

WILLA CATHER

PIONEER MEMORIAL AND EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

NEWSLETTER AND REVIEW

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Membership Drive Launched at Cather Spring Festival

The WCPM launched its first-ever nationwide Membership Drive to increase financial support of its many activities. Board of Governors President John Swift announced the drive at a press conference on the lawn of the Cather childhood home on the opening day of the 2001 Willa Cather Spring Festival.

The WCPM is financially supported by membership gifts, fees from tours of Catherland and subscriptions to the WCPM *Newsletter and Review*.

Members in the WCPM receive several benefits, including a membership card; an attractive lapel pin featuring the design of the Willa Cather commemorative postage stamp; a subscription to the *Newsletter and Review*, containing scholarly articles and the latest news of the WCPM in Red Cloud and beyond; advance notice of special events and exhibits; and a free tour of historical sites in Red Cloud.

Members joining at the Sustaining level and above, with an annual gift of \$125 or more, also receive discounts at participating stores throughout Catherland, including the WCPM's Art Gallery and Bookstore.

The goal of the drive is to raise \$70,000 in annual support of the WCPM. The proceeds will support historic programs and tours, preservation of the Cather Archives

and the many special events and exhibits offered by the WCPM. Executive director Steve Ryan is enthusiastic about the national effort. "The Membership Drive will raise the visibility of Red Cloud across the nation as an historic treasure on the Great Plains. It will boost our efforts to preserve Willa Cather's legacy in Red Cloud and to promote her work to the world."

Endowment Campaign Marks the Second Phase of Opera House Project

Construction is about to begin on the long-awaited renovations to the 1885 Morhart Opera House. Those familiar with Cather's work recognize the importance of the Opera House in her life as well as in her literature. It was the setting of Cather's commencement address and the site of her early experiences of theater, and still bears her signature on a backstage wall, along with the names of other Red Cloud residents who appeared in productions.

The Board of Governors recently launched the second phase of the Opera House project, the *Taking Care Campaign*, a \$1.1 million endowment campaign to return the Opera House to its original function as a center for cultural, educational and community programs. It will also provide a state-of-the-art home for the Cather Archives.


In December, 2000, the *Taking Care Campaign* received its first leadership gift, a \$275,000 challenge grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The WCPM must match the grant on a three-for-one basis by raising \$825,000 by July, 2004.

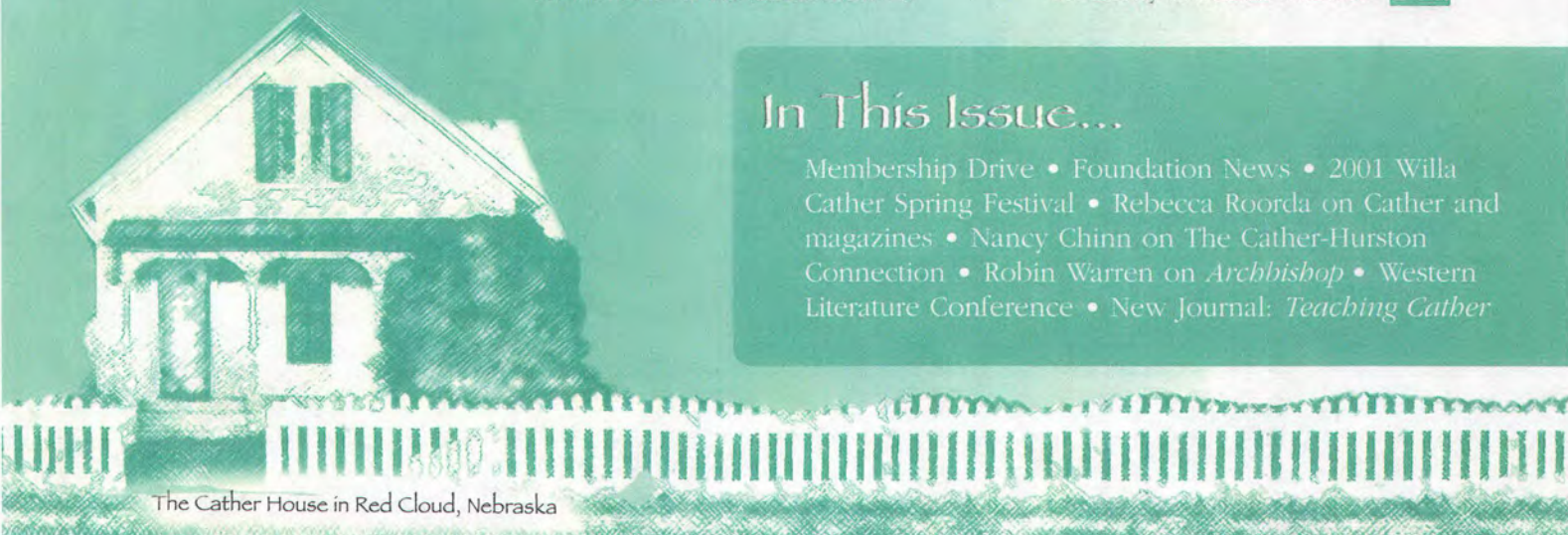
The endowment will fund the hiring of a program director to run the Opera House and an archivist to manage the Cather Archives.

National Leadership Heads Fund Drives

In recognition of Cather's importance and of the WCPM's work to preserve her legacy, internationally renowned actress Julie Harris has agreed to serve as the National Chair for the Membership Drive and for the *Taking Care Campaign*.

Joining Harris to endorse the project is former U.S. Senator Bob Kerrey, now president of the New School University in New York. Kerrey is serving as the Greater Nebraska Chair for both fund drives.

Steve Ryan, executive director of the WCPM, feels optimistic about the involvement of Harris and Kerrey. "The participation of individuals of this caliber indicates the high level of respect that is felt for Cather and her works, and how very important it is that we preserve the artifacts and historic sites that are closely associated with her." 



The Cather House in Red Cloud, Nebraska

In This Issue...

Membership Drive • Foundation News • 2001 Willa Cather Spring Festival • Rebecca Roorda on Cather and magazines • Nancy Chinn on The Cather-Hurston Connection • Robin Warren on *Archbishop* • Western Literature Conference • New Journal: *Teaching Cather*

New Challenges, New Opportunities for the Foundation: A Letter from the Presidents

Dear WCPM Members,

As many of you know, in early December of last year we received great news from the National Endowment for the Humanities: the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation has been awarded a \$275,000 challenge grant supporting the operations to be based in the newly restored Red Cloud Opera House. Over the next few years we will need to raise another \$825,000 in matching funds, and the resulting 1.1 million dollar permanent endowment will allow us to expand our humanities programming dramatically, to hire additional professional educational and archival staff, and to maintain the Opera House itself—the site of Willa Cather's (and Jim Burden's) high school graduation speeches, and the WCPM's new headquarters.

This vote of confidence from the federal government is the culmination of three years of work by many members of the WCPM staff and board of governors. In making the award the NEH recognized the national importance of Willa Cather and our mission; it also recognized the tremendous support that we have had from our members and other friends of Cather during the fund-raising campaign for the Opera House restoration itself, which concluded successfully last

year. As we make the transition between our presidencies of the Board of Governors, we want to thank you for that generosity, and for your passionate commitment to the preservation of Willa Cather's childhood home and community.

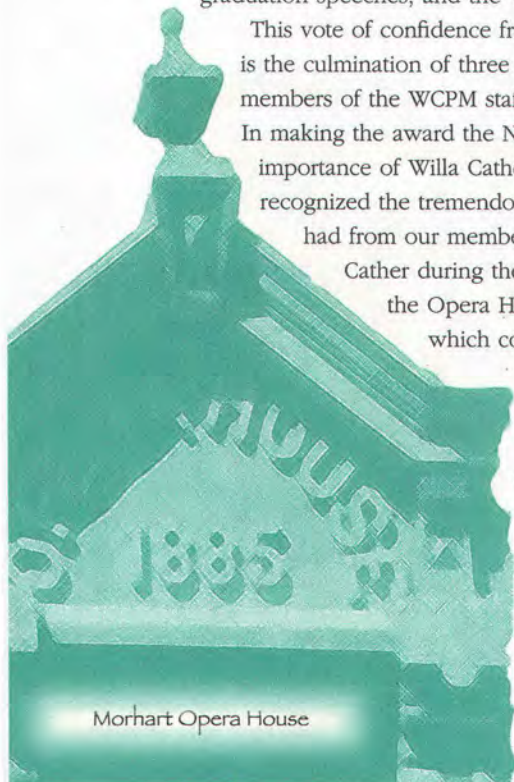
We think that the WCPM now stands close

to the realization of its founder Mildred Bennett's dream of making Red Cloud the vital center of an international web of educational, scholarly, cultural, and artistic activities gathered around the life and work of Willa Cather. Although we usually shorten the Foundation's name to the acronym "WCPM," Mrs. Bennett insisted on the importance of the "EF"—the forward-looking functions of the Educational Foundation—as well as of the Memorial itself. The Opera House and its endowment move us toward fulfilling these functions, forging new strong links, as Cather might have put it, between the world and the parish.

When the restoration is completed we will have a state-of-the-art visitor center (with an art gallery and bookstore), scholarly archive, and administrative office, as well as the unique late nineteenth-century opera house stage itself. We are moving toward more (and more diverse) educational programming, in Red Cloud and elsewhere; toward a higher and more organized level of fund-raising; toward increased collaboration with other historical, literary, and conservation organizations; and toward better communication with our membership and the public generally, in our Newsletter and other publications, concerning the unique artistic, scholarly, and historical resource that we have in Red Cloud. We hope that all of you, in all corners of the world, will visit our Nebraska headquarters, and that you'll take home with you a feeling for Cather's town and prairie.

Amid all this activity, we're committed to the original goals of the WCPM, in Red Cloud and throughout the world. Willa Cather was above all else an artist of connectedness. In her work she explored the hidden relations and interdependencies of apparent oppositions like country and city, native and immigrant, new world and old, past and present, religion and art. We want the operations of the WCPM to continue to reflect the breadth of Cather's passionate interest in humanity—at once local and international, memorializing the past and educating for the future.

Best Wishes,
Betty Kort, Past President
John Swift, President



Morhart Opera House

Letters to the Editor

Thank you for the great tour during my visit to Red Cloud. I thoroughly enjoyed being there and I appreciate your hospitality. It is always reassuring to know that Nebraska's rich and diverse history is being preserved and protected, and yet is available to Nebraska's citizens for our enjoyment.

The gifts presented to me are wonderful and I will very much enjoy reading the books. Again, thank you and best wishes.

*Mike Johanns
Governor, State of Nebraska*

On behalf of the Society our sincere thanks to the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation for the \$5,000.00 in matching funds toward the Save America's Treasures grant for the Cather childhood home.

I have never seen such a quick response to an appeal. It is no wonder that the WCPM Foundation was so successful in raising the funds needed for the opera house project. Please express our appreciation to all the WCPM Foundation members and supporters in your next newsletter.

Again Thank You, and best wishes
*Lawrence Sommers
Director, Nebraska State Historical Society*

I would like to donate to the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Foundation the enclosed copy of "Neighbour Rosicky" which has been translated into Modern Greek in 1993.

*Dr. Donna Pastourmatzi
School of English—Aristotle University
Thessaloniki, Greece*

I am a senior English major at Midway College in Kentucky. I recently received an inter-library loan lecture about Cather's life, that was very helpful to our Women as Literary Characters class. We find Willa Cather as individualistic as the sun that shines on her homestead. Thank you for preserving such a wonderful author's history.

*Lora Marshall
via e-mail*

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Willa Cather in the Magazines: "The Business of Art"

Rebecca Roorda
Mesa Verde Symposium

Willa Cather thought of herself as an artist, with an aristocrat's sensibilities, although, unlike a true aristocrat, she worked hard and always paid her own way. She thought of her books as literature—as art-work that was meant to be permanent and appreciated rather than crudely used, although she herself used her writing as a means of making a living, often selling it to the magazines. She left her position as managing editor of *McClure's Magazine* in order to spend all of her time writing fiction; however much she identified herself as an artist, Cather never stopped being that editor. She must have had to struggle at times with the complications inherent in these conflicting points of view.

The record of Cather's magazine sales, both short stories and serializations, is full of inconsistencies: sometimes she serialized her novels and sometimes she did not; sometimes she would authorize her work to be submitted to the popular magazines and sometimes she would not; sometimes she allowed her agent to maximize her selling potential and other times she seemed to sabotage her own marketability. I hope to show that these inconsistencies were manifestations of the conflict she felt as an artist about selling her art in the marketplace.

Cather's magazine publications, both short stories and novel serializations, were infrequent. After she

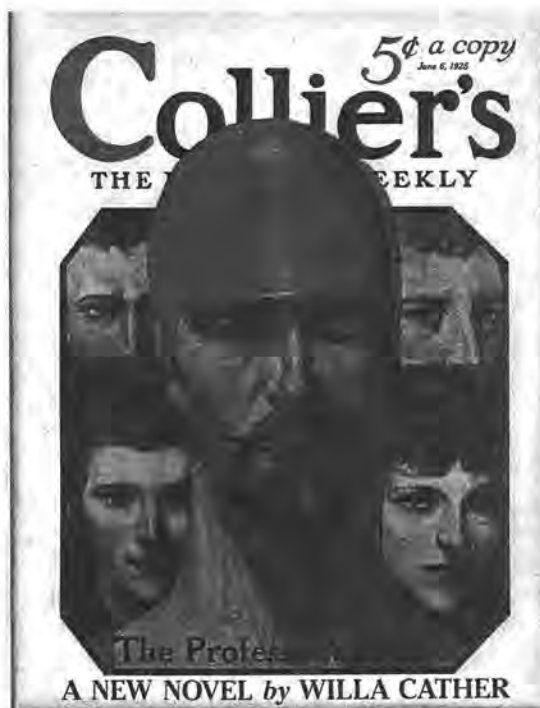
started working with her literary agent, Paul Reynolds, in 1916, she placed about one or two a year, sometimes less, rarely more, and kept this up consistently for twenty years until her last magazine submission in 1936. Two decades of magazine publications contain a lot of history, and each submission has its own story. I would like to focus on her work for three particular magazines, all of which saw multiple Cather submissions. All of these magazines are different, with contrasting and even contradictory audiences, yet all are magazines in which Cather was apparently very pleased to publish her work: the *Smart Set*, the

Century, and *Woman's Home Companion*. To quote from Janis Stout's article on historical scholarship in the Fall 1999 *Cather Newsletter*: "To historicize is to locate a writer or artist within the brew of contemporary experience and thought that would have constituted her world and to attempt to see how she responded, whether consciously or not, to that brew" (43). This essay is an attempt to historicize Cather's magazine publications, especially in these three magazines. I would argue that an understanding of these magazines within their contemporary contexts will help to flesh out our understanding of why Cather published in them and to take us beyond the simple notion, often repeated, that Cather wrote these stories

because she needed money and because she knew what could be sold "easily" to the "slick magazines" of her day (Meyering 3).

The first magazine I'd like to highlight in which Cather seemed eager to publish her work is the *Smart Set*. The *Smart Set* had been around in one form or

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another since 1900. When Cather sent in her story for consideration, the editors were H.L. Mencken and his friend and "formidable" drama critic George Jean Nathan, both editors at the magazine since 1914. Subtitled "The Magazine of Cleverness" (and later, from 1918 on, "The Aristocrat of Magazines"), the *Smart Set* had a small but selective audience. Here's how one reader remembers it from his days at Harvard between 1912 and 1916: "In American colleges when I was an undergraduate, the *Smart Set* magazine had an electrifying effect. It was an influence. We swallowed the *Smart Set* as part of our regular nourishment. Nathan and Mencken were legendary. In the literary course, [students] wanted to write for the *Smart Set*, just as, several decades later, they wanted to write for the *New Yorker*" (Dolmetsch xx).

The magazine's circulation was low, causing the advertising rates to be low, and therefore the editors could not afford to pay their authors top prices. Mencken turned this limitation into a virtue by making the magazine's chief aim the discovery of new writing talent. One frequent contributor called the *Smart Set* his "mainstay" during the early 1920s: "You could send them things you couldn't possibly hope to get in anywhere else" (xxii). The slant for their fiction was satiric, the principal targets being matrimony, small town life, academic life, and "success"—a kind of reverse Horatio Alger formula. Printed on the front cover of one early issue was this bold challenge to their audience: "One civilized reader is worth a thousand boneheads."

I believe that Cather would have found the *Smart Set* an irresistible outlet for the short fiction she was writing between about 1916 and 1920, her stories about New York and about artists. She would have been happy to place these stories with Mencken regardless of the higher prices other magazines would have paid. Ultimately she placed two stories in the *Smart Set*: "Her Boss" in 1919 and "Coming, Eden Bower!" in 1920. But Mencken rejected her 1916 submission, "The Diamond Mine," and this turndown must have been a blow to Cather. Cather's response to the rejection indicates that Mencken evidently feared a lawsuit from George Young, the husband of the singer Lillian Nordica who was the principal inspiration for Cather's story (WC to Mencken, 12 May 1916).

This rejection from Mencken in May of 1916 caught Cather at a bad time. She had learned in about January of that year that her friend Isabelle McClung was to be married in April, and also, perhaps every bit as traumatic for Cather, that the McClung house, where Cather had had a room of her own for writing for the past fifteen years, was to be sold. She describes in a March letter to Dorothy Canfield Fisher that this was a staggering change and ruinous loss (WC to DCF, 15

March 1916). Perhaps Mencken's rejection, the stress from changes brought about by Isabelle's marriage, and the minimal royalties from her novels combined to convince Cather that she needed an agent. Whatever the reason, she hired Paul Revere Reynolds in 1916.

Very little has been written in the Cather biographies about Reynolds, certainly not enough to get a rounded picture of this man who was the first literary agent in America. Reynolds was far from being merely an employee or a manuscript peddler, an impression of Reynolds that one might acquire from reading the various Cather biographies. Reynolds's friend, Frederick Lewis Allen, had this to say in a privately printed memoir about Reynolds: "[I]t is hardly too much to say that at one time or another Paul Reynolds has served as agent for most of the important and successful writers of his time" (70). Stephen Crane, H.G. Wells, Frank Norris, and Jack London are some of the authors Reynolds handled early in his career. Perhaps we can see Reynolds as Cather might have seen him by remembering that Cather was drawn to "aristocratic" types. In fact, she collected aristocrats. As Patricia Lee Yongue has pointed out, Cather was drawn to people of wealth and aesthetic sensibility and to those who came by their wealth through artistic accomplishment or inheritance (47). Isabelle McClung, Annie Fields, Stephen Tennant, Yehudi Menuhin—these were people who had the breeding or sensibility to use their wealth to live aesthetically. Although at heart a Puritan, Paul Reynolds would have fit with Cather's view of an aristocrat. He was a Harvard-educated Boston Brahmin of old stock and distinguished family, a great-grandson of Paul Revere, and a disciple at Harvard of William James. Cather would have been drawn to the Brahmin side of Reynolds. However, she would have been more ambivalent about his shrewd business side. That side could close the deal, as Allen states, with "no tub-thumping, no oratory, no frenzy of enthusiasm, no attempt to hypnotize the editor into signing on the dotted line," yet with an uncanny ability to obtain the highest prices for his authors because of his knowledge of the markets and of what a manuscript would bring (86). Even though Cather supported herself after she left *McClure's* solely on the income from her writing, her own aesthetic sense caused her great ambivalence about the business side of writing: decades later she would write, "Economics and art are strangers" (Cather, "Escapism" 27).

How did Cather come to use Paul Reynolds as her agent? It was common practice for Reynolds to solicit an author directly. Dorothy Canfield Fisher responded in the affirmative to a letter from him suggesting to her that she give him a chance to show her what he could do (Reynolds to DCF, 11 December 1907). But for Cather, Reynolds used a third-party recommendation. In a letter dated 10 June 1916, Cather's editor at Houghton Mifflin, Ferris Greenslet, tells Cather that

Paul Reynolds had written asking for her address because he had magazines asking for a story by her (Greenslet to WC, 10 June 1916). Edith Lewis knew Reynolds at about this time from her work at *Every Week* magazine, so perhaps she seconded Greenslet's recommendation (Lewis to Reynolds, September 1925). Whatever the case, Cather lost no time in getting together with Reynolds. In less than two weeks time, he sold "The Diamond Mine" to *McClure's* for \$600 and in November sold "A Gold Slipper" to Harper's for \$500, more money than she expected for either story. She was pleased and wrote to Greenslet, telling him that Reynolds could sell anything (Woodress 278).

Reynolds's next sale was "Ardesa" in September of 1917 to the *Century*, the second magazine which I would like to highlight. This story was Cather's fourth appearance in that magazine—she had sold three earlier stories to them herself before this sale by Reynolds. Since half of her published short stories, four of eight stories, in the previous ten years had gone to the *Century*, it would seem important to ask, why was this market so attractive to Cather? From 1895-1905 *Harper's* and the *Century* were leaders in the "quality magazine" class; the *Century* was especially strong in short fiction (Mott Vol IV 43). Cather must have known this magazine well, because the Cather family collection of books contained home-bound volumes of the *Century* (Woodress 50). In August of 1907 she made her first appearance in the magazine, with the story "The Willing Muse." That issue, like all the others at that time, is beautifully printed and lavishly illustrated. One historian describes the *Century* as "characterized by the highest aesthetic and moral ideals . . . and of great importance in the development of American literature throughout a life of sixty years" (Mott Vol III 480). I believe that Cather would have been proud to have her work appear in the *Century*.

No record has been found of the amount Cather received for her early stories in the *Century*, but in the early days before the competition of the popular magazines with their wide audience appeal, the more discriminating *Harper's*, *Scribner's* and *Century* had their pick of the literary giants of the day without paying large prices. When magazines like *McClure's*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and *Ladies' Home Journal* came along, a revolution in circulation and advertising revenues caused fiction prices to skyrocket. Reynolds sold "Ardesa" to the *Century* for \$400, which in 1917 was considerably less than Cather might have received if she had been willing to sell to one of the more popular magazines (Reynolds to WC, 24 October 1917). For example, that same year Sinclair Lewis had sold a story to the *Saturday Evening Post* for over \$1000; another, sold at the same time to the *Century*, paid him only \$200 (Schorer 237). This 1917 sale of Cather's to the *Century* runs contrary to the notion that

Cather was writing short stories she didn't care about in order to earn enough money to write the novels that were important to her. Even though 1917 was a time when she must have been strapped for cash because of the minimal royalties she was receiving from *The Song of the Lark*, Cather's main concern about placing her stories at this time does not seem to have been money; instead she seemed more concerned with the magazines' highbrow or avant-garde reputation. Reynolds knew Cather's feelings, respected them, and sold to the markets she preferred. Early in his relationship with another client, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, he wrote: "I am your humble slave and servant and the articles are yours and I wish to handle them to your satisfaction" (Reynolds to DCF, 2 September 1919). There is no reason to think that he handled Cather's affairs any differently.

Although Reynolds may have told his authors that he was a "slave and a servant" when it came to their wishes about their work, that does not mean he passively waited for them to call the shots. His letters are full of advice and directions, prodding and suggestions to get his authors to allow him to do what was best for them. And Reynolds' view of "best" usually involved more money for an author. Certainly "more money" was one reason why three of Cather's best short stories and one serialized novel appeared between 1925 and 1935 in the third magazine I would like to highlight, *Woman's Home Companion*. Again, however, I don't think money was her major motive for publication in this magazine.

The *Woman's Home Companion* was one of the "Big Six" of women's magazines of the day, meaning that it was at the top of the list in both circulation and advertising. It was these advertising revenues that enabled editors to pay authors huge prices for their fiction (Zuckerman 180). There was big money to be made in publishing in the women's magazines, both short fiction and serialized novels. In 1917 Cather was burdened by worry over money and having difficulty finishing *My Ántonia*, because the time spent on the short fiction that earned her money took time away from writing the novel (Meyering 3). Why then did she tell Reynolds that there was no chance of serializing *My Ántonia* (WC to Reynolds, 24 September 1917)? It is not clear to me why she was so set against serialization at this point. Obviously she could have used the money. Her publisher, Houghton Mifflin, had no apparent bias against serialization. In fact, Cather's editor there, Ferris Greenslet, once himself submitted for an author a manuscript for serialization to over a dozen magazines. When he wasn't able to make the sale, he turned it over to Reynolds, who did successfully sell the serial rights (Ballou 564). The same year that *My Ántonia* was published, Edith Wharton was paid \$18,000 by one of the Big Six to serialize *The Age of Innocence* (Benstock 357). To put into perspective what \$18,000 could have

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bought in 1918, the library with the green tile roof that is still in use today on Main Street in Red Cloud was built and furnished in 1918 for \$20,000. Cather could not have sold her serialization at this time for what Wharton was able to get for hers, but by not serializing her novel, Cather was turning down a considerable sum, just the same. One objection to serialization, most frequently heard from publishers, was that serialization hurt a novel's sales, but there is no indication that this was necessarily true. In fact, numerous examples can be cited of serializations coupled with excellent book sales. Dorothy Canfield Fisher's 1921 novel, *The Brimming Cup*, had been serialized; Reynolds sold it to *McCall's* for \$15,000 (Reynolds to DCF, 2 February 1920). That novel had advance sales of 20,000 copies. By contrast, in its first six months, Cather's never-serialized novel, *My Ántonia*, sold only 7,000.

Cather expressed reluctance not only about serializing her novels but also about publishing in women's magazines, frequently turning down lucrative offers which came to Reynolds' attention. Eventually, Reynolds persuaded Cather to change her mind. In May of 1924 he sold "Uncle Valentine" to the *Woman's Home Companion* for \$3000, Cather's first appearance in the Big Six. It has been repeatedly written that Cather herself sold this story, but the evidence indicates otherwise. Reynolds sent her a check for \$2700 (that's \$3000, less his ten percent). Reynolds would have been sending Cather this check only if he had sold the story (Reynolds to WC, 17 June 1924).

Cather appeared three more times in the *Woman's Home Companion*, but I would suggest that Cather's subsequent publications in that magazine had more to do with her compatible professional relationship with the editor, Gertrude Battles Lane, than with a desire on Cather's part to earn the large amount of money available from publishing in the women's magazines. Cather and Lane were very much alike; though Lane did not write fiction, she was the very successful editor-in-chief at the *Woman's Home Companion* for thirty years. She never married, but always lived with a female companion. She worked hard, had a close relationship with her family, maintained a country home in Connecticut, traveled often throughout the United States and Europe, enjoyed the theater and opera, and loved to dress well. When Lane died in 1941, *Time Magazine* described her as "the best man in the business" (65). When Cather was managing editor at *McClure's Magazine*, S.S. McClure had called her the best magazine executive he knew.

Ironically, however, this close affinity with Lane ultimately had an adverse impact on Cather's income from magazine sales. By 1930 when "Neighbor Rosicky" appeared in the *Woman's Home Companion*, Cather

was almost finished using Reynolds as her agent. By that time, either the Knopf firm was selling her writing to the magazines or Cather was placing the stories herself. Cather wrote Reynolds that she had sent "Neighbor Rosicky" to Lane as a result of a telephone conversation and that there were no written records about the sale (WC to Reynolds, 25 March 1930). Why didn't Cather use Reynolds better? Perhaps one reason was her pride: she might have thought, as a former editor, that she didn't need Reynolds. In contrast, Dorothy Canfield Fisher's relationship with Reynolds was long and profitable. Fisher was his client for thirty-seven years until he died at the age of eighty. Early on in their relationship, Fisher wrote to Reynolds that she was happy to have him for her middleman: "The side of relations to editors is getting dimmer and dimmer to me, and I can only pray you for my sake to avoid a sudden death, or a retirement from business, for I should be left high and dry!" (DCF to Reynolds, 5 September 1919). Also, perhaps Alfred Knopf discouraged Cather's use of Reynolds as her agent, believing that the Knopf firm could do anything for Cather that Reynolds might do. Fisher, on the other hand, didn't allow her publisher, Alfred Harcourt, to interfere with her relationship with Reynolds, even though Harcourt was one of her husband's oldest friends and Harcourt was never enthusiastic about her serializations.

Reynolds did not place the other stories or the serial that Cather sold to the *Woman's Home Companion* after 1930, and he could easily have predicted the consequences of Cather's direct dealings with Lane. Authors were often foolish when it came to business, and editors were not above taking advantage of them. The evidence that Cather was not a good agent on her own behalf is clear. First, the money Cather received for her work remained low in comparison to what she could have made. Reynolds was a whiz at negotiating increases for his authors' prices with editors. For example, Fisher's price for a serialization in Lane's magazine went from \$15,000 in 1923 to an offer of \$35,000 in 1929 (Reynolds to DCF, 9 December 1929). No record has been found of what Cather received for the serialization of *Lucy Gayheart*, which was sold to the *Woman's Home Companion* in 1935 without benefit of Reynolds's expertise, but it would be a good guess that the amount was far less than it was worth, based on what we know Cather received from Lane for her 1932 story "Two Friends." Lane paid her \$3500 for this story, an increase of only \$500 over what Reynolds had sold her first story for in that magazine eight years before. We can judge what Reynolds would have thought of Cather as a negotiator from a phrase that is found frequently in Reynolds's papers to other authors: the price that Cather received for her story, had he known about it, would have grilled his soul.

A second unfortunate outcome of Cather's direct dealings with Lane came in the form of hurt feelings. In

1936 Cather sent Lane "The Old Beauty," a story Cather herself thought much of, according to Edith Lewis (180). Presumably Lane didn't like the story. She could be very direct. She might even have suggested that Cather make changes. Reynolds was always the consummate professional and soul of tact. At this point he'd been dealing with writers' egos for forty years. If Cather had allowed him to continue to be her middleman, Reynolds would have mediated between Cather and Lane gracefully in a way that would have saved face for them both. Instead, Cather withdrew her story. There is no indication that she ever submitted any fiction to a magazine again.

Attitudes of writers towards the marketplace during Cather's most productive fiction-writing years were in a state of flux. As Edith Wharton's career came to an end, she was pleased to reap the financial benefits that went along with the rise of the writer as a commercial property, quite comfortably defining her writing as a business as well as a passion (Benstock 355). But authors soon came to feel the need to distance themselves from an attitude that appeared to equate their work with merchandise. When Wharton's career was ending, Ernest Hemingway's was just beginning, and his attitude was to react against even the appearance of "selling out" to the mass market of readers that was being created by advertising and modern publishing practices (Leff xiii, 49). Cather was caught in the middle and pulled in opposite directions by these conflicting points of view; the inconsistencies of her magazine publications would seem to be a direct reflection of her ambivalence about the changing trends in what was becoming the writing business.

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"My Six Books Would Be": The Cather-Hurston Connection

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Recent studies of women and African American writers have challenged long-held ideas about Modernism. Yet with the exception of George Hutchinson's 1995 study *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White*, few scholars have asked about relationships among black and white writers. Usually the only footbridges provided between the two groups assume white patronage of black writers and white use of black culture. Hutchinson's book begins to strengthen the stanchions by "rereading the Harlem Renaissance and the problematics of American cultural nationalism. But even that project is only a prologue to something more, for what has come to be at issue is the problem of rethinking American cultural history from a position of interracial marginality, a position that sees . . . 'white' and 'black' American cultures as intimately intertwined, mutually constitutive" (Hutchinson 3). I would like here to assume the possibility of such a community.

My own interest in two modern writers, Willa Cather (1873-1947) and Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960), in particular, has made me question the possible influence if not direct connections between these racial groups. The fact that many writers of the twenties and thirties shared the same place of residence, New York City, suggests that they may have been aware of, even influenced by, each other, and may have had more actual contact with each other than has been yet recorded in biographies or scholarly studies. Most of the scholarship to date on Hurston treats her as a member of the Southern and African American communities. More specifically, she is included as a major figure of the Harlem Renaissance. Certainly, she has been studied within the context of women writers, but what scholars have not done is to connect Hurston to other modernists, especially her contemporaries who were not African American.

Yet, in the twenties and thirties Cather and Hurston both lived in New York City. In a recent book arguing Cather's Southernness, Joyce McDonald states that "during the time Cather lived on Bank Street, the Harlem Renaissance was at its height, producing the strong literary voices of W.E.B. DuBois, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, and later, Zora Neale Hurston. . . . But whether Cather was familiar with or even read the works of these authors remains a mystery" (106). The standard Cather biography written by James Woodress includes no references to Harlem Renaissance writers. Clearly, if any connection exists, it has not been documented. One impediment to this

research is the fact that collections of letters have not been published for these two important writers. While reading Cather letters in the Houghton Library at Harvard in the summer of 1998, I discovered one Hurston letter in the collection. Curious to read a letter in Hurston's own handwriting, I was amazed to find Willa Cather and her 1918 novel *My Ántonia* mentioned, proof that Hurston read and admired Cather. With this as a beginning point, I would like to speculate on the possibility that their knowledge of each other goes beyond this reference and briefly to propose reasons for Hurston's admiration of *My Ántonia*.

First, Cather and Hurston share New York City as their primary place of residence in the twenties, thirties, and forties. Cather, of course, being older, had been in New York longer, beginning in 1906 when she moved to Washington Square after ten years in Pittsburgh. She lived in two other apartments, 82 Washington Place beginning in 1908 and 5 Bank Street beginning in 1913 as well as the Grosvenor Hotel on 5th Avenue in 1927. Five years later she settled in a Park Avenue apartment where she would reside until her death in 1947. During these years she often spent time in other locations: the summer in the southwest or on Grand Manan Island, New Brunswick, and the fall in Jaffrey, New Hampshire. She also made regular trips home to Red Cloud, Nebraska, until the thirties. Cather once wrote, "I keep my own suitcases under the bed" (Urgo 15). I suspect Hurston did the same since she was no less a wanderer. She first came to New York in January 1925 and stayed until February 1927 and then was back for extended stays in 1937-38, 1940-41 and 1946-47 leaving in May of 1947, just after Cather died in April. So from 1925 until 1947 their residences in, as well as exiles from, New York City often overlapped.

Of course, proximity does not mean that Cather and Hurston met, but they were reading the New York papers which would have included articles and reviews of their work or stories about social and public events that they each attended. In fact, Hurston first came to New York because Charles Spurgeon Johnson, the editor of *Opportunity*, invited her after he published her story "Drenched in Light" in 1924. In May 1925 she won two second-place prizes for the short story "Spunk" and a play, *Color Struck*, and attended an awards dinner designed to provide an occasion for literary New York to meet young black writers (Hemenway 20). At this dinner Hurston first met Langston Hughes (1902-1967), Countee Cullen (1903-1946), Carl Van Vechten (1880-1964), Annie Nathan Meyer (1867-1951), and Fannie Hurst (1885-1968), who were among the more than three hundred guests (Wall 964). According to her biographer, Robert Hemenway, "Hurston shrewdly used this and subsequent dinners to make contacts, impressing those she met and encouraging a series of friendships that would significantly aid her career" (20). She was also "an extra-ordinarily witty woman, and she acquired

an instant reputation in New York for her high spirits and side-splitting tales of Eatonville life. She could walk into a room of strangers, whether on Park Avenue or at a Harlem party, and almost immediately gather people, charm, amuse, and impress them, until it did not seem at all unnatural to be offering her whatever she might want" (Hemenway 22).

Several offers did result from this awards dinner in 1925. Annie Nathan Meyer, a founder of Barnard College and a socially prominent novelist (Hemenway 21), arranged a scholarship for Hurston at Barnard, where she was the only African American student. There she studied with Columbia anthropologist Franz Boas. For a time Hurston lived on 131st Street in Harlem, then in 1926 moved to West 66th Street to be close to Fannie Hurst (Wall 964), author of many popular novels such as *Imitation of Life* (1933). One of the judges for the contest Hurston won, Hurst hired Hurston as her personal secretary, later chauffeur and companion, and introduced Hurston to many of her New York friends (Hemenway 20). Fannie Hurst herself had met Cather in the early twenties at the home of May Wilson Preston, another writer. Hurst described Cather, then in her late forties, as a "smooth-haired, middle-aged woman of 'vast serenity,' who looked as if she had never been very young. 'Her era . . . seemed to swirl about her stately intellectual isolation like a noisy storm' and her Bank Street apartment was 'no more a part of Fitzgerald's twenties than of Mars'" (Robinson 235). The facts of Cather's life suggest that Hurst's description is misleading. Cather's social life may have been quieter than Hurston's but no less active and varied. According to James Woodress, "from her quiet corner Cather was an observer rather than a participant in the yeasty ferment in Greenwich Village in the years before World War I" (236). But he also points out that about 1915 she "had begun the practice . . . of having people drop in for tea and talk on Friday afternoons" ("Historical Essay" 379). Certainly, "she tried to keep distractions to a minimum but she enjoyed an evening with congenial people from time to time" (Robinson 235). Throughout all of her New York years she enjoyed going to concerts, frequently dined with friends, and had dinner parties herself because she liked to share her French cook. Additionally, Cather had many long-term friendships. The best examples are the two women to whom she dedicated *My Ántonia*, Carrie and Irene Miner, models for the Harling sisters and friends since their childhood together in Red Cloud. But her friendship with the child prodigy violinist Yehudi Menuhin and his family, which began when they met in Paris in 1930, suggests that at age fifty-seven Cather was still able to befriend people of all ages.

One of Cather's friends, Carl Van Vechten, was also a "close friend" of Hurston (Howard 30). Van Vechten maintained a regular correspondence with both women for more than twenty-five years. He first met Cather

before World War I when she was living on Bank Street in Greenwich Village. About ten years later when Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop* was published in 1927, Cather wrote in response to Van Vechten's praise of the novel that "his letter gave her a fine glow of satisfaction. As a sophisticated city dweller, he was a test case. She had wondered if the book would seem at all true to people who knew the world well and the Southwest only a little" (Woodress 396).

"Sophisticated city dweller" is an accurate description of Van Vechten, a graduate of the University of Chicago with a degree in philosophy, as well as a friend of the widest city circle. After graduation he was first an assistant music critic for the *New York Times* (1906-1912), then drama critic for the *New York Press* (1913-14), developing in both positions his critical knowledge of dance, opera, theater, and music. At the same time his "admiration and respect for black arts and artists also deepened and broadened . . . [By 1924] his career included six volumes of essays on music, theater, and other interests" as well as three novels. He wrote four more novels (including the controversial *Nigger Heaven*, 1925) and three more books of essays before he began another career, this time as a photographer. In 1923 he had met Langston Hughes and James Weldon Johnson (Kellner 367) and began to give interracial parties that were routinely reported in the black press. Even *Time* magazine reported in 1925: "Sullen-mouthed silky haired Author Van Vechten has been playing with Negroes lately . . . writing prefaces for their poems, having them around the house, going to Harlem" (Hemenway 25). James Weldon Johnson's assistant, Walter White, "referred to Van Vechten's apartment as the mid-town branch of the NAACP . . . Van Vechten was only the most prominent of many, for as Langston Hughes remarked in *The Big Sea*, Harlem parties often had enough white celebrities in attendance to turn any Nordic social climber green with envy" (Hemenway 25). According to Hemenway, "It was a time when whites went out of their way to meet blacks, invite them to parties, ask them to serve as passports to Harlem" (25). Hurston was "very much a part of this scene . . . Partially through contacts made with Hurst, partially because she was not afraid to court relationships with those who could help her, she became widely known in the Van Vechten circle . . . She became a common guest at the Van Vechten parties, where attendance was often a sign that Harlem artists had made their mark among upper-crust whites" (Hemenway 27). Cather's friendship with Van Vechten and Hurston's friendship with him are concurrent from 1925 until Cather's death.

Van Vechten specialized in portraits, many of them of Harlem Renaissance writers, including Hurston. She was not shy of the camera. In a letter to Van Vechten in December of 1934, she comments on a series of photographs he had taken of her: "I love myself when I am

(continued on page 78)

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(continued)

laughing. And then again when I am looking mean and impressive." Cather, on the other hand, did not like to have her picture taken. In spite of the fact that "[s]he liked Van Vechten and they had a lot in common," she did not agree to let him photograph her until 1936, after he had pleaded with her for years (Woodress 466). Yet it is easy to imagine that Van Vechten would have discussed Cather with Hurston and vice versa: they were both newsworthy topics. With six novels already to her credit, Cather continued to be productive during these years, publishing *The Professor's House* in 1925, *My Mortal Enemy* in 1926, *Death Comes for the Archbishop* in 1927, *Shadows on the Rock* in 1931, and a collection of stories, *Obscure Destinies*, in 1932. The New York papers regularly carried announcements and reviews of these works. Carl Van Vechten was reading and talking about these books while also attentive to Hurston's early writing.

Hurston, of course, began her career in the twenties, a decade after Cather, publishing her first short story in 1921. She continued to write stories and win prizes throughout the twenties. She did field work in Harlem for Boas, collaborated with Langston Hughes and others on a quarterly "'devoted to younger Negro artists'" (Wall 964), and received a fellowship to collect folklore in the South. She and Langston Hughes also collaborated on a play and traveled together. Hurston was not able to make a living from her writing and was supported from December 1927 until the fall of 1932 by Charlotte Mason (Mrs. Rufus Osgood Mason), "a wealthy white Park Avenue woman" who liked to be called godmother (Howard 22-23).

The year in which Hurston wrote the letter that provided my starting point, 1934, Hurston spent on the move, first in January as a faculty member at Bethune-Cookman College in Daytona Beach, Florida. Because of disagreements with the school's president, Mary McLeod Bethune, however, she left in April and took a group of performers to the National Folk Festival in St. Louis. The year's most significant event for Hurston is the publication in May of her first novel, *Jonah's Gourd Vine*. In December 1934 Hurston was briefly in New York to enroll at Columbia for the spring semester, but did not attend classes (Hemenway 209). For Cather the year was less eventful; she published *Lucy Gayheart*, spent the summer on Grand Manan Island, and the fall in Jaffrey, New Hampshire (O'Brien 957).

While Cather's and Hurston's wanderings during this particular year specifically would make it unlikely that their paths crossed, between 1934 and 1936 they shared a correspondent in Lewis Stiles Gannett (1891-1966). Gannett graduated from Harvard with a degree in philosophy, studied economics in Germany, received his MA from Cambridge, and began his career in journalism as a reporter and rewrite man for the *New York World*. In 1917

he was in France as a part of a Quaker relief unit and covered the peace conference for *The Survey*. Gannett then worked for *The Nation*, reviewing books occasionally but serving as associate editor, foreign correspondent, and business manager from 1919-28 when he moved to the *New York Herald Tribune* and first wrote a review column three times a week (G[irson] 10). Beginning in 1931 he next wrote a daily review column for the *Tribune*, reading about 400 books per year. Hurston's letter to Gannett, dated May 12, 1934, is a response to both his review of *Jonah's Gourd Vine* and a letter he sent her after writing the review. The first part of the letter responded to the review. Hurston began by saying, "Your criticism is so full of understanding kindness that by the time I got half-way thru, my feelings were running all over me" (Letter 1). In particular, she is appreciative of Gannett's understanding of the black preacher as poet and actor. After a long paragraph on the black preacher, Hurston provides no transition to the second part of the letter, which is presumably her response to his letter. She simply begins: "My six books would be" followed by a numbered list including *The Return of the Hero* (1923) by Darrell Figgis; *Penguin Island* (1909) by Anatole France; *Back Street* (1931) by Fannie Hurst; *Along This Way* (1933), James Weldon Johnson's autobiography; *The Good Earth* (1931) by Pearl Buck; and *My Ántonia* (1918) by Cather. Gannett must have asked Hurston to name six books she liked or thought were significant generally or important to her specifically. Given the fact that many are contemporary and all are published in the twentieth century, within twenty-five years of each other, he may have limited her in this way. Whatever Gannett's request was, the list itself is both eclectic and inclusive in the forms it includes--folklore, allegory, novels, and an autobiography--as well as authors: one Irish, one French, one African American, three American women, one of these a Nobel prize winner, another a popular writer, and the last the more established member of the literary elite, Willa Cather. Hurston's only other comment about the list is: "The order here means nothing" (Letter 2). Clearly she did not want to rank these books. Later in 1942, Hurston also listed Cather among her favorite writers in a brief entry she wrote of herself for a biographical dictionary. Cather and Anatole France are the only writers who appear on both lists, suggesting that these two remained key to her.

Conversely, Cather's letter to Gannett written December 16, 1936, is cryptic—two sentences in which she thanks him for allowing her to refuse his request. I suspect that he asked Cather for a list similar to Hurston's. That she would have refused such a request is certain, given her emphatic refusal in other letters to comment on the quality of the works of other writers, especially living ones.

So far I have not found a way of dating Hurston's reading of *My Ántonia*, but it probably took place in the decade between the 1918 publication date and 1928. The novel was widely available during those years. As a

folklorist, essayist, and short story writer who would become a novelist, Hurston found much to admire in *My Ántonia*. First, she would have appreciated Cather's vivid depiction of Nebraska and its immigrants, something Hurston would do in her novels for Florida and its common folk, both black and white. The natural landscape so crucial to *My Ántonia* is also central in Hurston's work. Additionally, the use of memory and the oral tradition were important to Hurston as a Southern writer. Cather was a Southerner too, after all. The use of various story tellers, as well as folktales like the Peter and Pavel story, would have appealed to Hurston, who was combining fiction and folklore in her own research and writing. Inclusiveness was a shared trait. Just as Janie in Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* finds her own voice, Ántonia too becomes the author of her own story. Both appear first as children, then adolescents, and finally as strong women in their forties, women who have endured some of life's hardest experiences. Cather described *My Ántonia* as a "novel of feeling," a description fitting Hurston's novels as well. Cather also understood the importance of her book, calling it "the best thing I've done . . . I feel I've made a contribution to American letters with that book" (Woodress "Historical Essay" 387, 391). Hurston certainly agreed.

At the end of her letter to Gannett, Hurston says, "I am much more than mouth-glad at your kindness to me, and then too and again, I thank you. You encourage me to work and try to improve up the next time I say to a volume 'go gator and muddy the water'" (Letter 2). For Hurston, *My Ántonia* had actively muddied the water. For me Hurston's letter muddied the water, but I'm happy to continue to wrestle with this gator.

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Our Lady in the New World: The Role of the Virgin Mary in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*

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Writing to a friend soon after finishing *Death Comes For the Archbishop* in 1927, Willa Cather said that the novel told "a story with no woman in it but the Virgin Mary."¹ Cather exaggerated; females do appear in the book, but her comment shows Mary's importance to the two male protagonists, Jean Marie Latour and Joseph Vaillant, both Catholic priests sent to New Mexico in the nineteenth century. Indeed, the epigraph for *Archbishop* is "Auspice Maria," or Mary guides, the inscription on Father Vaillant's signet ring.² Mary is also a protector and provider, mediator and comforter, inspirer, teacher, healer, rejuvenator, and intercessor. A pervasive presence in *Archbishop* as she has been in the history of the Catholic Church, the Virgin Mary appears in seven of the novel's nine books, binding an otherwise loose narrative together and focusing it on two lives of faith in action.³

In a letter to *The Commonweal* in 1927, Cather said that Jean Baptiste Lamy, the first bishop of New Mexico and later an archbishop, served as the model for Jean Marie Latour, while Lamy's close friend Father Joseph P. Machebeuf was the inspiration for Father Joseph Vaillant.

Cather used William Joseph Howlett's biography, *The Life of the Right Reverend Joseph P. Machebeuf*, as one source for her book. "What I got from Father Machebeuf's letters [included in the biography]," said Cather, "was the mood, the spirit in which they accepted the accidents and hardships of a desert country, the joyful energy that kept them going."⁴ Mary is at the heart of that joyful energy. Cather's novel resembles a medieval saint's life, a story of the incidents in two men's lives in service to the Church and God. Like Mary's, their faith is active and tactile: the doing of God's work on this earth. Speaking of Father Vaillant, Cather calls him "the wiry little priest whose life was to be a succession of mountain ranges, pathless deserts, yawning canyons and swollen rivers, who was to carry the Cross into territories yet unknown and unnamed, who would wear down mules and horses and scouts and stage-drivers . . ." (301).

As arduous as that work is, it is not ascetic; it partakes of the joys and sorrows of this earth, just as Mary did. Latour and Vaillant's work and faith are of the senses; so is their joy. At home, Latour and Vaillant live in comfort, albeit not luxury. On Christmas Day, Vaillant prepares himself and the bishop a feast of "dark onion soup with croutons," followed by "roast chicken and *pommes sautées*" (299), and then for dessert "a com-

pote of dried plums" (301). "A soup like this is not the soup of one man," says Latour. "It is the result of a constantly refined tradition. There are nearly a thousand years of history in this soup" (299). Harshly demanding as their faith sometimes is, Latour and Vaillant do not deny themselves pleasure, nor do they live a life of pure contemplation. "One day . . .," says Father Joseph, "I will return to some religious house in France and end my days in devotion to the Holy Mother. For the time being, it is my destiny to serve Her in action" (300-1). Yet, Joseph's wish is not to be; he will live and die venerating Mary in action, not contemplation. For Father Joseph's and Bishop Latour's incessant, busy work on earth, Mary is the perfect inspiration and embodiment, both in the Catholic faith and in Cather's novel. As the mother of Christ, Mary brought God's word into flesh. As with Latour and Vaillant, her life is not a denial of the senses, but an affirmation of them in God's service. Also like them, she glorifies God in her deeds as well as her thoughts. In Catholic belief, Mary is the only one who served God so faithfully that she serves as a mediator between God and humans for all time.

Mary acts first in *Archbishop* as protector and guide. In "The Cruciform Tree," Father Latour, the newly appointed Bishop of New Mexico, has gotten lost in the desert while travelling to see the Bishop of Durango in Mexico. Drained by his exertions, the heat, and the lack of water, Latour comes upon a cruciform tree where he dismounts and prays for deliverance.⁵ Just an hour later, he comes to an oasis, a place with "running water, clover fields, cottonwoods, acacias, [and] little adobe houses with brilliant gardens" (289). While Latour is watering his mules, a young Mexican girl named Josepha approaches and greets him in the name of Mary: "*Ave Maria Purissima, Señor*" (290). Josepha's salutation, "Hail Purest Mary," echoes that made by Gabriel at the annunciation, "Hail Mary, full of grace: the Lord is with thee."⁶ To Catholics, Gabriel's words not only show Mary as the recipient of divine grace but also as possessor and hence dispenser of that grace.⁷ She is pure and uncorrupt, immaculately conceived as is her child Jesus; through her willingness to bear the Christ, humans are assured eternal life.⁸ Since Alexander referred to Mary as *Theotokos* or God Bearer in his encyclical of A.D. 319, the Catholic Church has seen Mary as "Mediator between Creator and Creature."⁹

Thus, in the same way that Mary willingly helps restore humankind by giving birth to Jesus Christ, so too does she act in the novel to save Father Latour. Though her intervention is not explicit in this first book, Josepha's greeting suggests that it is Mary who has brought the lost priest to the safety of her family's settlement, *Agua Secreta*. Father Latour later thinks that Father Vaillant "would say, 'A miracle' that the Holy Mother to whom he had addressed himself before the cruciform tree had led him hither. And it was a miracle" (293). Josepha's grandfather Benito is also sure that the "Blessed Virgin" has interceded to bring Father Latour to his family (290).

Thus, true to her role as protector and guide, Mary delivers the devout priest, bringing him to a community where he will find welcome, hospitality, and kindness.¹⁰

Mary's role grows larger in the second chapter, "Hidden Water." Here she becomes provider, mediator, and comforter, as well as protector and guide. Having led Father Latour safely to *Agua Secreta*, the Virgin provides Josepha's family and neighbors with the sacraments they have been without for years.¹¹ After resting overnight, the bishop hears confessions, celebrates Mass, baptizes, and sanctifies marriages (290). Hence, Mary provides for the spiritual needs of the people in *Agua Secreta* even as she provides for the physical needs of Father Latour. In this way, Mary becomes the handmaiden of the Lord, the very name she gives to herself in the Magnificat, her response to Gabriel's visitation in the first chapter of Luke.¹²

The Virgin also acts as mediator between cultures in this episode.¹³ The French bishop admires the Mexican family's collection of holy images and finds their figure of the Virgin particularly striking. The hand-carved Mary is "a sorrowing mother," he muses, akin to the "homely stone carvings on the front of the old parish churches in Auvergne" or even to "some of the rigid mosaics of the Eastern church" (292). Hence, as both icon and saint, Mary links the French priest and the Mexican family together in the service of Christ. The family's devotion to the figure of the sorrowing mother, the *Mater Dolorosa*, further moves Father Latour.¹⁴ They accord her a place of honor on the fireplace mantle and use her likeness to adorn the makeshift altar set up for the bishop's impromptu celebration of Mass (292;293). He knows that through Mary's visible lamentation of Christ's death, she shows herself to be fully human, able to empathize with other ordinary mortals in the trials and tribulations of life. The Virgin is the embodiment of faith in this world; having compassion and pity for humans in their pain, she brings them comfort.

In "The Bishop *Chez Lui*," Mary is both inspirer and guide. On Christmas Day, in the early evening, the bishop is writing to his brother. Pausing, Father Latour gazes out his study window at a star shining more brightly than all the rest in the darkening sky and is lost in the beauty of the moment: "The evening star hung above the amber afterglow, so soft, so brilliant that she seemed to bathe in her own silver light" (298). To Latour, the Virgin manifests herself in that one lustrous star, and *Ave Maris Stella*, the ninth-century hymn of praise hailing Mary, Star of the Sea, comes to his mind.¹⁵ Sailors traditionally sang the *Ave Maris Stella*, believing that the Virgin's star led them on their voyages and overcame enemies and storms.¹⁶ Father Latour himself has just returned nine days ago from his own journey to the bishop in Durango, an overland voyage through which Mary acted as his guide, often in turbulent times. Mary's bright star marks the safe end of that journey and the beginning of another. Having obtained his credentials from the Bishop of Durango to assume his position as Bishop of

New Mexico, Latour is poised on the brink of his ministry in his new Diocese. He knows that hard work lies ahead: he has missionary journeys to undertake, new churches and schools to establish, wayward clergy to discipline, and further off, perhaps not even a fully formed thought yet, a magnificent cathedral to build. As he applies himself to these tasks, Mary, Star of the Sea, will give him hope and help and direction.

"A Bell and A Miracle," relates two stories that again feature Mary as mediator between cultures. In the first, Father Latour awakens to hear a bell ringing. Its sound is "full [and] clear, with something bland and suave[;] each note floated through the air like a globe of silver" (302). The reverberating noise makes the bishop think sleepily that he is in Rome, hearing again the *Angelus*, the Ave Maria Bell. Rung in devotion to Mary three times a day, the *Angelus* began with the Franciscan order in the thirteenth century.¹⁷ As the bishop gains consciousness, hearing the nine strokes fade away, he detects something Eastern about the tone. Father Vaillant explains that he found the bell in storage and had it hung as a surprise for Father Latour. Vaillant further notes the 1356 Spanish inscription on the bell and attributes its clear tone to the substantial amount of silver in the alloy. Latour in turn muses that the Spaniards learned their silver-working skills from the Moors. "What are you doing, Jean?" Father Vaillant sharply retorts. "Trying to make my bell out an infidel?" (303). Latour, however, sees in the *Angelus* a beautiful melding of cultures.¹⁸ Latour sees that through a bell made to ring in Mary's honor, Christianity transcends and mediates between peoples and times.

Mary appears again as a cultural mediator in the second story of "A Bell and a Miracle." Father Vaillant has arranged for Father Latour to hear Padre Herrera, a Mexican priest, tell about his recent pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe (304). With a "rapt" expression of absolute devotion, Herrera relates the beauty of the shrine and the story "so dear to his heart" of its origins (304). Erected in 1531 through the efforts of a poor Mexican named Juan Diego, to whom the Virgin had appeared in person, the shrine quickly became celebrated as the site where Mary had revealed herself as Patroness of Mexico.¹⁹ Because the Virgin chose to appear at a site that was also previously associated with a native female deity, she incorporates the religious traditions of two different cultures and becomes a "bridge builder" between them, says Jaroslav Pelikan.²⁰ Herrera's story moves both Latour and Vaillant (306). Vaillant has always harbored a pious devotion for Mary, and he sees her appearance to the native Mexicans at Guadalupe as proof of the Virgin's "affection for Her Church on this continent" (304).

As she has in the chapters of Book One, Mary continues to play important roles as protector and teacher in Books Two and Three; her presence, however, is less pervasive and her appearances more subtle. In "The Lonely Road to Mora," Mary protects and defends the

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(continued)

two priests as they cross the Trucas Mountains on a missionary journey. At nightfall, they come upon a destitute farm, inhabited by a poor Mexican woman named Magdalena and her degenerate American husband, Buck Scales. The priests greet Magdalena in the name of the Holy Mother, but the woman seems paralyzed with fear and cannot answer. Finally gathering her strength, she warns the clerics that her husband will kill them and take their mules. Not surprisingly, he also cruelly abuses Magdalena herself. The priests escape unscathed, and, with her confidence buttressed by the priests' kindness, Magdalena too runs away. Buck Scales is brought to justice, and Magdalena comes to Santa Fe to work for five newly arrived nuns starting a convent school. She will "bloom again in the household of God" as she lives with the five teachers on the grounds of The School of Our Lady of Light (324). Thus, Mary hovers over this part of the book: from the time the priests invoke her name in their salutation to Magdalena through the poor Mexican woman's refuge in the school named for the Virgin, Mary protects and delivers both Magdalena and the priests.

By using one of Mary's many honorary titles for the name of their new school, the nuns show her to be a teacher in "The Wooden Parrot." Cather only briefly relates the founding of The School of Our Lady of Light, but later in the novel, she mentions that within six years the school is well established. Indeed, the institution is "reckoned a benefit to the community by Protestants as well as Catholics . . ." (398). At its inception, though, the five nuns whom Father Latour recruits while on his trip to the Plenary Council at Baltimore can only trust in the aid of their school's patron saint to help them disseminate Christian knowledge.

In "The Month of Mary," the Virgin is healer and rejuvenator in a chapter all her own. Recuperating from malaria, Father Vaillant has the leisure for the first time since seminary to devote the month of May to the "contemplation of his Gracious Patroness" (399). Daily he "consecrates" his waking hours to the Virgin and nightly he falls asleep with a sense of "Her protection" (399). Thanking her for healing his body and mind, Father Vaillant calls her "*Alma Mater redemptoris*," or Kind Mother of the Redeemer (978). Vaillant's words attest to his Catholic belief in Mary as mother of all humans by virtue of her role as the mother of Jesus. In her unique position, Mary not only pities humans with a "motherly love," she also actively intercedes on their behalf—for "strength to the weak, comfort to the sorrowing, and pardon to sinners."²¹ Father Vaillant's supplications are heard, and he soon feels that once again he is "able to worship with the ardor of a young religious, for whom religion is pure devotion, unalloyed by expediency and the numbing cares of a missionary's work" (399). The recuperating priest is not alone, however, in his thanks for Mary's healing and rejuvenating touch: Magdalena

and the sisters, also caught up in his zeal, decorate the altar daily with sprays of fresh apple blossoms and daffodils (404). On the other hand, Father Latour is just glad for time to visit with his normally busy friend. Sadly for the bishop, though, Vaillant's period of recuperation does not last long, for his prayers to Mary bring not only physical recovery but also a subsequent spiritual restoration that soon leads him back to Albuquerque, where he has been ministering for the last several years.

"December Night" tells of Mary's role as comforter and intercessor for Father Latour and one of his Mexican parishioners. Depressed and lonely after Father Vaillant's departure in mid-summer, the bishop sinks into a spiritual crisis that reaches its depths a few weeks before Christmas: "His prayers were empty words and brought him no refreshment. His soul had become a barren field. He had nothing within himself to give his priests or his people. His work seemed superficial, a house built upon the sands" (405-6). Unable to sleep and close to despair, Father Latour rises one snowy night to pray at church, where he finds a poor Mexican woman weeping uncontrollably in the doorway (406).²²

Moved to compassion, the bishop leads the woman into the Lady Chapel to pray. Overcome by her emotions, the woman, Sada, falls to the floor before Mary's statue. Sobbing and kissing the feet of the "Holy Mother," she reveals to Father Latour that her employers, strict Protestants, have for nineteen years forbidden her to attend church (407). They have not been able to keep her from her prayers, however, for, unbeknown to them, she has kept her rosary to pray with nightly.²³ Kneeling together, Sada and the bishop pray for the intervention of "Holy Mary, Queen of Virgins."²⁴ Their prayer reflects Catholic belief dating from the twelfth century that as the one chosen to bear Christ, Mary is the Queen of Heaven or *Mater Gloriosa*.²⁵ As such, she is blessed above all other women and chosen by God to be the *Mediatrice*, the one to whom is given the "specific task of pleading the cause of humanity before her Son."²⁶ Praying for Mary's comforting touch in Sada's life brings spiritual renewal for her and also for Father Latour. Kneeling beside her, he feels Mary's comforting love and is convinced that the Virgin as "Fountain of all Pity" will be "food, raiment, friend and mother to her" (409). More importantly, though, the bishop reawakens to his own membership in Christ's priesthood, realizing "this church was Sada's house, and he was a servant in it" (409). Thus, the episode that begins in despair ends in hope, and the two leave with renewed faith, reassured by their prayers. As Father Latour retraces his steps to his house, the snow stops and all is hushed and quiet outside: "the peace without seemed all one with the peace in his own soul" (410).

In "*Auspice Maria!*" Mary again figures prominently, acting as guide to Father Vaillant and as comforter and restorer to Father Latour. With the discovery of gold in Colorado, the population booms, and as the Bishop of Leavenworth writes to Latour, "among all the wanderers and wasters were many honest men, hundreds of good

Catholics, and not one priest. The young men were adrift in a lawless society without spiritual guidance" (426). The bishop determines to send Father Vaillant, always the successful missionary in the past, but, even as he makes his decision, his heart is heavy with a premonition that his friend will not come back to work with him in New Mexico again. As Vaillant departs, he invokes Mary as his guide and protection: "'Auspice, Maria!' he murmured as he turned his back on . . . familiar things" (431). After seeing his friend safely on his way, the bishop rides "home to his solitude" (431). His heart is heavy as he enters his study, until, suddenly, he is aware of "a Presence awaiting him" (432). It is Mary, come to reassure him his "life need not be cold, or devoid of grace in the worldly sense, if it were filled by Her who was all graces; Virgin-daughter, Virgin-mother, girl of the people and Queen of Heaven: *le rêve suprême de la chair*" (432). Hence, Mary once again lifts Father Latour's spirits, giving him hope, strength, and courage to carry on, in both a worldly and a heavenly sense.

As Father Latour contemplates Mary's gift of renewal in his own life, he comes to a new understanding and appreciation for the place of homage she has in the lives of his parishioners. The native women sew intricate garments with which they array the Virgin's statue, and the men make silver jewelry for her. Annually they bedeck a little wooden statue of Mary with rich robes and jewels selected from her vast wardrobe, parading her through the streets in a procession of honor. Father Latour muses that "she was their doll and their queen, something to fondle and something to adore, as Mary's Son must have been to Her" (432).²⁷ Connecting these Mexican traditions and those practiced in Europe, Latour realizes that his native parishioners are only continuing a long history in which adoration of Mary has played an important part; paintings by artists such as Raphael and Titian, music by famous composers, and cathedrals conceived by master architects all come to his mind.²⁸ As a source of inspiration and adoration, Mary also fulfills her recurring role in linking different cultures.

Mary's final appearance at the end of the novel is brief, though significant. In Book Nine, Chapter 5, she once again manifests herself as guide, an appropriate role, given that she has acted in the same capacity at the start of the novel. Here at the end of his life, Father Latour, now retired, readies himself for death; he spends his days resting and quietly reminiscing about his experiences. As he slips in and out of consciousness, he often reaches to feel Father Vaillant's signet ring, which Latour wears now after the death of his good friend. Inscribed "*Auspice Maria!*" the ring simultaneously reminds the Archbishop of Vaillant's faith and devotion to Mary and reassures him of her continued presence in his own life. As such, she will be the auspicious guide who leads him on his way to death and eternal life. One evening just after dark, the Cathedral bell finally tolls signaling the end of Latour's life, and "the next morning the old Archbishop lay before the

high altar in the church he had built" (459). Not far from him, Mary's statue keeps watch in the Lady's Chapel.

Thus, just as Mary guides Latour to his new life as bishop in New Mexico, so she also guides him to his new life after death. It is impossible to understand Catholic belief without paying attention to the place of the Virgin Mary within it. Likewise, to appreciate fully *Death Comes For the Archbishop*, Willa Cather's novel of two Catholic missionary priests, one must examine the role of Mary. She hovers over the lives of the characters and permeates the fabric of the narrative. Over nearly twenty centuries, the idea of Mary has evolved in Catholic thought. From her proclamation as *Theotokos* in A.D. 431 to her status as *Mulier Fortis* in the early Middle Ages to her position as *Mater Dolorosa*, *Mediatrix*, and *Mater Gloriosa* in the High Middle Ages, Mary has become a model of faith and a source of inspiration. She is all of these things in *Death Comes For the Archbishop*.

NOTES

- ¹ James Woodress, *Willa Cather: A Literary Life* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1987) 396.
- ² Willa Cather, *Death Comes For the Archbishop in Later Novels*, ed. Sharon O'Brien (New York: Library of America, 1990) 273, 449. All subsequent parenthetical references are to this edition.
- ³ Hermione Lee says that Cather avoids presenting events in a "sustained chronology," eschews the inclusion of dates, and imbeds stories within the main narrative. The effect makes "the whole story, told in the twentieth century of the nineteenth, feel like a medieval legend"; not surprisingly, Cather used *The Golden Legend*, a medieval collection of saints' lives, as a reference while writing the novel. Lee, *Willa Cather: Double Lives* (New York: Pantheon, 1989) 271. James Woodress asserts that in general, the novel follows the real lives of Lamy and Machebeuf on which it is based. The inserted religious stories tend to become "digressions" for him, but he agrees that mostly they "reinforce the tone of faith" in the novel (398).
- ⁴ Willa Cather, letter to *The Commonweal* 23 Nov. 1927 in *Later Novels* 973.
- ⁵ Merrill Maguire Skaggs draws an analogy between the experiences in Latour's life and the stages represented in the Stations of the Cross; here, for example, Latour endures a painful trial as Jesus did; see Skaggs, "*Death Comes For the Archbishop: Cather's Mystery and Manners*," *American Literature* 57 (1985): 405-6. Similarly, John J. Murphy notes that "According to Catholic belief, Christ shares his priesthood with men through the sacrament at Holy Orders . . . ideally then . . . the priest becomes another Christ, which the opening of *Archbishop* clearly illustrates"; see Murphy, "Willa Cather and Catholic Themes," *Western American Literature* 17 (1982): 54.
- ⁶ The English translation "Hail Purest Mary" for the

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(continued)

- Latin phrase "*Ave Maria Purissima*" comes from the "Note on the Texts" in Cather, *Later Novels* 975. All subsequent translations will come from this edition unless otherwise noted. Gabriel's words to Mary at the annunciation are from the Vulgate Bible and form the opening line of a prayer that has come to be "ranked second only to the Lord's Prayer"; see Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1996) 13.
- ⁷ Pelikan 13. Note also that in A.D. 431, the Council of Ephesus officially proclaimed Mary the *Theotokos*; see Pelikan 223.
- ⁸ In 1439 the Council of Basel declared Mary's immaculate conception to be pious doctrine, though the belief did not become an article of faith until 1854 with an encyclical issued by Pope Pius IX; see Pelikan 183.
- ⁹ Pelikan 55-58.
- ¹⁰ Cather frequently places her pioneer characters into hostile situations to which they adapt by finding strength in their own traditions; indeed, Steven P. Ryan contends that "the conservation of long-established practices proves a means of sheltering the pioneer from the surrounding chaos." The Virgin Mary "*qua protectress*" fulfills this role in *Death Comes For the Archbishop*. Ryan, "'A World Above the World': Transcendence in Cather's Fiction," *Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter* 34 (1990): 29-30.
- ¹¹ A priest serves as an *alter Christus*, administering the sacraments through which Catholics believe they commune with Christ. Thus, sacramental deprivation is very serious to Catholics, since not to partake of the sacraments is to lack direct access to Christ; see Thomas Casey, "Mariology and Christology in *Death Comes From the Archbishop*," *Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter* 35 (1991): 25.
- ¹² As Handmaiden of the Lord, Mary is "instrument of a divine plan," but because she exercises her own free will, she becomes revered by the Middle Ages as the *Mulier Fortis* or Woman of Valor, the "champion, conqueror, and leader" of humanity; see Pelikan 83-91.
- ¹³ French, Mexican, and Indian cultures appear in the novel; these "intersecting worlds" with "medieval levels of meaning" through which Cather relates Latour's life create "a cyclical pattern whereby, from a medieval perspective, all time is present as it is to God"; see Evelyn Haller, "*Death Comes For the Archbishop: A Map of Intersecting Worlds*," *Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter* 34 (1990): 15-16. Hermione Lee notes that Cather honors qualities associated with the various cultures in the novel: "the French for their order, civilization, domestic arts and graciousness, the Mexicans for their passionate, sensual generosity, their fierce pride or naïve religiosity, the Indians as ascetic, ritualistic, dignified, courtly and reserved"; see Lee 279.
- ¹⁴ The portrayal of Mary as the *Mater Dolorosa* became quite widespread during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Europe; the term comes from Simeon's prediction of Mary's inevitable grief over her son's crucifixion when he says to her in Luke 2:35: "Yea, and a sword shall pierce thy own soul also." As *Mater Dolorosa*, Mary is also associated with a paradox: she simultaneously laments and welcomes her son's death, since as a mother she grieves over his loss, but as a human, she welcomes his action as savior of the world. See Pelikan 19; 126. Jean Schwind interprets Latour's attraction to the sorrowing Mary of Agua Secreta as an affirmation of native traditions and a negation of his European heritage; see Schwind, "Latour's Schismatic Church: The Radical Meaning in the Pictorial Methods of *Death Comes For the Archbishop*," *Studies in American Fiction* 13 (1985): 71-88. Since Pelikan's observations give the sorrowing mother a secure place in the history of the Catholic Church in Europe, however, Schwind's contentions seem moot. John J. Murphy takes direct issue with Schwind, asserting that Latour's acceptance of New World traditions is not an "abandonment" of the Old World; instead, his tolerance suggests "a gathering or unifying" of the two cultures; see Murphy, "On the Precipice of a Caesura: *Death Comes For the Archbishop* and Vatican II," *Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter* 35 (1991): 28.
- ¹⁵ The text of the hymn: "*Ave, Maris Stella, / Dei mater alma / Atque semper virgo, / Felix caeli porta,*" translates as "Mary, Star of the Sea, / Nourishing Mother of God, / The Ever-Virgin, / The Gate of Heaven."; see Pelikan 94.
- ¹⁶ Pelikan 94.
- ¹⁷ Ringing the *Angelus* bell is one of two "widespread and popular" devotions to Mary, the other being the recitation of the Rosary. At each ringing of the bell, the Franciscans stopped work to offer up the Hail Mary prayer. The bell's name originates with verse 26 of the first chapter of Luke: "*Angelus domini ad Mariam, Ave gratia plena*"; see Pelikan 99.
- ¹⁸ The *Angelus* bell conflates Christianity and Islam and becomes the symbol that becomes the symbol through which Cather shows how "western faith has been touched upon and changed by the 'Other'"; see Guy Reynolds, *Willa Cather in Context: Progress, Race, Empire* (London: Macmillan, 1996) 160.
- ¹⁹ The Catholic Breviary recognizes the Virgin of Guadalupe as Patroness of the Americas because of the close ties between Catholics of Mexico and of the United States; see *Christian Prayer: The Liturgy of the Hours* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing, 1976) 1339. In the novel, Father Vaillant himself says that the Virgin of Guadalupe is a "household word" to Mexicans (306).
- ²⁰ Pelikan 67.

²¹ *Christian Prayer: The Liturgy of the Hours* 1333.

²² This event probably occurs on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, which takes place approximately three weeks before Christmas on December 8; further, the 1854 encyclical issued by Pius IX, pope during the setting of the novel, would have a bearing on the devotion shown to Mary on the part of Latour and Vaillant in the novel; see Schwind 84-85.

²³ The Rosary originated with the Dominican tradition as a devotion to Mary; its prayers include three sets of five *Pater Noster* recitations, three sets of fifty *Ave Maria* recitations, and three sets of five *Gloria Patri* recitations. Each set concentrates on one of the mysteries of the redemption; see Pelikan 99.

²⁴ The prayer that Father Latour and Sada probably recite here, the "Hail, Holy Queen" comes from the Rosary; it follows the Apostle's Creed and precedes the three sets dedicated to the mysteries of the redemption; see Anthony J. Meis, *The Rosary* (Baltimore, Maryland: Barton-Cotton, 1993) 4. Guy Reynolds interprets the interaction between Father Latour and Sada in this scene as "an unspoken communion" (160) whereas John J. Murphy calls it an example of "classless Christian communion"; see Murphy, "The Missions of Latour and Paul: *Death Comes For the Archbishop* and the Early Church," *Literature and Belief* 8 (1988) : 64.

²⁵ Pelikan 166.

²⁶ In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, belief in Mary as intercessor or *Mediatrix* for humanity arose; she can plead for human need since she is the cause of reconciliation, having born the Christ; see Pelikan 125-33.

²⁷ Father Latour's view of the native Mexicans as children who play with dolls illustrates Jerome Martinez y Alira's assertion that "there is an overall paternalistic condescension present [in the novel] when [Cather is] treating the Native American or Hispanic populations"; see Martinez y Alira, "The Church in *Archbishop*: A Session from the Santa Fe Seminar," *Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter* 35 (1991): 20. Though Erik Ingvar Thurin states that "an avowed purpose of the book is to pay homage to the civilizing role of France in the New World," unlike Martinez y Alira, he does not see that role in a negative light. Indeed, he reads Latour's thoughts in this scene as indicative that he is "the Frenchman, the Catholic, the classicist, the broad humanist capable of appreciating the Hispanic culture of the American Southwest"; see Thurin, *The Humanization of Willa Cather: Classicism in an American Classic* (Lund: Lund UP, 1990) 296 – 304.

²⁸ Latour's formal gardens and the Midi Romanesque architecture that he chooses for the cathedral are further examples in the novel of ties between the Old World and the New; see Robert J. Nelson, *Willa Cather and France: In Search of the Lost Language* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1988) 42.

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Journal to Aid the Teaching of Cather

Carolyn Elswick
Maryville, Mo., *Daily Forum*

"She belongs everywhere; from graduate seminars to third-grade classrooms."

The inaugural issue of *Teaching Cather*, a teaching journal based on the writings of Willa Cather, has made its debut. The journal, sponsored by Northwest Missouri State University, offers teachers and readers of Cather's novels and short stories essays of different perspectives on the richness and fullness of her writings.

But why Cather? What does she offer to the student of today's world—how do her writings give meaning to them?

The two co-editors of *Teaching Cather* share their views on Cather and her relevance to today's world.

"She [Cather] offers clarity [to the student]. Her images are understandable and she deals with being an immigrant and a woman," said Co-editor Dr. Virgil Albertini, professor emeritus of English with Northwest Missouri State University.

Cather can easily be related to today's student, explains Co-editor Steve Shively, assistant professor of English at Northwest.

"One of the central issues of her writing is the importance of place and having a sense of place," Shively said. "That essentially applies to students because many of them have been uprooted from one place to a new place and they are trying to decide where they fit in the world. I think Cather's writing is about how people who have been through that [moving] and dealt with the problem and how it can be helpful to them."

The journal is being introduced by the two co-editors as another source or guide in the teaching of Cather's works. She has emerged as one of the premier writers of the 20th century. Her literary reputation is much stronger now than it was even when she was

alive, the co-editors said. They feel their presentation—by journal—is something different.

"This is a rather unique method—a journal," said Albertini. "There are books and articles, but a journal with emphasis on assisting the teaching of Cather, we believe, is a new and unique addition to the field. We want it to be a teaching aid for those who present Cather's works, as a way to reach students in all the different levels—from middle school to the university level."

"Not only is the journal for teachers of all levels," added Shively. "But we have found that many of our subscribers are not teachers—they are readers."

And subscribers there are. Even before the first issue appeared, the journal seemed to be headed for success.

"Remember we're new, just more or less getting started. But we are pleased with the amount of subscribers we have," said Albertini.

"We didn't even have a product to show and we already have subscribers in 19 states and two foreign countries, Japan and Turkey," said Shively.

But now they have that product and not only has it been received successfully, useful information abounds

from the back to the cover.

The cover symbolizes much of what Cather and her writings have offered to the reader and the two co-editors used the cover as symbols of that expression. The inspiration for the cover image came from the photography of Beverly J. Cooper, Hastings, Neb., and the illustration was produced by Stephanie Bolton, a graphic artist at Northwest.

"The railroad (on the cover) is a symbol of much importance to Cather," said Shively. "Many of the immigrants traveled by railroad. The depot in Red Cloud, Neb. [where Cather grew up], is a key scene in several of her works and we think it also suggests the educational journey. That there are the tracks and they are help for people who make that journey, but we often go off on the side track and we don't quite know where it's going to go or where the next turn is going to take us,



Steve Shively (left) and Virgil Albertini at the International Cather Conference, Nebraska City, NE, June 17-24, 2000
(Photo taken by Elizabeth Turner)

suggests the journey of education."

"The railroad is so important in Cather's work," said Albertini. "Imagine, eight passenger trains a day went through that town [Red Cloud] during Cather's childhood and it was not unusual for many to go down to the depot to see who got on or off—ending or starting a journey."

This journal is anything but an ending; it is a beginning for educators and their students.

To obtain the journal, which will be published biannually (fall and spring) by the Department of English at Northwest, send your subscription (\$10) to Steve Shively, Department of English, 800 University Drive, Maryville, MO 64468-6001.

Meet the Co-editors Behind the Journal

The story of the journal and how it came about is not complete without the story of its co-editors and how they came together.

Virgil Albertini, professor emeritus of English with Northwest Missouri State University, found his interest in Cather at an early age.

"I was a sophomore in high school when I first read *My Ántonia*. I later taught school in western Kansas where Cather's writings could be uniquely applied," said Albertini.

As time went on, he became more and more attracted to Cather and wrote one of his first articles on her writings in 1977. He also proposed a class to be added to the curriculum at Northwest, which was also well received.

Albertini also gives credit to his wife, Dolores, who would recommend books she was reading, many of them by Cather, to him. She was also the one who insisted they make their first stop in Red Cloud, Neb., Cather's hometown, to see the restored train depot and the area.

"I was hooked—I attended the spring conferences, the Willa Cather Spring Festival held in Red Cloud, and my interest continues through today," he said. Albertini is a member of the board of governors of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation in Red Cloud.

Steve Shively, assistant professor of English at Northwest Missouri State University, grew up in Nebraska.

"When you grow up in Nebraska, you just naturally relate to Cather. I liked to read and if you like to read, you read Cather," Shively said.

He was also a high school English teacher for 14 years and taught Cather often, becoming more and more interested in her writings.

How did these two come together and the journal come about?

According to Albertini, their common interest in Cather was one reason and Shively's coming to Northwest led to the other.

"It was in January, 1999, when Steve signed his Northwest contract," said Albertini. "Susan Rosowski, Adele Hall Distinguished Professor of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, came up to us and said how excited she was. 'Northwest Missouri will have a stronghold in Cather studies,' she said. 'I think a good thing would be for you and Steve to collaborate on a journal.' And that was the inception of the journal, *Teaching Cather*."

It is fitting that *Teaching Cather* was announced at a special session called "Cather and the Classroom" at the International Cather Seminar 2000, in Nebraska City, Neb., last June. Those attending the seminar gave the co-editors much interest and encouragement.

"She [Rosowski] invited us to do it because we've both been involved in Cather for a long time," Shively said. "But also because of the reputation of Northwest. We are known as a good training ground for teachers and this journal is especially focused on teaching. That's one of the things we do well here [at Northwest]."

Location helped, as well, both men agree. Northwest is close to the center for Cather studies and it was also fortunate in that there was a good catalyst in a kick-off event at the International Cather seminar.

"We headed up to the 'Cather and the Classroom' presentation and it made a good springboard for taking this journal off," said Shively.

"It was thought that maybe 30 or so people would attend the program, 'Cather in the Classroom,' but the room was full with over 100 persons attending," Albertini said.

Both men are especially pleased with the way the Northwest community has recognized their project—through its encouragement and support.

"At Northwest Missouri State University, we thank C. Taylor Barnes, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and Beth Richards, chair of the Department of English, for their support, financial and otherwise. We are grateful for the encouragement offered by many friends and colleagues. We are privileged indeed for this opportunity to expand our work with the literature of Willa Cather and the dedicated scholars who teach her work," the co-editors said in the journal's introduction.

Teaching Cather is supported by a grant from the Culture of Quality, by the Department of English at Northwest and subscriptions.

Two noted authorities brought together by a common thread—Willa Cather and her writings—a gift they hope to share with many.

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The second issue of *Teaching Cather* was published May 17, the day before Spring Festival. Copies of the first issue are still available from the WCPM for \$5, plus postage.—SR

Western Literature Association Annual Conference

Elizabeth A. Turner
William Rainey Harper College

Norman, Oklahoma, was the site for the 35th annual meeting of the Western Literature Association, which was held 25-28 October at the Oklahoma Center for Continuing Education on the University of Oklahoma campus. This year's theme was "Going to the Territory: Filling Space with Myth," and Cather scholarship was well represented.

Thursday morning of the conference included two sessions on Cather. The first, moderated by Ann Romines (The George Washington University), was titled "(Re)Reading Willa Cather's West." Romines explained that the presenters (all of whom were from the George Washington University) proposed to "re-envision" Cather's readings of the West. Lisbeth Fuisz's paper was "Discovering the Southwest: Cultural Imperialism in Willa Cather's *The Song of the Lark*." Myra Remigio read "Blind d'Arnault and Jim Burden: Citizenship in Relief" followed by Justin Roby who delivered "Troubling Borders: The Problem of Empire in Willa Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop*." Satarupa Sengupta concluded with "(Anti)Imperial Cather: A Reading of *Death Comes for the Archbishop*." Rosanna West Walter (University of Oregon) moderated the next Cather session which was entitled simply, "Cather." Walker began by reading her study of *The Professor's House*: "Tom Outland in Neverland." Keri L. Overall (University of South Carolina) presented "Sexual Ambiguity in Cather's *The Professor's House*," and Margaret Doane (California State University) delivered "Life is but a Dream: Reality Romanticized in *A Lost Lady*."

After lunch we reconvened for a session on the

Cather Scholarly Edition with John J. Murphy (Brigham Young University), Ann Romines (The George Washington University) and Susan J. Rosowski (University of Nebraska-Lincoln). During this lively discussion, Rosowski posed the most fundamental of questions: what difference does such a project as the Scholarly Edition make? Murphy said that he now sees Cather's work as an art of collage, for she brings in materials for numerous sources—historical, religious, biological, autobiographical. Romines added that knowing about Cather family history helps us to understand how Cather wrote to create layers of meaning within her texts. Rosowski talked about how Cather brings us together in many ways, and she reminded us of Professor Tom Lyon's talk, "Willa Cather: Learner," from this summer's International Cather Seminar. She emphasized that a project as intense as the Scholarly Edition changes the ways we think and read while reminding us of the "lived experiences" behind Cather stories.

Sue Rosowski moderated another Cather session the following afternoon. The first two presenters were from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln; Michael Schueth led with his "Presentations of Celebrity and Cather," followed by Mary K. Stillwell's "Cather: Re-envisioning the Allegory." Amy Ahearn (Saddleback College) read "Cather, White Slavery, and *My Ántonia*." Elizabeth A. Turner (William Rainey Harper College) concluded the meeting with "Thea Kronborg's Appetite in Willa Cather's *The Song of the Lark*." Numerous folks commented on the reverberations between these essays, noting how nicely one led into another.

That evening we took a bus ride from Norman into Oklahoma City to tour the Cowboy Hall of Fame. While admiring the numerous artworks as well as the building, we were happy to see that Willa Cather was, indeed, elected to the "Hall of Great Westerners" in 1974. The plaque read: "Each year the National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center inducts into the Hall of Great Westerners those who have made significant contributions to the devel-



Susan J. Rosowski, WCPM Board of Governors, receives the Thomas J. Lyon Book Award for *Birthing a Nation: Gender, Creativity, and the West in American Literature* at the Western Literature Association conference

opment of the American West." Before the banquet began, the Oklahoma Fancy Dancers, a group of Native American performers, impressed us with a variety of traditional dances, including the Butterfly Dance, the Women's Buckskin Dance, the Northern Women's Jingle Dance, the Healing Dance, and the Hoop Dance. After dining, WLA president Robert Murray Davis hosted the awards ceremony. Rosanna West Walker was a tie runner-up for the J. Golden Taylor Award for outstanding graduate student paper for her "Tom Outland in Neverland." Susan J. Rosowski's recent study, *Birthing a Nation: Gender, Creativity, and the West in American Literature*, (described by the award presenter as "elegant") was selected for the Thomas J. Lyon Award given to the best book in American literary criticism for 1999.

Saturday morning brought not only the OU-Nebraska football game but also the final Cather papers which were a part of a mixed session on two separate topics: publishing and Cather. Sue Rosowski presented "*Death Comes for the Archbishop* and Willa Cather's Comedy of Survival," and Jennifer Danes (Mercy College of Health Sciences) read "Willa Cather's Use of Etiquette as a Subtext in *My Ántonia*." Although this was the last scheduled meeting for Cather Scholars, many of us visited with each other throughout the afternoon and evening, touring local sites, discussing the Cather papers, and catching up with friends while anticipating next year's Western Literature Association conference, which will be hosted by the University of Nebraska-Omaha.



John J. Murphy (Brigham Young University) and Charles Mignon (University of Nebraska-Lincoln) with the 2000 Twitchell Award. Dr. Murphy is on the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation Board of Governors.

Kudos!

Source: *The Mower's Tree*
The Newsletter of the Cather Colloquium

The Scholarly Edition of *Death Comes for the Archbishop* was awarded the Ralph Emerson Twitchell Award for Significant Contribution to the Field of History on April 15, 2000, by the Historical Society of New Mexico. John J. Murphy wrote the historical essay and explanatory notes, while Charles Mignon served as textual editor with assistance by Frederick Link and Kari Ronning.

WILLA CATHER NEWSLETTER AND REVIEW

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The *Newsletter and Review* welcomes scholarly essays, notes, news items, and letters to the Managing Editor. Scholarly essays should not exceed 2500-3000 words; they should be submitted on disk in Microsoft Word or WordPerfect (8 and up) and should follow *The MLA Style Manual*.

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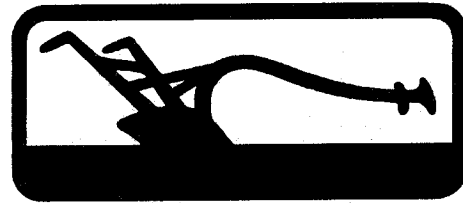
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Essays and notes are listed in the annual MLA Bibliography.



WILLA CATHER PIONEER MEMORIAL AND EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

Founded 1955 by Mildred Bennett

Mrs. Bennett and seven other founding members of the Board of Governors defined the Foundation's mission, which has evolved into these

AIMS OF THE WCPM

To promote and assist in the development and preservation of the art, literary, and historical collection relating to the life, time, and work of Willa Cather, in association with the Nebraska State Historical Society.

To cooperate with the Nebraska State Historical Society in continuing to identify, restore to their original condition, and preserve places made famous by the writing of Willa Cather.

To provide for Willa Cather a living memorial, through the Foundation, by encouraging and assisting scholarship in the field of the humanities.

To perpetuate an interest throughout the world in the work of Willa Cather.

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Steven P. Ryan

News from the Executive Director



Excitement ran high in Red Cloud for the Nebraska premiere of *The Song of the Lark* October 1. A large crowd attended the event, co-sponsored by the WCPM and Nebraska Educational Telecommunications, at Red Cloud High School. Dorothea Petrie, producer, and Stephen Kulczycki, executive producer, honored us with their presence, and afterward fielded questions from the audience. The opening whetted everyone's appetite for the PBS *Masterpiece Theatre's American Collection* broadcasts on May 2 and 6. No doubt the production will introduce Cather to new audiences.

Later that month, Cather scholars distinguished themselves at the Western Literature Association meeting in Norman, Oklahoma. Congratulations to Rosanna West Walker and Sue Rosowski on their awards. We hope to see many of you at the 2001 WLA conference at the University of Nebraska-Omaha in October, when the WCPM board of governors will also meet.

We received a marvelous response to our appeal for the Save America's Treasures preservation analysis of the Cather childhood home. The WCPM made the appeal jointly with the Nebraska State Historical Society, which owns the structure. Various teams of experts have scrutinized the home, and the study is nearing completion. Our thanks to all who contributed to this worthy effort.

In December the Louis E. May Museum in Fremont hosted "A Nebraska Literary Christmas" featuring displays of re-creations of holiday scenes from works by state writers, including Mari Sandoz, John Neihardt, Bess Streeter Aldrich and Willa Cather. The Cather display was drawn from Jim Burden's account of a country Christmas in Book I of *My Ántonia*.

We are honored that actress Julie Harris and former Senator Bob Kerrey accepted invitations to be honorary chairs of our national and state membership drives. Both have been speakers at past Spring Festivals.

The Acting Company of New York City offered a special treat with a musical adaptation of *O Pioneers!* March 2 in Beatrice. The next


day, a vanload of cast and crew visited Red Cloud. They especially enjoyed the Cather Memorial Prairie, and left with a fresh appreciation for the land at the heart of her story. On March 22 Chief Red Cloud was inducted into the Nebraska State Hall of Fame in a special ceremony at the state capitol.

Governor Mike Johanns and his staff visited Red Cloud April 6, paying visits to the WCPM visitors' center and bookstore, the 1885 Opera House, the Garber Bank and the Cather childhood home. Later that month, our annual, two-day Pastimes and Playthings drew over 170 youngsters from across the region. We are grateful to the Excel Campers, who supervised their experience of the favorite diversions of children one hundred years ago. I had the pleasure of discussing *O Pioneers!* with the Grand Island Friday Afternoon Book Club April 20.

We enjoyed beautiful weather for the 46th annual Spring Festival in May. It was a delight having many of you here. The staff performed superbly: my bottomless thanks to them for all their efforts. Special thanks also to the Nebraska Humanities Council for funding support.

Three junior high students from King Science Center in Omaha have prepared a ten-minute documentary on Cather. The piece included interviews with Mellanee Kvasnicka, WCPM board of governors, and Kent Pavelka, radio broadcaster and descendant of Annie Pavelka, who inspired *My Ántonia*. Filmed in part on location in Red Cloud, the production won local honors and advanced to statewide competition.

C-Span cable television network will broadcast live from Red Cloud July 2, 8 to 10:30 am CDT, as part of its American Writers series. Rumor is the Washington, D.C.,-based crew is already looking forward to prime rib night at The Palace. *Comme d'habitude*, Red Cloud has it all: great literature, great food, and major media coverage.

We welcome Jan Offner of Red Cloud to the staff. Her husband is Mike Offner, county judge of the Tenth Judicial District. They have two sons in college. 

I am indeed very happy to send you some help for the structural survey of the Cather House.

My husband and I were the only visitors at the WCPM one cold November Sunday in 1998—Betty Bohrer drove us around Red Cloud to visit the House, the Depot, the Catholic Church and the Episcopal Church, the Museum—it was one of the most memorable and thrilling days of my life. When my husband saw your request, he decided he'd like to help too—seeing me so happy meant a lot to him.

Enclosed with this letter you should find a check from each of us—we're looking forward to the WCPM newsletter to keep us up-to-date on the survey. . . .

Joan M. Futscher
Fairfield, California

I am the current owner of Willow Shade—the [Virginia] childhood home of Willa Cather and am undertaking completion of the restoration of the property. I am looking for any photographs or information concerning the household furnishings that may be relevant to the house's restoration I want to ensure that Willow Shade is properly restored to her former glory. Anything you can do to assist would be greatly appreciated.

I have also launched the non-profit Willow Shade Foundation to preserve the local history and to support programs related to human understanding, equal rights, free expression, and literacy.

Nicholas Pisano
Gore, Virginia
via e-mail



Co-producer Dorothea Petrie and executive director Steve Kulczycki answered questions from many of the 300+ members of the audience following the premiere showing of Willa Cather's *The Song of the Lark*, in Red Cloud. Photo courtesy of The Red Cloud Chief.

Spring on the Divide: The Willa Cather Festival 2001

by Bruce P. Baker II

After a long, hard Nebraska winter, spring on the Divide was both welcome and glorious! Some 200 gathered in Red Cloud on May 18 and 19 for this year's Willa Cather Festival. The new name, "Festival" rather than "Conference," certainly described the crowd's response as they enjoyed the lush green fields and lawns in Cather's home town as well as the many activities scheduled to celebrate this year's theme, "Cather and Nature." Iris, lilacs, and peonies were abundant as Nature, evidently determined to put on Her best face, provided not only a lovely setting but also a beautiful (read No Rain!) two days as participants enjoyed the place, the fellowship, and the many activities scheduled during the week end.

In addition to the new name, a number of new events gave participants, both old and new, a chance to enjoy—and to learn—about everything from Friday afternoon's paper sessions (organized by Virgil Albertini and Steve Shively) and presentation by Suzi Schulz on the stories related to grave stones in Webster County cemeteries, to Saturday afternoon's session on the Cather Prairie where land stewards from the Nature Conservancy explored with us the flora and fauna of that place.


Also new this year was a Thursday evening opening of an art exhibit of work by John Bergers (whose prints are available in the WCPM bookstore) and Wes Holbrook, a watercolorist of sketches from Cather's childhood home, as well as a Friday evening wine and cheese reception held on the lawn of the Cather home. How lovely it was at the latter event to chat with Cather Foundation members (and future members) and look up at the window of Cather's bedroom from which she viewed this very site and dreamed her dreams.

Not a new event, but one that always presents new ideas and reflections on Cather's art, was "The Passing Show" paper presentation (by Matt Hokom of UNL) and panel discussion moderated by Merrill Skaggs of Drew University with panelists Nancy Chinn (Baylor University), Mark Robison (Union College)

and Kari Ronning (UNL). This followed a Powerpoint presentation by Ellsworth, Kansas, High School students illustrating selections from Cather with splendid photographs of the Great Plains.

Also not new but always tasteful and inspirational were a Friday evening Candlelight Gathering at St. Juliana Falconieri Church and a Saturday morning service at Grace Episcopal Church, graced by the music of the St. Juliana Choir, readings from Cather by Darrel Lloyd, and a moving service led by Reverend Dr. Charles Peek.

The concluding event of the annual banquet featured a served dinner (how elegant!), lively music by Gina Brazell, and a delightful after-dinner speech by Mary Clearman Blew. Like Cather, Blew writes about the connection between writer and land and landscape. Her remarks about how the natural setting of one's youth is "always with us," no matter where we are, even abroad, were insightful observations delivered in a lively, often amusing, style.

After such a full but memorable day, only a hardy few made it to the "End of the Festival Get-Together" at one of the local "establishments," but all who participated could leave having enjoyed "the passion of spring" (*O Pioneers!*), whether it was their first or often-repeated trip to this annual Cather event—a festive celebration indeed! 



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