic. Replaying Ántonia's interlingual translation each 'night, before [he goes] to sleep', the young Jim Burden converts it from words into a recurring dream:

¹¹⁷ Judith Fryer, *Felicitous Space: The Imaginative Structures of Edith Wharton and Willa Cather* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), p. 283.

¹¹⁸ Ann Fisher-Wirth, 'Out of the Mother: Loss in *My Ántonia*', *Cather Studies*, 2 (1993) <https://cather.unl.edu/cs002_loss.html> [accessed 20/08/2016] (para. 39 of 51).

I often found myself in a sledge drawn by three horses, dashing through a country that looked something like Nebraska and something like Virginia. (p. 751)

This intersemiotic translation is domesticating in mode because Pavel's confession is, once again, repurposed (albeit subconsciously) according to its translator's needs. This time, Pavel's account of his exile from Russia becomes a psychological tool that Jim uses to process his own exile from Virginia and his subsequent feelings of displacement and homesickness in Nebraska.

The young Jim Burden's intersemiotic (dream) translation of *Ántonia's* interlingual translation of Pavel's confession is presented to the reader through the lens of a third layer of translation performed by the adult Jim Burden, who records both prior translations in his memoir of his childhood with *Ántonia*. In order to write this memoir (which comprises the main body of *My Ántonia*) the adult Jim Burden has, Cather implies, translated *Ántonia's* oral version of Pavel's story into his own words (an English-English intralingual translation) and his younger self's dream-version of the story back into language (an intersemiotic translation) in order to commit them to paper.

This tertiary layer of translation is, once again, domesticating in mode because Jim repurposes Pavel's story as a literary device to tell readers more about himself. Exactly what the story tells us about Jim is something that critics have debated at length. Fisher-Wirth, for example, argues that the adult Jim weaves Pavel's story into his memoir in order to foreshadow the fact that, like Peter and Pavel, he will grow up to become 'an exile and a wanderer'.¹¹⁹ Meanwhile, Ann Goodwyn Jones suggests that Jim includes the story to highlight the fact that, just as Pavel threw the wedding party to the wolves, he 'tossed' his 'old life' in Virginia 'violently out of his mind' when he arrived 'in Nebraska'.¹²⁰ Both of these interpretations are valid and they both highlight the fact that, just as Cather repurposed, recontextualised and translated de Musset's *À la Malibran* into a section of her *Courier* drama review in order to comment on American acting styles, Jim repurposes, recontextualises and translates Pavel's

¹¹⁹ Fisher-Wirth, para. 40 of 51.

¹²⁰ Anne Goodwyn Jones, 'Displacing Dixie: The Southern Subtext in *My Ántonia*', in *New Essays on My Ántonia*, ed. by Sharon O'Brien (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 85-101 (p. 101).

autobiographical Russian story into a section of his own autobiography in order to comment on the circumstances of his American life.

When Jim Burden passes his memoir to *My Ántonia*'s first narrator, Pavel's story undergoes a fourth and final translation. In the novel's introduction, the nameless first-person narrator meets Jim on a train journey across the 'plains of Iowa' (p. 711). Together they reminisce about their childhood in Nebraska and agree to 'set down on paper all that' they remember of their friend Ántonia (p. 711, p. 713). 'Months afterward', Jim gives the first narrator 'a bulging legal portfolio' containing his memoir (p. 713). The narrative that follows is – as the first narrator notes in the 1918 edition of *My Ántonia* – 'Jim's manuscript, substantially as he brought it to me' (p. 713).¹²¹

The word 'substantially' is significant because it implies that the subsequent text is an edited version of Jim's manuscript. Given that the first narrator of *My Ántonia* is a writer (on board the train, Jim expresses his surprise that the first narrator has 'never written anything about Ántonia' before), it is reasonable to assume that he/she is responsible for this editorial work (p. 713). As Bassnett argues, 'the role played by editors in shaping texts for [...] readers can be regarded as a kind of' intralingual translation because 'editors, like translators, [...] re-phrase and emend texts in diverse ways'.¹²² Consequently, when the first narrator edits Jim's manuscript, Pavel's story undergoes one final intralingual translation.

On the one hand, this final translation is domesticating in mode because Pavel's story (embedded within Jim's manuscript) is, once again, repurposed and re-contextualised according to its latest translator's agenda. When Jim leaves his manuscript with the first narrator, he warns him/her not to let it 'influence [his/her] own story' (p. 714). However, rather than write his/her own memoir, the first narrator simply appends Jim's edited manuscript to his/her introduction in the same way that Cather appended her translation of 'À la Malibran' to the end of her *Courier* article on Minnie Maddern Fiske. Consequently, in addition to being repurposed as a fairy-tale, a dream and an episode in Jim's American childhood, Pavel's confession is finally transformed into a chapter within the first narrator's American novel.

At the same time, this final translation – as well as the three translations which precede it – is foreignising in mode. This is because, as Miles Orvel points out, Pavel's

¹²¹ Cather removed this line when she rewrote the introduction for the 1926 edition of the text.

¹²² Bassnett, *Translation*, p. 30.

story is never ‘fully absorbed into [the] finished system’ of *My Ántonia*.¹²³ One reason for this is that, whilst Ántonia, Jim Burden and the first narrator repurpose (and domesticate) the tale according to their own agendas, they do not hide the complex chain of provenance by which they came to possess it. Just as the knots on the reverse of a tapestry reveal how it was made, Cather’s first narrator makes it clear that the narrative he/she presents is Jim’s, whilst Jim himself draws attention to the fact that he acquired Pavel’s story from Ántonia who acquired it from Pavel. Consequently, the story’s connection to its source, Pavel, persists and it is never completely transformed into an autonomous tale in its own right. The foreignising visibility of the layers of translation that Ántonia, Jim and the first narrator create makes one of the ‘patterns’ which ‘is not supposed to count’ in a story – namely, the record of people who have previously told, translated and modified it – one of the most significant patterns in *My Ántonia*, the structure of which is, therefore, comparable to another pattern which ‘is not supposed to count’: that which can be found on ‘the other side of the rug’.

In summary, drawing attention to their translation work and their source text even as they repurpose it according to their own agendas, Ántonia, Jim Burden and the first narrator are fictional translators who oscillate between foreignisation and domestication. In this respect, they epitomise the fundamental principles of Cather’s modernist half-foreignising, half-domesticating translation theory and, moreover, the significant impact that her translation work had upon her original writing. Their modernist translation strategies also epitomise Cather’s ‘English first, but not English only’ language politics. Whilst Ántonia, Jim Burden and the first narrator put English first by converting a Russian story into an American-English one, they nonetheless acknowledge (with foreignising translation strategies) the fundamental importance of that original Russian tale, which is the ultimate source and catalyst for their own layered narratives.

‘Julio knows one such lovely story about an Aztec Cleopatra’: Cather’s Translational Creative Process

The notion that the stories of ‘The Forty Lovers of the Queen’ and Peter, Pavel and the wolves told by Don Hedger and *My Ántonia*’s first narrator are translations of pre-

¹²³ Miles Orvell, ‘Time, Change and the Burden of Revision in *My Ántonia*’, in *New Essays on My Ántonia*, pp. 31-55 (p. 34).

existing foreign-language tales is not, however, a complete fallacy. This is because the invented intradiegetic layers of translation by which these inset stories are passed between Cather's characters and narrators are underpinned by additional, real layers of translation which extend their chains of provenance far beyond the pages of 'Coming, Aphrodite!' and *My Ántonia*. Tracing these extended chains of provenance reveals that, in addition to shaping the structure of Cather's narratives, translation was also a vital element of her creative process.

Critics have already observed that Pavel's story of the wolves and the wedding party pre-dates *My Ántonia*. James Woodress, for example, suggests that Cather learned the tale from either a 'painting by Paul Powis depicting wolves attacking a sledge' which hung in her hometown of Red Cloud, Nebraska or, alternatively, Robert Browning's poem 'Ivan Ivanovich', which she read when she 'took a year-long course in Browning at the University of Nebraska'.¹²⁴ Michaela Schulthies, on the other hand, argues that Cather may have borrowed Pavel's backstory from 'a *New York Times* article from March 19, 1911,' entitled "'Wolves Kill Bridal Party: Only Two Escape in Asiatic Russia'".¹²⁵

Paul Schach, meanwhile, persuasively argues that the 'ultimate source of the tragic wolf tale' is a French-language text entitled, '*Les mystères de la Russie: Tableau politique et moral de l'Empire russe*' (1845) by Frédéric Lacroix.¹²⁶ In this piece of anti-Russian propaganda, Lacroix condemns the dehumanising effects of serfdom by recounting the story of a Russian peasant who gladly threw her children from her sledge in order to save herself from a pack of wolves: 'Enfin, le troisième suit bientôt ses deux frères; et la mère triomphante rentre, saine et sauve [...]. Voilà ce que l'esclavage fait d'une femme, d'une mère'.¹²⁷ Although the sledge in Lacroix's story is populated by a mother and children rather than a bridal party, the details of his tale very closely match those of Pavel's confession, which raises an intriguing question: how did this French-language story make its way into Cather's English-language novel?

¹²⁴ Woodress, p. 292.

¹²⁵ Michaela Schulthies, "'Never at an End": The Search for Sources of Cather's Wolves Story, *Willa Cather Newsletter and Review*, 58.1 (2015), 2-8 (p. 2).

¹²⁶ Schach, p. 76.

¹²⁷ Frédéric Lacroix, *Les mystères de la Russie: Tableau politique et moral de l'Empire russe* (Paris: Pagnerre, 1845), pp. 323-24.

From French, Lacroix's book was translated into German and 'published' in that language 'in Regensburg on the Danube River' – a major stopping point for the thousands of Germans who emigrated to Russia between 1763 and 1890.¹²⁸ These emigrants – who, as Schach notes, would undoubtedly have been 'eager to read a book that purported to reveal "secrets" about the politics and morality of their future homeland' – transported the wolf story to the Russian-German colonies that they established near the Volga River, translated it into 'West Prussian Low German' and recast the main characters as a wedding party.¹²⁹ When some of these Russian-Germans emigrated to the Great Plains of the United States in the latter half of the nineteenth century, they carried the modified story with them. As Schach argues, it is likely that Cather heard an English-language translation of the tale of wolves and the wedding party from one of these immigrants during her childhood in Nebraska and subsequently translated it one more time into Pavel's backstory. Consequently, the 'source text' for the fictional layers of interlingual, intralingual and intersemiotic translation generated by Ántonia, Jim and the first narrator in *My Ántonia* (Pavel's backstory) was itself the product of a chain of real translations spanning French, German, 'West Prussian Low German' and, finally, English.

Don Hedger's version of 'The Forty Lovers of the Queen' is similarly underpinned by two 'real' chains of translations which connect 'Coming, Aphrodite!' to an ancient Aztec legend. Primarily, a letter from Cather to Shepley Sergeant reveals that she learned Hedger's tale – which she described in her correspondence as a 'lovely story about an Aztec Cleopatra' – from her guide Julio (who perhaps also taught her 'Serenata Mejicana') during her trip to the Southwest in 1912.¹³⁰ From this letter we may infer that Julio translated the story from his native Spanish into English for Cather (an interlingual translation), who wrote it down when they reached 'the place where it happened'.¹³¹ Eight years later, Cather translated her notes into the section of 'Coming, Aphrodite!' (1920) in which Don tells the story to Eden (a final intralingual translation).

Secondly, Cather's letter to Shepley Sergeant reveals that she read another version of the tale in William H. Prescott's *History of the Conquest of Mexico* (1843):

¹²⁸ Schach, p. 76.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 76, p. 68.

¹³⁰ Willa Cather, 'To Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, May 21 [1912]', in *Letters*, pp. 157-59 (p. 158).

¹³¹ Ibid.

‘Prescott has a dim account of it [‘The Forty Lovers of the Queen’], I remember, but Julio’s version is much more alive’.¹³² Arguably, Prescott’s version seemed ‘dim’ to Cather because it languishes in the second appendix of his history, where it takes the form of a dry, scholarly translation of a section of Ixtlilxochitl’s Spanish-language *Historia Chichimeca* (c. 1610-1640). In the section of *Historia Chichimeca* that Prescott translates, Ixtlilxochitl describes the ‘extraordinary severity with which the King Nezahualpilli [a ruler of Texcoco] punished the Mexican Queen for her adultery and treason’; the details of this story closely match Cather’s version of ‘The Forty Lovers of the Queen’ in ‘Coming, Aphrodite!’.¹³³

A Mexican historian descended from the rulers of Texcoco, Fernando de Alva Cortés Ixtlilxochitl (c. 1580-1648) spoke both Nahuatl and Spanish. Consequently, in addition to being derived from Julio’s Spanish-language oral telling of the story, the version of ‘The Forty Lovers of the Queen’ told by Don Hedger in ‘Coming, Aphrodite!’ is an intralingual (English-English) translation of Prescott’s interlingual (Spanish-English) translation of Ixtlilxochitl’s *Historia Chichimeca* – a text which contains Spanish-language translations of legends which were originally told in Nahuatl. This provenance does not quite match that by which Hedger claims to have acquired the tale (that is, from ‘a Mexican priest’ who ‘found it in a monastery [...], written by some Spanish missionary’ who ‘got his stories from the Aztecs’); however, in both its ‘real’ and ‘imagined’ histories of tellings and retellings, the story of ‘The Forty Lovers of the Queen’ is transported across the linguistic borders dividing Nahuatl, Spanish and English (p. 382).

Cather’s translations of the French/Russo-German wolf story into Pavel’s confession in *My Ántonia* and the Nahuatl/Spanish legend into Don Hedger’s story in ‘Coming, Aphrodite!’ are domesticating in mode because, just as she repurposed ‘À la Malibran’ in accordance with her agenda as an American drama critic, she repurposed these originally foreign-language tales in accordance with the needs of her modern American texts. In ‘Coming, Aphrodite!’, for example, Cather employed the story of ‘The Forty Lovers of the Queen’ as a foreshadowing device and a plot catalyst.

¹³² ‘To Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, May 21 [1912]’, p. 158.

¹³³ William H. Prescott, ‘Translation from Ixtlilxochitl’s *Historia Chichimeca*’, in *History of the Conquest of Mexico* (London: Folio Society, 1994), pp. 687-89 (p. 687).

Specifically, Cather used the Aztec story to foreshadow Eden Bower's infidelity to her 'millionaire' patron and future husband, Mr. Jones (p. 373). Just as the King in the Nahuatl legend gives 'his bride a fortress on the outskirts of the city' so that she may 'entreat the rain gods' in peace, Jones 'rent[s] the Griffith's place' in Washington Square so that Eden can stay in New York City unattended and study with 'an excellent singing master' whilst he is 'compelled to go to Mexico to look after oil interests' (p. 383, p. 375). Rather than entreating the gods, however, the Aztec Queen deceives her husband by inviting lovers to her fortress. Likewise, rather than 'studying quietly', Eden deceives Jones by embarking on an affair with her new 'Griffith's place' neighbour, Don Hedger (p. 375). Ironically, it is the Aztec Queen's tale which brings Don and Eden together. Unable to sleep for thinking about Don's 'savage story', Eden goes to the roof of their apartment building (passing through the 'heavy trapdoor' which recalls the removable 'stone in the floor' through which the Aztec Queen disposes of her lovers in her fortress) for air (pp. 384-86). There, Eden coincidentally finds Don and the pair admit their feelings for each other.

There is, however, one key difference between Cather's domesticating redeployments of the wolf story and 'The Forty Lovers of the Queen' and her translation of 'À la Malibran'. In her review of Minnie Maddern Fiske's acting, Cather clearly acknowledges that the poem with which she concludes her article is a translation: 'de Musset said the same thing much better [...]. My scholarly friends will laugh at the translation, but I merely wish to get at the idea'.¹³⁴ In contrast, in *My Ántonia* and 'Coming, Aphrodite!' Cather makes no indication that Pavel's confession and Hedger's story are anything other than her own invention.

As Murphy, Lindemann and others have argued, collecting fragments of pre-existing texts and 'arrang[ing] them into' new 'patterns' without acknowledging their prior authorship was a hallmark of Cather's creative process.¹³⁵ Thacker, for example, observes that 'whole passages' of *Shadows on the Rock* are silently 'lifted' from other works (something which is evident in the cutting and pasting of the unnamed French-language text in the novel's manuscript).¹³⁶ For Daryl Palmer, this process of

¹³⁴ 'The Passing Show', December 11, 1897, p. 451.

¹³⁵ Murphy, 'Escaping the Prairie and Approaching Quebec', p. 6. See also: Lindemann, p. 4; and Skaggs, 'Cather's Use of Parkman's Histories in *Shadows on the Rock*', no page numbers.

¹³⁶ Thacker, "'A Kind of French Culture': Cather, 'Canada', and the Québécois", p. 12.

rearranging and reusing pre-existing textual material represents the impact of Cather's career as a magazine editor upon her fiction: 'Is it any wonder that the experienced editor [...] realized that stories created for one purpose could be repurposed in the name of a larger project?'.¹³⁷ Cather's unacknowledged translation of 'The Forty Lovers of the Queen' and the wolf story into sections of 'Coming, Aphrodite!' and *My Ántonia* represents another, hitherto unexplored way in which she 'lifted' pre-existing literary material and repurposed it as part of the larger project of her fiction. It also raises some interesting ethical questions about Cather's creative process.

On the one hand, the translational aspects of Cather's creative process can be regarded as appropriative and commodifying. Indeed, by quietly transforming the Nahuatl legend of 'The Forty Lovers of the Queen' into part of a short story which she sold in two forms (first in *Smart Set* in August 1920 and then in *Youth and the Bright Medusa*, her collection of short stories, in September 1920) and by translating the French/Russo-German wolf story into a section of her best-selling novel *My Ántonia*, Cather profited from tales which were neither her cultural birthright nor her invention. On the other hand, by translating these originally foreign-language stories into sections of her English-language texts, Cather did precisely what the dying Bishop Latour wishes he had done with 'the old legends' that he learned during his time in New Mexico in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*: she 'thr[ew] about them the light and elastic mesh of' her native 'tongue' in order to '[arrest] their flight' into obscurity (p. 444). If readers take this view, Cather did not appropriate the stories so much as preserve them for generations of new readers.

The translational narrative structures of 'Coming, Aphrodite!' and *My Ántonia* support this more positive interpretation of Cather's curatorial creative process because they 'diminish the status of originality' (a quality which Emily Apter attributes to all pseudotranslations) by demonstrating that the best stories never belong to just one author.¹³⁸ Indeed, Ántonia, Jim Burden, *My Ántonia*'s first narrator, Don Hedger, the Mexican priest and the Spanish missionary participate in a form of storytelling which is collaborative as well as translational. They cast the 'mesh' of their own languages around the stories of the wolves and the wedding party and 'The Forty Lovers of the

¹³⁷ Daryl W. Palmer, *Becoming Willa Cather: Creation and Career* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2019), p. 189.

¹³⁸ Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 223.

Queen’ in order to pass them on to new listeners and readers, just as Cather did when she wove those tales into her own texts. Read in light of their own narrative structures, then, ‘Coming, Aphrodite!’ and *My Antonia* are not commodifying appropriations of ‘The Forty Lovers of the Queen’ and the wolf story; rather, they are fresh links that Cather has added to those stories’ long chains of translations, tellings and retellings.

In summary, Cather’s English-language texts are ‘palimpsests’ – to borrow Gérard Genette’s term – of originally-foreign-language tales.¹³⁹ For Genette, a text which is a palimpsest of prior texts is often ‘more savory’ than one that is ‘made on purpose’ because of the ‘dissonance’ between its ‘concurrent’ old and new elements.¹⁴⁰ This certainly applies to Cather’s translational texts. Primarily, the ‘dissonance’ between old and new, borrowed and created, English and other languages in Cather’s works makes them ‘more savory’ because it epitomises her complex ‘English first, but not English-only’ language politics. By translating originally-French and Nahuatl tales into important sections of her English-language narratives, Cather put foreign-language stories at the very heart of her texts whilst, at the same time, making them immediately accessible to Anglophone readers. As such, translation is a process which enabled Cather to strike a balance between including linguistic diversity (in the form of foreign-language tales) in her work whilst simultaneously ensuring that English remained the primary language of her prose.

Furthermore, the dissonance between old and new, borrowed and created, English and other languages inherent in her palimpsest narratives enabled Cather to enact one of her theories about the nature of literature. In Cather’s opinion, the difference between ‘Literature’ and ‘merely a good story or novel’ lay in the quality of its raw ‘material’.¹⁴¹ Literary material (as opposed to ‘merely good’ storytelling material) possessed, Cather argued, the qualities of ‘persistence, survival and recurrence’.¹⁴² Indeed, as Cather learned from Stephen Crane, literary material was that which survived the process of being ‘filter[ed] through’ the author’s ‘blood’; similarly, Cather’s mentor Sarah Orne Jewett advised her that:

¹³⁹ Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. by Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), p. 398.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Sarah Orne Jewett, quoted in Willa Cather, ‘Miss Jewett’, in *Stories, Poems, & Other Writings*, pp. 849-57 (p. 849).

¹⁴² Ibid.

*“The thing that teases the mind over and over for years, and at last gets itself put down rightly on paper – whether little or great, it belongs to Literature.”*¹⁴³

This wisdom from her two literary forerunners shaped Cather’s belief that, if material ‘ha[d] any real vitality’, it had the capacity to ‘go on’, even if it was ‘printed and sold in half a dozen languages’.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, for Cather, the quality of artistic material lay not in its originality, but in its ability to withstand time, various retellings and even linguistic border crossings.

By translating the Nahuatl story of ‘The Forty Lovers of the Queen’ and the French/Russian-German story of the wolves and the wedding party into sections of her English-language texts, Cather built her narratives from tales which had not only teased her mind ‘over and over’ (indeed, eight years separate Cather’s 1912 trip to the Southwest, during which she learned the story of the ‘The Forty Lovers of the Queen’, and the publication of ‘Coming, Aphrodite!’ in 1920), but which had teased the minds of other tellers – for example, Ixtlilxochitl, Prescott and her guide Julio – ‘over and over’ for centuries in various forms and languages. By using these time-tested stories as the source texts for her translational narratives, Cather was able to guarantee that – according to her and Jewett’s definition, at least – the raw material of her fiction ‘belong[ed] to Literature’.¹⁴⁵

Within the context of Cather’s narratives, ‘The Forty Lovers of the Queen’ and the story of the wolves and the wedding party withstand further layers of interlingual, intralingual and intersemiotic translations, tellings and retellings as they are handed from narrator to narrator. As such, these tales pass a further intradiegetic litmus test of ‘persistence, survival and recurrence’. In this way, both the translational narrative structures of ‘Coming, Aphrodite’ and *My Ántonia* and the translational process by which they were written epitomise Cather’s belief that the best stories are not invented; rather, they are overheard, carried across linguistic borders, filtered through the blood, remembered, repurposed, re-contextualised and, finally, retold. If, after this, they still

¹⁴³ ‘When I Knew Stephen Crane’, p. 776; Sarah Orne Jewett, quoted in Cather, ‘Miss Jewett’, p. 849.

¹⁴⁴ Willa Cather, ‘To Irene Miner Weisz, January 6, 1945’, in *Letters*, pp. 641-43 (p. 643).

¹⁴⁵ Sarah Orne Jewett, quoted in Cather, ‘Miss Jewett’, p. 849.

‘tease the mind over and over’, they belong – as Cather noted in ‘The Novel D  meubl  ’ – to the ‘eternal material’ of art.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Willa Cather, ‘The Novel D  meubl  ’, in *Stories, Poems, & Other Writings*, pp. 834-37 (p. 836).

CHAPTER FOUR

‘[U]ne sorte de langue étrangère’: Cross-Linguistic Influence and Willa Cather’s Pluralist Conception of the American Idiom

In *Contre Sainte-Beuve* (1954), Marcel Proust wrote that ‘Les beaux livres sont écrits dans une sorte de langue étrangère’.¹ For Gilles Deleuze, Proust’s statement is the ‘definition of style’.² ‘Style’, Deleuze argues, is generated when authors ‘stammer in [their] own language’, and one way in which authors can achieve this is by speaking their ‘own language like a foreigner’:

We must be bilingual even in a single language, we must have a minor language inside our own language, we must create a minor use of our own language. Multilingualism is not merely the property of several systems, each of which would be homogenous in itself: it is primarily the line of flight or of variation which affects each system by stopping it from being homogenous. Not speaking like an Irishman or a Rumanian in a language other than one’s own, but on the contrary speaking in one’s own language like a foreigner.³

Theodor Adorno also believed that ‘the syntax’ of ‘great narrative prose’ possesses an element of ‘strangeness’ which registers its author’s ‘Attempts at formulation that swim against the stream of the usual linguistic splashing’. He argued that interpreting this kind of prose requires an extra ‘effort’ on the part of readers akin to that which they must exert when they encounter ‘foreign words’ in a text.⁴ For Proust, Deleuze and Adorno, then, great authors find ways of writing their own language from a new perspective, making it feel to readers like a sort of foreign language.

Shortly before she began to write *O Pioneers!* (1913), Cather received some advice from her mentor Sarah Orne Jewett: ‘If you have to create a new medium,’ the older writer told Cather, ‘have the courage to do it’.⁵ In this chapter, I will argue that Cather did indeed create a ‘new medium’ of expression in her fiction by transposing

¹ Marcel Proust, *Contre Sainte-Beuve* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), p. 297.

² Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Continuum, 2002), p. 5.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, ‘Words from Abroad’, in *Notes to Literature Volume One*, trans. by Shierry Weber Nicholson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), pp. 185-99 (p. 185).

⁵ Willa Cather, quoted in Eva Mahoney, ‘How Willa Cather Found Herself’, *Omaha World-Herald*, 27 November 1921, in *Willa Cather in Person: Interviews, Speeches and Letters*, ed. by L. Brent Bohlke (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), pp. 33-39 (p. 34).

grammatical and syntactical elements of her bilingual characters' native languages onto her English-language prose. In doing so, she quite literally wrote 'her own language like a foreigner' and created 'une sorte de langue étrangère' which hovers on the border between her characters' native languages and English. My aim in this chapter is to illuminate the connections between Cather's subtly foreignised sentence structures, her aesthetic theories and the artistic and political moment in which she was writing.

Using the sociolinguistic concept of cross-linguistic influence as a theoretical framework, I will identify when, why and to what effect Cather wrote English from the perspective of a non-native speaker. Primarily, I will argue that writing in this way gave Cather a more subtle method of representing her bilingual characters' non-Anglophone dialogue within her predominantly English-language texts than selective reproduction and explicit attribution: namely, 'verbal transposition'.⁶ I will propose that, in addition to her modernist theory of translation, Cather's use of this technique represents a significant overlap between her multilingual literary style and that of her modernist peers, particularly her great literary rival Ernest Hemingway. I will argue that, despite their well-documented differences, both Cather and Hemingway tested the extent to which they could make their characters' 'translated' foreign-language dialogue resonate with echoes of those characters' native languages without, ultimately, making it incomprehensible to Anglophone readers. In doing so, I will propose that Cather is more stylistically 'radical' than critics have previously acknowledged.

Secondly, I will explore how, in addition to writing in 'une sorte de langue étrangère' in order to represent foreign-language dialogue, Cather also incorporated grammatical and syntactical elements of other languages into her descriptive prose. Building upon Françoise Palleau-Papin, Stéphanie Durran and Marc Chénétier's identification of unexpected echoes of French within the narratives of *Shadows on the Rock* (1931) and *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927), and proposing that they are amongst the 'thing[s] not named [...] divined by the ear but not heard by it' in those texts, I will demonstrate that Cather's experiments with writing 'une sorte de langue étrangère' represent a hitherto unexplored way in which she enacted her aesthetic theory of simplification.⁷ Moreover, considering the demands that Cather's simplified

⁶ Meir Sternberg, 'Polylingualism as Reality and Translation as Mimesis', *Poetics Today*, 2.4 (1981), 221-39 (p. 227). Further references given in the text.

⁷ Willa Cather, 'The Novel Demeublé', in *Stories, Poems, & Other Writings*, ed. by Sharon O'Brien (New York: Library of America, 1992), pp. 834-37 (p. 837).

prose makes of her readers, I will investigate whether the subtle cross-linguistic influences which shape her novels' descriptive passages are 'heard' or 'divined' differently depending on readers' ability to cross linguistic borders. In turn, I will question whether Cather's experiments with cross-linguistic influence establish different levels of meaning within her texts and incentivise a multilingual approach to her ostensibly English-language fiction.

Drawing these two lines of enquiry together, I will then explore the cultural and political ramifications of Cather's decision to write sections of her novels and short stories in '*une sorte de langue étrangère*' at the turn of the twentieth century. I will argue that Cather's simulation of cross-linguistic influence in her English-language prose (and her subsequent pluralisation of her own language from within) speaks to a contemporary debate about the definition of the American idiom. At the same time as Cather was offering readers a plural, foreignised vision of the English language in her texts, commentators such as Theodore Roosevelt, George Philip Krapp and Henry James were campaigning to define a monolithic Standard American English. Setting Cather in opposition to these commentators, I will demonstrate that, whilst they believed that cross-linguistic influences from immigrants' native languages irrevocably damaged the English language, she believed that those influences productively rejuvenated American English. As such, I will argue that the '*sorte de langue étrangère*' that Cather created in her texts was a grammatical and syntactical expression of her tolerant attitude towards (controlled, contained) American multilingualism.

However, I will also question whether, by transposing grammatical and syntactical elements of other languages onto English prose which remains immediately accessible to Anglophone readers, Cather – although clearly making a concession to linguistic diversity in her texts – necessarily subordinated those other languages to her own, thus reinforcing the dominant status of the English language in her fiction and in the United States as a whole. In light of this, I will suggest that Cather's experiments with writing her language 'like a foreigner' represent a fourth and final way in which she put English first, even as she rejected the idea that English should be the only language spoken in the United States.⁸

⁸ Deleuze, p. 5.

Cather and Hemingway's 'Radical' Experiments with Verbal Transposition

As I have demonstrated throughout this thesis, one of the most significant stylistic challenges that Cather faced was finding ways of representing her characters' polylingual dialogue within her predominantly unilingual, English-language texts. In order to surmount this challenge, Cather employed various methods of 'translational mimesis' – a term coined by Meir Sternberg to denote any technique that authors use to represent one language by means of another (p. 225). Thus far, I have demonstrated that Cather used two forms of 'translational mimesis' to represent her characters' polylingual dialogue: 'explicit attribution', a technique which requires authors to state which language their characters are speaking before 'translating' all of their words into the primary language of their text, and 'selective reproduction', a method which requires authors to 'translate' the majority of their characters' words into the primary language of their text whilst 'intermittent[ly]' quoting some of those words in their 'original' language (p. 231, p. 225).

A third, more complex type of 'translational mimesis' that Cather used throughout her oeuvre is 'verbal transposition'. As Sternberg explains, verbal transposition is an 'oblique and varied type of translational mimesis' which – in terms of the extent to which it homogenises characters' 'original heterolingual discourse' – hovers at a mid-point on the spectrum between selective reproduction (quoting some of that original discourse) and explicit attribution (completely translating all of that discourse into domesticated English) (p. 227, p. 225). This is because verbal transposition requires authors to 'superimpos[e]' onto their 'translation' of their characters' foreign words 'features and patterns distinctive' of the language in which those characters are speaking – a process akin to writing a foreignising pseudo-translation (p. 227).

This superimposition 'may relate to any verbal level or aspect at which the two languages involved [the 'original' foreign language spoken by a character and the language in which the author is writing] are less than perfectly isomorphic'. To cite one example, the author might transpose 'grammatical irregularit[ies]' of the foreign language being represented onto his/her primary language (p. 227). In order to create verbal transposition, authors write their 'own language like a foreigner' and give a

‘poetic twist’ to the sociolinguistic phenomenon known as cross-linguistic influence (p. 227).⁹

First investigated in the 1950s by linguists Uriel Weinreich, Charles Fries and Robert Lado, cross-linguistic influence (also known as ‘language transfer’ or ‘bilingual interference’) is a term used in:

applied linguistics to refer to a process in foreign language learning whereby learners carry over what they already know about their first language to their performance in their new language. This tendency may be an advantage, if the two languages have features in correspondence, as there will be ‘positive transfer’ (or ‘facilitation’). Rather more noticeable, however, are cases of ‘negative transfer’ (or ‘interference’), where the patterns of the two languages do not coincide.¹⁰

If a bilingual person is said to be speaking their second language ‘like a foreigner’, it is likely that they are exhibiting ‘interference’. In *Languages in Contact* (1953), Weinreich identified three categories of ‘interference’: ‘phonic interference’, ‘lexical interference’ and ‘grammatical interference’.¹¹ Although Cather died in 1947, her representations of non-native speakers’ English dialogue in her essays, novels and short stories reveal that, thanks to her upbringing in multilingual Nebraska, she was conversant with these three types of cross-linguistic transfer.

The simplest of Weinreich’s three forms of interference, ‘phonic interference’, involves ‘the transfer of sounds from one language to another’.¹² As Håkan Ringbom explains, ‘Learners initially perceive L2 [their second language] sounds in terms of the phonological system of the L1 [their native language]’.¹³ Typically, ‘L1 pronunciation is so deeply entrenched in the learner’s mind that it resists modification’ and so learners instinctively apply that pronunciation to L2.¹⁴ Many of Cather’s bilingual immigrant characters display this trait when they speak English.

⁹ Deleuze, p. 5.

¹⁰ Januz Arabski, ‘Language Transfer in Language Learning and Language Contact’, in *Cross-Linguistic Influences in the Second Language Lexicon*, ed. by Arabski (Toronto: Multilingual Matters, 2006), pp. 12-35 (p. 12).

¹¹ Uriel Weinreich, *Languages in Contact: Findings and Problems* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), p. 47, p. 14, p. 29.

¹² J. M. Lipski, ‘Structural Linguistics and Bilingual Interference: Problems and Proposals’, *Bilingual Review*, 3.3 (1976), 229-37 (p. 229).

¹³ Håkan Ringbom, *Cross-linguistic Similarity in Foreign Language Learning* (Toronto: Multilingual Matters, 2007), p. 62.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

For example, Cather's German-born characters tend to pronounce the English sounds 'p' and 'th' as 'b' and 'd', respectively. In *One of Ours* (1922), for instance, Mrs. Voigt, the owner of a train station restaurant frequented by Claude Wheeler, pronounces 'German people patronize' as 'Cherman beobles batronize'; meanwhile, in 'Old Mrs Harris' (1931), Mrs. Rosen 'convert[s] her *th*'s into *d*'s [...] when she [is] excited'.¹⁵ These patterns of pronunciation uphold linguist V. J. U. Rozencvejk's observation that, because there is no distinction in German between 'voiceless' 'occlusive-plosive consonants' ('(p), (t), (k)') and their 'voiced' equivalents ('(b), (d), (g)') – a distinction which does, however, exist in English – Germans speaking English tend to replace 'The voiced-voiceless opposition' with 'the opposition of pure voiceless to aspirated voiceless' consonants.¹⁶ As such, native German speakers like Mrs. Voigt and Mrs. Rosen pronounce the English '(p), (t), (k)' with aspiration, i.e. (bh), (dh), (gh)'.¹⁷ Testament to her self-professed talent for 'catch[ing] the tone, phrase, length of syllables, enunciation, etc., of all persons that cross[ed] [her] [...] path', Cather's rendering of Mrs. Voigt and Mrs. Rosen's German-inflected English speech is highly accurate according to the rules of phonic interference.¹⁸

'Lexical interference', meanwhile, is produced when bilingual individuals over-rely on 'cognates' – words in their native and acquired languages which are 'historically related, formally similar' and may even have 'identical' meanings.¹⁹ As Ringbom notes:

It is easy for learners to get the meaning of cognates [because they look similar to words in their native language] and in production they may be overused even by advanced learners in situations where a non-cognate would have been more appropriate. High-frequency words in one language may have low-frequency cognates in a related language. French learners thus tend to overuse 'commence' in spoken English, rather than the more frequent and appropriate 'start' or 'begin' [...].²⁰

¹⁵ Willa Cather, *One of Ours*, in *Early Novels and Stories*, ed. by Sharon O'Brien (New York: Library of America, 1987), pp. 939-1297 (p. 970); Willa Cather, 'Old Mrs. Harris', in *Stories, Poems, & Other Writings*, pp. 619-72 (p. 619). Further references given in the text.

¹⁶ V. J. U. Rozencvejk, *Linguistic Interference and Convergent Change* (Paris: Mouton, 1976), p. 28.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Willa Cather, quoted in Ethel M. Hockett, 'The Vision of a Successful Fiction Writer', *Lincoln Daily Star*, 24 October 1915, in *Willa Cather in Person*, pp. 12-16 (p. 14).

¹⁹ Ringbom, p. 71.

²⁰ Ibid.

In Cather's short story 'A Night at Greenway Court' (1896), Frenchman M. Maurepas exhibits lexical interference when, speaking English, he uses the cognate 'mêlée': 'the bravest man in all that mêlée was the old Nabob himself [sic]'.²¹ A loanword from French, 'mêlée' is listed in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, but it is a much lower-frequency word in English than it is in its original language. Consequently, for Anglophone readers, it is a slightly unusual word choice which foregrounds the character's status as a Frenchman and an outsider. For Maurepas, however, it is a natural word choice because, straddling the border between French (his native language) and English (his second language), it enables him to express himself more easily in an unfamiliar tongue.

Similarly, in the 'Prologue' of *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, Spanish Cardinal María de Allande, who usually converses with the other cardinals in French, exhibits lexical interference when he tells Father Ferrand (who has just nominated Father Latour for the position of Bishop of New Mexico) in English that he looks 'distrain' [...]. Are you wishing to unmake your new Bishop already?'.²² The word 'distrain' (meaning 'distracted') is a loanword from French which is a high-frequency word in that language and a very low-frequency one in English. Consequently, whilst the adjective enables María de Allande to find a foothold in English (which is, for him, an unfamiliar language), it strikes Cather's Anglophone readers as a curious, noticeably Gallic word choice.

The final type of interference identified by Weinreich, 'grammatical interference', involves the application of the grammatical and syntactical rules of a speaker's first language to their second language. Cather's unpublished correspondence with the French-born 'chancellor of the Archdiocese of New Mexico', Reverend Henry C. Pouget, reveals that she was aware of this form of interference. In 1931, Cather granted Pouget 'permission to translate part' of *Death Comes for the*

²¹ Willa Cather, 'A Night at Greenway Court', *Nebraska Literary Magazine*, June 1896, pp. 215-24, in *The Willa Cather Archive* <<https://cather.unl.edu/ss027.html>> [accessed 06/05/2019], p. 221.

²² Willa Cather, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, in *Later Novels*, ed. by Sharon O'Brien (New York: Library of America, 1990) pp. 273-460 (p. 284). Further references given in the text.

Archbishop into French for ‘Monseigneur Marnas’, the Bishop of Clermont.²³ Writing to thank Cather, Pouget acknowledged some of the difficulties associated with transporting texts across linguistic borders by telling an anecdote about his ‘grand nephew[’s]’ struggles with French-English translation:

As he is taking English I insist that he write me in that language three or four times a year. In his last letter he had this sentence: “Time lasts me much to see you”. A perfect sentence in French: *Le temps me dure beaucoup de vous voir* – unhappily meaningless in English and hard to reproduce so as to keep the flavor of the French: the longing that arrests fugitive [^ time] in its course and makes it appear so long and durable.²⁴

The error that Pouget describes here – namely, his nephew’s arrangement of English words according to the rules of French syntax – is a perfect example of grammatical cross-linguistic influence.

Cather also learned about grammatical cross-linguistic influence when she met Gustave Flaubert’s multilingual niece, Madame Caroline Franklin-Grout, in 1930. In her essay describing the encounter, ‘A Chance Meeting’ (1936), Cather keeps ‘the flavor’ of Madame Franklin-Grout’s idiolect by carefully recording the errors in her English speech caused by grammatical interference from her native language, French. For example, Cather faithfully transcribes Franklin-Grout’s statement that she lives ‘*at* Antibes’ [my emphasis]. Grammatically, this sentence sounds odd because, in English, the correct preposition to use would be ‘in’: ‘I live *in* Antibes’. However, this apparent error echoes the typical French construction ‘j’habite *à* Antibes’, which Franklin-Grout evidently carried across the linguistic border from her native tongue into her English speech.²⁵ Cather’s talent for accurately recording the impact of cross-linguistic influence upon the English-language dialogue of bilingual individuals like Franklin-Grout, Cardinal de Allande and Mrs. Rosen formed the basis of her more complex experiments with verbal transposition.

When Cather used verbal transposition to denote in English instances when her bilingual characters speak or write a language other than English, she deliberately

²³ Lincoln, NE, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries, Archives and Special Collections, MS 228 James R. and Susan J. Rosowski Cather Collection, Box 1 Fol. 10 Willa Cather Correspondence, Misc. Corr. To Willa Cather, 1913-1933, Letter to Cather from Rev. Henry C. Pouget, Lenox, Iowa, September 21, 1931, p. 1.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²⁵ Willa Cather, ‘A Chance Meeting’, in *Stories, Poems, & Other Writings*, pp. 815-33 (p. 816). Further references given in the text.

mimicked the effects of interference, carrying over what she knew about the grammar and lexis of her characters' native languages into her English-language 'translations' of their dialogue. Like her incorporation of foreign words into her texts, Cather used this technique for representing foreign-language discourse from the very beginning of her career. For example, in an early article marking the death of Anton Rubinstein published in the *Nebraska State Journal* in 1894, Cather used verbal transposition (that is, simulated cross-linguistic interference) to represent in English 'the elaborate, euphuistic French' speech of an 'old Frenchwoman' from Nebraska who once encountered the great pianist: 'Master, I am amazed at myself that I should dare ask this favour, I'.²⁶ The syntax of this sentence – which, Cather implies, is a 'translation' of the 'original' French sentence that the woman addressed to Rubinstein – sounds unidiomatic because Cather has deliberately transposed onto it an element of the woman's 'original' French grammar: l'accent tonique.

Unlike English, the French language has no individual word stress. As such, one method of emphasising an important word is grammatical repetition or l'accent tonique. For example, in order to say 'I did it' ('Je l'ai fait') in French with particular emphasis on the 'I', a French speaker might add the pronoun 'moi' to either the beginning or the end of the sentence: 'Moi, je l'ai fait' or 'Je l'ai fait, moi'. It is this French grammatical construction that Cather emulates when she writes: 'Master, I am amazed [...] that I should dare ask this favour, I [my emphasis]'. With the final, superfluous 'I', Cather exposes Anglophone readers to one of the grammatical idiosyncrasies of the woman's French speech without fully crossing the border into that language.

In addition to sounding Gallic, Cather's English-language rendering of the old woman's French phraseology sounds archaic due to its excessive formality: 'I am amazed at myself that I should dare'. The resulting 'euphuistic' tone reflects the fact that the old woman does not use modern French, but the 'French of the Second Empire' (a statement which indicates that she left France for the United States sometime between 1852 and 1870).²⁷ Since then, the French language has developed and modernised but, 'buried' in Nebraska, the old woman uses a historic form of it – a

²⁶ Willa Cather, 'As You Like It', *Nebraska State Journal*, November 25, 1894, p. 13, in *The World and the Parish: Willa Cather's Articles and Reviews, 1893-1902*, ed. by William M. Curtin, 2 vols (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), 1, pp. 167-69 (p. 168).

²⁷ Ibid.

carefully-preserved linguistic souvenir of the life she lived before she emigrated.²⁸ Consequently, the verbal transposition in this article not only evokes the grammatical shape of the woman's 'original' French sentence, it also evokes the sense of being out of time and out of place that haunts her and so many of the other immigrant characters that populate Cather's texts.

As Sternberg argues, when writers employ verbal transposition, they create an 'interlingual clash' of 'two codes within the transposed utterance' and a prose which is shaped by the rules and rhythms of two languages at the same time (p. 227). This 'interlingual clash' is less violent than that created by the inclusion of foreign words in a text (selective reproduction), but is more violent than that created by explicit attribution (simply stating which language a character is speaking). Hovering between differentiation (switching languages in order to directly reproduce characters' foreign-language speech) and homogenisation (the wholesale translation of those characters' words into the primary language of the text), verbal transposition is, therefore, a technique for representing polylingual discourse which perfectly epitomises the tension between Cather's desire to introduce linguistic diversity into her texts and her concurrent desire to ensure that English remained their primary language.

As well as reflecting Cather's 'English first, but not English-only' language politics, her simulation of cross-linguistic influence in order to create verbal transposition also connects her literary style to the artistic moment in which she was writing. As Evelyn Nien-Ming Ch'ien argues, verbal transposition is a technique commonly used by 'immigrant [...] writers' whose 'polylingual backgrounds influence their writing in English', and this was especially true at the start of the twentieth century.²⁹ In 1939, for example, Cather's contemporary Pietro di Donato drew upon his Italian-English bilingual background when writing the dialogue of *Christ in Concrete*.

In this novel about Italian immigrants to the United States, characters' speech, although written in English, sounds unidiomatic because di Donato composes it in the form of a word-for-word 'translation' of their 'original' Italian dialogue. For example, the sentence 'The masculine first-born son of the Good Spirit Geremio is here' sounds

²⁸ 'As You Like It', p. 168.

²⁹ Evelyn Nien-Ming Ch'ien, *Weird English* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 20-21.

odd because it is a direct, foreignising translation of the ‘underlying’ Italian sentence: ‘il figlio primogenito del buon spirito Geremio è qui’.³⁰ By transposing his native Italian idioms and grammatical structures onto his English prose in this way, di Donato gave Anglophone readers a taste of his characters’ ‘original’ Italian speech without causing them to reach for an Italian-English dictionary. In her Rubinstein article, Cather, too, used verbal transposition to make an immigrant’s non-English speech (and, by extension, that immigrant’s experience) accessible to Anglophone readers. Consequently, although Cather was not a bilingual immigrant herself, she shared Di Donato’s aim of using simulated cross-linguistic influence to forge a linguistic bridge between immigrant characters and Anglo-American readers.

During the first half of the twentieth century, verbal transposition was also an increasingly common feature of the work of expatriate modernist authors who, although not always fluently bilingual themselves, encountered foreign languages on their travels. In *Accented America* (2011), Joshua L. Miller notes that that novelists like Gertrude Stein and John Dos Passos ‘stretch[ed] U.S. English [...], pushing monolingual expression to represent other languages’.³¹ Juliette Taylor-Batty agrees that modernist authors frequently ‘unsettle[d] the boundaries between languages’ by carrying the ‘rhythmical possibilities’ of other languages ‘in to English’ in order to represent polylingual discourse.³² In particular, she notes that Katherine Mansfield, who was inspired by a visit to Germany in 1909, used a ‘foreignising mode of verbal transposition’ in *In a German Pension* (1911) to represent (in English) the German-language ‘speech of the German characters’: ‘so that is the secret of your English tea? All you do is *to warm* the teapot [my emphasis]’.³³

Whilst Cather was a fan of Mansfield’s work, she was not part of a coterie of expatriate modernists and her experiments with verbal transposition were inspired more by the multilingualism that she heard during her childhood in Nebraska than her trips to Europe.³⁴ Despite this, there are striking similarities between Cather’s methods of

³⁰ Pietro di Donato, *Christ in Concrete* (New York: Bobbs-Merill, 1939), p. 89.

³¹ Joshua L. Miller, *Accented America: The Cultural Politics of Multilingual Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 23.

³² Juliette Taylor-Batty, *Multilingualism in Modernist Fiction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2013), p. 93, p. 4.

³³ *Ibid.*, p.69; Katherine Mansfield, ‘Germans at Meat’, in *In a German Pension* (London: Constable, 1926), pp. 1-7 (p. 3).

³⁴ Willa Cather, ‘Katherine Mansfield’, in *Stories, Poems, & Other Writings*, ed. by Sharon O’Brien (New York: Library of America, 1992), pp. 872-84.

creating verbal transposition and those used by the multilingual modernists, especially her great antagonist Ernest Hemingway. Typically, attempts to compare Cather and Hemingway are regarded as a critical dead end. As Steven Trout has argued, ‘sustained’ comparisons between Hemingway and Cather are usually precluded by two things: Cather’s apparently peripheral relationship to literary modernism and scholars’ tendency to focus on Hemingway’s notorious dismissal of Cather.³⁵ Writing to Edmund Wilson in 1923, Hemingway famously lambasted Cather’s novel *One of Ours*:

Then look at *One of Ours*. Big prize, big sale, people taking it seriously. You were in the war weren’t you? Wasn’t that last scene in the lines wonderful? Do you know where it came from? The battle scene in *Birth of a Nation*. I identified episode after episode, Catherized. Poor woman, she had to get her war experience somewhere.³⁶

For Guy Reynolds, this letter epitomises Cather and Hemingway’s irreconcilable positions upon opposing sides of a ‘culture war’ in which ‘Hemingway’s aesthetic of self-conscious experiment, strident modernity and iconic masculinity were pitted against a female writing often rooted in the pastoral and the past’.³⁷ If we overlook this letter, however, some significant similarities between the two authors begin to emerge.

For example, Michelle E. Moore has recently made a compelling case that Hemingway and Cather, although divided in their views on war writing, were united in their criticism of the ‘Chicago art scene’ at the start of the twentieth century, especially the way it treated ‘art as business’.³⁸ Meanwhile, Michael North has noted that there are intriguing overlaps between the subject matter of *One of Ours* and Hemingway’s short story ‘Soldier’s Home’ (1925). Both texts, North observes, describe an ‘unhappy, maladjusted [...] Midwestern boy who finds himself’ in France, a country which seems to him to be ‘the inevitable alternative to the aesthetic starvation of conventional American life’. North even goes so far as to suggest that the similarities between these

³⁵ Steven Trout, ‘Antithetical Icons? Willa Cather, Ernest Hemingway, and the First World War’, *Cather Studies*, 7 (2007) <https://cather.unl.edu/cs007_trout.html> [accessed 09/07/2019] (para. 3 of 21).

³⁶ Ernest Hemingway, ‘To Edmund Wilson, 25 November 1923’, in *Selected Letters 1917-1961*, ed. by Carlos Baker (New York: Scribner, 1981), pp. 104-06 (p. 105).

³⁷ Guy J. Reynolds, *Twentieth Century American Women’s Fiction: A Critical Introduction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), p. 66.

³⁸ Michelle E. Moore, *Chicago and the Making of American Modernism: Cather, Hemingway, Faulkner, and Fitzgerald in Conflict* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), p. 2, p. 7.

texts imply that Hemingway's lambasting of *One of Ours* may have 'derive[d]' not from critical opposition but 'from an uncomfortable sense of recognition'.³⁹

Despite finding similarities of subject matter in Cather and Hemingway's writing, North and Moore fail to identify any stylistic or 'linguistic relationships' between their texts.⁴⁰ These relationships do, however, exist. Primarily, there are strong correspondences between Cather's theory of simplification (her belief, expressed in 'The Novel D meuble' in 1922, that 'Whatever is felt upon the page without being specifically named there – that, one might say, is created') and Hemingway's belief (expressed in 1932) that:

If a writer of prose knows enough of what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them.⁴¹

Although they wrote these statements a decade apart, both authors advocate a minimalist aesthetics of excision and implication which makes the reader 'feel' more than is written on the page. Further stylistic similarities between Cather and Hemingway can be found in their use of verbal transposition to represent their characters' non-Anglophone discourse within their predominantly English-language texts.

Like Cather, Hemingway was an enthusiastic but 'semiproficient' linguist. Just as Cather struggled to speak French despite being able to read it well, Hemingway 'could read well' in Spanish but could only 'converse' and 'compose' in that language 'with great struggle'.⁴² Despite this, in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), which is set in Spain during the Spanish Civil War, Hemingway used his limited knowledge of Spanish to 'manipulate English [...] syntax, and vocabulary' and make it 'mime' his characters' Spanish dialogue.⁴³ Up to fifty years earlier, Cather manipulated English syntax and vocabulary in order to 'mime' her characters' polylingual discourse in

³⁹ Michael North, *Reading 1922: A Return to the Scene of the Modern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 181.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 203.

⁴¹ 'The Novel D meuble', p. 837; Ernest Hemingway, *Death in the Afternoon* (New York: Scribner, 1999), pp. 153-54.

⁴² Gayle Rogers, *Incomparable Empires: Modernism and the Translation of Spanish and American Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), p. 203.

⁴³ Milton M. Azevedo, 'Shadows of a Literary Dialect: *For Whom the Bell Tolls* in Five Romance Languages', *The Hemingway Review*, 20.1 (2000), 30-48 (p. 32).

languages as diverse as Czech and French. There are three key correspondences between Cather and Hemingway's use of verbal transposition to represent their characters' foreign language speech: primarily, they both experimented with using formal/informal pronouns in order to create verbal transposition; secondly, they both represented foreign-language speech by deliberately creating calques; thirdly, they both represented non-English discourse (and, moreover, created inter-lingual puns) by peppering their prose with cognates which possess slightly different meanings depending on the language in which they are used.

Firstly, both Cather and Hemingway represented foreign-language discourse in their English-language texts by deliberately simulating grammatical cross-linguistic influence arising from the fact that modern English does not make the 'T-V distinction'. Languages which do make the T-V distinction, for example French, differentiate between formal and informal versions of the second person singular pronoun ('tu' and 'vous'); in contrast, in modern English, there is only one version of the second person pronoun: 'you'. In archaic usage, however, there are two versions of the second person pronoun in English: 'thee'/'thou' (which are informal) and 'you' (which is formal). Both Cather and Hemingway use the opposition between 'thee'/'thou' and 'you' in English to indicate that their characters are speaking a foreign language which, unlike modern English, makes the T-V distinction.

In *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, for example, Hemingway uses the opposition between 'thee'/'thou' and 'you' in English to mimic the opposition between the Spanish pronouns 'tú', which is informal, and 'usted', which is formal. For instance, when Anselmo addresses Robert at the beginning of the novel, Hemingway's use of the English pronoun 'you' indicates that, in Spanish, Anselmo is using 'usted': 'How are you making it?'⁴⁴ In contrast, when Anselmo asks Robert his name a few lines later, thus making their relationship more personal, he switches from 'usted' to the informal pronoun 'tú' – a change which Hemingway marks by switching from 'you' to the English pronoun 'thee': 'How do they call thee?'⁴⁵

Forty-eight years before Hemingway, Cather used exactly the same technique to indicate that Peter and Antone, an immigrant father and son living in Nebraska, address one another in Czech in her short story 'Peter' (1892):

⁴⁴ Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (London: Vintage, 2005), p. 5.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

“No, Antone, I have told thee many times, no, thou shalt not sell it until I am gone.”

“But I need money; what good is that old fiddle to thee? The very crows laugh at thee when thou art trying to play. Thy hand trembles so thou canst scarce hold the bow. Thou shalt go with me to the Blue to cut wood to-morrow. See to it thou art up early.”⁴⁶

Like Spanish, Czech has two forms of the second person singular pronoun: ‘ty’, which is informal, and ‘vy’, which is formal. Pre-empting Hemingway’s famous use of the technique, Cather uses the opposition between ‘thee’/‘thou’ and ‘you’ in English to mimic this element of Czech in her English-language prose and to indicate that Peter and Anton are using the Czech pronoun ‘ty’. In this way, Cather establishes the conceit that her narrator (like Hemingway’s) is translating Peter and Antone’s ‘original’ Czech-language dialogue into foreignised English, simulating cross-linguistic interference as he/she does so in order to capture a grammatical idiosyncrasy of his ‘source language’. Moreover, Cather gives her Anglophone readers a taste of Peter and Antone’s original Czech speech without requiring them to reach for a dictionary; in this way, she introduces linguistic diversity into her text without completely crossing into a different language.

For Milton M. Azevado, Hemingway’s use of ‘thee’/‘thou’ not only highlights the ‘translated’ nature of his characters’ speeches, it also echoes ‘the archaic diction of the King James Bible’, making the band of fighters’ dialogue sound more serious and ‘heroic’.⁴⁷ Cather’s use of ‘thee’/‘thou’ in ‘Peter’ also makes her characters’ translated Czech speech sound ‘archaic’, and this tallies with Cather’s conception of Czech as a ‘rich old’ language.⁴⁸ Recalling the language of Shakespeare’s plays, Cather’s use of ‘thee’/‘thou’ also sounds rather theatrical – a tonal idiosyncrasy which neatly reflects the fact that violinist Peter spent his former life in Prague on the stage. Moreover, it adds a sense of gravity to her vignette about ‘farm life’ (to borrow her own deprecatory phrase) in rural Nebraska.⁴⁹

More importantly, Cather’s use of ‘thee’/‘thou’ helps to illuminate one of the story’s central themes. As I argued in Chapter Two, Peter’s suicide is precipitated by

⁴⁶ Willa Cather, ‘Peter’, *The Hesperian*, 24 November 1892, pp. 10-12 (p. 10), in *The Willa Cather Archive* <<http://cather.unl.edu/ss019.html>> [accessed 10/10/2016].

⁴⁷ Azevado, p. 33.

⁴⁸ Willa Cather, *My Antonia*, in *Early Novels*, pp. 707-938 (p. 924).

⁴⁹ Willa Cather, ‘To Will Owen Jones, March 6, 1904’, in *The Selected Letters of Willa Cather*, ed. by Andrew Jewell and Janis Stout (New York: Vintage, 2014), p. 80.

his inability to adapt his Old-World system of values to his new life in the New World – something which makes him desperately homesick for Bohemia. Peter’s belief that he is out of place in modern America is echoed in the way that – much like the ‘euphuistic’ phrases spoken by the ‘old Frenchwoman’ in Cather’s Rubinstein article – the Middle English pronoun ‘thou’ (which Antone uses to address him) seems archaic, out of place and old-fashioned in the context of the modern English prose that surrounds it. Indeed, just as ‘thou’ does not really belong in modern English, Peter’s longing for his old life in the Old World means that he does not truly belong in the United States. In both ‘Peter’ and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, then, Cather and Hemingway’s use of the pronouns ‘thee’/‘thou’ not only establishes translational mimesis indicating which languages their characters are speaking, it also performs a significant narrative function.

In 1900 (eight years after its original publication in *The Mahogany Tree* and *The Hesperian*), Cather submitted ‘Peter’ for republication in *The Library* and, as James Woodress notes, she conspicuously dropped ‘the *thee*’s and *thou*’s’.⁵⁰ This decision indicates that either Cather or *The Library*’s editor considered her earliest attempt at verbal transposition unsuccessful. Arguably, the fact that Cather’s use of ‘thee’/‘thou’ is her only simulation of cross-linguistic influence in ‘Peter’ means that it could be interpreted by readers (especially readers unfamiliar with Czech grammar) as an unnecessary grammatical affectation. However, Cather did not abandon verbal transposition altogether; instead, she continued to use grammatical cross-linguistic influence to represent polylingual discourse, but focussed on larger syntactic discrepancies between English and other languages rather than differences of pronoun usage. In doing so, she paved the way for Hemingway to make similar syntactic transpositions almost a decade later.

In *Shadows on the Rock*, for example, Cather created verbal transposition representing characters’ French-language dialogue by arranging her English words according to the rules of French syntax, thus deliberately creating calques of French phrases. As Stéphanie Durrans notes, Cather’s use of this technique means that some sections of her characters’ dialogue in this text veer ‘close to Gallicism’ – something which helps to convey those characters’ Francophone reality.⁵¹ For example, when

⁵⁰ James Woodress, *Willa Cather: A Literary Life* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), p. 77.

⁵¹ Stéphanie Durrans, *The Influence of French Culture on Willa Cather: Intertextual References and Resonances* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 2007), p. 224.

monolingual French speaker Cécile's states: 'Mère Laflamme tried hard to sell me a cock, but I told her my father always complained of a cock', the unusual construction 'he complained *of* [my emphasis]' is a calque of Cécile's 'original' French words 'il s'est plaint *de*' which, Cather implies, have been translated into English by the narrator.⁵²

Nine years after the publication of *Shadows on the Rock*, Hemingway used exactly the same technique to create verbal transposition representing Spanish-language dialogue in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. As Azevado notes, Hemingway fills his Spanish-speaking characters' dialogue with 'morphosyntactically anomalous calques' of Spanish expressions.⁵³ Most famously, the question that Hemingway's characters use to greet each other – 'what passes with thee?' – is a calque of the Spanish expression '¿qué pasa contigo?'.⁵⁴ Although common in Spanish, this construction sounds strange in English and so reminds readers that they are reading a foreignised 'translation' of the characters' 'original' Spanish words.

For Rogers, Hemingway's deliberate use of calques, which creates irreconcilable 'collisions' between the 'linguistic planes' of Spanish and English, is evidence of his experimental 'literary cubism'.⁵⁵ Although Cather, by her own admission, was 'intrigued [...] by the Cubist', she, in contrast, is never categorised as a 'cubist' author.⁵⁶ Indeed, whilst Susie Thomas concedes that Cather's 'splicing' of 'description, anecdote and legend' in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* makes that novel "'almost" cubist' in structure, Marilee Lindemann confidently argues that Cather 'was neither a proponent nor an exponent of cubism'.⁵⁷ That being said, Cather's creation of 'collisions' between the 'linguistic planes' of French and English in *Shadows on the Rock* almost a decade before the publication of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* suggests that she was, in fact, an early experimenter with a technique now firmly associated with literary cubism. The fact that Cather and Hemingway used exactly the same method of

⁵² Willa Cather, *Shadows on the Rock*, in *Later Novels*, ed. by Sharon O'Brien (New York: Library of America, 1990), pp. 461-642 (p. 469). Further references given in the text.

⁵³ Azevado, p. 35.

⁵⁴ *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, p. 95.

⁵⁵ Gayle Rogers, "'Spanish is a Language Tu": Hemingway's Cubist Spanglish', *Novel*, 48.2 (2015), 224-42 (p. 226).

⁵⁶ Willa Cather, quoted in Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, *Willa Cather: A Memoir* (New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1953), p. 114.

⁵⁷ Susie Thomas, *Willa Cather* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), p. 158; Marilee Lindemann, *Willa Cather: Queering America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 84.

producing verbal transposition and yet only he is regarded as a ground-breaking cubist for this work is a compelling example of how, when left unquestioned, authorial reputations (Cather's for being simple and conventional and Hemingway's for being experimental) can distort criticism of their work – something which, in this case, has obscured an unmistakable stylistic similarity between two supposedly contrary authors.

The third technique that both Hemingway and Cather use to create verbal transposition is simulating lexical interference. In particular, they both weave into their characters' 'translated' dialogue cognates with etymologies which span the border between those characters' native languages and English, but which have slightly different meanings in each language. These subtle differences in meaning highlight the gap between the language that Cather and Hemingway's characters are speaking and the language being used to record their words (English).

In *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, for example, Cather creates verbal transposition – and, moreover, a complex cross-linguistic pun – based on the subtle differences of meaning between the English and French cognates 'suspicion' and 'soupçon'. When Bishop Vaillant cooks for Bishop Latour on Christmas Day (and both men permit themselves the festive indulgence of speaking French), he lists the ingredients of his 'bean salad' as 'onion, and just a suspicion of salt pork' (p. 301). The expression 'a suspicion of salt pork' is, Cather implies, a literal, foreignising 'translation' of Vaillant's 'original' French phrase, 'un soupçon de porc salé' (a more domesticating translation of which would be: 'a small amount of salt pork').⁵⁸ Whilst the English word 'suspicion' and the French word 'soupçon' possess the same etymological derivation (from Old French and, before that, Latin) and whilst they can both mean 'a feeling that something is possible' as well as 'a small quantity', Vaillant's phrase strikes English-speaking readers as unidiomatic because 'suspicion' is used more frequently in English in the former sense ('a feeling that something is possible') than the latter ('a small quantity').⁵⁹

In *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Hemingway created a similar cross-linguistic pun based on the English and Spanish cognates 'clearly' and 'claro':

"She was in a very bad state," the woman of Pablo said. "Now she is better, she ought to get out of here."

⁵⁸ Durrans notes that this phrase is another of Cather's 'Gallicisms' (p. 224).

⁵⁹ 'soupçon, n.', in *OED Online* <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/185167>> [accessed 04/07/2017].

“Clearly, she can be sent through the lines with Anselmo.”⁶⁰

Whilst both words are derived from the Latin ‘clārum’, the English ‘clearly’ means ‘evidently’ whilst – as John J. Allen notes – the primary meaning of the Spanish ‘claro’ is ‘of course’.⁶¹ This explains why Robert’s response in the above quotation sounds slightly strange to Anglophone readers: Hemingway is using the signifier ‘clearly’ to convey the sense of its etymological cousin ‘claro’.

Cather and Hemingway’s facility in using cognates to create verbal transposition is testament to their shared interest in word roots. As Douglas LaPrade argues, Hemingway spent a great deal of time researching etymologies for key words in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. For example, he ‘learned from Richard Ford’ (a nineteenth-century writer of handbooks about Spain) that ‘the derivation of the word *Spain*’ is from the Hebrew word for ‘rabbit’, ‘*Sephan*’. Hemingway then used this etymological information to create patterns of imagery in his novel: ‘when the protagonist of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* refers to his lover Maria as “rabbit,” it is because Hemingway wants to make Maria a personification of Spain’.⁶²

Cather’s similar preoccupation with word roots is evident in the extensive annotations which cover the books in her personal library. In her copy of T. R. Lounsbury’s *History of the English Language* (1894), for example, Cather carefully underlined a passage explaining that the English language had been shaped by ‘the introduction into it of French words [Cather’s underlining]’ following the Norman conquest (one of which would have been *soupçon*).⁶³ Similarly, in the glossary at the back of her copy of *Introduction to Modern French Lyrics*, a textbook which she used at university, she marked an entry explaining that the French word ‘loi is derived from Latin *lēgem*’.⁶⁴ Later, when Cather became a high school teacher in Pittsburgh (1901-

⁶⁰ *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, p. 34.

⁶¹ John J. Allen, ‘The English of Hemingway’s Spaniards’, *South Atlantic Bulletin*, 27.2 (1961), 6-7 (p. 6).

⁶² Douglas LaPrade, *Hemingway and Franco* (València: Publicacions de la Universitat de València, 2007), p. 16.

⁶³ Red Cloud, NE, National Willa Cather Center Collections and Archives, Cather Family Book Collection, Willa Cather’s annotations in her copy of T. R. Lounsbury, *History of the English Language*, rev. edn (New York: Henry Holt, 1894), p. 85. See Appendix, Figure 10.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, Willa Cather’s annotations in her copy of B. L. Bowen, *Introduction to Modern French Lyrics* (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1894), flyleaf and blank pages at the back of the book.

1906), she shared her interest in cross-linguistic etymologies with her students. As her former-pupil Phyllis Martin Hutchinson remembered, Cather:

Invariably [...] tried to show [the class] how to derive the meaning of English words from their Latin roots. [...] And the habit she inculcated of tracing meanings through word-roots has remained life-long with some of us.⁶⁵

By using cognates like ‘suspicion’ and ‘soupçon’ and ‘clearly’ and ‘claro’ to simulate lexical cross-linguistic influence in their texts, Cather and Hemingway encouraged their readers to trace meanings through word roots, too.

In doing so, they demonstrated in their fiction that – as Lounsbury argues in his *History of the English Language* – ‘English is no isolated, independent tongue’ protected by impenetrable linguistic borders; rather, it is a language which is deeply interconnected with other languages.⁶⁶ In making this point, Cather reiterated in her fiction one of the key arguments of her 1921 Omaha Fine Arts Society speech condemning Nebraska’s 1919 language law. If it made people ‘less American to know one or two other languages’, Cather argued, ‘your one hundred percent American would be a deaf mute’.⁶⁷ It was impossible, in Cather’s opinion, for Americans to avoid hearing, speaking and coming into contact with other languages in the United States, not least because lexical elements of those languages (for example, ‘soupçon’, ‘mêlée’ and ‘distrain’) were already firmly embedded within the English language itself.

In summary, when creating verbal transposition representing foreign-language dialogue, both Hemingway and Cather foregrounded the foreign elements already present within English (in the form of cognates connecting their characters’ native languages and English) or, alternatively, they moulded ‘English around a foreign tongue’ by arranging English words according to the grammar and syntax of other languages.⁶⁸ For Rogers, Hemingway’s use of these techniques represents ‘a radical experiment in linguistic synthesis in a superficially realist text’.⁶⁹ Whilst words like ‘radical’ and ‘experimental’ do not seem out of place when used in relation to

⁶⁵ Phyllis Martin Hutchinson, ‘Reminiscences of Willa Cather as a Teacher’, in *Willa Cather Remembered*, ed. by Sharon Hoover and L. Brent Bohlke (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), pp. 48-51 (p. 50).

⁶⁶ Lounsbury, p. 1.

⁶⁷ ‘State Laws Are Cramping’, *Lincoln Evening State Journal*, 31 October 1921, in *Willa Cather in Person*, pp. 147-48 (p. 148).

⁶⁸ *Incomparable Empires*, p. 200.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

Hemingway, they are not commonly associated with Cather. Nonetheless, as these examples demonstrate, Cather's experiments with verbal transposition are not only strikingly similar to Hemingway's, they also pre-empt them by up to fifty years. Whether or not Hemingway was directly inspired by Cather's use of verbal transposition, the two authors are – in terms of their experiments with simulating grammatical and lexical interference – more stylistically aligned than critics have previously acknowledged.

In turn, this indicates that Cather's writing is more stylistically 'radical' than hitherto imagined. Indeed, alongside her use of highly synecdochic foreign words in her predominantly English-language texts and her simultaneously foreignising and domesticating translation theory, Cather's simulation of cross-linguistic influence in order to create verbal transposition can be classed as another of her 'quiet', independent 'experiments' (to borrow Jo Ann Middleton's phrase) with one of 'the techniques we now call modern'.⁷⁰ Challenging her backward-looking reputation, this comparison of Cather's use of verbal transposition with Hemingway's reveals a clear intersection between her writing and the 'radical' literary trend for experimenting with multilingual modes of expression which emerged at the start of the twentieth century. In turn, this strengthens the argument for her inclusion in future conversations about modernism, especially multilingual modernism.

The 'sledge' and the 'rapier': Cross-Linguistic Influence and Simplification

In 1921, Will Owen Jones, Cather's former editor from her time as a drama critic at the *Nebraska State Journal* (1893-1896), described her as a 'meatax' reviewer who roasted disappointing actors and plays with her cutting remarks.⁷¹ His description was apt because Cather herself conceived of language and writing in violent terms. In particular, Cather rationalised the differences between English and other languages by comparing them to different weapons.

⁷⁰ Jo Ann Middleton, *Willa Cather's Modernism* (Toronto: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990), p. 37. Whilst Palteau-Papin does not explore the concept of verbal transposition, she notes that Cather's experiments with writing English which "sound[s]" French' in order to represent a 'foreign worldview' in her later novels (see part two of this chapter) are not 'isolated if we consider other modernist writers' (See paras 7 and 32 of 33).

⁷¹ Will Owen Jones, 'Editorial Note', *Nebraska State Journal*, November 1, 1921, quoted in *The Kingdom of Art: Willa Cather's First Principles and Critical Statements 1893-1896*, ed. by Bernice Slotte (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), pp. 16-17 (p. 17).

In a *Journal* article published in 1894, Cather compared the French language to a ‘rapier’ and English to a ‘sledge’; likewise, in a *Pittsburg Leader* article published in 1898, she compared French to a ‘rapier’ and English to an Anglo Saxon ‘battle-ax’.⁷² As Bernice Slote observes, this analogy was a nod to American literary critic W. C. Brownell’s essay *French Traits* (1889), in which he described French as a language suited to ‘rapier-thrusts’ of sarcasm.⁷³ Cather agreed with Brownell that French was a ‘flexible and exact’ language well-matched to ‘word-fencing’; in contrast, she characterised English as a ‘slower, heavier’ and more ‘unwieldy’ language better suited to ‘crush[ing]’ than cutting.⁷⁴

Cather used this analogy to explain why learning a foreign language is such a difficult process. If the ‘Englishman [...] studies French word-fencing’, Cather argued:

He only makes a clown of himself. He can never apply his power through a slender blade, and he is at best only a poor imitation. The affectation poisons his style, his vigor and his whole personality. He loses not only his art but his manhood.⁷⁵

Fencing with the ‘rapier’ of French requires completely different skills to crushing with the ‘sledge’ of English: whilst fencing requires speed and dexterity, crushing requires great strength.⁷⁶ It is not, therefore, easy for a person trained to use the ‘sledge’ to learn to wield the ‘rapier’ or vice versa. The poisoning of ‘vigor’ and ‘personality’ caused by wielding an unfamiliar linguistic weapon is something that Cather experienced for herself during her trip to Paris to visit Dorothy Canfield Fisher in 1902. Unable to make herself understood in French, Cather was left feeling ‘helpless and provincial and ignorant’ – defeated by her inability to fence with the ‘rapier’ as effectively as she could fight with the ‘sledge’.⁷⁷

⁷² Willa Cather, ‘More or Less Personal’, *Nebraska State Journal*, November 4, 1894, p. 12, in *The Kingdom of Art*, pp. 135-36 (p. 136); Willa Cather, ‘Books and Magazines’, *Pittsburg Leader*, March 4, 1898, p.8, in *The World and the Parish: Willa Cather’s Articles and Reviews, 1893-1902*, ed. by William M. Curtin, 2 vols (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), II, pp. 581-84 (p. 583).

⁷³ W. C. Brownell, *French Traits: An Essay in Comparative Criticism* (New York: Scribner’s, 1919), p. 196; ‘More or Less Personal’, p. 136.

⁷⁴ ‘Books and Magazines’, March 4, 1898, p. 583; ‘More or Less Personal’, p. 136.

⁷⁵ ‘More or Less Personal’, p. 136.

⁷⁶ This is not the only occasion when Cather characterised French as a ‘light’ language. In *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, Bishop Latour describes French as a ‘light and elastic mesh’ (p. 444).

⁷⁷ Willa Cather, ‘To Dorothy Canfield, [Early March 1904]’, pp. 76-79 (p. 76).

Cather's analogy of the 'sledge' and the 'rapier' also neatly elucidates the phenomenon of cross-linguistic influence. In Cather's terms, the negative transfer that native French speakers like Pouget's nephew and Madame Franklin-Grout exhibit when they write or speak English is a result of them applying the skills required to wield the 'rapier' of French to the task of handling the 'battle ax' of English. Similarly, when Cather simulated cross-linguistic influence in order to represent her characters' French-language dialogue in texts like *Shadows on the Rock*, she deliberately wielded the 'sledge' of English as though it were the 'rapier' of French in order to create a 'sorte de langue étrangère' that hovered on the border between the two languages.

Representing foreign language speech was not, however, the only occasion when Cather fought with the 'sledge' as though it were a 'rapier' and simulated cross-linguistic influence in her fiction. In her Francophone novels *Shadows on the Rock* and *Death Comes for the Archbishop* – so called because they are focalised through French-speaking characters – Cather made cross-linguistic influence a feature of her narrators' descriptive prose as well as her dialogue. In this respect, Cather wrote the entirety of those novels in 'une sorte de langue étrangère'.

In *Shadows on the Rock*, for example, Cather's narrator exhibits grammatical and lexical interference from French in his/her descriptive prose when he/she states that Cécile 'made the ménage for her father' (p. 469). Primarily, although the word 'ménage' exists in both English and French, it has a slightly different meaning in each language. In French, it means 'housework', whereas in English it means 'the members of a household'.⁷⁸ Consequently, for this sentence to make sense, Cather's narrator must be invoking the word's French meaning – a distinction which generates lexical interference. Secondly, in English it would be more idiomatic to state that Cécile 'did the housework' rather than 'she made the housework'. Here, the narrator's unexpected use of the verb 'made' seemingly reflects the fact that, as Palleau-Papin notes, the French version of this sentence would be 'Cécile a fait le ménage' (the French verb 'faire' can mean either 'to do' or 'to make').⁷⁹ Combined with his/her ambiguous use of the word 'ménage', this verb error creates the impression that, like the characters he/she describes, Cather's narrator is a native French speaker.

⁷⁸ 'ménage, n.', in *OED Online* <<http://www.oed.com/view/116380>> [accessed 26/20/2019].

⁷⁹ Françoise Palleau-Papin, 'The Hidden French in Cather's English', *Cather Studies*, 4 (1999) <https://cather.unl.edu/cs004_palleau-papin.html> [accessed 01/05/2019] (para. 19 of 33).

As Durrans notes, there are similar ‘resurgences of the French language’ in the narrator’s prose in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* – particularly relating to ‘the omission’ of articles before nouns.⁸⁰ For example, in the chapter entitled ‘December Night’, Cather’s narrator describes how, unable to sleep, Bishop Latour, goes to the church to pray. There he finds ‘an old Mexican woman, called Sada, who was slave in an American family’ (p. 406). The expression ‘who was slave’ sounds unidiomatic because, in English, there should be an article before the word ‘slave’: ‘who was *a* slave’. However, when a noun (like ‘slave’) is used as an adjective after the verb ‘être’ (‘to be’) in French, the article is not required. Cather implies, then, that the phrase ‘who was slave’ is a direct, foreignising translation of the French construction: ‘qui était esclave’. In turn, this implies that, like the narrator of *Shadows on the Rock*, the unnamed narrator of *Death Comes for the Archbishop* is more familiar with wielding the ‘rapier’ of French than the ‘sledge’ of English.

Francophone critic Palteau-Papin can hear even more subtle cross-linguistic influences from French in the descriptive passages of *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, observing that ‘It is as if a “ghost” language ran beneath Cather’s English’.⁸¹ For Palteau-Papin, this linguistic haunting becomes particularly apparent when the novel is translated into French. To illustrate this point, she compares the grammatical construction of descriptive passages of *Death Comes for the Archbishop* to that of Marc Chénétier’s French translation (*La Mort et l’archevêque*, 1986). In doing so, she demonstrates that the word order of Cather’s sentences is frequently identical to Chénétier’s. For example:

An hour later, as darkness came over the sand-hills, the young Bishop was seated at supper in the mother-house of this Mexican settlement—which, he learned, was appropriately called *Agua Secreta*, Hidden Water. (p. 290)

becomes:

Une heure plus tard, alors que l’obscurité envahissait les dunes, le jeune évêque était assis à souper dans la maison mère de cette colonie

⁸⁰ Durrans, pp. 224-25.

⁸¹ Palteau-Papin, para. 18 of 33.

mexicaine, qui, apprit-il, s'appelait justement Agua Secreta, l'Eau Cachée.⁸²

This striking grammatical synchronicity is partly testament to Chénétier's skill as a translator. However, he is aided by the fact that, as Palteau-Papin notes, Cather has often already arranged her words into 'idiomatic structures' which are common to both French and English.⁸³ Chénétier agrees that, 'under the translator's [...] prolonged glare' the 'French that had been lying dormant under' Cather's sentences 'seems to float up' of its own accord.⁸⁴ Chénétier's use of the words 'float up' and 'dormant' is interesting because it indicates that Cather's stylistic experiments with cross-linguistic influence add another layer or dimension to her writing beneath or beyond that which is immediately apparent 'upon the page'.⁸⁵

For Palteau-Papin, different languages represent different 'perception[s] of reality' and so Cather's 'crafty game' of composing *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Shadows on the Rock* in 'English that still manages to "sound" French' adds another dimension to her writing because it enables her to offer readers a subtly Francophone 'vision of the New World' (such as it is experienced by Francophone characters like Bishop Latour and Cécile Auclair).⁸⁶ From a structural rather than a thematic perspective, Cather's 'crafty game' also adds another dimension to her writing because it reinforces the conceit that, not only are her narrators familiar with the 'rapier' of French, they are French-English translators. In turn, this bolsters the idea that the stories they tell are underpinned by a layered history of tellings and retellings which spans linguistic borders.

As discussed in Chapter Three, *Shadows on the Rock* is a pseudotranslation of a pre-existing French 'source text' which Cather's narrator sometimes quotes in its 'original' French form. By creating evidence of grammatical interference in the novel's descriptive passages, Cather strengthens the conceit that her narrator is in the process of translating that French 'source text' into English, negotiating between the two

⁸² Willa Cather, *La Mort et l'archevêque*, trans. by Marc Chénétier (Paris: Ramsay, 1986), quoted in Palteau-Papin, para. 13 of 33.

⁸³ Palteau-Papin, para. 14 of 33.

⁸⁴ Marc Chénétier, 'Shadows of a Rock: Translating Willa Cather', in *Cather Studies*, 8 (2010), in *The Willa Cather Archive* < https://cather.unl.edu/cs008_chenetier.html > [accessed 06/05/2019] (para. 23 of 26).

⁸⁵ 'The Novel Demeublé', p. 837.

⁸⁶ Palteau-Papin, paras 5 and 7 of 33.

languages as he/she does so. In contrast, the narrator of *Death Comes for the Archbishop* never quotes directly from a pre-existing French ‘source text’, which means that the novel is less obviously a pseudotranslation. However, by introducing ‘resurgences’ of French grammar into his/her prose, Cather creates the impression that the narrator of *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, too, is translating an originally-French language story into English in order to share it with a new audience of Anglophone readers.

The ‘ghost’ of French which haunts the two narrators’ prose makes their ‘translations’ foreignising in mode. Indeed, just as a foreignising translation drives readers’ perceptions back towards its source text, cross-linguistic influence in the descriptive passages of *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Shadows on the Rock* drives readers’ thoughts towards the fictional, underlying French-language ‘source texts’ that the novels’ narrators are ‘translating’. Readers familiar with French can work backwards from Cather’s grammatical transpositions and ‘recover’ the ‘original’ French phrases which are Gallicising the narrators’ prose. For instance, they can reconstruct the ‘original’ phrase ‘Cécile a fait le ménage pour son père’ from ‘[Cécile] made the ménage for her father’ and the construction ‘qui était esclave’ from ‘who was slave’. Whilst these underlying French phrases never actually appear in the two novels, they are implicitly there, lying ‘dormant’ (to borrow Chénétier’s word) in the lexical and grammatical interference that Cather simulates in her English-language prose.

Pushing readers to supply something (namely, a foreign-language phrase) that is not written upon the page but which is, nonetheless, heavily implied there, Cather’s simulation of cross-linguistic influence represents a hitherto overlooked connection between her literary practice and her aesthetic theory of simplification. Explaining her belief that ‘art ought to simplify’ in her essay ‘The Novel Demeublé’, Cather argued that it was not ‘literalness’ that ‘[gave] high quality to the novel’, but:

Whatever is felt upon the page without being specifically named there – [...] the inexplicable presence of the thing not named, [...] the over-tone divined by the ear but not heard by it, the verbal mood, the emotional aura of the fact or the thing or the deed.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ F. H., ‘Willa Cather Talks of Work’, *Philadelphia Record*, 10 August 1913, in *Willa Cather in Person*, pp. 7-11 (p. 8); ‘The Novel Demeublé’, p. 837.

In this paragraph, Cather suggests that there is a subtle element or dimension of an author's language (an 'over-tone', a 'mood', a 'presence') which exists independently of the actual words that he/she uses. '[D]ivined' by the ear but not 'heard' by it, this 'presence' is sensed by readers even though its source cannot necessarily be pinpointed upon the page; in this respect, it is simultaneously there and not there.

The idea that there is a dimension of literary language which exists beyond the words on the page is one that Cather developed in her private correspondence. Writing to Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant in 1912, Cather described Spanish as a language in which 'the words' are 'a mere convention' through which 'the *undertow*' – the real meaning – is 'as apt to break through at the wrong place as the right [my emphasis]'.⁸⁸ Likewise, writing to her brother Roscoe in 1938, Cather explained that, in literature, 'it's the heat *under* the simple words that counts [my emphasis]'.⁸⁹ Cather's argument that there is 'heat' or 'undertow' hidden beneath a writer's words which can, nonetheless, be sensed by readers clearly echoes her description in 'The Novel D  meubl  ' of the 'presence', 'mood' or 'aura' that is felt upon the pages of great literature even when it is not specifically 'named' there.⁹⁰

Significantly, the language that Ch  netier and Palleau-Papin use to describe the 'hidden French' in Cather's narrators' English is reminiscent of Cather's definitions of both 'the heat under simple words' and the 'thing not named'. For example, Ch  netier's description of French as a '*deep, subterranean, haunting presence*' in Cather's language which 'seems to float *up* [my emphasis]' during translation as well as Palleau-Papin's description of the 'ghost' of French which runs '*beneath* Cather's English [my emphasis]' correspond with Cather's idea that literary language has an 'undertow'. Moreover, Ch  netier and Palleau-Papin's characterisation of the 'hidden French' in Cather's texts as a 'ghost' or 'haunting' recalls the way that, according to Cather's definition in 'The Novel D  meubl  ', the 'thing not named' exists in a liminal state between absence and presence.⁹¹ Whilst Ch  netier and Palleau-Papin do not explicitly state and explore the connection themselves, these correspondences of language and imagery point to the fact that Cather's experiments with cross-linguistic

⁸⁸ Willa Cather, 'To Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, June 15 [1912]', in *Letters*, pp. 161-63 (p. 162).

⁸⁹ 'To Roscoe Cather, November 6 [1938]', in *Letters*, pp. 560-62 (p. 561).

⁹⁰ 'The Novel D  meubl  ', p. 837.

⁹¹ 'Shadows of a Rock', paras 16 and 23 of 26; Palleau-Papin, para. 18 of 33.

influence are another way – alongside her use of highly synecdochic foreign words – in which she used multilingualism to simplify her prose. In *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Shadows on the Rock*, the French language is one of the ‘thing[s] not named’ which is nonetheless ‘felt upon the page’.⁹²

Indeed, whilst Cather rarely writes in French for more than a few words at a time in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Shadows on the Rock* (meaning that the language is rarely present ‘upon the page’), her experiments with grammatical and lexical interference mean that those novels nonetheless resonate with the sounds and rhythms of that language. In turn, this adds a new facet to our understanding of Cather’s conception of simplified, *démeublé* writing. In particular, it suggests that, for Cather, eliminating unnecessary detail (for example, an immigrant character’s backstory) from a text was not the only method of simplifying prose; simplification could also be achieved by adapting a text’s primary language to evoke the sound and shape of another language (as well as the unique world-view and culture associated with it) without, in fact, code-switching into that language upon the page.

By experimenting with cross-linguistic influence in her narrators’ prose or her characters’ dialogue, Cather found a way of making foreign languages a shadowy presence in her texts. However, the extent to which that shadowy presence is felt depends very much upon the reader. To date, Durrans, Chénétier and Palleau-Papin – three native French speakers – are the only critics to have discussed the ‘hidden’ French in Cather’s English. This indicates that the subtle echo, ‘mood’ or ‘overtone’ of foreign languages hidden in Cather’s sentence structures is heard differently by bilingual as opposed to monolingual Anglophone readers. Indeed, whilst the ‘resurgences’ of French in Cather’s English might effortlessly ‘float up’ to a French speaker like Durrans or Chénétier, a monolingual English speaker might have to listen for them more closely.⁹³ Rogers makes a similar point in relation to Hemingway’s use of cross-linguistic influence, arguing that his ‘fusions’ of Spanish and English are more apparent to those ‘readers who know both Spanish and English [...] and can see the colliding linguistic planes’.⁹⁴

⁹² ‘The Novel *Démeublé*’, p. 837.

⁹³ Durrans, p. 224; ‘Shadows of a Rock’, para. 23 of 26.

⁹⁴ *Incomparable Empires*, p. 218.

For Durrans, Cather's inclusion of elements of French grammar in her English-language prose means that she risks 'disconcerting' some of her 'American readership', especially those who do not know any French.⁹⁵ In contrast, Palleau-Papin, proposes that, even when Cather imbues her prose with echoes of French grammar and diction, her writing 'is still accessible at all levels of reading'.⁹⁶ Whilst Cather's cross-linguistic writing is certainly 'accessible' to readers with differing levels of linguistic aptitude (it is always readable as English), Durrans is correct to acknowledge that those readers will experience Cather's multilingual experiments in different ways.

In Chapter Two, I argued that, depending on their willingness or ability to pursue the meaning of unknown words, Cather's readers can extract different levels of meaning from the untranslated foreign words that she quotes in her fiction. For example, if readers do not know (or if they do not look up) the untranslated Czech word 'Blázne', their overall understanding of Cather's short story 'The Bohemian Girl' (1912) is not compromised: they still know that Clara is angry.⁹⁷ However, if they do look at the word, listen to it and look it up in a dictionary, they learn that Clara is not simply angry, she is actively insulting someone or something. Readers who find out what 'Blázne' means are, therefore, rewarded with access to 'bonus' information about Clara.

Likewise, readers' overall understanding of texts like 'Peter', *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Shadows on the Rock* is not compromised if they do not know that Czech makes 'the T-V distinction', that the article can be dropped in French before the noun 'slave' or that 'ménage' has different meanings in English and French. As with Cather's use of the word 'Blázne', it is – on one level of reading – enough that readers simply notice what Chénétier calls the occasional '*rhetorical exoticism*' in Cather's predominantly English-language prose and note that her texts offer a non-Anglophone perspective on the New World.⁹⁸ However, if readers make the effort to investigate these rhetorical exoticisms, they gain access to interlingual puns (for instance, between 'suspicion' and 'soupçon') and a deeper understanding of how the themes of Cather's texts (for example, the way that immigrant characters like Peter feel out of time and out

⁹⁵ Durrans, p. 225.

⁹⁶ Palleau-Papin, para. 33 of 33.

⁹⁷ Willa Cather, 'The Bohemian Girl', *McClure's*, August 1912, pp. 420-43 (p. 423), in *The Willa Cather Archive* < <https://cather.unl.edu/ss004.html> > [accessed 18/02/2018].

⁹⁸ 'Shadows of a Rock', para. 13 of 26.

of place in the New World) are reflected in the intricacies of her grammar. They also gain a clearer glimpse of the layers of pseudotranslation which underpin her narrative structures.

Consequently, just as Cather rewards readers for investigating the meaning of untranslated foreign words, she also rewards readers who investigate the sources of the lexical and grammatical interference present in her characters' 'translated' non-Anglophone dialogue or her narrators' prose. In order to make these investigations, however, readers must have (or must be willing to acquire) some grammatical and lexical knowledge of the languages that Cather transposes onto her English-language sentences. By creating texts which reveal hidden complexities only to readers who are able to cross linguistic borders, Cather upholds in her fiction one of the central arguments of her 1921 speech to the Omaha Fine Arts Society.

In her speech, Cather lamented the fact that Nebraska's Siman Act would prevent any 'child born in' the state from 'gain[ing] a fluent speaking knowledge of a foreign language'.⁹⁹ Demonstrating the additional richness that a familiarity with 'one or two other languages' can bring to the reading of texts which, on the surface, are predominantly written in straightforward English, Cather's novels and short stories are manifestos for the benefits of learning to wield unfamiliar linguistic weapons.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, with their hidden interlingual puns and verbal transpositions, they are exemplary case studies for the benefits of re-reading ostensibly simple, monolingual, English-language American texts from a more multilingual perspective.

'I cannot produce my kind of work away from the American idiom': The Political Ramifications of Cross-Linguistic Influence

In *Dialogues II* (2002), Deleuze argues that the American language is 'a hegemonic imperialistic language' which is nonetheless characterised by:

its extraordinary capacity for being twisted and shattered and for secretly putting itself in the service of minorities who work it from the inside [...], nibbling away at that hegemony as it extends itself [...].¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ 'State Laws are Cramping', p. 148.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Deleuze, p. 58.

Cather's fiction corroborates this statement. In *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, for example, Bishop Latour's Native American guide, Jacinto, 'nibbles away' at the English language by 'drop[ping] the article' – a grammatical idiosyncrasy which, Cather suggests, is entirely deliberate (p. 331). When Jacinto does 'give a noun its article, he use[s] the right one', indicating that he is cognizant of the rules of English grammar. Consequently, when he drops the article ("“One. Baby. Not very long born.””), it seems to be a ‘matter of taste’ – a voluntary ‘nibbling’ rather than involuntary grammatical interference (pp. 331-32).

Latour presumes that Jacinto adopts this grammatical idiosyncrasy because articles are ‘superfluous and unpleasing’ in ‘the Indian conception of language’ (p. 332). However, it is equally possible that Jacinto chooses to drop the article and admit cross-linguistic influence from his native tongue into his English speech as a deliberate act of grammatical resistance against his colonisation by English-speakers. For example, when Jacinto drops the article in the statement ‘I know Indian name’, he does so whilst feeling somewhat patronised by Latour:

“The Laguna Indians call Snow-Bird Mountain.” [...]
 “That is very nice,” said the Bishop musingly. “Yes that is a pretty name.”
 “Oh, Indians have nice names too!” Jacinto replied quickly, with a curl of the lip. (p. 331)

By dropping the article and making his language diverge from Latour's here, Jacinto – although he does not code-switch completely – is able to place some linguistic distance between them. He uses grammatical interference to express his disapproval of Latour's ignorance of Native American culture and demonstrate that, although the Spanish, English and, in Latour's case, French have colonised his country, he can refuse to submit to the rules of their languages. In contrast, when Jacinto later feels bad for taking ‘out on the Bishop a reproach not deserved’ in this exchange, he adds articles back into his speech, making it converge with Latour's. In doing so, he linguistically accommodates the Frenchman in a bid to make amends: ““*The* Laguna people think it very funny for *a* big priest to be *a* young man. [...]” [my emphasis]’ (p. 331). Choosing when he admits cross-linguistic influence into his speech is, therefore, a technique that Jacinto uses to make his feelings about his colonisers (and, in particular, his fluctuating feelings of annoyance and admiration for Latour) known.

Although Cather – a white, middle-class native Virginian – was not a member of a ‘minority’ group, she, too, voluntarily nibbled away at the English language from the inside, bringing forth the foreign elements within it and transposing other languages’ syntactical structures onto it in order to represent foreign-language dialogue or to foreignise her narrators’ prose. By wielding the ‘sledge’ of English as though it were the ‘rapier’ of French or another linguistic weapon, Cather deliberately pluralised the English language from within, creating not ‘*une sorte de langue étrangère*’ from her native language, but many. In this way, Cather – as Durrans argues – turned her native language ‘into an instrument of resistance to the assimilation policies of the time’. For Durrans, Cather’s incorporation of echoes of French into the prose of *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Shadows on the Rock*, and her subsequent creation of a ‘language that breaks free of its nationalist straitjacket’ in these texts, reflects her ‘liberal stance in matters of Americanization’.¹⁰² More specifically, Cather’s creation of multiple Englishes via her experiments with cross-linguistic influence speaks to an important twentieth-century debate regarding the fate of the English language in an increasingly multicultural United States.

As Joshua Miller argues, ‘More books and articles’ – including Henry James’s ‘The Question of Our Speech’ (1905), H. L. Mencken’s *The American Language: An Inquiry into the Development of English in the United States* (1919) and George Philip Krapp’s *The English Language in America* (1925) – ‘were published on the subject of U.S. English between 1918 and 1948 than had appeared in the previous 142 years of the nation’s history’.¹⁰³ In debating the similarities and differences between U.S. English and British English, these books asked a key question: ‘was there one singular U.S. English, or were there many?’¹⁰⁴ For Mencken, the answer to this question was ‘many’. Indeed, for him, the fundamental difference between British English and U.S. English was that the latter encompassed a multitude of dialects shaped by ‘foreign influences’ (or cross-linguistic influences from the native languages spoken by immigrants to the United States).¹⁰⁵ He observed, for instance, that the ‘local dialect of English’ spoken in Pennsylvania’, where there were many German immigrants,

¹⁰² Durrans, pp. 232-33.

¹⁰³ Miller, p. 107.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁰⁵ H. L. Mencken, *The American Language: An Inquiry into the Development of English in the United States* (New York: Knopf, 1949), p. 212.

‘show[ed] plain traces’ of German ‘both in vocabulary and pronunciation’ whilst ‘the speech of lower Louisiana’ was ‘full of French terms’.¹⁰⁶

Cather agreed with Mencken that American English was a diverse language which comprised a variety of dialects shaped by cross-linguistic influence. Writing to Sarah Orne Jewett in 1908, for example, she noted that the English spoken ‘in the West’ where she grew up was very different to that spoken in Jewett’s Boston because it had ‘a kind of Latin influence’ as opposed to a British influence: ‘We had so many Spanish words, just as you had words left over from Chaucer’.¹⁰⁷ When Cather wrote her novels and short stories, she showcased the effects of grammatical, lexical and phonic cross-linguistic influence upon the English language in America, carefully recording the unique idiolects of non-native English speakers such as Jacinto, Mrs. Voigt and Mrs. Rosen.

James and Krapp also heard ‘foreign influences’ in American English, but their response to them was much less open-minded than Mencken’s. As Miller notes, these commentators believed that immigration and increasing multilingualism had left ‘US English’ ‘destabilized’ and ‘newly vulnerable to the damaging influence of other languages’ at the start of the twentieth century.¹⁰⁸ Krapp, for example, heard residual ‘traces of German, or Polish, or Yiddish’ in immigrants’ English-language speech, but, unlike Mencken, rejected the notion that the dialects which resulted from this language contact should be ‘considered part of the national idiom’. Until immigrants’ ‘speech [became] acknowledgedly American’, Krapp argued, they were ‘imperfectly assimilated’ – a stance which reflected his broader opinion that dialects of English shaped by immigrants’ native languages were mere stepping stones between those languages and a standardised, monolithic U.S./British English.¹⁰⁹

James also believed that U.S./British English should be standardised and even called for the introduction of a ‘national speech standard’ to protect American English from the harmful influences of immigrants’ native languages.¹¹⁰ In ‘The Question of Our Speech’ he lamented the fact that the English language had been ‘handed over’ to

¹⁰⁶ Mencken, p. 214.

¹⁰⁷ Willa Cather, ‘To Sarah Orne Jewett, October 24 [1908]’, in *Letters*, pp. 115-17 (p. 116).

¹⁰⁸ Miller, p. 13.

¹⁰⁹ George Philip Krapp, ‘The Improvement of American Speech’, *English Journal*, 7.2 (1918), 90-91.

¹¹⁰ Henry James, ‘The Question of Our Speech’, in *The Question of Our Speech; The Lesson of Balzac: Two Lectures* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1905), pp. 3-52 (p. 35).

‘the American Dutchman and the Dago’ for them to ‘play’ with ‘to their heart’s content’.¹¹¹ Escalating images of linguistic play into images of linguistic violence in *The American Scene* (1905), he famously described the Lower East Side cafes frequented by Jewish immigrants to New York City as ‘torture rooms of the living idiom’. The ‘Accent of the Future’, he predicted, would be unrecognisable as English thanks to the ‘lacerations’ it suffered in these cafes.¹¹²

Like James, Cather had some reservations about the ‘language [...] heard in New York’ at the start of the twentieth century, although for very different reasons.¹¹³ These reservations came to the fore when she revised her 1925 preface to her mentor Sarah Orne Jewett’s short story collection *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (‘The Best Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett’) for inclusion in her own collection of non-fiction, *Not Under Forty* (1936). As Cather explained to her friend Zoë Akins, she seized the opportunity whilst revising this essay to refute ‘the most horrid articles’ written by ‘brassy young Jews and Greeks from New York University’ (such as Louis Kronenberger) which claimed that Jewett’s fiction was outmoded.¹¹⁴ In order to strengthen her defence of Jewett, Cather attacked the way that those critics spoke English. The beauty of Jewett’s Maine dialect was, Cather argued, inevitably lost on ‘a young man [...] of foreign descent’ ‘born in New York City’ like Kronenberger because:

To him, English is merely a means of making himself understood [...]. He may write and speak American English correctly, but only as an American may learn to speak French correctly. It is a surface speech: he clicks out the words as a bank clerk clicks out silver when you ask for change. [...] How could he find the talk of the Maine country people anything but “dialect”?¹¹⁵

For Janis P. Stout, this paragraph is ‘disappointing’ evidence of the ‘effects not only of age but of ill health, grief for her deceased friends and family members, and

¹¹¹ ‘The Question of Our Speech’, p. 51.

¹¹² Henry James, *The American Scene* (London: Hart-Davis, 1968), p. 139.

¹¹³ Willa Cather, ‘To Ferris Greenslet, March 8, 1936’, in *Letters*, pp. 513-14 (p. 514).

¹¹⁴ Willa Cather, ‘To Zoë Akins, October 28 [1937?]’, in *Letters*, pp. 536-37 (p. 537); ‘To Ferris Greenslet, March 8, 1936’, p. 514.

¹¹⁵ Willa Cather, ‘Miss Jewett’, in *Stories, Poems, & Other Writings*, pp. 849-57 (pp. 856-57). This paragraph does not appear in Cather’s original 1925 version of the essay – for comparison, see Willa Cather, ‘The Best Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett’, in *On Writing: Critical Studies on Writing as an Art* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), pp. 47-59.

depressions' upon Cather's 'youthful warmth toward ethnically distinct immigrants'.¹¹⁶ However, whilst the paragraph is undeniably cantankerous in tone, it is important to remember that, when she penned it, Cather was furious about the criticism being levelled at Jewett; as she later told Akins, 'it made me angry and I broke out'.¹¹⁷ Cather's aim when re-writing her essay was not to objectively explore the linguistic effects of immigration, but to defend her mentor. Nonetheless, even with these mitigating circumstances in mind, it is clear that Cather, not unlike James, was concerned that some immigrants had an insufficient appreciation for the English language as she perceived it.

Something that critics failed to observe in relation to this reactionary, defensive paragraph of Cather's, however, is that, whilst James's concerns about the changing American idiom stemmed from his belief that New York City immigrants played with English too much, Cather's concern was seemingly that they played with it too little. Indeed, the aspect of immigrants' speech that troubles Cather the most in her revised Jewett essay is not the way that they modify the English language according to the diverse rules of their native languages, but the way that they standardise it, speaking it in a 'correct' but perfunctory manner 'like a bank clerk clicks out silver'. For Cather, standardisation was a much more serious problem than cross-linguistic influence.

In 1921, Cather told journalist Eleanor Hinman that twentieth-century American life was blighted by a 'rage for [...] conventionality':

At present in the west there seems to be an idea that we must all be like somebody else, as if we had all been cast in the same mold. We wear exactly the same clothes, drive the same make of car, live in the same part of town, in the same style of house. It's deadly!¹¹⁸

For Cather, the perfunctory way in which Jewett's critics spoke English was another form of this 'deadly' standardisation and one which had the doubly unfortunate effect of preventing them from appreciating the subtlety of her mentor's prose. Consequently, although Cather frequently bemoaned the fact that her correspondents were 'unable to

¹¹⁶ Janis P. Stout, 'Modernist by Association: Willa Cather's New York / New Mexico Circle', *American Literary Realism*, 47.2 (2015), 117-35 (p. 128).

¹¹⁷ 'To Zoë Akins, October 28 [1937?]', p. 537.

¹¹⁸ Willa Cather, quoted in Eleanor Hinman, 'Willa Cather, Famous Nebraska Novelist, Says Pioneer Mother Held Greatest Appreciation of Art – Raps Women Who Devote Themselves to Culture Clubs', *Lincoln Sunday Star*, 6 November 1921, in *Willa Cather in Person*, pp. 42-49 (p. 46).

write an English sentence' and expressed a sincere wish that 'colleges' would teach people 'to write passably clear and correct English', her defence of Jewett indicates that her 'fetish for correct English' was not entirely inflexible.¹¹⁹ On the contrary, it suggests that, in Cather's opinion, it was preferable for people to speak expressive 'non-standard' forms of English than English which was grammatically 'correct' but emotionless.

Cather conveyed this view very clearly in *The Song of the Lark* (1915). In the novel, Thea's father, Mr. Kronborg – who was raised in a Swedish-speaking colony in Minnesota – struggles to express himself in the perfunctory, 'book-learned English' that he acquired 'at college'.¹²⁰ Like the English spoken by Jewett's critics, Mr. Kronborg's English is a 'surface speech' which precludes him from expressing himself fully: 'If he had his sincere moments, they were perforce inarticulate' (p. 306). Encouraging readers to view Mr. Kronborg as a 'poor' man who is tongue-tied and emotionally repressed by his college-learned English (just as she was tongue-tied by her college-learned French), Cather clearly indicates that it is better for immigrants to the United States to speak a 'natural, spontaneous', idiosyncratic and 'human' English which is shaped by cross-linguistic influences than one that is grammatically correct but mechanical (p. 306). Read in light of *The Song of the Lark*, then, Cather's defence of Jewett – although it has previously been interpreted as a defence of 'Maine English' and a denigration of immigrant Englishes – is, in fact, a defence of linguistic diversity and a critique of linguistic standardisation.

For Cather, the diversification and pluralisation of the English language thanks to cross-linguistic influence was valuable not only because it enabled immigrants to express themselves fully, but also because it revitalised the American idiom. Throughout her oeuvre, Cather celebrates characters whose status as non-native speakers enables them to find fresh approaches to the English language. In *My Ántonia* (1918), for example, native Swedish speaker Lena Lingard's 'soft' and unusual way of pronouncing the 'formal phrases' idiomatic of Black Hawk society transforms them

¹¹⁹ Willa Cather, 'To Egbert Samuel Oliver, December 13, 1934', in *Letters*, p. 503; Marjorie Wyman, *Lincoln Sunday Star*, 29 June 1924, in *Willa Cather Remembered*, p. 31.

¹²⁰ Interestingly, Cather's description of Mr. Kronborg's English as 'book-learned' recalls Romanian immigrant Marcus Ravage's description of his language shortly after his arrival in the United States as 'the very grammatical, and very clumsy book-English of the foreigner'. See his memoir: *An American in the Making: The Life Story of an Immigrant* (New York: Harper, 1917), p. 221.

from ‘flat commonplaces’ into something ‘very funny, very engaging’. As Jim approvingly notes, ‘Nothing could be more diverting than to hear Lena, who was almost as candid as nature, call a leg a “limb” or a house a “home”’ (p. 886). Likewise, when Mr. Rosen uses ‘local idioms’ in ‘Old Mrs Harris’, Vickie Templeton admiringly thinks that ‘his voice and enunciation ma[k]e them sound altogether different from Skyline speech’ (‘Old Mrs Harris’, p. 375).

Contrary to Holger Kersten’s hypothesis that ‘almost all’ literary representations of ‘Non-Standard English’ ‘have as their primary effect a demotion of the speaker represented’, then, Cather’s fiction celebrates characters who use Non-Standard dialects of English shaped by cross-linguistic influences from their native languages.¹²¹ Just as the cultural pluralist philosopher Randolph Bourne believed that the introduction of immigrant cultures into the United States at the start of the twentieth century would save the country from its ‘own stagnation’, Cather suggests in her fiction that the introduction of the sounds of other languages into ‘small town’ American English by individuals like Lena and Mr. Rosen could save it from becoming timeworn, static and, ultimately, meaningless.¹²² This success of this process of linguistic de-homogenisation and de-stagnation is evident in the way that Lena and Mr. Rosen’s English idiolects offer native speakers Jim Burden and Vickie Templeton a fresh perspective on their own language – something that Cather experienced for herself when she listened to Francophone Madame Franklin-Grout speaking English.

In ‘A Chance Meeting’, Cather explores how Franklin-Grout’s Francophone background productively frees her from the constraints of an instinctive knowledge of idiomatic English expressions. This freedom means that Franklin-Grout often lands upon rich and unexpected turns of phrase which make her English more playful, uninhibited and interesting than that of a native speaker. For example, by deploying the unusual word ‘lowering’, Franklin-Grout energises an otherwise unremarkable English-language conversation about the theatre:

¹²¹ Holger Kersten, ‘America’s Multilingualism and the Problem of the Literary Representation of “Pidgin English”’, *Amerikastudien / American Studies*, 51.1 (2006), 71-91 (p. 76).

¹²² Randolph Bourne, ‘Transnational America’, in *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*, 2 vols, ed. by Paul Lauter et al (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), II, pp. 1732-43 (p. 1733).

“[...] Besides, it is almost September; the days are lowering now, and one needs the theatre.” The old lady stopped, frowned, and made an impatient gesture with her very interesting hand. “What should I have said then? Lowering is not the word, but I seldom have opportunity to speak English.” (p. 817)

Cather replies that a more idiomatic phrase would be ‘the days are growing shorter’, but nonetheless declares ‘lowering a very good word’ (p. 817). She agrees with Franklin-Grout that it is ‘*un peu poétique*’, but argues that it is ‘the right kind of poetic’ (p. 817). When Franklin-Grout asks her to explain what she means by this (‘And by that you mean?’), Cather describes ‘lowering’ as a word that is interesting without being too ‘bookish’. The fact that it is used by ‘country people [...] in some parts of England’ and ‘old-fashioned farmers in America, in the South’ means that the word has an interesting pastoral provenance; moreover, used by workers rather than writers, it is ‘safe’ rather than ‘literary’ (p. 817). An unexpected word choice redolent of specific geographical contexts, ‘lowering’ is – in Cather’s opinion – far more evocative than the equivalent, more idiomatic phrase ‘growing shorter’. More importantly, it is a word choice which pushes Cather to think harder about the connotations of her own language.

Justifying his efforts to learn English in his essay ‘Les Mots Anglais’ (1877), the French poet Stéphane Mallarmé famously argued that ‘on ne voit presque jamais si sûrement un mot que de dehors, où nous sommes; c’est à dire l’étranger’.¹²³ Challenging Cather to explain why ‘lowering’ is ‘the right kind of poetic’, Franklin-Grout encourages her to see the word from this outsider’s or stranger’s perspective (specifically a Francophone outsider’s perspective) and pushes her to articulate what exactly makes an English word ‘safe’ or ‘bookish’ or ‘poetic’. Adopting this new, outsider’s viewpoint ‘defamiliarizes’ (to borrow Shklovsky’s term) English in Cather’s eyes and gives her a valuable opportunity to think about her native language more objectively.

When Cather simulates cross-linguistic influence and writes English ‘like a foreigner’, she gives her Anglophone readers the same opportunity.¹²⁴ Indeed, by deploying low-frequency loanwords like ‘distrain’ and ‘soupçon’ in her prose or by arranging English words according to the grammatical structures of other languages,

¹²³ Stéphane Mallarmé, ‘Les Mots Anglais’, in *Oeuvres Complètes II*, ed. by Bertrand Marchal (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), pp. 937-1100 (p. 975).

¹²⁴ Deleuze, p. 5.

Cather creates places in her texts where her language – like Franklin-Grout’s use of the word ‘lowering’ – strikes readers as being strangely unidiomatic. By creating these moments of linguistic strangeness and pushing readers to question why words like ‘distract’ sound slightly odd, Cather enables them to momentarily step outside the borders of their own language and examine it from a ‘stranger’s’ perspective. Consequently, not only are Cather’s experiments with cross-linguistic influence mimetic (in the respect that they enable her to represent foreign-language speech in English) and not only do they enable her to enact her theory of simplification, they also enable her to defamiliarise and thus breathe new life into her own idiom. By experimenting with cross-linguistic influence, Cather is, therefore, able to de-habitualise and revitalise her readers’ response to their own language, just as she did when she wove foreign words into her prose.

In an interview with *Century Magazine* published in 1925, Cather claimed that she could not write in France because she could not ‘produce [her] kind of work away from the American idiom’.¹²⁵ Although Cather referred to a singular ‘American idiom’ here, her texts showcase a multitude of American modes of expression. In addition to English, Cather’s bilingual immigrant characters speak French, German, Czech, Norwegian, Swedish, Italian, Spanish and other languages. When they do code-switch to English, Cather’s characters do not speak just one form of that language; rather, they speak a variety of Englishes, some of which are shaped by cross-linguistic influences from their native tongues. Not only did Cather record these diverse American idioms in her fiction, she also created her own new idioms and modes of expression by simulating cross-linguistic influence in her ‘translations’ of characters’ foreign-language dialogue and by using verbal transposition to foreignise her narrators’ prose.

Consequently, in answer to the question debated at the start of the twentieth century, ‘was there one singular U.S. English, or were there many?’, Cather’s texts clearly indicate that the answer was (as Mencken believed) ‘many’.¹²⁶ Moreover, they indicate that, for Cather, an ‘American idiom’ which encompassed a variety of different languages and Englishes – from Maine English to French- and Swedish-inflected Englishes – was far preferable to the standard, monolithic English advocated by James

¹²⁵ Willa Cather, quoted in Walter Tittle, ‘Glimpses of Interesting Americans’, *Century Magazine*, July 1925, in *Willa Cather in Person*, pp. 81-85 (p. 84).

¹²⁶ Miller, p. 12.

and Krapp. For Cather, not only did a diverse ‘American idiom’ counter the ‘deadly’ standardisation of American society, it saved the English language from its own stagnation. As such, although Clifton Fadiman argued in 1932 that ‘Though deeply American in tradition, [Cather had] no report to make us on the America of her time’, her experiments with cross-linguistic influence prove that this was not the case.¹²⁷ Far from making ‘no report’ upon the contemporary moment, Cather’s texts have a great deal to say about twentieth-century language politics.

For Nien-Ming Ch’ien, the process of ‘giving’ American English ‘the dimension of a foreign language’ by simulating cross-linguistic influence is political not simply because it pluralises the English language from within and diversifies the American idiom, but also because it ‘deprives English of its dominance’ in the United States ‘and allows other languages to enjoy the same status’.¹²⁸ Undeniably, Cather’s method of wielding the ‘sledge’ of English as though it were another linguistic weapon entirely makes foreign languages an integral part of her fiction; they are the ‘heat’ or ‘undertow’ which energises and productively defamiliarises her ostensibly English-language prose. However, it is not true that foreign languages ‘enjoy the same status’ as the English language in Cather’s texts.

Indeed, when Cather introduces the phonology, grammar and lexis of foreign languages into her fiction, she allows them to stretch and nibble away at her predominantly English-language prose, but never to pull it out of shape completely; she modifies English, but (to borrow Rosenwald’s description of the process of ‘notating a non-standard dialect’) does not ‘jettison [...] the system altogether’.¹²⁹ This results in a two-way tension between Cather’s efforts to defamiliarise her English-language prose with cross-linguistic influence and her simultaneous, opposite efforts to ensure that it remains coherent and accessible to Anglophone readers. This tension perfectly epitomises at a grammatical and syntactical level her broader attitude towards American multilingualism. Whilst Cather believed that America’s increasing linguistic diversity at the start of the twentieth century should be preserved, she also believed that

¹²⁷ Clifton Fadiman, ‘Willa Cather: The Past Recaptured’, *Nation*, 35 (1932), 563-65, in *Willa Cather: The Contemporary Reviews*, ed. by Margaret Anne O’Connor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 430.

¹²⁸ Nien-Ming Ch’ien, p. 11.

¹²⁹ Lawrence Rosenwald, *Multilingual America: Language and the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 9.

the English language should have a special status. By keeping a firm grip on the ‘sledge’ of English even as she wielded it according to the rules of other languages, Cather created new mediums of expression – or ‘sortes de langues étrangères’ – which put English first whilst simultaneously acknowledging (and, indeed, celebrating) the fact that English is not the United States’ only language.

CONCLUSION

‘Mother uses them to make *kolaches*’: The Lasting Significance of Willa Cather’s Linguistic Border Crossings

In 1918, Willa Cather made a lasting change to the English language. In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the first use of the noun ‘kolach’ – meaning ‘a small tart or pie, topped or filled with a sweet mixture, preserve, etc., popular in Czech communities’ – in English is attributed to Cather’s novel *My Ántonia* (1918).¹ As Andrew Jewell notes, the *Dictionary of American Regional English* also credits Cather’s ‘novel *My Ántonia* with introducing’ the originally-Czech word “‘kolache” into the English language’.²

The freshly-imported loanword appears in the final section of Cather’s novel when the Cuzaks are proudly showing Jim Burden their pocket of Bohemian language and culture in Nebraska:

“Show him the spiced plums, mother. Americans don’t have those,” said one of the older boys. “Mother uses them to make *kolaches*,” he added.

Leo, in a low voice, tossed off some scornful remark in Bohemian.

[Jim] turned to him. “You think I don’t know what *kolaches* are, eh? You’re mistaken young, man. I’ve eaten your mother’s *kolaches* long before that Easter day when you were born.”³

Although Jim cannot speak Czech, his exposure to Ántonia’s native language and cookery from an early age (just as Cather was exposed to her immigrant neighbours’ diverse languages and cultures from the age of nine in Nebraska) means that ‘*kolaches*’ is already an established loanword within his vocabulary; as such, he is able to smoothly side-step Leo’s exclusionary code-switch.

By deploying the Czech word in her bestselling novel *My Ántonia* and again in her short story ‘Neighbour Rosicky’ (1928) (‘Mary took out of the oven a pan of

¹ ‘kolach, n.’, in *OED Online* <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/104296>> [accessed 24/08/2019].

² Andrew Jewell, “‘A Crime Against Art’: *My Ántonia*, Food, and Cather’s Anti-Americanization Argument”, *Willa Cather Newsletter and Review*, 54.2 (2010), 72-76 (p. 72).

³ Willa Cather, *My Ántonia*, in *Early Novels and Stories*, ed. by Sharon O’Brien (New York: Library of America, 1987), pp. 707-938 (p. 918).

kolache'), Cather introduced it into her readers' vocabularies, too.⁴ In this way, she helped to carry the word across the border between Czech and English in real-life usage, authorising its inclusion within English-language literature and, in doing so, leaving a lasting mark upon her native tongue. Significantly, this was not the only occasion when Cather's experiments with crossing linguistic borders in her fiction helped to shape the English language. In addition to 'kolach', the *OED* cites Cather's novels as a major twentieth-century source for originally-French, Spanish, Navajo and Hopi loanwords such as 'abonnement', 'arroyo', 'hogan', 'kiva', 'muchacha', 'ranchero' and 'rebozo'.⁵ Whilst she was not the first Anglophone author to use these words, she did help to naturalise them within the English language by deploying them in her texts.

Archival evidence relating to Cather's use of italics in her novels and short stories suggests that she was keenly aware of her capacity to naturalise foreign words within the English language or, alternatively, to reinforce their otherness. As Daniel Weston and Penelope Gardner-Chloros argue, a writer's decision whether or not to italicise a word of foreign origin is a vital 'visual clue' indicating the extent to which they wish that word 'to be perceived' as foreign, strange or 'other'.⁶ As a general rule, if a writer italicises a word, and therefore visually differentiates it from the words that surround it on the page, it can be inferred that they intend it to be perceived as 'other'; in contrast, if they give the word in roman type, and therefore make it blend in with the surrounding words, it can be inferred that they want it to be perceived as an accepted loanword within the primary language in which they are writing.

Cather's italicisation of the word '*kolaches*' in *My Ántonia* reflects the fact that, when she introduced it into her prose in 1918 (carrying it across the border from Czech into an English-language text for the first time), it would have been unfamiliar to most of her readers. Furthermore, visually highlighting the word's foreignness with italics

⁴ Willa Cather, 'Neighbour Rosicky', in *Stories, Poems, & Other Writings*, ed. by Sharon O'Brien (New York: Library of America, 1992), pp. 587-618 (p. 595).

⁵ 'abonnement, n', 'arroyo, n', 'hogan, n.2', 'kiva, n', 'muchacha, n', 'ranchero, n' and 'rebozo, n', in *OED Online* <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/478>> <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/11086>> <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/87580>> <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/103793>> <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/235088>> <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/157951>> <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/159263>> [accessed 14/09/2019].

⁶ Daniel Weston and Penelope Gardner-Chloros, 'Mind the Gap: What Code-Switching in Literature Can Teach Us About Code-Switching', *Language and Literature*, 24 (2015), 194-212 (p. 197).

emphasises the Cuzak boys' surprise that Jim knows what it means; it is not a word that they expect an 'American' like him to recognise. Cather did not, however, consistently italicise all of the words of foreign origin that she quoted in her fiction. As Cather and Edith Lewis's extensive handwritten amendments to the setting typescript of *Shadows on the Rock* (1931) reveal, they carefully deliberated over which of that text's French words and originally-French loanwords to give in roman type and which to italicise (and, by extension, to mark as 'other').

In the *Shadows on the Rock* typescript, Lewis, who mainly worked in pencil, and Cather can be seen experimenting with removing the underlining (which indicates that the above words should be italicised) beneath some French words and adding it beneath others:

"At any rate, the aunts will have our letters by New Years; and then they will know how glad I was of my béret and my jerseys [...]" [accent added and underlining crossed out in pencil]⁷

"Au revoir, Monsieur," [...] [underlining crossed out in pencil]⁸

"Je suis mère, vous savez!" [underlining crossed out in pencil]⁹

She replied: "Ah, mon père, mon [[^]ma] chambre est mon paradis terrestre; c'est mon centre; c'est mon élément. Il n'y a pas de lieu plus délicieux, ni plus salubre pour moi; point de Louvre, point de palais, qui me soit plus agréable. Je préfèr[e] ma cellule à toute le reste de l'univers." [accents, strike-throughs and underlining added in pencil]¹⁰

(Les ourses et les louves protègent leurs petits) [accent and underlining added in pen]¹¹

Corresponding with the typesetting of the first published edition of *Shadows on the Rock*, these amendments reveal Cather and Lewis making some interesting (and ostensibly inconsistent) decisions concerning the relative 'Frenchness' of these words.

Primarily, read in light of Weston and Gardner-Chloros's argument, Cather and Lewis's decision to remove the underlining beneath simple French words and phrases

⁷ Lincoln, NE, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries, Archives and Special Collections, MS 77 Philip L. and Helen Cather Southwick Collection, Box 1 Fol. 13 *Shadows on the Rock* 1931, manuscript, pp. 1-34 (p. 8).

⁸ Ibid., Box 1 Fol. 15 *Shadows on the Rock* 1931, manuscript, pp. 74-111 (p. 75).

⁹ Ibid., p. 74.

¹⁰ Ibid., Box 1 Fol. 16 *Shadows on the Rock* 1931, manuscript, pp. 112-81 (p. 120).

¹¹ Ibid., Box 1 Fol. 14 *Shadows on the Rock* 1931, manuscript, pp. 35-73 (p. 65).

which are easily recognisable to Anglophone readers, such as ‘Au revoir’ and ‘béret’, whilst adding it beneath longer and more complex passages of French (for example, ‘Ah, mon père [...]’) makes sense. If we imagine a line between English and French, loanwords like ‘béret’ straddle the border between the two languages whilst complete paragraphs in French (which the average Anglophone reader would need a dictionary to understand) belong firmly on the French side of that divide. Cather and Lewis used typesetting to emphasise this difference.

According to this logic, however, Cather and Lewis’s decision to cross out the underlining on the sentence ‘Je suis mère, vous savez’ makes less sense. Although un-italicised, this sentence consists entirely of French words which do not exist as loanwords in English. As such, it seems less immediately accessible to Anglophone readers than many of the other similarly un-italicised French portions of the text, like ‘béret’ and ‘Au revoir’. So why did Cather and Lewis choose to remove the italicisation on ‘Je suis mère’? Arguably, their decision can be explained by the fact that the sentence’s meaning is, with a little readerly diligence, easily deducible from its context.

A few lines after Toinette announces ‘Je suis mère’ she reaffirms (in French that the narrator has this time ‘translated’ into English) that ‘[she] is [Jacques’s] mother’.¹² Cather’s provision of this subsequent translation means that the un-italicised French sentence is, ultimately, more accessible to the Anglophone reader – and, therefore, less foreign – than many of the other untranslated (and contrastingly italicised) passages of French in the novel, such as ‘Ah mon père, mon [[^]ma] chambre est mon paradis [...]’. By giving the comparatively guessable phrase ‘Je suis mère’ in roman type, then, Cather and Lewis used typesetting to acknowledge that, in the context of *Shadows on the Rock*, these words hover slightly closer to the Anglophone side of the border between English and French than they do in normal usage.

That being said, Lewis and Cather did not consistently give ‘guessable’ French words in roman type throughout the novel. A good example of this inconsistency is the phrase ‘(Les ourses et les louves protègent leurs petits)’. Like ‘Je suis mère’, this phrase is deducible from its context thanks to Cather’s provision of a translation (this time before the French words):

¹² Willa Cather, *Shadows on the Rock*, in *Later Novels*, ed. by Sharon O’Brien (New York: Library of America, 1990), pp. 461-642 (p. 518).

His silence was so dreadful that it was a relief when he began to thunder and tell her that even the beasts of the forest protected their young (*Les ourses et les louves protègent leurs petits*).¹³

Rather than giving these words in roman type, however, Cather unexpectedly chooses to underline/italicise them. In terms of the words' accessibility to Anglophone readers (and according to Weston and Gardner-Chloros's argument), this typesetting decision does not make sense: accompanied by a clear translation, they seem (like 'Je suis mère') less foreign than many of the other untranslated French words in the novel. Nonetheless, this decision does make sense in terms of Cather's bid to establish the conceit that the novel is a translation of a pre-existing French text. By italicising '*Les ourses et les louves protègent leurs petits*', Cather reinforces the idea that these words are a quotation from the 'original' French source text that the narrator of *Shadows on the Rock* is translating into English and, indeed, slightly modifying as he/she does so – for example, 'les ourses et les louves' (bears and wolves) in the 'original' text becomes 'beasts of the forest' in translation. In this instance, Cather's italicisation not only indicates that the words '*Les ourses et les louves protègent leurs petits*' belong to a different language, it also indicates that they belong to a different text altogether.

As these examples indicate, Cather and Lewis's decisions about which French words to italicise and which to leave in roman type in the *Shadows on the Rock* typescript, although carefully and deliberately made, can seem arbitrary. Certainly, they must be analysed on a case-by-case basis. However, this seeming arbitrariness is – in the context of the novel – extremely valuable because it helps to create the impression that *Shadows on the Rock* is written in a linguistically unstable prose which hovers somewhere between English and French, sometimes leaning more towards one language, at other times leaning more towards the other. In turn, this helps to reinforce the conceit, discussed above and in Chapter Three, that the novel is a (pseudo)translation in progress of a pre-existing French text written by a bilingual narrator. From its vocabulary to its overall 'translated' structure, *Shadows on the Rock* is a novel constructed from layers of micro and macro linguistic border crossings between French, the language of its characters, and English, the language into which it is being 'translated'. Cather and Lewis's experiments with italicisation in their

¹³ *Shadows on the Rock*, pp. 512-13.

typesetting instructions make some of these linguistic border crossings, as well as the text's resulting linguistic instability, visible on the page.

As I have demonstrated throughout this thesis, *Shadows on the Rock* is by no means the only novel in Cather's oeuvre which is shaped by interactions between English and another language. From her early short stories to her mature novels, Cather's texts are constructed from layers of linguistic border crossings which underpin their subject matter, vocabulary, narrative structures and grammar. In Chapter One, I focused on language contact as a subject of Cather's texts, demonstrating that when, why and, most importantly, where her bilingual characters cross the borders between the languages that they speak is a topic that she returned to repeatedly throughout her career. Moreover, I argued that, by tracking her characters' code-switches in the manner of a sociolinguist, Cather was able to outline the social, cultural and artistic benefits of controlled, contained pockets of linguistic diversity within the United States.

In this way, I demonstrated the usefulness of applying sociolinguistic theories of language choice – theories which are usually reserved for analysing the speech of real-life bilingual individuals – to Cather's writing. The success of this approach to Cather's work, particularly in terms of the information that it unlocked about changes in her bilingual characters' physical and emotional state, signals the wider usefulness of an interdisciplinary sociolinguistic-literary approach to fiction, as well as a way in which that emerging field of research might be expanded. So far, sociolinguists interested in written examples of code-switching have tended to apply their theories to bilingual literature written by bilingual authors; in this study, I have demonstrated that sociolinguistic models can also be productively applied to predominantly English-language fiction written by an author who was not herself fully bilingual and who, therefore, wrote about the patterns of bilingual speech from an 'outsider's' perspective.

In Chapter Two, I focused on a micro linguistic border crossing in Cather's fiction: her selective importation of untranslated foreign words like '*kolaches*' across linguistic borders and into her English-language prose. I argued that this technique was a hallmark of her prose style from her earliest short stories to her later novels, as well as one which enabled her to 'defamiliarize' her texts and put into practice her belief that reading should be an active process. Furthermore, I used Cather's multilingualism as a lens through which to re-examine her aesthetic theory of simplification. In doing so, I demonstrated that, thanks to her use of highly synecdochic

foreign words, the principles of Cather's theory of simplification are – contrary to critical belief – evident in even her longest, densest novels, for example *The Song of the Lark* (1915).

In Chapter Three, I found new connections between Cather's translation work and her original writing, demonstrating that, on a macro level, her texts are constructed from layers of real and 'pseudo' translations. Connecting this recurring narrative structure to her aesthetic theories, I argued that Cather's translational texts epitomise her belief that the best stories are those which survive multiple tellings and retellings. In this way, I outlined the value of pursuing a hitherto untried critical approach to Cather's work: translation theory.

Finally, in Chapter Four, I proposed that, by importing elements of the grammar and syntax of other languages into her English-language sentences, Cather created a new medium of expression which hovers on the border between her characters' native languages and her own. I argued that this hovering, in-between language encapsulated Cather's broad and pluralistic conception of the American idiom at the start of the twentieth century and enabled her to enact the principles of her theory of simplification. In this chapter, I once again demonstrated the benefits of applying sociolinguistic theory (this time, relating to the bilingual phenomenon of cross-linguistic influence) to predominantly English-language works of literature.

Developing the arguments put forward in these four chapters, the examples of 'kolaches' and 'Je suis mère' discussed above highlight that, in addition to being constructed from layers of linguistic border crossings, Cather's texts also *effect* linguistic border crossings, making aspects of foreign languages accessible to Anglophone readers. On a small scale, Cather carried single foreign words across linguistic borders and into her Anglophone readers' vocabularies (or, in the case of 'kolaches', into the English language more broadly). On a larger scale, Cather carried entire foreign-language stories (for example, that of the wolves and the wedding party in *My Ántonia*) across linguistic borders by translating them into sections of her English-language novels. Additionally, Cather's texts effect linguistic border crossings because they encourage Anglophone readers to (briefly) step outside their own language and engage with unfamiliar vocabulary. For example, by weaving untranslated but nonetheless highly-significant foreign words into her prose, Cather

encouraged readers to follow Ray Kennedy's lead in *The Song of the Lark* and look them up in a bilingual dictionary.

In 'The Antimony of Multilingual US Literature' (2008), Brian Lennon argues that a fundamental quality of multilingual fiction is that it 'serve[s] as a kind of incentive [...] for language acquisition', and this is true of Cather's writing.¹⁴ Certainly, readers who engage with the linguistic border crossings in Cather's texts (for example, by learning the meaning of unfamiliar foreign words or by investigating the causes of cross-linguistic influence) are rewarded with access to interlingual puns or additional information about characters' motivations which would otherwise remain hidden. At the same time, however, Cather's use of techniques like explicit attribution and selective reproduction to limit the number of foreign words in her fiction enables her to ensure that her Anglophone readers are never confused or alienated by her linguistic border crossings. Her texts are, therefore, an environment in which Anglophone readers can engage with elements of foreign languages in a safe, controlled manner: her prose incentivises language acquisition whilst simultaneously making that process relatively easy.

By using a combination of sociolinguistic models, translation theory and Meir Sternberg's polylingual discourse theory to demonstrate that Cather's apparently monolingual writing is not only underpinned by but also effects linguistic border crossings, this thesis has established a new, interdisciplinary set of theoretical frameworks in which to read Cather's fiction. Something else which I have done differently to previous studies in this thesis is challenging the belief that Cather's work is best studied in roughly 'decadal' chunks – a critical approach which Daryl Palmer describes as 'inevitable and even irresistible'.¹⁵ By choosing instead to compare works from different periods of her oeuvre in each chapter, I have been able to contest the commonly-held view – voiced by critics such as Sharon O'Brien – that Cather 'became more conservative' and traditional with age, especially after the 'world broke in two', as she put it, 'in 1922'.¹⁶

¹⁴ Brian Lennon, 'The Antimony of Multilingual US Literature', *Comparative American Studies*, 6 (2008), 203-24 (p. 212).

¹⁵ Daryl W. Palmer, *Becoming Willa Cather: Creation and Career* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2019), p. 18.

¹⁶ Sharon O'Brien, "'The Thing Not Named': Willa Cather as a Lesbian Writer', *Signs*, 9.4 (1984), 576-99 (p. 590); Willa Cather, *Not Under Forty*, in *Stories, Poems, & Other Writings*, ed. by Sharon O'Brien (New York: Library of America, 1992), pp. 811-884 (p. 812).

Whilst we might expect an increasingly traditional, conservative Cather to turn away from innovating ways of crossing linguistic borders in her predominantly English-language writing towards the end of her career, I have demonstrated in this thesis that the small experiments with foreign words and cross-linguistic influence that she made in her earliest works, such as 'Peter' (1892), blossom into increasingly complex verbal transpositions in her later novels, for example, *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927) and *Shadows on the Rock* (1931). Likewise, I have demonstrated that Cather's early translation work, which is usually overlooked by critics, had a significant impact upon the structure of novels like *My Ántonia* and *Shadows on the Rock*. These cross-period comparisons have enabled me to argue that, even though later texts like *My Ántonia*, *Death* and *Shadows* are set in the 1800s and the 1690s respectively and even though they nostalgically describe a somewhat idealised, traditional, conservative past, the layers of linguistic border crossings that underpin them can be read as a liberal (and stylistically radical) response to the United States' increasing multilingualism at the start of the twentieth century.

Certainly, one of the most significant findings of this thesis is that recognising Cather's multilingualism enables us to re-evaluate her relationship to the artistic and political moment in which she lived and wrote. From an artistic perspective, identifying the linguistic border crossings in Cather's fiction is significant because it offers us new insights into her complex relationship with literary modernism. At the start of the twentieth century, modernist authors, such as Joyce, Pound and Hemingway, increasingly experimented with ways of introducing elements of other languages into their predominantly English-language prose. Cather's strong associations with the rural landscape, Nebraska and the nostalgic mean that she is rarely compared to these writers and is often seen as having more in common with her nineteenth-century predecessors than her twentieth-century peers. However, whilst Cather's experiments with crossing linguistic borders are clearly influenced by her favourite nineteenth-century authors, especially Mérimée and Carlyle, her 'defamiliarizing' use of foreign words in her fiction, her simultaneously domesticating and foreignising theory of translation, and her experiments with verbal transposition mean that her texts can also be seen as cousins to those written by the multilingual modernists.

There are, of course, differences between these sets of cousins. Most obviously, Cather's incorporation of foreign words into her texts is by no means as radically

disorientating as, say, Joyce's inclusion of foreign words in *Finnegans Wake* (1939). Secondly, whilst the high modernists' multilingual works are often a product of their expatriate experiences or pure literary experimentation, Cather's are derived from her lived experience of hearing America's growing multilingualism during her Nebraskan childhood. Cather's perspective on multilingualism is, therefore, uniquely hers and uniquely American.

Nonetheless, despite these differences, identifying the surprising but significant stylistic overlaps between Cather's multilingual experiments and those of the high modernists has enabled me to make a strong case in this thesis for her inclusion in future conversations about multilingual modernism. In particular, Cather's firmly American multilingual texts might usefully be discussed as a counterpoint to those written by expatriate American modernists. Within Cather studies, meanwhile, my spotlighting of the linguistic border crossings in her fiction (and the new comparisons that this has enabled me to draw between Cather, Joyce, Pound and Hemingway) adds strong evidence to the argument that she should be classified as a 'transitional modernist' whose works, although inspired late-Victorian literary culture, pre-empt those written by modernist authors.¹⁷

In addition to re-shaping our thinking on Cather's place within the twentieth-century literary canon, this examination of the linguistic border crossings in her texts also extends our understanding of the relationship between her fiction and the social and political moment in which it was written. As discussed in the Introduction, Cather – due in part to her own reactionary statements – has frequently been portrayed by critics as an author who failed to engage with the key ideas and debates of her time. However, her clear engagement with twentieth-century language politics in her fiction provides a compelling counter-argument to this view.

In her 1921 speech to the Omaha Fine Arts Society, in which she denounced Nebraska's ban on foreign language teaching in schools, Cather argued that, if it made 'a boy or girl [...] less American to know one or two other languages [...] your one hundred percent American would be a deaf mute'; in other words, Cather believed that the Siman Act was ridiculous because, in order for an American to avoid coming into contact with a foreign language in the United States, he or she would have to be

¹⁷ Phyllis Rose, 'The Case of Willa Cather', in *Modernism Re-Considered*, ed. by Robert Kiely (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 123-45 (p. 124).

completely unable to hear or speak.¹⁸ Anglophone Jim Burden's instinctive understanding of the Czech word '*kolaches*' thanks to his exposure to *Ántonia*'s native language as a child proves this point, as does the subject matter and style of Cather's oeuvre more broadly.

Indeed, it is impossible for readers to avoid encountering evidence of America's linguistic diversity in Cather's texts, whether that is a representation of bilingual characters' code-switching in short stories like 'Neighbour Rosicky', an untranslated Czech word in *My Ántonia*, a Nahuatl story in translation in 'Coming, Aphrodite!' (1920), or echoes of French in the grammar and syntax of *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. Read in light of her Fine Arts Society speech, then, Cather's subtly but nonetheless inherently cross-linguistic texts make a political statement about the inevitability – but also about the value – of encountering multilingualism in the United States. The fact that Cather made such a political statement in her fiction at a time when the value and, moreover, the future inevitability of American multilingualism had been called into question by proponents of hard-line Americanisation (for example, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin K. Lane and Nebraska's lawmakers) adds a new angle to Janis P. Stout, Guy Reynolds, Richard Millington and Catherine Morley's argument that she *was* a politically-engaged author whose texts are best understood as a product of (as well as a response to) the moment in which they were written.

Cather's response to twentieth-century multilingualism was not, however, a straightforward celebration of linguistic diversity. Whilst she believed that Americans should be encouraged to speak 'one or two other languages', Cather also believed that English should remain the country's primary language.¹⁹ The tension between these two positions has been a connecting thread throughout this project's exploration of the different kinds of linguistic border crossings that occur in her fiction. In Chapter One, for example, I argued that, whilst Cather's work outlines the social, cultural and artistic advantages of code-switching, it also suggests that bilingualism is most valuable when it is framed and contained within safe pockets, thus ensuring that English remains the primary language of the United States' public spaces. Likewise, in Chapter Two, I demonstrated that, whilst the untranslated foreign words that Cather wove into her

¹⁸ 'State Laws Are Cramping', *Lincoln Evening State Journal*, 31 October 1921, in *Willa Cather in Person: Interviews, Speeches, and Letters*, ed. by L. Brent Bohlke (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), pp. 147-48 (p. 148).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

fiction are amongst the most significant in her texts, she often selected them for inclusion on the basis of their visual and aural correspondences with English, thus prioritising the needs of Anglophone readers. In Chapter Three, I acknowledged that, although Cather's translational narrative structures make her texts complex palimpsests of foreign-language stories, the process of translation (especially domesticating translation) preserves the status of English as the primary language of her prose. Finally, in Chapter Four, I explored how, by transposing elements of other languages onto her prose whilst ensuring that it remained readable as English, Cather created a medium of expression which puts English first even as it acknowledges that English is not the United States' only language.

The ongoing tension between English and other languages which characterises the content, vocabulary, grammar and structure of Cather's fiction is also evident in her use of the word '*kolaches*', discussed above. On the one hand, Cather's introduction of the Czech word into *My Ántonia* and 'Neighbour Rosicky' typifies her commitment to showcasing untranslated foreign languages in her texts and challenging Anglophone readers to engage with them. On the other hand, the fact that Cather is credited with introducing the word into the English language means that she effectively Anglicised and domesticated it, making it 'safe' and accessible to future generations of Anglophone readers. The two-way pull between Cather's desire to foreground foreign languages and her contrasting desire to safely contain them within the framework of her own native language epitomised here is a reflection of her overarching language politics. Whilst Cather did not subscribe to the 'English-only' movement gaining traction at the start of the twentieth century, she consistently put English first both politically and in her writing.

Within the field of Cather studies, identifying the two-way tension between English and other languages in Cather's writing is significant because it adds a new perspective to the critical view that she is an author whose writing 'gets its energy from contraries'.²⁰ Looking beyond Cather studies, identifying this tension is significant because it highlights a new avenue of research that might be explored in the ongoing

²⁰ Hermione Lee, *Willa Cather: A Life Saved Up* (Virago: London, 1989), p. 16.

‘re-examination of American literature [...] in light of multilingualism’.²¹ As discussed in the Introduction, this re-examination – which began in the late 1990s – has thus far focused on literature written either partially or wholly in languages other than English by bilingual immigrants to the United States or bilingual enslaved or colonised authors. As Orm Øverland, who researches literature written in Norwegian in the United States, explains, the ultimate aim of this re-examination is to overturn the view that ‘American literature is necessarily literature in the English language’.²² Given that Cather was neither an immigrant, nor fluently bilingual and, moreover, that she produced texts which consistently put English first, it is unsurprising that, to date, she has not been included in this critical re-examination.

On the one hand, this is a good thing. One of the most valuable aspects of the ‘re-examination of American literature [...] in light of multilingualism’ is that it does not focus on canonical, predominantly-Anglophone authors like Cather. Instead, it foregrounds authors who – due to the fact that they write in languages which are inaccessible to the majority of Anglophone American readers and due to the fact that they frequently belong to overlooked groups within American society – are less widely-read than their Anglophone peers. I certainly do not wish to suggest that critics of multilingual literature should abandon their concentration on these overshadowed writers and focus instead on those whose place within the American canon is already established.

Nonetheless, as I have demonstrated in this thesis, Cather’s canonical fiction, which admits the presence of other languages in the United States even as it puts English first, is more multilingual than we might initially expect. In turn, the surprising linguistic diversity of Cather’s writing, as well as its political ramifications, indicates that there may be some considerable value in re-reading selected ‘classic’ Anglophone American authors – even those whose works may seem, on first glance, to be unpromisingly monolingual – in light of American multilingualism. Indeed, demonstrating that even the supposedly-traditional, Midwestern, Anglophone Willa

²¹ Werner Sollors, ‘Introduction: After the Culture Wars; or, From “English Only” to “English Plus”’, in *Multilingual America: Transnationalism, Ethnicity and the Languages of American Literature*, ed. by Sollors (New York: New York University Press, 1998) pp. 1-16 (p. 7).

²² Orm Øverland, ‘The Many Languages of American Literature: 1870-1930 Norwegian as an Example’, *Comparative American Studies*, 4 (2006), 307-26 (p. 307).

Cather wrote inherently cross-linguistic texts surely strengthens the overarching argument of multilingual literary studies that American literature cannot be comfortably defined as a monolingual literature written in English and is, instead, a literature moulded by the United States' linguistic diversity and its complex language politics.

Given that Cather was not fully bilingual, her efforts to represent her 'outsider's' experience of the United States' linguistic diversity on the pages of her predominantly unilingual texts are sometimes limited by her linguistic (in)capabilities. Moreover, her tendency to borrow fragments of pre-existing foreign-language texts or narratives and silently weave them into her own work raises uncomfortable questions of cultural and linguistic appropriation. Nonetheless, her 'outsider's' perspective is still an interesting one – and, moreover, one which is worthy of analysis – because it highlights the fact that multilingualism and encounters between different languages are as much a part of the American experience for monolingual Anglophone individuals as they are for bilinguals. Read alongside the works of bilingual American authors, then, Cather's subtly cross-linguistic texts reveal that multilingualism is more deeply ingrained in the literature of the United States – even its ostensibly English-language literature – than critics have acknowledged to date.

Looking forward to how this study of Cather might be developed in relation to the study of American multilingualism more broadly, the key words in the above sentence are 'read alongside'. In order to gain the fullest picture of how the United States' literature is shaped by its multilingualism, it would be productive to study Anglophone American authors who write subtly multilingual texts (like Cather) alongside their bilingual counterparts. To cite one possible example, it would be illuminating to compare Cather's fictional representations of multilingual immigrants in the Midwest in a text such as *O Pioneers!* (1913) with that of a contemporary bilingual immigrant author such as Ole Rølvaag (1876-1931). In *Giants in the Earth* (*I de dage*) (1924), for example, Rølvaag describes the experiences of Norwegian immigrants in the Dakota Territory. What makes this text particularly interesting from a linguistic perspective is the fact that he initially wrote it in Norwegian and then helped to translate it into English.

Such a comparative study might ask: what are the similarities between Cather (a monolingual outside observer) and Rølvaag (a bilingual insider) in terms of their

depictions of how Midwestern immigrants negotiate the borders between English and their native languages (in this case Norwegian)? How do Cather's 'outsider's' depictions of bilingual phenomena such as code-switching and cross-linguistic influence compare with those of bilingual 'insider' Rølvaag? Given that Rølvaag helped to translate his novels from Norwegian to English, are there any similarities between his theory and methods of translation and Cather's? More broadly, are there any connections to be made between the multilingual literary experiments of bilingual immigrant authors and those of modernist authors like Pound and Joyce? Arguably, Cather – an author who wrote about immigrants without being one herself and who is a peripheral, transitional modernist – stands on the divide between those two groups and would, therefore, make an interesting point of comparison and connection. The sociolinguistic methodologies explored in this thesis would provide a useful framework for answering these questions.

* * * *

This thesis began with a quotation about one of Cather's most successful Scandinavian immigrants in the Midwest, *The Song of the Lark*'s Thea Kronborg. As this thesis has demonstrated, *The Song of the Lark*, although primarily a novel about learning to sing and become an artist, is also a novel about the social, cultural and artistic benefits of learning 'one or two other languages' in addition to English.²³ Learning German from Herr Wunsch as a child, singing Spanish songs with her Mexican friend Johnny and being exposed to the Swedish language in her own home arms Thea with the linguistic and cultural tools that she needs in order to become a multilingual opera star. Throughout the novel, Cather seemingly offers Thea to readers as a role model for how to engage with foreign languages. When Thea does not understand a foreign word, for example, she diligently seeks out its meaning: "“What does this mean, please? I guess it's Latin.”"²⁴ This, Cather implies, is the approach that her readers should take when they encounter an unfamiliar word in her texts.

In Thea's shadow, however, there is another quieter but nonetheless equally-talented linguist: tragic railroader and avid dictionary-user Ray Kennedy. Ray, who is

²³ 'State Laws Are Cramping', p. 148.

²⁴ Willa Cather, *The Song of the Lark*, in *Early Novels*, pp. 291-706 (p. 317). Further references given in the text.

Thea's first suitor, is a doleful figure. Painfully aware of his lack of 'schooling', he quotes trite 'newspaper phrases' in order 'to make up for it'; although he works hard, he has 'little to show for it'; he is also hopelessly 'sentimental' (p. 338). Nonetheless, Ray has one notable and, in Thea's opinion, redemptive talent:

He spoke Spanish fluently and the sunny warmth of that tongue kept him from being quite as hard as his chin, or as narrow as his popular science. (pp. 338-39)

As I have demonstrated throughout this thesis, the ability to cross the borders between English and other languages – at the right time and place, of course – is a skill to be admired in Cather's fiction (jealously so in the case of Claude Wheeler and David Gerhardt). This is because, in the world of Cather's texts, different languages have the capacity to open up new worlds of art, music and literature to those who can understand them. Indeed, Ray's ability to cross the border between English and Spanish makes him seem less 'narrow' and more interesting to Thea because it gives him access to a treasure trove of Spanish stories (p. 839). The same is true of Cather's fiction. The linguistic border crossings which underpin Cather's texts make her writing seem less 'narrow' (and, moreover, less narrowly American) because they imbue it with a plethora of different cultures, stories and voices – from Czech, Norwegian and French to German, Navajo and Chinese – whilst also connecting it to the political and artistic moment in which it was written.

Ray's ability to speak Spanish seems particularly special to Thea because it is a secret talent: his outward hardness and narrowness make it even more surprising that he can speak such a 'sunny', warm language (p. 839). In Thea's eyes, being able to cross the border between English and Spanish gives Ray hidden depths. Not always noticeable until we delve deep into the grammatical and narrative structures of her texts, Cather's multilingualism is a similarly well-concealed facet of her fiction. Whilst Cather's writing seems, on the surface, to be simple and straightforwardly English, it is, as I have demonstrated, actually constructed from complex layers of code-switching, selective reproduction, translation and cross-linguistic influence which shape its vocabulary, grammar, structure and, finally, its subject matter. Like Ray, then, Cather's texts have hidden multilingual depths. By borrowing theoretical frameworks from sociolinguistics and translation theory, this thesis has shined a critical light on these hidden depths for the first time. In doing so, it has illuminated the political and artistic

significance of Cather's understated but nonetheless pioneering experiments with crossing linguistic borders; it has revealed the surprising modernity of her cross-linguistic literary style; and, finally, it has made a case for her renewed significance within a re-evaluated multilingual American canon.

APPENDIX

Figures 1-5 and 8-10 are included with the kind permission of National Willa Cather Center Collections and Archives in Red Cloud, Nebraska. Figures 6 and 7 included with the kind permission of the Archives and Special Collections of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries.

Figure 1 - Red Cloud, NE, National Willa Cather Center Collections and Archives, Cather Family Book Collection, Willa Cather's annotations in her copy of B. L. Bowen, *Introduction to Modern French Lyrics* (Boston, MA: D. C. Heath, 1894), p. 115.

Cather has underlined and annotated relatively simple French words such as 'la fraise' and 'un hibou'. This indicates that, although Cather was reading fairly complex French texts, her basic French vocabulary was limited.

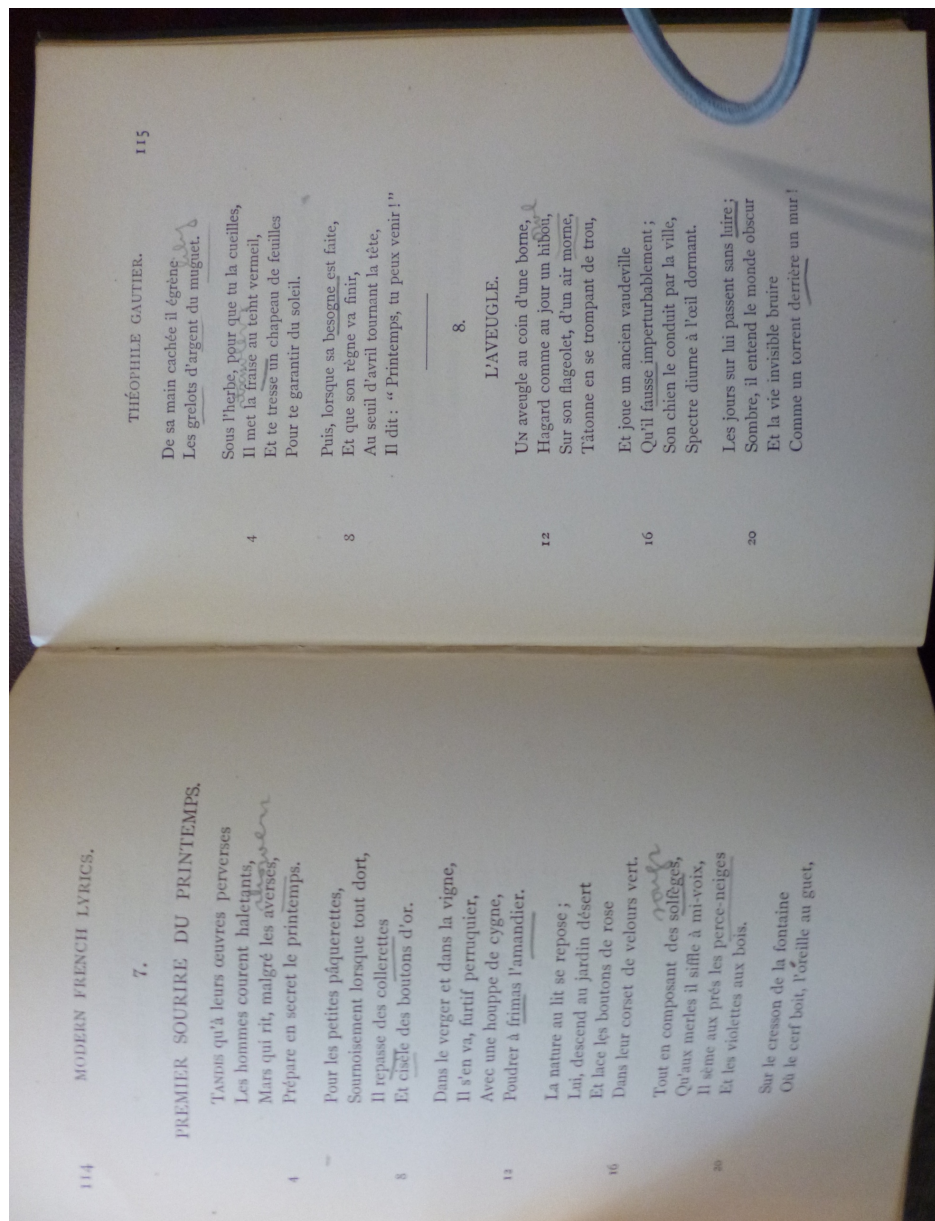


Figure 2 - Red Cloud, NE, National Willa Cather Center Collections and Archives, Cather Family Book Collection, Willa Cather's annotations in her copy of Victor Hugo, 'La Chute' from *Les Misérables*, ed. by H. C. O. Huss (Boston, MA: D. C. Heath, 1907), pp. 54-55.

Figures 2 and 3 (overleaf) reveal the dictionary work, annotation and effort that was necessary for Cather to read French.

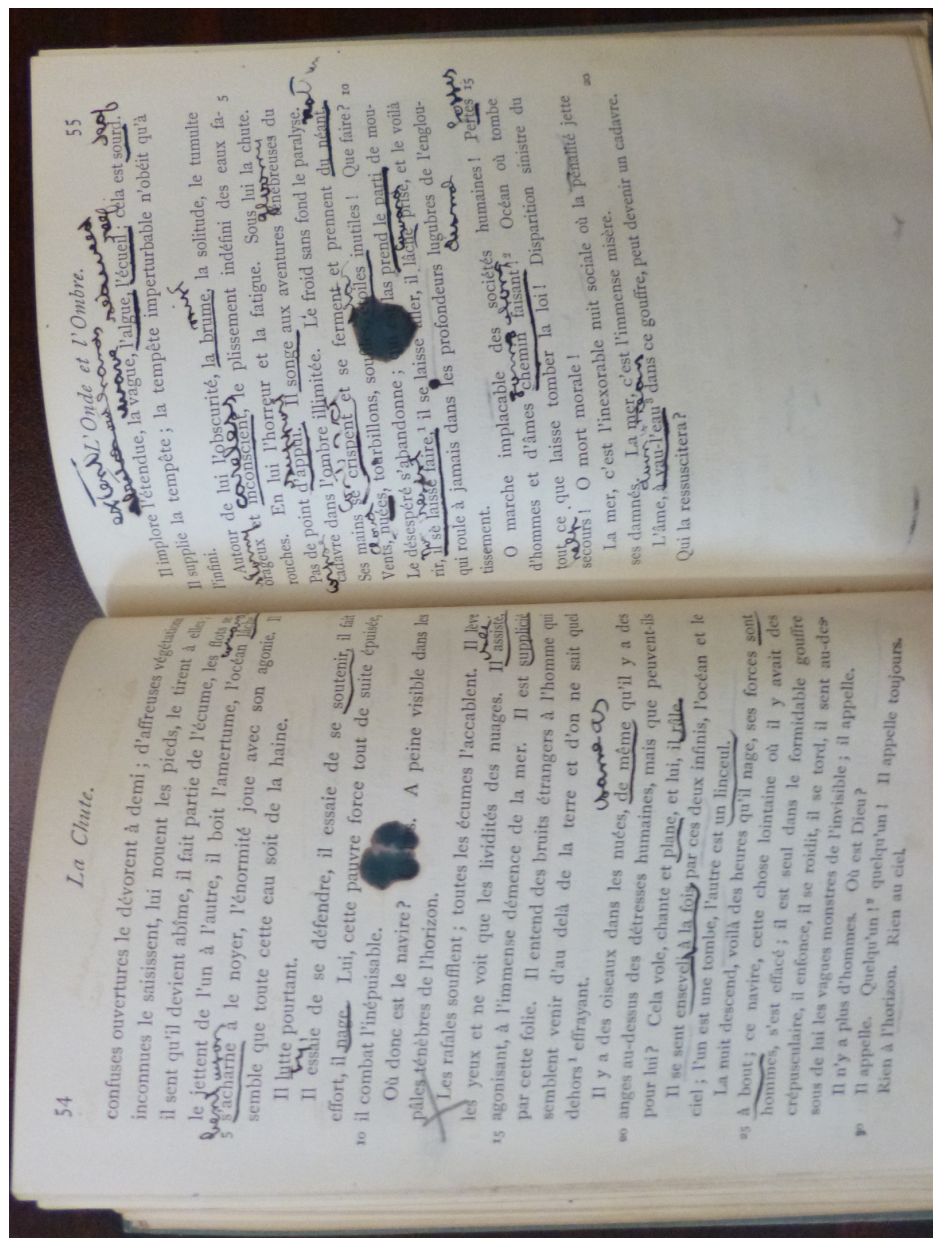


Figure 3 - Red Cloud, NE, National Willa Cather Center Collections and Archives, Cather Family Book Collection, Willa Cather's annotations in her copy of Victor Hugo, 'La Chute' from *Les Misérables*, ed. by H. C. O. Huss (Boston, MA: D. C. Heath, 1907), pages lining the back cover.

Cather made extensive lists of words that she did not recognise on the blank pages of her French-language books.

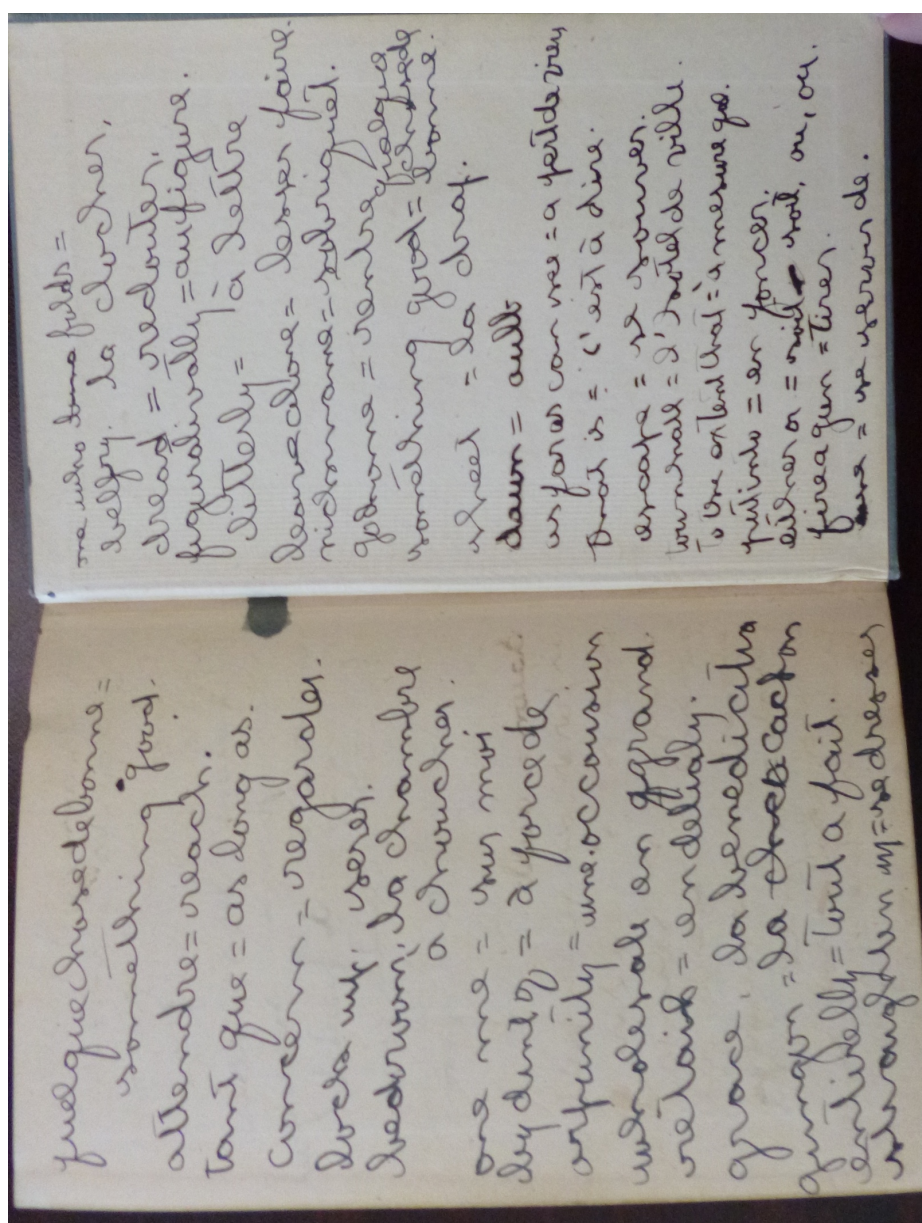


Figure 4 - Red Cloud, NE, National Willa Cather Center Collections and Archives, Cather Family Book Collection, Willa Cather's annotations in her copy of B. L. Bowen, *Introduction to Modern French Lyrics* (Boston, MA: D. C. Heath, 1894), p. 31.

Cather's notes on how to pronounce 'o' in French.

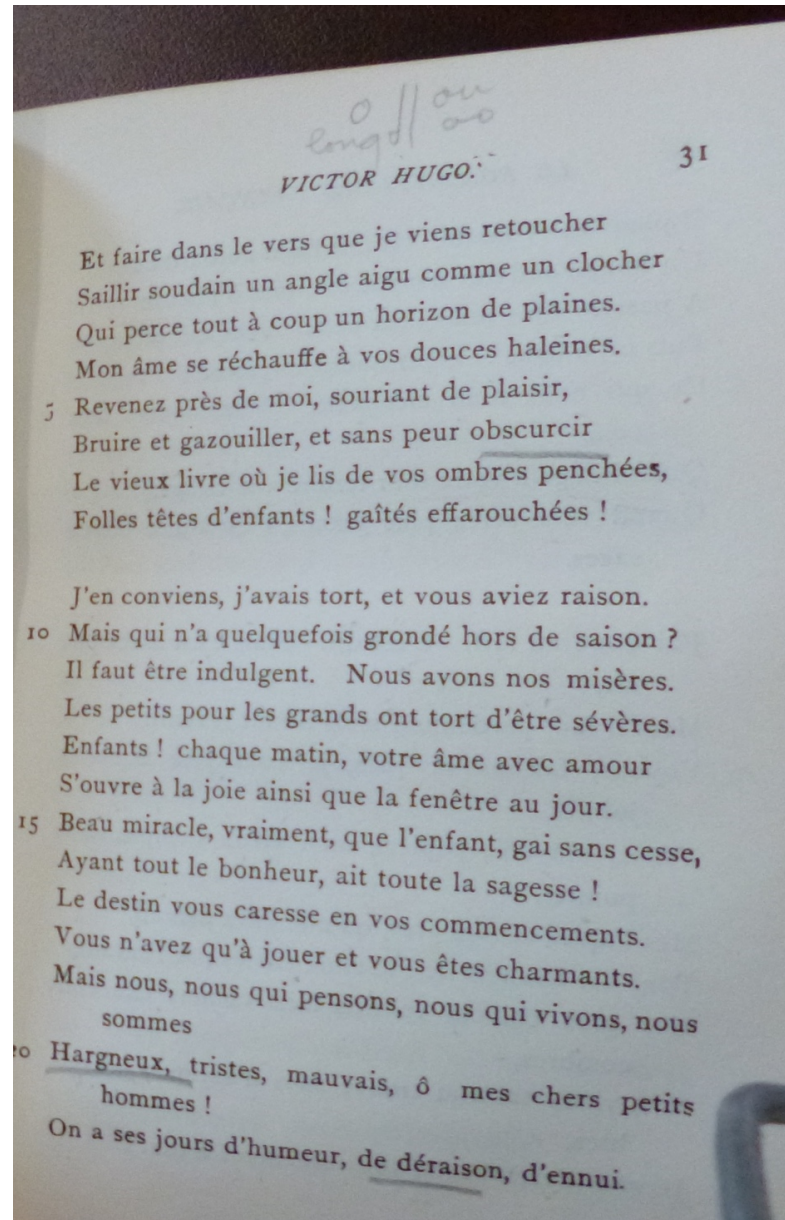


Figure 5 - Red Cloud, NE, National Willa Cather Center Collections and Archives, Cather Family Book Collection, Willa Cather's annotations in her copy of Thomas Frederick Crane, ed., *Le Romantisme Français: A Selection from Writers of the French Romantic School* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1886), p. 249.

'Mateo Falcone' was one of the stories that Cather read at university. She marked set reading for her classes with the word 'This'.

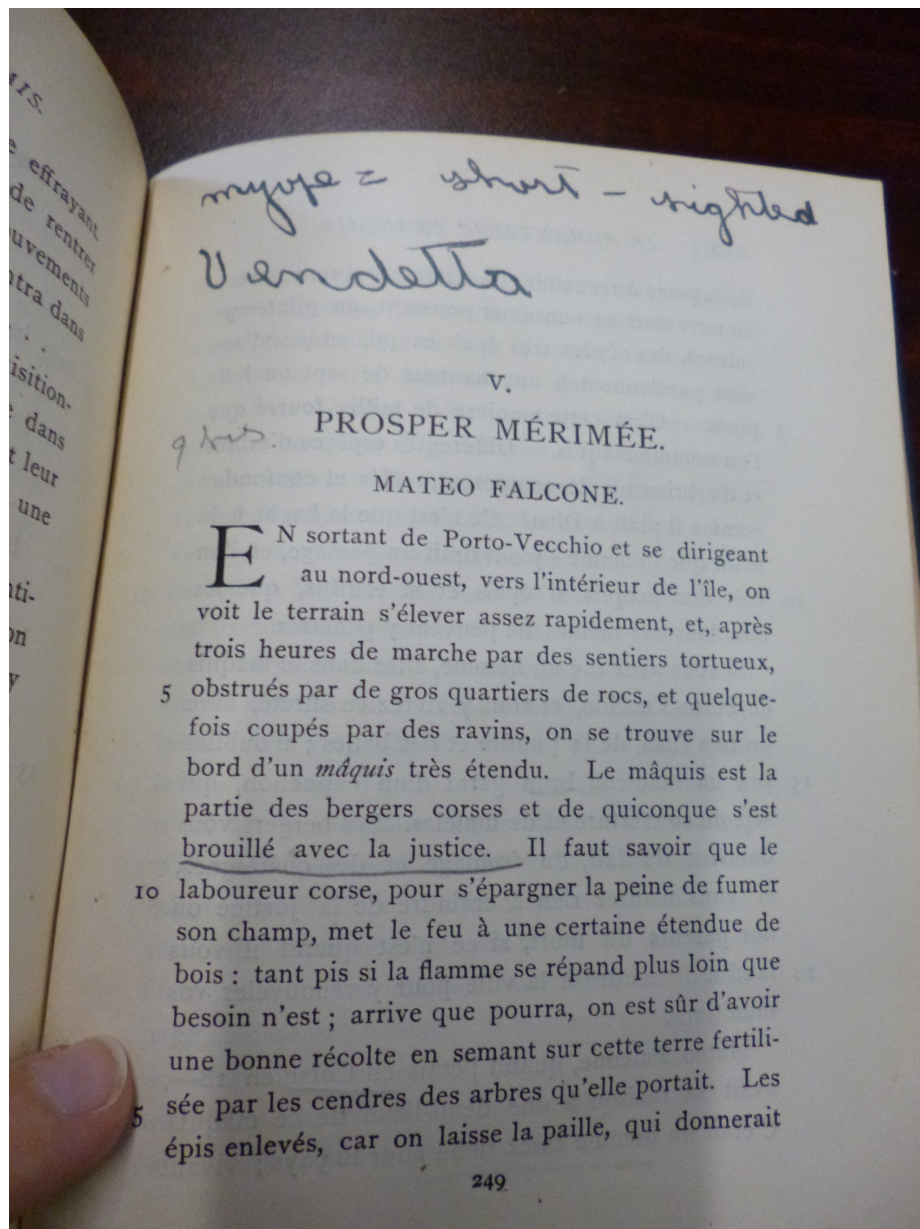


Figure 6 - Lincoln, NE, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries, Archives and Special Collections, MS 350 Charles E. Cather Collection, Box 4 Fol. 8 Composition Book 1924-1926(?).

Cather and Edith Lewis's shared notebook showing the list of useful Spanish phrases that Lewis jotted down during their trip to the Southwest in 1925. Some of these phrases appear in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*.

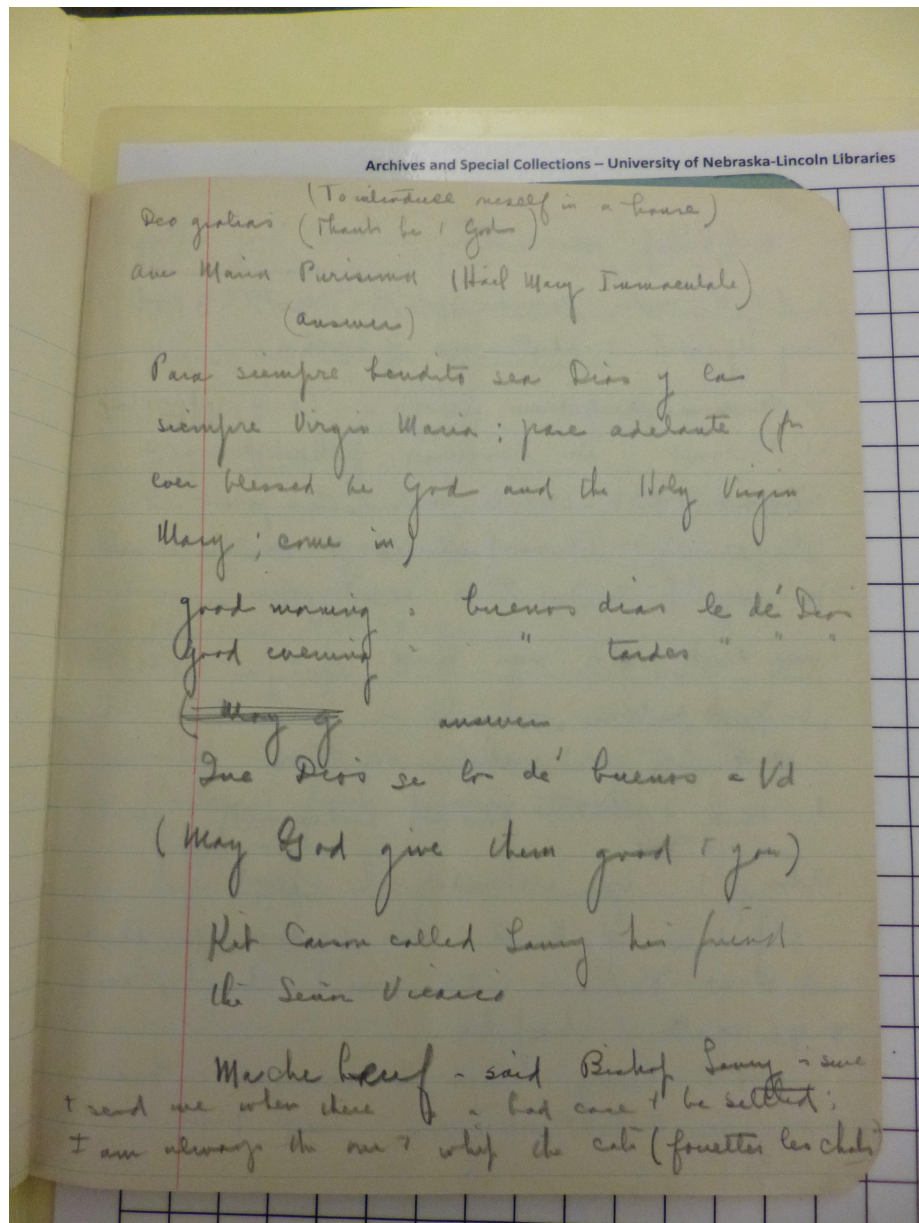


Figure 7 - Lincoln, NE, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries, Archives and Special Collections, MS 77 Philip L. and Helen Cather Southwick Collection, Box 1 Fol. 14 *Shadows on the Rock* 1931, manuscript, pp. 35-73 (p. 72).

The French-language story of Saint Edmond has been cut from a pre-existing publication and pasted into the *Shadows on the Rock* typescript.

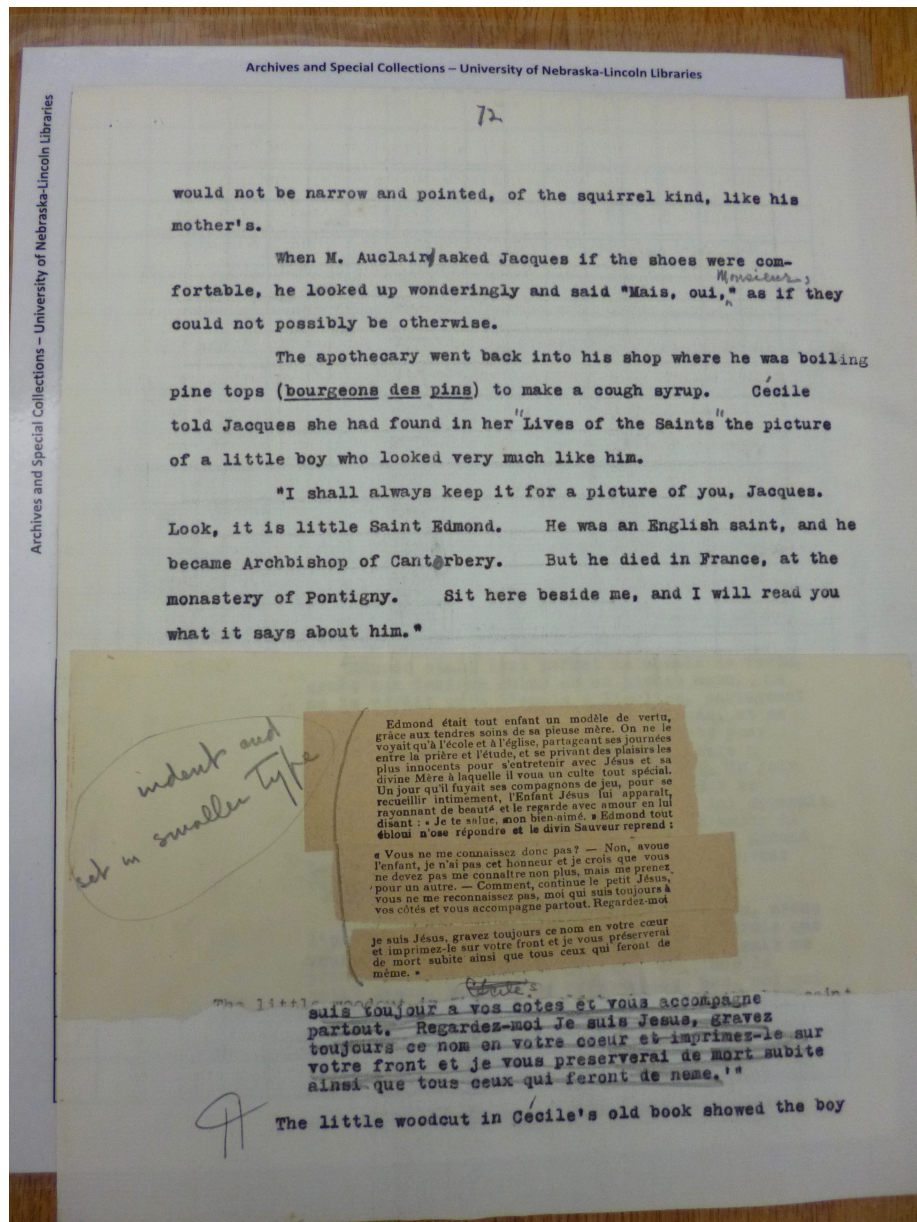


Figure 8 - Red Cloud, NE, National Willa Cather Center Collections and Archives, Cather Family Book Collection, Willa Cather's annotations on 'À la Malibran' in her copy of *Le Romantisme Français: A Selection from Writers of the French Romantic School*, ed. by Thomas Frederick Crane (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1880), p. 157.

Cather's annotation 'This' indicates that 'À la Malibran' was set reading for one of her university French classes.

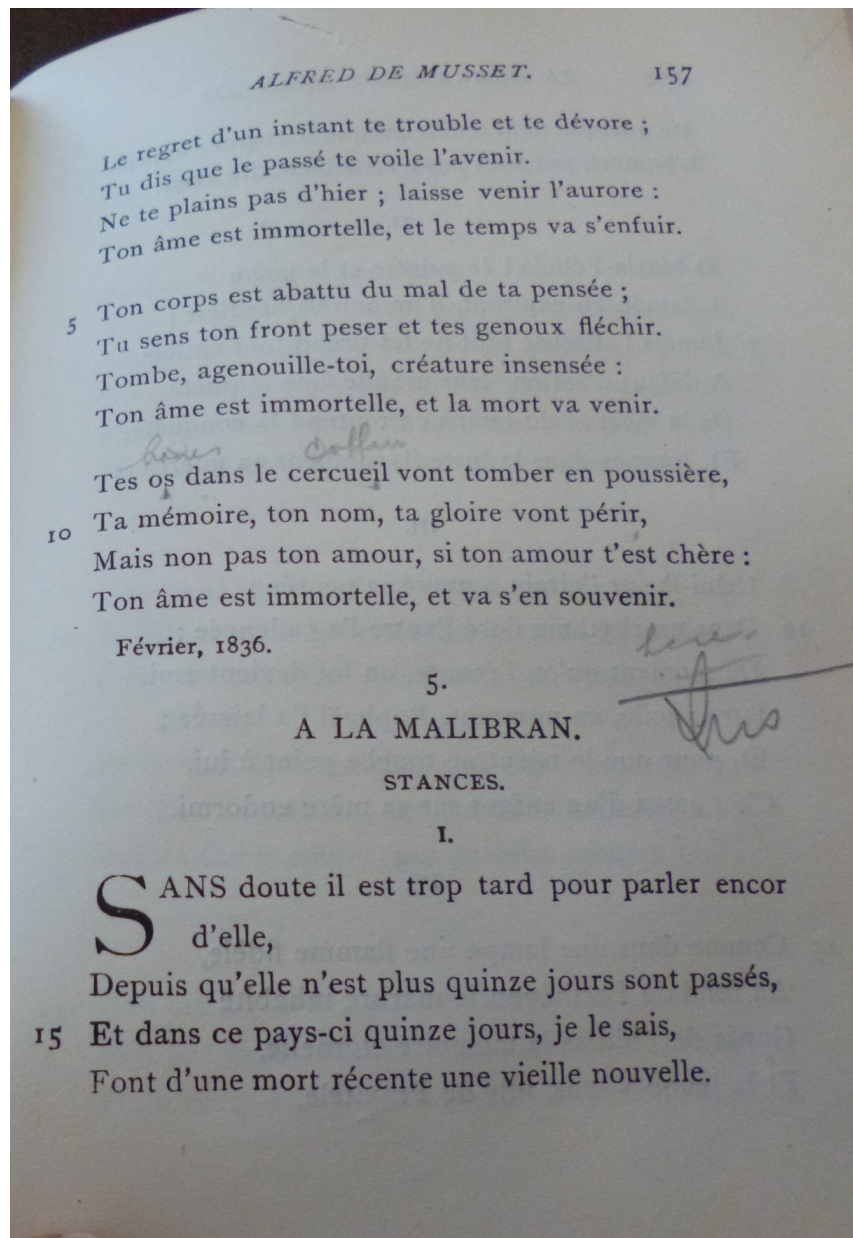


Figure 9 - Red Cloud, NE, National Willa Cather Center Collections and Archives, Cather Family Book Collection, Willa Cather's annotations on 'À la Malibran' in her copy of *Le Romantisme Français: A Selection from Writers of the French Romantic School*, ed. by Thomas Frederick Crane (New York: G. P. Putnam), pp. 164-65.

At university (1891-1895), Cather annotated the section of de Musset's poem that she later translated for inclusion in her 1897 *Courier* article.

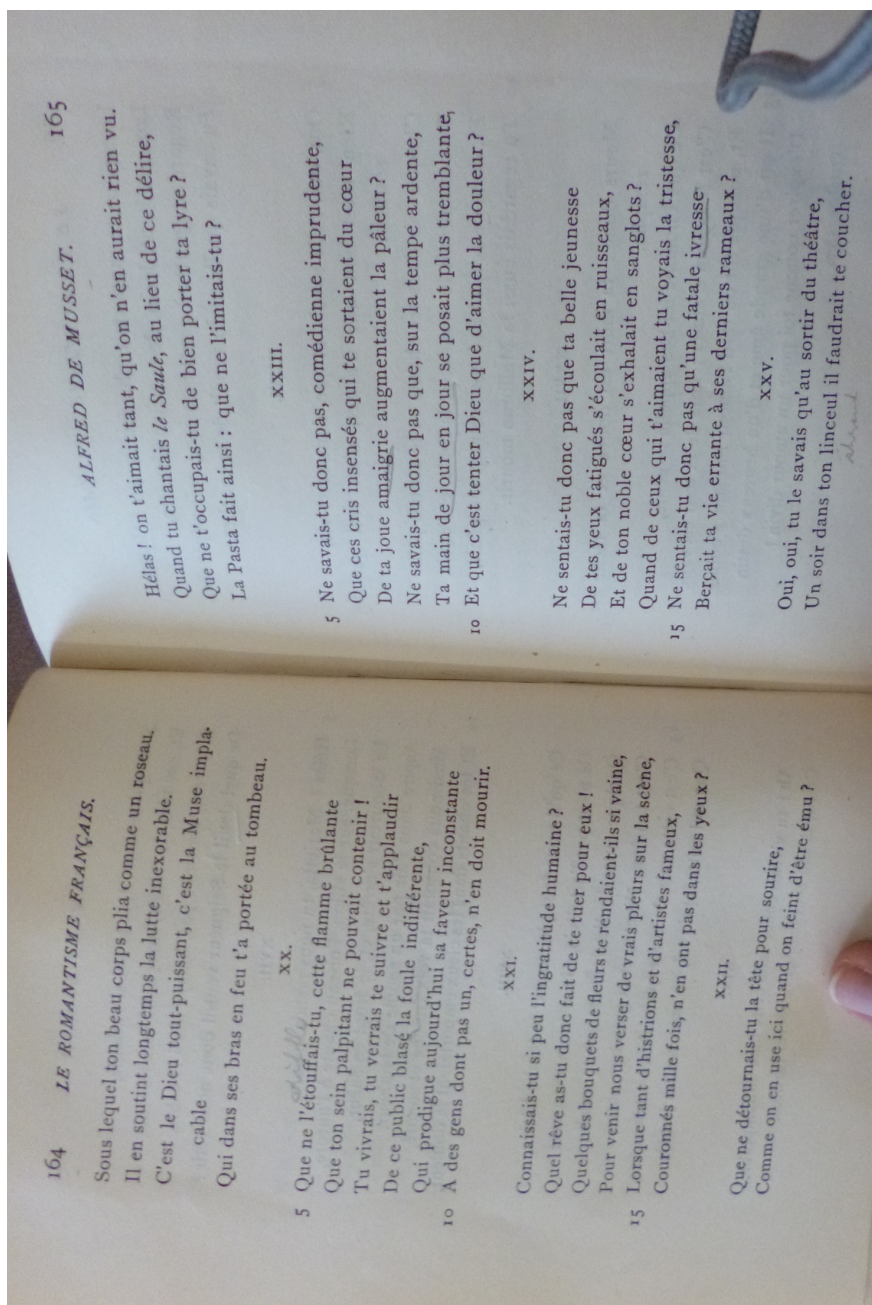
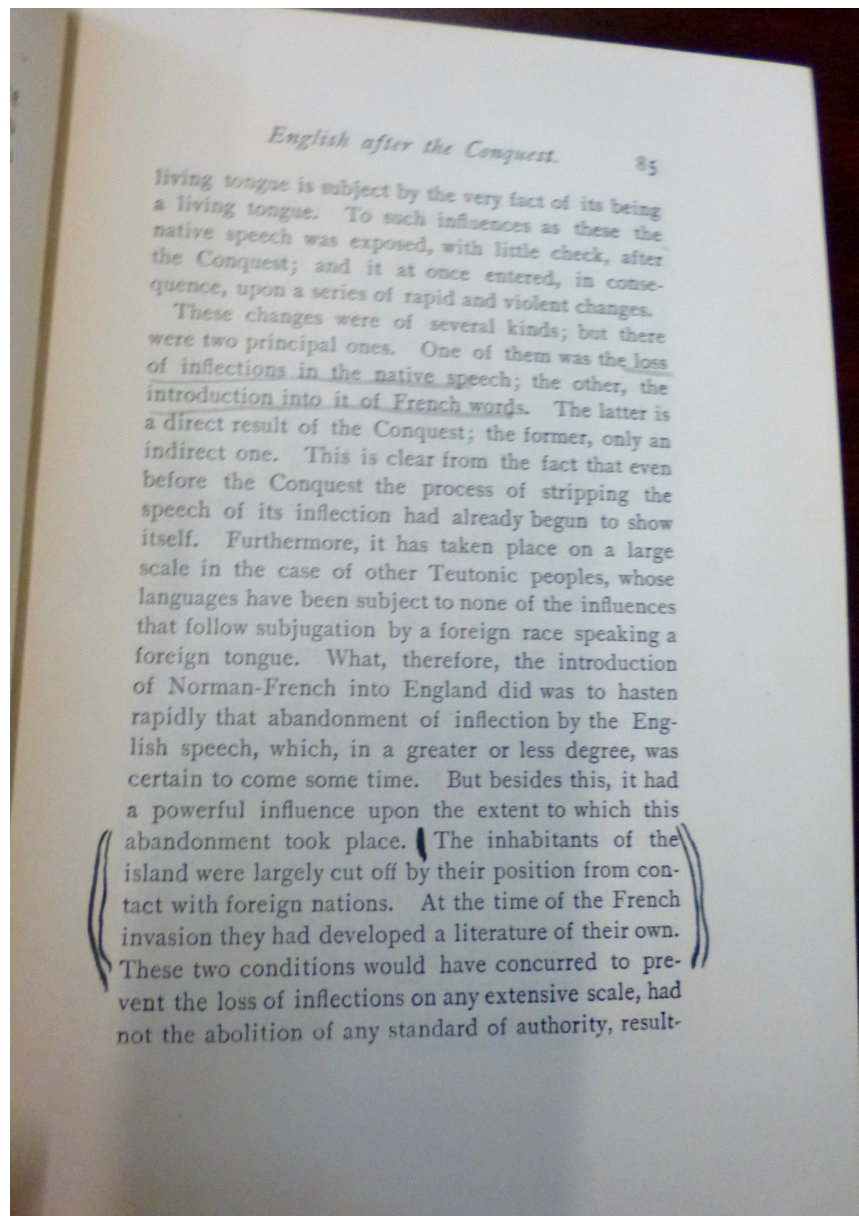


Figure 10 - Red Cloud, NE, National Willa Cather Center Collections and Archives, Cather Family Book Collection, Willa Cather's annotations in her copy of T. R. Lounsbury, *History of the English Language*, rev. edn (New York: Henry Holt, 1894), p. 85.

Cather has underlined Lounsbury's point about the 'introduction' of 'French words into' the English language, revealing her interest in cross-linguistic etymologies.



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