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High altar of Notre Dame des Victoires, Quebec City. "Cécile had always taken it for granted that the Kingdom of Heaven looked exactly like this from the outside" (*Shadows on the Rock*).

— Photo by John Murphy

See Joan Acocella's
"Cather and the Academy"
in *The New Yorker*, November 27, 1995.

See Laura Winters's "Response"
in this *WCPMN*, p. 75.

Historical Space in *Shadows on the Rock*

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The nature and interaction of history, memory, and imagination have presented an abiding intellectual and artistic challenge to modernist writers. To depict the intricate and subtle complexities of memory, human consciousness, imagination and their consequences as men and women deal with the process we call history is an intriguing and engaging proposition. Willa Cather's bifocal vision of the world and her habit of juxtaposition make her admirably suited to such an effort, and in her "backward glance" to seventeenth-century New France, *Shadows on the Rock*, we discover a superb rendering of this modernist inquiry.

Wilbur R. Jacobs, Gary Brienzo, and George Greene have each explored the connections between Cather's tenth novel and the histories of Francis Parkman, which she read when she first fell in love with Quebec in 1928 and to which she returned when Pierre, Cécile, and Euclide began to take hold of her imagination.¹ Merrill Maguire Skaggs's article "Cather's Use of Parkman's Histories in *Shadows on the Rock*" demonstrates quite clearly both the material Cather requisitioned from Parkman and the method by which she did so, speculating on the triggers in Parkman's work which set off corresponding resonances in Cather's own imagination.² Of particular interest is Skaggs's identification of the four historical periods we must hold in mind to do justice to the novel: "the present of 1928 to 1931, in which Cather first imagined and then research and wrote her book"; "the extended post-Civil War-era from 1865 to 1893 in which Francis Parkman wrote his seven-volume *France and England in North America*"; "the present of the novel itself: 1697-98, a year of rare calm in the turbulent Quebec era"; and "the medieval period which seventeenth-century Quebec suggested first to Parkman and then to the receptive Willa Cather" (a theme Skaggs has explicated further in "*Shadows on the Rock: Cather's Miracle Play*," which appeared in the 1990 *WCPMN Literary Annual*). Each of these historical epochs is relevant to Cather's novel, and the essay demon-

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HISTORICAL SPACE (Continued)

strates that Parkman is equally relevant to all four historic levels of consciousness. There are indeed four "times" in this book, but I would like to suggest even more. A fifth historical period is the present of the reader, creating the made work of art as he or she reads it; a sixth is time before recorded history — since Cather also invites the reader to consider prehistory with her ice age imagery and her mythic "uncharted continent"; a seventh extends into the future: the history that Cécile's sons, the "Canadians of the future" will write.

When we talk about history, we necessarily talk about time, about epochs, about periods, about past, present and future. John Livingston Lowes points out that "[w]e live in terms of *time*. And so pervasive is that element of our consciousness that we have to stand, as it were, outside it for a moment to realize how completely it controls our lives. For we think and act perpetually, we mortals who look before and after, in relation to hours and days and weeks and months and years."³ Cather anchors us and her characters in clearly measured *time*: "one afternoon late in October of the year 1697" (3), "the last Friday of October" (45), "the afternoon of All Saints' Day" (84), "last year — five years ago — many years ago" (96), "the morning of the twenty-fourth of December" (104), "the first day of June" (169), "four o'clock in the morning" (201), "the seventeenth day of August 1713, fifteen years after the death of Count Frontenac" (269). The limits of time circumscribe the book; the action takes place within a year's time, followed by an epilogue that takes place precisely fifteen years later. And yet, all of Skaggs's times — and mine too — exist within the tight framework of the book's "clock time." How can that be? We all know the answer; as Lowes reminds us, we mortals "look before and after," and, as Cather demonstrates in this novel we carry within ourselves the means by which we can extend the limits of measured time: our memories and our imaginations. Robert Penn Warren refers to the two concepts as "chronological time and history,"⁴ and Edwin Muir differentiates between their functions in fiction:

Time in the dramatic novel is internal; its movement is the movement of the figures; change, fate, character are all condensed into one action; and with its resolution there comes a pause in which time seems to stand still; the arena is left vacant. In the chronicle, on the other hand, time is eternal; it is not seized subjectively and humanly in the minds of the characters; it is seen from a fixed Newtonian point outside. It flows past the beholder; it flows over and through the figure he evokes. Instead of narrowing to a point, the point fixed by passion, or fear, or fate in the dramatic novel, it stretches away indefinitely, running with a scarcely perceptible check over all the barriers which might have marked its end.⁵

Indeed, time flows beneath the surface of this novel: Euclide looks "back to the time of Ambroise Paré, and still further back to the thirteenth century, as golden

ages in medicine" (29); "the shades of the early martyrs and great missionaries" (95) draw close to Cécile on All Souls' Day; the "crimson afterglow well[s] up out of the forest like a glorious memory," like the rainbow, "to remind us of a promise" (234); the "same well-ordered universe . . . created by God for a purpose, the sun which he made to light it by day, the moon which He made to light it by night — and the stars, made to beautify the vault of heaven like frescoes, and to be a clock and a compass for man" (97) surrounds the rock of Quebec with a reality that includes the creation of time itself, an eternal "permanent stability" that nonetheless carries each individual through the passage of measured chronological time and into the eternal, or history itself.⁶

Cather's very famous belief that "Life began for me . . . when I ceased to admire and began to remember" is nowhere better demonstrated than in *Shadows*. One of the problems she worked out in the novel was the relationship between change and permanence, stasis and flow. She wrote: "To me the rock of Quebec is not only a stronghold on which many strange figures have for a little time cast a shadow in the sun; it is the curious endurance of a kind of culture, narrow but definite. There another age persists."⁸ Loretta Wasserman, Barbara Caspersen and, of course, Tom Quirk have all linked Cather's concepts of the duration of time, the working of individual memory, and her understanding of the myth-making capacity of man to Henri Bergson's influence.⁹ Memory allows the French colonists to re-create a culture on a rock in the wilderness: the interior of the Auclairs' shop "was like home to the French-born" (22); life could "go on unchanged in this room" (25) because Madame Auclair teaches Cécile "the sense of 'our way,'" a "feeling about life that had come down to her through so many centuries and that she had brought with her across the wastes of obliterating, brutal ocean" (25). Memory can also transport them back in time and space: Euclide and the Count sit by the window "but the river was not the St. Lawrence. They were looking out on the Pont-Marie, and the hay-barges tied up at the Port-au-Foin" (250); Blinker finds that sometimes . . . things would rise up out of the past . . . faces . . . voices . . . even words . . . 'They are inside me . . . I carry them with me' " (161). What Blinker remembers, however, is *not* sustaining, nor does it tie him to a rich tradition worth preserving. In fact, if we read the book carefully, we cannot help but be struck by the barbarism of civilized France. "The most civilized people in Europe" tolerate torture, the hanging of innocent men, corruption at Court, and monstrous carp that devour little girls.

Certainly nothing about Cather is ever simple or perfectly straightforward, and that includes her response to the culture informing her novel, a response I find increasingly ambiguous. Cather wrote in her letter on the novel: "There, among the country people and the nuns, I caught something new to me; a kind of feeling about life and human fate that I could not accept, wholly, but which I could not but admire" (15).

Not only could she not wholly accept the feeling about life and human fate she found among the nuns and country people, but in the novel she does not wholly admire the perpetual stability of Jeanne Le Ber, who has a "stone face" and a voice "with the sound of despair in it" (182-83), or Mother Catherine de Saint-Augustin, who "burned her life out in vigils, mortifications, visions, raptures" (42). Cather tells us she tried to capture: "a kind of thinking, a mental complexion inherited, left over from the past, lacking in robustness and full of pious resignation" (15). Surely, these leftover characteristics lacking robustness and encompassing resignation stand in direct opposition to those qualities Cather always admired: "sturdy traits of character," "elasticity of mind," an "honest attitude toward the realities of life" and "certain qualities of feeling and imagination,"¹⁰ "fine personalities,"¹¹ and most of all "the shining eyes of youth" mentioned at the end of *O Pioneers!* I read Cather's comments on "the mood of the misfits among the early settlers" (16) and wonder just who in this book she intends to be the misfits — surely I can't miss them if there were a good many. I note her admonition that "really, a new society begins with the salad dressing more than with the destruction of Indian villages" and the word *new* leaps out at me. Finally, I come to her last statement: "Those people brought a kind of French culture there and somehow kept it alive on that rock, sheltered it and tended it and on occasion died for it, as if it really were a sacred fire — and all this temperately and shrewdly, with emotion always tempered by good sense." Who in *Shadows on the Rock* are "those people"? The ones who brought, not *French* culture, but "a kind of French culture," and kept it alive? The ones who are temperate and shrewd and have good sense as well as emotion?

As I ask these questions, I remember the first sentence of Cather's first public address, her high school graduation speech: "All human history is a record of an emigration, an exodus from barbarism to civilization."¹² I also recall that Cather wrote: "The history of every country begins in the heart of a man or a woman."¹³ If these notions of history are true for Cather, then *Shadows on the Rock* is not nostalgic or backward-looking, Canadian civilization is not — or will not be — merely re-heated French culture, and Cécile is not an insufferable prig, as she has been called. Instead, the novel looks forward in imagination as well as back in memory; it defines a new country that begins in the hearts of people who look on the land with love; and it re-affirms the value of the past in the creation of the future. In fact, the misfits are those who cannot relinquish the past's stranglehold: "European man was quickly swallowed up in silence, distance, mould, black mud, and the stinging swarms of insect life that bred in [the forest]" (7). Life on the rock of Quebec is originally French in character, but in reading this story of history we witness the subtle transmutation of French culture into Canadian civilization. This is as it should be: "When an adventurer carries his gods

with him into a remote and savage country, the colony he founds will, from the beginning, have graces, traditions, riches of the mind and spirit. Its history will shine with bright incidents, slight, perhaps, but precious, as in life itself, where the great matters are often as worthless as astronomical distances, and the trifles dear as heart's blood" (98).

On the rock where apparently nothing changes, small changes do take place within human hearts, and great changes take place in human history. Native seminarians study late at night; Jacques adds the Canadian beaver, "our very special animal" (111), to the creche; and the story of Jeanne Le Ber's spinning-wheel becomes the myth and miracle of Canada alone, like the stories of "Indian massacres and lost hunters and the almost human intelligence of the beaver" (137). Mother Juschereau, diametrically opposed in character to her predecessor, is chosen to direct the convent: "She was the first Reverend Mother of the foundation who was Canadian-born, and she had been elected to that office when she was but thirty-four years of age. She was a religious of the practical type, sunny and very outright by nature, — enthusiastic, without being given to visions or ecstasies" (34). We should remember that Bishop Laval — himself a man who turns to the new land with love — returns to France to select his successor, with disappointing results.

Most clearly identified with Canada, however, is Pierre Charron: "more than anyone else he realized the romantic picture of the free Frenchman of the great forests." Pierre — himself a rock — is courageous, confident, proud, nurturing, at home in the forests or in the town. Like all of Cather's most admirable characters, he carries the memory of the race into the future; he has "the good manners of the Old World, the dash and daring of the New" (171-72). He likes "a cold winter, and a hot summer" (188), he smells of "pine-woods and the fresh snow" (264), and he specifically identifies Cécile as Canadian.

Captain Pondaven protests to Pierre Charron that "one is best in one's own country" (218), and Father Hector tells Auclair that "nothing worth while is accomplished except by that last sacrifice, the giving of oneself altogether and finally" (149). Faced with returning to France, Cécile finds that she too has given herself to Canada and that it is indeed her own country. Like her grandmother, she cannot live "in a world [France] where such cruelties could happen" (93). She knows that "on a foreign shore, in a foreign city (yes, for her a foreign shore), would not her heart break for just this? For this rock and this winter, this feeling of being in one's own place" (104). For her, the forest and the river, which she dreams of exploring with Charron, hold no terror; the land is sweet-smelling, the river breathes with life, and the rock of Quebec blazes with (Cather's favorite colors) "so many kinds of gold, all gleaming in the soft, hyacinth-coloured haze of autumn" (229).

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HISTORICAL SPACE (Continued)

Fortunately for Pierre, Cécile and Canada, the Auclairs do not return to France. Before her death, Madame Auclair taught her daughter that "one made a climate within a climate; one made the days, — the complexion, the special flavour, the special happiness of each day as it passed; one made life" (198), but, like Mother Catherine, she passed her tradition on to a Canadienne, and the flavor of that life would not be French. Cécile's sons and daughters are in fact "the Canadians of the future, — the true Canadians" (278), the Canadians, perhaps, of our very own time.

I have saved Euclide for last, for perhaps Cather's past-bound apothecary shows us best the transforming power of history. A true misfit, who preserves his French home, his French schedule, his French food and drink, and a French feudal system, Auclair sees himself as "a helpless exile in a strange land" (263) when Count Frontenac dies. It takes fifteen years, but at the end of the book, Euclide, too, has finally become Canadian — content in his family, secure in his home, rooted in his own, new country and the traditions from which that country began, "indeed fortunate to spend his old age here where nothing changed" (280).

Earlier I noted Skaggs's observation that the year in which this novel takes place was a year of relative calm in the history of Quebec — a vacuole, if you will, an empty place in which nothing happened. But, in Cather, vacuoles are always important. Bishop Saint-Vallier's return to Quebec in the Epilogue allows Cather to put another into final perspective for the reader. Reflecting on the contrasting turmoil throughout the Old World, the Bishop says, ". . . we are in the beginning of a new century, but periods do not always correspond with centuries. At home the old age is dying, but the new is still hidden" (277). I register Cather's own comments one last time: she once told Rose Feld,

The world goes through periods or waves of art. Between these periods come great resting places. We may be resting right now. Older countries have their wealth of former years to fall back upon. We haven't. But, like older countries, we have a few individuals who have caught the flame of former years and are carrying the torch into the next periods.¹⁴

In *Shadows on the Rock*, Cather shows us what goes on in those resting places. Cécile and Pierre — and finally Euclide himself — are Cather's torchbearers who ensure the next wave of art; individuals who have caught the flame, who create new civilizations out of salad dressings, new countries out of their youthful hearts.

NOTES

¹ See Wilbur R. Jacobs, "Willa Cather and Francis Parkman: Novelistic Portrayals of Colonial New France," *Willa Cather: Family, Community, and History*, John J. Murphy, ed. (Provo: Brigham Young U Humanities Publications Center,

1990), 235-61; Gary Brienza, *Willa Cather's Transforming Vision* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna U Press, 1994); and George Greene "A Colloquy with Clío: Willa Cather's *Shadows on the Rock*," *Dalhousie Review* v. 70 (1991): 219-28. For Cather's interest in Parkman see Edith Lewis, *Willa Cather Living* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), 153, and Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, *Willa Cather* (Athens: Ohio U Press, 1992), 250.

² See Merrill Maguire Skaggs, "Cather's Use of Parkman's Histories in *Shadows on the Rock*," *Cather Studies, Volume 2*, ed. Susan J. Rosowski (Lincoln: U Nebraska Press, 1993), 140-55, and "Shadows on the Rock: Cather's Miracle Play," *Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter* 34 (Fall 1990): 21-24.

³ John Livingston Lowes, *Geoffrey Chaucer and the Development of His Genius* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934), 10-11.

⁴ Robert Penn Warren, "Warren on the Art of Fiction," by Ralph Ellison and Eugene Walter in *Talking with Robert Penn Warren*, eds. Floyd C. Watkins, John T. Hiers, and Mary Louise Weaks, (Athens: U Georgia Press, 1990), 38.

⁵ Edwin Muir, *The Structure of the Novel* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1954), 103.

⁶ Lowes's discussion of time in the Middle Ages underscores Skaggs's recognition of medieval themes in *Shadows*: ". . . we never any longer reckon with the sky. Except for its bearing on the weather or upon our moods . . . we are oblivious of its influence. And therein lies the great gulf fixed between Chaucer's century and ours. For Chaucer and his contemporaries, being likewise human, also lived in terms of time. But their calendar and time-piece was that sky through which moved immutable along predestined tracks the planets and constellations." Lowes also tells us that Chaucer's universe was "a nest of closed, concentric spheres," and that there were "two sorts of hours, with both of which everybody reckoned. . . the hours from midnight to midnight . . . were 'hours equal,' or hours of the clock. But there were also the hours which were reckoned from sunset to sunrise (which made up the 'day artificial'), and on from sunset to sunrise again . . . termed 'hours unequal' And they were the hours of peculiar significance, bound up far more closely with human affairs than the 'hours of the clock'" (11-14). Of course, one of the more splendid images in *Shadows* is Cather's many renderings of the sky, seen in constant and wonderful change that is, at the same time, permanently stable.

⁷ Sergeant, 117.

⁸ Willa Cather, "On *Shadows on the Rock*," *Willa Cather on Writing* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 1988), 15.

⁹ See Loretta Wasserman, "The Music of Time: Henri Bergson and Willa Cather," *American Literature* 57 (May 1985), 226-39; Barbara Caspersen, "The Flowering of Desire: Willa Cather and the Sources of Miracle," Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 1990; Tom Quirk, *Bergson and American Culture: The Worlds of Willa Cather and Wallace Stevens* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina Press, 1990).

¹⁰ Willa Cather, "Nebraska: The End of the First Cycle," *Nation* 117 (5 Sept. 1923), 237.

¹¹ Willa Cather, Letter to Will Owen Jones, 22 March 1927, in *Willa Cather in Person* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska, 1986), 181.

¹² Cather, "Superstition vs. Investigation," in *Willa Cather in Person*, 141.

¹³ Willa Cather, *O Pioneers!* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1941), 65.

¹⁴ Willa Cather, interview with Rose Feld, *New York Times*, 21 December 1924, in *Willa Cather in Person*, 71.

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"Je Me Souviens": Reflections on the Quebec International Seminar

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In a passage frequently quoted in this summer's conference, Edith Lewis comments on Cather's first impressions of Quebec upon their trip there in the summer of 1928: ". . . from the first moment that she looked down from the windows of the Frontenac [Hotel] on the pointed roofs and Norman outlines of the town of Quebec, Willa Cather was not merely stirred and charmed — she was overwhelmed by the flood of



David Stouck, John Murphy and Bruce Baker (left to right) discuss dinner options before an apothecary shop in Quebec's Upper Town.
— Photo by Emily Murphy

memory, recognition, surmise it called up; by the sense of its extraordinarily French character, isolated and kept intact through hundreds of years, as if by a miracle, on the great un-French continent." That most French of cities in an "un-French continent" was the site of the Sixth International Cather Seminar, June 24-July 1, 1995, attended by some 115 staff and participants from 32 states and a number of foreign countries (England, New Zealand, China, Japan, France, and Germany.) For many, this was a first-time visit to Quebec, as it was for Willa Cather in 1928; and, for many, as it was for her, this place embodied an Old World heritage, became a rock upon which lasting memories were founded. The imposing Citadel and the magnificent Frontenac Hotel where Cather stayed (*we didn't!*) dominates old Quebec City today just as it did in 1928, and it was easy to see how this stately hotel with its copper roof, its turrets, its beautiful wood paneling, and its splendid dining rooms (*we didn't eat there either!*) appealed to both the aesthetic — and perhaps emotional — needs of those who, like Cather, value permanence and beauty in a world in flux.

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Yuji Takahashi, Visiting Professor from Japan at University of Nebraska-Lincoln, signs guest book at Quebec City Hall for his family.
— Photo by John Murphy

REFLECTIONS ON QUEBEC (Continued)

Memories will no doubt vary with the individuals attending, but here are a few I either was told or overheard: "the restaurants! I couldn't find a bad meal"; "the university's cafeteria! I couldn't find a good one"; "the wonderful comraderie of undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, lay people, and distinguished scholars — how rare!"; "the expansions and stimulation of my understanding and appreciation of Cather's work"; "the beauty of the French language which surrounded us — even though I had trouble ordering from the menu!"; "the 'sense of place' in a place so

Director Thacker explains why he's in Quebec to TV News.

— Photo by Sally Murphy



different from my own"; "the splendid plenary lectures which explored everything from the echoes of St. Augustine in *Shadows on the Rock* to the problems of St. Peter in *Professor's House* and the gender issues in *One of Ours*"; "the light that can be shed on Cather's work through interdisciplinary approaches";

"the care given to the planning of this seminar so that we were able to experience both Cather and Quebec, both as a group and on our own"; "the splendid work of Bob Thacker and Michael Peterman who helped with everything from arranging that marvelous lunch at Montmorency Falls to helping me retrieve my lost room key";



Emily Murphy steps to the piper while Francoise Palleau-Papin helps with applause at Farewell Reception in Quebec's Lower Town.

— Photo by Susan Rosowski

"the excellent quality of the papers"; "the reception at the Quebec City Hall was elegant!"; "Emily Murphy dancing to the bag pipe at our farewell banquet. When can we do it again?"

For me, this opportunity to explore the texts I love in a place Cather loved was to experience once more a bit of that "something splendid" which Claude Wheeler seeks in *One of Ours*. Some 115 participants found that in the journey to New France. "Je me souviens" — as will all of us.

Shadows on the Rock: The Outsider, The Disfigured, The Disadvantaged, and The Community

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One of the most notable features of Willa Cather's *Shadows on the Rock* is its emphasis on community. Both Ann Romines and Merrill Skaggs highlight the centrality of community in the world of the novel. Like any community, this community is not perfectly harmonious and stable. Skaggs notes that the citizens are "amply acquainted with griefs" and that the town contains many examples of "bad faith" (34). The novel's shadows, however, are composed of more than grief and bad faith. They consist of characters, both within and beyond the town of Quebec, whose otherness poses a challenge to the community, an opportunity for development. These others are divided into subgroups — the outsiders, the disfigured, and the disadvantaged — each integral to the construction of community in *Shadows on the Rock*.

There are numerous conceptions of and theories about the other. It is unlikely that Cather had a highly developed theory of the other. On the contrary, she seems to have had, at least when she wrote *Shadows*, a very conflicted sense of the other. She appears to have been exploring in this novel different manifestations of the other, varying treatments and uses of the other by the community, and varying influences of the other on the community. In order to have a mode of reference for the discussion of the outsiders, the disfigured and the disadvantaged, this paper will draw on Emmanuel Levinas's understanding of the other.

Levinas outlines two different approaches to the other. One approach is a narcissistic impulse toward totalizing which reduces the other to its relation with the self: "It involuntarily considers the other as a 'force' with which it must compare itself and not as a genuine other" (Burggraeve 64). The other is denied its "radical otherness" and is ascribed a more convenient relative otherness (65). However, the radically other, the metaphysical other, maintains its otherness "before every reducing covetousness" (65); such otherness is intrinsic, "not based on mere contradiction or on an

opposition to the other than itself" (65). A true approach to the other, the second kind of approach, intrudes upon and disrupts totalizing narcissism: "The other appears before the narcissistically totalizing I as a given fact that the I cannot reduce to its own totality. The I which self-confidently draws the world to itself is, as it were, startled by the other's appearance" (66).

For Levinas the chief symbol for the other is the face, and he highlights its defenseless nature: "The skin of the face is that which stays most naked, most destitute" (Levinas, *Ethics* 86). In the following passage Levinas particularly emphasizes gaze as a force which breaks totality:

To be sure, the other is exposed to all my powers, succumbs to all my ruses, all my crimes. Or he resists me with all his force and all the unpredictable resources of his own freedom. I measure myself against him. But he can also — and here is where he presents me his face — oppose himself to me beyond all measure, with the total uncoveredness and nakedness of his defenseless eyes, the straight-forwardness, the absolute frankness of his gaze. The solipsist disquietude of consciousness, seeing itself, in all its adventures, a captive of itself, comes to an end here: true exteriority is in this gaze which forbids me my conquest. (*Collected* 55)

Levinas's theory sheds some interesting light on the importance of the outsider, the disfigured, and the disadvantaged, to the community of Cather's novel, primarily in the formative influence of these characters on Cécile's life. Cécile is the exemplar and perpetuator of the community; as Skaggs points out, "She is the most essential ingredient in [its members'] corporate, continuing life together" (35). Thus, whatever contributes to Cécile's self-development indirectly contributes to the sustenance of the community.

The outsiders in this text serve a variety of community functions, and Romines posits that Cather may be proposing an alternative to the "tradition of isolation" and the "mythic power this tradition attaches to the outside and the outsider" (72). In *Shadows*, the outsider is not seen primarily as hero but rather as necessary other in opposition to which the community/self is defined. According to Levinas, this is a narcissistic attitude toward the other.

The incident in the text which demonstrates this point most clearly is Cécile's visit to the Harnois family. Charron's name is significant here. As the Charon/Charon of Greek mythology ferried souls across the River Styx to the underworld, so Pierre Charron ferries Cécile to a place perceived by her as a kind of underworld. Cécile never meets the kind-hearted Harnois as they are, never sees their true otherness, but rather uses their otherness to define her already-formed view, thereby exercising a totalizing narcissism. Her conception of them as what is not-her is reinforced by each detail she observes — the dirty pillowcase and sheets, the shared towel, the unsophisticated food. She is so disgusted and uncomfortable that she begs

Charron to take her home early. When she returns to her little haven, she reaffirms the traditions passed to her by her mother. The intrusion on her life and consciousness of the outsider (embodied in the Harnois family) allows her fully to appropriate her mother's customs and practices as her own and to develop her sense of self more clearly and firmly.

Pierre Charron, too, is an outsider who contributes to Cécile's self-definition. He is the adventurer whose tales of exploits help her understand herself as owning different sensibilities and values than he. For example, she cannot comprehend how Charron could enjoy eating dog boiled with blueberries, and such experiences merely increase the value she places on structured and ordered traditions over wild and unordered living. Randall notes that "his very existence in the book is an implicit denial of everything the Auclair family stands for" (326). Charron presents a kind of anarchy dangerous to the rigidly maintained roles and recipes essential to Cécile's world.

Jeanne Le Ber also figures as an outsider. Like the Harnois family and Charron, she is not a part of the Quebec community (living in Montreal) and is used in a similar narcissistic fashion. While Cécile is clearly attracted to the figure of Le Ber and greatly respects her, she rejects her as a model for appropriate self-fulfillment. Choosing to isolate herself from all contact with family and friends, Le Ber seems the great antithesis to community building. She subordinates human ties (refusing to see her dying mother, cutting herself off from her bereaved father, repelling her desperate lover) and refuses to forge any new ones. She never serves others as a neighbor, never joins any social organizations, never marries and contributes children to the community. In contrast, Cécile, as the upholder of the community, must be in constant connection with those around her. She learns from her mother, serves as companion to her father, welcomes visitors and ultimately affirms life and community by marrying Charron and having four boys. Jeanne Le Ber provides the necessary antitype for Cécile's type, which is a microcosm for the macrocosm that is Quebec.

In addition to being the other against which the self is defined, the outsider often pays the price that allows the community to function more fully, a payment from which the community is then exempt. For example, the trappers brave the wilderness to carry on the fur trade, and several are wounded (like Antoine Frichette) or die (like Michel Proulx) in this service. Because these outsiders take upon themselves the dangers and hardships attendant on a trade important to life in New France, the Quebec community is absolved of the responsibility. This is also true in the case of the missionary priests such as Father Hector and Noel Chabanel. The community members generally feel the necessity of proselytizing among the Indians, yet are relieved by others who do the job at great sacrifice. These outsiders are used narcissistically by the com-

(Continued on the Next Page)

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(Continued)

munity, primarily in terms of what they spare the community.

As the Canadians' great saint, Jeanne Le Ber similarly benefits the community. Her excessive religious zeal relieves its members of the need to be as zealous, freeing them to temper religious fervor with communal concerns. One isolated saint making altar-cloths and vestments for the community is enough and serves as its surrogate or scapegoat. That she releases the community members from something greatly painful and difficult to bear is quite evident when Charron sees her in the church. The change he perceives in her is drastic — she has been drained of youth and life: "her voice was so changed, — hoarse, hollow, with the sound of despair in it When she prayed in silence, such sighs broke from her. And once a groan, such as I have never heard; such despair — such resignation and despair!" (579-80). In a way, her life force wanes in proportion to the increased life force in the people.

Clearly, this is a narcissistic use of Le Ber. Indeed, Le Ber is denied, or denies herself, opportunities which, according to Levinas, would allow her to present her radical otherness to others — her face and her speech. She sees no one and speaks solely to her confessor. When she addresses Charron in the church, he is so intent on her change that he only sees her in relation to his previous view of her. This portrayal of Le Ber is particularly apt if she is understood to represent in some fashion the artist, one who drains him/herself of energy for the enrichment of a community from which he/she usually holds aloof. The independent otherness of the artist is often preempted by what people like to define as that otherness. One cannot help but wonder to what extent Cather identified with Le Ber, with the blessings and the curses of her solitude, and with a sense of the public's use of her without any direct confrontation to/relation with her.

This scapegoat idea of the outsider is closely related to another use of the outsider in Cather's novel, that of providing inspiration and community integrity. Jeanne Le Ber clearly inspires not only Cécile but Quebec and Canada as a whole. The miracle of Le Ber's spinning wheel makes the settlers feel closer to one another and to God. Curiously, the communities in Quebec and Montreal rally around their image of this outsider, and both try to claim Jeanne as theirs, another narcissistic act of totalization. Pierre Charron's adventures function similarly in that Cécile and her father live vicariously through them. Through Pierre they see a world wider than the constricted circle of their community. The sense of movement they receive from his stories provides them with an outlet for their restlessness. In addition, his strength, daring, and pluck inspire them to continue with their own lives. This is seen most clearly by Charron's effect on

Euclide at the death of Frontenac. Instead of disturbing the totalizing view of Cécile and her father, Charron's appearance confirms them in it.

Whether the outsider serves as the not-I against which the I is defined, as the surrogate/scapegoat, or as inspiration/vicarious life, he/she is used by the self/community in a narcissistic, totalizing fashion. Rather than disrupting the ordering of one's world, the outsider helps bring the self/community into line with its own definitions. This is not to say that the self/community's use of the outsider is evil; rather, it is natural and often helps the self/community, although it does an ultimate disservice to the outsider.

II

Another group of others in *Shadows on the Rock* is the disfigured. Physical disfigurement often serves as both literal handicap and as metaphor for emotional or psychological wounding, a searing acquaintance with suffering. Blinker is a key example of this phenomenon. He is described as having "a terrifying face" (472), terribly cross-eyed and shrunken on one side, with pieces of bone protruding. His greatest torment, though, is his memory of the torture chambers in France and his participation in them. Blinker is fascinating to view in Levinas's terms. His face is more vulnerable and radically other than the typical face, and his gaze, because so crooked, is hardly the straightforward gaze Levinas discusses. Yet the recipient of such a gaze would certainly sense the other looking out, and Cécile's response to Blinker shows an evolution. At first, she avoids looking at his eyes, "had never really looked into his eyes at all" (472), and Blinker barely speaks to her. Through the incident with the creche she begins to read his looks and to listen, as he opens up and speaks to her about the creche figures. Then, Blinker spills out to her his news about Le Ber's miracle and finds a receptive listener in Cécile. Finally, he tells Auclair the story of his history; and Cécile, while she cannot hear his words, realizes most fully who he is: "He sounded so miserable" (568).

By caring for and observing Blinker, Cécile learns a great deal and discovers his depth of emotion and piety. He provides her an opportunity for expanded understanding and sympathy, an essential element in the maintenance of community. Levinas stresses one's ethical responsibility to the other, that "to greet the other is already to answer for him" (*Ethics* 88). Cécile comes to take an increasing responsibility for Blinker as she comes to accept him increasingly as other (e.g., she asks him to come sit by the fire, though her mother never did that). Blinker's account about the horrors of his past provides wisdom and insight into the dangers of a community whose zeal for control and order outweigh its capacity for compassion and justice (as with old Bichet). Because of Blinker's experience, though it is shared verbally with only Auclair (but later, it is implied, learned by Cécile),

Blinker is an important stabilizing force in the community.

Lastly, Blinker touches Cécile in a very special way when he tells her of Le Ber's miracle. As Cécile gradually comes to greet Blinker as other, as what she must admit she does not understand and cannot control, she is touched by infinity. Levinas says that such a meeting "opens the very dimension of infinity, of what puts a stop to the irresistible imperialism of the same and the I" (*Collected* 55). As enlightening messenger, Blinker responds to Cécile's joyous exclamation that the angels are as close in Canada as they are in France: "Ma'm'selle, I think they are nearer" (546). This idea is crucial to Cécile and the community as they struggle to maintain themselves in the wild New World, struggle to make for themselves not just a copy of the Old World but a community all their own, special and sanctified. Cécile's exposure to infinity as a result of a face-to-face encounter with Blinker about Le Ber's miracle, while beautiful, ironically becomes the opportunity for an act of totalization toward Le Ber.

The old Bishop with ulcerous legs is another disfigured character, yet the character with the greatest insight into the nature of Canada. He sets up a seminary according to the unique needs of the community. Bishop Laval has a special affinity with the people. It is he who connects with Cécile and helps her when she is in need (e.g., when she needs to borrow money for candles, and when she is distraught at her impending departure from Quebec). Himself an other, he is respectful of the other. It is Bishop Laval who befriends Jacques when he is lost and cold. The way Jacques startles him into a self-examination demonstrates Laval's openness to the disturbing force of the other. The Bishop approaches the other as other, awake to his/her call on his life. His own suffering gives him insight into that of others, and his pious example (e.g., getting up at 4:00 every morning to ring the bell) is an inspiration and stabilizing force for the citizens of Quebec: "The punctual bell and the stern old Bishop who rang it began an orderly procession of activities and held life together on the rock" (531). Indeed, it is only when Bishop Saint-Vallier becomes more like Bishop Laval in acquaintance with grief that he becomes more humble, human, and likable — "a man uncertain, and puzzled, and in the dark like ourselves" (640). As Auclair tells Blinker, "Suffering teaches us compassion" (567).

Some of the community members are afraid of Blinker's strangeness or the old Bishop's severity, but Cécile is afraid of neither. Blinker and Laval, perhaps because of their suffering, teach her something about meeting the other as other. Perhaps it is because she is young and more open to their otherness that she models for the rest of the community a mode of greeting the other.

There are other disfigured characters who do not figure as prominently in the story. For example, the shoemaker's mother is lame. While this handicap is not as glaring as Blinker's and the Bishop's, Madame

Pommier's facility in living with it, her strength and her courage, inspire Cécile. She learns from Madame Pommier that one can carry on productively and contribute to community no matter what one's limitation. Also, it is Madame Pommier who helps Cécile to see the wisdom of accepting Jacques's gift of the beaver: "Our Lord died for Canada as well as for the world over there, and the beaver is our very special animal" (535).

The broken-up woodsman, Antoine Frichette, is also maimed, though his difficulty is not visible. Thus he may symbolize the internal nature of human limitation and disfigurement, may indeed help Cécile to learn that sometimes one's greatest difficulty lies within and is invisible to others. He, too, goes on with his life, though he feels himself of no use; perhaps his presence increases Cécile's awareness of suffering and the ways in which it limits action. Frichette's character also demonstrates a blurring of others and response to them, for he is both an outsider and a disfigured community member, and Cécile's relation to him is partially narcissistic and partially respectful of his true otherness. He, like Father Hector, helps Cécile appreciate the warmth, safety, and peace of home and community.

III

The third category of other in *Shadows on the Rock* is the disadvantaged. The disadvantaged and the disfigured are joined in the demands they make upon the community members (although the disfigured may be more shocking in face-to-face encounters). The chief representative of the disadvantaged in Quebec is little Jacques. The boy has everything against him — he is very poor and is generally neglected by a mother whose livelihood is extremely repugnant to him. Yet Jacques inspires Cécile and her father, Bishop Laval, and probably other members of the community. His piety is amazing to Auclair (who observes him at the Stations of the Cross), and a delight to Cécile (who huddles with him in Notre Dame de la Victoire). His presence causes a spiritual examination in the old Bishop. Jacques's donation of his beaver to the creche is his most significant act in the story; through his unconventional addition, he teaches Cécile and the rest gathered an important communal lesson of the other. He shocks them with his otherness, demonstrating that faith, to mean anything, must involve real sacrifices (he gave his most cherished possession) and must be connected to actual life in the New World (as the beaver is Canada's special animal).

The disfigured and the disadvantaged, like Blinker and Jacques, are important sources of instruction in Cécile's life. As in Flannery O'Connor's works, the message of truth in this novel is often carried by the most unlikely messengers. Levinas calls "the other my *Teacher*, who magisterially teaches me about his

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(Continued)

essence, namely, his exteriority, without my having possessed this teaching or ever being able to locate it in myself" (Burggraeve 69). Interaction with others that is more than a narcissistic totalization helps Cécile develop her sense of human limitation and courage, her sense of sympathy, and her sense of communal responsibility. In addition, each of the figures contributes something to other members of the community or to the community at large.

Anthony Di Renzo points out that through Flannery O'Connor's cataloguing of misfits and the marginalized, several of her characters, as well as her readers, confront a moment of truth when they realize that they, too, are themselves marginal (14). O'Connor states "We're all grotesque" (Asals 75). In a similar way, by peopling Quebec with individuals who are in some way maimed (physically or emotionally) or marginalized, Cather may be suggesting that all her characters are in some way misfits. Indeed, in writing about *Shadows on the Rock*, she states:

Now, it seemed to me that the mood of the misfits among the early settlers (and there were a good many) must have been just that [resignation]. An orderly little French household that went on trying to live decently, just as the ants begin to rebuild when you kick their house down, interests me more than Indian raids or the wild life in the forests. (*On Writing* 16)

Here Cather implies that even the characters who appear at the center of the community of Quebec, e.g., Cécile and her father, are actually just as much misfits as those who appear more at the periphery of the community. Perhaps the presence in their lives of those who are outsiders, disfigured, and disadvantaged helps the more central characters realize their own otherness and deficiency. Perhaps it enables them to realize that both through their own limitations and through their sometimes narcissistic approaches to the other, they all share a shadow-nature on the rock to which they cling for comfort and support. Readers of this novel are also confronted with their own otherness and treatment of the other. The text itself is a radical other, and the reader is challenged to approach it with a willingness to listen, a willingness to be disturbed out of his/her comfortable totalizing view. In a face-to-face encounter with the text, the reader must set aside his/her narcissism.

While at first glance the narrative of *Shadows on the Rock* is a sunny one, full of light and warmth, it is also shadowy, filled with pain, danger and human limitation. The community of Quebec is one which relies for its existence upon the presence of outsiders and upon the contribution of community members who are disfigured and disadvantaged. Cather's work will never fit neatly into any schematization, but she does appear to have been working with concerns similar to Levinas's, examining varying manifestations of the

other, possible approaches to the other, and the consequences, positive and negative, of such approaches. Community, while necessary and beneficial, is always at best tenuous and its construction and maintenance are costly. Skaggs points out that "in [Cather's] opinion, we infer, any culture or community includes oppositions. What it also includes, by existing at all, is a continuity which is itself a kind of miracle" (35-36). Readers of *Shadows on the Rock* are touched not only by the attractive and comforting sunniness of the community, but also by the prevalence, necessity and inevitability of its shadows. And perhaps readers are made more aware of the shadows which fall across their own lives, the shadow-like characters around them, and their own complicity in a human nature characterized by the interplay of shadow and sun.

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Father Creator (traditional Quebec church wood carving)
Museum of Quebec

— Photo by John Murphy

Cather's Firm Foundations and the Rock of Ages: A Note

Janis P. Stout
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Professor Philip L. Gerber's stimulating paper at the Sixth International Willa Cather Seminar held in Quebec in June 1995 reminded those who were in attendance of Cather's characteristic recourse to imagery of heights and massive rock in association with ideas of personal security. We see this (perhaps anxiety-driven) fixation on rock, of course, in *Shadows on the Rock*, in the emphasis on the massive rock formation on which Quebec is built, giving the city and its way of life a great measure of confidence against enemies and even against time, and in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, where a great "hill of yellow rock" that "stood up high and quite alone" provides the material for Latour's cathedral, and a high rock like that of Ácoma is "the utmost expression of human need." Such a rock, Cather writes, is "appealing to the imagination."

Cather's response to great foundational rocks is not, of course, surprising. The image of the rock lends itself quite naturally to associations of permanence, security, and strength to withstand adversity. Shakespeare assumed such associations, of course, as the basis for his assertions of poetry's power ("more bright in these contents / Than unswept stone, besmeared with sluttish time," Sonnet 55) and the ultimate uncertainty of everything material ("Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea, / But sad mortality o'ersways their power," Sonnet 65). Or for an older use of the trope we might think of the Biblical house built on the rock, in contrast to the house built upon sand. Both of these would have been as familiar to Cather as they are to us. Nevertheless, Professor Gerber's paper prompted me to wonder whether her readiness to evoke images of massive rocks, especially high rocks, was not traceable to early familiarity with the old hymn "Rock of Ages," where the metaphoric rock of Christ, cleft like his "wounded side," provides shelter in which one may hide (perhaps from a burning prairie sun?).

As we know, during Cather's childhood she and her family attended the Baptist Church in Red Cloud.

The hymnal they used there would almost certainly have contained "Rock of Ages." The words of the hymn, written in 1775 by Augustus M. Toplady, were set to the tune so familiar today by Thomas Hastings in 1830. They were first published together in *Spiritual Songs for Social Worship* in Utica, New York, in 1832. The hymn gained widespread popularity well before the end of the nineteenth century.

The present Baptist minister in Superior, Nebraska, Rev. Tom Henshawe, has confirmed that a copy now in his possession of the *Baptist Hymn and Tune Book*, published by the Bible and Publications Society in Philadelphia in 1871, bearing the notation "an adaptation of the hymns contained in the New Baptist Hymnbook," indeed contains the familiar hymn.² Although it is impossible to say with any certainty, that publication could well be the hymnal actually used in Red Cloud during the years of the Cathers' attendance. At any rate, Dr. William J. Reynolds, Distinguished Professor of Church Music at the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, writes, "I feel certain that the Cathers would have known Toplady's hymn 'Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me' and would have sung it in their church in Red Cloud, Nebraska. . . . It appeared in many collections by the 1890s, and I am confident that it would have reached Nebraska and have become a part of the congregational song there."³

Willa Cather's emotionally weighted use of great rocks as images of strength and security in an insecure world is one that must have derived from many instinctual sources. We know, however, that her imagination readily drew on memories of her early life, and it is quite plausible to suppose that a hymn she had sung in childhood, with such powerful language of shelter and secure foundation, would readily have surfaced not only in brief references in *The Professor's House* and *The Song of the Lark* but more generally come to mind as she developed fictional themes relating to anxiety and the wish for refuge and assurance.

NOTES

¹ Cather, *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927; rpt. Random House Vintage Books, 1990), p. 97.

² My thanks to Rev. Henshawe, interviewed by telephone on November 3, 1995.

³ Personal letter, William J. Reynolds to Janis P. Stout, October 18, 1995.

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1924 poster of Chateau Frontenac.

Pensées Sur Le Rocher (Québec 1995)

Her spirit is palpable in the mottled shade
 Of the maples below the Château de Frontenac,
 In winding alleys converging on the Place Royale
 And in the shadows of Notre-Dame-des-Victoires.
 Her eyes might have held joyfully the flames
 Of hibiscus and geraniums
 Blazing on hard-edged granite walls.
 And deep below, in the vaulted cellars of Pagé-Quercy,
 She might have paused, secure among the meticulous
 masonry,
 Bracing against rock and time,
 Guarding the well-spring and order of life.

There, too, are her shadows on the rock;
 Little Jacques, in shorts and sandals,
 Skipping through the Parc Montmorency;
 Pierre Charron, singing of perilous journeys through
 choking woods
 To tourists at the Place de l'Hôtel-de-Ville;
 And Cécile Auclair, helping Euclide up the stairs
 Of the Escalier Casse-Cou.

And as the luminous light of summer
 Floods this Old World in the New
 With enchantment and delight,
 There is also young Bartley Alexander,
 Shedding his coat,
 Stepping boldly into the bright light on the Boardwalk,
 High above the glittering St. Lawrence,
 Holding this pulsing city close to his heart,
 In celebration,
 Yet untroubled by the bridge
 Just beyond the eye's reach.

— Matthias Schubnell
 Incarnate Word College

Memories of Grand Manan

Polly Duryea
 Humboldt, Nebraska

“They call this cottage upscale rustic,” joked Laura Buckley owner of Whale Cove Cottages, a place that has catered to “Rusticators” on Grand Manan Island since 1910. Specifically, she was referring to Orchardside Cottage, the cottage Willa Cather rented there in the 1920s. She added, “The local fisher folk couldn’t understand why a famous novelist would want to live in a cabin, without water, on a cliff, — and not talk to anyone.” On June 20, 1995, some forty Cather scholars enjoyed a three-day pretrip to Grand Manan Island just before the Sixth International Willa Cather Seminar opened in Quebec City.



Orchardside Cottage, Whale Cove.

— Photo by Author

Grand Manan lies east of Maine and west of the Bay of Fundy in the Maritime Province of New Brunswick. For several summers this Jewett-esque island served as a retreat for Cather and her friend Edith Lewis. After two summers at Orchardside, Cather built a replica of the cabin only steps away down a wooded path. Curiously, the attic room in each cottage resembled her Red Cloud attic — an ideal, familiar place to write. While the Cather group visited the area, Helen Cather Southwick generously opened her aunt’s

private cottage to us, and at Orchardside three Islanders reminisced about days when Cather was there. My following impressions are from our three days on Grand Manan.

The Cather group stayed at four different locations on the island. My solstice stars were with me when I drew a lucky lot for Whale Cove! And happily, my bedroom would be in the very cottage that Willa Cather first rented, Orchardside. The landscape around the cabin reminded me of an Andrew Wyeth painting. Grassy meadows were stippled with golden day lilies, blue columbines, white Shasta daisies, and pungent herbs. A spacious lawn spread between the cottages and the Main House. To the east toward the water, the sixish sun rose above the herring-weirs that languish in Whale Cove. A dark-green pine shore protected the half-moon shape of the cove from the temperamental Bay of Fundy. Eager mosquitoes, viscous black-flies, and small black bugs seemed the island's only natural enemies.



Cather's Private Cottage, Whale Cove.

— Photo by Author

I thought of other lovely places that Willa Cather chose to inhabit: the Pink Cottage that overlooked the Taos Blue Mountain; the half-dormered room in the stately Pittsburgh mansion; the sunny-shadowed patio covered with white roses at Mary Austin's home in Santa Fe; the balcony of the La Fonda Hotel; the majestic Frontenac; the elegant Hotel Voltaire on the Seine; a ritzy Park Avenue apartment; a Mesa Verde tent; and finally, this natural, grey-shingled cottage at Grand Manan. Each place fits its own exquisite space.

Willa Cather found out about Whale Cove from a New York City librarian, a Ms. Overton. The two oldest cottages at the resort, Coopershop (originally a fish-barrel shop) and Orchardside (where apples were processed), adjoin an ancient orchard. Laura Buckley's mother, Kathleen Buckley, stated that for at least a hundred years various owners have taken people in and served meals at Whale Cove. Eventually various cottages were rented by the same "summer people," usually women, year after year. They were librarians, writers, and artists with names like Miss Edith Busbee, Miss Cobus, Miss Quigley, Coney, Felix. With no kitchens in the cabins, all meals were taken in



Cather's bedroom, Private Cottage.

the dining room in the Main House at Whale Cove resort.

But more about today's Orchardside, the two-hundred-year-old cottage that Cather rented. The sitting room with its huge fireplace remains relatively the same. A long legacy of guests' watercolors adorns its walls. Inside the east bedroom the slanting sun makes leafy patterns on the pretty sweet-pea-covered wallpaper. A spacious desk is placed so one can see the Bay. The old washstand with bowl and pitcher provided for an earlier toilette, while a tiny cobstove checked the autumn chill. A commodious chest of drawers stands next to a tiny adjacent dressing room which is now a bedroom. The old, narrow, rope-bed was fairly comfortable. Many of us thought the east bedroom was Cather's, but Mrs. Southwick explained that what is now a small kitchen was really the bedroom that Cather occupied. The large attic where she wrote has now been divided into two bedrooms. Enormous fireplaces still provide heat for the larger rooms.



Author (left) with Helen Cather Southwick, Willa's niece and present owner of Private Cottage.

— Photo by Susan Rosowski

In the '20s there was no piped water, but cold-water showers were rigged up outside in a brush house. Kitchen girls carried huge blue pitchers of hot water heated on cookstoves to each cottage. Two of

(Continued on the Next Page)

MEMORIES (Continued)

those kitchen girls — now “Old Beauties” — revisited Orchardside to relate their memories of Willa Cather. For about eight summers these women worked at the Whale Cove resort. Half of our group visited with Ellen Harvey, Kathleen Buckley, and her nephew, Herb MacMurtry. The others met with Mrs. Southwick at the Cather Cottage. I paraphrase their conversation from my notes taken at Orchardside, my island home, on June 22.

The Conversation

Herb MacMurtry: I remember seeing Willa Cather walk about — Dad remembers her more, as being rather remote, but making no fuss, and giving up his quarters to her on the ferryboat. My father is 92 now, but he was the Captain of the *Aurora*. Then the ferry went to several ports — sometimes even to Campobello, where the Roosevelts lived. Occasionally, on these longer trips, he lent his cabin to those going to Grand Manan. While she was on the island she wore a Panama hat, jodhpurs, and a red sleeve to help her rheumatism. She was the first woman I ever saw who smoked. My twin brother and I used to swipe cigarettes from the guests to smoke on the beach.

Ellen Harvey: She was friendly, but a loner. She and Miss Lewis would come to the dining room, but not linger. They didn't want people around.

Kathleen Buckley: Miss Cather was ordinary like any other person. Ann Price had friends in Boston who sent an article from the *Boston Globe* and gave her a copy of *My Antonia*. She told them this woman lives in a cottage here. As a young girl I was disappointed when I saw her first. She didn't dress up, was stout, and solid-looking. You wouldn't give her clothes a second glance. But another writer who lived in Paris impressed me. Miss [Eloise] Derby always looked great when she came back from France, dressed well. She and Willa Cather were never friends. Most of the women guests had money, had different ideas. They came here because it was quiet. They came here to work.

Ellen Harvey:

Miss Cather was concerned about her health, but she didn't fuss or complain. Everyone was worried when my father decided to build a weir* because Miss Cather wouldn't like it because of the noise. Papa said the talk was that she was fussing,



Ellen Harvey, kitchen girl at Whale Cove during Cather era.

— Photo by Author

carrying on, but that really she was giving us an account of the weir all the time, how many herrings were caught, and so on. We had a Big Easterly that May, and all the twine and top poles came ashore. The money had to be spent all over again.



Kathleen Buckley, Whale Cove Inn employee (presently owner) during Cather era.

— Photo by Author

Kathleen Buckley: Cobus [a guest] said it was too bad your mother died before the money started to come in. One year they [Cather and Lewis] stayed in the fall when Grace Walsh went back to school. I had to cook, and Miss Cather said, “You should be cooking all the time, Kathleen. We

like your food because it is served when it's just done. It's not like the other food which sits around. There are no leftovers. How do you make it come out so even?” Miss Cather wanted underdone bacon. Sometimes, I just threw something together for lunch: always muffins, soup, cookies, and fruit. Once in the dining room I heard her say, “Middleton Murry [editor] practically has Edith Busbee boiling Katherine Mansfield's bones to make money.” I sometimes think that now people are boiling Cather's bones.

Herb MacMurtry: Miss Sarah Jacobus [the owner] dressed up my brother and me like little waiters. She thought we little boys — we were about 11 or 12 years old — were “perfectly killing.” We served food and carried basins of warm water. We always served Cather and Lewis because we were short. In those days, the old dining room was about the same, but had a slanting roof almost to the ground. There were bookcases under the eaves behind the tables. They always sat under the eaves. The main thing is that she came here to work. The same people came year after year, and others who were new had trouble cracking the group.

Ellen Harvey: Miss Lewis was very quiet. I thought she had a slight speech impediment. She took a while to say things. You had to bend over to serve under the eaves in that dining room. At that time there weren't many cars on the island. Ray and Claude Gilmore had a taxi business, and Miss Cather would call and say, “Are either of the boys in?” One day she was fussing — the day she went to the Strawberry Festival at the church — the day the drummers came. Someone else picked her up, and she didn't like that. But Jack Macaulay charmed Miss Cather. Jack

Macaulay was a doctor who had charm! He brought about a thousand babies into this world. He was sincere, friendly, and took his work so serious. One night only a horse and sleigh would go through the snow, so his car couldn't get through. He went on foot — but got there too late, but he got there. He'd go any time; he was first on the island to have a boat. He used to visit her cottage a lot.

Keith Ingersoll wrote about Cather, but it is full of mistakes. [Ingersoll, L. B. "Willa Cather and Grand Manan, An Exerpt" (sic). *On This Rock: An Island Anthology*. Grand Manan, N.B.: Gerrish House Society, 1963; available from GM Museum, N.B. 10G 2M0]. Cather didn't go to Rose Cottage for a meal; she never gave Aggie Beal a set of china! He never came out here.

Kathleen Buckley: Willa Cather only came here once [in 1940] after Doctor Macaulay died in 1939. Once I took Dr. Bryant to see her. Miss Lewis said Miss Cather has a big lump on her hand, perhaps a spider bite. When Doctor Bryant came, he looked around and said, "You mean people stay and pay money to stay in these old places." She was always nice to me. When I was leaving to go to school, she came down the lane in [custodian] Ralph Beal's car with Miss Lewis and said, "Why didn't you say good-bye to me?"

Ellen Harvey: They bought the land for their cottage from Barb Thomas, or Joy Thomas [Sept. 7, 1926]. After she died, Miss Lewis paid [upkeep] for a while; then when she didn't pay Ray, he quit. All the property here was left to her nieces.



The Whale Cove Cuisine was a major topic among our group because of the delicious food prepared by chef-owner Laura Buckley. A spunky Island native, she holds a degree in Canadian history. One need only scan the interesting books in her Library to observe her broad interests. She also has a degree in kitchen management. Fortunately for us her Dining Room and Gourmet Food Shop opened June 4th, only weeks before we arrived. Her fare was divine. It included homemade chicken pie, lobster, salmon-salad sandwiches, flounder, pasta, muffins, and a delicious cheesecake with rhubarb and strawberries, all served on Blue Willow china. Through the windows of her dining room one gloried in the pink- and purple-Lupin garden bordering a dense wood. Laura Buckley said the best part of her life now is "the place, and being my own boss. The Swiss-German chef who trained me always said 'You're only a chef when you're hired to be one.'"

I have not touched on many special memories — spicy pantry cookies, tasty dulse (edible seaweed), the naturalists' talks on island life, the awesome view from South Head's glacial cliffs, Dany the bus driver, the herring factory, kayaks weaving through the weir. The islanders themselves, especially the grandmothers I

met, were unguarded, gentle, generous, and friendly in a way that seems lost at home. Later, my own granddaughter asked if I had any mystical experiences while sleeping in Cather's cottage. No, but I confessed that on solstice night, as the full moon shown in a silver pool through the window overlooking Whale Cove, I felt a sense of transmorphing, remembering that Cather had been there before. It was a poetic thing, a very special experience that I'll never forget.

Leaving Grand Manan on the handsome Dutch-built ferry was bitter-sweet. Some of the group saw whales which lifted their spirits. Herb MacMurtry left Grand Manan on the same ferry, and kindly pointed out the Swallowtail Lighthouse and Seven Days Work — the cliffs that Cather describes in "Before Breakfast," her only story about the island. After an hour and a half, we left the ferry docked on the Canadian mainland and traveled on to the beautiful village of St. Andrews, where I took a group photograph. Most important of all, we continue to thank tour-leaders, Professors Michael A. Peterman and Robert Thacker, who directed both the fabulous pretrip and the seminar.

How to get there: To reach the GM Ferry, fly into Saint John and follow Rt. #1 west to Blacks Harbour, Tele. 506-636-3922. To rent modern Whale Cove Cottages, including *either* Cather cottage, call 506-662-3181. Other rooms are available at Shorecrest Lodge, Compass Rose Inn, and Aristotle's Landing. Order *Heritage Trails & Footpaths on Grand Manan*. Ed. Kevin O'Donnell. 1993 ed. from GM Tourism Assoc., Box 193, North Head, Grand Manan, N.B. E0G 2M0.

* Weir, pronounced ware on Grand Manan, is a fence-like fishing trap. Weirs are built in the still waters of Whale Cove for herring.

Historicism and the Sentimental: Sources of Power in Willa Cather's *Shadows on the Rock*

Elaine E. Limbaugh
Portland State University

*"To invent good Stories and to tell them well
are probably very rare Talents."*

(Fielding, *Tom Jones*)

Judith Fetterley writes that "the ultimate irony of Cather's career lies in the fact that she is best remembered not for her impersonations of male experience, her masculine masquerades, but rather for strategies she evolved to maintain her own point of view and tell her own story within the masquerade" (56). While Fetterley's statement is an opening to explore other, very different avenues of fiction writing, there is implicit in her observation an understanding of Willa Cather's

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Sister Adele Edwards at the Basilica of Ste. Anne de Beaupre,
P.Q.
— Photo by John Murphy

HISTORICISM (Continued)

fictional method in *Shadows on the Rock*. I wish to examine Cather's blending of historicism and the sentimental as a strategy that enabled her to maintain a point of view and "tell her own story".

Cather's words on story telling, often guarded or metaphorical, speak to strategy and method. She defended the artist's need to employ the "veil and cloister" if the craft of inventing and telling good stories is to emerge as art, keeping she said, "the priesthood of art untainted from the world" (Slote 153). She described *Shadows* as "mainly 'anacoluthon,'" a rhetorical device usually designating a grammatical change within a sentence. In terms of the novel as a whole, however, this change suggests a larger scale issue. That issue is the blending of a process, which I contend, employs Cather's aesthetic use of historicism and the sentimental.

How does a writer use history to determine the shape and nature of a piece of literature? During the last two decades, there has been a renewed interest in the historical as an avenue for cultural understanding. I am not referring here to what has come to be

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Cather's Canadian Diptych

Sister Adele Edwards
Mount St. Mary's College, Los Angeles
*Gratefully Dedicated to Willa, Bob, Michael,
and All 1995 Seminar Participants*

First the lighthouse,
then the Cove
offer Grand Manan's welcome to
whales
weary sailors
writers.

"Here's a place
to play
to land
to create,"

calls the Cove.

"Come,
spout your spray
fillet your fish
plan your plot

among my
harbors
weirs
lupin.

Remember,

My shores are your shores."

First the Chateau,
then the Rock
extend Quebec's welcome to
explorers
artists
writers.

"Here's a place
to re-discover
to re-produce
to re-create,"

calls the City.

"Come,
search out my streets
sketch all my steeples
perpetuate my past

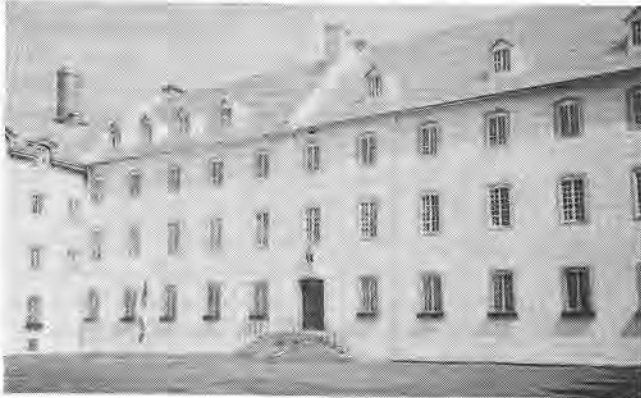
among my
shops
churches
hanging flowers.

Remember,

My past is your present."

HISTORICISM (Continued)

called "New Historicism," a method for rediscovering a particular political view. Rather, I would point to literary texts whose historical genesis is instrumental in shaping the work aesthetically. Traditionally, historical understanding focused on the clarification of texts as document or cultural artifact. In other instances, the historical was used to provide substantive background for biography or case studies. Cather's selection of a historical moment in time — the French colonization of Quebec — serves to shape the novel in terms of mood as well as message.



Quebec's 17th century Petit Seminaire, the site of two plenary sessions and luncheon at the Sixth International Seminar.

— Photo by John Murphy

Cather describes *Shadows On the Rock* as "more like an old song . . . than like a legend," as something fragmented and incomplete, a feeling about life inherited from another age and molded by tradition and time and memory. Several critics have offered arguments on Cather's method. Deborah Carlin provides a persuasive one on what she sees as four basic narrative constructions within the novel (62). Other readers point to metaphorical and connotative qualities. David Stouck speaks of the shadows as "ghosts or an aura from the past; something only experienced through memory or reflection . . ." (150). Shadow words like "ghosts, aura, memory, reflection" project an imaginative response within the novel's "muted" tone, a term Judith Fryer borrows from the historian, Gerda Lerner (Fryer 391). It is clear that Cather's "anacoluthon" strategy succeeds in richness for evoking thought. David Stouck argues that "Implicit in the historical perspective is the vision of mutability . . ." (150). This is true concerning death and decay and the passage of time; however, I would argue that a more subtle and perhaps a more significant attitudinal change takes place, the gradual divestment of the Old World.

We are told early in the story that the philosopher apothecary knows he is not the proper stuff for a colonist. The New World will require a different kind of person. Pierre Charron, the free Frenchman and

soldier of fortune, is the New World prototype. His good manners are those of the Old World, his "dash and daring belong to the New" (*SR* 172). Proud, vain, "relentless when he hated, and quickly prejudiced," his clan-loyalties embrace friendship but do not keep him from questioning customs of the church and the politicals who "smell of Versailles" (174). While others lived in fear of the Indians, could not learn their language, or suffered ridicule and torture at their hands, Pierre, the handsome skeptic, won the trust and respect of the Indians through courage and fair dealing. He was as much at home in the wilderness as he was in the Auclair salon.

The landscape once wild and frightening to the colonists, a "vegetable kingdom" (6), a dead, sealed world which swallows European man, at the close of the novel seems instead to be full of promise. True, it does not glow in the warm light of Provence; it is different, clear and fresh, enveloping the "orchards, and gardens and silvery steeples" (225). Those who could not detach from the idea of the Old World found themselves vanquished by the hardships of frontier living, politics in France intervened not to right old wrongs but to replace old evils with new evils. Meanwhile, Cécile chooses Charron's devoted and fearless life, an "authority and power that comes from knowledge of the country and its people, and from a kind of passion" (268). The tradition-bound Cécile and her politically loyal father now bask under the beauty of October skies, pleased to embrace life as true Canadians.

The historical process itself becomes, as Kenneth Burke suggests, "the instigator and actual shaper . . . both origin and real composer of specific works." "Relevance," he continues, "stems from the implications for both art and social situations outside of art" (433). Cather's own words describing her method in the book confirm the process as "a series of pictures remembered rather than experienced; a kind of thinking, a mental complexion inherited, left over from the past . . ." (*OW* 15).

The sentimental novel, once "the enthusiastic choice of serious writers who sought through fiction to emphasize positive values" (Spacks 115), has fallen from favor in the twentieth century. Today's sophisticated readers, while endorsing other forms of sentimentality, deplore those characteristics frequently associated with sentimental novels of earlier centuries. Overindulgence in emotion, maudlin dialogue, and exaggerated pathos fail to move modern audiences to restore morality or rescue virtue. And yet, sentimentalism at its best, literally the heart of nineteenth century American culture, was a genre which implied "a set of ethical principles . . . and the theological scheme to support such principles" (Spacks 130).

Cultural historians in recent examinations of works formerly shelved as "sentimental novels" have been asking how the genre fell from grace when so many

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HISTORICISM (Continued)

serious novelists had adopted the form, finding no shortage of enthusiastic readers. Most of these critics concede the genre was used to underscore values, that perhaps certain values have gone out of style or that the culture sought modes of appeal more effectively treated through the strategies of literary naturalism.

Other critics point to class and gender struggles for an explanation, that if sentimentalism was a "woman thing," debunking the form was a way of devaluing women's writing. Such an analysis seems a touch paranoid, and yet many times social schemes, calculated or not, frequently work in the reverse of what is intended. Lauren Berlant addresses this issue in her essay, "The Female Woman: Fanny Fern and the Form of Sentiment":

sentimental ideology served as a structure of consent in which domestically atomized women found in consumption of popular texts the experience of intimate collective identity, a feminine counterpublic sphere whose values remained fundamentally private. (270)

Lynn Wardley in an essay on Stowe adds another dimension to the discussion by considering the power of "invisible persuasion" inherent in the depiction of domesticity. Wardley quotes Stowe's intention to be really great in the little things . . . noble and heroic in the insipid details of everyday life" (209). If texts are in some sense political gestures, the nature of that politicization in *Shadows* is ethical.

I suggest that two areas of the sentimental court our sense of the ethical in Cather's novel. One, the nurture of domesticity, and the other, the elements of virtue, both life-sustaining essentials, are woven like threads in a tapestry in and around the Auclair household. The result is a commentary on beauty — the beauty of life well lived.

Just as the sentimental tends to be aligned with women, so are attributes of beauty, sentiments of tenderness and affection. While philosophers and clerics are divided on the nature of a providence that makes this so, they have been known to concede such sublimity constitutes a form of power. It is, then, perhaps unique but not implausible that what we learn comes via Cécile. When Father Hector shares the means by which he found strength to embrace a most significant sacrifice, he notes Cécile's breathless attention to his words. He touches her and says, "See, she understands me! From the beginning women understand devotion, it is a natural grace with them; they have only to learn where to direct it. Men have to learn everything" (150).

Cécile cherishes housekeeping and homemaking. She is faithful to her mother's memory in the details of domesticity — cooking wholesome food, keeping pots and pans polished, observing the rituals of hot chocolate and a walk before slumber, caring for the needy as well as extending cordiality to guests gathering round the Auclair hearth. Daily rituals provide order,

and order empowers one in times of stress. Her belief in the power of these habits is validated by her visit to the Harnois family, that "had kind ways, . . . but that was not enough; one had to have kind things about one, too" (197). Cather elevates Cécile's understanding of the need for gentility to a religious level, a nourishment of the soul that makes life worthwhile.

The sentiments of tenderness and civility are artfully juxtaposed with suffering, cruelty, and greed in the world. The power of this is felt through the storytelling Cécile loves. Stories are her education, and the novel is filled with stories heard and felt by the alert and perceptive child. The story of her grandmother's pain when old Bichet was so unjustly tortured causes Cécile to ask, "Am I like my grandmother?" (93). There is the story of the torturer Blinker who cannot forget his victims' screams. Stories of the missionaries and martyrs speak of sacrifice and loneliness. Stories of the Ursuline Sisters become dramas of stoicism and mystery. It is in this fashion that Cécile's (and the reader's) moral and ethical consciousness is informed. Cruelty, anguish, and suffering are balanced by the beauty of kindness, understanding, and compassion, all of which are fostered in the home:

When an adventurer carries his gods with him into a remote and savage country, the colony he founds will, from the beginning, have graces, traditions, riches of the mind and spirit. Its history will shine with bright incidents, slight, perhaps, but precious, as in life itself, where the great matters are often as worthless as astronomical distances, and the trifles dear as the heart's blood (98).

It becomes clear that historicism and the sentimental do not stand opposed but combine to evoke the mystery of Cather's power in this novel. The sentimental historian/novelist, free to negotiate history and character, is able to construct a social context that reconstructs values, crosses lines of class and gender, and demonstrates a process of spiritual renewal.

Cather's particular form of the sentimental within an historical framework argues for a world of Christian love fostered and nurtured through domestic ritual around the hearth. Her characters represent a New World humanity forged by abandonment and nurturing. Huddled within the shadows of their rock between two worlds — the frightening wilderness on one side, the greed and whim of distant monarchs on the other — they emerge inheritors of a new political destiny. Wars might be fought, continents won and colonized, the reign of monarchs documented and debated by historians, yet the central affirmations of power in human life go relatively unnoticed and unrecorded except for the subtle artistry of Cather's storytelling.

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**Crossing Boundaries:
Cather Scholarship at the 1995
Western Literature Association
Meeting
Vancouver, British Columbia**

Evelyn I. Funda
Utah State University

Held for the first time outside of the U.S., the 1995 Western Literature Association Conference met October 11-14 at the Coast Plaza Hotel which overlooks the skyline of downtown Vancouver, Vancouver Harbor and the fall colors of Stanley Park. Amid such spectacular scenery, Cather scholars sensed, as WLA president and conference coordinator Laurie Ricou wrote in his program introduction, "the mountains of western writing behind us, and the oceans of possibilities in front of us." Interpreting the conference's theme of a "celebration of border crossing," the ten papers focusing on Willa Cather consistently considered the effect of violating boundaries in Cather's fiction, where the "borderlands" are both literal and symbolic and include boundaries of public and private lives as well as class and gender.

Four papers considered different aspects of the boundaries of social status. Reginald Dyck (Capital University), in his essay "Lost Men: The Hidden Injuries of Class in Cather's *A Lost Lady*," suggested that *A Lost Lady* is the most class conscious fiction of Ca-

ther's canon; characters suffer a kind of "status anxiety" that leads them to find strategies for maintaining and increasing status.

The essay from Florence Amamoto (Gustavus Adolphus College), entitled "Why Aren't You Always Nice Like This, Tony": Romanticism, Realism, Naturalism, and Socioeconomics in Cather's Fiction," was one of the two papers that considered class issues in terms of the literary forms Cather used. Identifying Cather characters with either a Romantic, Realistic, or Naturalistic viewpoint — as determined by a character's socioeconomic status — Amamoto proposed that the Romantic luxury of the privileged has the potential to lead to blindness and be judgmental, while the Realistic perspective makes characters more able to love, accept and forgive.

In identifying the gossips of *A Lost Lady* with a Greek chorus, my own essay, "The Power of Their Tongues': Mistaking Invasion for Intimacy in Cather's *A Lost Lady*," explored the distinctive social position of the townspeople who act as intermediaries for us as readers while making us complicit in their invasion of the house of Forrester. Cather demonstrates how, mistaking intimate knowledge for intimacy, the gossips (and readers participating in their gossip) fail to recognize that their/our truth about Mrs. Forrester's inner self is only an approximation.

In "The Power of the Dog: Willa Cather and *Dracula*," Karen Kebarle (University of California, Berkeley) extended an earlier suggestion that Cather imaginatively drew on Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (Susan Rosowski had noted the similarities in 1986). Calling the short stories "The Affair at Grover Station" and "The Old Beauty" Cather's portraits of sexual danger and racial prejudice in which the foreigner is stereotyped as dangerous and base, Kebarle distinguished these works from Stoker's by suggesting that Cather does not sexually romanticize the danger of the threat.

Like Kebarle, Janis Stout (Texas A & M University) and David Delugach (University of Oregon) associated literary forms with gender issues. Stout's paper, "The Circuit of the House: The Homecentered Journeys of Mary Austin and Willa Cather," traced "the engagement with polarities of change and stasis" in the work of both Cather and Mary Austin. Both writers, said Stout, use the journey motif in feminine terms. Demonstrating in these writers the dilemma between the "desire to go and the necessity to stay," Stout sees this "home-centric journey" as a pattern of self-discovery and altered vision. Focusing on *My Ántonia* as a "female pastoral" in "Cather's Female Pastoral and the Androgynous Narrator of *My Ántonia*," Delugach suggested Cather was "grafting" a masculine model onto female subject matter. Abandoning male hierarchy, Cather's 1926 revision of the novel's introduction, for example, "blurs gender distinctions and obscures the authorship," thereby setting the stage for female heroics to be set side by side with traditional male heroics.

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CROSSING BOUNDARIES (Continued)

Papers by Matthias Schubnell (Incarnate Word College, San Antonio) and Linda Hughson Ross (Sheridan College) examined themes of transcendence. Schubnell's paper, "Whitman, Cather, and the Spirit of Place Idea in American Art: A Reading of *The Song of the Lark*," placed Cather in context with Whitman's belief that the artist must be attuned to the aboriginal presence in order to create a uniquely American art. Along with Whitman, Cather articulates her belief, particularly in the Panther Canyon section of *The Song of the Lark*, that truly national art must draw from truly American sources and the artist must be linked to the American soil and to the American Indian. Noting a spiritual affinity in Cather's later novels to the life of the sky, Linda Ross considered in "Sanctification through Light and Sky: Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Shadows on the Rock*" the notions of transcendence and sanctification in moments when literal ascensions parallel spiritual ascensions. Citing examples when characters achieve a state of grace, absolutism or forgiveness, Ross demonstrated how in these Cather texts the life of the spirit is reflected in the life of the sky.

Exploring the life of the visual artist, two other papers by Timothy R. Cramer and Polly Duryea (both of the University of Nebraska, Lincoln) offered a glimpse into Cather's own views on art as well as Cather herself as subject of art. While Cramer's paper, "The 'Tragic Necessity' and the Creative Individual: Willa Cather and Sinclair Ross," focused primarily on Sinclair Ross's artist, Philip Bentley of *As For Me and My House*, Cramer used as a point of departure Cather's concept of the artist as one who lives and suffers a conflict between public and private life. Like Stout, Cramer cited the artist's conflicting need to belong and to escape. Drawing extensively on letters to and from Cather, Duryea's paper "Willa Cather on Canvas: A Study of Two Portraits by Two Russian Painters" was illustrated by photos of Cather in the 1920s and the two portraits painted of her during that decade. Duryea traced the controversy surrounding the commissioned Bakst painting (1923) and the later portrait by Nicholas Fechin (1927). Bakst, said Duryea, set out to create a portrait of the complexities of Cather's inner and outer personality, while Fechin's portrait demonstrated a self-confident and approachable artist.

In what proved to be, for Cather scholars, one of the highlights of the conference, David Stouck, Susan Rosowski, and John Murphy discussed the delights and frustrations of editing the Willa Cather Scholar Editions of, respectively, *O Pioneers!*, *A Lost Lady*, and *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. Having received wide and enthusiastic praise for their relevance to Cather studies and American literature as a whole, the scholarly editions have been distinctive in the comprehensiveness of their explanatory notes and in the ground-breaking textual material. Noting Elizabeth



Cather Scholarly Edition Editors (left to right): Charles Mignon, David Stouck, Susan Rosowski, and John Murphy.

— Photo by Polly Duryea

Shepley Sergeant's assertion that the land itself "insisted on being the hero" in *O Pioneers!*, David Stouck described how research for that edition centered on the details of the landscape, the flora and fauna that served as backdrop to Cather's youth and gave her a sense of intimacy with place. John Murphy described the richness of historical references and the depth of Cather's research in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. Comparing original sources to Cather's text, Murphy demonstrated Cather's astonishing attention to minute detail. With Cather, he noted, nothing is careless, and even the smallest chosen detail has meaning. Susan Rosowski, general editor of the series, described the "leap of faith" of the editors when proposing editions that challenged purely textual scholarship. Since that initial proposal, the scholarly editions of *My Ántonia* and *O Pioneers!* have come into print, *A Lost Lady* has been approved (and lauded) by the CSE inspector and is presently being transmitted to the press, preparations for *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Obscure Destinies* are being completed, and work is beginning on *Shadows on the Rock* and *The Song of the Lark*.

While talk of texts and borderlands was intellectually exciting, the meeting was not without its opportunities for fellowship and conviviality — a relaxed boat excursion to the lovely forested Bowen Island, a poetry reading at the Museum of Anthropology, seafood meals at a harbour-side restaurant, and a reception hosted by Ann Romines (George Washington University) and Pat Phillips (WCPM Director). Most notably, at an informal dinner gathering at the Pink Pearls restaurant in downtown Vancouver, Cather participants expressed excitement over the announcement that the 1997 International Cather Seminar will be held in Winchester, Virginia, near the childhood home of Willa Cather. Over chop sticks and egg drop soup, Ann Romines, co-coordinator of that seminar, enticed us with details about how plans for the seminar's facilities and invited speakers are already beginning to unfold.

For 1996, the Western Literature Association will return to Cather's Lincoln, Nebraska, where Susanne

George (University of Nebraska at Kearney) will coordinate the annual meeting, to be held concurrently with the annual meeting of the Western History Association.

**CATHER SPRING CONFERENCE
RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA
MAY 3-4, 1996**

Featured Text: *My Mortal Enemy*

8-10 page papers invited on the featured novel and other aspects of Cather for May 3 sessions.

Abstracts due 1 February; completed papers due 1 April.

CONTACT: Virgil Albertini
Rural Route 3, Box 21
Maryville, Missouri 64468

**SEVENTH INTERNATIONAL WILLA CATHER
SEMINAR**

**Willa Cather:
Southern Connections**

**Winchester, Virginia — Shenandoah University
June 21-28, 1997**

This seminar, to be held in the Shenandoah Valley country where Willa Cather was born and spent the influential first nine years of her life, will explore Cather's deep and lifelong connections to Southern culture. Seminar sessions will consider Southern issues and institutions — including slavery — in Cather's writing and biography and will read her fiction in the contexts of Southern predecessors, contemporaries, and followers. Seminar staff and speakers will include historians, folklorists and a wide range of literary scholars representing various theoretical perspectives.

Seminarians will be housed on the parklike campus of Shenandoah University, and the week will include ample opportunities to explore the history and culture of the area, visiting Willowshade, Cather's childhood home in Winchester, and many other family sites inscribed in Cather's fiction. A day in Washington, D.C., based at George Washington University, will also provide an opportunity to explore Cather's Washington connections.

For further information, write to Professor John Jacobs, Site Director, Department of English, Shenandoah University, Winchester, Virginia 22601, OR Professor Ann Romines, Program Director, Department of English, George Washington University, Washington, D.C. 20052. The seminar is co-sponsored by the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Shenandoah University, and George Washington University.

**Louise Pound and Willa Cather:
An Intellectual Network?**

Guy Reynolds
University of Kent, England

The friendship between Willa Cather and Louise Pound is usually discussed in biographical terms: their meeting as students at the University of Nebraska; the possibility of a lesbian affair; the resentment and estrangement that was to disrupt their friendship. Such biographical inquiry is important for its own sake, and for feminist critics this friendship exemplifies the woman-centeredness of Cather's life. Sharon O'Brien, for instance, sees the Cather/Pound friendship as a bonding between precocious female students. She notes Pound's achievements as scholar and sports-woman, and places her as "the fabled 'New Woman' of the 1890s." O'Brien records that Pound and Cather worked together in 1891 as associate editors of a college literary magazine (129).

At this point the biographer has completed her or his investigation. Yet it is here, with the collaboration between Cather and her gifted contemporary, that the question of intellectual influence arises. *Who Was Who in America* testifies to the scope of Pound's work in philology, folklore and literary criticism: she produced a large number of books and articles, edited scholarly journals, and became the first woman president of the MLA. In spite of these achievements, Louise Pound is sometimes regarded as an inferior example of the Nebraskan intellectual. When A. L. Rowse met Ms. Pound, he ironically termed her the "Mother of American Philology." In Rowse's view Louise Pound "was perhaps jealous of Willa's achievement and her world-fame" (164).

Is it fair that Pound should be thus demoted? And would a fuller appreciation of Pound's work help our readings of Cather — for example, by supplying points of comparison and contrast with Cather's novels? We have to grant two objections to the hypothesis that Pound might have directly influenced Cather. First, apart from their early college collaboration, Pound and Cather never worked together. Indeed, Cather's career followed a curve towards increasing literary independence. Examples of collective literary endeavor occur during the early years: a ghost story that she wrote with Dorothy Canfield ("The Fear That Walks By Noonday," 1894); the autobiography of S. S. McClure which she helped to create (*My Autobiography*, 1914). Once Cather began to write fiction full-time these collaborations ceased.

A second objection is that Cather was suspicious of literary movements and groups. She had a defensive sense of her own literary idiosyncrasy, and she distrusted the clubbishness of movements such as "veritism" and "aestheticism." Her favorite authors remained outside these literary schools. Thus her comment on Robert Louis Stevenson in 1894: "It is probable that before the advancement of encroach-

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POUND AND CATHER

(Continued)

ing realism and 'veritism' and all other literary unpleasantness Stevenson will be relegated to the children's bookshelves, along with Scott and Cooper and the elder Dumas" (*World and Parish* 137). Even late in her life, with her singularity well-established, Cather continued to mock literary groups. A letter of 1939 to Dorothy Canfield Fisher expressed both love for the Southwest and contempt for the writing clubs that had flourished in Santa Fe (Madigan, Monday 1939).

We have, then, to be careful when considering Cather's life and work, paying due attention to her own suspicions of collaborations and literary movements. There was no "Cather circle," no stable literary or intellectual group immediately around her. If there had been, the problem of intellectual influence could be clearly focused. Instead, one has to imagine areas of intellectual overlap — a kind of loose networking. Given that Cather's friends included prominent novelists, musicians, scholars and journalists, it would seem highly unlikely that she was oblivious to their work. And since these friendships were characterized by an almost febrile intensity — Cather had notoriously impassioned rifts and reconciliations with Louise Pound and Isabelle McClung — we can assume an intellectual undercurrent too. Thus, even though we ought to respect Cather's dogged individualism, the intellectual reciprocities with her friends do merit investigation. Moreover, I believe that through tracing these networks of friendship certain intellectual affinities emerge. Louise Pound's work parallels Cather's and illuminates certain of Cather's main themes: immigration, cultural transmission, the development of an American folk-culture.

These analogies are immediately evident when we read Louise Pound's *Poetic Origins and the Ballad* (1921). Pound shares with Cather two preoccupations: the discovery of an ancient, indigenous American culture through the disciplines of archaeology and anthropology; and the transmission of Old World culture to the United States. *Poetic Origins*, which discusses the ballad's emergence in "primitive societies" and its survival into contemporary oral folk-culture, is an intellectually heterogeneous work. Pound draws on anthropology as well as the traditional methods of literary history, for example textual collation and analysis. Pound discusses the ballad in medieval Europe; she also refers to research on the folk-songs of the American Indian. *Poetic Origins* is notable for two features. It exemplifies the supposedly disinterested investigation of "primitive culture" for its own sake and for its illumination of the sources of Western society and art. The very title of Pound's book indicates this neo-Darwinian search for a cultural point-of-departure, an "origin." The second feature is the broad historical canvas that this inquiry produces. Instead of a narrow Occidental history, Pound projects a capa-

acious past in which supposedly "savage" societies have their place.

At the heart of *Poetic Origins* is a debate about creativity: did communal or individual creativity generate the ballad? Pound's thesis is that the individual's artistry *had* to come first:

That it is an absurd chronology which assumes that individuals have choral utterance before they are lyrically articulate as individuals, seems — extraordinarily enough — to have little weight with theorists of this school. Did primitive man sing, dance, and compose in a throng, while he was yet unable to do so as an individual? (9)

And she concludes her first chapter with this dismissal: "The assumption that group power to sing, to compose songs, and to dance, precedes individual power to do these things, is fatuously speculative" (35).

Pound is interested in using "primitive man" to examine the nature of creativity; and at the origin of culture she finds the individual artist. Her emphasis on creative individualism is analogous to Cather's fascination with the solitary artist or intellectual in novels such as *The Song of the Lark* and *The Professor's House*. Previous discussion of these figures has stressed the European and Romantic roots of Cather's interest in the individual artistic consciousness. Susan Rosowski writes that "In its narrative, then, *The Song of the Lark* is a romantic *Kunstlerroman*, a *Bildungsroman* or novel of development which treats artistic growth as the growth of the imagination" (68-69). Comparison with Pound suggests more immediate *Nebraskan* parallels. Pound and Cather both located their individual artists in a primitive setting. In the "Tom Outland's Story" section of *The Professor's House* (1925) Cather portrays a landscape littered with the domestic relics of an ancient Pueblo culture. Outland discovers shards of pottery, arrowheads and an ax; and on the mesa he finds dwellings, stone jars and dried food. The communality of the Pueblo is everywhere evident in these reminders of homeliness, and Outland explicitly refers to the collective spirit of the Indians: "It was evidently a kind of common kitchen, where they roasted and baked and probably gossiped" (209). Even though the environment is suffused with a communal atmosphere, it is most potently creative for the individual. Outland returns to the mesa alone after a disastrous trip to Washington, and he nurtures his creative intelligence in solitude. The landscape seems to encourage this productive isolation, as when he lies down "on a solitary rock" and finds a wholeness and self-regeneration: "that was the first night I was ever really on the mesa at all — the first night that all of me was there" (250). Alone in aboriginal America, Outland "had found everything, instead of having lost everything" (251).

The inquiry into creativity, communality and primitivism is for Pound and Cather a means to think about America and its artistic traditions. Pound investigates aboriginal culture and discovers a neo-Romantic primacy of artistic individualism. Pound thereby suggests that America was from its origin able to

sustain artistry. And Cather extrapolates from Pound's 1921 insight in her novel of 1925. She posits a continuity between the primitive American artist and her or his modern counterpart.

Cather was interested in the continuity of an American artistic tradition that stretches from the ancient indigenous culture through to the contemporary arts of opera and literature. In *The Song of the Lark* (1915), the demoralized opera singer Thea Kronborg is revitalized by a summer vacation in Panther Canyon, an ancient site once inhabited by Cliff-Dweller Indians. As in "Tom Outland's Story" the artist enters into a mystical communion with the landscape; again, relics suggest an artistic continuity: "These pot-shards were like fetters that bound one to a long chain of human endeavour" (380); and for Thea, "The Cliff-Dwellers had lengthened her past" (383). In one striking passage Thea's footsteps seem to follow the movement of the Indian women:

She found herself trying to walk as they must have walked, with a feeling in her feet and knees and loins which she had never known before — which must have come up to her out of the accustomed dust of that rocky trail. She could feel the weight of an Indian baby hanging to her back as she climbed. (376)

Cather puns on the word "accustomed" to suggest a cultural continuity from the Indians through to Thea. The dust is "accustomed" because it is habituated to being trampled upon; the trail is, as it were, used to being trodden. But the dust is also accustomed in the sense that it is impregnated or infused with the customs or the way of life of those who formerly trod the trail. The very dust can therefore transfer an ancient life into Thea Kronborg's body. Thea's fantasy, startling in its physicality, develops one of the novel's central themes: Thea's choice between the traditional female world (mothering, marriage) and an artistic career that would subordinate these activities. In Panther Canyon, Thea can imagine herself as a mother even as she is being rejuvenated as an artist; the communion with the habits and customs of primitive America enables her to incorporate the two sides of her female existence. Moreover, this epiphany combines communal primitivism with individual artistry — a conjunction of the past and the present, the collective and the individual which would have been immediately familiar to Cather's friend, Louise Pound.

Like Cather, Pound was interested in female creativity. She wrote that "It is interesting to note that many Indian songs are composed by women" (20). Her generalization was based on research articles by eminent anthropologists which discussed female creativity in primitive societies. Franz Boas and Alexander F. Chamberlain are cited by Pound in her sources. This anthropological research now seems strikingly ahead of its time. Cather might have been aware of this work through her friendship with Pound. Certainly, Pound's and Cather's fascination with primitive female culture anticipates the work of modern

feminists (themselves indebted to the work of earlier anthropologists). Compare the female folk-arts (ballads, pottery) in Cather and Pound with Adrienne Rich's description of the woman potter:

It does not seem unlikely that the woman potter molded, not simply vessels, but images of herself, the vessel of life, the transformer of blood into life and milk — that in so doing she was expressing, celebrating, and giving concrete form to her experience as a creative being possessed of indispensable powers. (97)

Pound's work on ballads led her to speculate about cultural transmission: how are ballads communicated from one part of society to another? Do they change as they filter down through the ages? Pound became an editor of *American Speech*, a journal devoted to American etymology, dialect and folklore; it published pieces on American transformations of transplanted European culture, for instance Herbert H. Vaughan's "Italian and its Dialects as Spoken in the United States." Pound's own research traced the import of European culture into the United States. Her note on "An American Text of 'Sir James the Rose'" discussed an eighteenth-century Scottish ballad that had made its way by oral transmission to Lincoln, Nebraska. She also argued that Walt Whitman, rather than being a demotically insular poet, was a polyglot user of Romance languages in his verse. Pound's entry on "Oral Literature" in the *Cambridge History of American Literature* (1921) declared that

The main interest of oral literature is historical. From it may be seen how songs and verse tales develop, how themes and styles are transmitted from generation to generation, and from one region or land to another. (502)

A motif in Pound's work is that this transmission — through times and across countries — produces artistic degeneration. In the New World, for example, European ballads deteriorate:

Contrast, where dates are available, early pieces with late, or American versions with their Old World parents, and make inference from the mass. The crudity and the unliterary quality increases with the lapse of time, and by popular preservation. (116)

Although Pound collected American ballads, she took a hard line on the quality of that material. Her argument in *Poetic Origins* is that New World ballads are communal, popular poetry and therefore they are "too crude, too structureless, too unoriginal, too lacking in coherence and in striking or memorable qualities" (218-19). Poetic degeneration is seen as a movement from the Old World to the New, from an individualist to a collective form of creativity. Popular, communal varieties of literature come to prevail, but they lack the originality and power to constitute a viable tradition. There is then a further slippage towards cultural disintegration. There is an underlying pessimism to Pound's analysis of cultural decline. Simply stated,

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POUND AND CATHER

(Continued)

Pound fears for the creeping cultural imperfection that is the corollary to poetic degeneration.

Pound's scholarly essays parallel and illuminate Cather's work on a similar array of topics: translation, cultural transmission, the fate of European culture in its new American home. If we take one famous illustration of these themes from Cather's fiction — the inset story of the fated wedding in *My Ántonia* (1918) — we can see how Pound's work illuminates Cather's fiction:

The immigrant Pavel tells a story from the European homeland: wolves attacked the sledges in which a wedding party was travelling, and in the chaos Pavel pushed the bride and groom off their sledge to certain death. The story of betrayal and long-held guilt is tangentially related to other troubled relationships in *My Ántonia* (the Cutters, Ántonia and Jim). But this thematic relevance is tangential at best, and is overshadowed by the wedding tale's contribution to the novel's exploration of cultural transmission, oral folklore and translation.

European tales of ravenous wolves had spread, as the immigrants had spread, across the Midwest (Schach 67-78). Cather, either consciously or unconsciously, used a story that was popular in the folk-culture of the American Plains. She then set down the story to demonstrate the ways in which oral transmission had taken place. The story is told by Pavel to Mr. Shimerda; Ántonia overhears the tale and translates it for Jim Burden. At first Jim can only sense the excitement of the Europeans; he cannot understand the reasons for their agitation:

Presently Pavel began to talk to Mr. Shimerda, scarcely above a whisper. He was telling a long story, and as he went on, Ántonia took my hand under the table and held it tight. She leaned forward and strained her ears to hear him. He grew more and more excited, and kept pointing all around his bed, as if there were things there and he wanted Mr. Shimerda to see them. (54)

The passage is full of different kinds of communication: whispering, touching, gesticulating. Jim, as yet, does not understand the subject of this story. Eventually he is told about the wolves; the story appears as a translated inset in the narrative. After he tells his story Pavel dies; his companion, Peter, moves away. Despite the break-up of this immigrant household, the story of the wolves continues to be remembered because Ántonia and Jim preserve the memory: "For Ántonia and me, the story of the wedding party was never at an end" (61). The original story has a progressively wider audience as it moves from Pavel to Mr. Shimerda and then out to Antonia and Jim. Simultaneously, the story binds Ántonia and Jim together: "We did not tell Pavel's secret to anyone, but guarded it jealously" (61). Cather explores the ways in which a folk-memory develops, moving centrifugally and centripetally, spreading outwards even as it binds

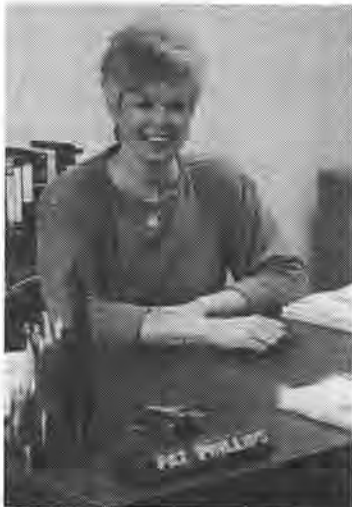
the listeners together in a community of memory. Through the transmission of memories a sense of community is fostered.

To the central question of whether transmission entailed degeneration, Louise Pound could only answer that this was indeed the case. Cather's position was more hopeful. Whereas Pound sees cultural transmission as a two-stage process of decline (individual creativity falling towards the communal; the Old World becoming the New), Cather re-positions these stages as a regenerative dialectic: folk-culture is renewed by being shunted to and fro between Europe and America, the individual and the community. *My Ántonia* reads as a remarkably optimistic text about cultural transmission and continues to be relevant to America's ongoing controversies about assimilation, Americanization and bilingualism. Comparison with the work of her peers enables us to place Cather's prescient response in context.

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News from the WCPM Director . . .



The WCPM's Board of Governors meets three times a year: in January (in Lincoln), May (Red Cloud), and September (Omaha). This September we met on the last day of the month at UNO's Peter Kiewit Conference Center for a day-long meeting. I thought *Newsletter* readers might like to know some of what transpired during this

meeting. Governors are regularly elected at this time, and a highlight of this particular gathering was the election of two new Board members, Ann Romines from George Washington University in Washington, D.C., and John Swift, Occidental College, Los Angeles, California. We warmly welcome Ann and John to the Board. Their insight, intelligence, interest, and concern will be assets to the Board. Both have been very active within the Cather community, locally and nationally. In addition, several Board members were re-elected: Virgil Albertini, Bruce Baker, Dave Garwood, Gary Meyer, Gary Thompson, and Marcella Van Meter. Officers elected were Dave Garwood, President; Betty Kort, Vice President; Bruce Baker, Secretary; and Gary Meyer, Treasurer.

The Board agreed that the 1996 Spring Conference, to be held Friday and Saturday, May 2-3, will center around *My Mortal Enemy*. An invitation will be extended for papers related to this book for presentation during the Friday afternoon session. On Saturday John Murphy will present an academic paper on *My Mortal Enemy* to be followed by the "Passing Show" panel discussion, which will feature George Day, Marilyn Callander, and Jo Ann Middleton. A Cather tour or slide presentation option will be offered on Saturday afternoon. The Saturday evening banquet will feature readings from *My Mortal Enemy*.

Newsletter readers can look forward to the publication of *Cather Studies 3* by the University of Nebraska Press. This publication will include essays by fourteen scholars. Many of these essays come from the WCPM/UNL Fourth International Seminar held in Nebraska in 1993. The Board approved the expenditure of \$2000 in support of this project.

A proposal was also enthusiastically approved for an International Seminar in June of 1997 at Shenandoah University, Winchester, Virginia. The proposal was submitted by co-directors, John Jacobs (site director) from Shenandoah and Ann Romines (academic/program director) from George Washington University.



Adopted granddaughter of Oscar Cather (brother of G. P. Cather, One of Ours, and son of George Cather), Sayra Wagner, has done exterior repair, roofed, and painted the Charles Cather house, located on Sixth and Seward in Red Cloud. Renovation of the porch and interior continues. The Cathers lived in this house from 1904 until Mrs. Cather's death in 1931. — Photo by Pat Phillips

Considerations of local nature included approval to develop a map of the Red Cloud cemetery to identify relevant Cather stories as well as grave sites. In addition, new signs will be installed on the Museum building and at a location a few miles north of Red Cloud to direct visitors to the Cather Foundation and Historical Center. The temporary renovation of the Opera House building continues with plans for applying a new coat of paint using two colors. Because the Board will be developing a fundraising campaign to complete the permanent restoration of the Opera House and establish an endowment to support activities connected with the project, it approved the recommendation of the Finance Committee to hire an outside accounting firm to do the bookkeeping for the Cather Foundation.

NEWS ITEMS:

In October Terri Kohtz, a social studies and language arts teacher from Omaha's Mount Calvary Lutheran School, organized a five day tour across Nebraska for seventeen students, who studied some of Nebraska's history and culture first hand, including "Cather-Country." Ms. Kohtz told *Omaha World-Herald* writer Tom Allan that "three years ago, when I realized most of the kids hadn't been west of Seward, I arranged a trip to York to see agricultural sites." She added that the recent trip was "the culmination of the students' studies of Nebraska history." At the end of their day in "Cather Country," and after viewing the film version of *My Ántonia*, they camped on the floor of Christ Lutheran Church in Juniata. Other sites on their "Wagons West" tour included Homestead National Monument, Spring Ranch (a ghost town), Fort Kearny State Historical Park, Chimney Rock, Scotts Bluff National Monument, Fort Robinson State Historical Park, Toadstool Park, the National Wildlife Refuge and Smith Falls, near Valentine, and Fort Hartsuff State

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NEWS FROM WCPM

(Continued)

Historical Park. I would love to hear first hand what this trip meant to a group of junior high students from the city.



Judy Graning, WCPM hostess, explains to students from the Nebraska Scholars Academy what surrounds them in the WCPM Art Gallery and Bookstore. The students toured the historic Cather sites in August.
—Photo by Pat Phillips

Joel Geyer, writer, producer, and director at Nebraska Educational Television, plans another segment of his *Plains Voices* series. Last fall he produced a twelve-minute adaptation of Willa Cather's short story "The Sentimentality of William Tavener." This fall he has begun work on another portion of this series called "Love and Loneliness on the Plains," which will link the completed "Tavener" story to a segment from Mari Sandoz's *Old Jules* and the "Winter Memories" scene from *O Pioneers!* Distinguished actress Julie Harris will host the half-hour program. The WCPM/Nebraska State Historical Society will underwrite this program.

Since coming to perform for the 1990 Spring Conference in Red Cloud, Eva Marie Saint and husband Jeffrey Hayden have taken their "Cather show" to numerous audiences. In July, Gray Scott in the *Claremont [California] Courier* reported that "an invitation to a memorial gathering of Willa Cather fans in Red Cloud, Nebraska, about three years ago hooked actress Eva Marie Saint. She had read Ms. Cather's works before, during her college years at Bowling Green (Ohio) State University, but it was the 'Willa Cather Memorial Weekend' in Red Cloud that jump-started her appreciation for Cather, who is considered by some critics to be the greatest female contributor to American fiction to date. Within a few short years, the Academy Award-winning actress had channeled her affections for Cather's writings into a foundation for several of her dramatic pursuits: USA Network's 1995 adaptation of Cather's *My Ántonia*, and a series of staged readings titled 'Willa Cather: On the Divide.' The readings were developed and performed



Antonette Kort, Annie Sadilek Pavelka's only living child, addresses the group which gathered in the Red Cloud High School gymnasium in March for the screening of *My Ántonia*. In the movie, Antonette appeared outside the dance pavillion. Antonette Turner, daughter of Julia Pavelka Skupa, listens as her aunt reminisces about her mother and the filming of *My Ántonia*.
—Photo by Bev Cooper

'Eric Hermansson's Soul.'" Ms. Saint also told reporter Scott that she enjoys this production "because it carries Cather's fire to other people. People go back stage and tell me, 'I have never read Willa Cather but now I want to read everything she's ever written.'"

Prior to their September 15 performance at Pepperdine University's Center for the Arts in Malibu, the *Santa Monica Outlook* reported that "Eva Marie Saint has become the national ambassador for author Willa Cather. It wasn't intentional, it just evolved because of Saint's love of her words." This article also tells of the sojourn of Ms. Saint in Red Cloud and her performance here as the starting point for this production that has traveled to Bowling Green University (in a theatre named after her), Cal State, Northridge, and Dallas. When talking to *Outlook* reporter Debbi K. Swanson about the genesis of "Willa Cather: On the Divide," Saint stated that Cather lived in Red Cloud, that her house is still there, and that "a friend asked me to go there to read excerpts from *O Pioneers!* and I asked Jeff to edit it" (The friend was Ron Hull who is Associate General Manager of Nebraska Educational Television and a WCPM Board member). The evening the Haydens performed in Dallas was the same day that the Waco tragedy occurred. Saint said, "that night we decided we couldn't go on as if nothing had happened . . . so my husband made the speech about

by both Ms. Saint and her husband Jeffrey Hayden, also known as the director behind a host of major television shows from *Cagney and Lacy* to *Magnum P. I.* to *Route 66.*" The original plan was to have Mr. Hayden direct and Ms. Saint perform. "But she liked the sound of both male and female voices, and the format evolved to what it is today: a duo's staged reading based on *O Pioneers!*, 'The Sentimentality of William Tavener,' and

what a horrendous day it's been and thanked them for coming. That put the audience at ease so they could enjoy being taken to another time and place." Ms. Saint shared more of her feeling about Willa Cather's work: her "work is a dynamic blend of human drama, romance and suspense. She talks a lot about the immigrants, their strength and the prejudice. She talks about early pioneer women and men, the stark realism of the life itself. People seem to enjoy going back to that time. They didn't have the kind of stress we have today, but they had isolation, loneliness and very real danger to contend with." I thought it was interesting that Eva Marie Saint's current roll of a Mother Superior in *Mariette in Ecstasy* is based on a book by Nebraska writer Ron Hansen. Mary McDonnell is also in this film, and it was Mary McDonnell who appeared as Alexandra in the first stage adaptation of *O Pioneers!*

There are always several paper sessions relating to Willa Cather at the annual meeting of the Western Literature Association. This year's meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, was no exception, and you can read about them in Evelyn Funda's report in this issue. However, I want to inform you about the plans for next year, when the Western Literature Association meeting returns to the United States, to Nebraska, in fact. Newly elected president, Dr. Susanne George, a WCPM Board member and professor at the University of Nebraska-Kearney, has chosen Lincoln as the site for the October convention and plans to offer tours to Catherland and to Neihardt and Susan La Flesche Picotte country. It just happens that the American History Association will be meeting in Lincoln at the same time. Presidents of both associations have organized the conferences to allow members to intermingle in the sessions. Accordingly, Dr. George asks especially for papers or panels that examine the interplay of literary imagination and historical experience. Other topics of interest include the writings of Tillie Olsen (Olsen will be a guest), the literature of Nebraska (especially Aldrich, Cather, Eisley, Neihardt, Sandoz, Kees, and Morris), Nature Writing and Writers of the Great Plains, and Poetry of the Prairies. For more information, write to Dr. Susanne George, English Department, University of Nebraska-Kearney, Kearney, Nebraska 68849-1320, or use the Internet: georges@platte.unk.edu. Her office telephone number is 308-865-8867 and the fax, 308-865-8806. Papers are to be ten pages in length (typed and double-spaced) and are due June 15, 1996.

And finally, would you be surprised if you ran a small business in Red Cloud, Nebraska, and the Governor of the state walked in, unannounced, one day? Well, that's exactly what happened to us on October 10. WE WERE SURPRISED and PLEASED! Governor Ben Nelson had flown to Red Cloud that day for an important event at the Intergenerational Center. Since he was a bit early, he stopped in to visit the WCPM with two aides and the patrolman who met his plane. Actually, our first concern was that a state patrol car was pulling up in front of our building!

So it was somewhat of a relief when the Governor walked in!

— Pat Phillips, Director

One Critic's Response to The New Yorker Article

Laura Winters
College of St. Elizabeth

As our century draws to a close, it has become increasingly evident that Willa Cather's vision is central to the fundamental questions of modernism: How do we survive after the worst has happened? How do we make choices and what are the results of those choices? How do we live in exile from what we love most? How can we find a language to describe the divided self?

In this particular postmodern moment, Cather's work speaks to a variety of popular and scholarly audiences, as evidenced by the recent film versions of *My Ántonia* and *O Pioneers!* (which begin to capture the surface without touching the depth of Cather's understanding), a volume of three Cather novels as a recent Book of the Month Club selection, and Joan Acocella's hybrid piece in *The New Yorker*. Part insightful analysis, part hatchet job, Acocella's article may say more about the state of contemporary journalism than about how Cather has been treated in the academy in recent years.

Maybe good news doesn't sell. Like the television reporter who stands outside a burning building and asks the mother of children who have just been killed how she feels about what has happened, Acocella asks the wrong questions and quotes people who can't be expected to provide a balanced view of the situation. With this technique, we learn nothing about the fire itself. It's embarrassing, and it violates the reality of what has happened. Highlighting the split between feminist readings and more traditional criticism sensationalizes the shallowest questions in Cather scholarship. Acocella's use of an eccentric, melodramatic passage from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick represents the fundamental problem of the article: her choice of evidence is consistently skewed.

That Acocella is familiar with much of the best recent criticism of Cather is clear; that she chose neither to acknowledge her debt to it, nor to discuss its significance, is puzzling in an article that purports to analyze Cather's treatment by the academy. As a journalist, Acocella has internalized the wrong Catherian technique. "The thing not named" in this article is the significant contribution of critics from Bernice Slote forward. While Sharon O'Brien's feminist reading of Cather's life and work represents one significant and influential trend in Cather criticism, this trend continues to be balanced by even more significant and influential scholarship that helps students, teachers, and general readers understand the depth and complexities of Cather's thought.

WILLA CATHER NEWSLETTER

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Willa Cather Newsletter welcomes articles, notes and letters to the editor. Address submissions to John J. Murphy, English Dept., Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah 84602. Essays and notes are currently listed in the annual MLA Bibliography.

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- To promote and assist in the development and preservation of the art, literary, and historical collection relating to the life, time, and work of Willa Cather, in association with the Nebraska State Historical Society.
- To cooperate with the Nebraska State Historical Society in continuing to identify, restore to their original condition, and preserve places made famous by the writing of Willa Cather.
- To provide for Willa Cather a living memorial, through the Foundation, by encouraging and assisting scholarship in the field of the humanities.
- To perpetuate an interest throughout the world in the work of Willa Cather.

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