



Willa Cather
REVIEW

Volume 60 · No. 1

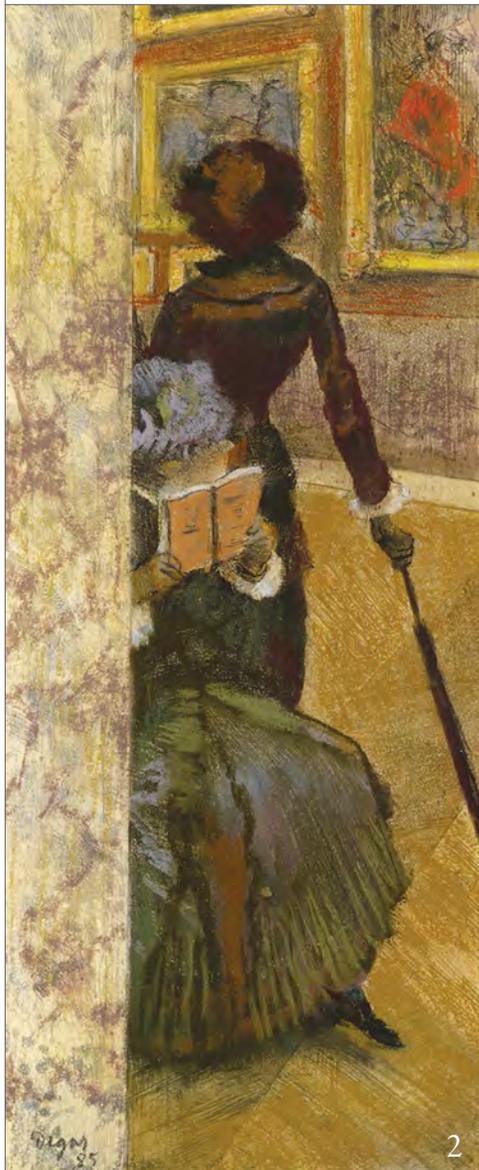
Fall 2017

Willa Cather and
Mary Cassatt

m e

Willa Cather REVIEW

Volume 60 • No. 1 | Fall 2017



CONTENTS

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|--|
| 1 | Letters from the Executive Director and the President | 14 | On the Visual within Willa Cather Mary Linnea Vaughan |
| 2 | Missed (?) Connections: Willa Cather and Mary Cassatt • Ann Romines | 19 | Regarding “Art-less Pittsburgh,” C. S. Reinhart’s <i>Washed Ashore</i> , and “The Sculptor’s Funeral” Timothy W. Bintrim |
| 13 | The Willa Cather Foundation Art Collection | | |

On the cover: *Mary Cassatt Self-Portrait* (ca. 1880), National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.



Letter from the Executive Director Ashley Olson

So many changes! By now, you have no doubt taken note of our beautiful new masthead and this publication's simple and sophisticated new name, the *Willa Cather Review*. We're pleased to debut this new look after another (larger) transformation that led to the grand opening and dedication of the National Willa Cather Center in early June. For those of you who were unable to join us in Red Cloud for the festivities, I can assure you that the new facility is also beautiful and sophisticated. Whether you're looking to make use of the archive and study center, participate in a guided tour, or simply browse our art gallery and museum exhibits, we look forward to seeing you!

For readers near and far, we've included a special treat in this issue. It's a preview of just a handful of the beautiful pieces in the Willa Cather Foundation's art collection. Of the many wonderful objects in our collections, our fine artworks are perhaps less

known than some of our other archival holdings. These artworks, many connected to Cather herself, and many inspired by her writing and evocative of her time, bring great joy to our visitors and to our staff. The collection has grown gradually over the years, to our delight. And now that we have greatly enhanced facilities, we hope to see it grow even more.

Humankind is fortunate that since our earliest days, artists have shared their gifts with us. In addition to bringing joy, the arts push us to become more well-rounded individuals and give us a reason to pause for thought and reflection. In *The Song of the Lark*, Cather wrote "... what was any art but an effort to make a sheath, a mould in which to imprison for a moment the shining, elusive element which is life itself—life hurrying past us and running away, too strong to stop, too sweet to lose?" Life is hurrying past us every day. I hope you'll take time to read the insightful essays that regularly appear in the *Willa Cather Review*, attend a Cather conference or seminar, or visit us for a tour and program in Red Cloud. You'll be glad that you did!



Letter from the President Lynette Krieger

In April 2017, the past met the present quite unexpectedly for me. During an exploration of the attic of the 140-year-old George Cather home, I thought I felt the whole house tremble when I chanced upon a trove of forgotten documents: a true archival moment. Here were remnants of a family's past, bits of torn and faded paper, fluttering their music through the air out of the silence of the attic.

As one of the members of the committee that worked to raise the funds for our new National Willa Cather Center, I was vividly reminded of the importance of the Foundation's quest to build our new archive. We had several thousand pieces of archival materials awaiting a proper placement in history. And now by chance, the remodeling of the George Cather home was coinciding with the opening of the archive. Yes, here too were documents and ephemera from its original family led by George and Frances "Franc" Cather. Grosvenor Phillips ("G. P.") Cather, the model for Claude Wheeler in *One of Ours*, was their middle child (of five). Many once carefully boxed

treasures, now a century later, were musty and crumbled, more than ready to find a proper place in the new Cather Center. Other items were in perfect condition, like the family's 1892 almanac and G. P.'s calling card adorned with purple violets, and a large assortment of "School Reward of Merit" slips. A slightly chewed-up copy of the *Hesperian* magazine, dated January 1893, contains the original publication of Cather's story "A Son of the Celestial." Of further interest, a good number of Republican party nomination cards demonstrated the George Cathers' participation in the Webster County political culture of the day. Taken together, they help us to have a deeper understanding of a family that figures importantly in Willa Cather's life and work.

And so it was that as President of the Board of Governors of the Willa Cather Foundation, it was my privilege to be able to bestow on the Foundation a multitude of treasures from a century past. These items have their place in history and a new home at the National Willa Cather Center. Items saved, items treasured. I'll always wonder about this happy coincidence of finding these objects just as we had a good home to give them. I do hope you will visit the new National Willa Cather Center and enjoy our many treasures.



Missed (?) Connections: Willa Cather and Mary Cassatt

Ann Romines | The George Washington University

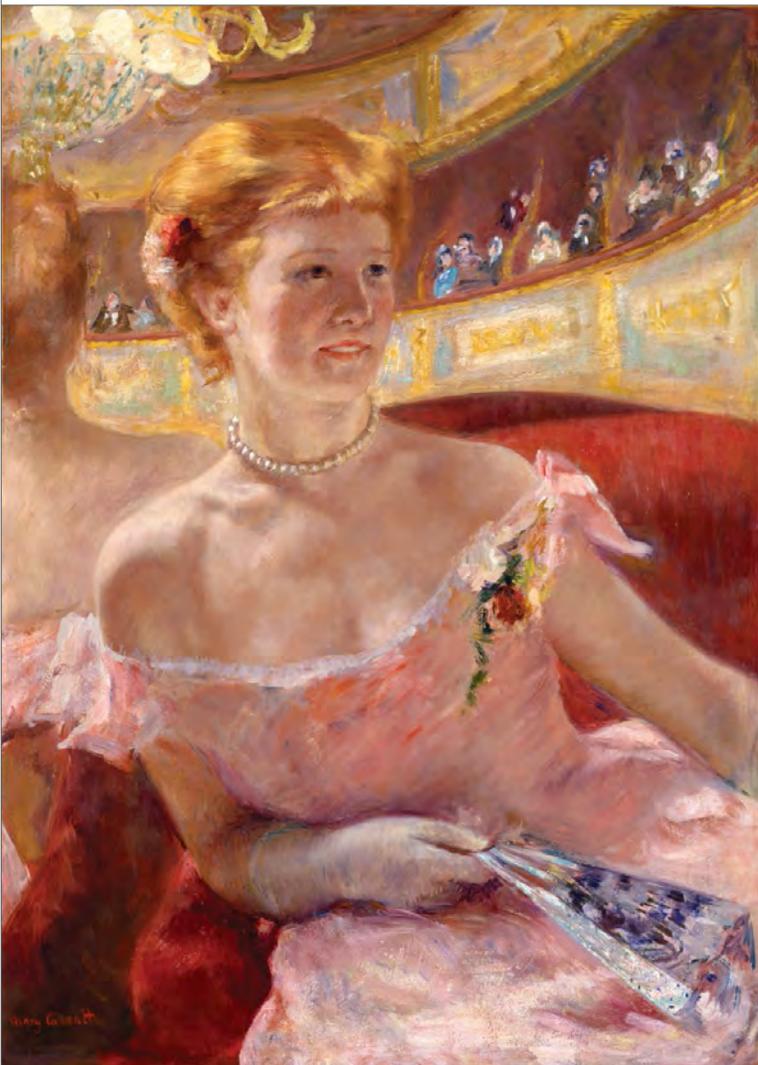
When Willa Cather was born in rural Virginia in 1873, Mary Cassatt was twenty-nine, living and working in Paris with her older sister. Beginning at age sixteen, she had studied painting at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia and then studied and worked for several years in Spain, Italy, and France. Like Cather, Cassatt was both fiercely independent and deeply committed to her modestly wealthy and sometimes conservative family. And also like Cather, Cassatt was an extraordinary American woman who managed to invent herself as a major American artist with an international reputation.

Given the importance to Cather of such mentors and older women-artist friends as Sarah Orne Jewett and Annie Fields, it seems feasible that Mary Cassatt, of the same generation and economic situation as Jewett and Fields, could also have been an

important and influential figure for her. They moved in worlds that almost—but not quite—connected. Cassatt belonged to an old Pittsburgh family that moved to Philadelphia when she was a child, a family that might well have known the McClung family and others of Cather's Pittsburgh friends. During her Pittsburgh years, Cather reviewed International Exhibitions at the Carnegie Museum of Art that included work by Cassatt and her French impressionist colleagues. Cassatt was the only American artist whose work had been included in the important impressionist exhibitions organized in Paris by Edgar Degas in the 1880s, and Willa Cather's interest in impressionism is apparent in her writing. However, Cather never mentioned Cassatt in her Carnegie Institute reviews, or in any other of her frequent writings about painters (Duryea 73–74).

Mary Cassatt's closest friend, Louisine Havemeyer, and her husband Henry were affluent and very visible New York art collectors, guided and principally advised by Cassatt. After Louisine's death in 1929, much of the great Havemeyer collection, which included major work by Cassatt, went to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, as "one of the most magnificent gifts ever made to a museum" (Tinterow 3). Cather knew the Met collection well.

During the years that Cather was living in New York City and editing *McClure's Magazine*, Louisine Havemeyer was a prominent figure in the women's suffrage movement in the city. As Rebecca Rabinow reports, in 1915, in support of that cause, Havemeyer organized an unprecedented American show of paintings by Cassatt and her friend and collaborator Edgar Degas, juxtaposed with "old master" works, at a prominent New York gallery. She was urged on and aided by Cassatt, who also strongly supported women's suffrage. "Women need the vote," Cassatt wrote to her friend, and in 1914, as World War I began, she urged Havemeyer to "work for the suffrage. If the world is to be saved, it will be the women who save it" (Rabinow 89). Although the exhibit was a well-publicized critical and financial success, many affluent New Yorkers who would ordinarily have attended a show of such quality boycotted it. Cassatt wrote to Havemeyer that "it was the cause that kept many people away, 'society' it seems is so against suffrage" (Mathews 324). To her fury, no member of her own family—a part of the "anti-suffrage elite"—attended the show; they did not support the cause (Mathews 309). Did Willa Cather, who had now lived in New York for nine years, attend? No record has yet been found.



Woman with a Pearl Necklace in a Loge (1879) by Mary Cassatt, Philadelphia Museum; bequest of Charlotte Dorrance Wright, 1978.

In that same year, 1915, Cather published *The Song of the Lark*, the novel that, according to Polly Duryea, includes the most references to visual art and “most nearly coincides with her own awakening to the visual arts” (9). Ann Moseley proposes that the Nathanmeyers, Chicago art patrons who sponsor Thea’s first public appearance as a singer, may have been partially modeled on Louisine and Henry Havemeyer (715–716). Like the Havemeyers, the Nathanmeyers are discriminating collectors of paintings, and while Thea and Fred are in their house, Fred points to what he considers “the most beautiful Manet in the world,” which depicts a woman musician “eating grapes out of a paper bag” (305). This description obviously alludes to Edouard Manet’s *Street Singer* (1862; see illustration on the right). That painting was bought about 1899 by Sarah Choate Sears of Boston, another astute collector and a painter. The Sears family gave the Manet to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, but not until 1966. If Cather (whose favorite artist was Manet [Duryea 204–05]) saw the painting in Boston, it would likely have been at the Sears house, and Sears would very probably have moved in the same circles as Mrs. Fields, whom Cather often visited between 1908 and Fields’s death in 1915, and other Cather friends in Boston. In addition, Sarah Sears and her daughter were friends of both Louisine Havemeyer and of Mary Cassatt, whose work they collected. In fact, Cassatt often saw and advised American artists and collectors—many of them women—who visited in France (as Willa Cather regularly did).

Another couple whom Moseley identifies as possible models for the Nathanmeyers are Mr. and Mrs. Potter Palmer of Chicago, also notable collectors (715–716). Bertha Palmer was in charge of plans for the Women’s Building at the Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893–94, and she commissioned Mary Cassatt to paint a massive mural for the building, celebrating “Modern Woman.” (The mural was a new project in a new medium for Cassatt; like Cather, she was open to taking on new and sometimes experimental artistic projects.) Cather’s famous opera trip to Chicago was in March of 1895, just a few months after the great exposition closed (and Cassatt’s mural was lost). We know of Cather’s admiration for mural painting, especially that

of Puvis de Chavannes. One would think the subject of Cassatt’s mural would have interested young Willa Cather, then a college senior who was working hard to become a “modern woman” herself. Another barely missed connection.

While a student at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, Cather had already begun writing about visual art. Reviewing a show at the 1894 Nebraska State Fair, she claimed, “We want men who can paint with emotion, not with words.” She contrasted those men with the “dear old ladies,” whose paintings were “fancy work on canvas” (Duryea 6). The one work by a woman that she praised at the State Fair show was a copy of a landscape by Camille Corot (a male Barbizon painter hugely admired in America) by Cora Parker, an art instructor at the university (*Kingdom of Art* 183). Throughout her writing life, although she made disparaging comments about such popular women’s arts as “fancy work” and china painting, Cather very seldom found occasions to notice or to admire, in print, paintings by women artists—not even by Mary Cassatt, widely recognized as the most distinguished American woman painter of her generation.

Yet these two working women artists had much in common. Both were also lifelong, avid consumers of art—whether on the stage, in galleries, or on the page. And both were surrounded by and closely observed women who were also such

consumers. The audiences Cassatt portrays at the Paris Opera, for example, are largely female; she focuses on how they see, or how they allow themselves to be seen (or not). Repeatedly, Willa Cather looks at women in similar situations.

We know that Cather had loved theater from childhood and attended regularly throughout her life, often with women friends. And theater was an important part of Cassatt’s life in Paris. “The Cassatts [Mary and her sister Lydia, and later their parents, who came to live with them in Paris in their last years] went to the theater once or twice a week. . . . And enjoyed virtually every type of performance” (Mathews 144). Louisine Havemeyer, who was a teenager when she first met Cassatt in Paris, remembered admiringly how Cassatt, without a male companion, managed the mechanics of theater-going with ease and finesse: “She took me to the [Paris] Opera where, without depleting our pockets, she



Street Singer (ca. 1862) by Edouard Manet, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; bequest of Sarah Choate Sears in memory of her husband, Joshua Montgomery Sears.



found a place where we could hear well and could enjoy the fine ballets . . . [from seats] in the front of a box” (270).

When Cassatt began painting in Paris in the 1870s, “the city was in a period of radical and rapid transformation. . . . Gas and later electric lighting . . . extend[ed] the possibilities of nighttime entertainment,” and fashion flourished. Cassatt and her sister Lydia “were always fashionably attired and clearly conversant with the city’s fashion magazines,” stores, and dressmakers (Barter 45). Theaters, now dazzlingly lit, offered a spectacle in the audience, as well as on the stage—a spectacle in which the starring players were usually women. Cassatt painted this scene at the Paris Opera

repeatedly in the late 1870s and early 80s. In *Woman with a Pearl Necklace in a Loge* (1879; see illustration on page 2), for example, the chandelier’s bright light bounces off the woman’s hair and flesh and the mirror behind her gives us an intimate view of her back, as well as the seated audience that she is facing and perhaps looking at. According to Judith Barter, “the fashionable women Cassatt painted expected to be watched or were so comfortable being watched that they could detach themselves from the viewer.” “The youthful subject” of this painting, Barter says, is “healthy, open, and unrestrained. . . . Confident in her golden, good looks, she is not merely on display. She does not invite our attention by looking at us directly; rather she draws us to her because she is clearly enjoying herself”

(50). Here, the brilliant reflected light and the bright palette (“shocking” to some of Cassatt’s contemporaries [Barter 51]) reveal a woman with lips expectantly parted, entirely at ease with the deep décolletage that partially reveals her breasts. Clearly, she is reveling in the possibilities of seeing and being seen.

In another Paris Opera painting, *The Loge* (1878–80; see illustration above), palette and mood are more subdued. These two young women, also spotlighted by a chandelier, are fully equipped for their parts in the spectacle: the flowers, the gloves, the

luxurious fabric and lace, the tight black ribbon above the wide expanse of perfect skin. Yet they are clearly uncomfortable: gravely unsmiling, fully aware that we are looking at them. Their eyes are narrowed, and they withhold their gaze from us. The woman on the right, lips firmly closed, seems frozen in her impeccable pose. Her companion holds her fan fully open, so that we are not permitted to see her lips or the upper half of her body. She uses the fan as it was intended, as an instrument by which she can edit our gaze at her.

Since 1975, much of our thinking about gaze has been influenced by Laura Mulvey’s famous essay, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” which argues that “in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly” (442). In these two loge paintings, the carefully calculated display of female beauty (and skin) acknowledges the gaze of men (with ease in the first picture, dis-ease in the second). But Cassatt’s women are looking themselves, viewing the spectacle of which they are a part. And of course they are also posing for the gaze of a woman artist. Robyn Warhol and Diane Herndl ask these fundamental questions: “Can a woman be represented without being objectified? Can a woman be the bearer of gaze, instead of or in addition to its object? Can the concept of the

gaze operate outside the heterosexual economy of men’s looks at women?” (427). These questions matter hugely to women who go to the theater and to museums. These activities, if fully experienced, require that they be “bearer[s] of gaze.”

Young Willa Cather knew about the necessity (and the pleasure) of dressing for the gaze when she made her first trip to Chicago in 1895, to hear grand opera. She bought new clothes—the requisite “opera cape” and a fantastic hat—for the occasion, and had herself photographed in them in Chicago, presenting



The Loge (1882) by Mary Cassatt, National Gallery of Art; Chester Dale Collection.

herself to the eye of the camera (see photograph on the right). But the eager, avid gleam in this young woman's eyes confirms that she possesses a gaze of her own, and her over-the-top enthusiastic published comments on her favorite opera in Chicago, Verdi's *Falstaff*, demonstrate what an active and attentive audience she was. *Falstaff*, she writes, "is a wonder, a marvel, a miracle. . . . Beside the wonderful beauty of the central themes and the still more wonderful management of them, there are a hundred little things," several of which she proceeds to describe with energetic enthusiasm (*Kingdom of Art* 214). This young woman apparently did not miss a one of those "hundred little things."

A brief scene from "Paul's Case" demonstrates that Cather was very aware of the gendered dynamics of gaze in a theater

audience. Paul's English teacher (recall that Cather herself was an English teacher in a Pittsburgh high school when this story was published), who has just administered mercilessly harsh discipline to her pupil Paul at school, attends a concert that night at Carnegie Hall, where Paul is an usher. "She betrayed some embarrassment when she handed Paul the tickets, and a *hauteur* which subsequently made her feel very foolish. Paul was startled for a moment, and had the feeling of wanting to put her out" (205). This woman is anxious about her appearance and manner as Paul shows her to her orchestra seat among an affluent, well-dressed audience. She is uncomfortable as a subject of male gaze, even that of Paul, who is quite comfortable in his role and is appropriately dressed in his well-fitting usher's uniform, which he considers "very becoming." A "model usher" (204), he feels free to scrutinize his teacher with scorn: "what business had she here among all these fine people and gay colours? He looked her over and decided that she was not appropriately dressed and must be a fool to sit downstairs in such togs. The tickets had probably been sent her out of kindness, he reflected, as he put down a seat for her, and she had about as much right to sit there as he had" (205). Paul, despite his ambiguous gender identity and his role as



Willa Cather in 1895, by the Morrison Studio in Chicago. WCPM/Willa Cather Foundation Collection, Nebraska State Historical Society.

servant to the "fine" and properly attired people who have the "right" to seats in Carnegie Hall, easily assumes the traditional prerogatives of privileged male gaze. He regards his teacher with scathing disdain to which he seems to feel entirely entitled.

Mary Cassatt frequently portrayed women who, "in a culture obsessed with looking," are claiming those prerogatives of gaze for themselves. According to Barter, "They could employ certain accoutrements to protect their privacy (and their reputations), while they gazed where they pleased: among these were opera glasses . . . veils, large hats, and fans" (50). In another painting, *In the Loge* (1878; see illustration on page 6), we are at a matinee in another theater Cassatt frequented. The central figure (like many of the other women in the audience) wears

black dress and hat, standard Parisian matinee attire (Zehnder 13), and displays all the expected accoutrements. Opera glasses, which, as Amanda T. Zehnder writes, "imply telescopic expansion of vision" (12), are in one hand; fan (folded but at the ready) is grasped in the other. Again, we see her in a loge, the seat of economic privilege.¹ This theatre is darker; a performance may be underway. The woman leans forward; every line of her body conveys the intensity with which she is looking. There is no lack of ease here; clearly this woman of indeterminate age (thought by some to be a Cassatt self-portrait [Zehnder 13]) is accustomed to claiming the gaze. According to Zehnder, in this and other female figures, Cassatt portrayed "women as social observers and agents of the public gaze" (12), legitimizing them as bearers of that gaze.

At the upper left of this picture, we see another figure using opera glasses, a man. His open and aggressive gaze, as he leans far forward, is directed toward the central woman. She shows no awareness or acknowledgement of that gaze; it is not interfering with her intense focus on whatever she is seeing through her own glasses. As Barter writes, "by including and, at the same time, minimizing the man, Cassatt raised the level of her female subject's independence. Freed from the need or desire to respond



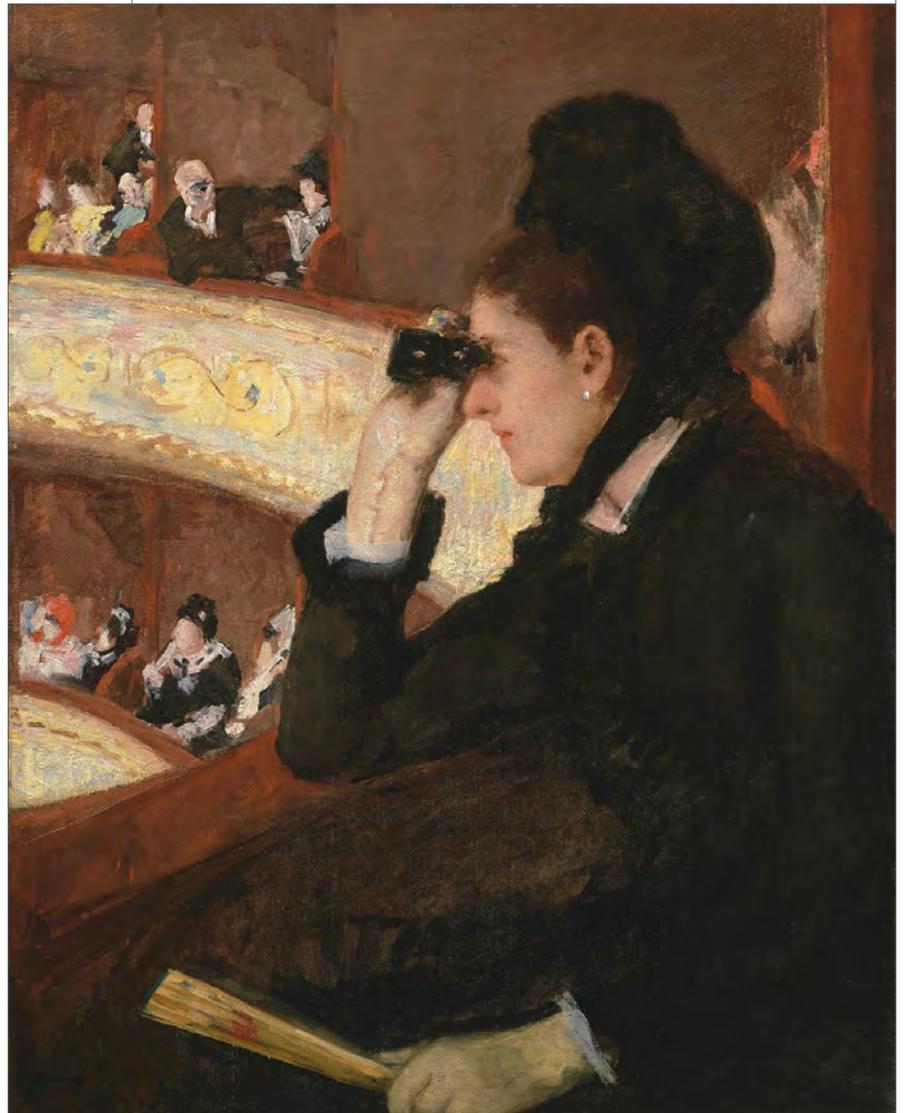
either to male interest or to us . . . Cassatt's theater-goer is self-sufficient and modern" (50).

In *Lucy Gayheart*, we see young Lucy in the process of becoming such a modern female concert-goer. In her first concert scene, she goes reluctantly, at her teacher's insistence, to hear a celebrated baritone, Clement Sebastian. Before he has sung a word, Lucy has begun to respond in a new, unaccustomed way, to both the man and the Schubert songs. "Lucy had never heard anything sung with such elevation of style." In it, "there was a kind of large enlightenment, like daybreak" (32). That breaking light awakens Lucy to a new kind of vision, "a discovery about life. . . . Some protecting barrier was gone—a window had been broken that let in the cold and darkness of the night" (33–34), as well as the full possibility and danger of human experience, both of art and of love. When Lucy goes to her second of Sebastian's concerts, her behavior is different. This time, like one of Cassatt's women, she dresses carefully and fashionably, with a "soft, light" new velvet opera cloak "about her bare arms and shoulders," and she takes a cab (39). She exchanges her seat, near her protective male teacher, "for one at the back of the house, in the shadow of a pillar, where she could feel very much alone" (40) and unobserved, to claim the full experience of the concert for herself. And she does so. But she is still the (reluctant) object of male gaze; her protective teacher easily locates her, and the next day Sebastian says, "I saw you in my audience last night, hiding behind a pillar" (43).

We last see Lucy in a theater when, after Sebastian's death, she goes with her family to hear *The Bohemian Girl* at Haverford's small town opera house. Lucy has been reclusive and reticent in her grief; this is the first time since her return that she has subjected herself to the full gaze of the town. To please her father, she dresses in her "new evening dress," and by his preference, they arrive early to see and be seen. When the curtain rises, Lucy gives the production the intense attention she has now learned to exercise, focusing on the aging soprano. "Her voice was worn . . . like her face." But "she gave the old songs, even the most hackneyed, their full value. . . . This poor little singer had lost everything. . . . And yet she sang so well! Lucy wanted to be up there on the stage with her, helping her do it. A wild kind of excitement flared up in her. . . . When she woke in the morning, it was still there, beating like another heart" (191–192). Because she has learned to be a present and passionate audience, the old opera is a transformative experience

for Lucy; it revives her flagging heart and gives her back her life. As Cather writes, she is "very nearly saved" by it (189).

One of Cather's best stories, "A Wagner Matinée," places us inside a first-person male gaze.² Clark, a young man who has acquired a veneer of Bostonian sophistication, observes his sixty-some-year-old Aunt Georgiana, a former music teacher at the Boston Conservatory, who has been a hard-laboring Nebraska farm wife since she married at thirty. When she returns to Boston for the first time, Clark treats her to a concert. Even before her arrival, he is obsessed with Georgiana's appearance; her very name calls up her "figure, at once pathetic and grotesque" (107). Once she arrives, Clark is concerned about how his landlady will react to his relative's appearance: her "soiled linen duster . . . [and] black stuff dress, whose ornamentation showed that she had surrendered herself unquestioningly into the hands of a country dressmaker She wore no stays, and her gown, which trailed unevenly behind, rose in a sort of a peak over her abdomen. She wore ill-



In the Loge (1878) by Mary Cassatt, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Hayden Collection—Charles Henry Hayden Fund.

fitting false teeth, and her skin was as yellow as a Mongolian's" (109). Georgiana does not resemble a figure that Cassatt might have painted in a loge at the Paris Opera. At the concert hall, Clark fears she will be embarrassed (as he seems to be) about her appearance. Surveying the concert audience, largely women, he sees them as he might see an impressionist painting:

One lost the contour of faces and figures . . . and there was only the color of bodices past counting, the shimmer of fabrics soft and firm, silky and sheer: red, mauve, pink, blue, lilac, purple, ecru, rose, yellow, cream, and white, all the colors that an impressionist finds in a sunlit landscape, with here and there

the dead shadow of a frock coat. My Aunt Georgiana regarded them as though they had been so many daubs of tube-paint on a palette. (111)

Clark places his embarrassingly ugly and dated aunt in a contemporary setting that recalls art he may have recently seen in a Boston museum or galleries.³ But his aunt, he thinks, can no longer see or hear new art; the colors that evoke impressionist painting to Clark are dead matter to her, "daubs of tube-paint."

Georgiana herself has been to the Paris Opera as a student, probably around the period when Cassatt painted it; she entertained Clark as a boy by telling him of operas she saw there. The black of her dress, at least, would have been entirely suitable for a Paris matinee in the 1870s. But we never perceive the Wagner matinee directly through her, as she may be juxtaposing it with her memories of Paris and Boston and her present life on the Nebraska farm. As the music begins, she responds intensely; her hands grope, her breath catches, and Clark sees that her "eyes were closed, but the tears were glistening on her cheeks" (113). The gaze he turns on his aunt, although sympathetic, is voracious. He watches her "closely" "in a fever of curiosity." In the first published version of the story, he demands at intermission, "do you get it, Aunt Georgiana, the astonishing structure of it all?" (*Everybody's Magazine* 328). When the music resumes, so does Clark's avid scrutiny. He is "still perplexed" and "wholly

unable to gauge" "what degree of musical comprehension was left to her." As "the deluge of sound poured on and on," Clark must admit that his gaze is unsatisfied: "I never knew what she found in the shining current of it; I never knew how far it bore her." When the sound ends and audience and then musicians

leave the hall, Georgiana sits still and silent. When Clark reminds her that they must do the expected thing and depart, she "burst into tears and sobbed pleadingly, 'I don't want to go, Clark, I don't want to go!'" Clark is certain that he understands this response. "For her, just outside the door of the concert hall" looms the aesthetic horror of the Nebraska farm he has escaped, with its flat landscape and turkeys

eating garbage outside the kitchen door (114–115). Does Georgiana see it this way? We will never know. The story delineates the impossibility for a male gaze, however intense and sympathetic, to penetrate this woman's vision. Georgiana's gaze, whatever it is, is another story.

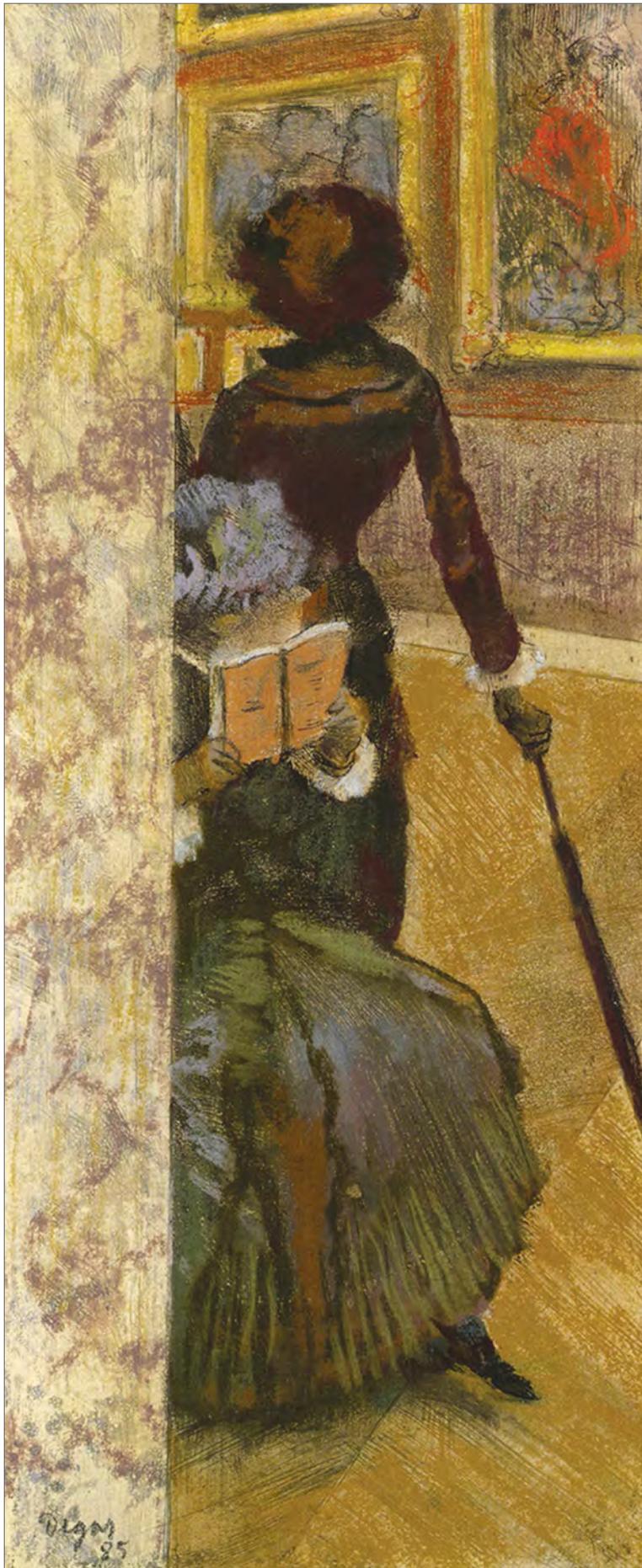
The subject of a Cassatt etching, *Lady in Black, in a Loge, Facing Right* (ca. 1880; see illustration above), recalls "A Wagner Matinée" in some ways. Again, we see a woman of late middle age, in a black dress. She appears to be alone, undisturbed by the scrutiny of an intrusive companion like Clark. She holds a fan so that it does not impede her vision but does partially hide her black dress. Although a woman in a loge would almost certainly have had opera glasses, she is not using them. Instead her head is tilted back slightly in an attitude of fully engaged, solitary listening. Cassatt gives this woman her space, her privacy, and her difference—as Clark could not quite do for Aunt Georgiana.

Commonalities between Cather and Cassatt, as they scrutinize women who are both objects and bearers of the gaze in theater settings, are striking. Both are also involved with representations of women contemplating visual art, in museums. Willa Cather shows us both Lucy Gayheart and Thea Kronborg of *The Song of the Lark* learning to turn their gaze on paintings at the Art Institute of Chicago, the first major American museum that Cather herself visited. When Lucy visits the Art Institute



Lady in Black, in a Loge, Facing Right (ca. 1880) by Mary Cassatt, National Gallery of Art; Rosenwald Collection.





Mary Cassatt at the Louvre: The Paintings Gallery (1885) by Edgar Degas, Art Institute of Chicago; bequest of Kate L. Brewster.

with her suitor Harry Gordon, it is obviously already a familiar place to her. In an “exhibit of French Impressionists,” Harry begins “pointing out figures that were not correctly drawn.” Lucy replies, “I don’t think it matters. I don’t know anything about pictures, but I think some are meant to represent objects, and others are meant to express a kind of feeling merely, and then accuracy doesn’t matter.”

“But anatomy is a fact,” he insisted, “and facts are at the bottom of everything.”

She . . . bent her head a little and spoke in a quiet voice. . . . “Are they, Harry? I’m not so sure.” (107–108)

Harry, who confidently presents himself as a practical banker-businessman, speaks for the primacy of “facts” in painting. But Lucy’s response is more exploratory; she is “not so sure” as her confidently single-minded companion. She recognizes her own ignorance “about pictures,” but she is groping for a vocabulary to express what she is learning to see, and she is beginning to develop a discriminating gaze of her own.

Despite his blunt certainty in this exchange, Harry is silently sympathetic to Lucy’s response; “something in her tone had made him feel very tenderly toward her” (108). This is his second annual trip to Chicago for a week of opera with Lucy, and he enjoys and values the music, the museum, and other pleasures of the city, as well as her company. Although his blunt assertions in the museum are conventionally “masculine” in the aggressively “active” mode that Mulvey describes, he sometimes sympathizes with and perhaps even desires a more “feminine” posture. Like the young women in Cassatt’s loge pictures, Harry is very concerned about presenting himself properly in Chicago. Unknown to Lucy, he arrives in the city three days before he presents himself to her. “He had written his tailor to have two suits ready for the last fitting, and he made no calls until these were sent to his hotel. He wanted to wear exactly what well-dressed men in Chicago were wearing” (103–104). Fashion matters to Harry, as it does to the women at the Paris Opera, but this is a concern that he keeps secret to protect his masculine image. He values the responsive gaze that Lucy is developing as a concert and museum goer, and looks forward to opportunities to share that responsiveness without endangering his masculinity: “There was a part of himself that Harry was ashamed to live out in the open (he hated a sentimental man), but he could live it through Lucy. She would be his excuse for doing a great many pleasant things he wouldn’t do on his own account” (114). Through Harry—who became the most interesting figure in *Lucy Gayheart* for her—Cather began to explore how problematic the conventions of gendered gaze could be for such

a man, as well as for women. Although Harry recognizes and even values a part of himself that he considers “feminine,” he will not let that self speak. Even in his proposal of marriage to Lucy, he uses the unsentimental, businesslike language of “facts” that he spoke to her at the museum: “And now isn’t it time we got down to business? . . . Why waste any more time? This is April; I should think we might be married in May” (115).

When young Thea Kronborg visits the Art Institute during her first year in Chicago, always alone, she is already more confident and self-possessed than Lucy Gayheart will ever be. She first goes rather indifferently, urged by her landladies, but the museum soon becomes a “retreat” to her, like those of her Western childhood, “a place in which she could relax and play,” as she “could hardly ever play now” (218). She spends some time studying the plaster casts that constitute most of the museum’s sculpture collection, but her enthusiasm is clearly for the paintings. “It was with a lightening of the heart, a feeling of throwing off the old miseries and old sorrows of the world, that she ran up the wide staircase to see the pictures.” Although she has several favorites, “the thing she ran upstairs so fast to see” is “her picture,” Jules Breton’s *The Song of the Lark*. “The flat country, the morning light, the wet fields, the look in the girl’s heavy face—well, they were all hers. . . . She told herself that that picture was ‘right.’ . . . To her the word covered the almost boundless satisfaction she felt when she looked at the picture” (219–220). Unlike Lucy, who is “not so sure” as she tries to articulate her thoughts about paintings, Thea is absolutely certain about *The Song of the Lark*, and she has found the single word—“right”—that expresses her feelings. Cather never portrays Thea as being aware of the many other visitors at the museum, who are turning their gazes upon the pictures and perhaps also upon her—as the young women in Cassatt’s loge pictures clearly are aware of being scrutinized. Instead, when Thea is “at play” in the Art Institute, she revels in the singularity and certainty of her own gaze.

Significantly, the novel’s account of Thea’s experiences at the Art Institute is followed directly by her attendance at the revelatory concert at which she hears Dvořák’s *New World Symphony* for the first time, followed by selections from Wagner’s *Das Rheingold*, her introduction to “that troubled music . . . that was to flow through so many years of her life” (222) as a diva. She emerges from the concert hall into a violent thunderstorm, jostled by other rushing pedestrians who make her aware of “the congestion . . . the brutality and power of those streams that flowed in the streets, threatening to drive one under.” She is the object of male gaze, and two men approach her as a prostitute. In the midst of this, Thea is still absorbed by the powerful “ecstasy” of the concert; she rebuffs the men impatiently, with



Willa Sibert Cather (1936) by Carl Van Vechten, gelatin silver print, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; ©Carl Van Vechten Trust.

“Oh, let me *alone!*” She sees them all as enemies of her own emergent gaze, by which she has experienced this revelatory new music. At the museum, we saw her at “play,” unobserved and enjoying childlike freedom to exercise her own gaze. Now she realizes that she must fight to claim and to name her own aesthetic experience:

They might trample her to death, but they should never have it. As long as she lived, that ecstasy was going to be hers. . . . She could hear the crash of the orchestra again, and she rose on the brasses. She would have it, what the trumpets were singing! She would have it, have it,—it! Under the old cape she pressed her hands upon her heaving bosom, that was a little girl’s no longer. (223–224)

Cather’s juxtaposition of the childlike, playful Thea at the Art Institute with this passionate woman of the “heaving bosom,” who is defiantly determined to have “it” and to claim the full possibilities of art, is telling. Unlike the happy girl at the museum, this embattled woman is recognizing the full cost of being a bearer of the gaze.





Mary Stevenson Cassatt (1880–84) by Edgar Degas, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; gift of the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation and the Regents' Major Acquisitions Fund.

As a painter and an advisor of wealthy collectors such as the Havemeyers, Mary Cassatt was a frequent visitor to museums and galleries all over Europe. Her friend and colleague Edgar Degas, not usually an admirer of women artists or critics, made an exception of Cassatt, whom he respected and admired, in an extraordinary series, *Mary Cassatt at the Louvre*, for which she and her sister Lydia posed. Cassatt was at the height of her career when she posed for Degas's Louvre series; she was exhibiting with him in the series of impressionist exhibits in Paris. She had never been a professional model and is not known to have posed for any other painters. Posing was a demand on her limited time, and she may have also considered it demeaning. Yet she committed herself (and her invalid sister) to posing for this series and for several other works by Degas. Louisine Havemeyer asked her if she had posed for him often and Cassatt replied: "Oh no. . . . Only once in a while when he finds the movement difficult and the model cannot seem to get his idea" (Havemeyer 258). She seems to consider her modeling for Degas as an act of collaboration with a colleague. As a practicing artist, she could "get his idea" and assist in its execution. She must have seen Degas's depiction of her, as most critics have,

as a confirmation of her own assured and professional gaze. In Paris, Cassatt's "gender and her class restricted the kinds of public spaces she could visit within the bounds of propriety. The Louvre, however, was a common space both artists could share equally as peers" (Jones, "A Much Finer Curve" 89). Cassatt was sometimes erroneously considered a student and follower of Degas's, a view she vigorously protested. Recent scholarship on the two has confirmed her view: "Cassatt was no mere student of Degas, but a peer who displayed a confidence and facility on a par with his own. Theirs was a true artistic dialogue" (Jones, "Introduction" xv).

Thus I propose that we consider the Louvre images a collaborative work that celebrates Mary Cassatt, in a museum setting, as a consummately confident bearer of the gaze. In *Mary Cassatt at the Louvre: The Paintings Gallery* (1885; see illustration on page 8) as in all the images in this series, we see her only from the back. Yet her posture clearly conveys the discrimination and assurance with which she is intently looking, balanced confidently on her umbrella. Kimberly A. Jones notes that "the figure's carriage was sufficiently distinctive to be recognized by at least one contemporary." The umbrella she holds, chosen instead of a "conventionally feminine" parasol, "reinforces the figure's air of confidence and independence, but also reflects Cassatt's character. . . . She wields it with all the brio of a dandy with a walking stick" ("A Much Finer Curve" 88–89). Her seated sister Lydia, more elaborately dressed, has a timid and tentative gaze. She relies on her (guide?)book, using it almost as she might use a fan. The sisters take similar poses in another of the Louvre images, *Mary Cassatt at the Louvre: The Etruscan Gallery*, which shows them, two famously proper single women, regarding the statue of an enigmatically smiling Etruscan couple, whose embracing nude bodies express perfect physical harmony and ease.⁴ Here Lydia's hunched posture is even more conventionally tentative, even a bit cowering; Mary displays her same cool assurance. Degas clearly admires her discriminating and unflinching gaze.

Cassatt was one of the few early admirers of his paintings of nude women, one of which she proudly owned and displayed. After Degas's death, six years before her own at 82, Cassatt asked her friend Louisine Havemeyer to buy this picture and the two others she owned by Degas, saying, "If you don't take them of course they will be sold as no one in the family can understand them" (Shackelford 139). As an old woman, Cassatt was still quite aware of the singularity of her keen vision and wanted to protect a treasured picture from the limitations of her Philadelphia heirs. Cather, too, laments in several letters that only a few, if any, of her family members share her vision and value her work. In one such late letter, written in 1940, she

told her brother Roscoe that he was “the only one in my family who cares a damn. I never used to mind that, but as one grows older one wishes there were some one of one’s blood kin who was deeply interested” (*Selected Letters* 588). Cassatt turned to her closest woman peer, Havemeyer, who bought the Degas painting. Thanks to her, we can see it now at the Met. Cather chose not a family member but her partner and peer, Edith Lewis (to whom we also owe thanks), as her literary executor.

Final evidence of the commonalities of these two great American women artists is apparent at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington. The Gallery

owns two photographs of Cather. One is the familiar Steichen image, in the middy blouse. The other, by Carl Van Vechten, is far less familiar and less engaging (see photograph on page 9). But, as much as any I have seen, this photograph highlights the directness and intensity of Cather’s unflinching gaze. The Gallery displays two Cassatt portraits. One is a watercolor *Self-Portrait* of 1880 (see illustration on the right). Reserved, with perfect posture, and perfectly dressed with beribboned hat and lacy cuffs, she does not regard us directly. A piece of work is lightly indicated at the corner of the picture. But the artist cannot be working on it. Not in these clothes, in this pose.

This delicate and ladylike self-portrait indicates Cassatt’s reluctance to go public with the full facts of her working artist self. The other Cassatt portrait—the greatest portrait of an American woman artist that I know—is an unfinished painting by Edgar Degas, *Mary Stevenson Cassatt* (1880–84; see illustration on page 10), from the same period as the Cassatt *Self-Portrait*. She is pictured in a studio, probably Degas’s. Again, there is the hat, tied with a ribbon. But this is clearly a working, thinking artist. She leans forward, perhaps in conversation, and her sleeves are pushed up to reveal her capable, practiced hands. She holds photographs (which she sometimes used as working tools), fanned like a suite of cards. Her face is mobile; her blue eyes are intent and engaged. This is not the portrait of a lady. It is the portrait of an artist, fully engaged in her game.

Degas’s portrait of Cassatt hung prominently in her home for years. But in 1912 she decided to sell it and wrote to her

dealer: “I certainly don’t want to leave it with my family as being of me. It has artistic qualities but it is painful and depicts me as such a repugnant person . . . I don’t want anyone to know that I posed for it” (Jones, “A Much Finer Curve” 96). I am reminded of a letter Cather wrote to her mother in 1931, apologizing for a published portrait of herself: “I’m sorry that horrible picture of me got onto the front page of the magazine called ‘Time,’ but I couldn’t help it” (*Selected Letters* 450). For a woman born into a nineteenth century American family, claiming and acknowledging the full possibilities of her identity and her gaze as an artist could be both difficult and “painful,” as Cassatt says. Although the two women never met, this is yet another of the connections that Mary Cassatt and Willa Cather shared.



Mary Cassatt *Self-Portrait* (ca. 1880), National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.

NOTES

1. “Loges were extremely expensive and exclusive. Cassatt situated her woman in at least the second tier of balconies, implying elevated social status” (Zehnder 13).

2. Cather received criticism from Nebraska family and friends for her characterization of Aunt Georgiana (apparently based on her Aunt Franc Cather) and the rigors of early Nebraska after “A Wagner Matinée” was first published in 1904. Cather revised the story significantly in subsequent

published versions, progressively softening the portrayal of Aunt Georgiana and making Clark’s scrutiny of her less aggressive. The first magazine version and the first revision, which was published in *The Troll Garden* in 1905, are most pertinent to this essay.

3. Willa Cather herself probably heard talk of such “new” art at the Boston home of Annie Fields, which she first visited in 1908. In “148 Charles Street,” her memoir of Fields, she recalled that Fields was “not in the least dashed” by the advent of Cubist painting: “the Cubists weren’t any queerer than Manet and the Impressionists were when they first came to Boston, and people used to run in for tea and ask her whether she had ever heard of such a thing as ‘blue snow’” (67).

4. To view this image online, go to <http://www.artic.edu>. Click on “Collections, Works of Art” and search for *Mary Cassatt at the Louvre: The Etruscan Gallery*.



WORKS CITED

- Barter, Judith A. "Mary Cassatt: Themes, Sources, and the Modern Woman." *Mary Cassatt: Modern Woman*. Edited by Judith A. Barter, Art Institute of Chicago, 1998, 49–108.
- Cassatt, Mary. *Cassatt and her Circle: Selected Letters*. Edited by Nancy Mowll Mathews, Abbeville Press, 1984.
- . *In the Loge*. 1878. Oil on canvas. Museum of Fine Arts, Philadelphia.
- . *Lady in Black in a Loge, Facing Right*. 1880. Soft ground etching, National Gallery of Art, Washington.
- . *The Loge*. 1878–80. Oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington.
- . *Self-Portrait*. National Portrait Gallery, Washington.
- . *Woman with a Pearl Necklace in a Loge*. 1879. Oil on canvas, Philadelphia Museum of Art.
- Cather, Willa. *The Kingdom of Art: Willa Cather's First Principles and Critical Statements, 1892–1896*. Edited by Bernice Slote, University of Nebraska Press, 1966.
- . *Lucy Gayheart*. 1935. Willa Cather Scholarly Edition. Historical Essay by David Porter, Explanatory Notes by Kari A. Ronning and David Porter, Textual Essay and editing by Frederick M. Link and Kari A. Ronning, University of Nebraska Press, 2015.
- . "148 Charles Street." *Not Under Forty*. Knopf, 1936, 52–75.
- . "Paul's Case." *Youth and the Bright Medusa*. 1920. Willa Cather Scholarly Edition. Historical Essay and Explanatory Notes by Mark J. Madigan, Textual Essay and editing by Frederick M. Link, Charles W. Mignon, Judith Boss, and Kari A. Ronning, University of Nebraska Press, 2009, 199–234.
- . *The Selected Letters of Willa Cather*. Edited by Andrew Jewell and Janis Stout, Knopf, 2013.
- . *The Song of the Lark*. 1915. Willa Cather Scholarly Edition. Historical Essay and Explanatory Notes by Ann Moseley and Kari A. Ronning, Textual Essay and editing by Kari A. Ronning, University of Nebraska Press, 2012.
- . "A Wagner Matinée." *Everybody's Magazine*, 10 (March 1904): 325–328. *The Willa Cather Archive*. Edited by Andrew Jewell, University of Nebraska–Lincoln.
- . "A Wagner Matinee." *The Troll Garden*. 1905. New American Library, 1984, 107–115.
- Degas, Edgar. *Mary Cassatt at the Louvre: The Paintings Gallery*. 1885. Pastel, over etching, aquatint, drypoint, and crayon électrique on tan wove paper, Art Institute of Chicago.
- . *Mary Cassatt at the Louvre: The Etruscan Gallery*. 1879–80. Soft ground etching, dry point, aquatint, and etching on cream wove Japanese paper, Art Institute of Chicago.
- . *Mary Stevenson Cassatt*. 1880–84. Oil on canvas. National Portrait Gallery, Washington.
- Duryea, Polly P. "Paintings and Drawings in Willa Cather's Prose: A Catalogue Raisonné." Dissertation, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, 1993.
- Havemeyer, Louisine W. *Sixteen to Sixty: Memoirs of a Collector*. Edited by Susan Alyson Stein, Ursus, 1993.
- Jones, Kimberly A. "'A Much Finer Curve': Identity and Representation in Degas's Depictions of Cassatt." *Degas Cassatt*. Edited by Kimberly A. Jones, National Gallery of Art, 2014, 86–99.
- . "Introduction." *Degas Cassatt*. Ed. Kimberly A. Jones. National Gallery of Art, 2014, xiii–xv.
- Manet, Edouard. *Street Singer*. About 1862. Oil on canvas. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
- Mathews, Nancy Mowll. *Mary Cassatt: A Life*. Yale University Press, 1994.
- Moseley, Ann. Historical Essay and Explanatory Notes. Cather, *The Song of the Lark*. 549–809.
- Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*. Edited by Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl, Rutgers University Press, 1997, 438–448.
- Rabinow, Rebecca A. "The Suffrage Exhibition of 1915." Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen, et al. *Splendid Legacy: The Havemeyer Collection*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1993, 89–98.
- Shackelford, George T. M. "Pas de deux: Mary Cassatt and Edgar Degas." *Mary Cassatt: Modern Woman*. Edited by Judith A. Barter, Art Institute of Chicago, 1998, 109–144.
- Tinterow, Gary. "The Havemeyer Pictures." *Splendid Legacy: The Havemeyer Collection*. Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen, et al, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1993, 3–93.
- Van Vechten, Carl. *Willa Sibert Cather*. 1936. Photograph, National Portrait Gallery, Washington.
- Warhol, Robyn R. and Diane Price Herndl, "Gaze." *Feminisms: an Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*. Edited by Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl, Rutgers University Press, 1997, 427–429.
- Willa Cather*. 1895. Photograph. Willa Cather Foundation–Nebraska State Historical Society, Red Cloud and Lincoln, Nebraska.
- Zehnder, Amanda T. "Forty Years of Artistic Exchange." *Degas Cassatt*. Edited by Kimberly A. Jones, National Gallery of Art, 2–19.



The Willa Cather Foundation Art Collection

We are pleased to feature selections from the Cather Foundation's art holdings, a small but growing collection begun some years ago with works acquired by our founder Mildred Bennett. The importance of our collection has grown since then, and the collection's role and function have evolved. If our early acquisitions primarily complemented Cather's work and recognized her passion for the fine arts, the collection took on greater prominence when the Red Cloud Opera House opened in 2003 with its gallery and abundant display opportunities. These spaces have allowed us to display our own collection and host numerous exhibits, including new work inspired by a single Cather novel, student art, and exhibits organized by the Museum of Nebraska Art. Now, with the opening of the National Willa Cather Center, in addition to having more exhibit space, we also have a fine facility to house our collection.

The scope of the collection is broad, including folk art and decorative works as well as fine art. The collection includes works with a direct connection to Willa Cather (art she owned, original illustrations from her books, depictions of her and places she lived) and works, mostly by regional artists, that are concerned with similar themes, locations, and people as those that appear in Willa Cather's work. There is considerable overlap



Willa Cather's Bedroom. Photograph, 1972. Lucia Woods, Chicago. Gift of the artist.

between the art collection and the Foundation's book, archival, and museum collections: a fine book is a work of art, a family quilt is both a museum object and art, a hand-lettered document is both archival and artistic. The art collection is an important part of our mission to encourage increased understanding and appreciation of the life, times, settings, and works of Willa Cather. Unfortunately, due to space limitations this feature

includes only a few of the collection's treasures. We will be sharing more of our works in future issues.

Special thanks to Tracy Tucker, Education Director and Archivist for the Willa Cather Foundation, who provided valuable assistance with this feature.



Scene After Tornado. Watercolor, undated. Grant Reynard (b. 1887, Grand Island, Nebraska; d. 1968, Leonia, New Jersey). Gift of the artist, 1958. WCPM/Willa Cather Foundation Collection, Nebraska State Historical Society.



On the Visual within Willa Cather

Mary Linnea Vaughan

I was a slow reader when young. My parents worried about my ability to learn. One summer day, my mother, an ardent literary person, began reading *Lucy Gayheart* out loud to me. I began asking questions, eventually taking the hard-bound book from her; I did not put it down until I finished the last page. Willa Cather's novel left me dumbfounded. Some experiences form us and change our lives. This book and what it conjured up in my young imagination put the idea of "artist" and what that might mean in front of me before I was thirteen.

My life is about painting. I walk through the world, convinced that what pays my bills is secondary to my choices about how to live. Ironically, the more I work, instead of overthinking the risks involved, I find that the artistic process thrives. Meanings beyond the composition call me onward like a kind of "obscure destiny."

For me, Cather is a picture-maker. She is an unexpected visual artist with words. She astounds me with her descriptions of land, the poignancy she captures within a moment, and the way she lights a scene with color, space, mood, and even tactile texture. The art within her stories transcends the material. It is hard to define but undeniably present. Readers feel her art as much as they see it.

Because Cather was deeply rooted to the visual, it makes sense for the Willa Cather Foundation to collect and curate fine art. Recalling that Cather scrutinized the world with intensity, we should set the bar high in terms of art when educating others toward the full Cather experience. (I imagine her ghost with a grumpy, bothered look if we choose mediocrity.)

There was a time when I wanted to leave Nebraska for more of a cultural hub to build my artistic life. Like many of her characters, Cather dealt with her own love/hate relationship with the prairie and with Nebraska. In the end, notions of the artful have little to do with a particular place. Art begins as seedlings do, inside the artist, and the exterior world serves mainly to shape and extend those tender, meaningful—and powerful—forces involved in creating.

The profound can be found in one's own backyard or in the nuances of any life, anywhere. Sensitivity grows from the less obvious instead of the thing shouting. Cather's gift is



Prairie Vista, acrylic on canvas, 2005. Mary Linnea Vaughan, Hastings, Nebraska, and Santa Rosa, California. Gift of the artist following a residency at the Cather Foundation in 2004.

teaching us how to *see* wherever we are. By offering the world a glimpse into fine literature and its creator (a woman who seems more Renaissance than Midwestern), Red Cloud, Nebraska offers a valuable benefit to any serious maker of art. This ongoing legacy encourages artists—and all people—to build constructive lives through aesthetics, which often leads to the analytical as much as the visual. The Cather legacy of both the written word and fine art has the potential to civilize. More than any other mode of expanding one's view of the broad world, art shapes awareness. The ordinary becomes the magnificent.

It is a deep truth that great art expands all things. Many authors and other artists have admired Cather and still do. I once sat by the aging Eudora Welty, who came to Catherland when I was a child. She had an unusual face, I recall, and smiled at me as she offered me a stick of gum. Her short story "Why I Live at the P.O." would later amaze me as I felt the resonance of her art.

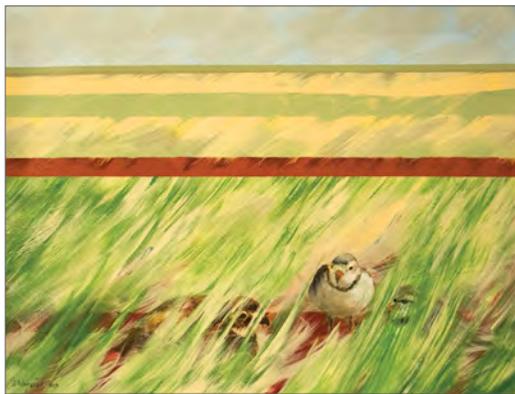
Join me in support of literature being one of many things, seen and unseen, we bring to the plate or the palette. Grateful for the fortitude of those who devote themselves to passionate endeavors, we affirm the promise that art lives in all of us. I like to think we are all somehow within the painting by Jean-François Millet (an artist Cather admired) called *The Angelus*: two field peasants hear the village bells and bow their heads for a brief homage to abundance, but somehow also to labor and strife. Like the process of art itself, "the road is all," not the destination, an understanding which connects us to the infinite movement and curiosity within the art of being fully human.



From the Collection

Willa Cather purchased several Piranesi prints for the home she and Edith Lewis shared at 5 Bank Street in Greenwich Village. Lewis wrote in *Willa Cather Living: A Personal Record* that Cather “discovered some fine Piranesis at a little print shop which was selling out its wares—she was very much pleased by this find, I remember, and considered them a great treasure.” Cather alludes to this image in “Old Mrs. Harris,” when Vickie notices “the dark engraving of the pointed cypresses and the Roman tomb” hanging in the Rosen home.

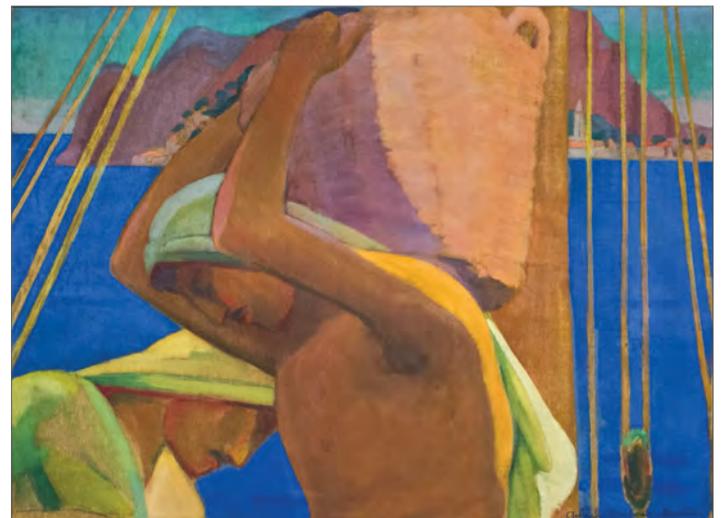
“She had felt as if her heart were hiding down there, somewhere, with the quail and the plover and all the little wild things that crooned or buzzed in the sun.”
—*O Pioneers!*



Acrylic on canvas, 2013. Antoinette Turnquist, Omaha, Nebraska. Gift of the artist.



Avanzi di un antico Sepolcro, oggi detto la Conocchia . . . (Remains of an ancient tomb, today called La Conocchia . . .). Print of engraved etching, ca. 1800. Giovanni Battista Piranesi (b. 1720, Mogliano, Veneto, Italy; d. 1778, Rome). Originally the property of Willa Cather and Edith Lewis; gift of Doug and Charlene Hoschouer.



Water-Carriers (ca. 1918) and image of unknown name (ca. 1921), two-sided oil on canvas. Achsah Barlow Brewster (b. 1878, New Haven, Connecticut; d. 1945, Almora, India). Gift of James and Angela Southwick.

Achsah Barlow and Edith Lewis were roommates at Smith College; their lifelong friendship also included artist Earl Brewster, whom Barlow married, and Willa Cather. Cather and Lewis purchased various works by the Brewsters for themselves or as gifts. This work, which is particularly noteworthy because images are painted on the two sides of the canvas, was purchased by Edith Lewis and hung in the Park Avenue apartment where Lewis and Cather lived.





On Lovely Creek. Oil on canvas, 1979. John Blake Bergers (b. 1931, Omaha, Nebraska; d. 2011, Lindsborg, Kansas). Gift of the artist. This is one of numerous Bergers works featuring Cather sites in and around Red Cloud.

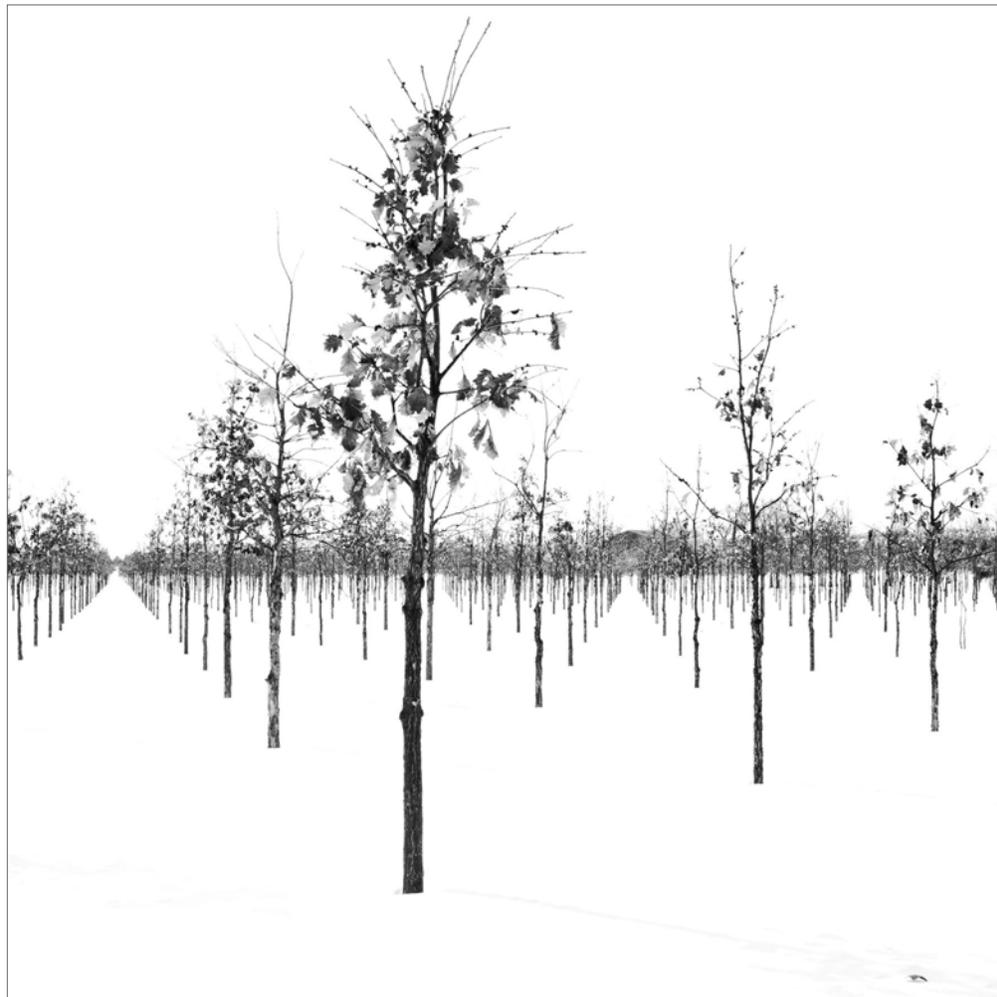


Left: *Low Window*. Graphite, found paper and bookboard collage, 2015. Right: *Når Mitt Øie, Trett Av Møie*. Graphite on found paper collage, 2013. Travis Hincey, Chadron, Nebraska. Gifts of the artist.





Untitled watercolors of scenes in Grand Manan, New Brunswick, Canada. Edith Lewis (b. 1881, Lincoln, Nebraska; d. 1972, New York City). The painting on the left is a gift of Doug and Charlene Hoschouer (originally given to them by Helen Cather Southwick). The painting on the right, showing the cabin Lewis and Cather shared, is a gift of James and Angela Southwick.



Nebraska Nursery, Winter. Photograph, 2016. David McCleery, Lincoln, Nebraska. Gift of the artist.



During the renovation of the Red Cloud Opera House, a number of historic performance posters were found on the walls; great pains were taken to preserve what could be removed. The pianist John William “Blind” Boone played Red Cloud at least twice—January 19, 1889, and again December 5, 1897. Of the later performance, the *Red Cloud Chief* writes, “The coming of Blind Boone and his associates to the opera house on last Saturday evening elicited a warm welcome from music lovers. As on former occasions the house was well filled by an appreciative and well behaved audience. Boone, with his renderings on the piano, and Miss Stella in her singing brought out round after round of applause” (Dec. 10, 1897).



Poster for an appearance by “Blind Boone” (John William Boone, 1864–1927) at the Red Cloud Opera House.



Untitled watercolor of a winter scene, undated. Linda Stych, Conifer, Colorado. Gift of the artist (who grew up in Red Cloud).



Birthplace of Willa Cather. Limited edition print, 2008. William A. Gura, Winter Park, Florida. Gift of Ann Romines.

The Willa Cather Foundation encourages appropriate gifts of art and donations of funds for the purchase of important additions to the collection. The opportunity to view art is one more reason Red Cloud and the National Willa Cather Center are must-see destinations for scholars, tourists, tour groups, students, and others.

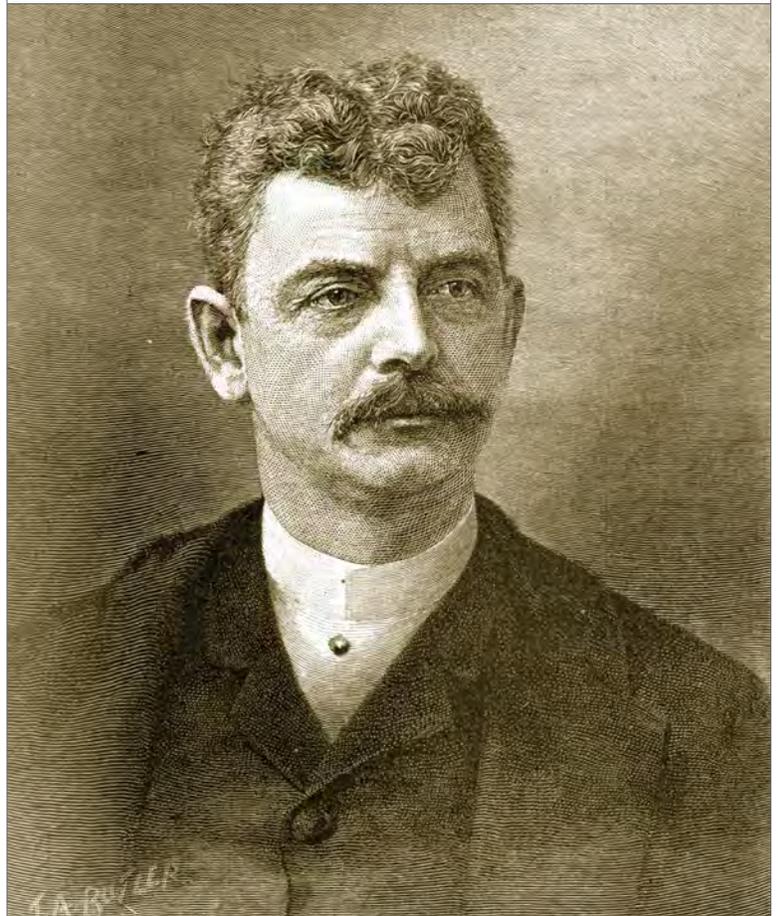
Regarding “Art-less Pittsburgh,” C. S. Reinhart’s *Washed Ashore*, and “The Sculptor’s Funeral”

Timothy W. Bintrim | Saint Francis University

In her publisher’s foreword to *The World and the Parish*, Virginia Faulkner insists that “Willa Cather’s journalistic writings deserve attention in their own right,” but she concedes that “their chief interest to the general reader and their peculiar value to the scholar reside in their manifold and crucial connections with her later work” (xv). Read alongside her better-known fiction, Faulkner adds, Cather’s journalism illustrates “whence came the raw material and which were the influences that endured” as well as “the development of ideas and the refining of style” (xv). This essay focuses on one such enduring influence dating from her first autumn in Pittsburgh: illustrator Charles Stanley Reinhart’s funeral at the First Presbyterian Church on September 1, 1896. The funeral profoundly touched multiple strands of Cather’s developing artistry: the topic of death, which would be a recurring theme in her literature and letters; her complex, ambivalent feelings about Pittsburgh, which extended to Nebraska as well; her developing awareness of what it means to be an artist; and her fears of living—and dying—in obscurity. I contend she revised Reinhart’s story through successive genres, like a painter working through preliminary sketches before taking up the brush. She began with a profile written under a pseudonym in the October 1896 *Home Monthly*, added fictional riffs in “The Passing Show” column she wrote for the *Lincoln Courier* the following October; tried poetry in 1901¹; and settled upon a short story set in Kansas, “The Sculptor’s Funeral,” published in slightly different versions in *McClure’s Magazine* and *The Troll Garden* in 1905 and in *Youth and the Bright Medusa* in 1920.

Scholars risk introducing (or repeating) error if they assume that all of her experiments presented as journalism are factual; this is especially the case for “The Passing Show” columns written for the *Lincoln Courier* during the fall of 1897 after she resigned from the *Home Monthly* and came back to Pittsburgh intending to write dramatic criticism for the *Pittsburg Leader*. She employed her considerable talent for satire and melodrama in “The Passing Show” to entertain her Lincoln readers with embellished tales of Pittsburghers’ follies that are mixtures of fiction and journalism. For example, scholars have accepted her October 23, 1897, “The Passing Show” column as a straightforward account of

Pittsburgh’s neglect of C. S. Reinhart, the city’s great artist, but comparisons with her earlier profile in the *Home Monthly* and the journalistic record show that the column is neither objective nor factually true. It misrepresents Reinhart’s reputation in his home city before and after his death, elides facts of his childhood, and fabricates tensions with friends and family. These inconsistencies have gone unnoticed because William Curtin omitted the *Home Monthly*’s “Charles Stanley Reinhart” from *The World and the Parish* in 1970, and it has not been reprinted since, while “The Passing Show” version, readily available in Curtin’s anthology, has been widely cited. The fictional embellishments of “The Passing Show” are more than experiments with tone and perspective; they introduce two themes that Cather further developed in “The Sculptor’s Funeral”: first, artists are born in the most unlikely and



Charles Stanley Reinhart. This image accompanied Henry James’s “Charles S. Reinhart” in the June 14, 1890 *Harper’s Weekly*.





Photogravure Goupil & Co

C. S. Reinhart's *Washed Ashore* in a Goupil & Co. photogravure originally published in *Recent Ideals of American Art*, with text by George William Sheldon; D. Appleton and Co., 1890.

uncongenial environments; and second, artists so born can expect little understanding and less honor at home. Nine years after Reinhart's funeral, when composing "The Sculptor's Funeral," she remembered C. S. Reinhart's most famous painting, *Washed Ashore*, and drew inspiration from it for archetypal characters with which to people her story (see illustration above).

In *The World and the Parish*, Curtin cites a profile of Reinhart by "Lawrence Brinton" in the October 1896 *Home Monthly* (510) but does not identify Brinton as Cather,² although the *Home Monthly* piece shares whole sentences with her October 23, 1897, "Passing Show" column. This is a rare mistake in Curtin's herculean undertaking of packing about half of the five hundred articles and reviews then known to be Cather's into two dense volumes totaling almost a thousand pages. Ten years later, Kathleen Byrne and Richard Snyder identified Cather as the author of the *Home Monthly* profile (7, 98), an identification since confirmed by Polly Duryea (254) and the editors of the Willa Cather Archive.

Like other scholars interested in Cather's journalism, I owe a debt to Curtin's anthology even as I grumble at its thematic organization and its fragmentations and elisions of columns. Specifically, I disagree with Curtin's claim in his editor's preface that "The Passing Show" was more "thoughtfully and carefully composed" than the original articles and reviews written for audiences in Pittsburgh (xxi). Too often "The Passing Show" sacrifices factual accuracy for comedy. What is more, her Lincoln audience's physical distance from Pittsburgh encouraged Cather to fudge what she did not know. To cite just one example, reviewing the homecoming concert of Ethelbert Nevin, she claims he was a younger brother of the owners of the *Leader*, her employers (*The World and the Parish* 533). Actually, Theodore and Joseph Nevin were uncles, not elder brothers of the composer, yet Curtin accepts her statement as fact in his prefatory comments (532). So it may be better to think of "The Passing Show" as a laboratory for mixed-genre writing, not as a portfolio of Cather's best reporting. This distinction is especially

pertinent to her October 23, 1897, “The Passing Show” column describing Reinhart’s memorial service.

Appearing in the same column as a broad send-up of Pittsburgh’s horse show (a clue obfuscated by fragmentation of this column in Curtin’s anthology), her reflections upon Reinhart’s funeral are more decorous in tone than her lampoon of Pittsburgh’s equestrian class, but are nonetheless satirical in blaming the poor attendance at Reinhart’s burial upon Pittsburghers’ disdain of achievement in any endeavor but business. She claims that “not a hundred people” attended, writing, “I never knew the emptiness of fame until I went to that great man’s funeral. I never knew how entirely one must live and die alone until that day when they brought Stanley Reinhart home” (*The World and the Parish* 512). These lines are fine poetry, but dubious reportage. The Reinharts were an old and distinguished family in Pittsburgh, and the funeral was held at the First Presbyterian Church, the city’s oldest, largest, and wealthiest congregation. Reinhart’s sister Laura had served First Church as soprano soloist for almost three decades. In 1867, she married the church’s organist, Charles Chauncey Mellor, owner of the city’s premier music store, which advertised Steinway pianos on the contents page of the October 1896 *Home Monthly*. It would be surprising indeed if a family of this stature was slighted by their friends and their church.

A smaller gathering graveside was, in fact, expected because, as the *Pittsburg Press* announced on Monday, August 31, the “interment will be private” (“Charles S. Reinhart Dead”). If Cather did show up at Allegheny Cemetery without receiving an invitation, she—not more intimate friends who respected the Reinharts’ wish for privacy—was guilty of a breach of etiquette.

It may be impossible to count heads at First Church that Tuesday afternoon, but Cather’s second complaint, that the press ignored Reinhart’s death, is more easily checked. She writes that Reinhart’s associates brought his body “home to art-less Pittsburgh. . . . And no one here knew or cared. The daily papers had a paragraph or two about him. A number of artists and

literary men and several great editors came down from New York with his body, but his death was not even known in Pittsburgh” (*The World and the Parish* 512).

The archive tells a much different story. On August 31, 1896, the *Pittsburg Post* featured on its front page a significant obituary with a prominent headline and multiple sub-headings,

including mention of his “World-Wide Fame” (“Famous Artist Passes Away”); *Post* stories on September 7 and 13 also mentioned Reinhart. The *Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette* eulogized Reinhart at length on August 31 (“Reinhart Is Dead”). The *Pittsburg Bulletin* covered Reinhart’s death in its “Obituary” column and its “Art” column on September 5, 1896; the “Art” column continued to cover Reinhart, *Washed Ashore*, and the Pittsburgh Exposition, which featured the painting, for several weeks. Cather’s *Home Monthly* colleague Erasmus Wilson, who wrote a popular column for the *Commercial Gazette* titled “The Quiet Observer,” devoted his September 1, 1896, column to Reinhart and his September 25, 1896, column to *Washed Ashore*; on October 12, he recommended the *Home Monthly*’s article on Reinhart pseudonymously written by Cather, and at the end of October, he noted the publication of Reinhart’s last illustrations in *Harper’s Weekly*. Multiple substantial notices in several papers belie Cather’s assertion that “The daily papers had a

paragraph or two about him.” And if Reinhart were dishonored and forgotten in his hometown, why then did the *Home Monthly* publishers bill Cather’s pseudonymous “illustrated sketch . . . of Pittsburgh’s great artist” ahead of the magazine’s cover story about the defunct utopian village of Economy in their weekly advertisements in the *Pittsburg Post*? (see illustration on page 23).

Posing as “Lawrence Brenton,” Cather wrote “Charles Stanley Reinhart” quickly, so quickly she left traces of her sources. From the *Bulletin*’s “Obituary” Cather cribbed information about Reinhart’s Civil War service, including the exact phrase “those stirring times” (“Charles Stanley Reinhart” 17). She could not have completed the profile, however, until she saw his painting *Washed Ashore* the

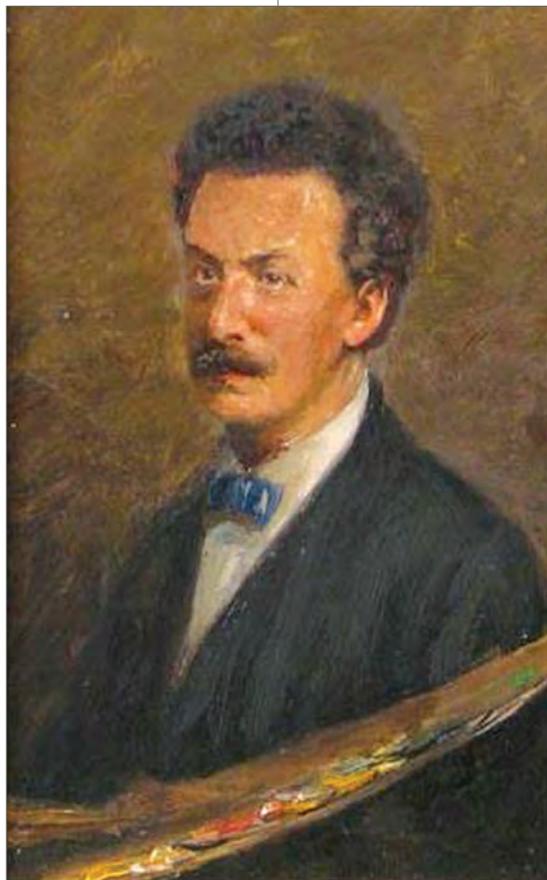


“The Quiet Observer,” Erasmus Wilson, as seen on the frontispiece to his *Quiet Observations on the Ways of the World*, published in 1886 by Cassell & Company.



next week at the Pittsburgh Exposition, a forty-day showcase of the region's accomplishments. The 1896 Exposition opened on September 9, and *Washed Ashore* was hung there two days later, exactly a week before her September 18 deadline for the *Home Monthly's* October issue. According to "The Passing Show," she heard Reinhart's story "over and over from Gustave Leiser," an artist who "never wearies of talking of him" (*The World and the Parish* 510), but she must not have known Leiser well. No man of that name or close variations lived in Pittsburgh in 1897, according to digitized city directories and more than 1,200 contemporary volumes at the *Historic Pittsburgh* text database; the 1900 federal census found only four Gustave Leisers in the entire United States—none closer than New York. I assume her informant was instead the well-known teacher and painter Martin B. Leisser (1845–1940), a boyhood friend of Reinhart, a respected instructor of painting at the Pittsburgh School of Design for Women, and a spokesperson for fellow artists for more than fifty years.

That Cather misremembered his name suggests that Leisser was only a casual acquaintance; nevertheless, he was a logical source because he had grown up with Reinhart and was on hand at the Exposition. On October 10, 1896, the *Bulletin* noted in its "Art" column, "Mr. Leisser spends much of his time at the gallery and is always pleased to give any information about the pictures that visitors may desire." The official Exposition *Album* praised the "valued assistance of artist Martin B. Leisser," who was also in "charge of the 'hanging'" of the Exposition's art (2). *Washed Ashore* was not among the paintings originally planned for the Exposition, but after Reinhart's death it was brought from New York, hung in a prominent place in the gallery, and advertised for sale with a goal of placing it permanently in Pittsburgh's Carnegie Museum.³ Beneath the painting, the *Bulletin* reported on September 19, 1896, a wreath was placed, "the gift of a number of Pittsburg artists, in loving memory of the dead artist" ("Art"). Years later, this wreath may have partially inspired the palm branch placed on Harvey Merrick's coffin in "The Sculptor's Funeral."



Self Portrait with Palette by Martin B. Leisser, ca. 1880

To her gleanings from the *Bulletin* and her interview with Martin Leisser, Cather grafted a fabricated conflict: she claimed unnamed "friends" opposed Reinhart's decision to throw up his clerkship at a steel plant to go to Munich to study art. Mimicking the voice and values of Philistia, she wrote, "This announcement was received by his friends with more than consternation. It meant

the ruin of a promising business career, and for what was a man made, if not for business?" ("Charles Stanley Reinhart" 17). The *Bulletin*, by contrast, in its September 5, 1896 "Obituary," told a more plausible story that Reinhart's friends, who were artists living by the brush, had urged him to depart for Europe: "A successful venture—in which his friend, Mr. [Albert F.] King, was associated—and the advice of close friends decided his course and in 1867 he went to Paris, and then to Munich, where he studied under Prof. [Karl] Otto for two years" (emphasis added). The *Bulletin's* art editor had known Reinhart for more than a decade, visited his studio, and published fortnightly updates about the painter's travels, picture sales, and prizes; Cather, by contrast, had limited exposure to the local art scene in Pittsburgh, where she had resided only since June 1896. Yet, the next September she told

her Lincoln readership that she had heard at least "a hundred times" in the days after the artist's death, "Reinhart dead? Oh, yes; his brother is a fellow of some means I guess. Stanley never amounted to much" (*The World and the Parish* 512). Once again, the print record favors the view opposite that which Cather wrote: Pittsburgh's artists and journalists, as well as the thousands of regular people who attended the Exposition, appreciated Reinhart's accomplishments.

While her *Home Monthly* piece fibbed that Reinhart's "friends" opposed his career, in the "Passing Show" she compounded the offense by setting his family against his art: she wrote of "the indignation of his family" when "he threw up an excellent position to go to Munich to study art" because in Pittsburgh, "art was considered as something frivolous, entirely beneath a brilliant young man of good family; a trivial thing,

PITTSBURG'S MAGAZINE

THE HOME MONTHLY

FOR OCTOBER

Is full of good things. The best number yet issued. Contains
Illustrated sketch of C. S. Reinhart, Pittsburg's great artist.
The Passing of the Economites, with the only portrait of
Jacob Henrici ever made.
More of Whittier's unpublished verse, good descriptive arti-
cles, splendid stories, all finely illustrated.

On the news stands for five cents. Sixty cents a year. Send your sub-
scription to 203 Shady Ave., Pittsburg, Pa.

An advertisement for the *October Home Monthly* that ran in the *Pittsburg Post* October 3–5, 1896. Cather's pseudonymous profile of C. S. Reinhart is the first-named of the "good things" in the issue.

like play-acting, possibly immoral, certainly not remunerative" (*The World and the Parish* 511). Actually, as Henry James wrote in 1890, the elder Reinharts fully supported the aspiring young artist's ambition: "At Pittsburgh, where he was born, he was free to draw to his heart's content. There was no romantic attempt, as I gather, to nip him in the bud. On the contrary, he was despatched with almost prosaic punctuality to Europe, and was even encouraged to make himself at home in Munich" (471–472). James's version sounds credible because artistic talent ran thick in the Reinhart family, both musically and painterly. One prominent forerunner was his paternal uncle, Benjamin Franklin Reinhart (1829–1885), a specialist in historical portraits. In Britain, B. F. Reinhart painted the Princess of Wales, Thomas Carlyle, and Alfred, Lord Tennyson; in America, his commissions included President James Buchanan, Secretary of State Edwin M. Stanton, and General Sam Houston ("Reinhart, Benjamin Franklin" 218). A few years after Stanley's parents sent him to school in Paris and Munich, they set his youngest brother, Albert Grantley Reinhart (1853–1926) on the same path. Both brothers prospered: between 1890 and 1896, Stanley sold more than ninety illustrations to leading magazines such as *Harper's Weekly*, *Scribner's*, and *The Century* (Bintrim and Madigan 37). Yet in "The Passing Show" Cather elides the other artists in the family and their support, holding up only his brother as Pittsburgh's standard of success.

In order to use C. S. Reinhart as a prototype of the frustrated romantic artist, Cather not only fabricated disapproval of his friends and family, but also distorted his childhood. The *Bulletin* mentions that for the first ten years of Stanley's life, his family lived in a comfortable home downtown at Penn and Eighth

Avenues ("Obituary"). At age ten, he was transplanted to Sewickley, a village fifteen miles down the Ohio River from Pittsburgh that Cather would describe as idyllic in her many writings about Ethelbert Nevin. Because the *Home Monthly's* readers knew Sewickley's beauty, Cather, posing as "Lawrence Brenton," had to admit to Pittsburgh that Stanley did not suffer much by being displaced to "a spot that comprises whatever beauties of scenery Western Pennsylvania may have" ("Charles Stanley Reinhart" 16).

A year later, however, Cather excised this information from "The Passing Show," stating unequivocally that Reinhart "was born in an unlovely age and in a most unlovely city, and a man can not escape the environment of youth" (*The World and the Parish* 511). Nine years later, the romantic conceit of the tormented artist triumphing over domestic ugliness and provincial closed-mindedness emerges in "The Sculptor's Funeral" when Jim Laird laments, "why, in the inscrutable wisdom of God, a genius should ever have been called from this place of hatred and bitter waters" (272). This statement provides a striking echo of Cather's "The Passing Show" epigram, "Anyone who has not lived here can not realize how incongruous, how little short of miserable it is for an artist to come out of Pittsburgh" (*The World and the Parish* 510).

A full third of Cather's *Home Monthly* profile of Reinhart is devoted to an appreciation of *Washed Ashore*, its details suggesting she studied the canvas at the Exposition and asked focused questions of Leisser. A meditation on mortality, the painting depicts the reactions of nine witnesses—eight French villagers and a policeman—to the body of a drowned fisherman. The strength of the picture is Reinhart's sensitivity to characterization, his knack of giving "each character its individual peculiarity and verity." Cather marvels, "Death means something different to every figure there" (17). Henry James praised this very quality of evocative characterization in his 1890 *Harper's Weekly* commentary on *Washed Ashore*:

It represents the dead body of an unknown man whom the tide has cast up, lying on his back, feet forward, disfigured, dishonored by the sea. A small group of villagers are collected near it, divided by the desire to look and the fear to see. A gendarme, official and responsible, his uniform contrasting with the mortal disrepair of the victim, takes down in his note-book the





An engraving of Fernand Blayn's *Une épave (Victim of a Shipwreck, 1879)*, in *L'illustration: Journal Universel*, Nov. 15, 1879. Courtesy of HathiTrust.

procès-verbal of the incident, and an old sailor, pointing away with a stiffened arm, gives him the benefit of what *he* knows about the matter. Plain, pitying fish-wives, hushed, with their shawls in their mouths, hang back, as if from a combination too solemn—the mixture of death and the law. Three or four men seem to be glad it isn't they. (471–472)

Cather told her *Home Monthly* audience that “the scene of [*Washed Ashore*] was an actual one which the artist witnessed where he was summering down on the French coast. The picture was painted there” (17). About a week after the October *Home Monthly* went to print, Erasmus Wilson elaborated on the painting's origins in his “The Quiet Observer” column in the September 25, 1896, *Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette*, explaining, “Artists seek subjects in nature and paint them on the spot whenever possible. If the scene is changing, as in the case of ‘Washed Ashore,’ the artist outlines his sketch and finishes it from models made to resemble the original as closely as possible.” Wilson went on to quote one of Reinhart's letters about his inspiration for the picture. The letter was addressed to “a famous French painter,” Fernand Blayn, whose painting *Une épave (Victim of a Shipwreck)* (see illustration above) had appeared at the Salon in Paris in 1879, many years before *Washed Ashore* was exhibited there in 1887. The two pictures are so similar that Vincent Van Gogh, in a letter commending an engraving of *Washed Ashore* to

fellow painter Anthon van Rappard, referred to Blayn's *Une épave* to describe Reinhart's subject.

Van Gogh was not the only one to notice the affinity of the two pictures. Wilson notes that Blayn himself had initiated the correspondence with Reinhart, expressing his admiration for *Washed Ashore* while tactfully broaching the matter of its resemblance to his own painting. Neither taking nor giving offense, Reinhart replied that two artists working independently, handling similar themes and ideas using archetypal characters could not help but produce similar pictures. Wilson quotes the letter in his September 25, 1896 column:

In regard to the unfortunate resemblance between the picture you have on hand and the one which I exhibit, I can quite easily understand how it could happen, and does constantly occur, where two artists or writers, unknown to each other, undertake the same motive, and under the same conditions. Given: a body washed ashore, a gendarme must be present, as well as a group of fisher folk. Some one will kneel beside the corpse and the picture is complete. The same scene will happen so long as the waves beat against the shore and men go down to the sea in ships.

Learning the provenance of *Washed Ashore* just a week after her own *Home Monthly* sketch went to press, Cather may have agreed that artists commonly draw upon a universal stockpile of

archetypes. In *O Pioneers!* (1913), she makes Carl Linstrum, a frustrated artist reduced to “engraving other men’s pictures” for the popular market, observe that the same few human stories inevitably recur, like the meadowlarks who sing “the same five notes over for thousands of years” (108, 110). In other words, the human condition determines the characters who must be present, and reiteration of a group setting is both a tribute to other artists and inevitable.

Writing about “The Sculptor’s Funeral” in his historical essay for *Youth and the Bright Medusa*, Mark Madigan suggests that “Cather may have alluded to the painting’s title when she wrote that [Harvey] Merrick had been ‘cast ashore upon a desert of newness and ugliness and sordidness’ as a boy” (330, emphasis added). I extend Madigan’s perceptive remark to argue that Cather’s personal encounter with this painting, the artist’s posthumously published commentary on his use of archetypes, and newspaper and magazine reports on his death (including her own) colored her characterization, tone, and imagery in “The Sculptor’s Funeral.”

Because she worked from prototypes herself, Cather would have been intensely interested in Reinhart’s explanation to Blayn of the real persons behind his archetypal characters:

The subject of my picture I saw at Treport in 1882. I witnessed the wreck of eight fishing boats in the midst of a terrible gale, among the women who were shrieking and praying on the shore. One boat from Dieppe went to pieces and all on board were lost. The body which I saw washed ashore a day or two afterwards was that of the patron Jacques Paulin. (quoted in Wilson, September 25, 1896)

The agony of the fishwives on the French coast who watched helplessly as their husbands and sons drowned was genuine and deeply felt, but in “The Sculptor’s Funeral,” Cather uses the same adjective, “shrieking,” to undercut what Madigan calls Annie Merrick’s “stage managed” show of grief when her son’s coffin is unloaded from the hearse (“Teaching the Details” 59). By contrast, the servant Roxy contains her sorrow: “She was weeping silently, the corner of her calico apron lifted to her eyes, occasionally suppressing a long, quivering sob” (257). Understanding Roxy’s stoicism as evidence that she shared the abuse by Annie that made Harvey’s childhood a hell, Henry Steavens moves to stand beside the gentle servant. Much like Roxy, one of the humble fishwives in *Washed Ashore* stands apart from the others, holding the corner of her apron to her face in an expression of pity and grief. Reinhart’s explanation to Blayn that

the drowned man was not a common laborer, but the “patron” of one of the eight lost boats, deepens the affinity: the drowned man was not a stranger to the entourage as Henry James supposed, but a well-known captain of a boat from nearby Dieppe. He was a *patron*, which cultural linguist Vincent Remillard explains is the French idiom for the “master” of his vessel—equivalent to Steavens’s deceased master, Harvey Merrick.

Cather’s story is filtered through the consciousness of the young sculptor Steavens, who loved his master sufficiently to escort his mortal remains more than 1,500 miles in subfreezing weather. Initially perceiving the Sand City folk as a “composite, ill-defined group” on a snow-swept, dimly lit train platform (254), Steavens comes to see the townspeople as individuals only after he studies them under the harsh lamplight of the Merricks’ parlor. Classically trained in anatomy, modeling, and possibly physiognomy, Steavens reads their faces and their reactions to the opened casket, and is sickened by what he sees. Most of the characters have analogues in *Washed Ashore*. The fishwife with her apron to her mouth, a variation on Roxy, is looking toward the bareheaded, bearded man kneeling beside the drowned master. Cather said of this figure in the *Home Monthly*, “The man who kneels . . . is touched more personally, and may have been his comrade” (17). Years later, this comrade is reborn as Jim Laird, the choleric, alcoholic lawyer with an “astonishing cataract of red beard,” who removes his hat at the approach of the night express despite the driving snow (250, 252).

The middle ground of *Washed Ashore* shows three fishermen standing behind the old man and the uniformed official; two of them are seen clearly. The closer one, visible between the old man and the gendarme, appears, like the local clergyman in the story, Mr. Thomas, to sympathize with the dead, his clasped hands and downcast eyes demonstrating pity while his pursed lips signify that he is unwilling or unable to speak. Behind him, in the exact center of the picture, is a pensive, clear-eyed figure, the only one whose gaze seems to meet the eyes of the viewer. He may suggest Henry Steavens, the focal character at the center of Cather’s story who, despite his loyalty to his master, is strangely passive, as if his hands were trapped in his pockets. Steavens serves as one of those who meets the casket at the depot and accompanies it to the home, but once he enters the Merrick house, he is possessed, nauseated, and unable to do as much as open a window or redirect the conversation. The old man discoursing to the gendarme, whom Cather says views death “almost indifferently . . . [having] seen many such a tragedy” (“Charles Stanley Reinhart” 17), may be analogous to



old Martin Merrick, the sculptor's father, of whom Laird says, "I didn't think he had any tears left. Seems as if his eyes would have gone dry long ago. At his age nothing cuts very deep" (259). Even the immaculate uniform of the gendarme has a parodic equivalent in the emblazoned coat of the Grand Army man, the most inquisitive and talkative of Merrick's attendants. The painting's "little girl who clings to her grandfather," agitated because, Cather infers, this is "the first time she has looked on death" ("Charles Stanley Reinhart" 17), is paralleled in the bas-relief sculpture that Harvey Merrick shows Steavens of a "full-lipped, full-blooded little urchin" plucking at the gown of a gentle, "faded old woman, sitting and sewing something pinned to her knee," the boy wanting to show her a butterfly he had caught (261). The butterfly, notes Loretta Wasserman, represents Psyche, "an ancient symbol for the soul" (58). To Steavens, the bas-relief represents the love Merrick wished he had received from his mother, rather than her emotional and physical abuse. Madigan argues that Harvey received what tenderness he needed to survive from Roxy, the maid, who may be the true inspiration of the bas-relief ("Teaching the Details" 59–60). Annie, the sculptor's monstrous mother, has no visual equivalent in *Washed Ashore*—except perhaps in the looming cliffs and churning sea. Her oversized, wide-spaced "teeth that could tear" suggest the predations of the sea monster Scylla, to which Odysseus sacrifices six of his men in order to avoid losing all his crew to the whirlpool Charybdis.⁴ Cather implies the analogy when Steavens recognizes Annie Merrick as an emotional vortex threatening every person within range: "She filled the room; the men were obliterated, seemed tossed about like twigs in an angry water, and even Steavens felt himself being drawn into the whirlpool" (256). Fittingly, Harvey dies from tuberculosis or pneumonia, drowning after "the congestion of both lungs had shut off any probability of recovery" (267).

Jim Laird likens Harvey to "an oyster" for keeping his griefs and hurts to himself, and Steavens thinks of his master as a "porcelain vessel" (262, 259); in other words, he was a miraculous creature who made "beautiful impressions" even from the gritty detritus of Sand City (263). The oyster and pearl imagery of "The Sculptor's Funeral" comes close to describing the genesis of this rare story, grown by accretion around the site of an old injury—the fear of erasure and oblivion Cather experienced at Allegheny Cemetery in September 1896. The origins of other celebrated works may be awaiting discovery as the Cather Journalism Project works toward a complete,

annotated, and updatable electronic edition of all her signed, pseudonymous, and unsigned journalism. Page images from the *Home Monthly*, the *Leader*, the *National Stockman and Farmer*, and other publications will equip scholars to search for the beginnings of fiction within her journalism and to further question her depiction (to her Lincoln readers) of Pittsburgh as an "artless city" (*The World and the Parish* 513).

NOTES

1. Because the history of her 1901 poem "The Night Express" is tangential to the Pittsburgh antecedents of "The Sculptor's Funeral," I leave explication of connections between the poem and the story to others. See Bernice Slote's introduction to *April Twilights* (1903), especially pages xxviii–xxix, and Mark J. Madigan's historical essay in the Willa Cather Scholarly Edition of *Youth and the Bright Medusa* (329).

2. Curtin erred not only by missing Cather's authorship of "Charles Stanley Reinhart," but also by initiating the misspelling "Lawrence Brinton" (*The World and the Parish* 510), a misspelling perpetuated by Byrne and Snyder when they identified Cather as author of the piece (7). The actual spelling of the pseudonym in all cases in the *Home Monthly* is "Lawrence Brenton." Polly P. Duryea, in her 1993 dissertation on paintings and drawings in Cather's fiction, became the first to correct the spelling as she confirmed Byrne and Snyder's identification, saying, "Lawrence Brenton . . . was surely Cather" (254). Additionally, Duryea points to a review of "The Pittsburgh Art Exhibit" in the January 1897 *Home Monthly* signed "Lawrence Brenton" as also Cather's (183). This review discusses Winslow Homer's Civil War service as an illustrator for *Harper's Weekly*, an experience shared by Reinhart. Cather perhaps fashioned this pseudonym to suggest a writer of Breton ancestry, one who might have understood Reinhart's love of painting the people of the French seacoast.

3. The editor of the *Bulletin's* "Art" column mentioned on September 19, 1896, the hope that the painting could be purchased and donated to the Carnegie Galleries. By the end of the Exposition, however, no donor had stepped forward with the purchase price. On December 26, 1896, along with praise for Reinhart's final illustrations, which were in the current *Harper's Weekly*, the "Art" column announced that Pittsburgh Mayor Henry P. Ford had organized a formal subscription to raise the sum through contributions. This effort, too, seems to have come up short, for the painting was not acquired by the Carnegie but



was donated instead to the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C., from whence it was sold in the 1950s and presumably passed into private hands (Bintrim and Madigan 38). Today its whereabouts are unknown.

4. Steven Shively pointed out to me that in Euripides's tragedy *Medea*, Jason excoriates another archetypal terrible mother, Medea, as "A monster, not a woman, having a nature / Wilder than that of Scylla in the Tuscan sea" (104–105).

WORKS CITED

Album. Western Pennsylvania Exposition Society, 1896.

"Art." *The Bulletin* [Pittsburgh], Sept. 5, 1896, p. 10; Sept. 19, 1896, p. 10; Oct. 10, p. 12; Dec. 26, 1896, p. 12. *Historic Pittsburgh Full Text Collection*, digital.library.pitt.edu/p/pitttextall.

Bintrim, Timothy W., and Mark J. Madigan. "A Palm for Stanley: Reinhart's Grave Restored through Cather's Writing." *Willa Cather Newsletter & Review*, vol. 44, no. 2, Fall 2002, 35–38.

Byrne, Kathleen D. and Richard C. Snyder. *Chrysalis: Willa Cather in Pittsburgh, 1896–1906*. Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, 1980.

Cather, Willa. "Charles Stanley Reinhart." [As Lawrence Brenton.] *Home Monthly*, Oct. 1896, 16–17.

—. *O Pioneers!* 1913. Willa Cather Scholarly Edition. Historical Essay and Explanatory Notes by David Stouck, Textual Essay and editing by Susan J. Rosowski and Charles W. Mignon with Kathleen Danker, University of Nebraska Press, 1992.

—. "The Sculptor's Funeral." *Youth and the Bright Medusa*. 1920. Willa Cather Scholarly Edition. Historical Essay and Explanatory Notes by Mark J. Madigan, Textual Essay and editing by Frederick M. Link, Charles W. Mignon, Judith Boss, and Kari A. Ronning, University of Nebraska Press, 2009, 249–273.

—. *The Selected Letters of Willa Cather*. Edited by Andrew Jewell and Janis Stout, Knopf, 2013.

—. *The World and the Parish: Willa Cather's Articles and Reviews, 1893–1902*. Edited by William M. Curtin, University of Nebraska Press, 1970. 2 vols.

"Charles S. Reinhart Dead: The Prominent Pittsburg Artist Dies Suddenly in New York." *Pittsburg Press*, vol. 13, no. 241, Aug. 31, 1896, p. 5. *Post-Gazette Archives*, archives.post-gazette.com.

Duryea, Polly P. "Paintings and Drawings in Willa Cather's Prose: A Catalogue Raisonné." Dissertation, University of Nebraska, 1993.

Euripides. *The Medea*. Translated by Rex Warner. *Euripides I*. Edited by David Grene and Richmond Lattimore, University of Chicago Press, 1955. 58–108.

"Famous Artist Passes Away." *Pittsburgh Post*, Aug. 31, 1896, p. 1. *Post-Gazette Archives*, archives.post-gazette.com.

Faulkner, Virginia. Publisher's Foreword. Cather, *The World and the Parish*, xiii–xvii.

James, Henry. "Charles S. Reinhart." *Harper's Weekly*, June 14, 1890, 471–472.

Madigan, Mark J. Historical Essay. Cather, *Youth and the Bright Medusa*, 313–375.

—. "Teaching the Details: Roxy, the 'Mulatto' Mourner in 'The Sculptor's Funeral.'" *Teaching the Works of Willa Cather*. Edited by Steven B. Shively and Virgil Albertini, GreenTower, 2009, 56–62.

"Obituary." *The Bulletin* [Pittsburgh], vol. 33, no. 18, Sept 5, 1896, p. 9. *Historic Pittsburgh Full Text Collection*, digital.library.pitt.edu/p/pitttextall.

"Reinhart, Benjamin Franklin." *Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, 1888, vol. 5, 218–219.

"Reinhart Is Dead." *Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette*, Aug. 31, 1896, p. 2. *Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette, Post-Gazette Archives*, archives.post-gazette.com.

Remillard, Vincent. Email: "Definition of the 'Patron' of a French Fishing Boat." Received by Timothy Bintrim, Dec. 15, 2015.

Slote, Bernice. Introduction: "Willa Cather and Her First Book." *April Twilights (1903)*, by Willa Cather. University of Nebraska Press, 1962, v–xxxxv.

Van Gogh, Vincent. "346: To Anthon van Rappard. The Hague, on or about Friday, 25 May 1883." *Vincent Van Gogh: The Letters*. The Van Gogh Museum and the Huygens Institute, vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let346/letter.html#translation.

Wasserman, Loretta. "Going Home: 'The Sculptor's Funeral,' 'The Namesake,' and 'Two Friends.'" *Willa Cather: Family, Community, and History*. Edited by John J. Murphy, Brigham Young University Humanities Publication Center, 1990, 57–62.

Wilson, Erasmus. "The Quiet Observer." Sept. 1, 1896, p. 4; Sept. 25, 1896, p. 4; Oct. 12, 1896, p. 4. *Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette, Post-Gazette Archives*, archives.post-gazette.com.



Ashley Olson, Executive Director

www.WillaCather.org

©2017 Willa Cather Foundation

Issue Editor: Steven B. Shively

Managing Editor: Thomas Reese Gallagher

Copy Editors: Virgil Albertini and Dolores Albertini

Design: Bunny Zaruba Design

Issue Editors

Ann Romines, *The George Washington University*

Steven B. Shively, *Utah State University*

Robert Thacker, *St. Lawrence University*

The *Willa Cather Review* welcomes scholarly essays, notes, news items, and letters. Scholarly essays should generally not exceed 5,000 words, although longer essays may be considered; they should be submitted in Microsoft Word as email attachments and should follow current MLA guidelines as articulated in the *MLA Handbook*.

Direct essays and inquiries to Ann Romines at annrom3@verizon.net.

Send letters and inquiries to Thomas Reese Gallagher at tgallagher@nyc.rr.com.

The *Willa Cather Review* (ISSN 0197-663X) is published three times a year by:

The Willa Cather Foundation
413 North Webster Street
Red Cloud, Nebraska 68970

402-746-2653

866-731-7304

Email: info@willacather.org

No part of the *Willa Cather Review* may be reprinted without the permission of the Willa Cather Foundation. Except as noted, the images in this publication are the property of the Foundation.

Editorial Board

Virgil Albertini, *Fairway, Kansas*

Bruce P. Baker II, *Omaha, Nebraska*

Thomas Reese Gallagher, *New York, New York*

Richard C. Harris, *Webb Institute*

Charles Johanningsmeier, *University of Nebraska Omaha*

Susan N. Maher, *University of Minnesota Duluth*

John J. Murphy, *Newton, Massachusetts*

Julie Olin-Ammentorp, *Le Moyne College*

Ann Romines, *The George Washington University*

Steven B. Shively, *Utah State University*

John N. Swift, *Occidental College*

Robert Thacker, *St. Lawrence University*

Joseph Urgo, *University of North Carolina Asheville*

Board of Governors

Officers

Lynette Krieger, *President*

Marion A. Arneson, *Vice President*

Glenda Pierce, *Secretary*

C. Kay Stahly, *Treasurer*

Thomas Reese Gallagher, *Past President*

Board Members

Virgil Albertini

Mark W. Bostock

Max Frazier

Ramón J. Guerra

Sarah Baker Hansen

Richard C. Harris

Andrew Jewell

Charles Johanningsmeier

Ruth H. Keene

Fritz Mountford

John J. Murphy

Julie Olin-Ammentorp

Charles A. Peek

Guy Reynolds

Ann Romines

Nancy Sherwood

Steven B. Shively

Amy Springer

Sally Stich

Robert Thacker

Lu Williams

John A. (Jay) Yost

Advisory Members

Bruce P. Baker II

Laurie Smith Camp

James L. Fitzgibbon

David B. Garwood

Joel Geyer

Jane Renner Hood

Ron Hull

Betty Kort

Mellanee Kvasnicka

Lucia Woods Lindley

Susan N. Maher

Gary L. Meyer

Nancy S. Picchi

Rhonda Seacrest

James P. Southwick

John N. Swift

Gary W. Thompson

Joseph R. Urgo

Contributors to this Issue

Timothy W. Bintrim is an associate professor of English and Environmental Studies at Saint Francis University in Loretto, Pennsylvania. He has published a dozen articles on topics such as homicidal wolves, bicycling ministers and suicides, Chinese mothers, and dandies in Cather's fiction, all with connections back to Pittsburgh. With James Jaap, he codirected the 16th International Seminar in that city.

Ann Romines, professor emerita at George Washington University, is author of *The Home Plot: Women, Writing and Domestic Ritual* and *Constructing the Little House: Gender, Culture, and Laura Ingalls Wilder*, and editor of the Scholarly Edition of *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, *At Willa Cather's Tables: The Cather Foundation Cookbook*, and *Willa Cather's Southern Connections*. She is an editor of the *Willa Cather Review*.

Mary Linnea Vaughan is an artist in Santa Rosa, California, spending a few months each year in her childhood home in Hastings, Nebraska. She began attending Cather seminars as a child with her mother Evadne, a librarian and avid reader. The pair were called "Cather Citizens" by the scholars they met during 40 years of conference-going. Vaughan's works are in collections nationwide, including the Willa Cather Foundation. (www.MaryVaughan.com)

SAVE THE DATE

Willa Cather's Irish Connections Cather Symposium

June 28–July 1, 2018 Limavady, Northern Ireland

Directors: Willa Murphy, Ulster University, and Aaron Callan, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council

Hosted by Ulster University and the Limavady Arts and Cultural Center

Sponsored by the Willa Cather Foundation and the University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Set in the ancestral home of the Cather family, the seminar will explore themes deeply resonant in Willa Cather's life and work: migration and immigration; family legacy and inheritance; and religious identity.

Look for more information soon!



Laura Bush Helps Dedicate the National Willa Cather Center

June 3, 2017 was a glorious day as the Willa Cather Foundation dedicated the National Willa Cather Center.

The day-long celebration featured a dedication ceremony with former first lady Laura Bush as the speaker, tours of the new facility, and a champagne reception. The new center, which enhances the work of the foundation and expands our service to visitors and scholars, is also a boon to the economic development of Red Cloud, Nebraska.

In future issues of the *Willa Cather Review*, we will highlight features of our new facility.

Executive Director Ashley Olson and Laura Bush attend to Lynette Krieger, President of the Willa Cather Foundation Board of Governors, as she speaks during the dedication ceremony.



Laura Bush addresses the nearly 300 guests assembled for the dedication ceremony.



Mrs. Bush's day in Red Cloud included visits to historic sites including Cather's childhood home.



Antonette "Toni" Turner greets the audience during the V.I.P. introductions at the start of the dedication ceremony. Toni is the granddaughter of Annie Sadilek Pavelka, the model for *Antonia* Shimerda in *My Ántonia*.

“We had a beautiful autumn that year, soft, sunny, like a dream.”

—The Professor's House



Prairie Gold. Acrylic on canvas, 2006. Jeremy Daniels, Hastings, Nebraska. Gift of the artist.

This is one of many works of art held in the Cather Foundation's collections.
See inside for a taste.



THE
WILLA CATHER
FOUNDATION

THE NATIONAL WILLA CATHER CENTER

Preserving Her Legacy

Your IRA: Taxes or Charity? Act Now to Transfer IRA Assets Tax-Free

You can give more for less. Americans over age 70½ no longer pay federal income tax on individual retirement account (IRA) funds given to charity, up to \$100,000 per person. You won't be taxed on the transfer and it counts against your required distribution.

You can make a difference. Support an existing program or establish a new fund in your name or the name of a loved one. Giving is one of life's pleasures; we can help you enjoy it today.

Contact us or your IRA administrator for more details.

Ashley Olson, Executive Director
866-731-7304
aolson@willacather.org

