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Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter

VOLUME XXXV, No. 4 Bibliographical Issue RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA

Jim Farmer's photo of the Hanover Bank and Trust in Johnstown, Nebraska, communicates the ambience of the historic town serving as winter locale for the Hallmark Hall of Fame/Lorimar version of *O Pioneers!*, starring Jessica Lange. The CBS telecast is scheduled for Sunday 2 February at 8:00 p.m. (CST). A special screening of this Craig Anderson production previewed in Red Cloud on 18 January with Mr. Anderson as special guest.

Board News

THE WCPM BOARD OF GOVERNORS VOTED UNANIMOUSLY AT THE ANNUAL SEPTEMBER MEETING TO ACCEPT THE RED CLOUD OPERA HOUSE AS A GIFT FROM OWNER FRANK MORHART OF HASTINGS, NEBRASKA. The Board accepted this gift with the intention of restoring the second floor auditorium to its former condition and the significance it enjoyed in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Among the actresses who appeared on its stage was Miss Willa Cather, who starred here as the Merchant Father in a production of *Beauty and the Beast*.

At a special Board meeting in October, an executive committee appointed by President Keith Albers presented the full Board with recommendations for a developmental study and for hiring an architectural firm. The Omaha firm of Baehr, Vermeer and

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Works on Cather 1990-1991: A Bibliographical Essay

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The outpouring of criticism and scholarship on Willa Cather definitely continues and shows signs of increasing each year. In 1989-1990, fifty-four articles, including the first six discussed below, and five books were devoted to Cather. In 1990-91, the number increased to sixty-five articles, including those in four collections, and eight books. As this survey shows, much continues to be uncovered and written from a significant variety of perspectives.

I will begin with the "leftovers" from last year, the six that I either missed or which arrived too late for inclusion in the 1990 *Literary Annual*. All were published in 1989. In "Rainwitch Ritual in Cather,

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Lawrence, and Momaday, and Others" (*The Journal of Ethnic Studies* 18:59-75), Polly Duryea defines Rainwitch as a "self-coined term . . . that describes a woman who has magical powers to bring about rainfall." She includes in this disjointed essay a brief section on Cather's uses of the myth of the American woman in "The Enchanted Bluff"; "Coming, Eden Bower!"; and *The Song of the Lark*. Joan Wylie Hall's "Nordic Mythology in Willa Cather's 'The Joy of Nelly Deane'" (*Studies in Short Fiction* 26:339-341) is a brief but penetrating essay emphasizing that Cather source studies need to recognize the significance of Norse mythology in Cather's work and then convincingly explaining how Cather structured her story on the Norse myth of Idun, the beautiful goddess of youth associated with spring and renewal. "Imagining the Land: Five Versions of the Landscape in Willa Cather's *My Ántonia*" by Richard Dillman (*Heritage of the Great Plains* 22:30-35) is a brief but reasonable discussion on a subject becoming rather popular with Cather scholars. Dillman sees five images of the landscape, ranging sequentially from wild and untamed land to textured and cultivated land. The images, as Dillman reiterates several times, help delineate Ántonia and Jim Burden. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's "Lighting Out for the Territories: Willa Cather's Lost Horizons," a rambling chapter in *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century, Vol. 2* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 169-212), attempts to show that Cather rejected "illicit sexuality" and threaded it as a theme throughout her canon. They contend that Cather's attack on heterosexuality resulted in a "series of works," like *My Ántonia, Song of the Lark, O Pioneers!, A Lost Lady* and *The Professor's House*, reversing "societally normative assumptions about gender in order to suggest that sexuality is itself a betrayal of the deepest desire of men and women." The opening pages of the chapter present an interesting discussion of the differences between Edith Wharton's and Cather's backgrounds. A matter of history is Joseph R. Urgo's concern in "How Context Determines Fact: Historicism in Willa Cather's *A Lost Lady*" (*Studies in American Fiction* 17:183-192). Urgo draws fascinating parallels between the erotic past and historical representation in *A Lost Lady* but argues unconvincingly that Cather obscures history for her own ideological positioning and that the events in the novel exist mythically: "The novel portrays and in itself represents the power to dehistoricize." The reader will not gain a historical understanding of the pioneer past from *A Lost Lady*; too much is left unsaid about characters and events. Urgo is convinced that because of Cather's "misrepresentation," Captain Forrester is as much a scoundrel as Ivy Peters. In "Writing Against Silences: Female Adolescent Development in the Novels of Willa Cather" (*Studies in the Novel* 21:60-77), Susan J. Rosowski claims that Alexandra, Thea, Ántonia, Cécile, Lucy, and Nancy populate a "gallery of adolescents whose voices combine to tell a story of female development" and who, as they develop, are protected through silences offering them safety. Rosowski's discussion focuses on *Lucy Gayheart* and *The Song of the Lark*, which she sees as Cather's most important and powerful novel of female development. Rosowski's comparisons of Lucy and Thea are striking, discussing Thea as one who "broke with conventions limiting a girl's development" and Lucy as weak because she "remains imprisoned within those conventions."

Six studies of individualized works, two on short stories and four on novels, were published in 1990-1991. Bruce P. Baker, a pioneer in Cather studies, contributes "Willa Cather's 'Peter': From Anecdote to Narrative" (*Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter* 34:40-41). Most discussions on this early short story stress its grimness and naturalistic overtones; Baker, however, clearly shows how Cather took the suicide of Frank Sadilek (Annie Pavelka's father) and transformed it into an enduring piece that suggests art will persevere and overcome insensitivity and materialism. Demaree Peck in "Thea Kronborg's 'Song of Myself': The Artist's Imaginative Inheritance in *The Song of the Lark*" (*Western American Literature* 26:21-38), like Susan J. Rosowski and Marilyn Berg Callander before her, considers the fairy tale element in Cather. Peck applies Cather's life to her novel and discusses Thea as a surrogate helping Cather to fulfill her own desires. The artist here reaps immaterial rewards because all selves in the novel collapse into Thea's "insatiable ego." Peck's observations are captivating as she offers a close examination of those who help Thea fulfill her mission as an artist as fairy godfathers, not godmothers, a neat turnabout of gender conventions that transcends the traditional sex role. A thoughtful study by Maureen Ryan is "No Woman's Land: Gender in Willa Cather's *One of Ours*" (*Studies in American Fiction* 18:65-75). Her title is ironic since land in the novel belongs not only to men but also to women. She discusses the story of Enid, who violates the norms of her time and place, as the untold story of the novel. In reference to the war in France, Ryan uses Mahailey, Mrs. Wheeler, Mrs. Voight, Madame Joubert, Mlle. Olive de Courcy, and the country French girls as indirect participants in the fighting and cogently affirms that not all soldiers are men. Ambivalence is Michael Murphy's concern in "The Complex Past in Willa Cather's *A Lost Lady* and *The Professor's House*: (*South Dakota Review* 28:113-125). Cather's treatment of the past, Murphy asserts, is both enchantingly nostalgic and devastatingly fatal, and he believes that this ambivalence becomes in the novels "a powerful shaping force," a phrase he borrows from Marilyn Arnold's 1981 study "Willa Cather's Nostalgia: A Study in

Ambivalence" (*Research Studies* 49:23-34). Murphy gives *The Lost Lady* short shrift, includes too much plot summary, too many errors, and has little to say not said elsewhere already. Scant critical attention has been given to Cather's short story "Scandal," one of the eight stories in *Youth and the Bright Medusa*, but R. M. Robertson focuses on the story in an overblown essay called "Disinterring the 'Scandal' of Willa Cather's *Youth and the Bright Medusa*" (*Criticism* 32:485-509). Robertson prefers to see Cather as an analyst "whose writing always disrupts to the Cather who left her pelican readers all those reassuring, mirroring fantasies of woman and art and history." Robertson feels that the story "Scandal" does not end properly because society puts the clamps on Kitty, that in this "usual ending for Cather" the woman is silenced. The 1991 spring issue of *The Platte Valley Review*, edited by sports enthusiast Vern Plambeck, includes my own essay "Lucy Gayheart: A Girl in Motion" (19:37-44). This journal has published my three other articles on how sports (football, bicycling, and baseball) play a role, however minimal, in Cather's life and fiction. This essay, very likely to be my last on sports, discusses Cather's early skating and life-long interest in walking and Lucy as a well-conditioned athlete who seems always in motion, either skating swiftly or walking quickly and nimbly.

The Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter, especially the *Literary Annual*, continues to contribute to Cather scholarship. The 1990 *Annual* (34:15-37), edited by John J. Murphy, includes four essays that consider models, themes, imagery, and transcendence in Cather's novels and short stories, plus a bibliographical essay on Cather's studies during 1989-1990. Evelyn Haller's "*Death Comes for the Archbishop*: A Map of Intersecting Worlds" (15-21) introduces this collection by discussing how Cather made a literary structure suited to her interests and techniques by employing four dominant and differing cosmic visions (Franco-centric, medieval, Mexican, and Indian). Haller discovers and learnedly considers two motifs — figures of Death and the Maiden/Mother — in all four. "In *Shadows on the Rock*: Cather's Miracle Play" (21-24), Merrill Maguire Skaggs has Cather wishing for medieval times during the 1920s and says that Cather found in Quebec a kind of life not unlike the medieval life for which she longed. Skaggs speculates that Cather summoned up her miracle in *Shadows on the Rock*, and that it became by her own deliberate analogy her miracle play. In "The Passing of a Golden Age in *Obscure Destinies*" (24-28), Kathleen A. Danker shows how Cather unifies "Neighbour Rosicky," "Old Mrs. Harris," and "Two Friends" through pastoral themes and imagery. Her comments on food imagery in "Neighbour Rosicky" and "Old Mrs. Harris" are consistent and convincing: With the Rosickys, food is a positive pastoral experience; with the Templetons, however, it is a negative one and causes disunity. The pastoral themes and imagery Danker finds are most frequent in "Neighbour Rosicky," diminish in "old Mrs. Harris," and are almost nonexistent in "Two Friends." Transcendence is the key word in Steven P. Ryan's "'A World Above the World': Transcendence in Cather's Fiction" (28-34). Ryan suggests that Cather's characters desire security and normalcy from union with the land and the universe, and he records their quest for "rising above" in *O Pioneers!*, *My Ántonia*, *Shadows on the Rock*, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, *The Professor's House*, and "Neighbour Rosicky." Their pursuit, Ryan argues, "arises from Cather's perception of the sacramentality of this world." Concluding the *Annual* is my own "Works on Cather 1989-1990: A Bibliographical Essay" (34-37), a survey of Cather scholarship attempting to evaluate all the criticism during that time period.

Besides the above bibliographical essay, two others were done this past year: one by Susan J. Rosowski in a special 1990 spring issue on Cather in *Modern Fiction Studies* and the other by Gary Brienzo in *The Platte Valley Review* for its spring 1991 edition. Rosowski's "Recent Books on Willa Cather: An Essay Review" is the anchor for the *Modern Fiction Studies* collection (36:131-141), and she discusses in her selection nine books written about Cather from 1987 to 1990. These include the critical biographies of James Woodress, Sharon O'Brien, Jamie Ambrose, Susie Thomas, and Hermoine Lee, the books by Robert Nelson and Marilyn Berg Callander, and two books on *My Ántonia*, one a collection edited by Rosowski and the other by John J. Murphy. Brienzo's survey, "Developments in Cather Scholarship" (19:79-93), covers more years than the other two and examines or mentions seventeen articles published between 1984 and 1990 and twenty-three books from 1980 to 1990. He also includes a bibliography of the works he reviews and cites.

The *Modern Fiction Studies* collection on Cather, cited above, was tardy in arrival and could not be included in my last year's survey. It includes five articles on Cather's novels, four on the short stories (including two on "Paul's Case"), and Rosowski's essay review. Guest Editor William J. Stuckey refers to the contents as those that eschew traditional labels and examine Cather's work from what he considers a more questioning viewpoint. The selections, Stuckey feels, continue in the spirit of "probing the darker recesses of Cather's world" and modify and "challenge earlier readings." Demaree Peck, in a long discussion called "'Possession Granted by a Different Lease': Alexandra Bergson's Imaginative Conquest of Cather's Nebraska" (5-22), sees *O Pioneers!* as belonging in the tradition of the American transcendentalists. Alexandra, says Peck, is a descendant of Emerson's poet landlord, and not only is Alexandra reunited with self but Cather is also. In "Revisiting and Revising the West: Willa

Cather's *My Ántonia* and Wright Morris' *Plains Song*" (25-38), Reginald Dyck feels that Morris rejects the longing back to an idealized past excluding the present while Cather keeps her focus clearly on the past. Through their protagonists, Jim Burden and Sharon Rose Atkins, the two novelists express their feelings toward the plains and the past. Evelyn Haller in "'Behind the Singer Tower': Willa Cather and Flaubert" (39-54) argues convincingly that Cather used Flaubert's *Salammbô* as a visual commentary for her 1911 story "Behind the Singer Tower." Cather's story reveals her own psychological state at an important point in her life and, in "applying lessons learned from Flaubert to her own work," reveals her technique. Thomas Strychacz contributes another source study in "A Note on Willa Cather's Use of Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Pit and the Pendulum' in *The Professor's House*" (57-60). Strychacz discusses Cather's fascination with Poe's story and how she evokes an atmosphere of Gothic horror through the Professor. Blanche H. Gelfant, who has been writing perceptive articles on Cather for twenty years, offers another fascinating and elucidating essay with "What Was It . . . ?: The Secret of Family Accord in *One of Ours*" (61-78). Originally presented at the Brigham Young University 1988 Cather Symposium and later edited for *Willa Cather: Family, Community, and History*, discussed below, this essay traces Claude Wheeler's destructive quest for a happy family life to his inevitable death. Gelfant sees *One of Ours* as a "troubling nihilistic" work that describes a "quest for an indescribable something (a happy family life) that ends with *nothing*, a brotherhood of death on the battlefield." Jeanne Harris's "A Code of Her Own: Attitudes Toward Women in Willa Cather's Short Fiction" (81-89) examines "The Way of the World," "Tommy the Unsentimental," and "Flavia and Her Artists" to show that Cather's "misogyny" and identification with male-identified values and ideals were not confined to her early years. The male, or masculine woman, in these three short stories, for example, performs in a courageous, unselfish manner, and the female, or effeminate man, in a selfish, cowardly manner. Harris argues that feminist critics are mistaken in dismissing Cather's "misogyny" as occurring only in her youth. In her tedious yet amusing essay "Displacing Homosexuality: The Use of Ethnicity in Willa Cather's *My Ántonia*" (91-102), Katrina Irving writes that the "problems of Ántonia, her ostracization by the community for her various transgressive acts and style, are a metaphor for Cather's continued fear about what would happen if she were to announce her sexuality publicly and expose herself as female and hence, by definition, ineffectual." Irving reads the story of Peter and Pavel as a metaphor for the theme of homosexuality in the novel, and she sees Jim's attitude toward Ántonia as representing Cather's discomfort with her lesbian self. "'A Losing Game in the End': Aestheticism and Homosexuality in Cather's 'Paul's Case'" (103-119) by Claude J. Summers is still another article on the same subject. Summers feels that Paul owes much to Oscar Wilde as a discredited aesthete and a persecuted victim and examines the story as a contribution to the argument about homosexuality at the turn of the century. Paul, says Summers, is homosexual, but it is "the thing not named" and not overtly stated in the story. Loretta Wasserman's "Is Cather's Paul a Case?" (121-129) is a refreshing and understandable commentary on Paul as a young man who uses music, art, and the theater as a means to a bigger somewhere that might become his own place in the world.

Cather Studies, Volume 1 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), edited by Susan J. Rosowski, contains twelve stimulating and clearly written essays on Cather. The carefully selected articles in this new biennial were chosen from among papers presented at the Third National Seminar on Willa Cather, held in Red Cloud and Hastings in 1987. According to Rosowski, the *Studies* "complement both the *Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter* and the more general journals." Three of the articles center on biographical aspects, while the others concentrate on various themes, sources, influences and background in the novels and short stories. The lead essay, noted critic David Stouck's "Willa Cather and the Russians" (1-20), discusses Cather's debt to Turgenev, Chekhov, and Tolstoy. He says that her debt can be "summed up as a translation" in which "she took the powerful images" of these writers and created anew some of her own Nebraska experiences. Five years ago John J. Murphy wrote an insightful essay called "The Dantean Journey in Cather's *My Mortal Enemy*" (*Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter Special Literary Issue* 30:11-14), and he continues his interest in Cather's possible debts to Dante with another first-rate one called "Cather's New World Divine Comedy: The Dante Connection" (21-35). Again he sees Dante as a definite influence and traces many similarities between the Italian poet's work and *Death Comes for the Archbishop, My Mortal Enemy*, and *Shadows on the Rock*. Ann W. Fisher-Wirth's "Dispossession and Redemption in the Novels of Willa Cather" (36-54) reflects upon loss and redemption in *My Ántonia, A Lost Lady, The Professor's House, My Mortal Enemy*, and *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, and concludes that the latter novel is a culmination and a reversal of the other four novels. In "Cather's Archbishop and the 'Backward Path'" (55-67), John N. Swift sees *Death Comes for the Archbishop* as unusual or "nonnovelistic" and as anything but static in structure and discusses its narrative movement and the theme of death. Gender in Cather's endings occupies Susan J. Rosowski in "Willa Cather's Subverted Endings and Gendered Time" (68-88), and her perceptive discussion shows that those endings really are the most revealing aspects of the novels

and short stories. In "Fine and Folk Art in *The Song of the Lark*: Cather's Pictorial Sources" (89-102), Jean Schwind emphasizes folk arts and the "artistry mastery" that distinguishes the minor characters in the novel. James Woodress points out the difficulties a Cather biographer encounters in "Writing Cather's Biography" (103-114). Cather wanted to preserve her privacy and to avert publicity, and to sort out the true from the false in her life, says Woodress, is her biographer's main task. Mark J. Madigan's "Willa Cather and Dorothy Canfield Fisher: Rift, Reconciliation, and *One of Ours*" (115-129) is a straightforward discussion about how the two longtime friends, after years of dissension, renewed their friendship when Cather admitted in her many letters to Fisher that the friendship of Claude Wheeler and David Gerhardt was not unlike the friendship of Cather and Fisher when the two took their first trip to Europe together. David Harrell continues his scholarship on Cather and the Mesa Verde with "Willa Cather's Mesa Verde Myth" (130-143), revealing how Cather used her indirect journey between Richard Wetherill's historic discovery to "Tom Outland's Story" for her own private myth and what she did there to change the facts on Mesa Verde. Ann Romines's "The Hermit's Parish: Jeanne Le Ber and Cather's Legacy from Jewett" (147-158) considers Jewett's influence on *Shadows on the Rock*; Romines argues that *Shadows on the Rock* resembles *The Country of the Pointed Firs* largely through the two hermitic women: Jeanne Le Ber and Joanna Todd. Cynthia K. Briggs's "Insulated Isolation: Willa Cather's Room with a View" (159-171) is a neat and clear discussion of Cather's strong sense of place, both personal and fictional, and explains how Cather created spaces, like her home in Red Cloud and her cottage on Grand Manan Island, for herself and for characters such as Paul, Thea, St. Peter, Tom Outland, and Henry Grenfell. "Willa Cather, Ivan Turgenev, and the Novel of Character" (172-179), a brief piece by Richard Harris, concludes the collection with a comparative commentary on Turgenev and Cather. Characterization and juxtaposition are the distinctive characteristics of Turgenev's fiction that Cather noticed and used.

The largest (ever on Cather) volume of the four collections, consisting of thirty-two essays, is *Willa Cather: Family, Community and History* (Provo: Brigham Young U. Humanities Publications, 1990), edited by John J. Murphy. What Murphy has put together are the best among the sixty papers presented at the Willa Cather Symposium at Brigham Young University, September 14-17, 1988. (Incidentally, this symposium was selected by the Utah Endowment for the Humanities as a "Merit Award Project.") The essays, contributions from both literature scholars and historians, are an excellent complement to *Cather Studies, Volume 1*. The collection is divided into five sections, each section introduced by Murphy with a brief explanation of each essay. Six articles comprise the first part — "Cather's Family and Home Place," and distinguished Cather critic Marilyn Arnold establishes the scholarly quality of this volume with "Poses of the Mind, Paeans of the Heart: Cather's Letters of Life in the Provinces" (3-17). Arnold cautions against reading Cather's early and sometimes satirical letters at face value, and that the later and mature letters need to be read as from one who loved her family and Nebraska. In "A Dutiful Daughter: Willa Cather and Her Parents" (19-31), James Woodress talks about Cather's generally happy relationship with her parents and decides that this relationship had "a lot to do with what she wrote about." Bruce P. Baker, with his delightful conversational style, discusses the three-generation family unit living in the Templeton house in "'Old Mrs. Harris' and the Intergenerational Family" (33-40): "The writing of 'Old Mrs. Harris' was . . . a personal journey of memory, of exploration, of understanding, of reconciliation — a powerful evocation of that intergenerational family that resided on Cedar Street in Red Cloud." Mary R. Ryder's "Loosing the Tie That Binds: Sisterhood in Cather" (41-47) surveys the sister relationships in *The Song of the Lark, The Professor's House, Lucy Gayheart*, and "The Diamond Mine." Ryder warns that to find tensions between sisters in Cather's stories as reflection of her own relationship with her sister Jessica "would be to misrepresent the thematic importance of this sibling bond." Ryder does remind us that because of blood ties and family loyalties the bond between sisters is a delicate one. Home and the divided self is Cheryll Burgess's concern in "Willa Cather's Homecomings: A Meeting of Selves" (49-56). Burgess compares "The Best Years" and *The Song of the Lark* from that viewpoint: Thea's individuality becomes her professional self, while Lesley drowns in family. Cather, however, managed balance in her life by making her writing about Nebraska her homecoming. Loretta Wasserman, who has done extensive and competent articles (and a book) on Cather's short stories, rounds off this section with "Going Home: 'The Sculptor's Funeral,' 'The Namesake,' and 'Two Friends'" (57-62). Wasserman discusses the distressing return home to his terrible family and town of sculptor Harvey Merrick, who on his deathbed "senses the bond with home as inviolable"; then in the countering second story Wasserman shows how the home and family enables sculptor Lyon Hartwell to create the great works that have made him internationally known. Finally, in the third story, she discusses the narrator's childhood experience of a special friendship between two older men and its final dissolution, occasioning the narrator's imaginative coming home "to explain, to be comforted, to tell the tale."

The second section presents essays on "The Family Idealized and Explored"; it begins with Susan J. Rosowski's "Fictional Formations and Transformations" (67-78). Rosowski focuses on three novels

and two short stories, *O Pioneers!, The Song of the Lark, The Professor's House,* "Neighbour Rosicky," and "Old Mrs. Harris," and discusses Cather's creating families we all seem to know "as well as our own." "Cather's Complex Tale of a Simple Man, 'Neighbour Rosicky'" (79-83) by Merrill Maguire Skaggs is a helpful and lucid piece that pictures the dying Rosicky as a loving and whole man who can share his family pleasures and thus fulfill his idea of the American dream of success. Blanche H. Gelfant's previously mentioned "'What Was It . . .?': The Secret of Family Accord in *One of Ours*" (85-102) is included at this point. Gelfant sees family life in Nebraska as disturbing and lacking reality for Claude for whom family is achieved through a fellowship of death on the battlefield. In her stimulating "Fragmented Families, Fragmented Lives in 'Paul's Case,' *My Ántonia,* and *A Lost Lady*" (103-108), Mellanee Kvasnicka perceives Paul, Jim, and Niel as lacking balanced family lives and therefore lonely and maladjusted individuals, "unable to create a family of their own." Family life in *The Professor's House* is the topic of essays by Stephen L. Tanner and Alice Bell. Tanner in "The Deeper Role of Gender Conflict in *The Professor's House*" (109-114) displays disdain for the critics who offer only a limited view of gender conflict in the novel, and then proceeds to recognize that family life is a necessary function of Godfrey St. Peter's life and important to him not only personally but professionally. In "The Professor's Marriage" (117-123) Bell directs her thoughts on Cather's uses of allusions to define the status of the professor's marriage and to identify causes of stress within his family. "Lovers as Mortal Enemies" (125-131) by Eugene England holds Myra Henshawe accountable for the flaws in her marriage and judges her a failure, "a negative example of married love, and her death a tragic evasion," largely because she does not possess Christian forgiveness. Robert K. Miller completes this section with "What Margie Knew" (133-137), uncovering Valentine Ramsay's selfishness and self-indulgence, definitely sources of tension in any family structure.

Five essays on Cather novels, one on a short story, and the other a personal one make up "Feminist Perspectives on Family and Community," part three of this volume. Patricia Lee Yongue in "For Better and for Worse: At Home and at War in *One of Ours*" (141-153) rejects Hemingway's censure of the novel and clarifies it as an anti-war and a woman's novel. She solidly makes her point that Cather injects "a complex argument about the status of war as an anti-woman and anti-family act." Yongue hears Cather's voice decrying war and Claude's as glorifying it. In "*Sapphira and the Slave Girl*: The Daughters' Plot" (155-162), Ann Romines sees Cather's heritage of Southern female relationships as the center of her last novel, and she perceives Cather's concerns in claiming a part of her Southern heritage as a writer and learning how to deal with Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in "ways entirely her own." Female generations in concord rather than in discord is what Helen Fiddyment Levy suggests in "Mothers and Daughters in 'The Bohemian Girl' and *The Song of the Lark*" (163-168). Cather justified her personal leave-taking from her family and place through Thea, who will continue to celebrate her mother in her career. Thea and her mother have contrasting commitments, but they will never be separated. In contrast, Clara's leave-taking is a negative one motivated by romantic passion. A woman's individual freedom is Susan A. Hallgarth's interest in "The Woman Who Would Be Artist in *The Song of the Lark* and *Lucy Gayheart*" (169-173), an absorbing comparison on the development of the female artist with *escape* as the "key word for understanding Cather's concept of the artist." Hallgarth believes that Lucy, Thea's antithesis, is victorious because she escapes the limited life of Haverford and discovers the female in art. Karen Stevens Ramonda explains the importance of female kinship in "Three in One Woman in 'Old Mrs. Harris'" (176-181), depicting Grandma Harris, Victoria Templeton, and Vickie as interchangeable. A personal tone is supplied by Sue Hart in "My Great-Grandmother in Cather's Pages" (183-188). Examining stories of Cather's Western heroines and the life of her grandmother, Hart "finds the history of my own family in Nebraska woven into Cather's pages." Marian Forrester is "a lost lady," affirms J. Gerard Dollar in "Community and Connectedness in *A Lost Lady*" (189-194), divided between her need of security and her affinity with Captain Forrester and her wish to satisfy her sexual energy through Frank Ellinger and Ivy Peters. Those two, including Niel, are "disconnectors," breakers of connection on the level of friendship, marriage, and community.

The eight essays in the fourth section are, as the title "Issues of History and Fictional Communities" indicates, directed towards Cather's theory of history and use of historical sources. David Stouck initiates this part with "*The Professor's House* and the Issues of History" (202-211) and explains that the novel is a book about history, a "despairing view of history after the Renaissance, a rejection of the age of progress dependent on science and technology, with no reassurance any longer that history is cyclical." Joseph Murphy's "Cather's Re-Vision of American Typology in *My Ántonia*" (213-219) discusses Jim's vision of history as a progressive one, "a flawed typological one, a peculiarly American typology that draws a correspondence between experience in the New World and the Jewish experience in the Old Testament." Ántonia's outlook is a providential and redemptive one, "her belief dependent on her unmediated relationship to things" and her Old World cyclical vision of history. Ann Fisher-Wirth in "Womanhood and Art in *My Ántonia*" (222-227) places Ántonia in female cyclical time and Jim in male linear time, distinctions which Fisher-Wirth

uses to explain their separation. Fisher-Wirth, whose discussion clearly complements Murphy's, sees Cather as trying to unite female sexuality with creativity, or "Ántonia's body with Jim Burden's mind, in a relationship that would signify the union, in Cather's own life, of womanhood and art." In "Nebraska, 1883-1925: Cather's Version and History's" (229-238), Robert W. Cherny offers, along with a ten-page pictorial essay, a survey of the history defining Cather's changing attitudes toward Nebraska from her grim story "On the Divide" to *One of Ours, A Lost Lady*, and *The Professor's House*, reflecting Cather's attitudes during the postwar era. In "Willa Cather and Francis Parkman: Novelistic Portrayals of Colonial New France" (253-264), Wilbur R. Jacobs shows Cather's indebtedness in *Shadows on the Rock* to Francis Parkman's *France and England in North America* chronicles and compares their depiction of the Indians and the heroes of New France. As an historian, Jacobs discerns both virtues and shortcomings in *Shadows on the Rock*, commending Cather for employing the environmental frontier theme but expressing doubts about her characterization of Woodland Indians as savages. Ted J. Warner, another historian, finds Cather blameworthy for being creative with biography in "*Death Comes for the Archbishop*: A Novel Way of Making History" (265-273). Warner admits that Cather's novel, a classic one "accepted as history," is fascinating and impressive but, because Father Martinez is treated with disdain and Bishop/Archbishop Lamy (Latour) as kindly and gracious, flawed as a distortion of historical fact. Lance Larsen's "Cather's Controversial Portrayal of Martinez" (276-280) is a fine complement to Warner's and also chides Cather for distortions of Martinez. Larsen discusses in detail the parallels between W. J. Howlett's Martinez in *The Life of the Right Reverend Joseph P. Machebeuf* and Cather's Martinez and illustrates Cather's great debt to Howlett as well as her "creative process of narrative reshaping." Larsen relates that Cather took what she found historical and also literal in Howlett and gave her novel "epic and symbolic dimensions . . . ." ("A Post Santa Fe Connection" published in *The Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter* [34:42-43] by Sister J. Adele Edwards deserves mention here. Sister Adele makes note of the historical connection between her order, the Sisters of St. Joseph, and Bishops Lamy and Machebeuf, and believes that it was because of the two missionaries' efforts that many of the sisters migrated to the Southwest in the 1800s.) Closing this section is David Harrell's "The Family Affair at Mesa Verde" (281-287), yet another interesting perspective on Mesa Verde as a source in "Tom Outland's Story." Harrell discusses the contributions to Tom's story of the related Rickner and Jeep families, explorers and guides in the early days of the park.

"Communities of Art, Families of Faith" is the last section and, with only three essays, the shortest. Kevin A. Synnott in "Conflicting Communities and Cather's Artists: The Absorbing Vision" (291-299) studies Cather's resolution of dual allegiances. He emphasizes Thomas Cole's artist figure in *The Ox Bow* and concludes that Cole's significant landscape illustrates the success of Jim Burden, Thea Kronborg, and the young girl in "Two Friends" in creating communities to share their visions. William Monroe in "Scripts and Patterns: Stories as 'Equipment for Living' — and Dying" (301-310) feels that Tom's story is insufficient for Godfrey's change of life problems; thus Godfrey moves to Augusta for rebirth and cultural regeneration in a waste land. Capstoning *Willa Cather: Family, Community, and History* is John J. Murphy's "The Faith Community in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*" (311-319). He astutely discusses "The Best Years," "Neighbour Rosicky," *My Ántonia, Shadows on the Rock*, and "Jack—Boy" as prefatory and as transitions from the earthly family ideal to the supernatural family in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, Cather's "ultimate family novel." The missionaries' quest is, Murphy discloses, "to establish and sustain community through the Mass and the Eucharist."

Seven single-authored books on Cather were published in 1990, one so far in 1991, and that one is Loretta Wasserman's *Willa Cather: A Study of the Short Fiction* (Boston: Twayne Publishers), a significant addition to scholarship on the short stories. Wasserman focuses on what she considers Cather's most challenging contributions to this genre — "Before Breakfast"; "The Bohemian Girl"; "Coming, Aphrodite!"; "The Diamond Mine"; "The Enchanted Bluff"; "Eric Hermannson's Soul"; "The Garden Lodge"; "A Gold Slipper"; "Jack-a-Boy"; "The Joy of Nelly Deane"; "Neighbour Rosicky"; "The Old Beauty"; "Old Mrs. Harris"; "Paul's Case"; "The Sculptor's Funeral"; "Two Friends"; "Uncle Valentine"; and "A Wagner Matinee." Wasserman feels that these eighteen Cather stories are "responsive to a variety of critical approaches," and by focusing on Cather's selectivity, reticence, and control in these stories, she demonstrates why Cather's short fiction belongs in twentieth-century modernism. Strengthening Wasserman's position is a gathering of previously published essays on various Cather short stories by John J. Murphy, Marilyn Arnold, Susan J. Rosowski, Joan Wylie Hall, and Alice Hall Petry.

Reading Merrill Maguire Skaggs' *After the World Broke in Two: The Later Novels of Willa Cather* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia) is like opening a window to let in the air from Tom Outland's Blue Mesa. It is a fresh and invigorating work and carefully examines the eight novels Cather published after 1921. In a style both lucid and readable, Skaggs explores Cather's often quoted remark that "the world broke in two in 1922 or there-

abouts" and reads *One of Ours, A Lost Lady, The Professor's House, My Mortal Enemy, Death Comes for the Archbishop, Shadows on the Rock, Lucy Gayheart,* and *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* as attempts to make a broken world whole again after the critical contempt given to *One of Ours* and in light of more personal traumas. Skaggs calls her book an "intellectual history" primarily derived from those novels, and she follows Cather sequentially through the novels as "slowly work[ing] out her own salvation." In identifying Cather with her characters, Skaggs skillfully depicts her as flesh and blood and with human frailties and a dark side balanced with a positive one. The one definite minus in this significant study is that Skaggs does not include a bibliography.

Before 1990 there was no book-length discussions on Cather and the classics. Now there are two. Erik Ingvar Thurin's was the first one with Mary Ryder's close behind. Thurin's *The Humanization of Willa Cather: Classicism in an American Classic* (Lund, Sweden: Lund University Press) is the 81st of the Lund Studies in English, and this book on Cather and the one Thurin wrote on Ralph Waldo Emerson (no. 46) represent the only American writers in these Swedish studies. Thurin, a classicist himself, thoughtfully considers the manner in which Cather uses the classics in her writings, including her poetry, journalism, and letters. But the largest portion of the book is on classical influences and references in the novels, showing Cather's strong feelings for Roman and French culture, Greek civilization, the Catholic church, and, in addition, the Bible and medieval literature. This study is thorough, solid, readable, and carefully researched, and pictures Cather as "a splendid example of what the classics can do for a great twentieth-century writer, not to mention what a great twentieth-century writer can do for the classics."

Ryder's *Willa Cather and Classical Myth: The Search for a New Parnassus* (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press) explores the classical myths Cather knew and integrated into her writings and discusses how she made them a pattern for structuring her art. The early chapters in the book, those that focus on the influence of classical myths on early short stories, poems, *Alexander's Bridge, O Pioneers!, The Song of the Lark,* and *My Ántonia,* are convincing. Ryder is less forceful in the latter half, on the classical influences in Cather's eight remaining novels and later short stories, including *Obscure Destinies*. Although Ryder does not include the Christian mythos, she contributes an interesting and nicely structured work that, along with Thurin's will enhance the reader's knowledge of how the classical myths were deliberate and central to Cather's fiction. A minor point but perhaps worth noting is Ryder's indexing; it is perplexing and annoying. For example, works like *Lucy Gayheart, Sapphira and the Slave Girl,* and "Before Breakfast" cannot be found on the pages noted in the index, and there are more pages in the text on those works than Ryder indicates.

In *Willa Cather's Modernism: A Study of Style and Technique* (Rutherford, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson Press), Jo Ann Middleton explores the methods used by Cather to evoke ardent response from her readers, and she attempts to point out modernistic tendencies which help explain Cather's writings. Middleton "borrows" the scientific term *vacuole* to demonstrate how Cather "manipulates the reader to respond through absences." She explain that Cather uses *vacuole* in all twelve of her novels, but offers no credible reason for selecting only *A Lost Lady, The Professor's House,* and *My Mortal Enemy*. Middleton's brief work, obviously her doctoral dissertation, contains an extensive bibliography.

Janice P. Stout's *Strategies of Reticence: Silence and Meaning in the Works of Jane Austen, Willa Cather, Katherine Anne Porter, and Joan Didion* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia) provides a comparative study of the four authors and is a thorough, interesting and convincing feminist reading into many of their works. She carefully shows how rhetorical techniques interpret silences forced upon women writers, arguing that "woman speaks of and through silence out of a tradition of being silent" and that Cather's writings contain a rhetorical thrust mostly by means of what is said and what is not said. She observes Cather's verbal strategies in dealing with sexuality and gender and suggests that silences and dualities are evident in all of Cather's novels. Stout gives full treatment to *My Ántonia, A Lost Lady, My Mortal Enemy, The Professor's House, Song of the Lark,* and "Old Mrs. Harris"; *Death Comes for the Archbishop, Shadows on the Rock,* and *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* are briefly analyzed as having silences, artful omissions, and gaps. Stout's interpretations can be startling; for example, she sees the bride thrown to the wolves in the Peter and Pavel story as a nightmare version of Jim's readiness to toss Ántonia's friendship overboard whenever necessity requires it for him. Cather, according to Stout, communicated the difficulties and inequities of women's lives, protesting through her rhetorical structures the unfair treatment of women like Ántonia, Marian Forrester, Lillian St. Peter, and Mrs. Harris. Stout's "Notes" are extensive and vividly explanatory, and she is not timid in disagreeing with eminent critics like James Woodress and Susan J. Rosowski.

Tom Quirk calls his *Bergson and American Culture: The Worlds of Willa Cather and Wallace Stevens* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press) an essay in literary history. It is a study of the intellectual and cultural conditions that shaped the literary development of Cather and Wallace

Stevens. Although it is not really known how much Bergson Cather read, Quirk's thesis is that Bergson's philosophy helped rediscover the intellectual climate in America immediately preceding World War I. Quirk thinks that after enthusiastically reading his *Creative Evolution* in 1912 Cather was inspired enough by Bergson's vitalism to create *O Pioneers!*. Although Cather did not again write a novel which "might be properly described as vitalistic," Quirk sees the Bergson influence in all of Cather's novels and several of her short stories. Of course, Quirk is not the first to discover a significant Bergson influence on Cather. Loretta Wasserman accomplished that in 1985 with her fine essay "The Music of Time: Henri Bergson and Willa Cather" (*American Literature*, 57:226-239).

The last of the three comparative studies, by Conrad E. Ostwalt, Jr., is *After Eden: The Secularization of American Space in the Fiction of Willa Cather and Theodore Dreiser* (Lewisburg, Pennsylvania: Bucknell University Press). Ostwalt's title is specific, but his book seems to be a generalization, adding nothing really significant to Cather scholarship. Ostwalt's posture is that the spatial understanding of the United States changed in the nineteenth century from the sacred to the secular, a change leaving nineteenth-century Americans disoriented until they began to understand the exchange early in the twentieth century. And where does Cather fit into all this intellectualizing? Americans needed a more appropriate view of the twentieth century, and Cather, along with Dreiser, was a realist/naturalist whose writings depict how this exchange process occurred. Cather and Dreiser, Ostwalt claims, secularized American space. Ostwalt's bibliography — "Cather," "Dreiser," "Literary, Cultural, and Religious Studies" — covers ten pages, but his latest source on Cather is 1984. Recent scholarship might have altered his thoughts. He considers E. K. Brown's 1953 work, complemented by Mildred Bennett's 1951 book, the best full-length Cather biography — so much for biographers like Woodress, O'Brien, and Lee! Certainly Susan J. Rosowski's superlative work *The Voyage Perilous: Willa Cather's Romanticism* (1986) would have challenged his reading of Cather as a realist.

The 1992 "Annual Bibliography" in *Western American Literature* (February) will show Willa Cather with many more entries than any other Western American writer in 1990-1991, and that includes, of course, one Samuel Langhorne Clemens. Cather criticism and scholarship, to be sure, does thrive.

Willa Cather's Poor Pitiful Professors

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It doesn't require a long stretch of reading Willa Cather's fiction to arrive at the conclusion that she had a pretty low opinion of professorial types, and she was not overly impressed with universities or their students either. Her letters, which rarely flatter anyway, support the general image conveyed in her fiction. In fact, they make some particularly nasty cracks about English teachers. Granted, a few of her fictional professors do seem to be rather engaging fellows — Gaston Cleric, Godfrey St. Peter, Claude Wheeler's department chair at State University, and perhaps Vickie Templeton's archaeologist. These are the best of the lot, and even they have problems. Cleric, for example, seems to have nothing better to do with his evenings than tramp the streets and drop in for conversation with Jim Burden.

Now, I haven't spent a lot of my life dropping in on students, but if I ever do, I hope that I can find someone with more get-up-and-go than Jim Burden to drop in on. Of course, if Cleric is an insomniac, seeking Jim Burden makes sense. Jim is better than a sleeping pill. Not that Jim doesn't have his good points, I suppose, but aren't we all mightily relieved that Ántonia didn't get soft on him? We don't see enough of Claude's professor to know his personal views and habits, but we have to be suspicious of anyone who lectures without notes and treats his students as though they were people, don't we? At least Lillian St. Peter would say so. Vickie's Profes-

sor Chalmers is a hard one to call, too, but I feel quite secure in accepting Victoria's estimate of him as "a gawky kind of fellow" (OMH 151). If only Grandma Harris had sized him up. Or Mrs. Rosen. Or Blue Boy the cat. There would be some assessments we could rely on.

As for the university, we cannot ignore Mrs. Wheeler's carefully considered and totally objective charge that there can scarcely be "any serious study where they give so much time to athletics and frivolity" (OO 23). Bayliss, too, whose word, like his value system, is gold, speaks knowingly of the "fast football crowd at the State" (OO 24). And when we remember that Emil Bergson's sole distinction at the university was his ability to whistle (thanks to the providential space between his front teeth), we cannot doubt that Cather is casting aspersions (not to mention saliva) at the institution we hold dear. (Could Emil's hot blood be traced to the fact that "gat-tothed he was"? Surely, Willa Cather knew the Wife of Bath.) It is not intended as a compliment either to Carl Linstrum or our profession that Marie Shabata describes him as "kind of staid and schoolteachery" (OP 153). (Some days, I confess, I get to feeling that way myself.) Willa Cather, as you remember, left the teaching business as fast as she could, though she seems to have been a bit sentimental about public school teachers.

Cather's most engaging professor is, of course, the attractively Mesphistopholean Godfrey St. Peter. His very name should tip us off to Cather's subversive intent, however. He bears the moniker of a card-carrying saint, and yet he wishes to be free of God. Scandalous, as the sewing woman well knows. Granted, St. Peter is a brilliant scholar, one of only two "uncommercial" (PH 141) researchers at Hamilton U., and he cuts a smart figure clad only in "pyjamas," or robe, or less. Especially less, Cather slyly informs us. Although Cather pretends to admire and sympathize with her professor, in her secret heart she finds him peculiar, to say the least. Otherwise why would she linger on his rather odd preferences and behavior? Okay, so he doesn't want grass in his yard. Let him brood over his rocks to his heart's content. It does trouble me, though, that on occasion he has leapt into the bathtub in his "pyjamas" (never mind that it is only to paint the thing — does anyone do that from the inside? and in pyjamas? spelled with a "y"?). More kinky still, he has a decidedly unnatural attachment to the dress forms that adorn his otherwise spartan study in the old house. St. Peter's much advertised solitude, it turns out, is but a perverse sort of camaraderie. He has filled the gap Tom Outland left in his life with a couple of headless torsos that are only slightly less intelligent than the students Cather vindictively puts in his classes.

The form called "the bust" presents an intriguing aspect. This "headless, armless female torso" is, as the professor notices, "richly developed in the part for which it was named" (PH 17). And although St. Peter tries to make an academic matter out of it, the reader perceives, even if Augusta doesn't, that the professor has a rather intimate relationship with "the bust." I mean, Cather spends half a page describing this seductive female figure, in language that clearly suggests that St. Peter knows her characteristics by, shall we say, "hands on" experience. The lady, Cather reports, appears "billowy (as if you might lay your head upon its deep-breathing softness and rest safe forever)" — in the professor's case, a consummation devoutly to be wished. But "if you touched it you suffered a severe shock, no matter how many times you had touched it before" (PH 18). We are left wondering how many times, indeed, and how our esteemed professor could have developed an attachment to such a deceitful creature. I find it downright shocking to note all the overt tactile references in Cather's description: "Its hardness was not that of wood, which responds to concussion with living vibration and is stimulating to the hand, not that of felt, which drinks something from the fingers. It was a dead, opaque, lumpy solidity, like chunks of putty, or tightly packed sawdust — very disappointing to the tactile sense . . ." (PH 18). Augusta is absolutely right in thinking that "these forms were unsuitable companions for one engaged in scholarly pursuits" (PH 19), but Cather's professor takes his soul-mates where he can get them.

In all fairness, despite his personal "eccentricities," we have to admit St. Peter is a true and enviable scholar, a researcher of integrity, a credit to the academic profession. It is *not* to his credit, however, that he has given his life to an uncreditable profession. You can bet that if he had it to do over again, he would collect his boy self and beat it for Lake Michigan. Maybe find a hard-backed turtle or two to consort with. He used to have something in common with Professor Crane, before the ailing scientist found he could not stay ahead of poverty as a teacher and elected to join the money-grubbers. Worse still, "in a lifetime of teaching," St. Peter has "encountered just one remarkable mind; but for that," he says, "I'd consider my good years largely wasted" (PH 62). A lifetime of teaching is a lot of classes and a whale of a lot of students, and only one in the whole bunch worth beans. No wonder St. Peter goes home and cozies up to dress forms. It was the same for Professor Crane — the weak students, not the dress forms. Tom Outland was the only exceptional student that ever crossed his path, too. And all he had at home was Mrs. Crane. A poor second to St. Peter's dress forms in anybody's book. The fastidious Lillian St. Peter chastises her husband for forgetting himself on one occasion and speaking to his students "as if they were intelligent beings" when she can see at once that they are nothing but a bunch of "fat-faced boys" (PH 70). They probably remind her of her sons-in-law, with whom she will

coquette but not trust with an idea. St. Peter thanks her for the good advice and promises not to repeat the indiscretion. Even of wonder boy, Tom Outland, St. Peter is skeptical at first, for "he had been fooled more than once" (PH 122). (I wonder if he counts the dress forms as one of the foolings?)

If it were not enough that St. Peter has no worthy students, he can scarcely find a colleague other than Crane on this side of brain dead. My personal favorite among the faculty is that specialist in social graces, Horace "Lily" Langtry. St. Peter also has the misfortune to be teaching in a university which the state legislature and the board of regents are trying to convert into a "trade school" (PH 140). Still, that's better than the charm school it is now, Cather implies. And there is always research, after all, which is a darn sight better than teaching, even if the uncommercial variety like Professor Crane's leads only to the poorhouse. St. Peter is luckier. He finds an untainted kind that pays. One only has to scare up some lucrative award somewhere, or a rich relative, in order to live as a gentleman scholar should.

It is always the teaching, though, that St. Peter dreads, that "takes it out of him" (PH 151); and he comes to regard his researcher's desk as "a shelter . . . , a hole one could creep into" (PH 161). Recognizing that there is no satisfaction for her father in teaching, Rosamond offers to settle an annuity on him, courtesy of Tom Outland, so he can give up teaching. She reminds him how Tom "hated having you hampered by teaching" (PH 61). Goodness gracious, don't all of us teachers just hate to be hampered by teaching! By the time Cather reaches the end of her book, St. Peter, poor man, is reaching the end of his rope — Dragging himself reluctantly to his first fall classes. He decides he can't "take the trouble to learn the names of several hundred new students" (PH 271), especially since it's a sure bet there won't be an IQ above 110 among them.

In the midst of all this moribundity, however, we should not forget St. Peter's single lustrous moment. Heaven be praised, he has had one remarkable student in twenty or thirty years, and according to Willa Cather, that's one more than most of us poor blackguards can hope for. And he had two gladsome summers and many fine evenings in the company of that one student, but even then the kid couldn't tell you his own birthday. At any rate, the fun didn't last. First, St. Peter's wife became jealous of Tom, and then one of his daughters became jealous of Tom's attention to the other. In a clear, if unconscious, vote for celibacy, Tom followed Father Duchene to Europe where, in surrogate fulfillment of St. Peter's death-wish, he got himself killed in the Great War. Tom brewed trouble after his death, too, with the Cranes as well as St. Peter's family. St. Peter probably came to wish that he had never had that one exceptional student, that he had limited his social circle to Augusta and the dress forms. He winds up with them anyway, when his attempts to resurrect first Tom Outland, then his own Kansas boy self, fail to stir him out of terminal lethargy. In the end he succumbs to the lure of his old study and its dress forms. There he dies spiritually and is reborn not as Tom, and not as his youth self, but as Augusta's child. He becomes just one more fixture in Augusta's domain, and she his philosophical lodestone. Now three dummies inhabit the attic study instead of two.

Professors Gaston Cleric and Godfrey St. Peter, whose hunger for human association drove them to Jim Burden and a couple of dress forms — St. Peter had the livelier companions, I think — had an important forerunner and exemplar in vicarious living, Lucius Wilson (*Alexander's Bridge*). Good old Lucius, that twentieth century Miles Coverdale, that pedigreed Doctor of Philosophy who lectures at psychology conferences and regards himself as a reader of men's, and, yes, women's souls. Wilson, too, drops in on his student (that is his former student, Bartley Alexander), though it is a long drop from Chicago to Boston. His fixation is perhaps even more odd than Godfrey St. Peter's. At least Tom was in town.

Wilson's tastes do improve with time, however, and after the engineer's death he relives Bartley's two love affairs, though at age seventy, mind you. Maybe it has taken him this long to get up a head of steam. Now, Winifred Alexander has about the same texture as one of Augusta's dress forms — hard on the outside and hollow on the inside — but Hilda Burgoyne seems lively and supple enough, at least in the beginning. Gaston Cleric should have followed Wilson's example and taken up with Lena Lingard instead of Jim Burden. Wilson ends up doing as Bartley did, building an emotional bridge across the Atlantic between Winifred and Hilda. (Wilson's bridge, too, is made of inferior materials.) At any rate, the old duffer seems harmless enough, for all of his vicarious pleasure-taking. Is it to be counted against him that he cannot muster up any lusts of his own? Surely not. This prototypical professor is simply low in the life force department. Come to think of it, he and Jim Burden would have got on famously. Two of a kind. Why, life-weary as he is, even Godfrey St. Peter lounging in his garden or unconscious by his failed stove is a bundle of energy compared to Wilson.

We learn nothing of Wilson's university or his students, though we are probably safe in assuming that since he is a Willa Cather professor he had only one remarkable personality among all his students. Even so, Bartley wasn't particularly bright, for all his charm. Brains were in short supply in those years. Luckily, successful engineers didn't need them. What Bartley had was presence, force, and a way with women. Wilson decides he will settle for the latter as less tiring. Wilson may be aging, but his

eyes are still good, and right off he spots Winifred Alexander. "Always an interested observer of women," we are told, "Wilson would have slackened his pace anywhere to follow this one with his impersonal, appreciative glance" (AB 3). His glance is the only thing he has enough energy to exercise, and to slacken his pace much would be to go backwards. Vicarious observation is this dynamo's specialty: "Wilson was able to enjoy lovely things that passed him on the wing as completely and deliberately as if they had been dug-up marvels" (AB 3) he had gone in search of. "*Dug-up* marvels"? Bones, I presume. He strikes me as the kind who goes to graveyards for a lively change of pace.

After Christmas, when Wilson is, as Alexander says, "safe back at his grind" (Cather's term for university work), he writes that "the memory of Mrs. Bartley will make my whole winter fragrant." Yes, indeed, a fragrant winter is something we all could use, though a set of tire chains would probably be more gratifying. Bartley may not be right bright, but in this he has his old professor's number: "Just like him. He will go on getting measureless satisfaction out of you by his study fire. What a man he is for looking on at life" (AB 70). Well, somebody has to do it, and it wouldn't pay to assign a passive role like that to an archbishop or a pioneer. Only college professors need apply for such positions in Willa Cather's labor force.

After Bartley's death, Wilson moves to London where he takes up with Hilda Burgoyne. The narrator tells us that the two "have much more in common than their memories of a common friend" (AB 133). What they have in common is an active imagination and a severe case of inertia. Hilda's comment that Wilson is now "the realest thing I have" (AB 134), tells us that she has slowed down a lot since Bartley took a dive. There is a world of meaning in Hilda's comment that "nothing can happen to one after Bartley" (AB 138). Nothing except Wilson, that is. As she said, nothing. But it is Wilson who verbalizes the truth about the vicarious life he has lived through his student's love relationships. Speaking of Bartley Alexander as he and Hilda stare blankly into the fire together, he says, "He left an echo. The ripples go on in all of us. He belonged to the people who make the play, and most of us are only onlookers at the best" (AB 13). Sigh. There is Cather's model professor for you. Let us not forget, either, that Wilson is looking on with Hilda, his former student's lover, for whom things have deteriorated to the point that even Wilson looks good.

By and large, Willa Cather's professorial types, if not out and out perverted, are at the very least lacklustre and more than a little hung-up on their students. By way of conclusion I call your attention to, but decorously avoid discussion of, Claude Wheeler's teacher at the parochial college. With just this glancing allusion to the dull and pious Brother Welden I rest my case. Willa Cather did not have much use for the likes of us, and I seriously doubt that she has changed her mind even yet.

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Board News (Continued)

Haecker was selected to draw plans for the restoration.

BOARD MEMBER DON CONNORS AND THE WCPM RECENTLY PURCHASED AN UPGRADED USED MICROFILM READER/COPIER FOR THE CATHER HISTORICAL CENTER. This should help relieve the "scholarly neck pain" researchers have previously suffered.

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY'S FIRST "PRAIRIE WALK" ON THE CATHER PRAIRIE was led by Board Member Jim Fitzgibbon on Sunday 16 September as a part of Prairie Appreciation Week.

Meeting News

THE FIRST NEBRASKA LITERATURE FESTIVAL CELEBRATING NEBRASKA'S LITERARY HERITAGE AND CONTEMPORARY WRITING, co-sponsored by the Nebraska Center for the Book and the University of Nebraska at Omaha and held at the UNO campus 27-28 September, honored Willa Cather among Nebraskans John Neihardt, Loren Eiseley, Wright Morris, Bess Streeter Aldrich, and Mari Sandoz.

For Cather readers there is much to report. Photographer Lucia Woods talked to us about her Cather-related work. The rare tree on the prairie under the sky (*Willa Cather: A Pictorial Memoir*) Woods sees as dancing, as indeed she sees photography itself — the photographer moves around until locating a still center of what is seen. Evelyn Haller (Doane College) gave a fine presentation on Cather and quilting, leaving us with images of Cather as quiltmaker, as piecing together significant patterns in words. Susan Rosowski (University of Nebraska-Lincoln) gave a workshop on *My Ántonia*, drawing from her audience a close reading of the passage in which Jim Burden first visits the Shimerdas, when

they are living in the earth. Rosowski spoke of editing the MLA's *Approaches to Teaching Cather's My Ántonia* — on receiving diverse, interesting, and individual approaches to a text that supports so much.

There was a panel of Cather "Portraits." Bruce Baker (University of Nebraska at Omaha) explained to us that portrait, as opposed to picture, implies interpretation of the subject. He spoke of the sun "encircling" the plow in *My Ántonia*. Susanne George (University of Nebraska at Kearney) told us how she would take camera portraits related to characters in *O Pioneers!* — how she would convey with lens and angle their individual relationships to the earth. Susan Rosowski gave us portraits from the text of *My Ántonia*, and Robert Harwick (Hastings College) spoke of the arch of the sky over the graveyard in "Neighbour Rosicky." The "encircling" and the arch seem configurations that repeat. Betty Jean Steinshouer discussed her creating of the "Willa Cather" she dramatizes in person. She left us with a message from Miss Cather. Miss Cather would leave, presumably after the banquet, but she would think of Nebraska every night — and every night pray for rain.

Joanna Lloyd
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

THE 1991 WESTERN LITERATURE ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE, held in Estes Park, Colorado, 3-5 October, included a number of presentations on Willa Cather's life and works and involved some familiars in Cather activities: Marilyn Arnold, John Murphy, Pat Phillips, Ann Romines, Susan Rosowski, Robert Thacker, and Patricia Lee Yongue.

While the conference focused on many Western writers, two panels were devoted to Cather. The first was titled "Willa Cather's Landscapes — the Tree and the Desert" and included "Earth's Daughter in Cather's *The Song of the Lark*" by Patricia Matteson of Boulder, Colorado, and "Tree Mythologies: Perceptions of Sin and Sexual Love in *O Pioneers!*" by Evelyn Funda of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The second panel session, "Willa Cather's Sources and Methods," was chaired by Becky Davis of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and included her paper, "Some of His: Cather's Use of Sweeney's Diary in *One of Ours*." The other papers were also by University of Nebraska-Lincoln scholars: Polly Duryea's "Willa Cather and the Prodigious Menuhins," Paula Fessler's "*Paradise Lost*: Shaping and 'Justifying' *One of Ours*," and Elizabeth Turner's "Silence and Talk in *O Pioneers!*: Alexandra Bergson as Translator and Authority."

Cather was also represented in other sessions of the conference. Marilyn Arnold of Brigham Young University presented "Confounded Again: Willa Cather's Poor Pitiful Professors" in the session entitled "All in Good Humor." Frances Lumbard of Washington, D.C., read her essay, "Interpreting the American Landscape: *My Ántonia* and *Death Comes for the Archbishop*," in the "Women Writing on Land and Landscape" session. Gary Brienzo of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln combined Cather with another Nebraska author in "Romantic Transformation in Wright Morris and Willa Cather." On the last day of the conference, a panel-led discussion entitled "Great Plains Literature II: A Discussion of Quintessential Great Plains Novels" included the commentary "*My Ántonia*, a Classic? You're Darn Right!" by Susan Rosowski of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Cather scholars and friends gathered informally for talk and refreshments on Friday afternoon before the evening meal.

Elizabeth A. Turner
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

News Briefs

THE CATHER HISTORICAL CENTER'S SECOND ANNUAL CHRISTMAS VICTORIAN TEA was held at the restored Childhood Home on Sunday 8 December. It is a part of Red Cloud's Old Fashioned Christmas celebration.

A CATHER TOUR TO RED CLOUD WAS ONE CHOICE FOR A POST CONVENTION TRIP FOR P.E.O. MEMBERS who attended their International Convention in Omaha in September. Thirty P.E.O.s toured Cather Country and stayed overnight at P.E.O. Bed and Breakfast homes. The Czech Society hosted a Czech lunch for the group in Bladen. Antonette Turner, granddaughter of Anna Pavelka, made all the arrangements and most of the food.

PAVELKA HOUSE GETS COAT OF PAINT. Melissa Marget, a senior at Red Cloud High School, helped complete work on the Pavelka House with volunteers from Hastings, Nebraska. The painting project was used by Marget for her Girl Scout Gold Award. With a few other volunteers she scraped and primed this historic site for the painters, most of whom came from Hastings College.

Singing Cather's Song

This 30 minute award-winning video produced by Nebraska Educational Television is now available from the WCPM for $19.95 plus $2.50 postage. It tells of Mildred Bennett's spiritual struggle and her discovery of Willa Cather.

Cather Edition Request

THE WILLA CATHER SCHOLARLY EDITION IS LOOKING FOR COPIES OF *MY ÁNTONIA* FROM THE 1920s AND 1930s in order to confirm the printing history of the text. Of special interest are late printings of the first edition, particularly copies marked "Ninth Impression" on the copyright page, and also later printings of the 1926 edition, particularly those from which the Benda illustrations were dropped; these may have printing dates of June 1929, April 1930, February 1931, November 1931 on the copyright page, or notices that these were the fifth, sixth, seventh, or eighth printing. Anyone who would be willing to loan any of these volumes to the Cather Edition for examination, please contact Prof. Susan Rosowski, Dept. of English, University of Nebraska-Lincoln 68588-0333.

The *O Pioneers!* Interview: Director Glenn Jordan, Willa Cather Scholar Susan Rosowski

The Hallmark Hall of Fame presentation of *O Pioneers!* airs Sunday, February 2, 1992 at 8 p.m. CST on CBS. Based on the classic Willa Cather novel, the production stars Jessica Lange as a turn-of-the-century prairie pioneer who perseveres and, eventually, prospers. *O Pioneers!* marks the fifth time Glenn Jordan (*Promise; Sarah, Plain and Tall*) has directed a Hallmark Hall of Fame.

Dr. Susan Rosowski is Adele Hall Professor of English at the University of Nebraska; she has written widely about the life, times and work of Willa Cather, and is acknowledged as a leading Cather expert. Jordan and Rosowski were interviewed together on the *O Pioneers!* set in Nebraska.

QUESTION: Glenn Jordan, why did you decide to make a film based on *O Pioneers!*?

Glenn Jordan: Since college, when I first read it, I've always loved the story, and I love the characters — the most important of which is the land. I think it's a beautifully written book, and I thought it would be a wonderful challenge to try and recreate all that on film, and to make the land a character.

QUESTION: Dr. Rosowski, did you have any concerns initially when you heard a film was to be made based on the Willa Cather novel?

Susan Rosowski: Yes, I did. Willa Cather's work is just now entering the public domain, and those of us who've devoted much of our professional lives to Cather have been trembling with fear. We were less than impressed with some of the producers who came here to Nebraska expressing interest in making films based on her novels. But when Hallmark and Glenn Jordan started talking about doing *O Pioneers!*, we were both pleased and relieved.

QUESTION: Why were you relieved?

SR: Because right from the start I realized Glenn Jordan had a real reverence for the written word — for the book. In his letters to me he went into incredible detail about character, about motivation. He made sure the script stayed as faithful to the book as possible.

GJ: During this whole process, I've felt a great obligation to be as faithful to *O Pioneers!* as possible. Before we film a scene, I read the relevant part of the book to myself. And I often read that section to the actors as well, just before the cameras roll. I feel Willa Cather is looking over my shoulder — and I want her to be pleased!

QUESTION: If Willa Cather were alive today, how do you think she would have responded to this film?

GJ: I think she'd be thrilled. I mean, it's such a literal, pictorial representation of what she wrote.

SR: Interestingly, while Cather was alive a film was made based on her book *A Lost Lady*. And it was awful — both arrogant and tacky. That experience really turned her off film adaptations of her work. She decided her books could and should speak on their own to her readers.

But this she would have loved. She once wrote about *O Pioneers!*, "The country insisted on being the hero of my book, and I did not interfere." When I was brought here to the set, I was stunned. As far as you can see on the horizon it's just open land. No asphalt roads, no telephone poles, no billboards. Just the land, the glorious land. It was beyond anything I could have imagined.

QUESTION: Considering all of Willa Cather's work — how important is *O Pioneers!*?

SR: It's very impotant. It's the novel in which, for the first time, Cather used her own voice. Before that she was imitating other writers; this is the first major work in which she used her *own* imagination, in which she wrote with respect and love for the country that was such an important part of her as a person and as a writer.

QUESTION: Glenn, how did Jessica Lange get involved in the project?

GJ: She's a great fan of Willa Cather, especially of *O Pioneers!*. That's why she decided to make this her first motion picture for television. She also is familiar with the long, honorable tradition of the Hallmark Hall of Fame.

O PIONEERS!

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 1992 ON CBS

Below are stills from *O Pioneers!*, which opens the forty-first year of the *Hallmark Hall of Fame* and stars Jessica Lange in her television debut. The production was filmed entirely in Nebraska.

Academy Award winner Jessica Lange as Alexandra Bergson is joined by David Strathairn (*Silkwood, City of Hope*) as Carl Linstrum in *O Pioneers!*.

Alexandra Bergson's brothers: (left to right) Oscar (Graham Beckel), Lou (Adam Nelson) and Emil (Reed Diamond).

Reed Diamond and Anne Heche play the star-crossed lovers Emil and Marie in this adaptation of Cather's novel.

O Pioneers! also stars Tom Aldrege (*Batteries Not Included, Other People's Money*) as the memorable character Ivar, confidante of Alexandra.

Willa Cather Newsletter Bibliographical Issue

Editor: John J. Murphy, Brigham Young University
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Bibliographer: Virgil Albertini, Northwest Missouri State University
Editorial Assistant: Sally Murphy, Provo, Utah

Willa Cather Newsletter welcomes articles and notes for its Literary Annual and other issues. Address submissions to WCPM, 326 North Webster, Red Cloud, Nebraska 68970. Essays and notes are currently listed in the annual MLA Bibliography.

IN MEMORIAM

Dr. Wilbur K. Bennett

April 3, 1913 December 7, 1991

Pioneer WCPM Board Member and Benefactor

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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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