

Cather Community
Celebrates!

Willa Cather Newsletter & Review



Summer 2006 Volume L, No. 1

Cather Foundation Meets NEH Challenge!



Photograph by Dee Yost.

Major Gifts Help Cather Group Secure Grant *Hastings Tribune, Aug. 3, 2006*

Andy Raun

RED CLOUD —Major donors, including two families related to author Willa Cather, have helped the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation meet a major endowment challenge.

The Cather Foundation announced Wednesday it had reached its goal of raising \$825,000 for the Red Cloud Opera House endowment fund.

Aided by two Cather family gifts of \$50,000 apiece, an anonymous \$100,000 gift, and numerous smaller contributions, the foundation met its goal by July 31—its final deadline to match a \$275,000 challenge grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

“The Cather Foundation’s success in meeting the NEH Endowment Challenge marks a new stage in our evolution as a society,” said Charles Peek of Kearney, President of the Foundation Board of Governors.

With the grant money in hand, the Foundation now has an endowment of \$1.1 million for the Opera House. Interest revenue will be used to support cultural and educational programming, provide some money for a part-time archivist, and help maintain the building.

Fundraising for the endowment challenge began even before the 1885 Opera House reopened to the public in May 2003 following a \$1.68 million renovation. In fact, about \$300,000 already had been raised by the time of the grand reopening. Originally, the Foundation had faced a deadline of July 2004 to finish its fundraising for the match. That deadline was extended twice.

“[NEH] went out on a limb for us,” said Betty Kort, Foundation Executive Director. “We understand that they have never extended a significant NEH Challenge Grant to so small an organization as the Cather Foundation. It is difficult for

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2006 Cather Spring Conference Expands to Third Day

The 2006 Willa Cather Spring Conference focused on Willa Cather’s French Connections and featured the novel *Shadows on the Rock*. The Scholars’ Symposium, a new feature of the Conference, necessitated a third day. This, along with the dedication of the newly acquired Willa Cather Memorial Prairie and the international ambiance of the traditional events on Saturday, made the Conference unique in the history of the Foundation.

John Murphy was highly instrumental in organizing the Scholars’ Symposium held on the first day of June. Scholars participating in the event came from throughout the United States and as far away as England.

The Conference continued on Friday with a panel of distinguished scholars who shared their experiences teaching

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Death Comes for the Archbishop

In the tradition of International Seminars in Sante Fe, Virginia, Québec, Nebraska, and other Seminar sites, the CATHER FOUNDATION invites you to touch yet another part of Willa Cather's life.

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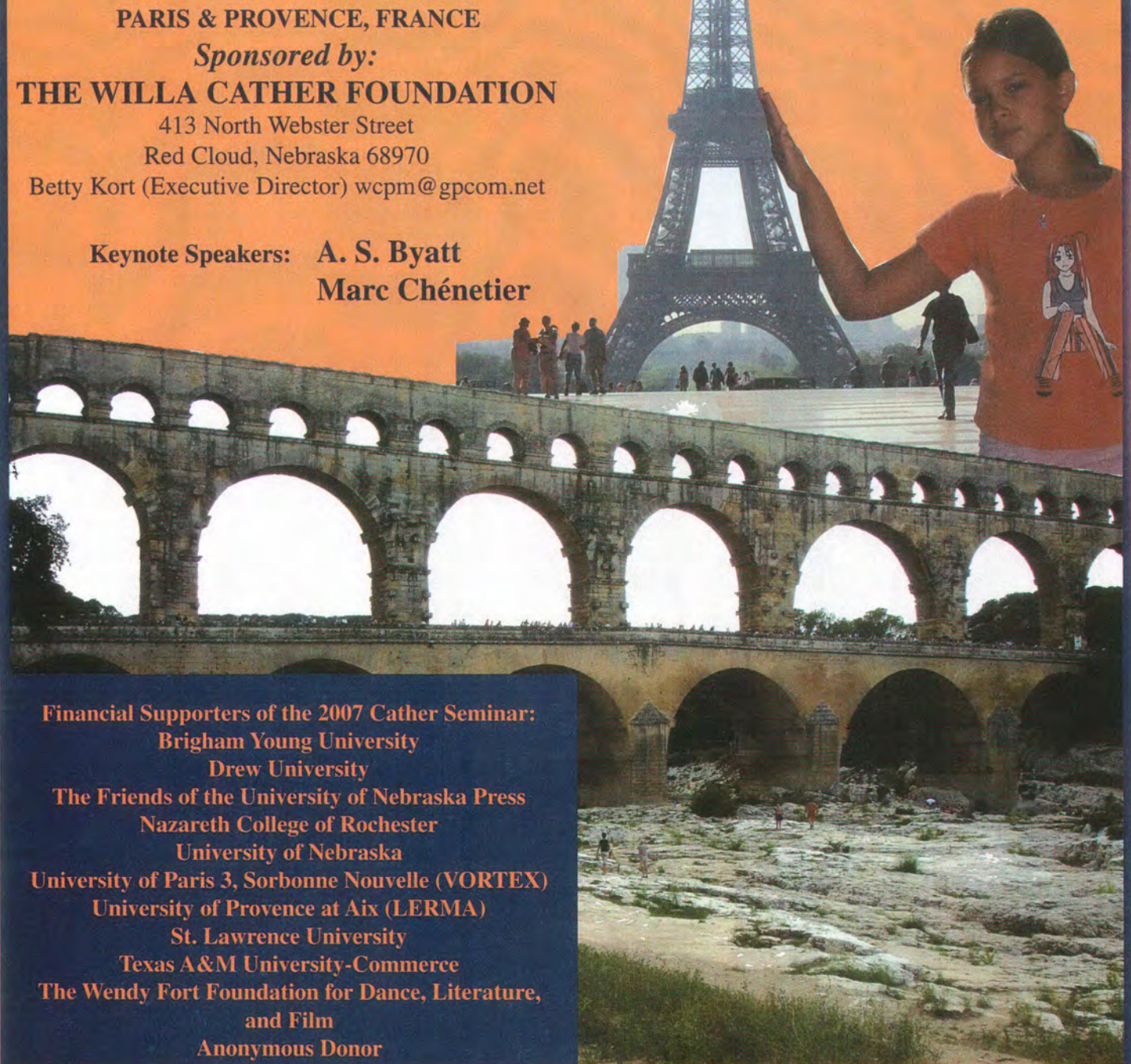
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War in Nebraska: Willa Cather's *One of Ours*

Andy Jones

The famous debate over the legitimacy of *One of Ours* as a war novel began early and quickly became heated. Willa Cather's supporters were undoubtedly pleased when *One of Ours* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1923. Raymond Wilson III notes that "many veterans wrote to tell [Cather] how perfectly she had recreated the atmosphere of the war" (25). However, dissenter Sidney Howard felt that Cather should have continued to write about what she knew, "farms and farmer folk," and recognize "war for the big bowwow stuff that it is" (qtd. in Trout, *Memorial Fictions* 107). And Hemingway, writing to Edmund Wilson, brutally lamented the success of Cather's novel: "Then look at *One of Ours*. Prize, big sale, people taking it seriously. You were in the war weren't you? Do you know where it came from? The battle scene in *Birth of a Nation*. I identified episode after episode, Catherized. Poor woman she had to get her war experience somewhere" (*Selected Letters* 105).

Then, as today, *One of Ours* is generally regarded as having two distinct and only slightly connected halves: the "Nebraska section" and the "war section." It is this type of thinking, of course, that led critics to wonder why Cather introduced war into a novel about "farms and farmer folk." Even critics who correctly read Cather's "unrealistic" romanticizing of war as part of an ironic critique usually rely upon the novel's second half, ignoring the first. But treating the novel in its entirety allows us to recognize that war as a theme runs throughout. In fact, one finds the fullest expression of both Cather's criticism of the war and her understanding of the reality of war in the "Nebraska section," not in the "war section." Similar to Hemingway in *The Sun Also Rises*, Cather writes about what she knows well—Nebraska and farming—as a means of writing about something else entirely. Behind the tractors and horses, and beneath the smooth surface of her prose, Cather's criticism and sober understanding of the Great War resides.

Before I begin my analysis of the Nebraska section, I will identify Cather's specific project in the latter half of the novel; this will reveal why Cather chose to romanticize the war section. It then becomes possible to separate the largely romanticized depiction of the war from Cather's own perception of the war. Then I will analyze the Nebraska section, revealing both the presence of the war as well as Cather's critique of the war. Once we realize the extent to which the "Nebraska section" is about World War I, Claude's tour of duty and his idealism

become charged with even more irony than Cather's supporters have recognized.

Cather's cousin G. P. Cather fought in World War I, providing Cather with the spark for *One of Ours*. According to James Woodress, G. P. Cather—like Claude Wheeler—dreaded life on the farm (304). Cather was intrigued by her cousin, who had become so dedicated to the idea of escaping the farm that he was willing to go to war. When her cousin was killed, Cather was inspired to write a war novel, a type of novel she might not have written otherwise. *One of Ours* is thus simultaneously an expression and critique of G.P.'s escapist idealism. Clearly, G. P. is the driving force behind the novel, and the novel itself may be seen as an homage to her cousin, who found himself in the war.

Cather's homage to her cousin is self-aware and meticulous, following the commemorative conventions of Civil War veterans organizations, as Steven Trout recognizes. Trout understands that although the Civil War ended eight years before Cather's birth, "popular conventions of military experience" still greatly influenced American conception of military experience ("From 'The Namesake'" 119). "According to this nostalgic picture," writes Trout, "the war had offered its initiates comradeship, connection with nature, and the opportunity to pursue . . . 'the divine folly of honor'" (122). In addition to creating a nostalgic picture of the war, these conventions either ignored or "patriotically varnished" battlefield horrors (125), a convention Cather adopts. However, the horror of war does seep ironically into Cather's text, as Trout notes: the graveyard Claude opens up in an attempt to bathe and the soldier's hand that keeps reappearing in the trenches are two of the most notable instances of irony. Yet, Trout does not believe that these ironic ruptures are the result of "conscious artistry" on Cather's part; instead, he argues that the irony present in the text is the result of the limitations of the commemorative traditions themselves. Furthermore, Trout does not discuss Nebraska and farming in relation to the war: "My claim that *One of Ours* is very much a novel about the Great War . . . requires some justification. After all, more than half of the narrative takes place in Nebraska" (*Willa Cather's One of Ours* 190). Trout, like most critics, does not see the depiction of war in Nebraska.

Frederick T. Griffiths separates himself from most critics in this respect. Griffiths recognizes that "Cather practices the Tolstoyan art of seeing war and peace as describable within the

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Scholarly Contributors

Born and raised in Texas, **Andy Jones** attended The University of Texas at Austin, where he earned his B.A. in English. He recently completed his Master's thesis in American literature at The George Washington University.

Hacin Park is an Assistant Professor of English at Valparaiso University. She is currently working on a book-length study of American Protestant literary responses to Catholicism.

War in Nebraska: Willa Cather's *One of Ours* (Continued)

same reality" (268). Furthermore, Griffiths argues that Cather laments "the dehumanizing mechanization of modern warfare . . . by anticipation from Nebraska," citing newspaper reports on the war as an example (265). He identifies Claude's voyage to Europe as the moment in the text that "sets up the counterpoint between Claude's expectations and war's realities," which prevents one from reading the rest of the novel "with simple literalness" (265). Griffiths argues that "Claude's insistence on experiencing the passage [to France aboard an influenza-ridden ship] as an Atlantic cruise" sufficiently indicates that in the war narrative "Cather . . . moves wholly within the realm of Claude's illusions" (265). Although he correctly concludes that this counterpoint should prevent one from reading the war section in terms of Claude's idealism, Griffiths does not explicitly argue for an ironic reading of the text, nor does he recognize that the counterpoint is set up much earlier in the novel when Claude is still in Nebraska. Griffiths does not extend his analysis of war in Nebraska far enough; he neither fully recognizes the significance nor fully explores the implications of his claim that "the idyll of peace becomes for Claude, at least, the waste land" (269).

Although Griffiths cites newspaper articles as a means by which Cather laments the dehumanizing effects of modern warfare, he does not fully acknowledge that Cather uses one moment of Claude's newspaper-reading not only to anticipate the war, but actually to make it present in Nebraska. After Claude reads the *World Herald* for news of the war, he goes to bed:

The night was sultry, with thunder clouds in the sky and an unceasing play of sheet-lightning all along the western horizon. Mosquitoes had got into his room during the day, and after he threw himself upon the bed they began sailing over him with their high, excruciating note. He turned from side to side and tried to muffle his ears with the pillow. The disquieting sound became merged, in his sleepy brain, with the big type on the front of the paper; those black letters seemed to be flying about his head with a soft, high, sing-song whizz. (Cather 1067)

Cather simultaneously describes a sultry night in Nebraska as well as a night spent at the frontlines: the lightning along the horizon represents the sound and flashing of artillery, and the mosquitoes and the black letters of the newspaper that whizz around Claude's head are the shells themselves. Claude reacts to the sound of the mosquitoes much as one might imagine a soldier reacting to the sound of shells in the trenches: he throws himself on the bed, tries to muffle his ears, and turns his head side to side.

Further reading confirms that Cather begins her critique of the war early in the novel, exploring the detrimental effects of wartime technology in the Nebraska setting. For example, Cather directly links her portrayal of a modernized farm to the war when

Claude has an accident involving a barbed wire fence, described by one witness as "the queerest thing I ever saw" (1049). Claude's face is wrapped in bandages, and he is nursed by Enid during his recovery, which is the seed of their failed marriage. This incident associates life on a modern farm in Nebraska with the war in several ways. First, barbed wire was employed at the front lines of World War I. Second, soldiers often became entangled in barbed wire and many met their death because of it. Although such an accident is "queer" on a farm, where barbed wire is meant to contain animals, it commonly occurred on the battlegrounds during the war. The very fact that Claude's accident is described as "queer" serves to remind the reader that this was decidedly not the case in the war. Third, the relationship between Claude and Enid resembles a love affair



Old barbed wire located on the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie in Webster County, Nebraska. Photograph by Betty Kort.

between a wounded soldier and a nurse, a common theme in war stories. Although Claude does not have such a relationship during the war, Enid's nursing of Claude fulfills the same function.

In addition to portraying the physical threat of wartime technology in the Nebraska setting, Cather also explores the psychological effects of modern warfare. One of the greatest impacts the war had upon the psyche of the combatants resulted from no-man's-land, as Cather recognizes. For example,

when Claude sees the family cherry tree lying "on the ground beside its bleeding stump," he becomes "a little demon" (964). In his anger, Claude calls his father, who cut the tree down, a "damn fool!" (964). The cherry tree symbolizes all the trees destroyed during the war, and Claude's condemnation of his father is simultaneously a criticism of the folly of humanity that resulted in the creation of no-man's-land. Although the destruction of the cherry tree occurred when Claude was a child, the scar the event left on his psyche is evident in his early adulthood. Now a young man, Claude is concerned that farmers are cutting down their trees: "Now these trees were all being cut down and grubbed up. Just why, nobody knew. . . . It was less trouble to run into town in an automobile and buy fruit than it was to raise it" (1023). Claude cannot justify the loss of the trees. Similarly, combatants and non-combatants alike, many of whom questioned the purpose of the war, were hard-pressed to justify the creation of no-man's-land. Gas, bombs, barbed wire, and machine guns created the no-man's-land of World War I. Automobiles indirectly resulted in the destruction of the trees on the farms, creating a veritable no-man's-land in Nebraska. In both cases, technology is implicated, and both the wasteland of the orchard and the wasteland of the war left a deep psychological scar upon those who witnessed them.

Indeed, the harsh reality of fighting a modern war greatly traumatized the combatants. According to Stanley Cooperman, combatants were completely "unprepared for the technological warfare of attrition and machine" (60). Cooperman also recognizes that "in 1914 officers thought

in terms of infantry, of cavalry, of 'flanking,' of 'advance,' of 'engagement,'" not understanding how the new mobility of machines and the "increased fire power of machine war" had completely changed the face of war (61). Because generals did not understand the "tactical applications of their own weapons," armies advanced *en masse* against the enemy's machines (61-2). As a result, many soldiers died an anonymous death, and the battlefields, strewn with corpses, became mass, open graveyards.

Claude is very much afraid of both death and anonymity, as the text makes clear: "He used to lie awake in the dark, plotting against death, trying to devise some plan of escaping it, angrily wishing he had never been born. Was there no way out of the world but this? When he thought of the millions of lonely creatures rotting away under ground, life seemed nothing but a trap that caught people for one horrible end" (982). When Claude turns in his theme paper to his history professor, he again displays his fear of death and anonymity: "[H]e was to leave his thesis on a long table, with a pile of others. He rather dreaded this" (994). The long table is equivalent to no-man's-land, and the pile of theme papers to a pile of dead soldiers. An anonymous death, a common death at the front lines, represents the ultimate nightmare for Claude. Thus, Claude is pleased when his professor does not place his theme paper among the others but carries it with him.

An anonymous death is especially frightening because it is such a waste. Cather recognizes this wastefulness, and does so in a manner similar to Hemingway. After a massive snow storm falls upon the farm, the roof of the hog-house collapses: "Twelve hogs . . . had been suffocated. They lay there wet and black in the snow, their bodies warm and smoking, but they were dead; there was no mistaking that" (1022). The family maid suggests they butcher the dead pigs. Because the men are tired and have to find a place for the living pigs, they do not wish to do so. In *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway writes that "the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it" (185). In both cases, it is the fact that the death of the animals does not result in the production of food that is so disturbing. And the sacrifices made by soldiers on both sides of the war, soldiers who fought over a desolate, barren battlefield, repeatedly losing land they had just gained, are infinitely more disheartening. Clearly, Nebraska is Claude's waste land.

Cather's depiction of Nebraska undoubtedly critiques contemporary life and modernization. At the same time, however, it is a clear, subtle, and assured condemnation of the war: just as technology transformed farming, so too did it transform war. Yet, when Claude becomes a soldier in the war, both his fears and the negative portrayal of technology seem to disappear from the text. Although the war section is filtered through Claude's idealistic vision, the horrors of the war are not entirely absent from the text; rather, they have already been encountered, displaced to the Nebraska setting. The very absence of the realities of war in the war section evokes the horrific images encountered in Nebraska. In recalling these encounters, the reader provides the realities of the war that Claude himself cannot acknowledge. The unacknowledged persistence of the war-like images of the Nebraska section thus contributes to the horrific irony of Claude's pastoral misreading of the front.

Claude, like G. P. Cather, desired to escape Nebraska. When he travels to France, he is confronted with a new and exotic land. Claude, like "a great many individuals and groups[,] had urgent desires which could not be gratified without [the war]"

(Cooperman 59). Claude's desire is so strong that it prevents him from seeing the horrific reality of the war. However, what Claude does not see is present by virtue of what he does see. For example, during Claude's first morning in the trenches, he sees a "wire entanglement, with birds hopping along the top wire, singing and chirping as they did on the wire fences at home" (1221). But we never see birds hopping and singing on the wire fences in Nebraska; instead, we see Claude's accident with the barbed wire. Thus the reader simultaneously recalls and provides the pain of the barbed wire that Claude cannot bring with him from Nebraska. Also, while Claude does note the barren presence of no-man's-land, he never dwells upon it as one would expect. Instead, Claude enjoys the trees that do exist. For example, while on his way to a village, Claude enters a "big wood" that he desired to visit:

The trunks of the trees were overgrown with a soft green moss, like mould. He was wondering whether this forest was not always a damp, gloomy place, when suddenly the sun broke through and shattered the whole wood with gold. He had never seen anything like the quivering emerald of the moss, the silky green of the dripping beech-tops. Everything woke up; rabbits ran across the path, birds began to sing, and all at once the brakes were full of whirring insects. (1212)

Claude, it seems, has stumbled across a veritable paradise. This episode does occur before Claude travels to the front lines and



John Murphy in his comfort zone: mentoring participants at the Scholar's Symposium, held at Grace Episcopal Church. Photograph by Dee Yost.

Spring Conference Highlights

I was very pleased by the response to the call for papers and of the willingness of the participants to work with me toward successful presentations. Those of us planning the symposium, which was a first for the Cather Spring Conference, hope that it will become a permanent component of the conference in off-international seminar years. The mix of young faculty, senior Cather scholars, and graduate students resulted in a true community. Several young participants told me it was the best conference they ever attended because everyone in the audience knew Cather, could offer intelligent questions, and join the discussion. The consensus among senior folk, judging from the quality of several graduate student presentations, was that future Cather studies is in good hands. There was little jargon and significant attention to texts. The geographical mix of participants was also encouraging. Participants hailed from Texas, Utah, Colorado, Minnesota, California, New York, Michigan, Mississippi, Washington D.C., South Dakota, Nebraska, and England. All in all, the symposium was well worth the effort it took to make it happen.

John J. Murphy

War in Nebraska: Willa Cather's *One of Ours*

(Continued)

actually sees no-man's-land; however, he never later observes the stark barrenness of no-man's-land in a manner that would serve as a counterpoint to this blissful experience in the wood. The absence of the waste land from the war section is striking, one that the modern reader undoubtedly notes. Consequently, this absence recalls Claude's traumatic encounter with the waste land in Nebraska. Thus the reader once again provides the horrific counterpoint that Claude cannot.

Clearly, in order to understand the war section, one must recognize that the horrors of the war have been displaced to Nebraska; one should read the war section not in terms of Claude's idealism, but in terms of the Nebraska section. Such a reading demonstrates that Claude's tour of duty is not a romanticization of the war, but a condemnation. Because one reads the war section in terms of the Nebraska section, one inevitably reads the Nebraska section in terms of the war section: that is, one recognizes the presence of the war in Nebraska. Thus, the fact that the two halves of *One of Ours* seem largely unrelated is what ultimately makes them inseparable: alone, they are incomplete; together, they form a sophisticated critique of both the war and modernization.

In the end, it seems that Hemingway was right. As with all her novels, Cather chose to make *One of Ours* personal, and she did so on many different levels. *One of Ours* is simultaneously a commentary on the harsh realities of World War I, an account of the modernization of farming in Nebraska, and a memorial to her cousin G. P. Cather, with the war resonating throughout. Although the debate about whether or not this novel is indeed one of ours may continue for some time among Cather scholars, it is most assuredly one of Cather's. She made *One of Ours* personal and unique: she Catherized the war. And I write this not with Hemingway's animosity, but with stark admiration instead.

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Scholarship Presented at Spring Conference



Virgil Albertini presented the 2006 Norma Ross Walter Scholarship to Sarah Chambers from Palmyra High School during the Spring Conference Banquet. The scholarship provides \$1,000 in tuition at the college or university of the student's choice. Information about the Norma Ross Walter Scholarship can be found at the Cather website: www.willacather.org. Photo by Dee Yost.

Spring Conference Highlights



Left: Among the featured speakers were Steven Monroe and Ann Moseley, here speaking at the Passing Show in response to a keynote address given by John Murphy. Third from left, Steve Shively, chair of the Spring Conference Committee of the Board of Governors enjoys the Conference Banquet on Friday evening. At right, Kathleen Danker discusses the "French Connections" Willa Cather made among the French Canadian settlers. The setting is St. Anne's Catholic Church at Campbell, Nebraska. Photographs by Dee Yost.

An Author for the World: Willa Cather's International Readership

In June of 2007 the 11th International Willa Cather Seminar will be held in Paris and Tarascon, France. The organizers' choice of a European location marks Willa Cather's critical coming-of-age as a writer, not only for a region and a nation, but for the world. To learn more about Cather as an international author, about how and why her work is valued among readers outside the United States, the *Newsletter and Review* interviewed four readers, who are also distinguished teachers and scholars of her work, in France, Portugal, Spain, and Thailand.

Dr. Manuel Broncano teaches American literature at the University of León, Spain. He has edited and translated into Spanish *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and Flannery O'Connor's *Wise Blood*. In addition to essays on Cather, O'Connor, and other American writers, he is the author of *Mundos Breves, Mundos Infinitos: Flannery O'Connor y el cuento norteamericano*. In 2005-06 he has been a visiting scholar at the University of Mississippi.



Dr. Paula Mesquita is Assistant Professor and Director of Portuguese and English Studies at the University of Beira Interior, Portugal. Her fields of specialty are American and English Literature. Her book *What Billy Wants to Dress—Sociosexual Dynamics in the Works of Willa Cather and William Faulkner* will be published in Portugal this year.

Dr. Françoise Palleau-Papin, a former student at the Ecole Normale Supérieure (LSH), wrote her Ph.D. dissertation on Willa Cather. She teaches American literature at the Sorbonne Nouvelle University (Paris 3), and has published articles on contemporary authors such as John Edgar Wideman, Jayne Anne Phillips, Russell Banks, Mary Caponegro, and a collection of critical essays on Patricia Eakins. She is the author of a forthcoming book on David Markson, and she is one of the three co-directors of the 2007 International Willa Cather Seminar.



Dr. Wajuppa Tossa is an Associate Professor in the Western Languages and Linguistics Department of Mahasarakham University, Thailand. She was introduced to Willa Cather's work at Drew University, where she received her Ph.D. in English in 1986, and she has taught Cather regularly since returning to Thailand. Dr. Tossa is also a well-known scholar and practitioner of the Thai story-telling tradition, whose books include *Phadaeng Nang Ai: a Translation of a Thai/Isan Folk Epic into English Verse*; *Phya Khankhaak, the Toad King: a Translation of an Isan Fertility Myth into English Verse*; and (with Margaret Read McDonald) *Folktales and Storytelling*. As a result of this interview, she has begun collecting more extensive data on Willa Cather's reception in Thailand.

Here are the questions posed to the four professors, and excerpts from their responses.

Has Willa Cather "arrived" in your country as an important academic or popular author? Can you talk about the reasons for her popularity?

Manuel Broncano: In the last few years, Spain has witnessed a great surge of interest in Cather's writings, and most of her novels have been translated into Spanish, some of them for the first time. Until the late 1990s, Cather was known to the Spanish reading public by the 1942 translation of *A Lost Lady*, by Mexican poet León Felipe; the 1955 translation of *My Ántonia*, by Julio Fernández, and the 1956 translation of *O Pioneers!*, by Antonio Guardiola. . . . [Today] of Cather's major works, only *The Professor's House* and *Shadows on the Rock* remain to be translated. Quite probably, they will be so in the not distant future. This flourishing of publications undoubtedly signals a renewed interest in Cather, and the reviews of the different translations unanimously hail her as a major writer, undeservedly consigned to near oblivion until recently. Finally, two doctoral dissertations that address Cather have been defended at Spanish universities.

Paula Mesquita: I first became interested in studying Willa Cather precisely because outside academic circles she is not as widely known in Portugal as one might expect of an author of this stature. Even in academia, I know of only one other Portuguese Cather specialist, Professor Isabel Alves at the University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro (UTAD). Though you can find some of Cather's titles in urban bookshops and good libraries, there are very few translations, and her name is not one to pop up frequently in literary conversations. So I have informally taken on the mission of making her work better known over here, presently as a lecturer, and

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(Continued)

hopefully as a translator in the future. Bringing Cather's works to light in this context is a challenge I am glad to take up.

I find that on a first approach people—colleagues and students—seem to expect some quaint old lady's literary voice, and are then greatly surprised at both how modern-minded and stylistically sophisticated her writing is, and at the current relevance of so many of her intellectual preoccupations. Bibliographical references also help to illuminate her commitment to her profession, art in general, and social issues of her time, which also has an impact on these new readers.

Françoise Palleau-Papin: In my experience of teaching Willa Cather in France, I have come to the conclusion that students liked her work very much when they read it, but that she was seldom assigned on their curriculum or reading lists. The fault lies with our academics, not with our students. So far, she has never quite made it to the mainstream of what most French academics consider important American literature, with notable exceptions such as her translator and prominent American literature specialist Marc Chénétier and a number of other colleagues, who also consider her work outstanding. She is often pigeon-holed in women's studies or nature writing, not urban enough for some, when many still mistake a well-honed style that hides its craftsmanship for lack of sophistication.

Wajuppa Tossa: Although Willa Cather and her works are not popular in Thailand, at least English major and minor students who graduate from Mahasarakham University will know Willa Cather's *A Lost Lady*. This book is used as an external reading for a required course for English majors and minors at the B.A. level, "Introduction to Prose and Poetry." This novel introduces students to the art of fiction writing, point of views, symbolism, etc. Graduate students have read *The Professor's House*. This book gives them inspiration to complete their theses, as it relates to the professor's creative energy. Other books that are chosen by students to read as external reading include *My Mortal Enemy* and *Alexander's Bridge*. One of the reasons students have chosen these two is that they are short and manageable in terms of time and vocabulary. This is understandable as English is not their first language.

Among university professors teaching English in Thailand, Willa Cather's works are not often used. One of the reasons is that her books are not sold in regular bookstores. To use Cather's works, the bookstores will have to place orders to distributors in the United States and it takes a long time.

Out of about ten American literature professors from three famous universities in Thailand, three have read *My Ántonia*, *A Lost Lady*, and "Paul's Case." One of these professors used *A Lost Lady* with her freshmen, junior, and senior students. She found that upper-level students had no problem understanding the content of the novel, but the lower-level students found *A Lost Lady* quite difficult. . . . One of these professors, who is fond of Cather's works (both the novel and the short story), found the historical backgrounds inherent in the novels a disadvantage, as she uses literature as a means to teach the English language. She feels that if her students have been to the United States, they would

appreciate Cather's works much more than if they have not been out of Thailand.

What aspects of Willa Cather's work are particularly difficult for your literature students to understand, and what resonates best with them? What are their (and your) favorite Cather texts? How is Cather received relative to other canonical American authors?

Mesquita: I cannot say I have had any discouraging experiences with students working on Cather's prose. Quite the opposite, really. This is not to say that just from reading a couple of her works students will fully comprehend the remarkable richness of multi-layered meaning in her texts, when her writing can appear so deceptively straightforward and univocal. What I try to do is train them beforehand in the study of detail in her works, demonstrating how richly charged they are and using illustrative examples. Then I ask them to try it themselves, and they go about "digging up" meanings and figuring out their own perspectives and interpretations. I have found that "Paul's Case" seems to be a favourite with them. My view is that many students can easily relate to the character on one level or another, and early into the reading they become eager to know how his story will end. On the other hand, they are surprised by the fact that Paul's personal experience feels really quite close to home, although set in such a distant time and place.

Tossa: Students who have read *A Lost Lady* find her work easy to read in terms of language, but they find historical background a little difficult. Once I advise them to look for information on history of the railroad and economic depression in the U.S., they appreciate the novel better. Students find ways Mrs. Forrester survives through the changes fascinating. In *The Professor's House*, my students are intrigued with how each part of the novel could stand on its own and how they are interconnected through the rise and fall of the professor's academic career and how he finds a peaceful resolution to the later part of his life. Among the four novels that my students have read in the past twenty years of my teaching, students seem to like *A Lost Lady* best, but none of them expresses dislike for any of these.

I have assigned other American authors such as Ernest Hemingway, Stephen Crane, John Steinbeck, Henry James, Edith Wharton, William Faulkner, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe. My students find Cather's works as enjoyable and educational as those of Hemingway and Steinbeck. It is important to note that my students are more attracted to novels that are short with precise and clear language. This is because English is taught as a foreign language in Thailand.

Palleau-Papin: Re-reading *The Song of the Lark* for a Master's seminar, I was struck again at how little her writing had aged. I marvel at the limpidity of her prose, written almost a century ago, but which still carries the sound of a genuine voice that won't get warped with time. A wiser narrator gives off the vigor of youth in *The Song of the Lark*, or in *My Ántonia*, a vividness still to be felt in later novels, even in *The Professor's House*, with its study of depression. The students I interviewed

speak of the sharp images that remain after they've closed the book. Something comes across with strength and authenticity, something lively, for lack of better words, something so much like life that one might almost forget the writing, precisely because it is so good.

Broncano: Cather is quite often represented in American literature courses in Spain, and both *O Pioneers!* and *My Ántonia* are frequent required readings in survey courses. Cather is mainly associated with pioneer life in the West, and her other writings are perhaps not so well known among Spanish academics. Students tend to appreciate and enjoy these two novels, for they usually have a keen interest in the American frontier. I have taught *Death Comes for the Archbishop* a number of times, and my students have had varied reactions, though they generally have enjoyed working with that text.

The most problematic aspect for a Spanish reader is, obviously, the chiaroscuro in which Cather depicts Hispanic culture in that novel, and that gives way to some interesting in-class debates. In fact, I have always been intrigued, both as a scholar and as a reader, by Cather's ambiguous relationship with Spanish civilization. While she was well-versed in French or even Italian culture and often incorporated them into her fiction, her knowledge of Spain and Hispanic countries seems to have been more limited, although there are some instances in her narrative that suggest the contrary. We know for example that Godfrey St. Peter had lived in Spain for some time and had written a history book titled *Spanish Adventures in North America*. His physical appearance is described as follows: "St. Peter was commonly said to look like a Spaniard. That was possibly because he had been in Spain a good deal, and was an authority on certain phases of Spanish history." I think the presence of Spain and Spanish culture in Cather's fiction needs to be reexamined, and perhaps the next international conference in Avignon will be a good setting for such reevaluation.

To what extent do you see Cather as a writer distinctively of the United States? How can she also be seen as a writer of international significance?

Mesquita: In view of the ongoing international, multicultural European political project and in times of heightened cultural and ethnic contact and tension, I believe Cather's works are particularly stimulating material for analysis and discussion. They offer great opportunities for the consideration of—among many other current issues—social and historical phenomena related to intercultural contact in general and to immigration in particular.

Broncano: I find Cather as a bridge between the uniqueness of the American experience and the European roots of that experience. This is perhaps the most outstanding characteristic of her writing: while on the one hand she was able to portray the American physical and human landscape as few other writers have, on the other she was able to frame all that in a universal context. And that universality is what I (and, I would add, the Spanish readership at large) find most appealing in her fiction.

Tossa: I see Cather a uniquely American author as well as an international author. Her works are set mostly in the United States. Her settings are landscapes of the United States. Yet her

themes are those of international significance. How one survives in the changing world is adaptable to the fast pace of change in the globalized world today. How one deals with one's creative energy, its ups and downs, is always prevalent in the lives of all academics and scholars. How one balances reality and the wonderful world of abstraction is always fascinating. All of these we need no boundaries of nationality to dictate.

Palleau-Papin: Our students are surprised at the different perception of space they read in her descriptions of nature and of her characters in a Western setting in particular. For French students, her American vision is more radically different than that of other Cather contemporaries. Her sense of space is more vivid, more awesome, but also friendlier, as if she managed to bring it closer to our befuddled perception in the beauty of her style. In Panther Canyon, Thea discovers something about herself in the countryside around her, set in the superb rhythm of Cather's prose: "She could become a mere receptacle for heat, or become a color, like the bright lizards that darted about on the hot stones outside her door; or she could become a continuous repetition of sound, like the cicadas." Such an encounter between the American West and a character is foreign to French students, and they've often expressed their curiosity and interest.

In France as well as internationally, this encounter is also an important point of interest for eco-criticism today, a new development in nature writing that often centers on the study of more recent writers than Cather. Students find that Cather's nature writing is at once precise, born of minute observation, and serves characterization, expressing a lot about the viewer Jim Burden in *My Ántonia*, when he remembers his youth on the prairie as he played by the cornfields and discovered a weed he endows with bountiful fertility: "I used to love to drift along the pale yellow cornfields, looking for the damp spots one sometimes found at their edges, where the smartweed soon turned a rich copper color and the narrow brown leaves hung curled like cocoons about the swollen joints of the stem." Such empathy between narrator and weed, or with the characters, makes Cather's texts endearing and memorable to the students, even when she describes difficult characters with whom empathy is at best problematic, like Myra in *My Mortal Enemy* or Sapphira in *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*. Once a Cather novel is read, something lingers: we have learned something about ourselves, something about life.

Cather Family Members Make A Difference



Pictured here are Jim and Trish Schreiber. Their timely donation to the NEH Endowment and the donation from Angela and Cather Foundation Board member Jim Southwick helped the Cather Foundation

reach the NEH Challenge goal just in time. The Foundation appreciates that members of the Cather family are taking an active part in making certain that the Cather Foundation is able to continue the important work of preserving and promoting the life, times, sites, and writings of Willa Cather. (See article on page 1 for more details.)

2006 Cather Spring Conference

(Continued from Page 1)

Cather's works in foreign countries. In the audience were a number of students from China who were guests of the conference. They shared thoughts on the teaching of Cather as well.

Friday afternoon and evening were reserved for the prairie. Nadine McHenry, featured visual artist at the conference, Bill Kloefkorn, the Nebraska State Poet, and Chris Helzer from the Nature Conservancy each took two groups to the prairie for special experiences. Attendance at the afternoon events was very good. Attendees seem to delight in drawing the prairie, writing about it, and inspecting plants with an eye toward the science of the prairie.

Late in the afternoon, an elegant reception included the ceremonial transfer of the prairie from the Nature Conservancy to the Cather Foundation. (See Charles Peek's remarks on page 13 of this issue.) Participants were reminded that thirty-one years before a similar ceremony had occurred when the prairie was purchased by the Nature Conservancy with the support of the Woods family foundation. Most remarkable about the afternoon on the prairie in 2006 was the setting. Participants sat in the shade of a large tent, facing a cloudless sky and incredibly verdant rolling grasses, with only a whisper of warm breezes—a remarkable day in Nebraska.

During the evening at the Opera House, the Hastings Symphony Orchestra presented a concert in celebration of the prairie, making a perfect ending to the day.

Traditional events on Saturday included services at Grace Episcopal Church with Charles Peek, Officiant, and Steve Shively, Assistant. The Passing Show Panel followed, featuring keynote speaker John Murphy, who focused on Cather's novel *Shadows on the Rock*, and panelists Kathleen Danker and Ann Moseley. Although the audience tended, for some reason, to be slightly off the subject of the session, discussions were lively and continued into the lunch hour.

Next, participants were off to St. Anne's Catholic Church at Campbell, Nebraska. Hints of *O Pioneers!* were evident as Robin Koozer set the tone for participants with his rendition of the "Ave Maria" while Spring Conference participants settled into the church for an afternoon of remembrance. After a presentation by Kathleen Danker, Steve Shively moderated a lively discussion. Members of St. Anne's congregation, who are descendants of the original French-Canadian families in the Campbell area, were on hand to introduce themselves and confirm the old, old stories that Willa Cather incorporated into her writing. After the discussion, members of the congregation invited participants to enjoy refreshments. The afternoon was highlighted by the gracious hospitality offered by St. Anne's members.

During the French inspired Conference Banquet, special recognition was given to Kenneth Morrison for his generous donations to the Opera House Endowment; Sarah Chambers, winner of the Norma Ross Walter Scholarship, was introduced by Virgil Albertini, Chair of the Scholarship Committee; and the Foundation recognized the volunteer of the year, Mary Brumbaugh, by presenting her with the newly-instituted Miriam Mountford Volunteer Recognition Award.

The 2006 Spring Conference ended with French-Canadian artist Normand Perron's vocal performance on the Opera House stage. Sponsored by the Cather Foundation along with the governments of Canada and Quebec, this internationally recognized performer underscored the Foundation's new thrust

toward an international tone and presence within the Cather Community.

Cather Foundation Meets NEH Challenge

(Continued from Page 1)

small organizations to find contributions on a three-to-one basis sufficient enough to meet such a significant goal."

Earlier this summer, the Foundation had more than \$220,000 left to raise to reach the \$825,000 mark. NEH had set July 31 as the absolute final date to do so. Then, a series of big developments began.

In early June, James and Angela Southwick donated \$50,000. James, who lives in Utah, is the son of the late Helen Cather Southwick, a niece of Willa Cather and longtime supporter of Cather scholarship who died in 2004 at age 86. The Southwicks have donated a number of archival items to the Foundation over the last two years, Kort said. These items include personal clothing and jewelry that had belonged to Willa Cather.

Not long after the Southwicks' donation arrived, a second \$50,000 arrived. This money came from Jim and Trish Schreiber of California. Trish is a granddaughter of Willa Cather's brother Roscoe. Kort said she was grateful for the two family gifts, and noted that neither the Southwicks nor the Schreibers had been aware of the other's intention to contribute.

"We are so pleased that members of the Cather extended family have contributed so generously to the endowment," Kort said. "Funds from the endowment will be used to perpetuate the work of the Foundation." She noted that gifts to the endowment fund had come from far and wide, and said each was appreciated greatly.

"We expected this fund drive to go down to the wire, but we were confident that the goal would be met," Kort said. The Opera House, situated along Webster Street in downtown Red Cloud, is a building that had special significance in Willa Cather's life.

The Pulitzer Prize-winning author attended numerous performances and events in the Opera House through the years. In 1890, she delivered her high school commencement address from the stage there—a speech that is recalled in one of Cather's most famous novels, *My Ántonia*.

The Cather Foundation has owned the building since 1991 when the late Frank Morhart of Hastings donated it. The renovation effort was planned for several years before work began in 2001.

Visit the all new
Willa Cather Foundation
Website
www.willacather.org

Object Lesson: Willa Cather's Brace

John N. Swift



Photograph by Betty Kort.

Willa Cather's wrist brace—an intricate, quite beautiful contrivance of polished metal and leather, now housed in the archives of the Cather Foundation in Red Cloud—was designed and built for her in the late winter of 1940-41 by Dr. Frank R. Ober, a senior orthopedic surgeon at Children's Hospital, Boston. Ober had been a pioneer in the surgical cure of clubfoot twenty-five years earlier, and he had worked with Dr. Robert Lovett in the early days of the Children's Hospital's polio clinic. Cather's friend Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant implies in her memoir that both Lovett and Ober had treated Sergeant's own damaged ankles, and that Cather came to Ober through her (274).

The brace's purpose was to immobilize and stabilize a badly strained thumb tendon on Cather's right hand, her writing hand, which she had damaged signing first editions of *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* the previous autumn (Woodress 490). The injury was serious enough to put Cather in New York's French Hospital for Christmas 1940. It was the final and most drastic episode in a history of hand-related disorders that stretched back at least to the summer of 1923, when Cather went to Aix-les-Bains (the setting for the bitter late story "The Old Beauty") to undergo therapy for "neuritis" of the right arm, a condition that flared again in 1924. In 1934 she reported a sprained tendon in her *left* wrist, necessitating splints and a sling, and an overworked and barely functional right hand. Four years later an accident temporarily crippled her right hand. It's not surprising that she called the book-signing injury only the last straw in a letter to Carrie Miner Sherwood and others.¹

Despite some initial therapeutic success, Dr. Ober's brace could effect only a temporary relief. Thus it became Cather's more or less constant companion for her life's final six years, and a familiar presence in her letters. She frequently, often wryly, resented the constriction of her "metal gauntlet" (Stout 236) that made not only writing, but even simple tasks

like dressing, difficult or impossible while wearing it. But she endured it, and she was also sometimes grateful for the small measure of dexterity that the brace restored to her, noting with surprise to Carrie Sherwood the steadying and strengthening of her handwriting under its stern discipline (Stout 239). Her brace was indeed a hard and unmerited punishment, she suggested to her niece Helen in a 1944 letter (Cather to Southwick); but it remains today a forceful expression of Cather's strength (like the strength of Myra Henshawe or Sapphira Colbert), which sustained her powerfully vital, self-possessed voice in the face of a painful age and through her body's slow failing.

Note

¹For a recent summary of this medical history, see Sharon O'Brien 148-50. James Woodress also describes these various crises in *Willa Cather: A Literary Life*, and specific letters referring to them are paraphrased in Janis Stout's *Calendar of the Letters of Willa Cather* (104-05, 113, 181, 211, 228-34).

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Cather Foundation Accepts Ownership of Willa Cather Memorial Prairie

Remarks made, Friday, June 2, 2006, by Dr. Charles A. Peek, President of the Board of Governors of the Cather Foundation, on the occasion of the transfer of the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie from the Nature Conservancy to the Cather Foundation.

The gift of these 608 acres represents another phase in the partnership between the Nature Conservancy and the Cather Foundation, which share the goal of protecting the prairie and enhancing the educational opportunities it provides.

The photograph of the prairie that appears on the cover of the Winter-Spring 2006 *Willa Cather Newsletter & Review* also appeared on the cover of its 1974 edition. The *Newsletter* was then celebrating the purchase of the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie by the Nature Conservancy, a purchase made possible by funding from the Woods Charitable Fund, Inc. of Lincoln, Nebraska, and Chicago, Illinois. Tom Woods of Lincoln, Frank Woods of Chicago, and Lucia Woods of New York were present that day. Lucia, of course, took the photograph.

Lucia is very sorry she could not be here today. This prairie, a major source of Cather's writing, is dear to her, as it was to Mildred Bennett as well, whose "hand in this purchase," the *Newsletter* notes, "is obvious." Lucia sends her greetings to all of us here today and, on behalf of the Cather Foundation, I want to say to Lucia: without you and your family, none of this would be happening today. We miss you, and only wish you could have been here.

Under the leadership of Jim Fitzgibbon, Merle Illian, Joe Strickland, John Swift, Cheryl Swift, Joe Springer, Bill Beachley, Gilbert Adrian, Duane Lienemann, Dave Smith, and Ann Fisher-Wirth will continue to preserve the prairie and the dream that Mildred, Lucia, and the Woods family shared.

Coming on two centuries ago, William Wordsworth wrote, "Getting and spending we lay waste our powers, / Little we see in nature that is ours."

When I was in school, we were taught that that last line merely meant that we had grown apart from nature, lost touch with its rhythms and beauties.

I have come to think Wordsworth was wiser than that and that the line means much more. We look around our material and social worlds and think, "This can be ours." Just enough getting and spending, and we can wrest a world and happiness from it. But when we turn our eye to nature itself, we instinctively sense that it cannot be ours. Thus some become at best indifferent to and at worst hostile to nature.

Robert Frost captured this same idea when he told us we were the land's before the land was ours. And again, since we would rather own than be owned, would rather shape than be shaped, nature looms up for some as at best an intrusion and at worst an enemy.

There's plenty in the ecological record of the human race the last two hundred years to suggest both Wordsworth and Frost were right, and their insights were Cather's as well. Early in *My Ántonia*, we see that both Jim and Grandmother get on rather well with nature precisely because, as my Chinese student Li Jing suggests, neither thinks nature exists solely to satisfy them.* And of course this particular system of nature we call prairie: Did anyone ever capture it quite like Cather could? She knew this land when much more of it was wild grass prairie; watched as first some and then more of it was converted by the plow.

Of course, we humans have to eat, have to make a living, and only nature is there to serve that end. Gaining food and occupation are indeed often heroic tasks as Cather knew. But she seems to have known as well that, on this planet, two species depend on each other for their continuation as species, and those two are humans and grass. The domestication of cereal grasses has, to be sure, played the central role in the development of civilization; but we know, too, that wild grass prairie, places of wilderness, deserve our conservancy, not as bits of nostalgia or as oddities, but as, if nothing else, holding secrets for human survival and harboring patterns and beauties vital for our souls.

I have no idea how Cather would feel about all our efforts to preserve her past. She herself abandoned her homes here for another life. I suspect she would have been pleased to see them preserved, the Opera House restored, and Grace Church maintained. But I am certain she would have been most pleased with the preservation of this prairie and with its transfer from the good stewards who have cared for it for over thirty years to the Cather Foundation. For many years, that work was the responsibility of Dr. Hal Nagel, who is present with us today.

On behalf of the Foundation, I accept, then, this prairie, with great thanks to the Nature Conservancy for their work in general and this gift in particular, and with the promise that we will not only be good stewards of the prairie in our turn, but will model our stewardship on the good example set for all of us by Hal and the Nature Conservancy. We deeply appreciate the Nature Conservancy's gift to us and its trust in us. I suspect this prairie will, in now unsuspected ways, change our Foundation for the better. After all, the Foundation is trying to build something, too, and though this prairie is not a world, it is, as Cather taught us, the materials from which worlds are made.

**Li Jing's paper, an ecological view of Cather's novel, was referenced earlier in the Spring Conference in the panel on Teaching Cather Abroad.*



Above left, Nadine McHenry, standing in front of a paintings from her exhibit, discusses her work. Photo by Dee Yost. Above right, guests from China, Yan Ling (Ellen), Li Yuan (Caroline), and Che Xiangqian (Bonita Che), enjoy the Spring Conference. Left, sponsor Zhou Junying (Rosa) speaks with a group. Photos by Barb Kudrna.

A Quest for Memory in Willa Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop*

Haein Park

In *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, Cather creates, through the interplay of color, light, sound and memory, a mood of particular place and time. This concentration on mood, some scholars have argued, leads her to sacrifice historical accuracy for artistic effect. Indeed, the problem of the narrative's relationship to history remains at the center of many critical discussions. From contemporary reviewers who remain baffled by its genre, to Cather who describes *Archbishop* as a narrative rather than a novel, to recent critics who address its glaring historical gaps—all have focused on the text's problematic relationship to history. Guy Reynolds points out how a number of earlier scholars grappled with the novel's "generic ambiguity" and attempted to classify it in various ways—"as history, biography, or fiction," and "even created the hybrid genre, 'historical biography'" (*Cather in Context* 154). Reynolds himself defines *Archbishop* as a "historical novel, but one that approaches its subject in an elusive, teasing manner" ("Ideology" 1). Bette Weidman points out, quoting from Herbert Butterfield's work *The Historical Novel*, that Cather goes beyond "the authenticated data of history books," subordinating "strict accuracy of detail to some other kind of effectiveness" (56). Weidman argues that Cather "is working . . . to heal the sense of alienation she feels in her own time and country by calling on an earlier period" (61). Cather's narrative, in effect, concentrates on recollection, lodging within historical memory an image of difference, what Pierre Nora describes as "the decipherment of what we are in light of what we are no longer" (18). *Death Comes for the Archbishop* works by remembrance that suspends time, producing moments of affective connection with the past. It is precisely within these suspended moments—when Cather most clearly excludes history—that the historical pressure under which she writes *Archbishop* becomes most visibly evident.

Death Comes for the Archbishop works by weaving memory into history. Pierre Nora's distinction between these two concepts illuminates Cather's narrative and ideological aim. Nora suggests that history is abstract, for it is based on "temporal continuities" and "progressions," whereas memory is concrete and lodges itself in "spaces, gestures, images and objects" (9). In effect, memory allows for emotional connection with the past, for it is "a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present" (8). History, on the other hand, is premised on a sequence of events and remains a representation of the past, one that emphasizes its break with and distance from the present. Memory, however, collapses this distance and offers "a phenomenal screen" that provides an affective lens through which to view the past. While history dissects and analyzes the past, memory offers a kind of mystic cord that links the past and present together. Thus, Nora writes that "[m]emory installs remembrance within the sacred; history, always prosaic, releases it again" (9). Cather emphasizes memory over history in order to reconnect with the past and thereby, as Weidman suggests, "to heal the sense of alienation" she felt "in her

own time and country." I will suggest in this essay that the historical discrepancies in *Archbishop* can be understood in light of Cather's attempt to foreground what Nora terms *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory) over history. Cather, in essence, privileges memory over history and establishes "remembrance within the sacred." By creating these sites of memory, she attempts to bridge the rupture she felt in the years following the Great War.

Cather marked 1922, seven years before the publication of *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, as a year when her "world broke in two." The Great War, in particular, represented the dislocation that Cather and others around her experienced in the early twenties. Expressing the tragic irony that many writers felt during this period, she wrote, "We knew one world and knew what we felt about it, now [after the Great War] we find ourselves in quite another" (Stout 180). Janis Stout points out that the novels written by Cather from 1922 to 1926—*A Lost Lady* (1923), *The Professor's House* (1925), and *My Mortal Enemy* (1926)—reflect the uncertainty and the tragic mood that dominated her life during this period. All three texts revolve around the theme of rupture, broken relationships, and the divide that exists between the past, present and future. This preoccupation with the "world's larger brokenness" expresses the intense sense of "cultural divorce" Cather experienced in the postwar years (187, 188).

Cather's 1923 essay, "Nebraska: The End of the First Cycle," captures effectively the growing pessimism she experienced in the early twenties. In it, she conveys the sense of irretrievable loss of an old order passing away, the disappearance of the pioneering spirit among the second generation of the settlers in the Midwest. "In Nebraska, as in so many other States," writes Cather, "we must face the fact that the splendid story of the pioneers is finished" (238). No longer finding "the generous idealism" and "noble seriousness" of the older generation, Cather instead bemoans the "ugly crest of materialism which has set its seal upon" modern America: "Too much prosperity, too many moving-picture shows, too much gaudy fiction have colored the taste and manners of so many of these Nebraskans of the future. There, as elsewhere, one finds the frenzy to be showy" (238). Philip Gerber notes that this sense of loss evident in Cather's "Nebraska" essay "border[s] on despair": "[Her] dim hope that the new generation might have inherited integrity sufficient to reject th[e] 'heaped up, machine made' existence was expressed only in the most guarded of tones, for the first cycle on the frontier had come to an abrupt halt, and its successor was to be dreaded" (104).

Cather turns toward the past in order to retrieve a meaningful narrative, one that would offset the pain of confronting a present with which she was deeply disillusioned. Her nostalgia for the past conveys her growing discomfort with

A Quest for Memory (Continued)

modern America, a discomfort that propels her to reconstruct a national narrative as antidote to her disillusionment in the postwar years. As Nora notes, memory makes its appearance by “virtue of the deritualization” that has occurred within modern, technological culture that produces and maintains “a society deeply absorbed in its transformation and renewal, one that inherently values the new over the ancient, the young over the old, the future over the past” (Nora 17, 12). This pressure of modernity impels Cather toward remembrance, and in the image of the difference she sees between past and present, she glimpses an “ephemeral spectacle of an unrecoverable identity” (17).

While Cather describes *Archbishop* as a “narrative” in order to resolve the tension emerging from its seeming generic transgression, it is more accurately a work saturated with memory and remembrance. “Writing this book,” she writes, “was like a happy vacation from life, a return to childhood, to early memories” (*On Writing* 11). In many ways, *Archbishop* works by a complex layering of memory; just as Cather structures the narrative as a whole through recollection, so she constructs Latour’s life through his memories. In recreating the historical figure, Jean-Baptiste Lamy, in her character, Jean-Marie Latour, Cather attempts to capture a life that “would remain through the years to come; some ideal, or memory, or legend” (*DCA* 253). In *Archbishop*, Cather revives the life of Bishop Lamy through Latour’s participation in acts of remembrance. She illustrates this with particular clarity as she describes Latour’s acceptance of the life he has lived and the death he is to meet at the end of his life. Knowing of his death, and serenely accepting his fate—the Archbishop reassures the young seminarian, Bernard Ducrot, that “I shall die of having lived” (269)—Latour is taken to Santa Fe in accordance with his wish to spend his last days there. In his old age, Latour remembers the past in Santa Fe, his earlier days as a missionary priest among the Native and Mexican Americans of the Southwest, his friendship with his fellow priest, Joseph Vaillant, and the building of his Midi Romanesque cathedral. In a winter evening in Santa Fe, “[w]rapped in his Indian blankets, the old Archbishop sat for a long while, looking at the open, golden face of his Cathedral” (271). He reflects with quiet joy, “How exactly” his young architect “had done what he wanted! Nothing sensational, simply honest building and good stone-cutting,—good Midi Romanesque of the plainest” (271). The cathedral also reminds him of his beloved native land of southern France: “[E]ven now, in winter, when the acacia trees before the door were bare, how it was of the South, that church, how it sounded the note of the South!” (271). Latour converts the Southwestern landscape into a geography shot through with memories of past, memories that reveal his fidelity to place.

These serene memories that permeate the novel, however, belie the actual historical reality of the French mission in the Southwest. Cather’s desire to recapture the lost ideal in Latour leads her to diffuse the colonial tensions that emerged with the establishment of French clergy as the dominant religious authority in the region.¹ Within the domain of recuperative memory, Cather evades Lamy’s position as colonizer of both native and Mexican cultures. Instead, she attempts a seamless identification with the past through an invocation of sacred memory, describing the changes that Latour brings as ultimately constructive. The

Archbishop views his Midi Romanesque cathedral in quiet serenity, “wrapped in his Indian blanket,” enveloped in his memories of the past, memories that center around the building of his cathedral, whose imposing presence in the landscape symbolize the triumph of European over native culture. Just as Cather renders Latour’s appropriation of native culture unproblematic—he remains supremely peaceful cloaked in his Indian blanket—so she veils in memory the complications played out in the actual historical arena. It is memory that repeatedly effaces history in *Archbishop*. As she turns toward the past, she attempts to retrieve a meaningful national narrative by capturing what Ernest Renan describes as “a long past of endeavours, sacrifice, and devotion . . . the social capital upon which one bases a national ideal” (19). Cather resurrects the spirit of early pioneers and locates it in her character, Jean-Marie Latour, endowing him with the generosity of spirit that she sees disappearing around her. She thus transmutes history into consecrated space, and, in the process, instantiates Renan’s concept of nation as “a spiritual principle . . . [o]ne that lies in the possession . . . of a rich legacy of memories” (19). Throughout *Archbishop*, Cather establishes memory “as a bond that connects” her character “to the eternal present.” After seeing his Midi Romanesque cathedral for the last time, the Archbishop wakes the next morning with “a grateful sense of nearness to his Cathedral—which would also be his tomb. He felt safe under its shadows; like a boat come back to harbour, lying under its own sea-wall” (*DCA* 273). Latour’s memory is lodged in concrete objects—the room he has inhabited, the desk that he has used, the candlesticks he has lighted—all of which remain essentially unchanged in his mind as he remembers the past: “He was in his old study. . . . He felt a great content at being here, where he had come as a young man and where he had done his work. The room had little changed; the same rugs and skins on the earth floor, the same desk with his candlesticks, the same thick, wavy white walls that muted sound, that shut out the world and gave repose to the spirit” (273). Latour’s life in his final days, notes Tom Quirk, is “thick with memory” (48). His remembrance of things past recalls what Nora describes as a Proustian “recovery from lost love[.]. . . that moment when the obsessive grasp of passion finally loosens” (24):

During those last weeks of the Bishop’s life he thought very little about death. . . . The mistakes of his life seemed unimportant. . . . He observed also that there was no longer any perspective in his memories. He remembered his winters with his cousins on the Mediterranean when he was a little boy, his student days in the Holy City, as clearly as he remembered the arrival of M. Molny [the architect] and the building of his Cathedral. He was soon to have done with calendared time, and it had already ceased to count for him. He sat in the middle of his own consciousness; none of his former states of mind were lost or outgrown. They were all within reach of his and all comprehensible. (290)

History—the progression of time experienced as a sequence of events—becomes obliterated, and memory takes center stage as Latour relives the past as Nora’s “perpetually actual phenomenon.” Latour’s recollection posits a distinction between history, the “calendared time,” and memory, that which

allows him to experience the past in the immediacy of the present and to establish his life within a timeless narrative. It is within these timeless moments of remembrance that Cather's own desire to escape history emerges.

Latour's old room in Santa Fe whose "wavy white walls muted sound and shut out the world and gave repose to the spirit" functions as a metaphor for Cather's own participation in the atemporal domain of her narrative memory. The historical events that complicate Latour's vision of serenity—the political and social consequences emerging from slavery, the Civil War, the failure of Reconstruction, and the displacement of Native Americans, (events to which Cather alludes but does so only peripherally near the end of her narrative)—remain absent within these enclosed sites of memory "torn away from the movement of history" (Nora 12). Latour remembers the violence and greed and politics that sustained the Indian Wars, and that deprived the Native Americans of their sacred land, but Cather creates a sense of resolution to these historical complications. Latour tells Manuelito, who has come to visit the Archbishop after many years of separation: "I have lived to see two great wrongs righted; I have seen the end of black slavery, and I have seen the Navajos restored to their own country" (292). The Archbishop's words convey a sense of restoration that belies Cather's own longing for restoration in a seemingly fragmenting world of the twenties. As Reynolds notes, the "[m]elodramatic details of political and military history are . . . largely absent from Cather's irenic novel. . . . When major historical incidents are mentioned, such as the infamous Bent massacre or the expulsion of the Navajo from their lands, Cather's prose is laconically subdued" ("Ideology" 1-2). Rather, Cather installs these incidents within a historical memory in which the emotional intensity released in the act of remembering overshadows the actual historical events themselves. Latour remembers the terrible events of Indian repatriation, but the narration of history becomes ruptured by the text's attempt to insert the historical events within a narrative that exceeds the particularities of time and history:

In 1875, the Bishop took his French architect on a pack trip into Arizona to show him something of the country before he returned to France, and he had the pleasure of seeing the Navajo horsemen riding free over the great plains again. . . . [S]heep were grazing under the magnificent cottonwoods and drinking under the

streams of sweet water; it was like an Indian Garden of Eden.

Now, when he was an old man and ill, scenes from those bygone times, dark and bright, flashed back to the Bishop: the terrible faces of the Navajos waiting at the place on the Rio Grande where they were being ferried across into exile; the long stream of survivors going back to their own country, driving their scanty flocks, carrying their old men and their children. Memories, too, of that time he had spent with Eusabio on the Little Colorado, in the early spring, when the lambing season was not yet over . . . a young Navajo woman, giving a lamb her breast until a ewe was found for it (279, emphasis mine).

The historical moment of 1875 and the historical locale of the American Southwest become incorporated into a timeless narrative of paradise regained, the lost Indian Garden of Eden recaptured within the landscape of Latour's memory, and into the sacred image of the Madonna and Child, of the Navajo woman giving her breast to a lost lamb. The "dark" flashes of history—the "terrible" faces of the Navajos awaiting their exile near the Rio Grande—merge seamlessly with the memory of these sacred images and become part of the transcendent narrative of fall and redemption. The novel shifts and glides between past and present, between time and temporality, between memory and history, ultimately collapsing the boundaries that separate their distance.

In *Archbishop* Cather employs two important medieval iconographic traditions—the image of the sorrowful Virgin, and the image of the suffering Christ—in order to elicit participation in a timeless narrative. Separated from his friend, Joseph Vaillant, and experiencing the pain of loneliness and spiritual doubt, Latour arrives at the church one winter night and finds the Mexican slave woman, Sada, seeking sanctuary from her Anglo master. Discovering her shivering in the December night, "utterly black except for the red spark of the sanctuary lamp before the high altar" (214), the Bishop takes her into the Lady Chapel and lights the tapers before the Virgin. Sada, overwhelmed by the presence of the Virgin, falls on her knees and "kisse[s] the feet of the Holy Mother, the pedestal on which they stood" (218). The passion and purity of her devotion penetrate through Latour's doubt; (Continued on Page 17)



Introducing the Director's Assistant...

The Cather Foundation is pleased to introduce the new Executive Director's Assistant, Eric Reed. Born in Alliance, Nebraska, Eric was graduated from the University of Nebraska at Kearney in 2002. He earned MA degrees in History and English from the same institution in 2003 and 2006. As a graduate student of English with special interests in Modern American Literature and Western American Literature, he studied Cather extensively under Foundation Board President Charles A. Peek. He has won several awards for his writing, such as the Critical Essay Award at the Sigma Tau Delta International Convention in Kansas City in 2005, and the UNK Honorable Mention Thesis Award for his history thesis in 2003. Earlier this summer, he presented a paper related to his MA thesis in English at the International Hemingway Conference in Málaga and Ronda, Spain. Eric has co-authored two books with Susanne Bloomfield, the first being *From the Beginning*, a centennial history

of the University of Nebraska at Kearney. The second, *Adventures in the West: Fiction in American Family Periodicals, 1890—1917*, is due out by the University of Nebraska Press in the fall of next year. His fiancée, Ana Luísa De Lorenzo, was born in Brazil and is currently studying in Italy.

Eric fills a new position and represents the growth and progress made by the Cather Foundation over the last few years. His responsibilities will include grant writing and program development.

A Message from the President



Dear Catherlanders,

Many of you can remember the days when what “Catherland” conjured up in our minds consisted of a town, some buildings, and several square miles of land bordered by steel plows on cement pedestals.

That is still Catherland, of course, but over the years Catherland has expanded. This summer, by meeting the NEH matching grant for our endowment, we made the equivalent of a Louisiana Purchase. It seems appropriate to me that we accomplished this “voyage of discovery” in the final months of the national celebration of Lewis and Clark.

As most of you are aware, meeting this challenge has opened vistas to us that previously we could only imagine. The NEH is one of our nation’s most prestigious sponsors of the humanities, and as a federally funded program, we all share in its sponsorship. Our foundation takes on the national importance that Cather’s writings so richly deserve. Meeting the NEH challenge means new prestige for us as a literary society, as well as new possibilities for sustaining our cultural mission.

In meeting this challenge, every gift was important, no matter how large or how small. Obviously, coming up with large amounts of matching money requires a few very generous contributions. I’m so grateful we have the loyal support of those who can afford such major gifts. But just as obviously, such agencies as the NEH want to fund organizations that can show a broad range of support, and this is shown by countless numbers of smaller gifts that demonstrate how much support there is for the promotion of Willa Cather and her works. So I’m equally grateful for each of you who managed to come up with \$10 or \$25 or \$100 for the cause. You have demonstrated that Cather has won the allegiance of readers across the world. Please look in this issue for a reprint of all the donors to the endowment over the entire six years of this campaign.

So, even though many of our programs will take place in or be sponsored out of Red Cloud, you can see that “Catherland” is much larger than a town, some buildings, and several square miles bordered by steel plows on cement pedestals. Catherland is the deserts and mesas of the Southwest where steel plows have never ventured. Catherland is Quebec and Avignon where Cather’s English is a second language (Avignon! site of our next international gathering in 2007). Catherland is Virginia beginnings and New England endings. The road didn’t stop on the prairies and divides of the Great Plains, but ran through them to the world. Meeting the NEH challenge makes us a world class organization with a national and international mission, and it will not only expand our opportunities but even our reading of Cather’s works. Those works have no county lines or national boundaries. Catherland is a big place indeed.

Charles A. Peek, President
Willa Cather Foundation

Volunteers Honored at Spring Conference

Left, Mary Brumbaugh receives the coveted Miriam Mountford Volunteer Award from Director Betty Kort for hours and hours of quiet and unassuming volunteer work for the Cather Foundation. Upper center, here serving as Master of Ceremonies at the annual banquet, Ron Hull is representative of the many Foundation Board members who give willingly of their time and talents without compensation. Lower center, Lonnie Knehans and Bob Minnick relax at the snacks and beverages counter. Upper right, Linda Mesloh and Ellie Keeney prepare to begin their duties as volunteers—pinning on the name tag takes serious concentration. Lower right, Patty Hutton prepares food for the reception on the Prairie. Photos by Dee Yost and Barb Kudrna.



A Quest for Memory

(Continued from page 15)

kneeling and praying with Sada before the statue of the Virgin Mary, he is transformed by the power of her simple faith. The scene encapsulates how spiritual transformation breaks down temporal boundaries that demarcate racial, class, and gender divisions. As Latour remembers the words of Christ, he merges his experience of spiritual poverty with Sada's material poverty, seeing "through her eyes," and recognizing that "his poverty was as bleak as hers" (218). The miracle Latour receives as he watches Sada's devotion to the Virgin allows him to blur the privileged position he occupies in relationship to the slave woman. Thus, Cather creates a suspended atemporal moment in which the contingencies of history—Sada's experience of oppression as a Mexican slave woman in a Protestant household, and Latour's privileged status as a European Bishop in the newly acquired U.S. territory—are inscribed within a timeless narrative in which the least become the greatest and Latour a servant to Sada. This sacramental perspective momentarily brackets historical contingencies, allowing Latour "to behold such deep experience of the holy joy of religion" as he identifies with the suffering woman. The visual culture of Catholicism mediates this affective connection. The Bishop, "[k]neeling beside [Sada]," is able to behold "the preciousness of the things of the altar to her who was without possessions; the tapers, the image of the Virgin, the figures of the saints, the Cross that took away indignity from suffering and made pain and poverty a means of fellowship with Christ" (217). In this scene of profound spiritual beauty, Cather presents a vision of counter-reality, a temporary inversion of power relationship. In the memory of the cross, in the act of remembering the suffering Christ together, Sada and Latour are drawn together, momentarily forgetting their own pain. While memory forges an intense, spiritual bond between Sada and Latour and offers them relief from their suffering, it simultaneously obscures the social reality of poverty and oppression that Sada must confront after her experience of spiritual communion.

Throughout *Archbishop*, Cather focuses on capturing the rich, spiritual meaning that resides behind the apparent reality of the visible world. The visual landscape Cather recreates reflects memories of a sacred past. *Death Comes for the Archbishop* opens with a scene in which Latour finds himself lost in a desert landscape. Burdened by fatigue and discomfited by extreme thirst, he is, however, able to escape this nightmarish landscape through an act of recollection, by capturing the image of the suffering Christ and remembering his passion. Latour merges his experience of physical and mental anguish with that of Christ: "The passion of Jesus became for him the only reality; the need of his own body was but a part of that conception" (20). The Bishop's participation in the sacramental memory of Christ's suffering works by isolating the scene of passion from its historical and dogmatic contexts, allowing the past to be experienced in the immediacy of the present. Latour remembers the past concretely, in the localized image of the suffering Christ. This memory allows the Bishop to insert his experience of anguish within the sacramental narrative of the passion. Latour's remembrance of the past elicits a powerful emotional response that sustains him both physically and spiritually, leading him to continue his journey.

In *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, Cather creates an intense emotional connection to the past, reliving it through the lives she recreates in her narrative. Throughout the novel, she inscribes "moments of history torn away from the movement of history," restoring within these sites of memory "the flavor of things, the slow rhythm of past times" (Nora 12, 17). By remembering the past and identifying with the lives she recreates in her narrative, she achieves the sense of serene joy that Latour comes to experience at the end of his life. As the novel draws to its conclusion, the Archbishop prepares for his death. "The long background to this moment," Quirk notes, "is the novel itself, the story of a life given over to God, a country, and people, and it is the strong lingering aftertaste of a life lived" (47). Latour relives his life by remembering his youth, and the narrative becomes flooded with memory as it comes to its completion. Cather, like Latour, accepts the quiet joy that these memories bring even as she is led to recognize the inevitabilities of change that must take place. Like her character, Cather achieves through these acts of remembrance a Proustian recovery of lost love that occurs as she relives the past and receives the consolation that it offers her, even while she recognizes the ultimate reality of its unrecoverable condition.

Notes

¹ Alberto L. Pulido discusses the tense conflict that ensued with the arrival of Lamy in the Southwest. According to Pulido, the French clergy established a type of religious hegemony, deeming certain popular religious practices as heterodox and marginalizing or eliminating them altogether. In discussing the history of Catholicism in New Mexico, Pulido argues that "New Mexicans found themselves challenged and confronted by an insensitive, ethnocentric clergy led by Jean Baptiste Lamy. . . . Within a short period [after Lamy had been appointed Vicar Apostolic], conflict erupted between Lamy and the native clergy" (98). For a larger historical overview of nineteenth-century Catholicism in the Southwest, see chapter two in Gerald Poyo's and Timothy Matovina's *Presente!: U.S. Latino Catholics from Colonial Origins to the Present* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000).

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The following is a listing of those contributing cash donations toward the Opera House Endowment fund during the six years of the campaign. We are so grateful for all of the donors—all 455 of you—who made it possible for the Cather Foundation to meet its goal of raising \$825,000 required for the 3 to 1 match on the \$275,000 Challenge Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. We will always treasure the faith in our effort that Rhonda and Jim Seacrest, Kenneth Morrison, Bill and Louise Mountford, Bob and Joanne Berkshire, Mr. and Mrs. Hal Lainson and the Hastings Tribune evidenced early in the campaign with their significant gifts. We were cheered by the generous boost mid-way from the Omaha World-Herald Foundation and the Carmen and John Gottschalk Foundation. We were thrilled by the anonymous donor and the Cather Family members, James and Angela Southwick and Jim and Trish Schreiber, whose generosity meant that we would make our goal by July 31, 2006. We thank all of you listed below from across the state and nation who care about Willa Cather and have assured the Cather Foundation that it will have a \$1.1 million endowment to support the important programming, education, and research offered in Red Cloud. Thank you!

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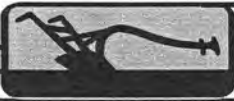


Jan Offner Keeps the Records!

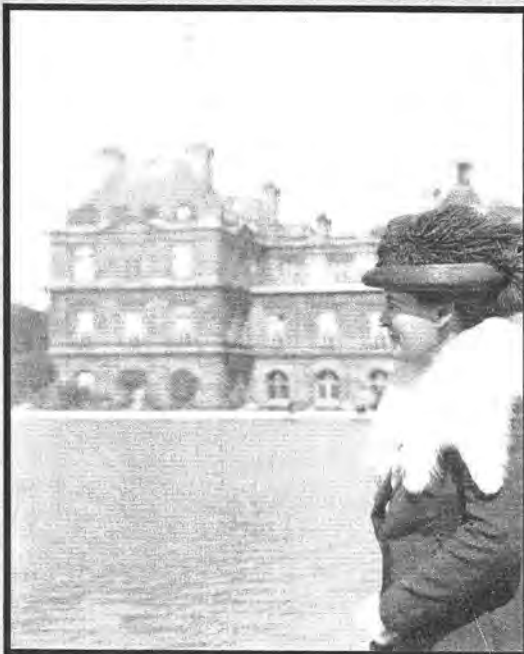
If you are a member of the Cather Foundation and/or if you have made a contribution of any kind to the Foundation, you have most likely received a letter of thanks from Jan Offner. Jan has assiduously kept track of all gifts given to the Foundation. Her computer program categorizes these gifts into endowment or preservation or restoration. Jan has been counting throughout the grant period. Readers can imagine the excitement she experienced when the endowment figures added up to that magical \$825,000!

Jan wants you to be aware that the list above is strictly limited to endowment and represents all gifts given to complete the National Endowment for the Humanities Challenge Grant by the deadline of July 31, 2006.

All gifts given during the year 2006, including both endowment and preservation, will be printed in the winter-spring issue of the *Newsletter and Review*.



Cather Foundation Calendar



The 11th International Willa Cather Seminar

Willa Cather: A Writer's Worlds
24-30 June 2007 in Paris
and
The Abbey St-Michel de Frigolet.

CALL FOR PAPERS: Paper proposals on any of the many aspects of the seminar theme, "A Writer's Worlds," are invited for presentation in special sessions. Papers which employ international and interdisciplinary approaches or deal with Cather's modernism and eclecticism or use of the fine arts are especially welcome. Proposals should be directed to Robert Thacker, Canadian Studies Program, St. Lawrence University, Canton, New York 13617 (315.229.5970 or 5826; e-mail rthacker@stlawu.edu).

See page 12 for specific information about the seminar.

2007 Willa Cather Spring Conference Planned for April 27-28

The 2007 Willa Cather Spring Conference theme, "Willa Cather and Material Culture," is inspired by the book (with the same name) edited by Janis Stout. The Conference will feature artifacts from the Cather Foundation Archive. Stout will present the keynote address. Look for further details in future editions of the *Willa Cather Newsletter and Review*.

Red Cloud Opera House 2006 Fall Season Highlights

"Some Memories are Realities"

- Sunday, September 10 at 3:30
Ride into History
Jeremy Daniels in the GALLERY~Reception
- Thursday, September 21 at 7:30 (TAW)
Go Big Red
- Sunday, September 24
Volunteer Celebration
- Sunday, October 1 at 2:30
Pippa White~"Breast Cancer"
Toni Turnquist in the GALLERY~Reception
- Wednesday, October 4 at 12:00 p.m.
Cowboy Poet R. P. Smith
- Sunday, October 15 at 2:00
Stepmom (Video)
- Saturday, November 25 at 2:30
*Discovery Mime Christmas Show and
"Hanging of the Greens"*
- Sunday, December 3 at 2:30
Barbershop Harmonies Christmas Show
- Sunday, December 31 at 9:00
Big Band Reprise

See www.willacather.org
for a complete list of programming.

Birthday Celebration

A barbershop/harmonies group will provide entertainment at the Red Cloud Opera House on Sunday, December 3, for an early celebration in honor of Willa Cather's 133rd birthday. Cather's birthday is December 7, 1873. Birthday cake will be among the refreshments served for this special event.



The Executive Director's Report

Barbed Wire—beautiful and treacherous. It has laced the fields of battle, trimmed the Berlin Wall, kept in check millions of cows . . . and been an object of beauty—spiraling into the sun or perhaps crusted with ice. Beautiful and treacherous—a perfect *oxymoron*.

This summer on June 6th, my husband and I ate lunch and then took off on foot across the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie. Neither of us had ever been to the far west side, but I had been told that there was some very old barbed wire over there. I was on assignment for John Swift, the issue editor for this edition of the *Newsletter and Review*. John wanted photographs of old barbed wire for the Jones article (see page 4), and we both thought it would be appropriate to use wire from Cather country. It is a very long way across the Cather Prairie. When we reached the other side, we walked the west fence line. We did not find much old barbed wire—nothing as old as the wire from my dad's collection pictured here. But it was an absolutely beautiful day with a cloudless, azure blue sky. Prairie flowers were protruding here and there from the lush green and gold grasses—wild roses were cropping up everywhere. We saw the old windmill that provides water for the cattle on the Cather Prairie, and we came across several of the eight natural springs that dot the landscape. We were enjoying ourselves.

About three miles into our walk, we saw a silver four-wheel-drive pickup racing up and down the draws and valleys of the Cather Prairie, apparently looking for something or someone. Actually, Rick Kudrna and his daughter Stephany Thompson, our Opera House Programming Director, were looking for us. They eventually “rescued” us and took us back to civilization. My husband's father had taken a turn for the worse and we needed to get to the nursing home fast. Ron's dad died sometime after midnight. I had stayed long into the night trying to comfort him. In the end I caught the virus that, along with other complications, killed him. Being healthy and younger, I held up through the ordeal. “Pain and pleasure”—that beautiful day on the Cather Prairie had turned into a sad day and, one might conclude, even a treacherous ordeal.

It has occurred to me that this barbed wire story provides a rather provocative analogy to the completion of the National Endowment for the Humanities Endowment Challenge Grant that made headlines on the front page of this issue of the *Newsletter* and headlines in a number of local newspapers. Yes, we are relieved and certainly we are celebrating the achievement of this goal, but there is a bittersweet side to this issue. This year, in particular, donations coming to the Foundation were always earmarked for the Endowment—little has come for operating expenses. For the most part, donations, tours and bookstore sales,

grants, and a limited income from the Nebraska State Historical Society (for six of the ten historic buildings we maintain) sustain the operating fund, with donations playing a significant role. Some in the Cather community have suggested that with the completion of the endowment, we are now “rich” and able to afford whatever we need. This prompts me to talk about the intent of an *endowment*. An endowment builds interest over time. In the case of the Opera House Endowment, this income is earmarked specifically for Opera House Programming and the Archive. The principal, of course, cannot be used for any purpose except to generate interest income. This process will

provide the Foundation with wonderful new opportunities for educational and cultural programming, and I most certainly appreciate these opportunities.

However, part of my job is to make certain that our historic buildings are maintained, the sites and artifacts are preserved, and the life, times, sites, and works of Willa Cather are made available to the world. This requires staff, materials, and equipment. We must continue to maintain a basic operating income so that the day-to-day bills can be paid. This necessitates substantial, unrestricted operating income to maintain the Cather Foundation site and its overall mission.

The photographs that I took on June 6th are replete with sunshine-filled memories of that gorgeous afternoon on the prairie. In those photographs, the taut barbed wire is beautiful. But that day ended in sorrow and pain in very short order, something like getting tangled in barbed wire.

In like manner, there is incredible pleasure in the completion of the endowment and I am forever grateful to

those who made contributions. But there is a difficult side for the Foundation. We need to go to work on a new priority: refocusing on funding the day-to-day operations of the Foundation. As always, I maintain faith in the Cather community—this goal will be met as we move forward.

Spring Conference Highlights



Barbed wire from Ivan Karr's collection. One of the original families in Webster County, the early generations of the Karrs settled west of Blue Hill in the early 1870s. The barbed wire represents that time frame on to the present. Photo by Betty Kort.



Above, Professor Robert Thacker takes time between paper presentations at the Scholars' Symposium to give a participant encouragement. Photo by Dee Yost. Left, Betty Kort plans strategy with Chris Helzer and Joanne Olson during the Prairie activities. Photo by Barb Kudrna.



**WILLA CATHER
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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 and should follow *The MLA Style Manual*.

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Essays and notes are listed in the annual *MLA Bibliography*.

**WILLA CATHER
PIONEER MEMORIAL
& EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION
(The Willa Cather Society)**

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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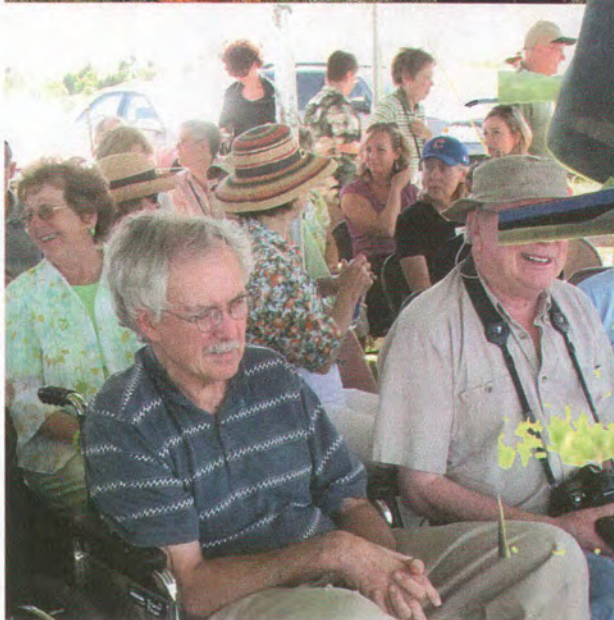
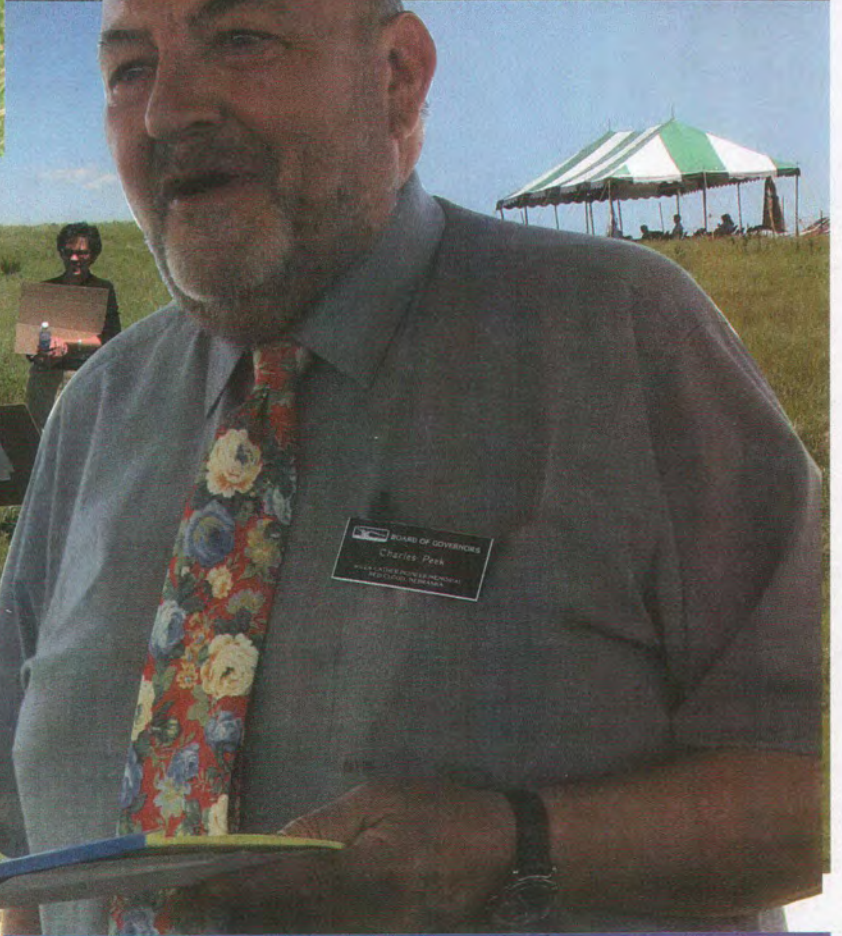
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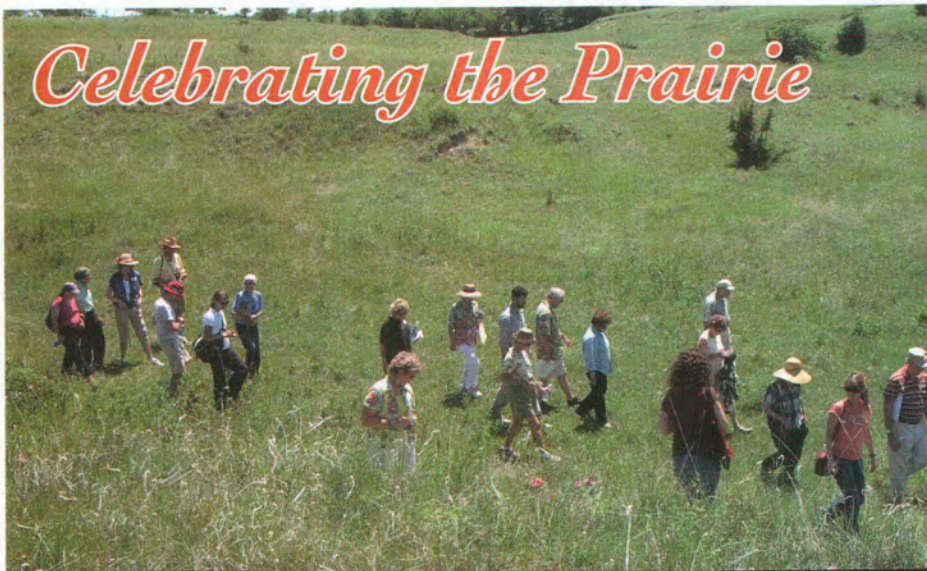
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Betty Kort



Charles Peek, President of the Cather Foundation Board, accepts the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie from the Nature Conservancy. (See remarks on page 13.) Clockwise from bottom left, Hal Nagel, who was for years instrumental in the development of the Cather Memorial Prairie, is an honored guest; participants discuss the drawings they completed under artist Nadine McHenry's direction; Nadine enjoys the opportunity to work with participants on the prairie; Chris Helzer from the Nature Conservancy instructs participants about the native plants and care of the prairie; and the tent provided by the Nature Conservancy serves as a respite from the afternoon sun. Photographs by Dee Yost.

Celebrating the Prairie



Entertainment: Celebrating the French Connection



Celebrating the Endowment



Celebrating the Prairie, the Conference, and the Endowment! Clockwise from top left: Exploring the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie; That's Entertainment: Normand Perron, internationally known French-Canadian performer sings from the Opera House stage; Robin Koozer poses between performances at the Hastings Symphony Orchestra Concert and St. Anne's Catholic Church; and staff members, Nancy Sherwood and Jan Offner, celebrate completion of the NEH Challenge Grant endowment!



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