

Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter

The Willa Cather Society

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Bibliographical Issue

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Theme for Red Cloud's annual Street Car Days was O Pioneers!. The Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and the Willa Cather Historical Center worked jointly on a float recreating "The White Mulberry Tree" scene. The clothing collection donated to the WCPM by Helen and Harry Obitz furnished costumes for the O Pioneers! parade.

Works on Cather: Summer 1991- Summer 1992: A Bibliographical Essay

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An abundance of writing about Willa Cather continues, although the critical output of this past year dipped below the sixty articles and five books of 1989-1990 and the sixty-five articles and eight books of 1990-1991. (Here, I need to rectify a comment I made about Mary Ryder's *Willa Cather and Classical*

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Willa Cather and the Intimacy of Art, Or: In Defense of Privacy¹

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During a discussion at an international seminar held in Red Cloud and attended by professional scholar-critics and laypersons, three critics expounded at some length about the symbolism of the snake-in-the-garden episode in *My Ántonia*, one detailing its phallic implication, another its Edenic imagery,

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Cather Events in Red Cloud and Beyond

For the sixth year, WILLA CATHER'S BIRTHDAY was celebrated in Red Cloud. On December 6 the children were entertained at the Cather House. They went straight to the attic, to the children's haven, and read excerpts from "The Best Years." The children could look around and see what was being described to them by Cather herself. Also, on December 6, the Cather Historical Center hosted its third Victorian Christmas Tea at the Cather House. The par-

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WILLA CATHER AND THE INTIMACY OF ART, (Continued)

and the third its comment upon a patriarchal society. Finally one of the laypersons spoke up: "But remember, there really are snakes in Nebraska." I sometimes recall the snakes in the garden when I consider the explosion of academic interest in Cather these past fifteen years. Critics have discovered that Willa Cather's lucid, apparently simple fiction is a fertile field for the most sophisticated and intellectual of theories. She is, it turns out, fine grist for the academic mill, which is turning out an avalanche of writing about her — now averaging over sixty articles and several books a year. "But remember," I imagine a voice saying to us all, "Cather has always had readers — lots of them." Indeed, this recent upsurge has its ironies, placing Cather firmly in an academy of which she wanted no part, privileging her status in a canon by arguing that she broke with it, and producing criticism that *her* reader would often find incomprehensible. As Sharon O'Brien has written in understatement, "since Cather valued the nonacademic over the professional reader (no matter how sympathetic), she might not be entirely pleased by this development" (123, "The Case Against WC").

I am, for the moment, interested not in her critics but in Cather's readers, the ones she wrote for and the ones who have remained faithful through (and perhaps oblivious to) her vicissitudes of critical and canonical fortune. Why do so many people feel so close to Cather's books (readers don't tend to feel close to Cather as an independent person, but to her through her writing) that, as if recalling first meeting a spouse or beloved friend, they recall in detail when they first read one of them? Yet it is a question that critics seem slightly embarrassed about, and the usual answers seem evasive and condescending — that Cather wrote with nostalgia about a stable past, that she affirmed the importance of family and place, and that she described the roots we yearn for. So the question I began with is a simple one: how might we understand the exceptionally close, personal relationship that Cather's readers forge with her books?

Considering this question has been a pleasure because it has led me to expected places — to look yet again at the change in Cather's writing between 1912 and 1913, between her skillful but conventional first novel, *Alexander's Bridge*, and her second first novel (there were two, she later said), *O Pioneers!* It has led me to reconsider the autobiographical impulse that runs through Cather's writing, and to realize that though we have identified persons and places Cather wrote about and though we have used the fiction to psychoanalyze her, we have largely ignored the importance of the autobiographical impulse *to her art*. It has led me also to ask about the importance of privacy to Cather. These questions have led to broader ones about gender and creativity, and to my argument here — that Cather wrote an art of intimacy, and that her

legendary sense of privacy is an essential ingredient in that art.



During her apprentice period while a student at the University of Nebraska (1890-1895) and an editor in Pittsburgh and New York (1896-1912), Willa Cather wrote short stories, poetry, and — especially — reviews. In these reviews she directly addressed what it means to be an artist, an elevated calling that leads to a grim life. Cather characteristically employed metaphors of withdrawal and distance to write of the artist's "forsaking" the world and lifting "himself up into the clear firmament of creation where the world is not." "He should be among men but not one of them, in the world but not of it," she declared (1894; KA 407). She described writing as a confrontation with intractable subjects and a struggle with her medium, for "ink and paper are so rigidly exacting" that writing means being exposed and made vulnerable: "One may lie to one's self, lie to the world, lie to God, even, but to one's pen one cannot lie." In writing, "every artificial aid fails you. All that you have been taught leaves you, all that you have stolen lies discovered. You are then a translator, without a lexicon, without notes, and you are to translate — God" (1895; KA 409). Through these comments runs the idea of being unprotected, insecure, defenseless, separated from the warmth and comfort of ordinary living. "For the business of an artist's life is . . . ceaseless and unremitting labor . . . the poet's work has so little to do with his life and often his life has so little poetry in it" (1896; KA 413). Cather hardly mentions readers in these early essays, where she was giving her allegiance to God in the Kingdom of Art. From an aesthetic high road, she passed down judgments, and these judgments were often harshly negative. She became known as "the meat ax critic," her attitude toward art following that of competitive individuation identified with male relationships.

In her stories, also, Cather sacrificed life to art. Most obviously — and to my mind interestingly because of the creative stance she was later to adopt — she used prototypes in ways that would surely cause them pain. As Mark Madigan has discussed, recently discovered letters have revealed that Cather based her story "The Profile" upon an unflattering portrait of an acquaintance in the recognizable details of a birthmark, dress, and manner; and she published the story despite warnings from their mutual friend, Dorothy Canfield, that doing so would cause pain and even danger to its model. She used not only the mannerisms but even the name of Flavia Canfield for another, similarly unflattering character — that of the shallow collector of artists in "Flavia and Her Artists." In more subtle ways, too, Cather sacrificed life to art. In later years she spoke of having been "afraid that people, just as they were, were not quite good enough," so feeling she had "to trim them up, to 'prettify' them." Thus when writing her story "Peter" (an early version of Antonia's father, who feels such loneliness in

Nebraska that he commits suicide), she made him a violinist who had played for Bernhardt, though her model was "just a fiddler — and not even a very good fiddler" (1931; Bohlke, 123-24).

That was all to change with *O Pioneers!*, the book that is vintage Cather. With it Cather was speaking in her own voice — that is clear; what has puzzled readers is how she did so. It is not simply that she turned from inherited materials to native ones, for though she had set her 1912 novel, *Alexander's Bridge*, in Boston and London, she had written earlier stories about Nebraska and its people. But she was dissatisfied with those stories: "most of them were poor," she later reflected. "It is always hard to write about the things that are near to your heart, from a kind of instinct of self-protection you distort them and disguise them . . . I decided that I wouldn't write any more about the country and people for which I had such personal feeling" (1913; Bohlke 11). This was, then, the dilemma — how to transform personal feeling into art without distortion.

As Cather herself suggested, one answer lay in her friendship with Sarah Orne Jewett. Biographers have interpreted this friendship in various ways — James Woodress that Jewett encouraged Cather to look for her material in "the thing that teases the mind over and over for years," and Sharon O'Brien that Jewett provided a friend and mentor who offered to Cather a female literary inheritance.² Jewett did indeed both direct Cather to the material that was right for her and also serve as a model of a successful woman writer. She also helped Cather revise her metaphor for creativity, to include a reader in it, and to make the act of writing intimate. As Cather explained, "I dedicated my novel *O Pioneers!* to Miss Jewett because I had talked over some of the characters in it with her one day at Manchester, and in this book I tried to tell the story of the people as truthfully and simply as if I were telling it to her by word of mouth." It is, in other words, not simply being truthful that Cather learned from Jewett — after all, Cather had long pledged her artist to truth (with a capital T); instead, she learned from Jewett *how* she might be truthful. And that was to include not only a reader — but an intimate friend — in her creative paradigm.

Following *O Pioneers!*, Cather's comments about writing changed as much as did her writing itself. From this point on, she wrote of the relationship between the writer and the reader. After 1913 explaining what she expected of a writer, Cather said, "I think a writer ought to get into his copy as he really is, in his everyday clothes. His readers are thrown with him in a personal relation, just as if they were traveling with him; and if he is not sincere, there is no possibility of any sort of comradeship" (1913; Bohlke, 8). In the same year, she described the difference between her two "first" novels. Writing *O Pioneers!* "was like taking a ride through a familiar country on a horse that knew the way, on a fine morning when you felt like riding. The other [*Alexander's Bridge*] was like riding in a park, with

someone not altogether congenial, to whom you had to be talking all the time" (*Willa Cather on Writing*, 92-3). Conceiving of creativity as talking with — or writing to — a friend was, as O'Brien has argued, the liberating strategy Cather needed³, and she repeated it the rest of her life. Cather dedicated her next book, *The Song of the Lark*, to Isabelle McClung; over two decades later she said that McClung was the person for whom she had written all her books (Woodress 479). This was, then, the turn seen with *O Pioneers!*, at which time Cather embarked upon a life-long forging of intimacy, revealing herself personally in her art even while withdrawing from public view in her life. She did so by a code of friendship characterized by mutuality, respect for difference, and privacy.

From 1913 on, Cather's description of her writing anticipates psychologists' discussions today of intimacy, defined as a process of attempting to get close to another, beginning with a deep, ongoing affection for a subject, involving a long-term commitment, characterized by "openness, honesty, mutual self-disclosure; caring, warmth, . . . dropping defenses; becoming emotionally attached" (Rubenstein and Shaver; qtd in *Intimate Relationships*, 17); and carried out as a "warm, close and communicative exchange with others — an interpersonal interaction perceived as an end in itself rather than as a means to another end" (McAdams, 1985; qtd in *Intimate Relationships*, 17). Rather than a defense against critical ill fortunes emerging by the mid 1930s, this stance of friendship was there all along — consistent and resilient.

Toward the end of her career, Cather reflected that she could write only about those she cared about; she openly expressed her love for her subjects when she spoke of them. Cather not only spoke of her affection, but she described her relationship with her subjects as an *exchange* of affection, what modern psychologists term "mutuality" and describe as essential to intimacy. Her feeling for her subjects was neither that of a proud creator nor that of a protective parent — it was of an exchange between equals. *O Pioneers!* is about "old neighbors, once very dear," who "understood my homesickness and were kind to me"; *My Ántonia* told of "the Bohemian hired girl of one of our neighbors, who was so good to me. She was one of the truest artists I ever knew . . . in her love of people and her willingness to take pains" (1921; Bohlke, 44); "A *Lost Lady* was a woman I loved very much in my childhood," whose "laugh made me happy clear down to my toes" (1925; Bohlke 77), and so on. In speaking of her characters, in other words, Cather gives them independence, describing her relationship with them — or with the models behind them — as one of an exchange of affection.

Cather's relationship with her characters — or with the people behind them — I hesitate because we are trained to distinguish the two, yet their intricate interweaving is central to Cather's art. In describing how she wrote, Cather revealed that merging: the writer who writes from his personal experience and emotions

has a brain like Limbo, full of ghosts, for which he has always tried to find bodies. *A Lost Lady* was a beautiful ghost in my mind for twenty years before it came together as a possible subject for presentation. All the lovely emotions that one has had some day appear with bodies, and it isn't as if one found ideas suddenly. Before this the memories of these experiences and emotions have been like perfumes. It is the difference between a remembered face and having that friend one day come in through the door. She is really no more yours than she has been right along in your memory. (1923; Bohlke, 79)

The passage won't be parsed, or analyzed, to distinguish fact from fiction, life from art. Instead of speaking of a woman who became a "ghost" that peopled her imagination for twenty years, then became the character Marian Forrester, Cather describes the deeply intertwined relationship between herself and "A Lost Lady" in which such distinctions do not exist.

Cather transformed the creative process for her historical subjects as well as contemporary ones into a process of friendship and intimacy. In a letter describing how she came to write *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, for example, she described first her long affection for the Southwest, then of "visiting it" (her words) as often as she could during the twelve years following her first visit. But as a visitor (*i.e.*, a stranger), she did not think of writing about the Church and the Spanish missionaries, though their story interested her, for she was not a Catholic. Then — she describes coming to write as a gradually developing personal relationship with Archbishop Lamy, who "had become a sort of invisible personal friend. . . . What I felt curious about was the daily life of such a man in a crude frontier society." Coming upon letters from Father Machebeuf (he would appear as Father Vaillant in her book) provided what she needed: "Without these letters . . . to guide me, I would certainly never have dared to write my book." Cather ends by once again describing writing in terms of mutuality and friendship: "I had the pleasure of paying an old debt of gratitude to the valiant men whose life and work had given me so many hours of pleasant reflection in far-away places where certain unavoidable accidents and physical discomforts gave me a feeling of close kinship with them" (1927; in *Willa Cather on Writing*, 3-13).

The account of writing this book is characteristic of Cather's description of writing others — the long association, the feeling first of friendship, then of kinship, the intimacy made possible by an actual personal communication (Cather's reading letters from G. P. Cather to his mother, her aunt, triggered her writing *One of Ours*; her reading of Lyra Garber's death in the *Red Cloud Chief*, a small town paper in which articles resemble letters, resulted in the idea for *A Lost Lady*; her talking with Richard Weatherill of the discovery of the Mesa Verde that provided the genesis for *The Professor's House*). The quality of mutuality — of an exchange of feeling between herself and her subjects — appears over and over. By so conceiving

of creativity, Cather protected herself by circles of intimacy — first, between herself and her subject; second, between herself, her subject, and the person to whom she was telling that subject's story (Sarah Orne Jewett/Isabelle McClung); and third, between her book and its reader.

In *O Pioneers!* Cather revealed her love for the country in which she grew up; in *The Song of the Lark*, her most thinly veiled autobiography, she provided details of her childhood — her joys, ambitions, and fears, as well as her relationships to her family, friends, and hometown. What I find interesting is that Cather wrote so revealing a novel at this time in her career, immediately after including the reader in her idea of creativity and, also in *O Pioneers!*, imagining writing as intimate friendship. Perhaps writing *O Pioneers!* freed Cather to draw upon her autobiography, not simply to include her love for a place and people but to include details of living with her family, conversations with friends and neighbors, the feeling of stretching out in bed at night. More than anywhere else, Cather gave herself directly and openly to her reader in the first, extended part of *The Song of the Lark*: to read "Friends of Childhood" is to feel we are with her in her attic bedroom, at the dinner table with her family, on the streets of Moonstone, so closely based upon Red Cloud that a map drawn from one could serve as a guide through the other. In her career, it announced an autobiographical impulse so strong in Cather that even while frustrated by the roadblocks she threw up — her instructions that her personal papers be destroyed, her stipulation against quoting her letters, her changing facts about her life — "the biographer of Cather has a great deal of autobiographical fiction to help in his task." I am quoting James Woodress here, who continues, "She turned her own life and experiences into literature to a degree uncommon among writers. I have used many passages from her fiction to document her life" (xiv). It is not only autobiographical details that appear in Cather's fiction, of course. She writes so openly and generously of the emotions of living that her fiction invites the most personal of responses from an exceptionally wide and diverse range of readers. Cather's readers span separations created by differences in age, sexual orientation, politics, geography, education, and class, and by that span her writing provides an occasion for an exchange among people too often separated, to understand differences and also to recognize the common life that runs beneath those differences.

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Cather was later to write with something akin to embarrassment about *The Song of the Lark*. The British publisher William Heinemann had declined it, saying "As for myself, I always find the friendly, confidential tone of writing of this sort distressingly familiar, even when the subject matter is very fine" (1931, *Willa Cather on Writing*, 96). Cather agreed: "Too much

detail is apt . . . to become slightly vulgar" (97), she said, with "vulgar" using a word she used characteristically to refer to an invasion of privacy, a lack of manners, one might say, in the very human relationship between a writer, her character, and her reader. What is lacking is the restraint — the "form" — that in writing ensures the sense of privacy essential to intimacy, even as manners insure that privacy in human relationships.

By creating the narrator Jim Burden in *My Ántonia*, Cather established the necessary distance that was lacking in *The Song of the Lark*. Directly revealing personal emotion to the reader is too often "distressingly familiar"; in *O Pioneers!* she had imagined telling the story of the country and people she loved to a friend, and that was the strategy she employed in *My Ántonia* — this time incorporating it into her text. Cather's introduction — so often overlooked by readers — is important, for by it Cather provided a narrative form of friendship that would allow revelation yet provide restraint. Willa Cather meets Jim Burden on the train, and together they establish ground rules for storytelling. "He and I are old friends," Cather says about Jim; they reminisce about the girl they had known while growing up in Nebraska, someone Cather hadn't seen since leaving: "but Jim had found her again after long years, and had renewed a friendship that meant a great deal to him." Multiple friendship, then, structures the storytelling: one friend would tell another about a mutual friend, and gender differences between them would safeguard against the overly familiar, confidential tone of *The Song of the Lark*. The strategy enabled Cather to write about what was of central interest to her — the process of intimacy — in structuring the book about the friendship of Jim and Ántonia.

Cather continued to write of intimacy as a fundamental human need. It is the "something splendid" that Claude Wheeler searches for in *One of Ours*, and that he finds, briefly, in friendship with David Gerhardt before being killed in battle. Describing writing *One of Ours*, Cather used "splendid" repeatedly for that friendship. She had met the violinist Hochstein, upon whom she would base Gerhardt, and she was struck by Hochstein's description of the "splendid" men in his company: "Afterward, in 1920, when I was deep in this story, I wanted my red-headed soldier from a prairie farm to 'get some of his back,' as the phrase is, through a fine friendship; so many splendid friendships grew up between young men during the war. . . . [and] when I came to that part of the story, it was the figure of Hochstein . . . that walked into my study and stood beside my desk" (1922; 56-7, Bohlke).

A Lost Lady, *The Professor's House*, and *My Mortal Enemy* concern the breakdown of the privacy necessary for intimacy when they tell of lost manners, form, and security. In each, with that breakdown the dangers of an erotics of intimacy looms large. *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Shadows on the Rock* are celebrations of intimacy in friendships removed

from overt eroticism, the one between two priests in the American Southwest, and the other in a household maintained by a father and his daughter in Quebec. Recapitulating the idea of intimacy through her oeuvre, the three stories in *Obscure Destinies* retell its story: "Neighbour Rosicky," as if a continuation of *My Ántonia*, builds to a moment of mutual disclosure between a father and his daughter-in-law — he revealing to her his pain from a heart attack and his love; she revealing to him that she is pregnant that she has "a good heart." In "Old Mrs. Harris," Cather writes intimately of what it is to live in a family; and in "Two Friends," she writes of the tragedy of a friendship that is accidentally destroyed.



An understanding of intimacy helps explain not only what Cather wrote about, but also how she did so, by a sense of restraint and privacy characteristic of her best work. If mutuality (openness, honesty, mutual self-disclosure) is the central characteristic of intimacy, privacy provides the context "in which intimacy, friendship, trust, and love can arise" (*Privacy*, xv). Today, when individuals discuss the most personal matters on television talk shows and candidates for office bare their souls to the electorate as a political rite of passage, we are suspicious of privacy, as if to protect it is to admit guilt. We forget that "privacy is the claim of individuals, groups, or institutions to determine for themselves when, how, and to what extent information about them is to be communicated to others" (Westin, 7).

It is this sense of her characters' right to privacy that runs through Cather's comments upon them. Except for Mrs. Miner, who became Mrs. Harling in *My Ántonia*, "all my other characters are drawn from life, but they are all composites of three or four persons," Cather maintained. "I do not quite understand it, but certain persons seem to coalesce naturally when one is working up a story. I believe that most authors shrink from actual portrait painting. It seems so cold-blooded, so heartless, so indecent almost, to present an actual person *in that intimate fashion, stripping his very soul*" (1921; Bohlke, 45, my emphasis). Protesting against an invasion of privacy that came with progress and "Americanizing" everything, Cather recalled when she was a child and "all our neighbors were foreigners. Nobody paid any attention to them outside of the attention they wanted Nobody investigated them; nobody regarded them as laboratory specimens nobody interfered with them It was very much better that way. I hate this poking into personal affairs by social workers, and I know the people hate it, too" (1924; Bohlke, 72). She might have been speaking of novelists, for she just as vehemently objected to analyzing characters. As Louise Bogan observed, Cather "is not a profound or subtle psychologist. Madame Colette's minute dissections of intimate personal relationships are not in her line" (1931;

Bohlke, 113-14). Analysis and intimacy are enemies, Cather believed; she sought "to cut out analysis, observation, and description . . . in order to make things and people tell their own story simply by juxtaposition," she wrote in 1921, an idea that she repeated in various ways. Art demonstrates itself in relationships (Bohlke, 23-24).

Cather protects her characters' privacy in various ways, by writing of them in a tone of respect, by allowing them to suggest motives rather than by analyzing them, and by placing them in spaces of privacy. Much has been made of Cather's use of private space, especially her childhood attic bedroom that appears as Thea Kronborg's bedroom in *The Song of the Lark* and, again, as Lesley Ferguesson's in "The Best Years." Spare in spatial imagery but made real with human memories, it could serve as an example of Gaston Bachelard's theory of intimate space:

Over-picturesqueness in a house can conceal its intimacy For the real houses of memory, the houses to which we return in dreams . . . do not readily lend themselves to description. To describe them would be like showing them to visitors. (12-13)

Thus Cather described her room (Thea's? Lesley's?) as she remembered it — not by physical dimensions, but by the flowered wallpaper she purchased for its walls, the white cheesecloth curtains she made for its single window, and the round wooden hat-crate from the clothing store which she put at the head of her bed. The room is so evocative we may fail to recognize that it is atypical not only in its detail but also in its accessibility. For Cather characteristically only suggests the most intimate spaces, and oftentimes she does so by establishing boundaries. Closing doors can both protect the privacy of those within and also suggest the pain of those excluded. In *One of Ours*, for example, Claude Wheeler's search for friendship is the story of his being expelled from the personal spaces he longs for. Before their marriage he stands with Enid in the bedroom he is building for them, an intimate space that he is making spacious and windowed so they can see the stars at night; when she speaks of reserving the room for the visiting preacher, her words have the effect of shutting them outside that imagined space. On their wedding night, the verbal exclusion becomes physical. After speaking of feeling unwell, Enid "closed the door, and he heard the lock slip. He stood looking at the highly polished wood of the panel for a moment," then went to a deserted observation car (195). Finally, Claude's pain of being excluded from private spaces is repeated when, after his wife went to China, Claude closed up the house he had built so lovingly for their wedded life together.

Boundaries to intimate space also can create a sense of intrusion upon characters' privacy. Cather creates disillusionment scenes that are unsettling and shocking by their voyeuristic quality, with her narrator taking the reader into regions that belong to the

characters alone. In *O Pioneers!* there is Frank Shabata, peering through the hedges at the lovers Marie and Emil, asleep and touchingly vulnerable; in *A Lost Lady* there is Niel Herbert crouching by the window of Mrs. Forrester's bedroom, hearing from within her teasing laughter, followed by that of Frank Ellinger; in *My Mortal Enemy* there is Nellie Birdseye coming upon the Henshawes who, bitterly quarreling, reveal the cruelty possible in a marriage. Even as do people, so her characters have secrets that should be respected, it would seem.

What we have, then, is a writer who treats characters in fiction with a sense of form analogous to manners in society. This form — this restraint and "consideration" — are essential qualities of Cather's art of intimacy. Cather talked of such matters in terms of "sincerity" — and (again using a metaphor of friendship), she linked sincerity and art:

"Suppose," she said, "a man comes up to you and you rise to greet him. He is your friend. You know him. You respect him. You have a genuine affection for him. Do you rush at him, paw him, pound his back and roar at him? No. The sincerity of feeling between you and your friend requires and fixes a form, a way of greeting each other, that isn't a slapstick show. Very likely you won't need more than a word in a quiet voice, nor any gesture more than a simple handshake.

"Art is form; and sincerity fixes form, naturally and in a way that expresses and earns respect." (1931; Bohlke 110).

I am a scholar-critic who makes her living by teaching and writing about literature, and I am committed to the belief that we enrich our lives by such academic exercises. Yet I am also a reader, and as such I end as I began, by acknowledging the personal feeling that readers have of Cather's stories, and by remembering Cather's wish for them and for us:

I hope the readers [of my stories] have enjoyed reading [them] as much as I enjoyed writing [them] Stories are to be read. "Sincerity" again. The sincerity of feeling that is possible between a writer and a reader is one of the finest things I know. (1931; Bohlke, 112)

NOTES

1. I wish to thank members of Canadian Studies and the Department of English of St. Lawrence University, and Robert Thacker particularly, for providing the occasion for me to write this essay. I am grateful also for a Fletcher Pratt Fellowship to Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, which provided an occasion for trying out ideas in this paper concerning a writer's potentially conflicting allegiances: respect for her friends and family's privacy versus her desire to draw upon them as models in her writing.

2. Woodress quotes from a Jewett letter to Cather; see *Willa Cather: A Literary Life*, 223. For the best discussion we have of the female model of creativity that Jewett offered to Cather, see O'Brien's "A Gift from Heart to Heart," *Willa Cather: The Emerging Voice*, 334-63.

3. "A Gift from Heart to Heart," in *Willa Cather: The Emerging Voice*, 334-63. See also Elizabeth Abel's important essay "(E)Merging Identities: The Dynamics of Female

Friendship in Contemporary Fiction by Women," for the argument that women writers experience the creative process according to a model of female friendship, by which the relationships, identification, and intimacy of friendship become the vehicle of self-definition.

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Children listen to "The Best Years" in the Cather House as part of Willa Cather's Birthday celebration. (See page 47.)
— Photo Courtesy of Bill Bennett

WORKS ON CATHER: . . . A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY, (Continued)

Myth: The Search for a New Parnassus in the 1990-1991 bibliographical essay. I stated that her indexing was "perplexing," since references frequently failed to match up with pages. The indexing errors were publication ones and not Ryder's, and the publisher [Mellen] has since made the necessary corrections.) This year's survey of Cather criticism evaluates forty-seven pieces, including four collections of essays, eleven independent articles, a foreword, a reference guide, and seven chapters in five books. After many years of substantial book-length studies on Cather, this period of 1991-1992 offered none. (Cather readers can look forward to David Harrell's *From Mesa Verde to the Professor's House* and Patrick Shaw's *Willa Cather and the Art of Conflict* published too late for inclusion here.) The scholarship we have, however, written by many veteran and new Cather critics, is generally substantial and should invite response. Pieces range from discussions of specific Cather short stories and novels (or combinations of both) to general discussions, comparative studies, feminist readings, and pedagogy.

I will begin with the four collections, the first from *The Nebraska English Journal*, and the others featured in the *Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter*. The Fall 1991 special Cather issue of the *Journal* (37.1), guest edited by Susan J. Rosowski, contains eleven stimulating discussions in what Rosowski in her Introduction says is an "ideal forum for a dialogue between the teacher-scholar voices within each of us individually." Appropriately titled *Cather in the Classroom*, the essays provide new and varied teaching ideas for Cather and are fine additions to Cather scholarship. In the initial essay, "A Reading of the Nebraska State Capitol: The Cather/Alexander Connection" (10-27), Betty Kort, the 1992 Nebraska English Teacher of the Year, discusses how she teaches her students to see connections among individual texts and the existing parallels between them. Stating that she is a firm believer in the "effectiveness of visual resources in the classroom," Kort uses slides of the State Capitol to provide her students with "a strong sense of cultural and historical background" also found in Cather's writing. Her "Afterword" is a personal note that is appealing and relevant to Cather studies. Looking at the Capitol, studying slides, and reading Cather, students should see, Kort feels, that "the past can be a window to the future of the Plains." Bruce P. Baker in "The Enchanted Bluff: Dream and Disillusion" (28-33) perceives this early story as an "accessible and appealing introduction to Cather's works." Baker makes an admirable case for its inclusion in the secondary school curriculum and, most importantly, for its ongoing relevance. Teachers can readily draw parallels between the students and the "young characters who dream their dreams on the sanctuary of a sandbar on the Republican River." Baker sees "The Enchanted Bluff" as an insightful study of the adolescent nature.

John J. Murphy's choice is "The Best Years." In "Paradisical Nebraska — 'The Best Years'" (34-40), Murphy ably points out the themes of the Cather canon in the story and demonstrates how it relates to works like Wilder's *Our Town* and Dickinson's "Because I could not stop for Death," other pieces students are likely to study in the secondary school, in enabling us to transcend realism. Three articles on "Neighbour Rosicky" follow Murphy's discussion. The first, "The Farmer as Cultural Model: Neighbour Rosicky's American Dream" by Matthias Schubnell (41-50), clearly depicts Anton Rosicky as a "cultural model," an embracer of traditional agricultural values. The story, Schubnell emphasizes, is a significant contribution to today's "environmental debate and a redefinition of the American dream," and students should comprehend its "continuing relevance to their understanding of contemporary American culture." Evelyn I. Funda in "Neighbour Rosicky: Ever-Widening Time" (51-62) studies in this "apparently artless story" what she calls Cather's organizational use of time. Funda creates a visual diagram of time for the episodes in the story and explains how students through this diagram may finally recognize why Rosicky's life is "complete and beautiful." Students should then ask fundamental questions about life and contemplate how storytelling works in their own lives, thus inheriting the legacy of Rosicky's own stories. Steven Shively's "Neighbour Rosicky: Lessons in Language" (63-74) caps these discussions with a commentary on multiple meanings and ways students can discover through them the "lessons in language." "Neighbour Rosicky" invites students to observe their own world and use the story's techniques — color, repetition, the sensory, similes and metaphors, and irony — in their own writing. "Old Mrs. Harris" is Merrill M. Skaggs' preference, and in "Teaching 'Old Mrs. Harris'" (75-84) Skaggs refers to the story as Cather's "greatest." She discusses three major themes — families, power, and women — and asserts that any one of them can generate "passionate" discussion in the classroom. Particularly interesting are incisive comments concerning Cather's investigation through Vickie, Victoria, and Mrs. Harris of the three stages of womanhood. Anthea E. Amos-Bankester and Mellanee Kvasnicka offer two varied approaches to *My Ántonia*. In "Teaching *My Ántonia*: The 'Introductions' and the Impact of Revisions" (99-109) Amos-Bankester displays how she uses Cather's 1918 and 1926 "Introductions" to the novel as an "important example of an author's revising a published piece for a later edition." Her composition students then can understand the importance of revising their own work. She argues that good literature, like *My Ántonia*, is necessary in secondary school writing classes. Kvasnicka's "Anything a Woman Can Be: Women's Roles in *My Ántonia*" (110-17) is a convincing teaching vehicle. She focuses on the novel as giving young people, particularly females, choices or options in their lives. Kvasnicka describes the experiences of Grandmother Burden, Mrs. Shimerda, Frances Harling, Tiny Soderball,

Lena Lingard, and, of course, Ántonia in making difficult and painful choices. Kvasnicka wants her students to learn through these characters that there are also viable choices for them. "A Bibliography on Approaches to Teaching Cather" (118-30) by Becky Faber adds to this collection by offering fifty-seven annotations on critical studies (articles, books, biographies), three on audio visual materials, two on bibliographies, and one on a pictorial history pertinent to teaching Cather. Rosowski anchors this collection with "Adaptations of *O Pioneers!* in the Classroom: Novel, Play, and Film" (131-45). She compares *O Pioneers!* the novel with the filmic version and discusses the film's use of visual realism in order to create impact. "In contrast to the stage adaptation," Rosowski claims, "the filmic one offers the possibility of opening out . . . and of supplying visual realism."

Cather scholarship certainly gains with each issue of the *Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter*, edited by John J. Murphy. For the Fall 1991 *Literary Annual*, Murphy has selected seven quality essays beginning with "Cohesion and Sentence Endings in Cather's Prose" (11-15) by Janet Giltrow and David Stouck. These critics use linguistic analysis to show how Cather achieves lyricism. They find striking syntactical examples in what they call the "echo effect" in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and then offer interesting comments on Cather's construction of elaborate sentence endings in *The Professor's House* and *Shadows on the Rock*. Clara Thomas in "Portraits of the Artist: Thea Kronborg and Margaret Laurence's Morag Gunn" (15-19) comments on her many conversations with Laurence about writing and the early influence of Cather on the Canadian author. Thomas refers to Laurence's numerous "specific language echoes" to Cather in her works and pursues the "interrelatedness of *The Diviners* and *The Song of the Lark*." "The Apotheosis of Bishop Lamy: Local Faith Perspectives" (19-22) by Rev. Jerome J. Martinez y Alira is the first of three essays grouped under the title "The Church in *Archbishop*: A Session from the Santa Fe Seminar." Martinez acknowledges he is no literary critic but that as a youth was a Cather enthusiast who marveled at her storytelling abilities. He feels now, however, as a tenth generation New Mexican, that Cather did not do her homework for *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and replaced fact with myth. Martinez sees Bishop Lamy, for instance, as not culturally sensitive to the Hispanics or Native Americans, and he complains about Cather's disdainful and distorted treatment of Padre Martinez. His comments about the padre are in line with recent others by Ted J. Warner, Lance Larsen, and E. A. Mares. All four strongly assert that Cather, albeit creatively, distorts history. Rev. Thomas M. Casey's "Mariology and Christology in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*" (22-25) offers a diverse approach to the novel. Casey, like Martinez, makes no claim as a literary critic but approaches the novel from the viewpoint of a "Roman Catholic theologian and psychologist of religion." Casey considers

Cather's ability to see and portray the world of Bishop Latour, Father Joseph, the Native Americans, and the Hispanics sacramentally. Cather entered and gently explored an "alien, iconic landscape," Casey states, and "made accessible to her readers an understanding of the vision and dreams sustaining her two French missionaries." John J. Murphy's "On the Precipice of a Caesura: *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Vatican II*" (25-29) discusses what Murphy calls "precipice pauses" "within and outside" the novel. The outside pauses occur prior to development phases of the Roman Catholic church, and the inside pauses are where Latour prudently and sensitively faces theoretical hurdles and challenges involving the world beyond his Roman-based church. Zhongxiu He in "Poverty as Myra's Mortal Enemy" (29-32) is a change of pace from usual psychological readings of *My Mortal Enemy*. He, referring to herself as a reader "from a socialist political and economic system" (China's), calls the novel a drama of "capitalist discord" and reminds us several times that the enemy destroying Myra's life and what she is trying to escape is poverty, not her husband, Myra herself, or her disease. Hiroko Sato in "Willa Cather in Japan: A Sequel" (32-33) briefly reviews the decline of Cather criticism in Japan during the past twenty years. She thinks Cather continues to be read by the reading public but laments her neglect by Japanese scholars. Sato considers two book-length studies from the 1970s, two articles published in the 1980s, and cites two recent unpublished theses.

The Summer of 1992 *Willa Cather Pioneer Newsletter*, titled *Biographical Miscellany*, contains five biographical pieces on Cather's friendships. The initial essay, "A Serious Pleasure: The Friendship of Willa Cather and Stephen Tennant" (7-10) by Philip Hoare, describes Tennant and Cather's close and puzzling friendship, maintained through meetings and years of correspondence. (John Anders, in his brief introduction to this essay, refers to their friendship as a "mutual fascination" from the beginning.) Hoare comments on their common interests, despite their cultural differences, points out the similarities in their lives, and finds some answers to the many questions surrounding their unlikely relationship. Hoare's biography of Tennant, *Serious Pleasures* (London: Hamilton, 1990), includes many pages focusing on Tennant and Cather's friendship as a creative force for both of them. Hoare also devotes a chapter to Tennant's friendship with Edith Lewis, which began soon after Cather's death. Interesting, too, is the friendship that developed between Tennant and Cather scholar Patricia Lee Yongue. Their connection, of course, was their mutual appreciation of the author and her works. In "Catheriana at the Bancroft" (10-12), Dennis Halac calls attention to three Cather letters housed in the Bancroft Library on the University of California campus. After referring to them as relatively insignificant to Cather scholars, Halac then describes the three "minor grace notes" written by Cather to playwright and dramatist Sidney Coe Howard (1942), to Howard's wife Leopoldine (1942), and to

Gelett Burgess (c. 1942), whom Halac calls a "rapsal-lion bohemian odist and artist." Halac also mentions two from Leopoldine to Cather. Polly Duryea returns to a special interest of hers in "Willa Cather and the Menuhin Connection" (12-15). Duryea centers first on Cather's early fascination with "genius," then on her special relationship with the Menuhin family, before concluding with a fascinating and detailed description of her own 1991 visit to Sir Yehudi's London home. When Janet Sharistianian was teaching *The Song of the Lark* at the University of Kansas, a student informed her that her sorority's house director was a native of Red Cloud and as a younger person knew Cather well. Following the student's lead, Sharistianian interviewed Gertrude Schenck, who retained vivid memories of Cather's visits to Red Cloud from 1921, when Mrs. Schenck was sixteen, until 1931, Cather's last visit to Red Cloud. Sharistianian condensed two 1987 conversations with Schenck into "Willa Cather and Red Cloud: An Interview with Gertrude Schenck" (15-19). Especially interesting are Mrs. Schenck's comments about Margie Anderson, Cather's relationship with her mother, the Pavelkas, and life in Red Cloud during these ten years. Certainly missing from this discussion, however, is any mention of Mrs. Boak, Cather's grandmother and the prototype for Mrs. Harris in Cather's enduring story "Old Mrs. Harris." "I Heard of Willa Cather" (20) is a brief bit of reminiscing taken from a collection of personal writing by Ruth Webb, an English student of Elsie Cather in Red Cloud. Mrs. Webb did not know Cather but offers interesting information concerning Elsie, Charles Cather's anger at receiving a letter from university daughter Willa because it was written in pencil, and Cather's niece Virginia Auld, a schoolmate of Mrs. Webb.

The Winter 1991-1992 *Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter* contains, in addition to the annual bibliographical essay, an article by Marilyn Arnold, "Willa Cather's Poor Pitiful Professors" (43-46), a thoughtful if satirical discussion of the various university types found in Cather's works. Arnold pokes fun at Godfrey St. Peter, Gaston Cleric, and Lucius Wilson with comments like "Professors Gaston Cleric and Godfrey St. Peter, whose hunger for human association drove them to Jim Burden and a couple of dress forms . . . had an important forerunner and exemplar in vicarious living, Lucius Wilson." Arnold's commentary, a must read for people in academe, swipes at Cather's "professorial types," including Brother Weldon, and ends with the delightful barb: "Willa Cather did not have much use for the likes of us, and I seriously doubt that she has changed her mind even yet." The Spring 1992 *Newsletter* offers two brief articles. The first, "A Sense of Place" (1-2) by David E. Scherman, former *Life* photographer, is a talk Scherman gave at the 1991 Cather Spring Conference, an account of the origins of the 1951 pictorial essay on Cather Country he and Mildred Bennett created for *Life* magazine. In "Garrison Keillor in Red Cloud" (4-5), Polly Duryea describes Keillor's charming the audience on Decem-

ber 7, 1991, during his live two-hour variety radio broadcast show. He is there, Duryea reminds us, "to call attention to the prairie author" and to celebrate Cather's 118th birthday. Duryea leaves no doubt that the 800 strong Red Cloud audience was "spellbound" by Keillor's performance.

In addition to the six essays on Cather's short stories in *The Nebraska English Journal*, three more studies of Cather's short fiction were published in 1991-1992, all in *Studies in Short Fiction* (28). Two of them were on "Paul's Case," showing the varied approaches this story can offer. Philip Page's "The Theatricality of Willa Cather's 'Paul's Case'" (553-57) briefly describes Cather's dependence on the theatrical motif, one providing her a "double perspective." Using the metaphor of theatricality, Cather shows Paul in Pittsburgh acting out several "mutually incompatible" roles. In New York in a series of scenes, he plays an actor in a single role — his desired one in his fantasized world. In "Willa Cather's 'Paul's Case' and the Faustian Temperament" (543-51), Edward W. Pitcher draws parallels between Paul's own ruinous acts and Faust's selling his soul to satisfy his own pleasurable longings. Pitcher reflectively considers similarities he feels critics have failed to note and calls Paul the "enervated Faust, the unsexed Don Juan . . . of the twentieth century." Jeane Harris' "Aspects of Athene in Willa Cather's Short Fiction" (177-82) is yet another study on Cather's ambivalence towards gender. Harris' argument has Cather drawing on her knowledge of the goddess Athene for her portraits of Tommy, Margie Pierson, Margie Van Dyck, and Jimmy Broadwood, respectively, from the successive early stories "Tommy, the Unsentimental," "Resurrection," "The Treasure of Far Island," and "Flavia and Her Artists." Cather employs Athene's masculine characteristics to resolve the characters of these four "androgynous" women and to reflect her own "need to reconcile gender with aesthetics."

Eight articles were devoted to Cather novels. Susan Wiesenthal's "Female Sexuality in Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!* and the Era of Scientific Sexuality: A Dialogue Between Frontiers" (*Ariel* 21:41-63), a carry over from 1990, considers Cather's depiction of sexuality to explore "the possible ways in which an authorial attitude towards a broader concept of 'deviant' female sexuality, in general, does disclose itself in the written text." She perceives Alexandra as "a subtle celebration of the hermaphroditic and perhaps even bisexual sensibility" who is perhaps "not . . . as lonely in her unmarried state as the narrator would sometimes have us believe." Wiesenthal explores the relationship of Marie and Alexandra as lesbian but concludes that Cather abandoned this "daring impulse in what seems a silent submission to the established sexual prejudices and stereotypes of her day." Diane Dufva Quantic in "The Unifying Thread: Connecting Place and Language in Great Plains Literature" (*American Studies* 22:67-83) analyzes passages from Cather's *The Song of the Lark*, Wright Morris' *The*

Home Place, and Sinclair Ross' *As for Me and My House* and sees Thea Kronborg, Clyde Muncy, and Mrs. Bentley as individuals isolated from the common place. Quantic delineates the recurring images of the sea, the town, the elevator, the depot, the train, the store and the tree as "fragile, transient, human existence" through all three novels and reveals that common elements informing these "symbols and images, language attitudes, and values arise from the land itself and the emotional significance that people assign to place." Muriel Brown's "Growth and Development of the Artist: Willa Cather's *My Ántonia*" (*Midwest Quarterly* 33:93-107) approaches the novel as one of creativity. Brown's thesis is that *Ántonia* is the artist created through Jim's perception as narrator. Brown's essay is not new or startling critical thought, nor is it scrupulously researched, as her latest critical source is 1985. In establishing the different ways characters in the novel express their artistic impulses, Brown has Mr. Shimerda play his violin, although his inability to play is emphasized by Cather as an obvious symbol of his defeat and unhappiness. In "Pastoralism and Its Discontents: Willa Cather and the Burden of Imperialism" (*Mosaic* 23:31-44) Mike Fischer criticizes feminist critics who ignore Cather's not recognizing Nebraska's first people — the Native Americans. Fischer convincingly argues that Cather seemed to forget Native American presence in Nebraska and thus ignored historical reality in *My Ántonia*. He perceives *My Ántonia* as a work romanticizing United States response to non Anglo-Saxon peoples. Two articles on *The Professor's House* offer divergent views on that novel. Michael Leddy traces Godfrey St. Peter's "three youthful lives" to his stance at the end of the novel in "The Professor's House: The Sense of an Ending" (*Studies in the Novel* 23:443-51). By affirming St. Peter lived an multiplicity of lives — three as a youth and one as an adult — Leddy explains that St. Peter's youthful perceptions helped him learn that as an adult he must "live without delight." Feminist Janice P. Stout offers yet another feminist study in "Autobiography as Journey in *The Professor's House*" (*Studies in American Fiction* 19:203-15). What needs to be understood, Stout argues, is the significance of Cather's 1912 trip to the Southwest, her 1923 one to the Hambois in France, and the "attachment to place in Cather's life as a whole." Reasoning that Cather could not disregard biographical information, Stout thinks those two journeys shape the novel and forthrightly asserts Cather was "in effect writing her own emotional autobiography, . . . in which the basic structure of action is a journey of search for the right place."

Deriving part of her essay's long title from John Driscoll's famous statement in the novel, *Lady Falls Brown* in "A Poor Man Stinks and God Hates Him": Interpreting Willa Cather's *My Mortal Enemy* in Light of Thorstein Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class*" (*Conference of College Teachers of English Studies* 56:68-75) includes essentially the same thoughts as Zhongxiu He (noted above). Brown, however, uses

Veblen's work for comparison and Veblen's term "invidious comparison" to emphasize how important wealth and standing are to Myra, a former member of the "leisure class." Yet the Veblen connection to Cather is supposition and not needed to understand Myra's desire for money and position. Patrick W. Shaw's "The Art of Conflict: Willa Cather's Last Three Novels" (*South Central Review* 8:41-58) asserts that "various conflicts — especially the homoerotic tensions — were the energy source for [Cather's] creativity" in *Shadows on the Rock*, *Lucy Gayheart*, and *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*. Cather packaged her own biographical information in fiction as a "form of psychological disingenuousness." Shaw says, for instance, that Cather could not permit Lucy Gayheart and Harry Gordon to marry, for "both are fictive manifestations of her bifurcated self" and to allow them this marriage "would be an incestuous acknowledgement of her own homoerotic desires."

Although there were no book length studies published during the period reviewed, several chapters about Cather were published in books. Marilyn Arnold's "Foreword" to the new addition of Edith Lewis' *Willa Cather Living: A Personal Memoir* (Ohio, 1989) is a perceptive study offering additional insight on the Lewis and Cather relationship. Arnold does the same with her seventeen-page "Foreword" to Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant's *Willa Cather: A Memoir* (Ohio, 1992). It is the record of a friendship, Arnold clearly explains, as perceived by Sergeant herself, who is "very much present" in the biography as both a "responding and a self-actuating consciousness." *Willa Cather and Six Writers from the Great War* (America, 1991) by James J. Kirschke contains a rambling chapter titled "Tom Outland: Some Likely Sources for Willa Cather's Character" (79-90). Kirschke draws similarities between Outland and various "real life" war heroes from WW I and finds connections between Cather and several of the same. Kirschke's comparison of Tom Outland with Richard Wetherill is interesting, but his attempt to force G. P. Cather as a source for Outland is merely guesswork. Documentation is lacking, and appropriate sources, like David Harrell's articles on Wetherill, should have been consulted by Kirschke. An addition to Twayne's Women and Literature Series, Mary Loeffelholz's *Experimental Lives: Women and Literature, 1900-1945* (1992), includes chapters on Amy Lowell, Virginia Woolf, Edith Wharton, Gertrude Stein, and Lillian Hellman, but fails to give Cather any more than a brief, tired commentary (109-14), portraying her as an "elegist of the American frontier" whose characters lived in "a kind of romantic symbiosis with their environment." Elizabeth Ammons' *Conflicting Stories: American Women Writers at the Turn into the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1991) looks at seven women writers, Sarah Orne Jewett, Kate Chopin, Mary Austin, Sui Sin Far, Anzia Yezierska, Humishuma or Mourning Dove, and Cather, from a multicultural perspective. Focusing on the differences and the similarities in their works, Ammons sees these

authors linked by "gender, historical context, and self-definition" and calls them "a pioneer generation," for they saw themselves not as professional writers but as artists who cut across the areas of class, culture, race, and ethnicity. In her compelling "Art: Willa Cather, The Woman Writer as Artist, and Humishuma" (121-39) Ammons heeds the discomforting aspect of racism in *My Ántonia*, *The Song of the Lark*, and *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* carefully shows how Cather unknowingly subverted her own texts by silencing "women of color even as she attempted . . . to praise and honor them." After contending that Cather's racism towards Native Americans, Hispanics, or Blacks blinded her, Ammons says Cather endeavored to "create art somehow outside of or at least in dialog with the inherited conventional white western narrative tradition." And, finally, Ammons contrasts Cather with Humishuma, a voice that was muffled because of her color. Reginald Dyck and Linda S. Pickle contribute two of the ten essays addressing the frontier's role in American literature and history in *Desert, Garden, Margin, Range: Literature on the American Frontier* (Twayne, 1992). In "Frontier Violence in the Garden of America" (55-69) Dyck investigates the contradictions between two myths: the peaceful garden and the destructive frontier. Cather and Wright Morris, explains Dyck, developed narrative strategies to accommodate both myths within the same story in order to depict both natural beauty and the violence of American settlement. Cather in *My Ántonia*, *A Lost Lady*, and *O Pioneers!* controls violence through "narrative devices so that it cannot destabilize social structures." Morris, however, in *Ceremony in Lone Tree* critically reviews society by "depicting violence as an expression of impotence caused by the failure of characters to realize society's dreams." The myths of the garden and the frontier, Dyck observes, continue to shape perceptions of people and their society. Pickle also invites further attention to violence in her chapter "Foreign-Born Immigrants on the Great Plains Frontier in Fiction and Nonfiction" (70-89) by exploring the variety of narrative techniques Cather, Ole Rolvaag, Mari Sandoz, and John Ise use to dramatize the struggles of life on the frontier. The conflicts, both physical and mental, of the immigrants are handled, Pickle points out, quite individually by each of these authors. For Pickle, the most essential difference between Cather's *My Ántonia* and Rolvaag's *Giants in the Earth*, on the one side, and Ise's *Sod and Stubble* and Sandoz's *Old Jules*, on the other, is the extent to which Cather and Rolvaag "employ various devices to endow their subject matter with a sense of universality and of epic and even mythic significance." Cather chose in *My Ántonia* to concentrate on the gains brought to the frontier . . . by "the heritage of its immigrants." Ann Romines' *The Home Plot: Women Writing and Domestic Ritual* (Massachusetts, 1992) is a solid study of Sarah Orne Jewett, Mary Wilkins Freeman, Eudora Welty, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Cather, all writers selected by Romines because they wrote a significant

amount of "domestic fiction" and are "linchpins" who perpetually question the "ongoing practice of domestic culture." Romines is a careful critic who contributes two thoughtful chapters on Cather: "Willa Cather: Repudiating Home Plots" (128-50) and "Willa Cather and Women's Culture: 'Now I Know'" (151-91). The former concerns Aunt Georgiana, Mrs. Erickson, Clara, Alexandra, Thea, and Antonia and the effects of domestic ritual — housekeeping — on them. Robbed of her art by the continual drudgery of house-keeping, Aunt Georgiana for Clark is a rural housewife who is pitiless; for Nils his mother's mechanical housekeeping is a travesty Clara resists for her piano; Alexandra and Thea shun domestic ritual but make it a "source for their art," and Antonia reveres it. Romines clearly explains the problem of domestic ritual and what she calls "troubling excess baggage for the young Cather." Domestic ritual, however, was not "excess baggage in *Shadows on the Rock*, 'Old Mrs. Harris,' and *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*," argues Romines in her second Cather chapter. Housekeeping for Cécile is an art, and she becomes a practitioner and perpetuator of "domestic ritual." Maintaining her place in the "housekeeping order" is necessary for Mrs. Harris' own personal worth. Romines also sees this short story as a "meditation on life" in which Cather does not "distance or deny the nuances of housekeeping," as she does in her early works like "A Wagner Matinee." Directing her thoughts for almost half the chapter to *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, Romines expounds on domestic ritual in the novel as the very fabric of family life and as intricately intertwined with slavery. Housekeeping for Cather, Romines concludes, becomes in these three later works a vehicle and not an adversary.

For reference purposes and a quick study on Cather, Susan J. Rosowski supplies primary and secondary bibliographies on Cather and abstracts of her twelve novels and *Obscure Destinies* for the 1991 edition of *Twentieth-Century Western Writers* (St. James, 116-18). The 1993 "Annual Bibliography" in the February issue of *Western American Literature* will show, as it did in 1992, Willa Cather with more entries than any other Western American writer in 1991-1992. Cather criticism and scholarship, to be sure, do prosper.

Just Off the Press!

Willa Cather Scholarly Edition O PIONEERS! — Edited by Susan J. Rosowski and Charles W. Mignon with Kathleen Danker. Historical essay and explanatory notes by David Stouck (Nebraska). \$45.00 plus \$4.00 postage.

Cather, Canon, and the Politics of Reading — Deborah Carlin (Massachusetts). \$25.00 plus \$4.00 postage.

The Life of Mary Baker G. Eddy and the History of Christian Science — Willa Cather and Georgine Milmine. Introduction and afterword by David Stouck (Nebraska). \$14.95 plus \$3.00 postage.

CATHER EVENTS IN RED CLOUD AND BEYOND, (Continued)

lor and dining room were decorated as they would have been in Cather's time. At noon on December 7, the Very Reverend Dean John P. Bartholomew from St. Mark's Pro-Cathedral in Hastings celebrated a memorial mass in Willa Cather's honor. Those attending the mass had a special luncheon complete with birthday cake at the Meadowlark Manor-Quality Street Restaurant.

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Nebraska writer, folklorist, and humorist Roger Welsch did "A Postcard from Nebraska" from Red Cloud for CHARLES KURALT'S SUNDAY MORNING on August 30. Roger and the film crew were in town in July to shoot this segment. He explained how the Cather heritage and preservation have helped Red Cloud remain economically viable. In 1963, *Pageant Magazine* announced that Red Cloud was a dying town. Thirty years later, Cather's Red Cloud survives; *Pageant* died.

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The OMAHA PLAYHOUSE presented Director Charles Jones' version of *O Pioneers!* as its fall production. Bruce P. Baker was an advisor to Jones on interpretation and accuracy. Baker also led several discussion after performances. Hastings High School performed Darrah Cloud's adaptation of *O Pioneers!* as its fall production.

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The WESTERN LITERATURE ASSOCIATION's Annual Meeting, held in Reno, Nevada, October 7-10, featured ten papers on Cather's works:

- Richard C. Harris, Maritime College, "Willa Cather and the Spiritual Development of the Artist";
- Virgil Albertini, Northwest Missouri State University, "Lucy Gayheart: Physically Active";
- Susan Rosowski, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, "The Family Story Behind Willa Cather's Frontier";
- Michael Hobbs, University of North Texas, "Textuality and Marginalization: The Immigrant as Distant Intimate in *My Antonia*";
- Margaret Davidson, University of California, Davis, "The Cathedral as Tomb: Willa Cather's Intersection of Culture and Land";
- Justin Askins, Radford University, "Willa Cather's Delight in the Desert".

Capping the Cather presentations was a session on Cather and painting including Constance Mierendorf, Minneapolis Community College, on Cather and O'Keeffe; Kevin A. Synnott, The Sage Colleges, on

Impressionism in *Lucy Gayheart*. John J. Murphy, Brigham Young University, compared *My Mortal Enemy* to the paintings of Childe Hassam, and Bruce P. Baker, University of Nebraska at Omaha, paralleled the careers of Cather and Thomas Hart Benton.



The WCPM participated in the Second Annual NEBRASKA LITERATURE FESTIVAL, held at the University of Nebraska-Kearney in September. Robert Harwick moderated the Cather panel, and Betty Kort (Hastings High School) and Hal Nagel (UNK) discussed the topic "The Land and I Had It Out Together." WCPM also set up a book and memorabilia sales display. Anne Wagner and Gary Gruenemeier, the owners of original acrylics on Cather by Linda Stych, gave permission for their collection, "The Magical Essence of Willa Cather's Childhood," to be shown at the festival.



The August Nebraska Q-125 Birthday Bash brought Betty Jean Steinshouer back to Nebraska. The Nebraska Humanities Council presented an old-fashioned tent Chautauqua of celebrated Americans. Betty Jean portrayed Willa Cather. Others on stage and in debate were William Jennings Bryan, Mari Sandoz, Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau, George Norris, Frederick Douglass, and Herman Melville.

Upcoming Meetings

APRIL 30 AND MAY 1, 1993 — 38th Annual Willa Cather Spring Conference in Red Cloud. The Conference theme will be Willa Cather's *A Lost Lady*. A new paper session has been added for Friday, April 30. Playwright Horton Foote will be the highlight of the evening banquet on Saturday, May 1.

MAY 28-30, 1993 — The American Literature Association meets in Baltimore, Maryland, at the Stouffer Harborplace Hotel. There will be two sessions on Cather's fiction. Contact Alfred Bendixon, English Dept., California State University, Los Angeles, CA 90032-8110 for more information.

JUNE 19-26, 1993 — The Fifth International Seminar on Willa Cather will be held in Hastings and Red Cloud, Nebraska. The seminar is co-sponsored by the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Dept. of English. Contact Pat Phillips, WCPM, for information.

OCTOBER 7-9, 1993 — The Western Literature Association moves to Wichita, Kansas, for its 28th annual meeting, which will feature several papers on Cather. For information, write to Diana Quantic, Dept. of English, Wichita State University, Wichita, KS 67260-0014.

Catherland Visitors

Visitors to the Cather sites in 1992, according to the Willa Cather Historical Center's figures, numbered nearly 7,000. This is an increase of twenty-five percent over last year. All fifty states and Washington, D.C. have been represented. In addition, visitors have come from Japan, Germany, Portugal, the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus, France, Switzerland, England, Sweden, Saudi Arabia, Scotland, Austria, Canada, and the Ivory Coast. Our tour guides have conducted approximately sixty-five scheduled tours this year.

Dr. Janet Sharistianian's month long seminar class on Cather and Wharton spent a day in Red Cloud. The National Endowment for the Humanities helped sponsor this seminar. Participants were graduate students and secondary teachers from across the United States.

Jim Denney, former editor for the *Omaha World-Herald's* "Magazine of the Midlands," led the Questers' International post-convention tour to Red Cloud in May. This is the second such tour to come to Catherland. The previous September the P.E.O. International Convention met in Omaha and brought a group to Red Cloud.

Two bikers' tours stopped this summer, BRAN (Bike Ride Across Nebraska) and Tour de Nebraska, for a total of 500 bikers.

Gifts to the WCPM

Glenn Jordan, Director of Hallmark Hall of Fame's *O Pioneers!*, donated, through Susan Rosowski, his script of *O Pioneers!* His notes and markings are fascinating. The Hallmark Company of Kansas City donated the three sketches that Carl drew in the film production of *O Pioneers!*

A letter to Dr. L. V. Jacks (a founding member of the WCPM) from Carrie Miner Sherwood (another founding member) was donated by Mary Cekan of Omaha. Again, the gift came through Susan Rosowski. The letter primarily indicates the importance of music to Willa Cather. Mrs. Sherwood also quotes from Cather's letters to her.

Board member Don Connors recently presented us with a FAX machine. He also provided half the funds necessary for us to purchase a new used microfilm reader for the Willa Cather Historical Center.

Alan Winge of Red Cloud donated fifty hours of labor toward weed control and scraping and priming picnic tables at the Little Red Schoolhouse.

Graduate students from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln scraped and primed the wooden parts of St. Juliana Catholic Church in October. These students were Kate Flaherty, organizer, Nancy McCabe, and Sandy Yannone.

Restoration Endeavors Continue

Sayra Cather Wagner, granddaughter of George and Franc Cather (Willa Cather's uncle and aunt) and daughter of their son Oscar, has purchased a second Cather house. This house stands on the corner of 6th Avenue and Seward Street and is the only home Charles and Virginia Cather owned in Red Cloud. (The Cather childhood home was rented by the Cathers from 1884-1904.) Sayra has been restoring and living in the George Cather house since 1988.

Nancy and Bernard Picchi of South Orange, New Jersey, have purchased the Miner House (Harling House in *My Ántonia*) and plan to do a full restoration. Charles and Darlene Reiher, as well as Hilda and the late Robert Reiher, have provided the Picchis with information about the original floor plan. Charles and Robert's mother, Jennie Miner Reiher, daughter of Hugh and Retta Ayres (niece of Charles Cather) Miner, lived in the house for many years. Jennie was the Cather and Miner family historian and genealogist. Family pictorial and historical collections are valuable for this restoration.

In Memoriam

Dr. Philip L. Southwick, long-time friend and supporter of the WCPM died June 7, 1992, in Pittsburgh. He was the husband of Helen Cather Southwick, Willa Cather's niece.

News of Our Board of Governors

In September, the Board elected new officers: David Garwood, President; Betty Kort, Vice President; Bruce Baker, Secretary; Keith Albers, Treasurer; John Murphy, Academic Advisor. A special tribute of gratitude is due Keith Albers, who was elected president immediately following Mildred Bennett's death. He led the Board through a trying period of transition. Robert Knoll and Miriam Mountford, faithful and long-time Cather Board members, have retired as active members but will remain in advisory positions.

Since 1990, the Board has added ten new members: Bill Mountford (Red Cloud), Mellanee Kvasnicka (Omaha), Betty Kort (Hastings), Jim Fitzgibbon (McCook), Alicia Bennett, Advisory (Galva, KS), Merrill Maguire Skaggs (Madison, NJ), Robert Harwick (Hastings), Virgil Albertini (Maryville, MO), and most recently, Gary Meyer and Gary Thompson (Red Cloud).

Board Members Honored

Betty Kort was named Nebraska Teacher of the Year in November. John Murphy has received a Brigham Young University 1991-92 Maeser Award for Research and Creative Arts. Gary Meyer was elected Vice President of the Nebraska Independent Bankers Association in November. Susan Rosowski has been appointed as the first Adele Hall Professor of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Briefs

Darin Stringer, a senior at Red Cloud High School, has been working weekends and summers at the WCPM and also writes our weekly column, "Cather Clips," for the *Red Cloud Chief*. The new voice you may hear when you call the WCPM belongs to Janice Nikodym. Janice assumed the secretarial position in September.

Prairie fashions in *Sassy*, a teenage fashion magazine, used Willa Cather in its August layout. The headline read "Willa Cather Wrote," and quotations came from "The Best Years," *My Ántonia*, and *O Pioneers!*. At the bottom of one page, in small letters, it said, "If you haven't read Willa Cather (1873-1947) you haven't lived."

Foundation Director Pat Phillips presented a program on Willa Cather to the Lincoln Women's Club and served on a panel for the George Norris Foundation to talk about how WCPM began and operates.

Antonette Skupa Turner, granddaughter of Annie Pavelka (Ántonia) has toured Nebraska extensively this year under the auspices of the Nebraska Humanities Council. Her program is titled "My Grand Babicka Ántonia." Both Elizabeth Pavelka Boyd, daughter of Annie Pavelka, and Antonette have been very generous with their time for those interested in hearing about Annie first hand. We thank them and recognize their contributions. On a sad note, Francis Skupa, of Campbell, Nebraska, Antonette's brother and grandson of Annie Pavelka, was killed in a car accident this fall.

Recent Publications in Stock at the WCPM

Legacy Cather Issue — guest editor, Deborah Carlin; contributors: John Swift, Elizabeth Turner, Elsa Nettels, Elaine Aphorp, Ann Fisher-Wirth, and Mark Madigan. \$9.00 plus \$3.00 postage.

Nebraska English Journal Cather in the Classroom Issue — guest editor, Susan Rosowski; contributors: Betty Kort, Bruce Baker, John Murphy, Matthias

Schubnell, Evelyn Funda, Steve Shively, Merrill Skaggs, Anthea Amos-Bankester, Mellanee Kvasnicka, Becky Faber, Susan Rosowski, Thomas Kuhlmann, and Pat Phillips. \$10.00 plus \$3.00 postage.

Modern Fiction Studies Cather Issue — guest editor, William J. Stuckey; contributors: Demaree Peck, Reginald Dyck, Evelyn Haller, Thomas Strychacz, Blanche Gelfant, Jeane Harris, Katrina Irving, Claude J. Summers, Loretta Wasserman, and Susan Rosowski. \$4.00 plus \$2.00 postage.

Resource Guide to Six Nebraska Authors, Volume I (Nebraska Literature Festival) includes Willa Cather, Mari Sandoz, John G. Neihardt, Wright Morris, Loren Eiseley, and Bess Streeter Aldrich. \$5.95 plus \$3.00 postage.

Resource Guide to Six Nebraska Authors, Volume II (Nebraska Literature Festival) includes Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Weldon Kees, Malcolm X, Tillie Olsen, Louise Pound, and Sophus Keith Winther. \$5.95 plus \$3.00 postage.

From Mesa Verde to The Professor's House by David Harrell (New Mexico). \$29.95 plus \$4.00 postage.

Willa Cather and The Art of Conflict by Patrick Shaw (Whitston). \$23.50 plus \$4.00 postage.

The Home Plot by Ann Romines (Massachusetts) includes chapters on Cather, Jewett, Stowe, Welty, and Freeman. \$15.95 (paperback) plus \$3.00 postage.

Re-issued books about Cather — *Willa Cather: A Memoir* by Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, introduction by Marilyn Arnold (Ohio). \$16.95 plus \$3.00 postage. *Willa Cather Living: A Personal Record* by Edith Lewis, introduction by Marilyn Arnold (Ohio). \$22.95 plus \$4.00 postage; \$12.95 (paperback) plus \$3.00 postage.

If you do not have our price sheet, please call or write: WCPM, 326 North Webster, Red Cloud, NE 68970, (402) 746-2653. We have the country's most complete inventory of books by or about Willa Cather.

In Memoriam

Elizabeth Pavelka Boyd, daughter of Annie Sadilek Pavelka, passed away January 16, 1993. Mrs. Boyd, born in 1909, was the prototype for Nina Cuzak in *My Ántonia*.

The Fifth International Cather Seminar June 19-26

Red Cloud and Hastings will be locations for a University of Nebraska-Lincoln and WCPM week-long seminar focusing on the later writings of Willa Cather. After 1922, the memory of Red Cloud and Webster County served Cather as one of those anchors "which in some unaccountable and very personal way give us courage," and these sites are ideal for a seminar interpreting her later writings. Seminararians will be housed on the beautiful Hastings College campus, visit Cather sites in Webster County and Red Cloud, hear lectures and seminar papers by scholar-critics of Willa Cather, participate in discussions, and enjoy other Cather-related events.

Major lectures will be presented by Terence Martin of Indiana University, Merrill Maguire Skaggs of Drew University, and Cynthia Griffin Wolff of Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Presentations will also be given by members of the seminar staff: Elizabeth Ammons of Tufts University, Bruce Baker of University of Nebraska at Omaha, Marilyn Arnold and John J. Murphy of Brigham Young University, Ann Romines of George Washington University, Susan Rosowski of University of Nebraska-Lincoln, David Stouck of Simon Fraser University, and Cather photographer Lucia Woods (Lindley). Cather biographer James Woodress, Professor Emeritus, University of California, Davis, will be honored guest.

When Willa Cather remarked that "the world broke in two in 1922 or thereabouts," she expressed a sense of dislocation so radical that it anticipated the breaking of orders in our own time. It is not surprising, then, that in her later fiction Cather challenges us to explore issues central to criticism today (including questions of class, race, and gender, the idea of place, history, and art), issues we intend to consider during the seminar week. Cather's life and friendships, the formation of Cather's reputation, and the politics of canonization are also relevant, as are approaches to teaching Cather.

For registration and lodging, fees, academic credit, and scholarship information write to Pat Phillips, WCPM, 326 North Webster, Red Cloud, Nebraska 68970 (phone: 402-746-2653). To respond to the call for papers on any aspect of the seminar theme (deadline 15 April) write to Susan Rosowski, Department of English, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, Nebraska 68588-0333 (phone: 402-472-6645).

WILLA CATHER NEWSLETTER

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Willa Cather Newsletter welcomes articles, notes and letters to the editor for its Literary Annual and other issues. Address submissions to WCPM, 326 North Webster, Red Cloud, Nebraska 68970/Phone (402) 746-2653. Essays and notes are currently listed in the annual MLA Bibliography.

Membership Renewal Notice!

Dear Friends,

We sent our membership renewal notice out a little earlier last year. If you missed it, we are including another form for your convenience. We need and encourage your financial commitment and support. Please renew now! — Consider introducing us to a friend or colleague. We are happy to send complimentary issues to those you think might be interested. Just write to us.

Thank you!!

Pat Phillips
 Director



Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial

326 North Webster Red Cloud, Nebraska 68970

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- By being a Cather Memorial Member and financial contributor:

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WCPM members receive:

- Newsletter subscription
- Free guided tour to restored buildings
- By contributing your Willa Cather artifacts, letters, papers, and publications to the Museum.
- By contribution your ideas and suggestions to the Board of Governors.

ALL MEMBERSHIPS, CONTRIBUTIONS AND REQUESTS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

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AIMS OF THE WCPM

- 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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