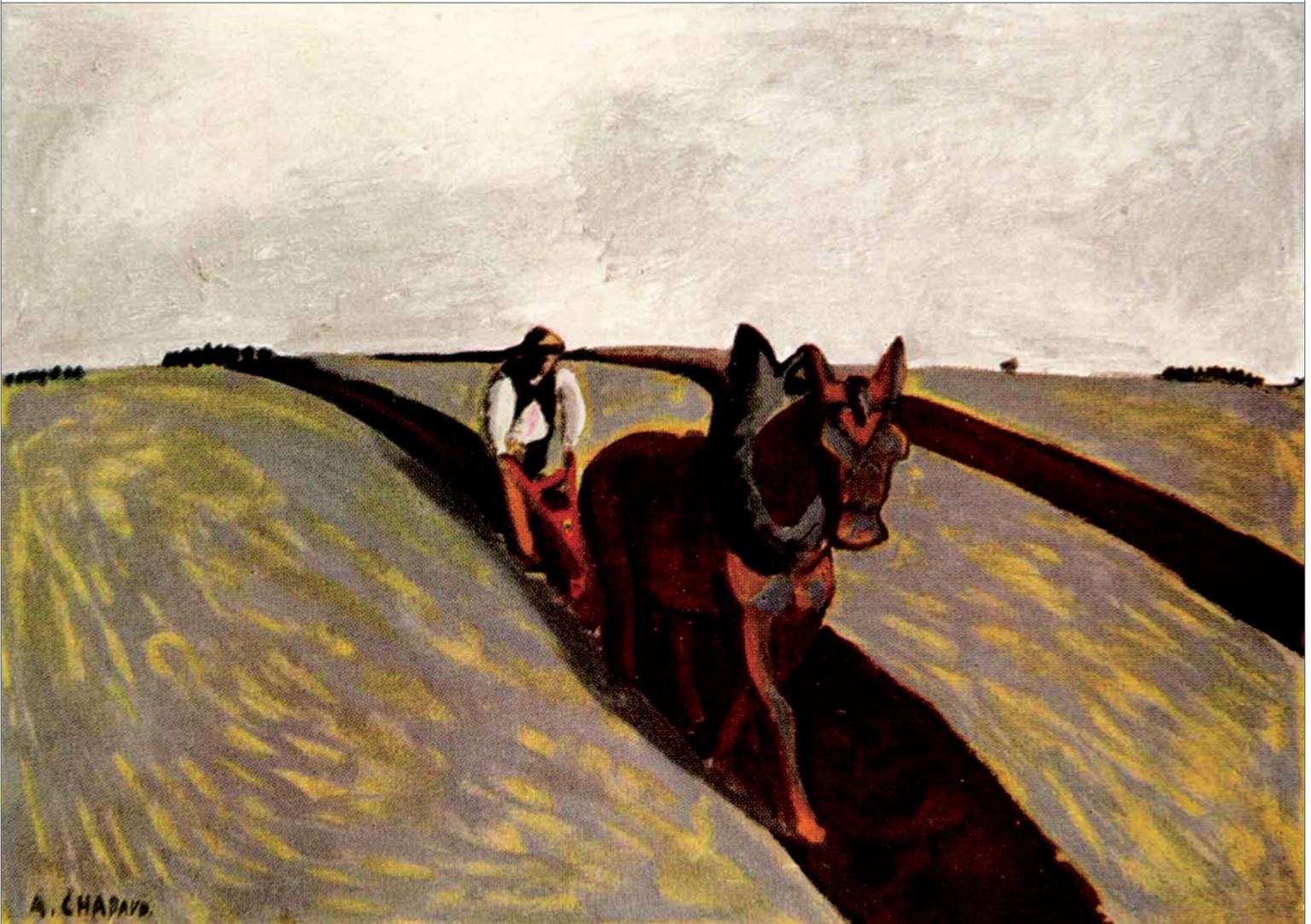


Willa Cather

NEWSLETTER & REVIEW

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“Intrigued by the Cubist”

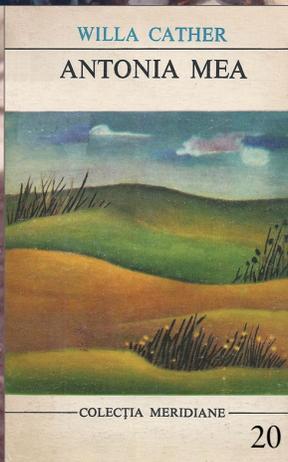
Cather in translation

Paul’s Pittsburgh: Inside “Denny & Carson’s”

Willa Cather NEWSLETTER & REVIEW



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On the cover: Le Laboureur (The Plowman), Auguste Chabaud, 1912.



Letter from the Executive Director

Ashley Olson

Nine years ago this month, I came home to Red Cloud and interviewed for a position at the Willa Cather Foundation. I listened attentively as executive director Betty Kort addressed plans for the future. Among many things, she spoke of a historic downtown building known as the Moon Block. The Foundation's intent was to restore and repurpose it as a museum and cultural center to serve as a living memorial to Willa Cather. I recall thinking how greatly Cather deserved this tribute and how much her childhood home of Red Cloud might benefit from the development.

A preservationist at heart, I spent countless hours of my childhood driving country roads with my grandfather and quizzing him about why someone hadn't saved an old schoolhouse, farmstead, or church from crumbling to pieces. Learning of the decades of work undertaken by the WCF to preserve places connected to Cather's life and writing had inspired me. So I eagerly joined the staff and naively thought we'd make quick work of this Moon Block restoration.

The planning and work that followed didn't happen swiftly, but purposefully. We designed an archive room with a proper envelope and climate control to ensure preservation of our valuable

collection of Cather materials. Plans took shape for a classroom, library, and study center to accommodate scholarly research and educational programs. We made plans for an expanded bookstore, performer greenroom, and dressing rooms to enhance our Red Cloud Opera House. Our aspirations to create an interpretive museum exhibit were brought to life. And, in the midst of it all, supporters near and far affirmed their belief in the project by making investments, both large and small.

Nine years later, the National Willa Cather Center is nearly complete. As a living memorial, it will honor Cather's place as one of America's greatest novelists. Her legacy could effortlessly be carried forward by her writing alone, but that doesn't seem fitting for a writer of her caliber. Her work will forever live on through her readers, but that doesn't provide these readers with a place to encounter the artist behind the writing.

Cather's relationship with Red Cloud and its citizens was complex, but it was also deep and strong, and enduring. In her later years, Cather wrote to her lifelong friend, Carrie Miner Sherwood, and said, "I am not exaggerating, Carrie, when I confide to you that I would rather go home to Red Cloud than to any of the beautiful cities in Europe where I used to love to go." Everyone ultimately needs a place to call home. I believe we've done right by Cather by preserving her town and creating a center to serve as that "home." We hope you'll visit us here. We hope you'll discover her here.



Letter from the President

Lynette Krieger

A few weeks ago, the Willa Cather Foundation and some of our good friends had an opportunity to reconnect with an important piece of our history. The property we know as the Pavelka farmstead called out to us. For a multitude of reasons relating to its history and location and the needs of the many individuals and organizations that have a stake in its preservation, this important site has long presented unique and difficult challenges.

Cather had seen her friend Anna Sadilek Pavelka as a woman who overcame adversity and remained strong. In *My Antonia*, Jim Burden says of Antonia, "I know so many women who have kept all the things that she had lost, but whose inner glow has faded. Whatever else was gone, Antonia had not lost the fire of life." We see that wonderful vitality in her home, too. Under the sponsorship of the Nebraska Tourism Serves volunteer program and with the help of landscape architecture students from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Architecture and

members of the community, we came together for an ambitious autumn clean-up. Inside and out, throughout the site, we painted and trimmed and swept and chopped and hauled, and did our best to channel the determination of Annie Pavelka.

One remarkable moment that day occurred when a very old truck that had belonged to one of Annie and John Pavelka's children was pulled by tractor from within a tumbled-down shed. For all of us, it was a vivid connection to the past (if also another significant clean-up target).

On a warm, sun-blessed day, volunteers of all ages were spellbound as Antonette Turner, Anna Pavelka's granddaughter, reminisced and told family stories. She brought Anna Pavelka to life for us. It was easy to imagine that Cather had portrayed her accurately. I think the sight of fifty of us sitting on the grass in her yard would have pleased Annie.

All of us that day came away with new energy and passion for preserving the past. We were amazed at the beauty of the loft of the cathedral-style barn on the property, where the beams would have been lifted by a community of volunteers. That was something for us to aspire to.



“Intrigued by the Cubist”: Cather, Sergeant, and Auguste Chabaud

Diane Prenatt | Marian University

An especially hot day in late June 1913 found Willa Cather waiting at the pier in New York City to greet her friend Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant who was returning from a nine-month stay in France. Cather, flush with anticipation over the publication of her real “first novel,” *O Pioneers!*, and Sergeant, in a “Provençal daze” (*Willa Cather* 111), had so much to say to each other that they shouted back and forth over the ship’s railing before Sergeant had even disembarked. In *Willa Cather: A Memoir* (1953), Sergeant records an intense exchange between the two women, a suite of scenes extending over a couple of days in Cather’s Bank Street apartment, which begins on the docks where the two sat on Sergeant’s trunks “surrounded by the multifarious luggage” of pre-war transatlantic travel (110), awaiting the customs inspector. Cather was “irked,” Sergeant reports, by the carelessness of the inspector who scattered the packed “gloves, frocks, scarves, from Paris and Avignon, books of Provençal poetry inscribed with many flourishes in purple ink, canvases and drawings” on the dirty dock (111). Cather wore green linen; her “hat nodding with red poppies and blue cornflowers” (110) must have reminded Sergeant of the French countryside she had just left behind.

Cather and Sergeant had struck up a friendship three and a half years before, when Sergeant submitted an article to *McClure’s Magazine*, but at least two and a half years of that time had left them at some distance from each other. Both women traveled extensively, and Sergeant also spent time away from New York at her family’s homes in the Boston area and in New Hampshire. Sergeant’s memoir vividly recounts early adventures with Cather—a Fifth Avenue bus ride ending in tea at Delmonico’s, a trip to Gloucester and to Mrs. Fields’s home in Boston—but the two women had shared their headiest experiences in correspondence. In a kind of call-and-response exchange that would recur throughout their friendship, Cather’s 1912 letters to Sergeant from the American Southwest and Sergeant’s 1913 letters to Cather from France narrated their uncannily similar experiences of sensual “foreign” cultures mediated through “native” men. In June 1913, they were getting together for the first time since that exchange of letters.

In her memoir, Sergeant composes the dock scene in painterly detail: the green linen, the purple ink, the red poppies

and blue cornflowers—and from the ship, the faces of the waiting crowd that appear as “blobs of white, crimson or brown, like patches of paint on a Pissarro canvas” (110). The “burning dirty waterside, clanging with trucks” (111) might have been painted by John Sloan or Charles Demuth. Once inside the Bank Street apartment, Sergeant registers a “first impression . . . a sensuous one”: “a temple” in which “good windows and marble fireplace asserted their lines” and the “heavy-spicy perfume of summer flowers” filled the air (112). Sergeant’s description of Cather herself is aestheticized: “the bounteous gesture of Willa’s arm, well-rounded, white, pouring a dry Burgundy” (113); her dress of Liberty of London silk, embellished by “some Czech embroiderer” (114). Art is on Sergeant’s mind, and on Cather’s as well. The conversation of that day and the next ranges over the imperatives of the creative life—how the writer, especially the woman writer, might assume an appropriate relation to her art—in the context of the justly anticipated success of *O Pioneers!* and Sergeant’s recent acquaintance with *avant-garde* art in Provence.



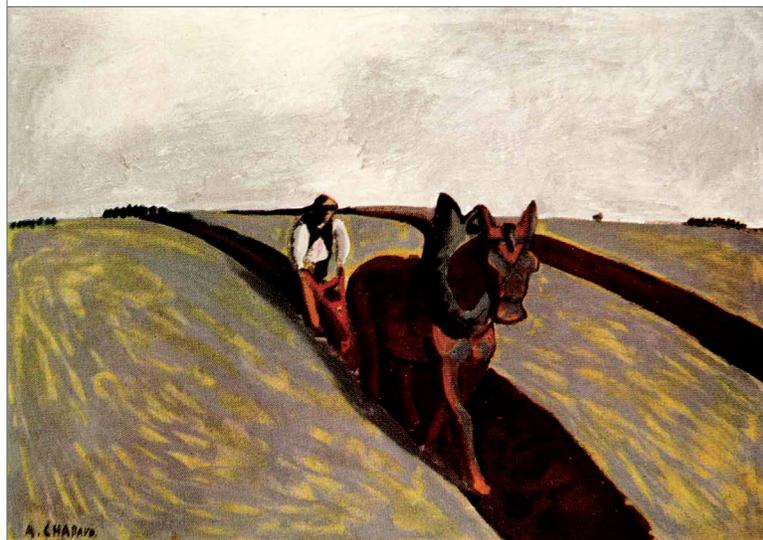
Le Troupeau après la pluie (The Flock after the Rain), 1912.

The trip Sergeant had just returned from was her fourth extended stay in Europe. She had arrived in England in September 1912 and then gone on to Paris, where she stayed until after Christmas. Cather had appreciated Sergeant’s response to a draft of “The Bohemian Girl” in early 1912, confiding that she was one of “just three people whose judgment she valued,”

and Sergeant was looking forward to reading the new “pastoral” novel (92, 86). Sergeant received the typescript of *O Pioneers!* in January 1913 with the request that she shop it around Paris for a translator. She read it to the family of women she was staying with and, with French appreciation for *le terroir*, they remarked on the unique American quality of a novel about “virgin soil” (93). When Sergeant moved on to the south of France in the spring, she shared the novel with her British-born traveling companion, Helen Quincy Muirhead, who also responded appreciatively to its “Americanism” (95). Sergeant’s “French literary friends in Paris”—who at different times included the poet André Spire, historians Daniel Halévy and Pierre Hamp, and the playwright Jean Giraudoux, among others—had provided introductions to Provençal artists and writers. She found lodging in a convent in Arles, and the poet Frédéric Mistral, who had been awarded the 1904 Nobel Prize in literature, invited her to join the gatherings of the *Félibrige*, the literary society devoted to the revival of the Provençal language and folk culture (97–98). It was among these Provençals that she first met the man she described to Cather as “*un sauvage*, a wild man . . . a ‘*Fauve*,” the painter Auguste Elisée Chabaud (98).

Auguste Chabaud was born in Nîmes in 1882.¹ His father was a tanner, but when Chabaud was still a child, the family inherited a *mas*—a large working farm—in Graveson near Avignon, and became grape growers and winemakers. Chabaud attended school in Avignon and then studied art at the *École des Beaux-Arts* there before leaving in 1899 to continue his studies at the *École des Beaux-arts* in Paris, where he became acquainted with Henri Matisse, André Derain, and other artists of the pre-war Paris School. He was called back to Graveson in 1901, when the phylloxera blight destroyed his family’s vineyards and his father, under financial duress, committed suicide. For several years, Chabaud divided his time between the Graveson *mas* and a Montmartre studio; in these early years, his paintings were sold through the Paris gallery of Berthe Weill, an upstart champion of the *avant-garde* who in 1902 had sold the first Picasso in Paris. By the time Sergeant met him in 1913, Chabaud had been submitting oil paintings and drawings to the annual Salon d’Automne, the Salon des Indépendants, and other French exhibitions for several years.² His work had hung at the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition organized by Roger Fry in London in 1912 and, as Sergeant states, he “had already exhibited in New York” (98)—specifically at the 1913 Armory Show. *Le Troupeau après la pluie* (*The Flock after the Rain*, 1912) was loaned to the Armory Show by its recent purchaser, the American modernist collector John Quinn; a second painting,

Le Laboureur (*The Plowman*, 1912), was purchased on the first day of the show by another prominent American modernist collector, Arthur Jerome Eddy.³ Quinn purchased another nine paintings between 1915 and 1917 from Chabaud’s mother while Chabaud was stationed at Verdun, having been conscripted at the start of the Great War in August; Eddy purchased another four (Kruty 45).⁴ These fifteen early paintings remained in the private collections of both men until their early deaths, Eddy’s in 1920 and Quinn’s in 1924.



Le Laboureur (*The Plowman*), 1912.

Although Sergeant refers to “my portrait . . . painted by a Cubist” (98), Chabaud actually painted two portraits of Sergeant in 1913, both of which he exhibited at the 1914 Salon des Indépendants under the title *Portrait de Miss S. S.* One of them was in the possession of the Chabaud family until it was sold to a private collector sometime around 2008–10. In the 1982 “Literary Issue” of the *Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter*, precursor to this *Newsletter & Review*, Michel Gervaud of the Université de Provence identified Chabaud as Sergeant’s cubist and published a black-and-white photograph of the painting given to him by Chabaud’s son Jean during a visit to the Graveson *mas* “some time” earlier (3). As an Aixois, Gervaud already knew something about Chabaud by reputation and drew more information from Charmet’s biography and from the director of the regional art museum, Louis Malbos. Gervaud based his conclusions on the similarity he saw between Sergeant’s 1913 Arlésienne photograph (reproduced in *Willa Cather: A Pictorial Memoir* 56; see image next page) and the one *Portrait de Miss S. S.* that was still housed in the Chabaud studio on the grounds of the *mas*. Gervaud’s essay is accompanied by an appreciative sketch by Mildred Bennett describing her visit to the studio with





The 1913 “Arlésienne” photograph of Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant and the two Portraits de Miss S. S. from the same year.

Gervaud, in the company of Chabaud’s son, and their discovery that the painting was indeed labeled “Miss E. S. S.,” the “E” added sometime later in Chabaud’s handwriting (7). The publication of the photograph in the *Newsletter* was probably the first time the painting, which Gervaud rightly pronounces “certainly one of the best works by Chabaud” (3), was seen outside of France. *Portrait de Miss S. S.* was most recently exhibited in 2012 at the Paul Valéry museum in Sète, near Montpellier.⁵ The whereabouts of the other *Portrait de Miss S. S.*, also sometimes identified as *Femme dans la casaque bleue* (*Woman in the Blue Blouse*), is currently unknown.

Chabaud served in the French artillery during the First World War and was awarded a *Croix de Guerre* with two citations. He married a local woman in 1921, and together they raised eight children at the Graveson *mas*. Chabaud remained there until his death in 1955, partly out of a sense of family obligation owing to his widowed mother’s difficulties, but more because of his passionate love for the Provençal landscape and culture. During the 1920s and 1930s, Chabaud’s work was sometimes exhibited by the Paris *galeriste* Katia Granoff, who also showed the work of Marc Chagall, Gustave Courbet, and Claude Monet among many others. After the Second World War, one of Chabaud’s daughters took over the promotion of his work. Louis Malbos, the director of the Granet museum in Aix-en-Provence and an advocate for Provençal culture in the tradition of Mistral, promoted his work as well. Chabaud continued to paint his entire life and remains esteemed in France as a significant Provençal painter; but he is not nearly as well-known in the United States as other painters in his early Paris circle. There is a museum dedicated to his work (which

includes some sculpture) in Graveson, and his paintings hang in such museums as the Calvet in Avignon, the Cantini in Marseille, and the Pompidou Center in Paris. The early work purchased by John Quinn and Arthur Jerome Eddy does not seem to have made its way into the American museums that house many pieces from those early modernist collections. Much of Chabaud’s work is in private collections, but is frequently on loan to the various European exhibitions in which his work has been shown almost annually since his death.

Chabaud’s early canvases are painted in the vivid, unmixed colors of the fauve palette; they were hung with the work of the fauves in the 1907 Salon d’Automne. Many of these early paintings depict the Montmartre demimonde—the music halls and circuses, prostitutes and singers that had fascinated Toulouse-Lautrec in the previous generation. His portraits of women are often darkened with heavy lines that link him to expressionism. His biographer Raymond Charmet compares Chabaud at this time to Géricault and Goya in his sympathetic preoccupation with the horrifying, even depraved, aspects of life.⁶ He “dove up to his neck” into the demimonde of Paris, Granoff writes in her own memoir, “but *only* up to his neck”; his Protestant morality, she surmises, kept him from engaging in the “hellish aspect of Paris night life.”⁷ Fauvism died out by 1910, and Chabaud did not continue to exhibit this early work out of concern that its explicit subject matter might embarrass his family; his fauve canvases were not rediscovered until 1950.⁸ In 1913, as Gervaud points out, Sergeant seems to have been granted privileged access to these early paintings (3).

Once he returned to Graveson permanently, Chabaud committed himself to the depiction of Provençal subject matter—landscapes, village street scenes, and genre scenes of rural workers and women and children in domestic settings. In a recent study of Chabaud’s Provençal paintings, Bernard Plasse asserts that “Frédéric Mistral influenced [Chabaud’s] return to the country more than any need to keep the *mas* running.”⁹ Chabaud did not consider himself in exile from Paris when he returned to his Gallo-Roman roots. Following Mistral, he attended to the local and the quotidian, living “*en osmose avec son village*” (Plasse 11). His paintings like the Armory Show’s *The Flock after the Rain* represent the pastoral nature of Provençal life in his time; Plasse, in fact, writes of the “Virgilian” quality of his work (9). Charmet characterizes his canvases after 1919 as “dynamic”—“vividly colored but searching for light, marked by intense contrast, emphasized by heavy masses of dark shadows.”¹⁰ This later work exhibits a fascination with the traditional costume of Arlésienne women, which he increasingly abstracts to a sphinx-like form.

There is no evidence that Cather sustained any interest in Chabaud. After their June visit on Bank Street, Sergeant and Cather did not get together again that summer. Cather did some traveling, ending with a September visit to her birthplace in Virginia with Isabelle McClung, and then settled down to a “period of unprecedented creative activity” (*Willa Cather* 120). Her attention shifted to Thea Kronborg and the musical world of *The Song of the Lark* (1915) that would absorb her for the next two years. Sergeant spent most of the summer working on a collection of essays, *French Perspectives* (1916), in Chocorua, New Hampshire, where her family often summered. The following year, she began writing for the *New Republic*; war was declared in Europe, and her fluency in the contemporary French scene acquired new importance. After the report of her 1913 correspondence and visit with Cather, Sergeant’s memoir does not again refer specifically to the cubist, the fauve, *le sauvage*. It is all but certain, however, that the “letters from the French army” that reached Sergeant during her first trip out west in the summer of 1916 were from Chabaud, telling her of his brother Pierre’s death at Verdun that July (*Willa Cather* 144). There is no evidence that the two met at any time during 1917–19, when Sergeant was in France covering the war for the *New Republic*, although Chabaud did write to her in 1921 to inform her of his marriage.

Nevertheless, this episode resonates in Sergeant’s memoir. It positions the two women at an intersection of their own personal histories and the cultural history of modernity. In it, Sergeant

claims a modernist identity for Cather as well as for herself by constructing proximity to the cubist. They are modern women: they are not shocked by what is new; they are engaged with it. “Cubist” is actually a formulaic label that Chabaud “threw away,” as Sergeant herself says (114). There is considerable debate among art historians on the subject of Chabaud’s cubism. Like so many French artists of his generation, he was heavily influenced by Cézanne; Granoff judges his Provençal landscapes with their emphatic planes “*dignes d’un héritier de Cézanne*” (“worthy of an heir to Cézanne”; *Chemin* 63). Guillaume Apollinaire described him as a “*cubist instinctif*” (83–84); Arthur Jerome Eddy, whose *Cubists and Post-Impressionism* (1914) was the first American study of the movement, asks, “What is the painting by Chabaud, “The Laborer,” but a more elemental Millet?” (15). Charmet confines Chabaud’s cubist period to only three years, 1908–11, after which his work becomes realistic, though highly individualized. Chabaud’s pre-war paintings are strikingly geometric, but they are not cubist in the academic definition of that style.¹¹ None of the work Sergeant would have seen in 1913 comes close to the studied cubism of, for example, *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912) or the early work of Braque and Picasso; and in 1913, Chabaud would no longer have identified himself as a fauve. Yet Sergeant, a knowledgeable viewer of art, retrieves both of those labels to identify him. She is using a kind of shorthand to define him—and therefore Cather and herself—as modern, relying on the American public’s usage of the terms rather than their academic definition. The International Exhibition of Modern Art, the Armory Show, had ended its New York run only three months before Sergeant returned to the United States. If fauvism and cubism as formulated movements were passé in Europe, they were startling new ideas for most Americans, who were seeing the work of Cézanne, Matisse, Picasso, and Duchamp for the first time. The words themselves were radical and challenging, a gauntlet thrown down in the philistine marketplace; the collector John Quinn scoffed at the New York “rubes” who failed to appreciate the art of the Armory Show. Sergeant’s use of these words indicates her cultural currency, a matter critical to her identity. We are reminded of her “amazement” at finding Cather, when they first met in 1910, a “hero-worshipper” of the “Golden Age of American Literature”: “New Englanders like me, in their twenties, did not bow to the ancient and honorable idols. They preferred Amy Lowell to James Russell” (41). In 1913, Sergeant links Cather and herself to a radical iconoclast rather than an ancient idol; and she differentiates between this modern Cather, “intrigued . . . by the Cubist,” interested in “a new way of *seeing*” (98, 111; original emphasis), and the conservative Cather “in



later life” who would no longer be interested in “*le mouvement . . . the avant-garde*” (114).

Another *sauvage* had recently figured in the personal history of Cather and Sergeant. In her exhilarated 1912 letters to Sergeant from Arizona, Cather constructs her new acquaintance Julio very much as a kind of wild man, a prototype of modernist primitivism. Sergeant’s account of her 1913 correspondence with Cather and their conversation on Bank Street poses a narrative and a persona in response to the story of Julio that Cather had unfolded in a few remarkable letters one year before—a year in which the two women had continued to correspond but had apparently not met at all. In her May 21, 1912, letter to Sergeant, Cather had apologized for being one of those who “rave about the beauty of untutored youths of Latin extraction,” having described Julio a few days before as “a boy of unearthly beauty.” Julio is “the handsome one who sings. . . . He has *no* stale ideas—not many ideas at all, indeed, but a good many fancies and feelings” (*Selected Letters* 157–158; original emphasis).

Chabaud, the educated son of a *petit bourgeois* family, is no untutored Latin youth. But Sergeant doesn’t report his self-deprecating, punning wit, his wide reading in French and classical Greek literature, or the *tête-à-tête* at Avignon cafés that might have produced “the abstract drawings . . . on the back of menus” she shows to Cather upon her return (*Willa Cather* 115).¹² What is crucial to her story is that he is one of the avant-garde wild beasts, someone whose own mother calls him a *sauvage* (114). In a 1912 letter from Arizona, Cather had described to Sergeant the crude conditions in which she was living in Winslow and declared, “You would die here; you are at least one thousand years more civilized than I” (*Selected Letters* 155)—too “civilized” to be left alone for three days with “the tipsy London cockney” who served as her brother’s housekeeper (154). No doubt Cather was still operating under her first impression that Sergeant “look[ed] like a Jamesian” (*Willa Cather* 35); but Sergeant’s personal refinement never deterred her from embracing life’s larger challenges. In 1913, Sergeant sees Cather’s one thousand years and raises her a millennium: I am not nearly so civilized as you think, her Provençal interlude announces. Cather had aestheticized Julio to emphasize his relationship to an ancient civilization: he looks like (a sculpture of) Antinous and “has the long strong upper lip that is so conspicuous in the Aztec sculpture” (*Selected Letters* 156, 159); “he really was like *all* the things in the Naples museum, and having him about was like living in that civilization” (162; original emphasis). Similarly, the people of Provence delineate their past to Sergeant: “The blood of the troubadours still runs hot” in the contemporary

Provençal, she stated in a sketch for *Scribner’s* (“M. le Curé’s Lunch Party” 720). As a Provençal artist, Chabaud aestheticizes his own relationship to the Gallo-Roman past that Cather herself had discerned in Arles (“In the Country of Daudet” 946). Julio and Chabaud serve as mediators in the transmission of culture, allowing Cather and Sergeant access to the landscape and folk history of their ancient homelands. Both women are given cultural artifacts linked to the past and to these sites, souvenirs of their adventures: Cather, the story of “The Forty Lovers of the Queen,” which she appropriated for “Coming, Aphrodite!” (1920) and Sergeant, Provençal poetry, which she later translated for the *New Republic*; a romantic serenade from Julio; paintings and drawings from Chabaud.¹³ When Cather “joked” that Sergeant might have to “marry the Cubist” to write a book on cubism, Sergeant counters that Cather didn’t find it necessary to marry Julio to write about him (*Willa Cather* 115)—suggesting that the two men function as equivalents.

Cather and Sergeant further enact this intersection of personal and cultural history by participating in site-specific cultural performances. In 1912, Cather had written to Sergeant, “I went to a Mexican dance with Julio the night before I left Winslow, but that *was* a dance. They have a curious pantomime waltz which a man dances with two women. . . . I was the only ‘white’ at the ball . . .” (*Selected Letters* 162; original emphasis). Cather’s language exoticizes the ethnic dance and articulates her sense of ethnic/racial otherness. Similarly, a year later, Sergeant “passed” as an ethnic other on a visit to the Provençal poet and Nobel laureate Frédéric Mistral. Under the direction of two local Catholic priests and a nun, Sergeant dressed in Arlésienne folk costume in an “innocent deception” that seems, nonetheless, highly theatrical (*Willa Cather* 97–98). One can only imagine the troupe of traveling players—the priests in their cassocks, the nun in her habit, and the Brookline WASP in her *fichu* and veiled headdress—tripping across the “dusty plain” to Maillane, where they were greeted by Mistral in a Camargue sombrero, closely resembling (Sergeant writes) Buffalo Bill (97).

In its theatricality, Sergeant’s performance is reminiscent of the *tableau vivant*, a staple of middle-class entertainment that both she and Cather had enjoyed, and of the pageantry of her Bryn Mawr days, which included theatrical college traditions like Lantern Night and the medieval May Day. More significantly, Sergeant’s Arlésienne masquerade is also a performance of cultural difference that responds to Cather’s representation of herself as “the only white” at Julio’s Mexican dance the year before. Cather called attention to her otherness in order to identify herself as a privileged boundary-crosser



in that setting. Similarly, although Sergeant writes that the nuns “had made me into a perfect counterfeit of the native article, headdress, fichu, black bodice, full skirt and Roman nose included” (98), no one could mistake the fair American for one of the native Arlésiennes whose “rather Moorish” and “strangely Roman” beauty Cather had noticed on her 1902 visit to Arles (“In the Country of Daudet” 948); Mistral was “pleased” rather than fooled by the disguise. Sergeant’s privileged access to Mistral’s *Félibrige* also responds to Cather’s disappointing call on A. E. Housman with Dorothy Canfield and Isabelle McClung in 1902, when she sat silent while he discussed Canfield’s research with her. Cather would have known of Mistral not only as a Nobel laureate, but as the subject of a sketch in Alphonse Daudet’s *Letters from My Windmill* (*Lettres de mon moulin*, 1869).

Sergeant’s Provençal interlude is more than an episode of cultural tourism; she was too politically intelligent simply to play at otherness. In conversation with Mistral and Félibrige affiliates like Chabaud, she is exposed to the Provençal revival that would be taken up by Modernists like Ezra Pound who found a new poetics in the courtly love tradition of the troubadours.

Jessie Weston’s *From Ritual to Romance* (1920), to which T. S. Eliot acknowledges a debt in his notes to *The Waste Land* (1922), is perhaps the most familiar study to emerge from this movement, but there were others, among them Pound’s later *The Spirit of Romance* (1934). Jessie Weston had been a student of the “great medievalist” Gaston Paris, whose widow opened her home to Sergeant during her 1912–1913 stay in Paris; Sergeant notes its “intellectual and aesthetic environment” (86). Sergeant, who was fluent in French when she matriculated at Bryn Mawr in 1899, would have been aware of the French philologist Louis Emil Menger, who taught graduate courses in Old French and Provençal at the college, but it is unclear whether she acquired her fluency in Provençal at Bryn Mawr or from the Provençaux she met in 1913.

Her proximity to the Provençal revival marks Sergeant’s modernism, then, as much as her proximity to a cubist does; the “contract for a Provençal book” Sergeant had to cancel with the outbreak of the war in 1914 is an indication of her investment in the subject (127). Cather and Sergeant share their experience of Provence, once again, in typical call-and-response form. In her 1913 letters from France, Sergeant describes to Cather the

romantic idiom of “the Provençaux who always ‘languish’ for everything” (96), and the two compare scenes from their separate visits to Avignon and Arles: “If I wrote her of the yellow irises flaming in the ditches, and the tall black cypresses piercing the blue like arrows, she matched me with the yellow mustard in the tragic theatre at Arles” (96). Cather passed Sergeant’s reference to Gaston Paris on to Louie Marsellus in *The Professor’s House* (1925), who laments that Gaston Paris is no longer alive to join a little party with the family when they travel to France (155).

In her memoir, Sergeant narrates the 1913 Bank Street episode as a kind of cultural performance in itself. The painterly detail with which Sergeant composes the scene provides the setting for a conversation between two women who are acutely aware of themselves as New Women. The flower-filled apartment where the fires of art are tended is strewn

with the spoils of European travel—avant-garde canvases and drawings and yellow-covered French novels. Cather and Sergeant’s self-awareness is related to their commitment to the creative life. Hers is not a life of servitude, Cather exclaims, but of “liberation!” (*Willa Cather* 116). But Sergeant asks, “Must a novelist—especially a female—go around saying I’m only a mirror? And never crossing the street without seeing herself do it?” (115). Her question about the representation of the material of one’s life is literalized by the paintings and drawings she has brought back—and the two portraits she has not. Cather tells Sergeant she will put her “Avignon dress with its lace fichu and sprigs of flowers” in a story (114); Cather’s embroidered Liberty silk, of course, goes into Sergeant’s, as does her “childlike costume,



Auguste Chabaud on military leave during World War I.



a middy blouse with navy bands and tie and a duck skirt” (117), evoking the iconic 1927 Steichen photograph.

Cather had written to Sergeant, still in Provence, in April, 1913, “New countries are easy to reach; but to find a new kind of human creature, to get inside a new skin—that’s always [the] finest sport there is, isn’t it?” (*Selected Letters* 178). She was referring to her own friendship with Olive Fremstad, but the words apply meaningfully to the friendship developing between Sergeant and Chabaud at the time. In the June 1913 conversation on Bank Street and the correspondence that preceded it, Chabaud figures as “a new kind of human creature”—*sauvage*, “cubist,” Provençal. The personal moment shared by Sergeant and Cather on Bank Street was historicized by the recent Armory Show and also, importantly, by the imminent publication of *O Pioneers!* Sergeant’s modern Cather is “intrigued by . . . the Cubist” whose art celebrated his pastoral Gallo-Roman roots at virtually the same time as the world began to pay attention to this “indigenous American novelist” and her “pastoral” novel (98, 93, 86). In the intimate episode on Bank Street, so vividly rendered in Sergeant’s memoir, we see Cather and Sergeant on the threshold of the new country of modernism. Auguste Chabaud was one of its citizens.

NOTES

1. Information about the life of Auguste Chabaud is taken from Raymond Charmet’s biography, *Auguste Chabaud*, Katia Granoff’s memoirs, and the “Biographie” included in the catalogue of the most recent Chabaud exhibition, Chabaud: *Fauve et expressionniste*.

2. In *Ma Vie et mes rencontres*, Katia Granoff implies that Chabaud first exhibited at the celebrated 1905 Salon d’Automne, stating that his work hung in the room nicknamed “*Le Cage aux Fauves*” (“The Beasts’ Cage”) by the critic Louis Vauxcelles, who thereby named the movement. Chabaud’s name does not appear in the 1905 catalogue, however, and Charmet and subsequent art historians agree that he first exhibited in the 1907 Salon.

3. Quinn’s ownership of *Le Troupeau* is noted in the Armory show catalog (46); Eddy’s purchase of *Le Laboureur* is documented by Kruty (43). The present whereabouts of Chabaud’s two Armory paintings is unknown. *Le Troupeau* was one of the ten Chabaud paintings that numbered among John Quinn’s 2,500 works of art, “the most important modern art collection assembled in the United States before 1930,” at his early death in 1924 (Zilczer 15). Valentine Dudensing,

the New York gallery owner, purchased *Le Troupeau* and five other Chabaud paintings at the auction of Quinn’s estate in 1927 (“Sale” 7, 10–11). (Dudensing’s Valentine Gallery was in business from 1924 to 1948 and sold to such collectors as Albert Barnes and Duncan Phillips; it was the first in the United States to exhibit Picasso’s *Guernica*.) *Le Troupeau* was last sold in January 2016 to an unidentified buyer. *Le Laboureur*, together with four other Chabaud paintings, was included in a 1922 exhibition of a selection of Eddy’s collection at the Chicago Art Institute; it was not included in the collection of modern art the Eddy family donated to the Chicago Art Institute in 1931. Neither painting has appeared in recent Chabaud exhibitions at French museums.

4. Kruty calls Eddy’s cubist and fauve purchases “the most important group acquired by any collector at the Armory Show” (43). In a letter to the novelist Joseph Conrad, John Quinn described Chabaud as “a fine painter,” and quotes from a letter Chabaud wrote him from Verdun, thanking him for buying the paintings from his mother and “my thus giving ‘pleasure to a mother whose two sons are at the front’” (April 12, 1915).

5. Vallès-Bled, 256. Once Sergeant had returned to the United States in 1913, Chabaud wrote to her that he was working on “*vos portraits*” (“your portraits,” plural; Chabaud to Sergeant, n.d. [1913]).

6. “*Comme jadis l’avaient fait Géricault et Goya, Chabaud se passionne pour les aspects atroces de la vie, où l’homme retombe dans l’animalité, pour les déformations où sombrent notre corps et notre âme, et où l’individue dissout*” (24).

7. “. . . mais s’y étant plongé jusqu’au cou, je dis seulement jusqu’au cou . . .” (*Ma vie*, 63; my emphasis). Granoff goes on to insist that “he wasn’t stuck like poor Pascin” (“*il ne s’y est pas enlisé, comme le pauvre Pascin*” 63), one of the pre-war Paris School painters, who eventually committed suicide. Jules Pascin (1885–1930) and his lover Hermine David lived in New York City from 1914 to 1920. When they married in 1918, one of their witnesses was Maurice Sterne, Mabel Dodge Luhan’s third husband. “*Son hérité de protestant donne un aspect infernal à ce monde nocturne*” (146).

8. Jacqueline Grassi, Chabaud’s daughter; Gervaud also discerns this motive for concealing the paintings.

9. “*Frédéric Mistral a pu l’influencer dans ce retour à la terre plus encore que le besoin d’exploiter le mas Martin*” (7).

10. “*Le style de Chabaud, après 1919, se caractérise dans l’ensemble par un retour au dynamisme, à l’exaltation des couleurs vives, en même temps qu’aux recherches de lumière, marquées*



par des contrastes intenses et soulignées par des masses profondes d'ombres noires" (96).

11. In an effort "to emphasize the two-dimensionality of the canvas [cubists] reduced and fractured objects into geometric forms and then realigned these within a shallow, relieflike space. They also used multiple or contrasting vantage points" ("Cubism" n.p.).

12. Michel Gervaud suggests this scenario: "She even 'showed Willa the abstract drawings mostly on the back of menus' (p.115), a precision sufficient to let us imagine intimate *tête-à-tête* in Paris or Avignon restaurants" (1). The present whereabouts of these drawings, and the pieces scattered on the dock by the customs inspector, is unknown. Neither Sergeant's will nor the inventory of her possessions compiled when her estate was probated includes any reference to art work by Chabaud.

13. Sergeant translated the verse of the Provençal poet and Félibrigist Henri Fabre for the *New Republic* in 1915.

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News from the Pittsburgh Seminar: Inside “Denny & Carson’s”

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During our preparations for the International Cather Seminar, “Beyond Nebraska: Cather’s Pittsburgh” to be held June 11–17, 2017, we have been blessed with colleagues willing to pilot versions of seminar activities. One opportunity came in October 2014, when Professor Linda Kinnahan of Duquesne University, the institution hosting our 2017 seminar, asked us to develop a walking tour of Cather-related sites for the Modernist Studies Association meeting in Pittsburgh. While working up the tour, we discovered that the building that housed the Denny Estate, a building connected to Cather’s “Paul’s Case,” still stands. The

Burke’s Building, located at 209 Fourth Avenue in downtown Pittsburgh, has during its long life housed a multitude of insurers, real estate brokers, and other professionals, undergone many renovations, and changed ownership numerous times. Intriguingly, two steel vaults for securing large sums of cash have survived through all these transformations (“The Burke Building,” *The Brookline Connection*).¹

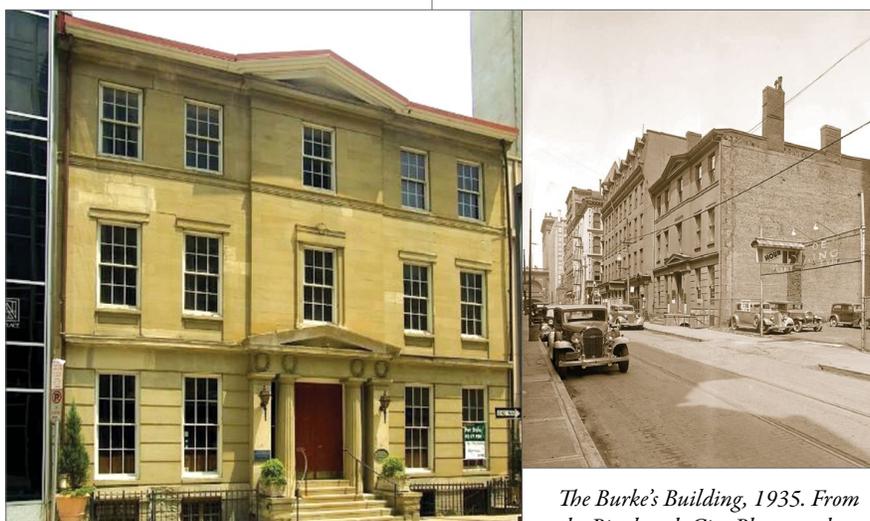
Might one be the strongbox from which nineteen-year-old office boy James J. Wilson filched \$1,500 on November 5, 1902, then fled Pittsburgh with his cousin, high school student Harold Orr?

Research indicates that the building is a real survivor. Built in 1836 for attorney Andrew Burke in a dignified Greek Revival Style by English-trained architect John Chislett, it is the second oldest building in Pittsburgh and the oldest commercial building in the city; only the Fort Pitt Blockhouse, built in 1764, is older. The Burke’s Building narrowly escaped Pittsburgh’s Great Fire of 1845, which destroyed a thousand other structures downtown (*Whirlwind Walk* 60), and it survived the building boom of the 1890s along Fourth Avenue and adjoining streets downtown, when Cather saw banking, investment, and manufacturing companies raising ever-higher monuments to their fortunes in oil, coal, glass,

steel, and aluminum. And its modest three stories, fronted with local sandstone and framed with native tulip tree, white oak, and pine, narrowly escaped “Renaissance II” of the 1980s, when Pittsburgh’s Golden Triangle grew forty-story towers of steel, aluminum, and glass. No better symbol of its anachronistic defiance is the eighty-foot-high black glass tower literally glued to its side—the third of five towers of PPG Place, the six-acre postmodern headquarters of Pittsburgh Paint and Glass Corporation.

During its 180-year life, in addition to insurers, banks, physicians’ offices, and artists’ studios, the building is known

to have housed at different times a photographers’ supply, a fountain pen repair company, a barbershop, and, as recently as the 1980s, a restaurant and whiskey bar (“It’s Back to the Future for Pittsburgh’s Oldest Office Building”). But perhaps the longest tenancy, from about 1900 until well into the 1920s, was that of the Denny Estate, the firm that managed the great combined land



The Burke’s Building (home of the Denny Estate) at 209 Fourth Avenue, with postmodern PPG Place adjoining on left. From the Brookline Connection.

The Burke’s Building, 1935. From the Pittsburgh City Photographer Collection 1901–2002, Archives Service Center, University of Pittsburgh.

fortunes of Mary Croghan Schenley, Pittsburgh’s famous expatriate philanthropist, and other heirs of Pittsburgh’s first mayor, Harmar Denny. Judging from the volume of its rental properties advertised in the classified ads of the city newspapers, the Denny Estate may have employed a staff large enough to fill all three floors. In choosing the name “Denny & Carson’s,” as Mark Madigan points out in the historical essay of the Cather Scholarly Edition of *Youth and the Bright Medusa*, Cather alluded to a family fortune that had considerable historical resonance for Pittsburghers.

We emailed the building’s present owners, Stonewood Capital Management, explaining the connection to Cather. Stonewood’s managing director, John Tippins, agreed to give us a tour. This July, we, along with Matt Lavin, Mark Madigan, Kelsey Squire, Bob Thacker, and Kim and Brett Vanderlaan, had the pleasure of

touring this historic building. As far as we could tell, we would be the first Cather scholars to tour the Burke's Building and take a crack at unlocking the mystery of its safes and the connection to one of Cather's most famous short stories.

Tippins and his brother became owners of this storied building at a crucial juncture in 2010. The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, which for the previous decade owned the building, had stabilized the exterior, installed new

heating and humidity controls, and secured an easement through the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation protecting the integrity of its façade forever. But as lovers of old buildings know, a structure of this age and significance needed owners with a sense of stewardship, a team of decorators and architects, and a sizable budget for unexpected repairs. Architects found that the aged brick of its interior walls was softer than required by code, so all of the interior walls had to be replaced. The often repurposed interior was an eclectic mix of styles. The Tippins brothers decided to restore the interior to a coherent Federal style, using no lesser model than the White House as their standard for interior design and decorating.

As we entered the parlor, we were welcomed by executive secretary Nancy Lackner and John Tippins. We noted a large painting above the mantel that we learned was representative of the Scalp Level School, a group of Pittsburgh artists who summered at a colony in Scalp Level Township, near Johnstown, doing preliminary studies that they later transformed into astonishingly detailed landscapes. This particular painting may have been completed on the premises, for the artist, Alfred S. Wall, and his brother, William Coventry Wall, kept a studio in the Burke's Building for a number of years ("About the Scalp Level Artists"). The Scalp Level movement is often compared with the Hudson River School, but Alfred S. Wall, though he never studied abroad and was largely self-taught, had a greater technical affinity with the Barbizon painters (Chew 91). Cather may have met Alfred Wall and his companion artists through her friend George Gerwig of Allegheny City, who was a nephew of the founder of the movement, legendary landscape painter George T. Hetzel ("A. D. Gerwig"). Alfred S. Wall made his home on Arch Street in Allegheny City (Chew 90), near the Gerwig home, the street on which Cather located old Albert Englehardt's physician's office in "Double Birthday."

Tippins led us on a very informative tour of the building's three floors (we winked at a bust of George Washington in the conference room), and with the manner of a master showman, saved the best for last. On the third floor hallway, the heft of its double doors disguised somewhat by a coat of mellow white



The outer and inner doors of the Burke's Building vault, of Pittsburgh steel, are secured by a keyed lock, not a combination, as reported in some accounts of the Denny Estate theft. Photo by Tim Bintrim.

paint, was a vault large enough for three of us to stand within.

The outer and inner doors are thought to have offered extra protection in the case of fire. Had we discovered the safe from which the office boy Wilson sprung enough cash "to have just as good a time as any boy would care about having," as he later explained to reporters? ("Prosecution was Dropped"). Yes and no. As Madigan established, Cather likely read two

accounts of the theft, accounts that differed substantially.

The initial report in the *Evening Leader* and its morning affiliate, the *Pittsburgh Chronicle Telegraph*, said that the office was closed on November 5 and its staff released for the election day holiday. According to both papers, James Wilson attended a football game with the son of his employer, then after supper returned to the office, met his cousin Harold Orr, and entered the shuttered office with his own key. Noting the camaraderie Wilson had enjoyed with his boss's son earlier that day, the *Chronicle Telegraph* quipped that the "field was clear when Wilson took the money" ("Erring Youths Will Come Home"). According to this account, that evening Wilson "unlocked the door of the largest safe where the cash was kept," and pocketed between \$1,500 and \$2,000. The *Leader* said "The doors were then closed and [the boys] hurried toward the Union station and boarded the first train for the west" ("Hazelwood Youths Lived a Fast Pace"). That Cather referenced this particular article is likely because she had Paul request a half-day holiday to cover his absence from Denny & Carson's, which corresponds with both papers' statements that the theft went undetected because of a bank holiday (Madigan 324). Later, more detailed reports by other newspapers make no mention of the Denny Estate being closed for the election; in fact, they agree that the firm was open for business as usual on November 5. The *Leader's* reference to "the largest safe" in the building seems to refer to the capacious walk-in vault ("The Burke Building" *The Brookline Connection*).

Possibly Major William Auell, the manager of the Denny Estate, did not like the impression the *Leader* representative gave of his trusting the keys of the till to a nineteen-year-old office clerk. Later accounts made clear that Wilson did not have routine access to large sums of cash, but had been a sneak thief, making several grabs from an open safe (possibly a smaller strongbox on the first floor) while the backs of his co-workers were turned. These later accounts agree that the crime occurred shortly before the noon hour, and when the money was missed and Wilson did not come back to work after his lunch break, he was immediately suspected.



So with reference to the flawed account that seemingly inspired Cather, the large vault does still exist (we took turns standing within it), but we agree with Madigan that the later newspaper accounts seem closer to what actually happened. The smaller safe mentioned in those accounts is no longer on the premises.

Madigan's historical essay tells the rest of the story: detectives caught up with the boys in Milwaukee, where they had fled from Chicago. Upon their arrest, they expressed contrition and were brought back to Pittsburgh, where Major Auell decided not to press charges out of sympathy for the boys' disgraced families (Wilson's father was a Methodist Episcopal minister). Apart from one or two nights in a Milwaukee jail, Wilson and Orr spent no time behind bars; instead, their fathers repaid the stolen money, promised that their sons would be model citizens in the future, and the boys were released to their families on bond. Recently we turned up an image of Wilson and Orr at the time of their requisition (see photo).

Taking our leave of the Denny Estate, we remarked that the prototype building, like the story which burnishes its fame, has had remarkable longevity. And although the interior is changed somewhat from how Cather knew it, certainly the Burke's Building deserves some kind of award for safe-keeping.

The Burke's Building will be a stop on the downtown Pittsburgh walking tour we will be offering during the 2017 International Seminar.

NOTE

1. The name of the Burke's Building, like the place name of Pittsburgh itself, has been spelled variously during its long history. We have followed the example of the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation in using the singular possessive (*Whirlwind Walk* 60), which accords with the spelling in the 1837 edition of *Harris's Pittsburgh Business Directory*.

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A newly found view of the perpetrators, from the Pittsburgh Gazette, Nov. 20, 1902.

Religiosa, Provinciale, Modernista: The Early Reception of Willa Cather in Italy

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The reception of Willa Cather's work in Italy is largely an unexplored topic.¹ In this essay, I analyze its early phase, the 1930s and 1940s, arguing that it was characterized by three very different critical approaches. Throughout these years, Cather was both greatly praised and well received. Although for rather disparate reasons, each group of commentators seemed in fact to see Cather's work as an embodiment of what was most lacking in the Italian literature of the time.

As Daniela Pagani has noted, many initial readings of Cather by Italian critics focused on the "religious" aspects of her writings. A variety of facts and episodes from the 1930s illustrate this critical approach. In this same first phase of the reception, two other important critical approaches were concurrently developing as Cather's work was also being defined as both "provincial" and "modernist." As applied, each of these terms was seen as positive. All three approaches need to be contextualized by reflecting on the historical and political background of Fascist Italy and on the circumstances in which they arose.

Cather's work first entered the Italian cultural scene during the 1930s, a time in which American literature was becoming increasingly popular throughout the country. This was happening notwithstanding—and often in direct opposition to—the Fascist regime's ideology of cultural autarchy, which was in those years increasingly focused on the denigration of the publication and consumption of non-Italian literary works.² While the regime was stubbornly isolating itself, trying to assert its complete self-sufficiency at different levels (not only economically, but also technologically, scientifically, and culturally) and indulging in the obsessive dream of becoming an exemplary political model, many Italian intellectuals—even many who were not anti-Fascist—were looking beyond the national borders. They were looking for foreign works that could inspire renovation of Italian literature and put Italians into contact with the international cultural *milieu*. And while the regime's dismissal of all things foreign was generalized and encompassing in its massive but ill-defined ideological rejection, the intellectuals' introduction of foreign writers was a response to precisely oriented cultural agendas. The early reception of Cather's work is an emblematic case, in this sense, as it took shape out of three very different agendas. In order to emphasize the distinctive elements of each, they need to be examined separately and then summarized.

The initial translations of Cather's work into Italian are highly revealing moments of textual encounter with the language and voice of the American writer. Particular emphasis needs to be placed on individual figures who advanced the diffusion of Cather's writings: who were they? What did they know about Cather's work, and about its presence and significance within American literature more at large? What did this literature represent for them? Why were they interested in it in the first place?

Religiosa

When first absorbed in Italy, it was as if Cather's work was nearly made over in the image of a faithful believer who, upon entering a Catholic church, would make a "segno della croce"—the sign of the cross. The first critics who introduced Cather to Italian readers, in fact, underlined the Catholic inspiration that, according to them, animated many of her books. A few critics went so far as to make Cather pass for a Catholic writer, or suggested that she was going to convert soon.

During this time the Catholic religion was often in institutionalized conjunction with Fascism (see Whittam 77); as such, it was playing an extremely influential role within the Italian cultural scene by intervening to shape the attitudes that the church wanted all Italians to have. From its point of view, Italians must never be secular: the Catholic faith had to permeate every single aspect of daily life, from work to education to leisure activities. It had to be present in music, theatre, cinema, and in books. And Catholic literary critics seemed to be unhappy with Italian literature: there was not enough spirituality found within it. There were not enough examples of Catholic integrity.

In 1930, the Catholic activist Igino Giordani, a librarian at the Vatican Library who had studied at Columbia University, translated two excerpts from *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and published them at the very opening of the tenth volume of his Catholic-centered literary anthology entitled *Contemporanei Nord-Americani*. The anthology included pieces from, among others, Henry Harland, James Gibbons, and Joyce Kilmer. In his introduction to the excerpts from *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (which contained the episodes of the Mexican woman who warns Latour and Vaillant about her dangerous husband, and the episode of the slave Sada), Giordani explained that he learned



about Cather's book in 1927, during the first months of his stay in the United States, where the *Archbishop*, as he recalled, was having a great success (2–3).

Giordani praised Cather's ability to merge the values of Catholic universalism with the pressing social issues of assimilation and formation of a heterogeneous multiethnic American society. For Giordani, Cather's book had the noble aim of opposing the uncontrolled pursuit of material wealth typical of contemporary society with an epic depiction of two heroic missionaries, "costruttori di anime e di cattedrali" ("builders of souls and cathedrals") in the violent and rural states of the southwest (3).³

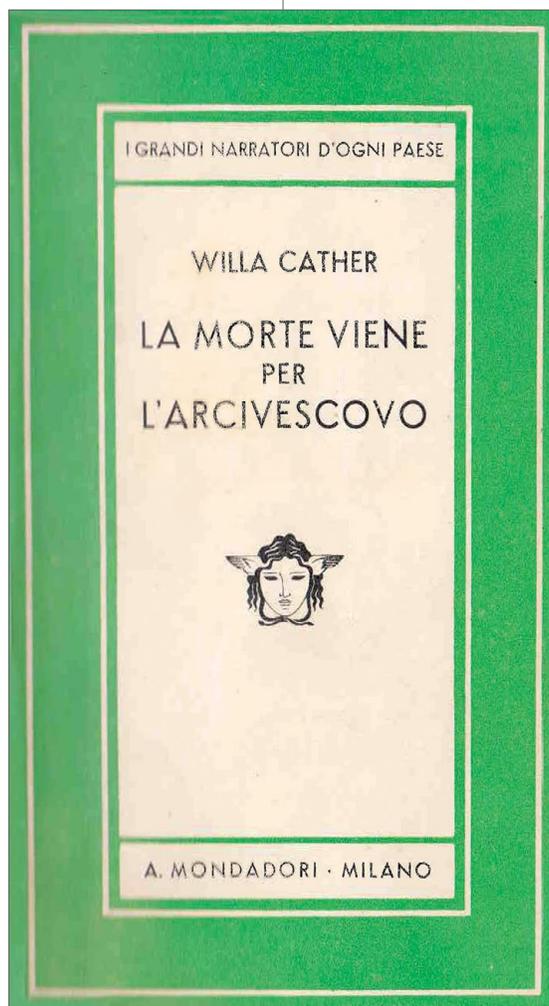
In contrast with other Italian critics who erroneously assumed, or deceptively led readers to believe, that Cather was Catholic, at the very end of his introduction to the excerpts Giordani made clear that she was not. In fact, he wanted to emphasize how even a writer who was not Catholic had still been able to treat Catholic themes beautifully in her book. As shown by other reviews and articles about Cather by Catholic literati that appeared in these years, Cather's book embodied an ideal model of a literature more imbued with Catholic faith (See Pagani 121–32).

In 1935, Francesco Casnati, another Catholic activist, editor, and literary scholar who taught Italian literature in Milan, decided to inaugurate a new series of novels with a translation of Cather's *Shadows on the Rock*. The series, called "Il Grappolo," was designed to publish works that expressed Catholic faith or that at least had some strong Catholic references. As it happened, the year before this, the translator of *Shadows* for Casnati's series, Gino De Negri, had proposed the same translation to a more famous publisher than Casnati: Arnoldo Mondadori. Mondadori had rejected the idea, laconically replying that *Shadows* was "of too limited interest" for Italian readers (Casnati 153). The Casnati translation of *Shadows* proved to be a great commercial success and, noting this, Mondadori recanted and commissioned Alessandra Scalero to translate *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, and the book came out in 1936.

De Negri was disappointed. His own translation of *Death Comes for the Archbishop* should have come out that same year, once again for Casnati, but it did not happen. Casnati was hesitant to publish a second book by Cather after *Shadows on the Rock*. Though it had been commercially very successful, as Casnati himself explained, with a tone of genuine annoyance, shortly after the Mondadori *Death Comes for the Archbishop* came out, there had been a small scandal about *Shadows on the Rock* (153–155). Some fanatical readers had been upset by what they saw as the "heretical" scene in which Jacques asks Cécile whether Captain Pondaven's parrot has a soul. And some readers were even scandalized by the fact that the publication date was June 30, 1935, a Sunday, a day that—according to Catholic common sense—should be devoted exclusively to the Lord. Perhaps with the aim of alleviating this "scandal," although it was now too late, Casnati mentioned—misleadingly enough—that Cather had been contemplating the possibility of converting to Catholicism.

With such precedents, Casnati had wondered about how readers would react to Cather's depiction, in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, of priests who had lovers, or were stingy, or had committed homicide. He greatly appreciated the book, which he described as "one of the most beautiful, most Christian works that I have ever read . . . in the field of Catholic literature—with the

exception of some scenes of the Claudelian *Soulier de satin*—nothing that was ever written in order to celebrate and exalt the immense fact of civilization and redemption that missions are, came even close to this" (154–155). And yet, Casnati had not been able to overcome his hesitancy and to go ahead with the publication of De Negri's translation of the book. He had missed a great opportunity, and it was now too late. Mondadori had published *Death Comes for the Archbishop* first, and it had done it thanks to the translation of an incredibly gifted translator and intellectual working during those years, Alessandra Scalero.



The 1936 Mondadori edition of *Death Comes for the Archbishop*.

Scalero was a prolific translator of American, British, German, and French authors and worked mostly for “The Great Storytellers of Every Country” series published by Mondadori. As was common for many translators in those years (and sadly is still common today), Scalero was not well compensated and was under constant economic pressure, so she tried to translate as many books as possible. She also worked as a literary critic for many journals and newspapers (under the pseudonyms of Carla Vela, C. Vela, and Sasca).⁴

Scalero’s translation, even if probably executed in a rush, is of high quality. Willa Cather herself liked it and even asked the French translator Christine Carel to use Scalero’s translation as a model.⁵ Scalero was very accurate in keeping the numerous Spanish and French untranslated words that Cather had in her original text. Scalero also decided to leave many English words untranslated, rightly judging that they were strictly embedded in the sociological and geographical context of the novel and should therefore remain the same as in the original: words like “trapper,” “wigwam,” “yankee,” “wampum,” “squatter.” Kept in the text, such words sometimes have brief and precise explanatory footnotes. But in some cases there is no footnote explaining the meaning of a foreign word. Scalero’s choice to not translate words like “chili,” “ranchero,” “desperados,” “rabbit brush,” “arroyo,” and even an easily translatable word like “mistress,” and French expressions like “à fouetter les chats,” just to give some examples, and also to not accompany them with notes, creates a powerful foreignizing effect to the ears of Italian readers. Instead of “domesticating” these words and expressions, Scalero left them in the text as echoes of the original language and as strong reminders of the book’s cultural embeddedness.⁶

This was an extremely modern translation and editorial choice. But Scalero’s choice also corresponded to a bold political, and anti-Fascist, gesture. From 1923 on, the Fascist regime had been deploying different strategies to put into place a fully xenophobic and purist linguistic policy. Contests were proclaimed to find Italian substitutes for all the borrowings from other languages that had come into common use (like “club” or “tour”); store signs with foreign words were subjected to sanctions; a special committee for Italian language had been created; foreign movies started to be dubbed, and various legislative decrees prohibited the use of foreign expressions in public places, and even prohibited parents from naming their children with non-Italian names (see Klein and Foresti). Scalero’s translation was a breath of fresh air, in such a stifling and isolating atmosphere. In fact, Cather herself wanted Scalero to translate more of her work. In a 1945 letter to Ferris Greenslet, she enthusiastically suggested that Scalero would be ideal for the

first Italian translation of *My Antonia*, not knowing that she had died in 1944 at the age of 51 (see Madigan).

Scalero was one of the central protagonists of a very busy decade in terms of translations: notwithstanding the continuous Fascist solicitations to publish fewer foreign works, Italian publishers managed in those years to make Italy the European country with the highest number of published translations (Rundle 46). For Italian readers and writers, American literature and America itself represented all that was innovative and promising—in a culture so heavily oppressed by the Fascists, the idea of “America” embodied a true myth.

Provinciale

Perhaps the clearest example of this voracious appetite for American literature is represented by the case of Cesare Pavese, a writer and critic who had studied American literature—he was a graduate of the University of Turin with a dissertation on Whitman—and who also translated from English for various Italian publishing houses. In a letter dated January 6, 1932,



Translator Alessandra Scalero, in Brusson, Val d’Ayas, Italy, 1925. Image from the Scalero collection at the Public Library of Mazzè (Turin).

Pavese’s Italian-American friend Anthony Chiuminato, a musician who “informed his Italian friend of the new literary works that appeared in the United States, sent books that were unavailable in Italy, [and] explained and translated American idioms” (Pietralunga 4), asked him

and how about books? Isn’t there anything you’d need? Don’t be bashful you know—I can still get them. Have you read anything of Willa Cather; she was mentioned for Nobel Prize, though she didn’t get it. Just now I am reading her *My Antonia* which is very good!

Chiuminato continued to write the letter the following day, January 7, and he added:



and now that I have read your essay on *Spoon River* (Jan. 7th), I note that you mention *My Antonia*. I am just about to finish this volume. Where the devil do you get all those books? (Pietralunga 154)

Pavese did already know Cather, and he was deeply fascinated by her work and by that of other American writers whom he called *provinciali*. Even though the term, just as in English, has a negative connotation in Italian, Pavese used it not to attack but rather to praise these writers. His idiosyncratically positive use of the word was meant to be a provocation. In his eyes, Italian literature was too dignified, too detached from the real life and the real language of common people. Italian writers, also because of the Fascist politics of pervasive nationalist homologation, were losing the ability to describe and value the uniqueness and richness of local regions, towns, and cultures of the country, and to put them into fruitful dialogue with the larger national dimension.

But the American writers Pavese called “provincial” were doing, he thought, the exact contrary: they had a renovated, unusual, and exciting creative energy. They were writing the real literature of a real America, and they were making it valuable for readers across the whole world. They were all but “provincial” in the common sense of the word (and here lies the true sense of Pavese’s provocation), as they showed themselves able to give new, updated forms to a society and culture in a continual state of transformation, to combine local themes with cosmopolitan ones, and to make those local themes resonate with national and universal meanings. So, for Pavese, “provincial” writers were the only ones to be really capable of mythopoetically reinventing a modern epic literature.

In an article about Sherwood Anderson, Pavese explained what he thought Italian writers had to learn from this “provincial” American literature:

We might think of the significance, for Italian literature, of the discovery of regions, which went hand in hand with the quest for national unity, a discovery that belongs to the last part of the eighteenth and to the entire nineteenth century. From Alfieri, on down, all the Italian writers try, sometimes and indeed often unconsciously, to achieve a more profound national unity through penetrating always further the character of their own region, thus

to achieve the creation of a human awareness and a language rich with all the blood of the province . . . and yet, from Alfieri himself, and then through D’Azeglio, Abba, to Calandra, or even later, we have never had that man and that work in which, in addition to being most dear to us, would truly achieve that universality and originality which would make him comprehensible to all men and not only to his countrymen. This is our still unsatisfied need. Meanwhile, the American novelists of whom I speak have in fact met the corresponding need of their nation and region. We must, therefore, learn from them. (*American Literature* 31)⁷

These ideas can be seen as put into practice in Pavese’s own creative work, which is often set in his native region, Piemonte. The land and its people, the customs and ways of being, all realistically depicted, but also filtered through a highly lyrical and evocative perspective, are the real protagonists of many of his books. But the local, in Pavese, is never folkloristic. It is not an arrival, but a departure point, an imaginative core, a mythopoetic microcosm that reflects larger political, social, existential questions.

As a critic, Pavese expressed the desire to write about Cather’s fiction in a 1931 letter to Arrigo Cajumi (see Smith 180). Cajumi was one of the major exponents of the literary journal *La Cultura*, with which Pavese had been collaborating since 1930 and for which he published various articles on American literature.⁸ In the letter, Pavese asked Cajumi whether he thought that an article entitled “Il villaggio Americano” (“The American village”) could be of interest for publication within *La Cultura* (*Lettere* 280). The article, as described by the Italian writer, would focus on “the literary renaissance that started in 1910 and is still going on, showing how the great discovery of those men was the America of the Midwest, of provinces and of towns” (Smith 180). Pavese specifically mentioned which works and writers he would want to concentrate on: *Main Street* by Sinclair Lewis, *Winesburg, Ohio* by Sherwood Anderson, *Spoon River Anthology* by Edgar Lee Masters, *The Grandmothers* by Glenway Wescott and *My Antonia* by Willa Cather.⁹

The article was never written, but later that same year, Pavese did publish an essay in *La Cultura* that he devoted



Cesare Pavese

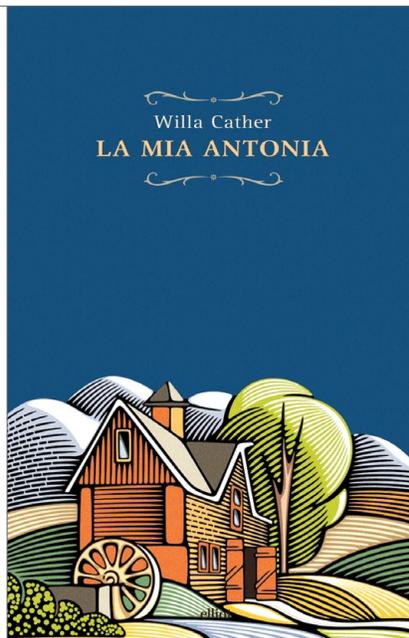
principally to Edgar Lee Masters, although Lewis, Anderson and Cather were also briefly mentioned in it.¹⁰ Here, Pavese described Masters's *Spoon River Anthology* as the initiator of the realistic description of provincial people with the same renovated energy and an epic, quasi-biblical tone that were also present in Lewis's, Anderson's, and Cather's books (*American Literature* 43).

From one of Pavese's letters we learn that, as early as 1932—when only a few articles about Cather had appeared, and the only translations available for Italian readers were Giordani's excerpts from *Death Comes for the Archbishop*—there were already plans for publishing the first Italian translation of *My Ántonia*. As Pavese wrote to Chiuminato in 1932, a publisher in Turin intended to translate it (*Lettere* 326). Pavese was referring to the publishing house Frassinelli, with which he had already started to collaborate. Even if it is not made explicit in the letter, we can hypothesize that Pavese himself suggested the book to the publisher, since he had already read and appreciated it. But Frassinelli never pursued that project, and *My Ántonia* only appeared in Italian in 1947, when both Longanesi and Einaudi published a translation of it. Einaudi was the publishing house for which Pavese had been working since 1934. Once again, it seems probable that Pavese actively encouraged, this time successfully, the publication of Cather's book.

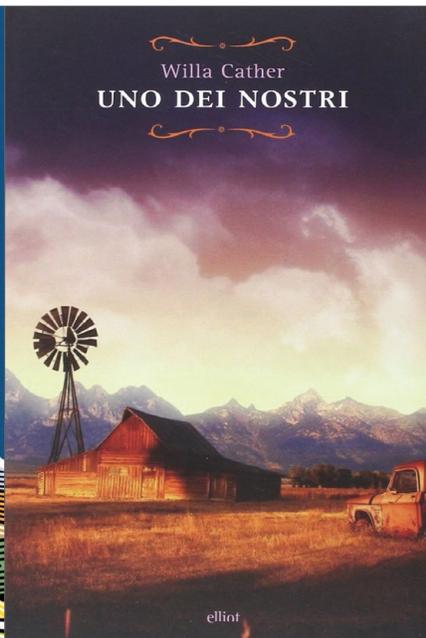
The translation of *My Ántonia* by Jole Jannelli Pinna Pintor for Einaudi is especially remarkable for the lyrical passages dedicated to the Nebraskan landscape, all superbly rendered by Pintor. As Scalero had done for *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, Pintor significantly maintains the foreign words (such as Bohemian terms) used by Cather and also keeps English terms when she finds it necessary, usually accompanying them with notes.¹¹

Modernista

In 1941, Cather's "The Sculptor's Funeral"—translated by the liberal intellectual and journalist Umberto Morra—was included by anti-Fascist writer and critic Elio Vittorini in his literary anthology *Americana*. The publication contained thirty-



Recent Italian editions of *My Ántonia* and *One of Ours*.



three texts written by American writers from all periods, from Poe and Hawthorne to Steinbeck and Cather.

Like Pavese, Vittorini was fascinated by American literature and wanted to promote it notwithstanding, and against, the Fascist politics of cultural autonomy. The Fascist censorship banned the publication of the anthology at first—in 1940—but then, thanks

to the intervention of critic Emilio Cecchi, who was well-liked by the regime, Vittorini was able to publish it in 1941.

It is ironic, if not altogether surprising, that Cecchi, who had made the publication of *Americana* possible by agreeing to an introduction appeasing the Fascist censors, would argue, a few years later, in his own book about America and American culture, that Cather was not modernist and experimental at all (see Cecchi 125–26). He saw this as positive, since, for him, American society from the late 1920s through the 1940s was characterized by moral degeneration and by a general anarchy of social customs, and this was reflected in the radically experimental works of writers like John Dos Passos, Henry Miller, and Ernest Hemingway. Cecchi argued that Cather represented an exception to this: her work, and *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, for example, represented an escape from this contemporary anarchy. The touching story of the missionaries, was, for him, "a corner touched by a confident and unalterable, nostalgic light; literary trends and manias change and exhaust, but somewhere else one can still see this chaste flame shining" (125).

But, apart from Cecchi's later reductive and conservative judgment, Vittorini's choice to insert Cather in the section of *Americana* entitled "Renewal of Forms," which included writers such as Gertrude Stein and Eugene O' Neill, was and still remains an illuminating contribution for an understanding of Cather's work as inherently modernist. *Americana* represented for many generations of Italian readers, students, and scholars, the first and most influential introduction to American literature. In this sense, it can be argued that it is with this publication in 1941 that Cather's work really made its entrance into Italian American studies, and it did as eminently modernist. The appearance of



Cather in *Americana* was also crucial in prompting a series of new translations that were published in the mid- and late-1940s.¹²

It is immediately noticeable how an echo of the first Italian version of Cather—that is, the one characterized by the emphasis on the religious values present in her work and the erroneous rumors about her putative conversion to Catholicism, is still present here. In the short biography that Vittorini offers, Cather is in fact said to have converted to Catholicism before the publication of *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (501).

Vittorini's short note also clarifies that Cather was a modernist because she transfigured the realistic descriptions of the pioneer legends and was able to create experimental representations of psychological processes. Vittorini's refreshing look was also aimed to emphasize the writer's ability to represent emotional complexities within minimal plots and essential, almost bare settings: a style that Cather herself had declared to be pursuing in "The Novel Dèmeublé" (1922). This was a style that the Italian literature of the time was certainly not yet mastering. Significantly enough, as Vittorini described Cather, he seemed to be describing his own writing, and, just as it is true for Pavese, it is clear that he was highly influenced by Cather.

Even so, Vittorini's selection of "The Sculptor's Funeral" remains a somewhat puzzling choice. It is one of Cather's darkest and most somber works, where the bleakness of the cultural ignorance and geographical isolation of the little Midwest town at the center of the story is described in raw and almost resentful terms. It is far from her more mature style and from the modernist elements of her later works. But Vittorini must have appreciated the bare descriptions, the sharpness of the images, the ordinary subjects, the long dialogues and the psychological insights.

It is also striking to note that in the same years in which he was preparing the anthology, Vittorini was writing *Conversations in Sicily* (1938–39), a book in which the main character, an intellectual who has been living in Milan for some years, is going back (and there too, the train, just as in Cather's story, is a central symbolic element) to his hometown and family in Sicily: an archaic world full of humble people living in poverty. While the unique mixture of realist and oneiric tone, the centrality of political allegories and the theme of war that characterize Vittorini's work cannot be found in Cather's short story, the consonances between the two texts are still quite evident.

Reconciling the approaches

Religious, political, and cultural interests played a crucial role within the historical context in which the initial introduction of Italian readers to the work of Willa Cather took place. Whether

pseudo-Catholic, "provincial," or modernist, the American writer proved to be an encouraging light of novelty and an example to follow for an Italian culture that was, with great difficulty, trying to modernize and emancipate itself, while also attempting to survive all sorts of expectations and reproaches from Catholic moralism, Fascist ideology, and censorship. Translations like Scalero's and Pintor's contributed to build a fine understanding of the American writer's use of language and expressive devices, and Cather clearly influenced the critic-writers Pavese and Vittorini.

While obviously mediated and at times clearly misread and manipulated, Cather's work emerged during these years in its freshness and balance. Italian critics discussed her curiosity for, and great knowledge of, religious and spiritual themes but also of social issues. They appreciated the writer's sense of place and her capacity to conjugate the local with the national, the cosmopolitan, and the universal. Finally, they admired her mastery of psychological complexities, as well as her distinctively vivid, sharp, minimalist and yet extremely evocative, writing style.

NOTES

1. The only existing piece about this topic is a short chapter, in Italian, by Daniela Pagani, included in the book *Chi stramalediva gli inglesi: la diffusione della letteratura inglese e americana in Italia tra le due guerre*. The volume, edited by Arturo Cattaneo, explores the reception of British and American literature in Italy in the period between the First and the Second World War. In her chapter, Pagani discusses the early reception of both Cather and Edith Wharton (she focuses only on the 1931–1936 period), and briefly indicates that the interest of Italian critics lay in the religious value of the work of the two American writers.

2. For more on this, see the fifth chapter of Ruth Ben-Ghiat's *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922–1945*.

3. All translations from the Italian are mine, except when quoting other scholars who had already translated the original (as in the case of Smith and Fussell).

4. Scalero also worked as a costume designer for the Greek Theatre in Siracusa. At one time she studied to be a nurse in Rome and had worked for the American Red Cross in Avellino. I was able to find out more about Scalero's life and work thanks to the invaluable help of librarian Lidia Ferrua, who manages the Scalero collection at the Public Library of Mazzè (Turin), Scalero's hometown, and with whom I have been in contact.

5. For this information, I am indebted to Mark Madigan, who talked about Cather's view of Scalero in the paper he presented at



the Fourteenth International Seminar on Willa Cather, Flagstaff, Arizona, in June 2013. His paper will be published in *Cather Studies 11* in early 2017.

6. Here I am borrowing the concepts of foreignization and domestication from philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher and from literary scholar and translator Lawrence Venuti, who adopted them as founding ideas for his theories about translation.

7. The original article in Italian, entitled “Sherwood Anderson,” was published in *La Cultura* in April 1931. Here I used the English translation by Edwin Fussell contained in the collection of Pavese’s essays *American Literature*.

8. Pavese would even become the managing editor of *La Cultura* in May 1934. In 1935, the journal was shut down during the same Fascist round-up in which Pavese was arrested and later confined in the region of Calabria for one year.

9. As is evident from looking at Pavese’s notes and letters in which he discussed American literature, these writers were among his all-time favorites, so the article he was planning to write would represent a *summa* of his idea of American literary “provincialism.”

10. The original article, entitled “L’Antologia di Spoon River,” was published in *La Cultura* in November 1931. It is the article mentioned by Chiuminatto in the letter quoted above, in which Chiuminatto realizes that Pavese does already know Cather.

11. An amusing detail about this translation is Pintor’s decision to change the last name Shimerda into Shimeda, without the “r,” in all probability because she judged that the original word sounded too similar to the Italian word “merda”; that is, the Italian equivalent of the English word “shit.”

12. The first Italian translation of *My Mortal Enemy* (*Il mio mortale nemico*), by Livia Agnini, came out in 1944 from the publishing house Jandi Sapi and in 1946 for Mondadori, with a translation by Maria Gallone. As mentioned earlier, two translations of *My Antonia* came out in 1947: one for Einaudi, in a translation by Jole Jannelli Pinna Pintor, and one for Longanesi in a translation by Gabriele Baldini.

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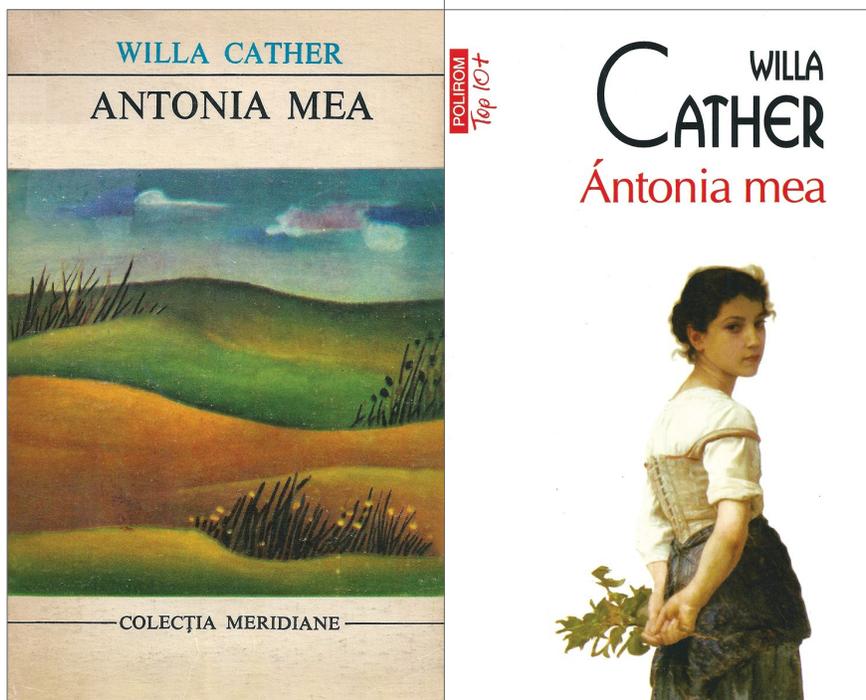
Willa Cather and Her Works in Romania

Monica Manolachi | University of Bucharest

In his memoir, *Unfinished Journey* (1977), Sir Yehudi Menuhin remembers Willa Cather as the family's most beloved guest when they lived at the Ansonia Hotel. In 1980, Menuhin's book was already available to Romanian readers. That Willa Cather loved classical music and that Menuhin was a student of Romanian composer and violinist George Enescu are well-known facts, but less is known about the circumstances in which Cather's books reached Romania and their reception among readers.

After a search of the databases of several university libraries, public metropolitan libraries, the National Library, and the Library of the Romanian Academy, it appears that only four books by Willa Cather have been translated into Romanian. This work was done mainly throughout the 1970s and the early 1980s. In 1971, Cather's most famous novel, *My Ántonia*, was translated by Vera Berceanu and Cezar Radu, two academics from Bucharest. In 1977, a second novel, *O Pioneers!*, was translated by Ecaterina Popa and Ioan Aurel Popa, two academics from Cluj-Napoca. In 1978, Ștefania Deleanu and poet Virgil Mazilescu translated thirteen short stories for a collection entitled after *The Affair at Grover Station* (a selection drawn from *Collected Short Fiction, 1892–1912* [1965]). In 1983, the lexicographer, translator, and professor Andrei Bantaș published a translation of *The Professor's House* (Tauchnitz Edition) in a decade

characterized by increased censorship. It was only in 2014 that translator Mihaela Negrilă published a new, improved version of *My Ántonia*. One significant difference between the two translations is that the "Introduction" to the 1971 translation follows the 1926 English language edition, whereas the 2014 translation uses the longer "Introduction" from 1918.



The 1971 and 2014 translations of My Ántonia.

Besides these titles, there is evidence in two of Willa Cather's letters that some of her books were taken to Romania before the Second World War. In a December 15, 1926 letter to Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Cather refers to Queen Marie of Romania's visit to Red Cloud, Nebraska, where she was offered a copy of *One of Ours*: "The Queen, by the way, stopped half an hour at my little town, and the assembled populace presented her with a bunch of roses and *One of Ours*. I was somehow deeply touched." Although the Queen herself wrote about her visit in Nebraska in her diary, she unfortunately did not mention Cather's book and no prewar English edition of it exists in Romanian catalogues. Cather's other letter, which was written November 6, 1938 to her brother Roscoe, mentions recent translations into "Hungarian and Roumanian" (*Selected Letters* 561). Hungarian translations published in the 1930s can be found in libraries today, but no Romanian prewar translations have been found.

Unlike the flourishing decade of the 1970s, many books published in the 1980s were under the supervision of the Communist regime. Taking this into account, the purpose of this article is twofold: first, it seeks to assess these translations in terms of linguistic and pragmatic elements such as intratextual factors, domestication (or foreignization), and solutions to cases of ambiguity, word play, and dialect. In this regard, it seeks also to examine

sensitive key issues subject to censorship. Second, it seeks to discuss the context of Willa Cather's entrance into the Romanian culture, with a focus on extratextual factors such as the relevance of her works to the epoch and to its dominant poetics and ideology, and also to access the critical reception of her books translated into Romanian. These lines of research are discussed as interdependent rather than separate, taking

into account variations in the texts and the shifts involved in the translation process.

Romanian libraries list several studies on Willa Cather by foreign scholars, but contemporary academic studies on her work written by Romanian researchers are scarce. There have been encyclopedias, which list and introduce twentieth-century American authors, but it was not until after 1989 that two Romanian researchers from the city of Iași published full doctoral studies based on her books.

Literary critic Brândușa Viola Popescu (1994) published a comparative essay entitled *Catastrofă și imaginație* (*Catastrophy and Imagination*), which refers to no fewer than thirty-six British, American, and Romanian war novels. In comparison with other titles in this study, Cather's *One of Ours* is appreciated as a unique novel, which covers the theme of war as a mode of exposing inner tensions, a disarming naiveté rooted in sincere idealism and a belief that war can give meaning to a dull life. Although her paradoxical understanding of war brought Cather the Pulitzer Prize in 1923, Popescu describes *One of Ours* as "colorless" (81) in contrast with the works of Romanian writer Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu.

In 2004, Anca Irina Cecal, from the University Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Iași, published her thesis entitled *Willa Cather: the Art of Writing, the "Writing" of an Artist's Existence*, an attempt—based on bibliography published before 1990—to demonstrate that Cather regarded art as her religion. In 2007, the same author published an article entitled "European Tradition and the Pioneering Women of the New World," which deals with *Shadows on the Rock* and in which she argues that "since Willa Cather was herself a pioneer both in her beliefs about the art of writing and in the subjects, techniques and style of her writings, she transferred this quality to the women protagonists of her novels" (223).

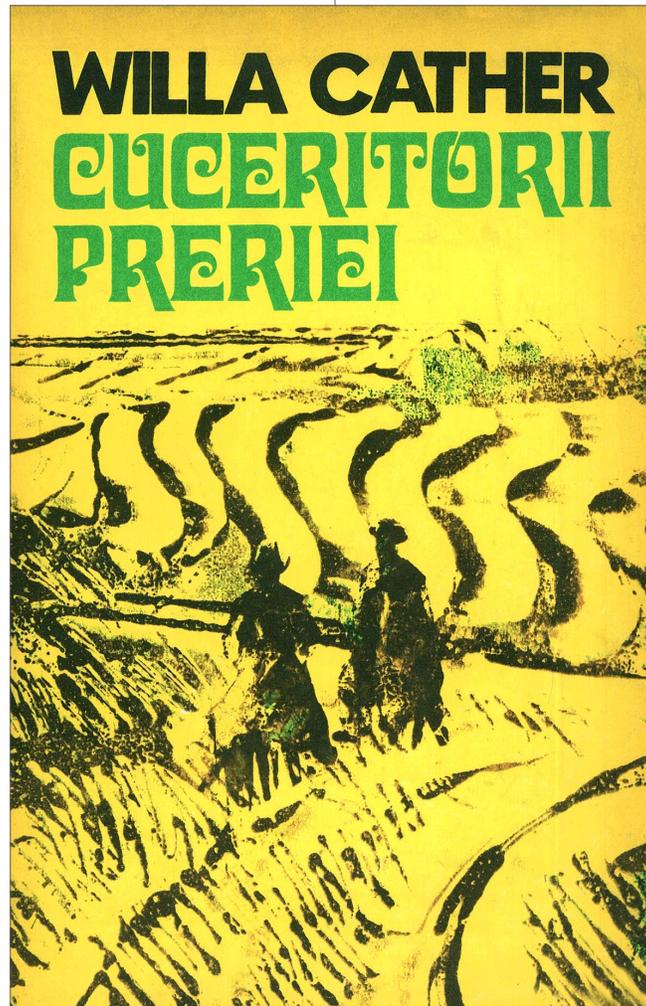
Taking all these details into consideration, one could ask what circumstances may have influenced interest in Willa Cather's work.

During the Communist epoch, university graduates—intellectuals regardless of field—were sent to the provinces by the system; often in rural areas, they were expected to serve the Communist party's aim of increasing the national level of civilization—and also the level of education—among Romanian citizens. Indeed, according to national statistics, the secondary education enrollment rate increased from 24 percent in 1960 to 68 percent in 1981, and

higher education enrollment rate increased from 6 percent to 11 percent. At the time, education was highly centralized, meant to be made accessible to all children and teenagers with a strictly controlled curriculum; under the umbrella of nationalist Communism and its propagandistic reading of Romanian history, according to which the past was a golden era of glorious battles. This context emphasized conservatism and love for the land, limpid literary discourse, the focus on underrepresented characters in literature, on the role of memory in building individual consciousness and on exploring the difficulties of living with disappointment. Cather appears to have passed as a suitable writer for the Communist regime. In addition, as Guy Reynolds has concluded, when Cather emerged as a writer, the United States was going through a transitional time. In that political turmoil, her progressive vision followed

"a highly distinctive, regionalist model of the progressive" (32), which most probably matched some of the Romanians' ideas of progress throughout the 1960s and the 1970s.

In the preface to her translation of *O Pioneers!*, Ecaterina Popa compares the frontier man and the European immigrant farmer, viewing them as two separate categories of pioneers, with the difference that the latter did not "enjoy the same aura of the first pioneers" (6). She also admits that "the immigrant suffers not so much because of material reasons, but because of the absence of a rich spiritual life" (13), which they experienced in their native countries. In her view, Alexandra Bergson is "the ideal type of the woman pioneer," who understands "the spiritual 'frontier'" (14).



The 1977 translation of *O Pioneers!: The Conquerors of the Prairie*.



However, the Romanian reality of the notion of “pioneers” had a completely different, politicized meaning, which may have influenced the translation of the book. The term and idea were associated with the Pioneer Organization, founded in 1949, which included about 70 percent of children from the second to the eighth grade and served an important propaganda function. This may be a reason why the Romanian title of the book does not include the word “pionier,” the Romanian equivalent of “pioneer.” Translated word-for-word back into English, the Romanian title conveys a rather different reality. “The Conquerors of the Prairie” (*Cuceritorii preriei*) may be taken as a formula that replaces the original meaning of the North American pioneers, as poor settlers in an unclaimed territory, with a more empowering word, which may have fit the idealized image of America among many Romanians and Eastern Europeans during the Communist era. It also adds a further detail, which designates a specific location in North America: the prairie. This choice reminds us of the importance of territorial boundaries before 1989 in contrast with the tendency of political deterritorialization of the public discourse, specific to the post-1989 decades.

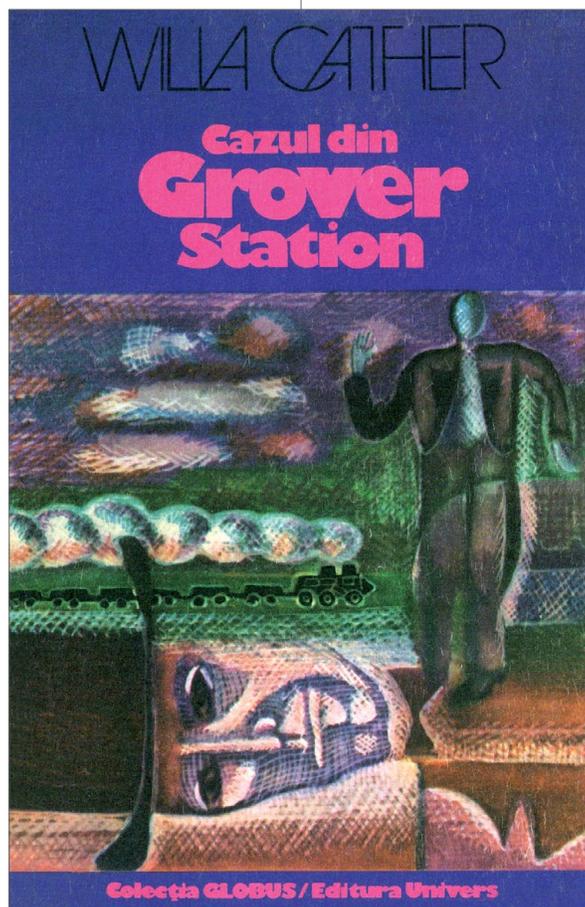
If we look at the titles of translations of *O Pioneers!* into other European languages, one can see four trends. The most significant is that half of the translators have rendered it very closely to the English word “pioneer.” The Swedish version, published before, and the Portuguese version, published after the Second World War, as well as the French edition from 1987 and the Spanish and Italian translations made after 2000, preserve the initial sound, which, however, lose the emotional expression transmitted by the exclamation. *O Pionjärer!* (1948) still includes the interjection, while all the others do not. Secondly, the German translators preferred to refer to America as a new land in comparison with Europe, such as in *Neue Erde* (1945) or as in *Unter den Hügeln die kommende Zeit* (1991), literally “under the hills the coming time.” Thirdly,

the Italian and the Polish translations used a neutral title, a phytonym—*Il gelso bianco* (1953) and *Drzewo Bailej Morwy* (1977)—which is the symbol of mulberry tree, an allusion to the Ovidian myth of Pyramus and Thisbe that connects the ancient European tradition with the new spirit of the prairie, very much in line with Cather’s interest in importing European values. The fourth category is an interpretation of the initial title, which includes the Romanian translation that probably followed the Spanish translation: *Los Colonos* (1955) and *Cuceritorii preriei* (1977). In conclusion, the Romanian translation of the title is similar to the Spanish one, because of the allusion to the colonists, and to the German one, because it includes a reference to a specific land. In Romanian, the title subtly and fortunately suggests that the novel is about understanding and mastering the uncontrollable forces of pioneer life in the treeless grassy plains.

On the background of the Romanian rural-urban redistribution and industrialization, which happened in parallel, but more slowly than in America, it is my assumption that the nostalgic spirit of Cather’s prairie novels may have corresponded to those Romanian urbanized readers who had left their villages in search for a better life in the city, especially when confronted with the misfortunes of urban life, such as dislocation, broken families, disillusion, estrangement and the general valorization of the new, modern environment versus the old, traditional one. Moreover, Cather’s

female characters such as Alexandra Bergson or Antonia Shimerda, women who, in spite of personal misfortune, struggle and manage to live well, often doing a man’s job, resemble a type of rural Rosie-the-Riveter *avant la lettre* that later matched the Soviet icon of the ideal woman who can do it all.

Published in different epochs, the two translations of *My Antonia* vary to a certain extent in terms of domestication and foreignization. First, in the translation from 1971, the original American dialect spoken by the Bohemian immigrants exists only in the chapters when Antonia is still a child, while the 2014



This 1978 anthology included “The Affair at Grover Station” (the title story) and “El Dorado: A Kansas Recessional,” “The Marriage of Phaedra,” “A Wagner Matinée,” “Behind the Singer Tower,” “The Clemency of the Court,” “The Bohemian Girl,” “A Death in the Desert,” “Paul’s Case,” “The Treasure of Far Island,” “The Sculptor’s Funeral,” “A Singer’s Romance,” and “Eric Hermannson’s Soul.”

translation extends the use of dialect to the time when she is an adolescent and even to Jelinek's defense of Christian faith, after *Ántonia's* father commits suicide. The effect is that the emotional charge slightly fades away when dialect is replaced with standard English and *Ántonia* seems to have learned English faster.

Second, the 1971 edition contains only one footnote, which explains the impossibility of translating the wordplay on "eyes" and "ice" in the following passage:

We sat down and made a nest in the long red grass. Yulka curled up like a baby rabbit and played with a grasshopper. *Ántonia* pointed up to the sky and questioned me with her glance. I gave her the word, but she was not satisfied and pointed to my eyes. I told her, and she repeated the word, making it sound like "ice." She pointed up to the sky, then to my eyes, then back to the sky, with movements so quick and impulsive that she distracted me, and I had no idea what she wanted. She got up on her knees and wrung her hands. She pointed to her own eyes and shook her head, then to mine and to the sky, nodding violently.

"Oh," I exclaimed, "blue; blue sky."

She clapped her hands and murmured, "Blue sky, blue eyes," as if it amused her. (25)

In contrast, the 2014 translation includes no fewer than eighty-four footnotes, most of which can be classified as follows: quotations or words in other languages (Latin, Czech, Hebrew); cultural translations of certain features of twentieth-century American society (transport, art, finance, lifestyle, health, education, traditions or food); fauna and flora specific (or not) to the American continent, most of them regionalisms; allusions to Biblical stories; book titles, songs, ballads or paintings; historical figures and mythology; and geographic details. Such dissimilarity between the translations could be explained by the rather nationalist atmosphere of the pre-1989 epoch, when general access to information was highly limited, either for political or technological reasons. This state of affairs has been gradually replaced with the cultural—and, therefore, linguistic—diversity of the post-Communist decades, when free information has been more often than not just one click away.

Interesting here is that the television film *My Ántonia* (1995) stars a Romanian-born Jewish American actress, Elina Löwensohn, who, after the death of her father, a survivor of the Nazi concentration camps, emigrated to the United States with her mother, a dancer in Bucharest. Given that at the beginning of the 1990s and even now, Eastern Europe has still been perceived

as a bloc, choosing a Romanian actress to play a Bohemian immigrant in America perfectly suits the transnational value of Willa Cather's novel and shows another side of history.

The third Cather work translated into Romanian is a collection of the following short stories: "The Affair at Grover Station," which gives the books its title, "El Dorado: A Kansas Recessional," "The Marriage of Phaedra," "A Wagner Matinée," "Behind the Singer Tower," "The Clemency of the Court," "The Bohemian Girl," "A Death in the Desert," "Paul's Case," "The Treasure of Far Island," "The Sculptor's Funeral," "A Singer's Romance," and "Eric Hermannson's Soul." Assembled and translated during a Communist decade of relative freedom, the selection shows a balance between stories dealing with local aspects of American provincial life (with a rural-urban contrast) and stories of international travel, immigration, and transnationality. What is significant is that Cather's short stories transmit a sense of both cultural and material loss, which parallels whatever feature that might be lost in translation: many of her characters die or experience disenchantment. Yet Cather found death meaningful and, therefore, she humanizes personages who, otherwise, would have seemed colorless or despicable because of their crimes, or she chooses various types of artists—a painter, a music teacher, a musician, a playwright, a sculptor or an opera singer—to prove once more her faith in the power and the survival of art.

In 1983, when Andrei Bantaş translated *The Professor's House* into Romanian, censorship was not as fierce as during the Soviet colonization of the 1950s, but it still existed in the sense that not many writers dared to remain true to their craft and only a few managed to avoid compromises. An important Romanian lexicographer and professor at the University of Bucharest, Andrei Bantaş (1930–1997) may have somehow identified himself with the main character, although no evidence such as a diary or letters have been made public so far.

Godfrey St. Peter's refusal to join his family in France may have been congruous with the general tendency to favor the local over the global during the 1980s, in times when the everyday practice of cultural difference did not proliferate in the public discourse as fast as it does nowadays. The dialogue between the professor and his doctor about travel is quite relevant: "How about travel? 'I shrink from the thought of it'" (269). A consequence of such socio-political conditions and cultural attitude was that translators and editors tended to avoid dialect speech, as it was against the general policy of linguistic standardization.

An example is the translation of the dialogue between Godfrey St. Peter and his landlord, Fred Appelhoff, a widower with a small garden, who agrees to rent the Professor his old house for another year. Cather describes Appelhoff as an elderly German man, who



speaks in dialect and used to work hard “in de old country,” but who had to work “turrible hard” after he arrived “in dis country,” in America (53). However, the Romanian translation does not preserve the linguistic difference, with the effect that Appelhoff seems to be as American as the professor. Only his name, which seems to include a dialect version of Apfel in German Northern Dialect, is translated as such, as if to emphasize once more in the original that the character was from elsewhere.

Another instance is Henry Atkins, a castaway Englishman who helps Tom Outland and his friend explore the Blue Mesa, and dies suddenly and horribly of a snakebite to the head. Although Cather subtly signals his different dialect, his speech is rendered into the target language differently only when absolutely necessary. When Tom recounts Henry “was very eager to help us in the ‘rew-ins,’ as he called them” (210), the translator chose a different form of plural for the Romanian word “ruină,” even though the original difference was in pronunciation, not in pluralization: instead of “ruine,” we read the unusual “ruinuri” (201).

To provide just one example of how an idiom can change the perspective in the target text, without losing the essential part of the subject from the source text, let us focus on the use of “keep the ball rolling,” a phrase which, etymologically speaking, emerged as a reference to various sports and was popularized during the U.S. presidential election of 1840.

It is used by the Professor in the context of marriage. When he and his wife talk about one of their daughters getting married, he addresses Lillian: “I have no enthusiasm for being a father-in-law. It’s you who keep the ball rolling. I fully appreciate that” (49). If initially the idiom referred mainly to a masculine subject or event, Cather staged a subtle gender transfer, which was subsequently taken over by the Romanian translator. Bantaș chose neither “a întreține conversația” (“to go on with the conversation”), nor “a susține” (“to support”), but “a întreține

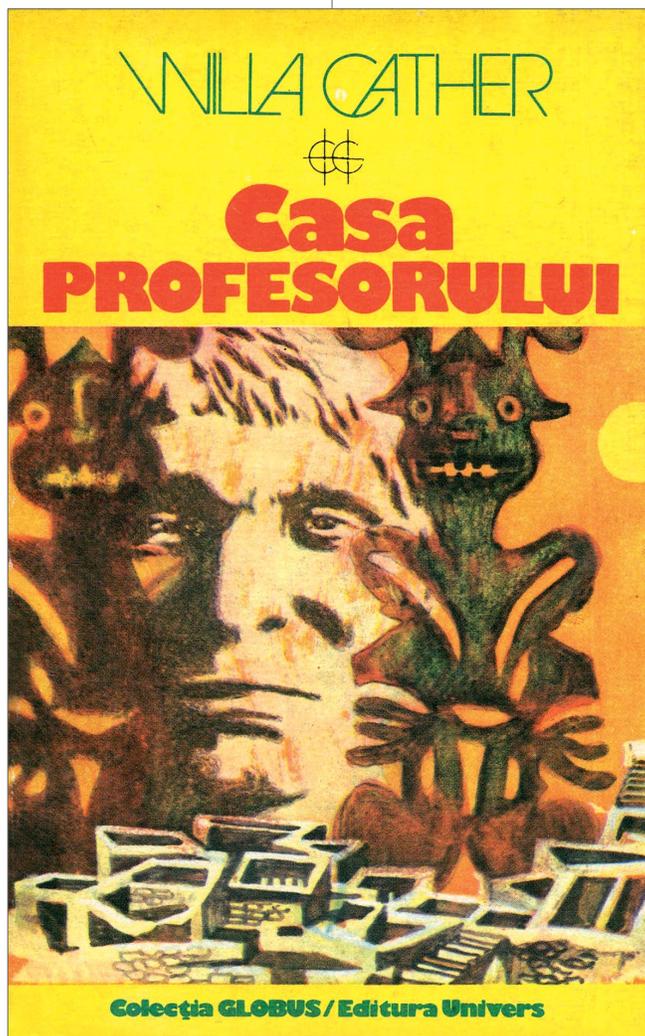
focul sacru” (43) (“to keep up the sacred fire”), which in the given context, refers both to conversation skills and to marriage. His choice also hints at the ancient Greek culture and mirrors Cather’s unadorned literary style.

In view of all these differences, there are several explanations for the absence of further translations or new editions of the previously translated works. First, Cather’s work has not been included in the faculty syllabus and thus not many B.A. diploma papers or M.A. dissertations have been written on it. Second, as

professor and literary translator Lidia Vianu (1998) remarked in a book with interviews and poems by Romanian writers on the subject of censorship, after the fall of Communism and the disappearance of subversive literature, the Romanian public started to devour translated works, usually postmodern. In this context, a somewhat different form of censorship arose over the post-1989 decades: state-sponsored censorship was replaced by what Vianu terms “a crisis of native writing.” Confronted with the immensity of world literature, many Romanian writers have focused on their own writing rather than on translations. Moreover, it takes time to educate and form new generations of translators. Third, the Second World War, the fall of the monarchy, the Soviet colonization of the 1950s, and the 1989 revolution were all traumatic intervals when Romanian libraries suffered enormously, which may explain the absence of any

other early editions and translations in Romanian. Fourth, the condition of the Romanian translator is slightly different from that of translators in other European countries: payment per page is lower than in other countries and the translator usually does not receive payment in advance or share of the profit. Therefore, professionals who live only on translations are *rarae aves*.¹

Against these heavy odds, Willa Cather’s novels and short stories include several specific embedded transnational values which most probably will favor the translation of new titles



The 1983 translation of *The Professor's House*.

in the future. In the first place, many of her characters gain experience through traveling, either to settle in a new country or just to spend time abroad, which corresponds to increasing contemporary migratory trends. Even death, as the ultimate form of travel—Ántonia's father's death, Pavel's death and the death of the Ukrainian newlyweds, Tom Outland's death, the Professor's contemplation of death and the likely tragic deaths of the Cliff City's inhabitants—achieves artistic value in shaping modern identity. In addition, the type of experience and self-consciousness that Cather's main characters gain involves cultural transfer and the activation of memory, both collective and personal. They extensively dwell on flashbacks or enjoy their and others' memories from other places, as these represent a significant part of their lives. Last but not least, Cather's work abounds in linguistically diverse vocabulary, which makes the text rich in meaning. In fact, translating Cather is a virtual journey in itself, because many lexical elements constitute invitations to the places and times she mentions and a type of thriving competition among European values transposed overseas, in America, meant to surpass the heritage of tradition.

Even though this article does not clarify when Willa Cather's books reached the Romanian libraries first or whether the translators consulted versions published in other languages or not, it aims at drawing attention to some of the factors that have influenced the archipelagic translation endeavor of her works into Romanian, in a similar way in which Cather brought to our attention the importance of the vacuum principle—on which Tom Outland's invention was based—as a source of value in general.

NOTE

1. A debate on these problems was organized in 2013, when Andy Jelčić, Vice President of the CEATL (European Council of Literary Translators' Associations) and Peter Bergsma, president of RECIT (Réseau Européen des Centres Internationaux de Traducteurs Littéraires) were invited to talk with Romanian literary translators. However, the situation is changing very slowly. There has been no national association that could defend translators' rights until October 2014, when ARTLIT, the Romanian Association of Literary Translators, was established.

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Every issue of the Willa Cather Newsletter & Review is the product of a careful process, guided by an issue editor with the assistance of an editorial team. Submitted essays are reviewed by respected Cather scholars, many of whom are on our editorial board. For essays selected for publication, revision follows, with close attention to style and content. This is a collaborative process between author and editors, who also check the accuracy of quotations and other details. Accompanying visual images are carefully selected and arranged. Before an essay is printed, it has received the close attention of editors, design and layout professionals, and copy editors.

*Usually this process works well, and editors, authors, and readers are pleased with the results. Occasionally, however, results are less successful, usually because of the requirements of our publication schedule. Such was the case with one essay in our Summer 2016 issue. Emily J. Rau felt that some of the revisions of her essay did not accurately represent her analysis of *A Lost Lady*. We have offered her this space to clarify her views.*

—The WCN&R Issue Editors

“Steel of Damascus”: Iron, Steel, and Marian Forrester

Emily J. Rau | University of Nebraska–Lincoln

I want to thank the editors of the *Willa Cather Newsletter & Review* for this opportunity to reframe arguments found in the version of my “The Princely Carelessness of the Pioneer’: Railroads and the Transformation of Space in *A Lost Lady*” in the last issue of the *Newsletter & Review*.

In discussing *A Lost Lady*, it is necessary to pay close attention to the point of view Cather offers when making any claims as to her views about the characters in the novel. Cather filters most of the novel through Niel's prejudiced and sometimes flawed perspective, although at a few significant moments she departs from Niel's view of things and instead represents Daniel Forrester's or Adolph Blum's. In an effort to clarify my argument, the editors advanced an interpretation of Marian Forrester as

morally and geographically lost, a judgment with which I do not agree and furthermore believe that Cather did not intend. Instead, Cather's use of the title *A Lost Lady* for this novel serves as a further comment on Niel's problematic perception of Marian Forrester.

Although filtered through the eyes of men within a plot largely concerned with men, Cather's point of view in the novel ultimately centers on Marian Forrester within the liminal space between the men of iron and the men of steel. Rather than a passive victim deluded by fairy tales, Marian Forrester emerges instead from the text as a strategic woman, both participating in and pushing against the role created for her within the patriarchal community of Sweet Water, Nebraska.



As highlighted in the original piece, Cather interchangeably associates Marian Forrester with iron and steel, rather than consistently applying one symbol to her character as she does with the male characters. However, the difference between the use of iron and steel largely corresponds to the perspective from which moments are recalled. The novel opens with recollections of Sweet Water and the “railroad aristocracy” from a perspective outside of Niel’s, possibly from Daniel Forrester’s perspective since he is the central figure in the novel who is a member of that particular group (7). Within this first chapter, Cather presents the image of Marian Forrester standing on the porch “waving a buttery iron spoon,” an image which readers might infer that Daniel Forrester treasures and remembers (10). After this chapter, the novel pivots so that Niel’s perspective dominates the narrative, including in such moments as when Niel perceives Marian Forrester as giving him “the sense of tempered steel, a blade that could fence with anyone and never break” (95). Thus, it is not Cather who assigns Marian Forrester attributes associated with iron and steel, but rather Cather uses these symbols to explore how Daniel Forrester, Niel, and other characters variously view her. Further, rather than having her own body be metaphorically made of iron or steel, as in the case of Daniel Forrester as a “man of iron” or Ivy Peters as having a “steel rod down his back” (120, 18), Marian Forrester instead takes up iron and steel in the form of tools or even weapons, as when she rhetorically fences with a steel blade. These instruments, whether real or metaphorical, symbolize Marian Forrester’s attempts to combat the powerlessness that threatens her throughout the novel, as she repeatedly runs to the edges of her husband’s property and pushes against the boundaries of her existence.

What the revised version of my paper fails to answer is the question of why Cather chooses iron and steel specifically as the

symbols for this portrayal of the increasing degradation of the Great Plains. Of course the railroads clearly contributed to that process, and Cather uses the railroad as both the literal and metaphorical vehicle through which this transformation took shape historically and became spatially meaningful. Her choice of these two metals as the particular symbols for her characters comments upon this deterioration at a deeper level. Through iron and steel, Cather highlights that, while clear contrasts exist between the choices and values of the different men, the two generations, just like the two types of metal, are certainly not opposites. Instead, Ivy and his contemporaries are harder and more relentless versions of Daniel Forrester, just as iron serves as the base metal in the production of steel. Thus, Cather acknowledges that the foundation for the greedy younger generation can be found within the mentalities, priorities, and actions of the very men she warmly characterizes in this novel, an irony she confronts throughout *A Lost Lady*. By placing Marian Forrester in the liminal space between the men of iron and the men of steel, Cather creates a complicated character with whom critics continue to struggle. This complication stems from Marian Forrester’s status in the novel as the incarnation of the moment of transition from iron to steel, and as both an active participant in and victim of the degradation and colonization of the Great Plains.

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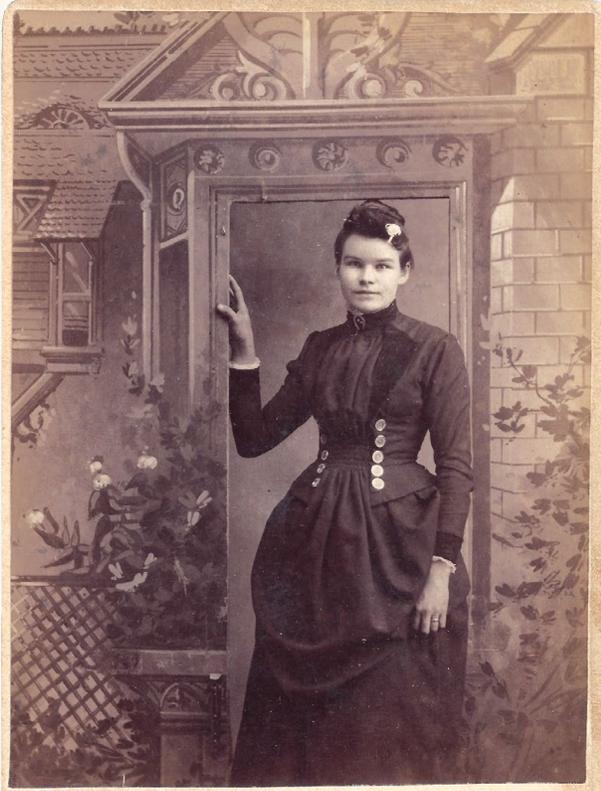
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The Spirits of the Moon Block

The stolidly handsome building once known as the Moon Block, erected on Red Cloud's Webster Street in 1886–1887 when the Cather family lived a couple blocks away, is coming to life again. This winter it joins its next-door neighbor, the Red Cloud Opera House, to become the National Willa Cather Center.

We have high hopes and big plans for the old Moon Block. As we've carefully taken it apart and put it back together over the last few years (yes, following strict standards of historic preservation), we've developed great affection for the place. And as it talks to us, we listen. Of all the businesses and organizations that made their homes here, one stands out, largely because it documented itself so well: the photo studio. The Red Cloud photographer Fred Bradbrook moved his studio into the Moon Block when the building opened and worked there, with a pause or two, until his early death in 1906. He was joined in the mid-1890s by J. H. Wegmann, who ran the studio alone in the years 1894–96. Willa Cather and her friends and family were among the studio's regular patrons.

These "cabinet card" photos are among several dozen in our collection, and we're always on the lookout for more. The subjects are unknown (so far).