

# Willa Cather's Notion on Traditional American Women in the Novel *My Antonia*: An Approach of Genetic Structuralism

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**Abstract**—This article discusses the traditional American woman initiated by Willa Cather in the novel *My Antonia*. It was written in 1913 which describes the social conditions of the frontiers in the farming areas of the American West in Nebraska, Hastings, Black Hawk, Lincoln, and others. Frontiers generally still maintain traditional values in the survival of their families, especially Nebraska. The literary study method used in this article is the Genetic Structuralism Approach which emphasizes the sociological analysis of literature based on the structural meaning of literature and literary genetics. This approach is very appropriate to be used to find universal values documented in literary works which are termed *vision du monde* or world views. This research found Willa Cather's imaginative ideas about traditional American women in the novel *My Antonia* which includes aspects of performance, position, role, identity, and perspective. Traditional women's performances have the same appearance and clothing as traditional women in general in America. The traditional position of a woman is as the wife of her husband and the mother of her children. The role of traditional women is to take care of the household and to maintain the continuity of family life. Traditional women's identity is a housewife. The perspective of traditional women is to devote all their souls and bodies for family happiness, domestic harmony, and maintaining good relations with neighbors. Then Willa Cather's notion of traditional American women is full domestication and partial domestication.

**Index Terms**—America, novel *My Antonia*, traditional women, Willa Cather's notion

## I. INTRODUCTION

Europeans since the 1600s from the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and others came to the Northern American continent which is currently the United States and Canada. They are known as the first wave of immigrants and continued with the second wave of immigrants in the 1700s from Norway, Bohemian, Sweden, Denmark, Russia, and others. One of the interesting phenomena in the complexity of American society is the history of the lives of American women. One typical American woman who has a strategic role in ushering in the journey of American culture is traditional women. They have been around since the arrival of the British and Europeans in America in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. They participated in clearing agricultural land in the colonies, contributed to the American independence movement, took part in supporting the abolitionist movement, participated in post-civil war national reconciliation, and formed the order of domestication of women in the American family. Many people are interested in knowing the typical phenomenological traditional women.

The arrival of the first wave of immigrants in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the second in the 18<sup>th</sup> century also involved women. One well-known women's group is puritan women who still maintain their traditional values. One typical notion of traditional women is to make the household a place to devote themselves. Household life which is termed as the domestication of women is seen as a space of life in achieving happiness. They obey the natural nature of women,

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namely to marry, take care of the household, have a husband, give birth, care for and raise their children. This traditional American women's notion is typical of performance, roles, ideas, principles, and outlook on life.

Two views are controversial in addressing the presence of this traditional woman. The first view is those who appreciate the role of traditional women's domestication in passing on moral values to American reform women or New American Women. The second view is that of radical feminists who see the pattern of traditional women's domestication as an obstacle to the American feminist movement, thereby slowing down the achievement of women's emancipation goals. The difference between the two views is minimized in this study through an explanation by an American woman writer named Willa Cather on the idea of her imagination towards traditional American women objectively and scientifically. The objectivity of traditional American women can be traced to the genetic documentation of one of Willa Cather's novels is *My Antonia*, which she wrote around 1913.

The documentation of traditional women in Willa Cather's novel *My Antonia* is traced genetically through Willa Cather's background knowledge or experience in perceiving traditional American women and exploring the reality of traditional women's social life in the history of American society. The appropriate literary research method used in explaining the documentation of these literary works is the Genetic Structuralism Approach. Based on this background, the researchers compiled the title of this article, namely *Willa Cather's Notion of Traditional American Women in the Novel My Antonia: An Approach of Genetic Structuralism*.

## II. LITERARY REVIEW ON TRADITIONAL WOMEN

The system of traditional women's values and culture is a matriarchal order that places the advantage of women's biological elements as mothers. The roles and functions of women are placed on their natural capacities, both physically and psychologically. According to Fromm (2011), matriarchal values are in line with the passive surrender of women to become mothers based on natural aspects and biological benefits. Spiritual, logical, and rational aspects are considered not too important for women because these aspects are more absolute in male or patriarchal values. Fromm's view meant that by fully dedicating a woman's self as a good mother, this could atone for her sins and mistakes as taught in religious myths.

According to Yeni's (2021) view, traditional women have a natural relationship with men in terms of roles and positions. The role of women is positioned as producers in the life system, while men act as exploiters. For example, in the reproductive function, women give birth as a result of the exploitation of men. It causes sexual exploitation of women by men. Traditional society according to Sapiro (1986) generally adheres to patriarchal values so it is prone to injustice in the gender relations between men and women. Patriarchy is the basis for justifying male dominance over women in various aspects of life such as family, politics, economics, law, culture, and others. Gender justice can be achieved if patriarchy is transformed into equality by eliminating all forms of male superiority over women.



Figure 1. Portrait of a Traditional Elite Woman in the Southern American Colony, Virginia, Who Maintained the European Ideal of Women as Housewives, Arranging Home Accessories, and Managing Slaves  
(Source: <https://www.google.com/search?q=traditional+women+of+America&biw=1366&bih=625&xsrf>. Accessed on June 1, 2022 at 00<sup>11</sup> p.m.)

Traditional women by several writers in 21<sup>st</sup> century are often abbreviated as tradwife. According to Hunt (2020), a tradwife is often seen as a woman who still maintains conventional gender roles. Typical of these women are not working, depending on their husbands, taking care of household needs, caring for babies and children. The main her works are cooking, preparing food, washing, cleaning, and so on, while her husband works, earns a living, collects money, and fulfills family expenses. This pattern of life according to Elsworth (2019) dominated the life of American society until the 1920s. After this period, there was a change in the order of life for American society, namely the wife

began to actively work in the office helping her husband take care of business and real estate, while the children were taken care of by a maid at home. A woman's dependence on her husband gradually decreases to create the typical modern woman who leaves her family for days to work. The image of men as the main breadwinners of the family is no longer valid today.

Based on all the explanations above, researchers can understand that the definition of a traditional woman is a woman who devotes all her physical and psychological potential to household life in fulfilling her duties and responsibilities as a wife to her husband and mother to her children. Her main duties are cooking, preparing food, washing, cleaning, caring for and educating her children. This definition is used to discuss Willa Cather's notion of traditional American women in the novel *My Antonia* which includes aspects of performance, position, role, identity, and perspective.

### III. METHODOLOGY

This research methodology is the conceptual foundation of the genetic structuralism approach which researchers' term as literary genetic structuralism. Referring to the relationship between sociology and literature, literature can be seen as not autonomous because literary works do not appear suddenly, but through a sociological process. The view that literature is social documentation has become the rationale for literary experts such as Goldmann (1981) regarding literary genetics. He thinks that the origins of literary works come from the structure of society and the results of human adaptation to their environment. Based on this thought, the researchers conclude that there are three main elements in the research method of Genetic Structuralism, namely the literary structure, the background of the author's social life in the literary works, and the social reality absorbed by the author. It indicates that the author's idea is to become a publication medium on social media that can influence public opinion (Arafah & Hasyim 2019).

The process of creating literature begins with social reality that is impregnated by the author, then that reality is processed according to the author's imagination, then the author produces creativity in the form of literary works, and finally transforms into a world view that carries universal values. According to Abbas (2021), the author's imagination is built from a reality not a dream because the author produces literary works in a conscious state. The social awareness of the author in the literary works is the basis for the premise that literary works are born from a sociological process. An author represents a number of hopes and desires of the people around him which are poured into the form of literary works. Indeed, literary works are not a series of real events directly in society because they were born from an imagination, but contain parables of ongoing conditions. Through fictional characters, an author seeks to voice certain groups of people. Authors cannot be separated from their fictional facts and social facts (Damayanti et al., 2021). So even though the work is fiction, it represents a connection with the community group in which the work was born as its genetics as stated by Guerin (1979) in his writing *Genetic Approaches*.

Many problems that arise in human life as a social reality that takes place in a society within a certain period of time. This reality can take the form of human action in various forms such as feminism, emancipation, slavery, romance, colonialism, oppression, religious conflict, resistance, and others. Massive human actions have the potential to become issues in aspects of culture, politics, economy, religion, education, love, others, which in the history documents them as group, ethnic, and national identities. Identity is considered as a social fact attached to a particular society and then documented by the author in literary works, such as Willa Cather documents the identity of American prairie women in her imaginative works. It means that fictional reality can be considered as historical documentation of certain events (Mutmainnah et al., 2022).

Literary works are created through an author's imaginative process that geniusly transforms facts into fiction. Authors in a conscious state of creating literary works even need years of contemplation in order to absorb a reality that is happening to them or events that are developing in the surrounding community. This reality is seen by the author as an aspiration that grows and develops in society as Goldmann (1977) once said that the author is naturally a member of society who carries out social interactions for a long time. The world view or *vision du monde* of an author does not appear suddenly, but takes place slowly to form a high quality literary work. The world view referred to by Goldman is the collective view of society in certain situations. This collectivity is considered as awareness in voicing the whole ideas, aspirations, and feelings of various social groups. Atmaja (2009) states that an author creates literary works is not personal wish, but for the benefit of his social group. The author does not represent himself in constructing his fictitious imagination, but there is an ideology that represents the collectivity of the social consciousness of the people which is fought by author. Goldman identified this ideology as a world view or *vision du monde*.

Goldman's view (Damono, 1979) on the Genetic Structuralism Approach is an attempt to combine structural elements (intrinsic aspects) of literary works with sociological elements of literature (extrinsic aspects). Goldman emphasizes that literary works are still fictitious realities, but the inspiration for these realities has sources from direct ideas and indirect ideas. The direct idea comes from the author's knowledge, while the indirect idea comes from empirical facts that are adhered to by certain groups of people. These two ideas are considered as the genetics of the literary work. The combination of literary works with the author's background knowledge and empirical facts of certain groups of people will form an objective view as universal values in the meaning of the literary work.

Genetic Structuralism Approach can be said as a method of analyzing literary structure which is carried out dialectically in order to trace the origins of the literary work. According to Ratna (2015), world view or *division du monde* is an expression of the social and physical collectivity of society in a long historical journey and it is

documented in major literary works. Only great literary works are able to accommodate various problems in people's lives as universal values. Literary works that inequality have limited capacity in recording social phenomena and are temporary in nature so that they are unable to accommodate a world view that is so broad and universal even though literary works can play a role in creating harmony in society (Rahman & Weda, 2018). The task of literary researchers and readers is to dismantle this world view as the origin of literary works or literary genetics imagined by the author through the research method of literary genetic structuralism.

The data source of this research refers to the data emphasized in the Genetic Structuralism Approach method, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data is the object of study in the form of literary works as in general literary research, while secondary data is a number of information containing the background of the author's social life and social reality as the genetics of the literary work being studied. The primary data for this research is the novel *My Antonia* by Willa Cather in 1913 which was published by Signet Classic, New York in 2014. Then the secondary data for this research is all information related to the genetics of literary works which are the object of research, namely (1) social background and Willa Cather's life experiences as a writer; and (2) the history of traditional American women as a reality of social life.

Research data processing refers to the research formulation of genetic structuralism referred to by Endraswara (2013). The data is processed into two main parts, namely the first is the structural meaning of the novel *My Antonia* as an intrinsic aspect of literature, and the second is traditional women in the social reality of American society as an extrinsic aspect of literature. The processed results of these two data produce a world view or *division du monde* in the form of Willa Cather's notion of traditional American women in the novel *My Antonia*. The construction of research data processing is described in the following chart:

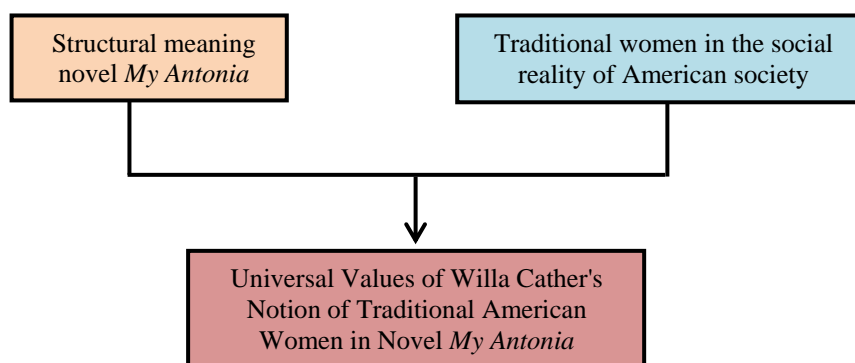


Chart 1. Reconstruction of Research Data Processing

In the research chart above, the relationship between universal values that occur in the history of a nation and literary stories is seen as the ultimate goal of research on the sociology of literature. The researcher is of the view that the process of creating the author's imagination is from fact to fiction, then the scientific study of literature goes through the reverse process from fiction to fact. It shows that the documentation of facts in fiction is an important relationship to be elaborated in the sociology of literature as a result of scientific research as well as being a scientific responsibility of a researcher towards readers. Based on this explanation, it can be concluded that Literary Genetic Structuralism is a literary research method that emphasizes the analysis of the relationship between literature and social reality. Literary work as an imaginative product is considered to have genetics which is the origin of the emergence of literary ideas in constructing fictional narratives. Fictional ideas of writers are absorbed from social facts in society. Analysis of literary works in this research method must be able to reveal the origins of the structural elements of literature in the author and the discourses that occur in society.

#### IV. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The essence of the results of this research is elucidated into three parts, namely the structural meaning of the novel *My Antonia*, traditional women in the social reality of American society, and Willa Cather's notion of traditional American women in the novel *My Antonia*.

##### A. The Structural Meaning of the Novel *My Antonia*

The structural aspects of the novel *My Antonia* which include characterization, setting, plot, and theme are summarized in one description called the structural meaning of the novel *My Antonia*. This novel consists of five volumes, namely volume one entitled *The Shimerdas* with nineteen parts, volume two entitled *The Hired Girls* with fourteen parts, volume three entitled *Lena Lingard* with four parts, volume four entitled *The Pioneer Woman's Story* with four parts, and volume five titled *Cuzak's Boy* with three parts. The whole story in this novel uses a mixed plot, namely backward plot and forward plot.

The social setting of this novel takes place in the lives of multi-cultural rural communities, complex urban communities, and highly educated metropolitan communities. Rural people in Hastings live as farmers, cattle breeders and cultivators. They come from various cultural groups, including English, Bohemian, and Russian. They were generally not rich people like Mr. Shimerda's family from the Bohemian family, but there were also wealthy farmers like Jim's grandfather from the English community. The urban community in Black Hawk is rich people who employ girls from surrounding rural areas such as Mrs. Harling which employs Antonia, Yulka, Lena, Tiny and others. For example, Antonia works at the Harling family's home and earns US\$ 3 per week, "*Mrs. Harling finally agreed to pay three dollars a week for Antonia's service – good wages in those days – and to keep her in shoes*" (Cather, 2014, p. 109). The life of the people in the city is also very complex with various professions such as businessmen, traders, artists, dancers, and others. The metropolitan community in the City of Lincoln is an educated people who received the higher education of James Burden and Gaston Cleric.

The time setting for the telling of this novel ranges from 1890 to 1922. This time range is taken from Jim Burden's meeting with Tiny Soderball in Salt Lake City in 1908. At that time Tiny Soderball had left Black Hawk town for ten years, which means around 1898, the same year when Jim continued on the study in the City of Lincoln. Jim lived in Black Hawk Town for five significant years from 1893 to 1898. Previously Jim had lived in Hastings for three significant years from 1890 to 1893. Then Jim Burden's reunion with Antonia was when he was nineteen years old which means 1899. After that Jim met Tiny Soderball in Salt Lake City in 1908, "*After nearly ten years in the Klondike, Tiny returned, with considerable fortune to live in San Francisco. I met her in Salt Lake City in 1908*" (Cather, 2014, p. 207). Jim had promised to return to meet Antonia since the last meeting in 1899. Twenty years later, Jim managed to meet Antonia in Hastings, which means that the event occurred in 1922. Their meeting was at the same time the end of the novel *My Antonia* and at that time, Jim's age about 42 years. Between 1890 and 1922 there was a massive migration from rural areas to urban areas, especially the younger generation. This migration occurs because they are tempted by the life of a rich, free, and glamorous urban community.

The tendency of telling the novel *My Antonia* about the life relations between the older generation and the younger generation is the survival of the tradition of women's domestication in the midst of the emergence of new values that are more free and open. Old generation characters such as Grandmother, Grandfather, Mrs. Shimerda, and Mr. Shimerda shows their peace in family life. Having a household is the ideal and purpose of their life. The idealization of women's domestication traditions underwent a shift when village girls like Antonia came to the city who was tempted by wealth and freedom. After experiencing various dilemmas, problems, and decades of destruction in the city, Antonia finally returns to the village to become the wife of her husband and the mother of her children and live the life of a happy farmer. Based on this phenomenon, one of the themes of this novel is the dilemma of maintaining the traditional values of American women in the midst of the renewal era.

#### *B. Traditional Women in the Social Reality of American Society*

Women in the northern colonies such as Massachusetts, Plymouth, Rhode Island, and others held strong spiritual values known as Puritanists. They stay at home carrying out routine tasks in the kitchen while educating their children to be pious by reading the Bible, teaching their children ethics and morality. The Puritans were a group of reformers of Christianity who wanted to restore the purity of Christianity, but they experienced persecution in England. They then left Scotland and fled to Leiden, Holland, but they were treated unfairly by the Calvinists so they left Holland and continued on to the American mainland by boarding the Mayflower. Cineotta (1992) stated that they numbered 140 men, women and children, but only 102 managed to arrive in mainland America on November 21, 1620.

The group of early Puritanist women who survived arriving in Provincetown, Massachusetts consisted of 18 family women, 7 women children, and 4 girls, while 73 were men. Shortly before landing on Cape Cod, New England, they formulated the main ideas which were the foundations of a constitution called the Mayflower Compact. According to Francis (1981), this idea aspires to the formation of government and legal institutions that are built on constitutional laws that treat everyone fairly and equally. This idea of justice and equality became the spirit of traditional American women in the northern colonies which was adopted from puritanical teachings. The number of European women who came with their families to the American colonies increased after the great migration in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century.



Figure 2. Portrait of Puritan Women in the Northern American Colony, Massachusetts and a Young Family Pair in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Plymouth (Source: <https://www.google.com/search?q=traditional+women+of+America&biw=1366&bih=625&xsrf>. Accessed on June 1, 2022 at 00<sup>21</sup> p.m.)

The discussion on notion of traditional American women is rather complex because of the various backgrounds of religion, culture, traditions, teachings, models, and social classes inherited from Europe, as has been explained regarding the historical aspects of the arrival of European women in the American colonies. They come from various ethnic groups, and nations. Researchers in this part generalize notions of traditional American women which are considered to reflect various types of traditional women as housewives who also prepare their daughters to marry and teach them to manage the household well.

Typical of traditional American women as women of the house that have been awakened since the early colonial period of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the period of the second wave of immigrants from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The position of women as wives and their roles as housewives was further strengthened when Victorian values dominated women's discourse in England and Europe throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially among the elite. Victoria (1819-1901) was Queen of England who reigned for 64 years from 1847 to 1901 and died at the age of 82 in Osborne. Queen Victoria according to Rolka (2005) was nicknamed the Grandmother of European nations because of her descendants who ruled in the Kingdoms of Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Greece, and Russia. At that time according to historians, the British Empire controlled almost a third of the world which stretched from Europe, America, Africa, South and Southeast Asia, Australia, the Pacific Islands and Oceania.

The influence of Victorian values also has a broad impact on the traditional American women order as Djajanegara (2000) said that American society is dominated by descendants of the British. This resulted in the cultural and traditional ties between the American people and the British being so strong that they are often referred to as the Anglo-American nation. The traditional values of women sparked by Victoria include women having to maintain their chastity, women having to be religious, women having to appear feminine, women having to be passive, women having to be diligent in taking care of their family and household, women having to maintain their domestic life, and so on. These values have an impact on the attitudes of traditional American women who tend to be passive, inferior, dependent, and resigned. Victorian values also influenced traditional American women's views. According to Olsen (1950), the perspective of traditional American society is that a girl's education is sufficient to be good at reading, writing, and calculating. Skills that suit her are sewing, cooking, babysitting, music and art. All education and skills obtained by women are intended to support their roles as wives and housewives.

### C. Willa Cather's Notion of Traditional American Women in the Novel *My Antonia*

Willa Cather's imagination of traditional American women is found in various fictional characters in the novel *My Antonia*, but this research article only describes two female characters, namely Grandmother and Mrs. Shimerda. These two fictional characters are social documentation of traditional women in the social reality of American based on Willa Cather's observations and life experiences over the years in Red Cloud, Nebraska, Illinois, and a number of frontier farming areas in the central and western regions of America. According to Prahl (2019), Willa Cather was born into a farming family in 1873 and experienced traditional life in Back Creek Valley, Virginia. From the age of nine to his teens, she followed her parents to live in a frontier slum in Nebraska. This background in social life, according to Pallardi (2022), also influenced the notion of traditional women in Willa Cather's imagination, as she illustrated in Grandmother and Mrs. Shimerda in the novel *My Antonia* in 1913.

#### (a). Grandmother

Grandmother was usually name used by Jim and the rest of the Hastings farms and the town of Black Hawk used for Mrs. Burden. She was Jim Qualey's grandmother who raised him from the age of ten when his parents died in Virginia.

Grandmother was in her fifties when Jim first came to her house. By the end of the story when Jim was in his forties, she was still living in his eighties. She was tall and slender, had brown skin, black hair, still had good teeth, was smiling, affectionate, and good at getting along with her neighbors, "*A tall woman, with wrinkled brown skin and black hair, stood looking down at me; I knew that she must be my grandmother*" (Cather, 2014, p. 13). Appearance and clothing are the same as traditional women in general in America. Even though she was a successful farmer with an affluent life, she still looked the same as the ordinary people in Hastings village and was friendly to everyone.

Her position as the wife of Mr. Burden or Grandfather, Mrs. Burden plays herself as a good and ideal housewife as a traditional middle class woman. Her role is to manage the conditions in the house and social relations with the surrounding environment, such as managing family spending money, cleaning, preparing food, taking care of clothes, managing the yard, and maintaining social communication with neighbors. She is also good at organizing and leading the workers in his house like Jake Marpole, Otto Fuchs, and others. They are Bohemian people who come from the far-east looking for work in the American West, especially in Nebraska (Cather, 2014).

Jimmy's father named Mr. Qualey is the son of Mrs. Burden or Grandmother so Jimmy Qualey is her grandson. Relative background from his father, his full name is Jimmy Qualey Burden. In Jimmy's view, his grandmother had successfully portrayed her identity as a good housewife. As the wife of Mr. Burden, she is able to please her husband in building a harmonious and peaceful family and household together. Then as the mother of Mr. Qualey, she also succeeded in educating her son so that Mr. Qualey was successful in building a career and raising his family in Virginia, where Jimmy Qualey Burden was born.

Grandmother views her life's purpose as devoting her whole body and soul for family happiness and domestic harmony and maintaining good neighborly relations. It was proven when she welcomed the arrival of her grandson, Jimmy Qualey Burden, who had been orphaned since he was ten years old. She loved, educated, raised and educated her grandson so he succeeded in becoming a legal consultant for the Western Railways railroad company. She succeeded in instilling family harmony to Qualey in building his household with his wife, Ruthland Whitney. Grandmother was able to maintain good communication with her neighbors from Hastings farming areas such as the Shimerda family to urban Black Hawk areas such as the Harling family.

(b). *Mrs. Shimerda*

Mrs. Shimerda is a housewife who has three children, namely a boy named Ambrosch and two women, namely Antonia called Tony and Yulka called Julka. The Shimerda house was separated by a small hill from the Burden house in a farming area called Hastings. The social relations of these two families are very close in a good neighborly relationship, even though both are different in terms of economic status and ethnic group background. This also underlies the closeness between Jim Qualey from the Burden family and Antonia from the Shimerda family such as studying together, riding horses, playing rabbits, catching birds, picking crops, and so on (Cather, 2014). The familiarity of the two families creates social issues in the novel *My Antonia*.

Mrs. Shimerda along with a number of other frontier cultivators came from a Bohemian family whose ancestors came from Austria, Sweden and Norway. They include pioneering women in clearing land in the American West such as in Nebraska who also work hard with men to manage nature that is still wild and vicious, "*The Shimerdas were the first Bohemian family to come to this part of the country*" (Cather, 2014, p. 20). When Jimmy Qualey Burden first met the Shimerda family, Mrs. Shimerda was in her forties and tall, well-built and full of spirit. Appearance and dress reflect as a traditional woman in general in America. Her life as a farmer has not been able to make her and her family live in luxury so that people know the Shimerda family as simple farmers.

Her position as the wife of Mr. Shimerda, Mrs. Shimerda plays herself as a housewife who is responsible for the family as a traditional woman in the farming village of Hastings. Her role is to manage conditions in the house such as managing family spending money, cleaning, preparing food, taking care of clothes, managing the yard, and maintaining social communication with neighbors. She tried hard to portray herself as a single parent when Mr. Shimerda died while her two daughters still needed financing, namely Antonia and Yulka. Financial conditions have not been able to meet the needs of family life so that Mrs. Shimerda allows Antonia and Yulka to go to Black Hawk City to work as hired girls in the Harling family. Her identity as a housewife made Mrs. Shimerda is directly responsible for educating her children and teaching Antonia and Yulka skills in cooking, washing, cleaning, and others. All of these skills are very useful when they have a household, "*We were willing to believe that Mrs. Shimerda was a good housewife in her own country, but she managed poorly under new conditions: the conditions were bad enough, certainly!*" (Cather, 2014, p. 28).

Mrs. Shimerda set her life goals in traditional female domestication to devote all her soul and body to family happiness and domestic harmony and to maintain good neighborly relations. It was shown when her husband died, she still tried to love and educate her children and maintain the integrity of the family. In maintaining good social relations with neighbors, Mrs. Shimerda often took her children to visit neighbors in the Hastings farming area, such as visiting the Burden family on Saturdays or Sundays. She also allows Antonia and Yulka to be friends and play with Jimmy Qualey, enjoying their childhood as good neighbors. When Jake Marpole got into a fight with Ambrosch, Mrs. Shimerda supports Mr. Burden reconciled the two in order to maintain the harmony of neighboring life. When the Burden family moved to Black Hawk City, the Shimerda family continued to visit this family as a testament to the life of traditional American society which always maintained social relations with neighbors.

Fictional female characters in the novel *My Antonia*, namely Grandmother and Mrs. Shimerda have a number of traits count as a traditional woman which is 10 out of 15 or the number of traits in percentage is 67%. It shows that there are major differences in the characteristics and attitudes typical of traditional women in the two characters, especially in the aspects of dependency, passive, weak, and quitter. They appear as independent, active, strong, and confident women. Minor differences from the characteristics and attitudes typical of traditional women in these two characters, namely inward oriented, subjective, take no risk, and emotional aspects. Grandmother's traits are objective and rational, while Mrs. Shimerda's traits are to be brave and outward oriented. It can be seen in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1  
FEMALE TRAITS IN SELECTED WOMEN CHARACTERS OF NOVEL *MY ANTONIA*

No .	Female Traits	Novel <i>My Antonia</i>	
		Grandmother	Mrs. Shimerda
01	Dependency	-	-
02	Passive, weak	-	-
03	Non aggressive	+	+
04	Not competitive	+	+
05	Inward oriented	+	-
06	Orientation between people	+	+
07	Empathy	+	+
08	Caring nature	+	+
09	Sensitive	+	+
10	Subjective	-	+
11	Intuitive	+	+
12	Quitter	-	-
13	Easy to accept	+	+
14	Take no risk	+	-
15	Emotional	-	+
Number of traits count		<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
Number of traits in percentage		67	67

Based on the time setting of the novel *My Antonia*, which ranges from 1890 to 1922, it can be explained that the characteristics and attitudes typical of traditional women dominate female fictional characters. The table above shows that the combined attitudes and characteristics of the two female characters in the novel represent 12 out of 15 of the number of female traits, which means around 80 percent. Grandmother and Mrs. Shimerda in the novel *My Antonia* is a traditional woman who works in the fields with her family and has not received formal education. Their lives are as housewives and interact socially with heterogeneous groups of people, namely neighbors in the farming village of Hasting and the town of Black Hawk.

Based on the analysis of the characteristics and attitudes of traditional women in the structural meaning of the novel *My Antonia* and the social reality of traditional American women, it can be seen that Willa Cather's notion on the traditional American women in the aspects of performance, position, role, identity, and perspective as mentioned in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2  
WILLA CATHER'S NOTION FOR TRADITIONAL AMERICAN WOMEN IN NOVEL *MY ANTONIA*

No .	Traditional Aspects of American Women	Novel <i>My Antonia</i>	
		Grandmother	Mrs. Shimerda
01	Performance	Appearance and clothing are the same as traditional women in general in America. Even though she was a successful farmer with an affluent life, she still looked the same as the ordinary people in Hastings village and was friendly to everyone.	Appearance and dress reflect as a traditional woman in general in America. Her life as a farmer has not been able to make her and the family live in luxury so that people in Hasting know the Shimerda family as simple farmers.
02	Position	The wife of grandfather (Mr. Burden) and is a good and ideal housewife who is good at managing and leading the workers in her house like traditional women from the upper middle class.	Mr. Shimerda and portrayed herself as a simple housewife and responsible for the family like a traditional lower-class woman in the farming village of Hastings.
03	Role	Regulating conditions in the house such as managing family spending money, maintaining cleanliness, preparing food, taking care of clothes, managing the yard, maintaining an atmosphere of harmony in family life, and building social communication with neighbors. She also plays a role in managing her husband's business in the farming and animal husbandry sector.	Managing conditions in the house such as managing family spending money, maintaining cleanliness, preparing food, taking care of clothes, managing the yard, maintaining a conducive atmosphere in household life, and building social communication with neighbors.
04	Identity	A housewife who is also involved in managing her husband's productive business in the farming and animal husbandry sector. She is seen as an active, innovative, wealthy and generous housewife.	A Housewife who depended more on her husband and resigned to accepting the realities of life. She is seen as a passive, modest, and patient housewife.
05	Perspective	A housewife must devote her whole body and soul to family happiness, domestic harmony, and maintain good relations with neighbors. She was able to maintain good communication with his neighbors from all classes, both when she was still in the Hastings farming area such as with the Shimerda family and when she moved to the urban Black Hawk area such as with the Harling family.	A Housewife devotes all her souls and bodies for family happiness and domestic harmony and maintains good neighborly relations. It was shown when her husband died, she still loved and educated her children and kept the family intact. She often took her children to visit neighbors' houses such as with the Burden family on the Hastings farm.

Willa Cather's thoughts on traditional American women are those who devote their lives to the household as wives and mothers of their children. Their main jobs are cooking, preparing food, washing, cleaning, serving her husband, educating children, and so on. Traditional American society considered education for a girl to be good at reading, writing, and counting. Skills suitable for girls are sewing, cooking, babysitting, music and art. All education and skills acquired by women are intended to support their roles as good wives and housewives. Willa Cather distinguishes two patterns of traditional American women's life, namely full domestication and partial domestication. Full domestication is a traditional woman who depends more on her husband's livelihood and is resigned to accepting the reality of life as a housewife as is typical for Mrs. Shimerda. The typical full domestication is generally embraced by women from the lower middle class. On the other hand, partial domestication is a traditional woman who participates in managing her husband's business or participates in earning a living with her husband to support the family economy. She is seen as an active and innovative housewife as a typical Grandmother. The typical partial domestication is generally embraced by women from the upper middle class. The presence of Grandmother and Mrs. Shimerda as a typical traditional woman in the novel *My Antonia* shows that Willa Cather acknowledged the existence of traditional women in American society at that time. Then Willa Cather's notion of traditional American women is full domestication and partial domestication.

The impact can be found in the full domestication of women in *My Antonia* as a reflection of traditional American women is both positive and negative. A number of positive impacts are woman focuses on household management, woman has a lot of time to educate her children, woman has close inner relationships with her husband and children, woman has the opportunity to communicate with neighbors, and so on. The negative impact is woman's dependence, woman's loss of public access, woman's powerlessness in decision making, and others. On the other hand, the partial domestication of women has a positive impact on women's participation in helping men increase their income and family welfare. The negative impact is women tend to leave their hometowns and are oriented towards urban life.

## V. CONCLUSION

Literature is reconstructed by the author based on the fictional imagination of the social reality of society so literary works are considered to have sociological elements. It indicates that literature has genetics absorbed by the author from his/her life experience as Goldman's basis for thinking in constructing the Genetic Structuralism Approach, one of the scientific methods in researching literary works. In this study, the novel *My Antonia* is considered to have genetics from the social background of Willa Cather's life in the American frontier farming areas such as Virginia, Hasting, Black Hawk, Red Cloud, Nebraska, Illinois, and others.

Willa Cather illustrates the presence of traditional American women in the novel *My Antonia* as reflected by the fictional characters of Grandmother and Mrs. Shimerda. They are fictional characters who narrate traditional American women living in the farming areas of Central and West America around Hasting, Black Hawk, Nebraska, and others.

Willa Cather categorizes traditional American women according to performance, position, role, identity, and perspective. Traditional women's performances have the same appearance and clothing as traditional women in general in America. The traditional position of a woman is as the wife of her husband and the mother of her children. The role of traditional women is to take care of the household and maintain the continuity of family life. Traditional women's identity is a housewife. The perspective of traditional women is to devote all their souls and bodies for family happiness, domestic harmony, and maintaining good relations with neighbors. Then Willa Cather's notion of traditional American women is full domestication and partial domestication.

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