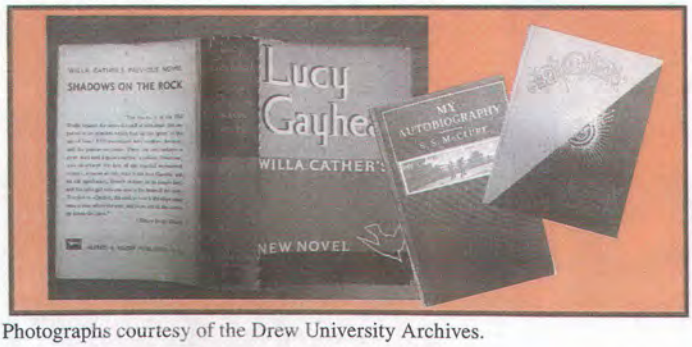
Willa Cather
Newsletter & Review

Winter-Spring 2006
Volume XLIX, No. 3

Drew University Hosts Colloquium

In the Summer 2004 issue of the *Willa Cather Newsletter and Review*, tribute was paid to Barbara and Finn Caspersen, whose generosity had enabled Drew University to add the Yehudi Menuhin Collection to Drew's largesse of private collections involving amazing numbers of heretofore unknown books, papers, letters, and artifacts relating to Willa Cather. Readers could hardly have realized in the summer of 2004 the extent of these unexplored collections. On September 30, 2005, in the Great Hall at Drew University, Merrill Skaggs, Baldwin Professor of Humanities and eminent Cather scholar; Andrew Scrimgeour, Director of the University Library; James Pain, Dean of the Caspersen School of Graduate Studies; and Robert Weisbuch, President of Drew University, warmly welcomed Cather devotees and scholars to a Cather Colloquium on the Drew University campus. The purpose was literally to unwrap a portion of the hundreds of papers, books, letters, and artifacts within the Caspersen Collections to allow for inspection and discussion.



Photographs courtesy of the Drew University Archives.

The materials in the Drew archives include the Adams, Caspersen, Brewster, and Menuhin collections, along with the recently acquired Burroughs collection, announced at the outset of the Colloquium. Together, these collections are changing the course of Cather scholarship. The papers that followed the opening ceremonies amply demonstrate the range of new thought emanating from study of the contents in the Drew vault. Cather had requested that family and friends burn her papers, manuscripts, and letters at her death. What becomes immediately obvious is that the myth of Cather family and friends acceding to her wishes is just that—a myth. Materials have surfaced over the years and been assiduously collected. Many of these treasures are now available for study.

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Cather Foundation Accepts Willa Cather Memorial Prairie

The Willa Cather Memorial Prairie, near Red Cloud, Nebraska, 1974. Photograph by Lucia Woods.

In June of 2006, the Cather Foundation will take part in a re-dedication of the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie as it is ceremoniously transferred from the Nature Conservancy to the Cather Foundation, along with a generous endowment, to provide for the continued maintenance of the land. The 608-acre tract of land, five miles from Red Cloud on the Kansas border, has been under the care of the Nature Conservancy for over thirty years. According to the Nature Conservancy's fall 2005 *Nebraska Update*, the "Prairie was purchased by the Conservancy in 1974 as much for its cultural value as for its ecological value."

"The transfer of the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie builds on a partnership between the Conservancy and the Cather Foundation," said Vince Shay, state director of the Conservancy in Nebraska. "This will ensure the continued protection of the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie and enhance educational opportunities for area schools and tourists alike to visit a slice of the pioneer lifestyle."

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Cather Foundation Calendar

51st Willa Cather Spring Conference
Red Cloud, Nebraska
June 1, 2, 3

"Willa Cather's International Connections"
Featuring
Shadows on the Rock

CALL FOR PAPERS

Papers on the conference theme or other aspects of Cather's life and work are invited for presentation at a scholarly symposium planned in conjunction with the the Spring 2006 Willa Cather Conference at Red Cloud, Nebraska, on June 1-2 -3, 2006. Graduate students and junior professors are especially encouraged to submit proposals. Symposium participants will discuss current issues in Cather studies with visiting senior scholars and will have opportunities to explore the resources of Red Cloud and the Cather Foundation archives. Completed papers will be due May 1. Proposals are due March 1, 2006. Email your proposals to

Betty Kort, Executive Director
Cather Foundation
bkort@gpcom.net

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.

Inquiries about the 11th International Seminar, including ideas for sessions, expressions of interest, particular themes to be addressed, and other considerations, should be directed to Robert Thacker, Canadian Studies Program, St. Lawrence University, Canton, New York 13617. 315.229.5970 or 5826 rthacker@stlawu.edu

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Opera House
2006 Winter Season Highlights

"Some Memories are Realities"

"Looking Back at the Harsh Realities of Childhood"—February/March
Featured in the GALLERY: Lewis Hine's Crusade Against Child Labor (Exhibit), Pippa White's "Story of the Orphan Train," the movie *Matilda*, and "The Orphan Trains" documentary.

Big Band Reprise and Valentine's Dinner—February 14
Dance to the sounds of the big band legends such as Glen Miller and Tommy Dorsey

***Daddy's Dyin' Who's Got the Will*—February 17, 18, 19**
Presented by Drew Leibel & Superior Community Theatre

The Story of the Orphan Train—March 11
Pippa White, presented by the Republican Valley Arts Council

***Little Women*—April 20, 21, 22, 23**
Red Cloud Community Theater

Blind Boone—April 29
Presented as part of the Annual Meeting of the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation

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

Cather, Journalism, and Periodicals: A Symposium
University of Nebraska—Lincoln
April 21, 2006

April 21st, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Cather, Journalism, and Periodicals: A Symposium. Sponsored by the Cather Project, the symposium will take place in the instruction room of Love Library, and is free and open to the public. Ellen Gruber Garvey (New Jersey City University), author of *The Adman and the Parlor: Magazines and the Gendering of Consumer Culture, 1880s to 1910s*, will present the keynote lecture on Cather and other women magazine editors at the turn of the century. Other speakers will be Charles Johanningsmeier (University of Nebraska-Omaha), Susan Belasco (UNL), Andrew Jewell and Kari Ronning (UNL), and Melissa J. Homestead (UNL). For more information, see the "community" section of the Willa Cather Electronic Archive at cather.unl.edu. Questions? Contact symposium director Melissa Homestead at mhomestead2@unl.edu

Whose Life is It Anyway?
Another Look At Thea Kronborg

Marvin Friedman

In his comprehensive biography of Willa Cather, James Woodress asserts that some of the statements in Cather's 1932 preface to *The Song of the Lark* ignore the fascination that the opera singer Olive Fremstad had for her. In this connection, Woodress cites a 1932 letter in which Cather urged her editor Jerris Greenslet not to encourage the rumors that the character was inspired by her acquaintance with Fremstad. Not one incident had any likeness to the incidents in Fremstad's life, she claimed. Their acquantainceship had some indirect influence, but that was mainly in making her aware of an opera singer's life. Woodress concludes that "Cather here, as she often did, was rewriting the story of her own life" (272). While not explicitly asserting that Cather was deliberately manipulating the truth, Woodress seems to suggest that the letter to Greenslet was, at best, a reflection of Cather's self-delusion regarding the nature of her creative process.[1]

But to what extent do the incidents of Thea Kronborg's life bear a likeness to those of Fremstad's? Key incidents in Thea's life include her relationships with Dr. Archie, Professor Wunsch, the Kohlers, Ray Kennedy, Spanish Johnny, Mrs. Tellemantez, the Harsanyis, and Fred Ottenburg, as well as her seminal experience in Panther Canyon. If these relationships were removed from the novel, what important "incidents" would be left? With respect to those incidents, at least, I am unaware of any corresponding biographical parallels to the life of Olive Fremstad.

Of course, we are handicapped in this regard by the absence of any complete biography of Fremstad who never published any memoir of her own.[2] Encyclopedias provide only the barest details. The biographical parallels that do exist between Thea and Fremstad are of a quite general nature. Both were of Scandinavian extraction, both lived a portion of their lives in the American Midwest as broadly defined, and both had fathers who were connected to the ministry. But even on this early biographical level, there are major divergences. Thea is an American-born child of an American-born, seminary-educated father and spends all her formative years in the American Midwest. Fremstad, by contrast, was born abroad and only came to America sometime between the ages of 10 and 12. And, although he may also have served as a lay-preacher, Fremstad's father seems to have served primarily as a physician.[3] While both Thea and Fremstad studied and taught piano during their youth, the motivating force in Thea's early musical education was her mother, while it was Fremstad's father who pressed her into developing her musical talents.

Turning to their adult musical development, it is true that both Thea and Fremstad traveled to Germany to study singing with Lilli Lehman, and both returned to New York to become famous artists with the Metropolitan Opera Company. But those parallels alone provide little basis for identifying Thea with Fremstad since they merely represent one typical resume of an aspiring female American opera singer seeking to develop a career during the early 20th century (when it was generally necessary to obtain training and a reputation in Europe before one could be seriously considered for booking in an American venue).[4] Indeed, Geraldine Farrar, one of the two singers other than Fremstad whom Cather interviewed for her 1913 "Three American Singers" article for *McClure's,* had also studied with Lilli Lehman. Unlike the key incident where Thea chooses to continue developing her career *abroad* rather than return

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Josie B. Davis-George is working on her Ph. D. at Texas A&M University—Commerce. Her dissertation, under the direction of Ann Moseley, concerns "Cather's Progeny."

Marvin Friedman, a native Nebraskan and UNL, as well as Harvard Law School graduate, has now retired from the practice of law. He has become an independent and often-published literary scholar, and a regular presenter at Cather seminars and colloquia.

John J. Murphy is a Brigham Young University Professor Emeritus, a major Cather scholar, and a member of the Cather Foundation Board of Governors. The University of Nebraska Press *Scholarly Edition of Shadows on the Rock*, which he edited with David Stouck, has just been published and will sell at the Cather Spring Conference this June.

Diana H. Polley received her Ph. D. from CUNY in May 2005 and is now Assistant Professor of English at CUNY's Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC). She is currently expanding her dissertation, entitled "Transhistorical Emerson: `Republic of the Spirit' in Twain, James, Wharton, and Cather," into a book.

home during what becomes her mother's fatal illness, Fremstad's former secretary Mary Watkins Cushing reports that Fremstad was performing in *America* and actually sang at her own mother's funeral (190).

While both Thea and Fremstad work to extend their vocal range above what was considered their natural one, the extension of a singer's vocal range was not unique to Fremstad even during that time period.[5] Moreover, there is evidence that Cather's conception of the opera singer's life was based on more than what she learned from Fremstad. In an April 1914 letter to Elizabeth Sergeant (Stout #280) written more than a year after she had met Fremstad, Cather indicated that, during a period when she had reached an impasse in her writing of the novel, she had used her time to meet with young singers and singing teachers and to learn about the backstage politics of the operatic world. She confesses that all these non-Fremstad materials were new to her and would have been left out of the novel if she had been able to write during that period.

Photograph of Olive Fremstad, inscribed: "To Willa Cather with kindest feelings." Photograph from the Cather Foundation Archive, Helen Cather Southwick Collection.

So are the few above-noted biographical parallels between Thea and Fremstad themselves sufficient to identify Thea with Fremstad? One way of approaching this question is to ask whether anyone would ever have made that identification if Cather had chosen to make her fictional Wagnerian opera star a woman of German rather than Scandinavian descent.[6] Without the genealogical Scandinavian identification, what in *The Song of the Lark* has any likeness to an incident in Fremstad's life sufficient to have convinced scholars that Cather, in her 1932 letter to Greenslet, was "rewriting the story of her own life"?

Admittedly, there is one episode in the novel that seems to have been the clincher for some scholars. That episode was based on Edith Lewis's description of Cather's first personal encounter with Fremstad which occurred while Cather was preparing her 1913 *McClure's* article. In her 1953 Cather memoir, Lewis writes:

> Fremstad had given her a late afternoon appointment at her apartment near Riverside Drive. Willa Cather was to interview her there, pick up a hasty supper somewhere, and join Isabelle McClung . . . and me at the Metropolitan Opera House, for we had tickets for *Tales of Hoffman* that evening. But when she arrived, just before the curtain went up, she told us, to our great disappointment, that the interview had not come off. . . .
>
> She had gone to Fremstad's apartment—waited—Fremstad was away on a motor ride, and there was some delay about getting back. Finally, she came in, very tired, and began at once to apologize, but she could scarcely speak—her voice was just a husky whisper. She was pale, drawn—"Why, she looked 40 years old!" Willa Cather told us. She begged Fremstad not to try to talk—said she would come back for the interview another time, and left.
>
> That was all she had time to tell us before the opera began.
>
> The second act of *Tales of Hoffman* is of course the Venetian scene. The intermission seemed very long, and the audience got very restless. Finally the manager came out before the curtain. The soprano, he announced, had been taken ill, and would be unable to appear; but Mme. Olive Fremstad had kindly consented to sing in her place. Then, the curtain went up—and there, before our astonished eyes, was Fremstad—whom Willa Cather had left only an hour before—now a vision of dazzling youth and beauty. She sang that night in a voice so opulent, so effortless, that it seemed as if she were dreaming the music, not singing it.
>
> "But it's impossible," Willa Cather kept saying. "It's impossible." (91-92)

This seems to have been the "smoking gun" for many scholars. In the first full biography of Cather published in 1953 (the same year as Lewis' memoir), E.K. Brown flatly stated: "The experience of that evening was to give Willa Cather one of the most dramatic chapters in the later part of *The Song of the Lark*, with Thea Kronborg taking the role of Sieglinde in *Die Walküre* at the beginning of the second act" (185). Twenty-four years later, relying on the same material, Woodress concluded that "Cather was so impressed by this performance that she used it in the novel much the way it happened" (253). If these biographical assertions are unqualifiedly correct, then an important part of *The Song of the Lark* would clearly have a likeness to an incident in Fremstad's life, and there would be strong justification for concluding that, by indicating the very opposite, Cather was effectively rewriting her life story.

The truth, however, may be more complex. When Cather arrived at Fremstad's apartment for that first interview, she was met by Mary Cushing (then Mary Watkins) who wrote her own memoir of the seven years she served Fremstad.[7] Cushing's memoir is consistent with that of the Metropolitan Opera's General Manager, Giulio Gatti-Casazza, regarding

critical aspects of Fremstad's performance in *Tales of Hoffman.* Cushing reports that Fremstad

> had been complaining that her work was too exacting, that her current repertoire afforded her insufficient relief from the heroic voice-shattering Wagnerian roles. So Gatti gave her, in appeasement, the short and vapid part of Giulietta in his revival of *Le Conte d'Hoffman.* It was a super production . . . but the Venetian courtesan, Giulietta, never really belonged to Olive Fremstad. She was artistically and vocally too big for the part—one might as well have asked the Winged Victory of Samothrace to dance the tango. The public, while enjoying such largess, eventually cried out upon its wastefulness, and after three performances, the part was given into lesser and more suitable hands. (217)

The consistent background descriptions in Cushing's and Gatti-Casazza's memoirs provide a context for considering the pivotal operatic substitution scene in *The Song of the Lark.* They demonstrate that, while superficially similar, there are critical differences between Fremstad's substitution in *Tales of Hoffman* and the obstacles with which Cather confronts Thea in the novel's corresponding scene.

First, consider the difference between the roles for which the two singers were substituting. The role of Giulietta in *Tales of Hoffman* was recognizably light, making no great vocal demands. By contrast, Cather (through the voice of Fred Ottenburg) describes the Wagnerian music that Thea will have to sing in *Walküre as* "terribly difficult" (529).

Next, note that Fremstad had actually performed the Giulietta role on the Met's stage several times in the two months prior to Gatti-Casazza's substitution request. The part was completely fresh in her mind, and she was undoubtedly familiar with most of the other singers in the cast as well as with the production's orchestral and staging details. Thea, on the other hand, had rehearsed the Sieglinde role but had never actually performed it on any stage—certainly not that of the Met.[8] Cather has Ottenburg emphasize the obstacles Thea faces: "That's the kind of rough deal that makes savages of singers. Here's a part she's worked on for years, and now they give her a chance to go on and butcher it. Goodness knows when she's looked at the score last, or whether she can use the business she's studied, with this cast" (529).

Finally, at the time of her substitution, Fremstad was a mature 41-year old established opera "star." (No wonder Cather thought she "looked 40 years old. She was!)[9] Her career was unlikely to have been seriously undermined by a single poor performance. Thea, by contrast, is in only her second season at the Met which has been "stingy" in giving her parts. She is a relatively young singer in the beginning stages of her career—a career that could well have been jeopardized by a poor performance.

Some may urge that these differences do not necessarily disprove the notion that the Fremstad substitution was the catalyst for the substitution scene in *The Song of the Lark* but, rather, merely show that Cather changed the Fremstad incident's details in order to heighten the novel's dramatic effect. However, that position can be countered by pointing to a previously overlooked fact—namely, that there was a relatively contemporaneous substitution incident that paralleled the details of Thea's substitution experience much more closely than the Fremstad episode. That other substitution event occurred on Jan. 1, 1912, little more than a year before Fremstad's substitution on Mar. 12, 1913. It involved Margaret Matzenauer, a Hungarian singer who was then in her first season at the Met (and who later succeeded Fremstad in some of her signature roles). Matzenauer was asked to substitute for Fremstad herself in a New Year's Day performance of the Kundry role in Wagner's *Parsifal.* The next day's *New York Times* review of that performance states:

> There were a number of features in the performance that deserve attention. Chief among these was the appearance of Mme. Margaret Matzenauer as Kundry—for Mme. Fremstad, originally intended for the part, was still unable to appear, and the substitution had to be made at short notice. The notice, indeed, was so short that Mme. Matzenauer was unable to have a stage rehearsal. It was, moreover, the first time she had ever sung the part. Under these circumstances what she achieved was nothing less than a tour de force, for her performance was in almost every way of great merit. Although Mme. Matzenauer is so much a contralto, she has in her voice the high notes that enable her to sing the music of Kundry without obvious effort, even the passages in the second act that are sometimes a trial. Her voice had power and significant [sic] and changing color of dramatic expressiveness. There was unusual skill in her composition of this difficult and perplexing part—difficult in both the musical and dramatic side. There was more than routine expertness; there were intelligence, insight, the comprehension gained by study. And for the results that she was able to present under difficult circumstances, Mme. Matzenauer deserves much credit, and gained it from yesterday's audience at the end of the second act. (9)

Here we have almost all the elements of Cather's novel—a young singer with an extended vocal range at the beginning of her career thrown into a "make or break" situation in which she must substitute on short notice to perform a difficult part that she has never performed on the stage. Not only do Gatti-Casazza and the *New York Times* emphasize the difficulty of the Kundry role, Cushing's memoir states that "it was generally considered to be the most difficult and to some extent the most thankless role of all" and that Fremstad herself "was always protesting that it was a superhuman assignment" (129).[10] Although Matzenauer went on to have a distinguished 19-year career at the Met, her difficult substitution for Fremstad was so amazing that, even to this day, opera historians continue to cite it as a defining accomplishment.[11]

But while the Matzenauer substitution makes better sense as the model for Thea's triumphant performance, Cather could only have used it if she actually knew about it. The evidence that she did so is entirely inferential but not unpersuasive. Regardless of whether Cather was in New York City on the very date of Matzenauer's substitution for Fremstad, Woodress indicates that she was there no more than a month later (225). With Cather's intense interest in the Met, Fremstad, and the operatic world generally, she could well have heard about Matzenauer's "tour de force." Indeed, Matzenauer might even have been one of the unidentified young singers about whom Cather wrote to Sergeant a year later. But even if she did not learn about the story at the very time it happened or from

Matzenauer herself in a later interview, it is plausible that she learned of the substitution incident from Fremstad during their discussion of the Kundry role for her *McClure's* article.[12]

Because Cather undoubtedly would have been immensely impressed by a singer's ability to substitute successfully in the Kundry role on short notice, there is at least a strong possibility that Thea's substitution incident was principally based on the Matzenauer rather than on the Fremstad incident. And if we exclude Fremstad's own substitution from the incidents on which *The Song of the Lark* is based, what important incident-related parallels are left between the lives of Thea Kronborg and Olive Fremstad?

Fremstad herself does not seem to have found many such parallels even if she may have thought that Cather was actually trying to equate the two singers. After reporting that Fremstad was delighted with Cather's 1913 *McClure's* article on the three American singers that included her, Cushing goes on to state that Fremstad: "was less enthusiastic about *The Song of the Lark*. . . . 'My poor Willa,' she once said in my hearing, 'it wasn't really much like that. But after all, what can you know about me? Nothing'" (244).

And Cather's own contemporary view? In a December 1915 letter to Elizabeth Sergeant in which she expressed relief that Fremstad liked the novel, Cather stated that [presumably now that the novel was finished] she missed Thea's company (#340). Thea thus seems to have assumed a reality for Cather that was distinct from the personality of the flesh and blood Fremstad whose company she still had.

This does not necessarily mean that Cather was entirely uninfluenced by her relationship with Fremstad or that *The Song of the Lark* does not incorporate any elements of what she gleaned from that relationship. As Sherrill Harbison has noted: "The fictional Thea Kronborg, like Fremstad, reaches perfection's 'frozen heights' by placing art ahead of everything else. Work takes every ounce of her strength, leaving her drained, aged, and often unfit for company. . . . Her art demands the kind of perfect dedication that Nietzche called *chastity* . . . " (146).

But Harbison also goes on to point out that these views of art's demands were consistent with Cather's own position, which was developed long before she met Fremstad (146).

On the other hand, there are other mind-teasing references in the novel that may indeed reflect aspects of what Cather learned from her encounters with Fremstad. For example, it may not be entirely coincidental that Thea's breakthrough role (as Sieglinde in *Walküre*) is the same role in which Fremstad made her own debut at the Met.[13] Also, note the many instances in which wild animals are associated with both Fremstad and Thea. Thus, Cushing reports that Fremstad repeatedly insisted that a true artist must work like a "tiger" (23, 129, 169, 310). Characterizing her as a "fierce animal" (23), Cushing on another occasion describes Fremstad as stalking "like a panther" (137).

Correspondingly, as a young girl, Thea Kronborg—who will find her artistic vocation in "Panther Canyon"—generally is described as speaking with "fierceness" and "crouching like a little animal about to spring" (123). In the canyon, Fred Ottenburg characterizes her as "part coyote" (328) and, later in New York, advises Thea to "keep your tiger hungry, and she'll spring all right on Friday" (397). Then, when meeting her in Central Park, Fred describes Thea as looking "like some rich-pelted animal, with warm blood, that had run in out of the woods" (397). A few lines later, Thea herself states that what she learned in Panther Canyon was not something known by the mind, but rather, something that had to be realized deep in the body: "It's an animal sort of feeling. I sometimes think it's the strongest of all" (398). And upon viewing the mature Thea as singer, Dr. Archie comments: "This woman he had never known; she had somehow devoured his little friend, as the wolf ate up Red Ridinghood" (412).

> Finally, Cushing states that Cather felt that Fremstad ought to see more of her fellow men, and often took her to matinees or invited her to wonderful little French meals at her apartment on Bank Street. Madame, while unresisting, would still protest, "But I get nothing from people!"
>
> "An artist learns from everyone she meets, from everything she sees!" Miss Cather would remind her.
>
> "What I learn, I find here!" Olive Fremstad insisted in a cello voice, her eyebrows climbing, both hands pressed to her heart! (242)

In *The Song of the Lark,* Cather has Wunsch tell Thea:

> "Oh, much you can learn! *Aber nicht die amerikanischen Fraulein.* They have nothing inside them," striking his chest with both fists. "They are like the ones in the *Marchen*, a grinning face and hollow in the insides. Something they can learn, oh, yes, may-be! But the secret—what makes the rose to red, the sky to blue, the man to love—*in der Brust, in der Brust* it is, *und ohne dieses gibt es keine Kunst, gibt es keine Kunst!*" (78)

This last illustration may be yet another exquisite example of how Cather did learn from everyone she met, including Fremstad, and how the fictional characters she created generally were *composites* drawn from all those encounters.[14]

But that did not mean that Thea *was* Fremstad.[15] On the contrary, recent scholarship has uncovered many parallels between the novel's incidents and the lives of individuals other than Fremstad, including Cather herself[16] and the singer Jenny Lind.[17] In conclusion, let us return to the rumors Cather was purportedly trying to halt in 1932. To the extent they existed, such rumors might have disturbed Cather because they implied that *The Song of the Lark* was a thinly disguised biography rather than a truly creative work of fiction. So Cather went out of her way to deny the truth of any such inference by advising Greenslet that the incidents of Thea's life were not done from Fremstad. Was she thereby "rewriting the story of her life?" This essay suggests that, on this subject at least, Cather may be entitled to more of the benefit of the doubt than she has thus far been given.

Notes

[1]Woodress' inference that Cather's letter to Greenslet was inconsistent with her actual life story might be buttressed by reference to some of her other letters. For example, in a Dec. 16, 1916, letter to Greenslet (#375) dealing with the possibility of obtaining Scandinavian translations of *The Song of the Lark,* Cather suggests that he may be able to get their attention by mentioning that reviewers have thought that Thea was modeled after Fremstad (#375). Her thrust at this point, however, was to sell books, and the emphasis is on what *reviewers* think. She does

not express her own opinion on the accuracy of their impression. (That reviewers continue to identify Thea Kronborg with Olive Fremstad is well illustrated by Margo Jefferson's Aug. 3, 2003, *New York Times Book Review* article flatly asserting that *The Song of the Lark* is "based on the life of the Opera Singer Olive Fremstad.")

[2]Fremstad's secretary, Mary Watkins (later Mary Watkins Cushing), reports that Fremstad tried writing such a memoir but apparently abandoned the project (307).

[3]The *Penguin Biograaphical Dictionary of Women* states that Fremstad was an *illegitimate* child who was taken to the U.S. and adopted by an American couple with Swedish roots living in Minnesota. The physician referred to above lived in Grantsburg, Wis., and it apparently is in his family plot that Fremstad is buried. Fremstad may have been hinting at her illegitimacy when she reportedly told her secretary Mary Watkins that she "was a love-child" but failed to explain "just what she meant by this" (71).

[4]In her 1929 story "Double Birthday," Cather similarly would have her young singer (a girl of German descent) go "abroad to complete her studies" (51).

[5]In his history of the Metropolitan Opera, Martin Mayer says this about a singer a portion of whose career at the company overlapped that of Fremstad: "Margaret Matzenauer moved easily from mezzo to soprano roles" (128).

[6]Of course identifying her heroine as German might have been unpopular with readers at the novel's 1915 World War I publication date.

[7]Cushing was Fremstad's all-purpose, live-in assistant between 1911 and 1918, years during which she seems to have kept a personal diary. She hired servants, helped dress Fremstad for her performances, and made sure to obtain the Metropolitan Opera management's payment check (without which Fremstad would not step on stage). A good illustration of the intimacy of their relationship is that, to enable Fremstad to call her in the middle of the night without having to shout and wake the neighbors, Cushing tied to her toe a string that passed between their respective bedroom doors and terminated in a ring hooked to Fremstad's bedpost (124).

[8]For a contemporary diva's description of the difficulties involved in having to perform on an unfamiliar stage with an unfamiliar set, see p. xii of Renée Fleming's recent memoir *The Inner Voice.*

[9]Cather may have been particularly sensitive to what it was like to "look 40 years old" since she herself was turning 40 in 1913. That this concern found its way into the novel may be reflected in Cather's having Dr. Archie, "with a sinking heart," comment that Thea, upon returning from a performance, "looked forty years old" (361). But while Fremstad was actually in her forties at the time of her substitution, Thea was not—a significant difference.

[10]The only notable difference between the Thea and Matzenauer incidents is that Matzenauer had 24 hours' notice and Thea had only two hours. To that extent, perhaps, Cather did intensify the drama of the scene (probably to an unrealistic level from the viewpoint of what an unrehearsed vocalist actually would have been able to accomplish on such short notice).

[11]See, e.g., p. 146 of Martin Mayer's history of the Met and the Matzenauer entry in *The New Grove Dictionary of the Opera,* both emphasizing that Matzenauer was substituting in a role she had never sung before.

[12]A few days after having witnessed Fremstad's substitution in *Tales of Hoffman,* Cather went to conduct her postponed interview with the diva. It is logical to assume that Cather would have begun by complimenting Fremstad on her remarkable achievement in having been able to substitute and sing the Giulietta role so beautifully on such short notice when she had been unable to speak above a whisper that afternoon. Fremstad might then have responded that "the whisper merely reflected her routine practice of saving her voice for a Wagnerian performance she was scheduled to give in two days time and, in any event, her substitution was no great accomplishment in view of the fact that she had performed this very role on the Met's stage only a few weeks earlier and was quite familiar with its not particularly demanding requirements. But if Cather were interested in a substitution that was a truly noteworthy artistic achievement, she would do well to study Margaret Matzenauer's substitution for Fremstad herself in the role of Kundry in *Parsifal* during the prior operatic season."

That Cather and Fremstad actually did discuss the Kundry role during that interview is evidenced by Cather's extensive treatment of the subject in the resulting *McClure's* article where Cather initially stated that it "was Mme Fremstad's Kundry that first made her known throughout this country" (42). Later in the article, Cather comments that "Wagner had done many kinds of women before he did Kundry, and into her he put them all. She is a summary of the history of womankind. He sees in her an instrument of temptation, of salvation, and of service . . . " (47).

[13]Cushing states that, to Fremstad's audience, "any other singer in the part was an interloper" (216).

[14]That Cather remained bothered by readers' tendency to determine the "real identity" of her characters is reflected in a Jan. 27, 1934, letter (#1096, only two years after her 1932 rumor-discouraging letter to Greenslet) in which she asks why people won't believe that fiction is not a direct portrait of real people. See also an Oct 26, 1918, letter to Irene Miner Weisz (#438) stating that a particular reviewer (presumably of a Cather work) had caught the whole better than those who concentrated on identifying originals for the characters.

[15]Despite sharing some Fremstad characteristics (such as the animal-like elements in her nature), Thea does not seem to display such other Cushing-described aspects of Fremstad's personality as her superstitiousness (70, 105, 256, 277, 281) and capriciousness (124, 126, 131).

[16]See p. 111 of *Willa Cather: The Writer and Her World* by Janis Stout.

[17]See Josie Davis's article published elsewhere in this issue.

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Drew University Hosts Colloquium

(Continued from Page 49 [cover])

A number of scholars were invited into the vault to research new materials and write papers on their findings. These papers were presented at the Drew Colloquium. John Murphy, introduced as the "father" of all Cather scholars, began the first plenary session with a discussion of a fragment of *Shadows on the Rock* from the Fredrick Adams collection. Although Adams had suggested that it was intended as a concluding chapter of *Shadows on the Rock*, Murphy affirmed Cather's decision to exclude the fragment, instead weaving the majority of it into earlier chapters and ending with the Epilogue which complements the beginning section of the novel, the beginning and ending both dealing with history and legend. Ann Romines later chose to disagree with John Murphy in a breakout session, suggesting that the fragment would make a fine conclusion to the novel, showing Cécile's

Merrill Skaggs presides over opening ceremonies at the Drew Colloquium. Photograph by Betty Kort.

retainment of a devotion to place which parallels Cather's own devotion to place in her feelings toward Red Cloud. According to Romines, for Cécile, as for Cather, there was a "haunting" loyalty to place. People who have not experienced this loyalty can know nothing about it. And so this discussion went, as did other similar controversies,—back and forth and back again—for two full days.

The range of materials explored was wide and varied, including letters to and from Cather, drawings and illustrations completed by Cather herself to illustrate her early writing at the University of Nebraska, and rare editions of her books. The presentations garnered apt attention on the part of participants as new and exciting information emerged relating to Cather's life, her friends, her acquaintances, her enemies, and her writings.

The Colloquium ended with a celebration of Merrill Skaggs's birthday. She received a gift of a framed portrait of Willa Cather, a gift from participants in the Colloquium. But for Merrill, the newly acquired additions to the Caspersen Collection at Drew must be the best gift of all. Gifts, by the way, have not stopped coming in. At the close of the Colloquium, another collection of 31 unresearched Edith Lewis letters was donated by Marilyn Callander to the Caspersen Collections. Merrill smiled and eloquently accepted the donation.

Look for short reviews of other paper sessions from the Drew Colloquium highlighted throughout this issue of the *Willa Cather Newsletter and Review*.

Cather Foundation Acquires Memorial Prairie

(Continued from Page 49 [cover])

The Cather Foundation now manages the largest number of historical designated buildings devoted to one author in the United States. The addition of the prairie is a natural extension of the Foundation's mission to preserve all that relates to Cather and her writings. School children and tourists already take advantage of the preserve. The prairie is always open to visitors. What the Cather Foundation will add is focused educational undertakings.

Over thirty years ago the photograph of the prairie appearing on the cover of this issue, taken by Lucia Woods, appeared in the Fall 1974 edition of the *Willa Cather Newsletter*. The Cather Foundation was celebrating the purchase of the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie by the Nature Conservancy with funds provided by the Woods Charitable Fund, Inc. of Lincoln, Nebraska, and Chicago, Illinois. Members of the Woods family, including Tom Woods, Lincoln, Lucia Woods, New York, and Mr. And Mrs. Frank Woods of Chicago, were present for a dedication ceremony the following spring. Mildred Bennett's hand in this purchase is obvious. Both she and the Woods Foundation had taken note that much of the natural landscape was disappearing and along with it the sources of Willa Cather's prairie writings. This near section of ground had never been broken. They would see to its perpetual care for the benefit of generations to come.

The Memorial Prairie will continue to be in good hands under the leadership of Cather Foundation Board member Jim Fitzgibbon of Red Cloud, a retired science teacher who was project director and teacher in the Prairie Institute and was also the land steward for the Cather Prairie for seven years. Other members of the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie Conservation and Preservation Committee include Merle Illian, former head of the soil conservation office in Red Cloud and long time member of the Nature Conservancy management team; Joe Strickland, Ag Instructor at Red Cloud High School and farmer; John N. Swift, Professor of Literature, Occidental College, California, and member of the Foundation's Advisory Board, who has a strong interest in ecology and botany; Cheryl Swift, Associate Professor of Biology at Whittier College with an academic specialty in physiological plant ecology, whose students read Cather among other writers and learn quantitative approaches to ecological analysis; Joe Springer, Range Management instructor at the University of Nebraska at Kearney; Bill Beechley, Crane Meadows Board; Gilbert Adrian, professor emeritus at Hastings College, experienced in the management of the Cather Memorial Prairie; Duane Linnerman, UNL Extension Educator for Webster/Clay Counties, who participates in UNL focus group on pasture, range and cow/calf management; and Ann Fisher-Worth, University of Mississippi.

The Cather Memorial Prairie Dedication will be Friday, June 2, of the 2006 Spring Conference. Activities will include nature hikes, art walks, writing experiences, and a wine and cheese reception. Records indicate that the Cather Memorial Prairie was first dedicated at the1975 Willa Cather Spring Conference. At that dedication a plaque was unveiled, which still stands, celebrating Cather's portrayal in her writing of the "shaggy grassland," the prairie that she once referred to as being "the floor of the sky."

Reflections of Jenny Lind within *The Song of the Lark*

Josie B. Davis-George

Willa Cather may have joined the male-dominated academic community as the Other, but she—like Thea Kronborg, the protagonist of her novel, *The Song of the Lark*—is able to rise to the top of her profession because of her dedication and desire to reach what, in describing opera singer Olive Fremstad in her essay "Three American Singers," Cather terms "the frozen heights" of art (42). Cather believes that in order to succeed the artist must put art before family and friends, as well as personal needs and desires. Cather's beliefs about art are reflected in her character, Thea Kronborg, who ultimately reaches her artistic goal of being an accomplished Wagnerian opera singer. In *The Song of the Lark*, however, Cather also inserts the subtle presence of another well-known opera singer, one who lives for her art and rises to success in much the same way as both Cather and Thea: the Swedish Nightingale, Jenny Lind.

In a 1921 interview with the *Lincoln Sunday Star*, Cather states that her characters are "drawn from life," but, with the exception of Ántonia, ". . . all [are] composites of three or four persons. I do not quite understand it, but certain persons seem to coalesce naturally when one is working up a story" (*Willa Cather in Person* 45). Noted Cather scholars, Susan Rosowski, James Woodress, Janis P. Stout, Sharon O'Brien, and Hermione Lee—along with Edith Lewis, who was Cather's friend, traveling companion, and house partner from 1904 until Cather's death in 1947—have pointed out that Thea is drawn from Cather's own personal experience as well as from the life of opera singer Olive Fremstad,[1] with whom Cather develops a friendship after seeing the singer rescue a performance at the Metropolitan Opera House, then interviewing her for *McClure's*. Even Fremstad herself finds it hard to "tell where Cather left off and she began" in the story (Woodress 257). I believe, however, that another legitimate but heretofore unidentified source for Thea is Jenny Lind, the famous Swedish singer who is an important figure in the life of Hans Christian Andersen and whose characteristics and experiences seem to parallel those of Thea.[2]

Although she does not acknowledge a connection between the world-known opera singer, Jenny Lind, and Thea Kronborg, Cather's allusion to the conclusion of Andersen's "The Snow Queen,"[3] which is described as "Thea's favorite fairy tale" (*SL* 23), provides a very tangible link between Thea, the protagonist, and Hans Christian Andersen, who, significantly, based not only "The Snow Queen" but also "The Nightingale" and several other tales (Boyette 3) on Jenny Lind—whom Cather identifies as "one of the most admired singers of the Victorian era" (410). This interconnection clearly suggests a possible link between Thea Kronborg and the popular singer Jenny Lind. Furthermore, another of Cather's allusions specifically connects Lind to Thea through Thea's grandfather, who "had played the oboe in an orchestra in Sweden, before he came to America to better his fortunes. He had even known Jenny Lind" (25). Through this allusion, Cather strengthens her link between Lind and Thea.

Lind and Thea are both of Swedish stock, come from middle-class families, and have to work hard in order to achieve their goals. They are also highly dedicated and responsible from an early age. Benét says that Lind "was an old soul for a child, old beyond her years" (26), and Thea's mother remarks that Thea is "so serious that she's never had what you might call any real childhood" (91). Apparently, neither woman knows the freedom or easy life that is generally associated with being a child, nor does either woman know the joy of being described as beautiful. Lind is described as having "honey-blonde hair," "dove-blue eyes" that turn to gray, "heavy features, and a broad nose" (Benét 1-11), whereas Thea is described as having "a wide, flushed forehead, freckled nose, fierce little mouth" (12). However, when these women begin to sing, they undergo a transformation of beauty and wonder, along with their audiences. Lind's biographer Laura Benét asserts that

> the fire and joy of Jenny's gift lighted her up from within, as a vessel lighted by a strong flame burning

Drew Colloquium: Findings

Joseph Urgo. Photograph by Betty Kort.

Cather's Response to Mr. Munson!

On Saturday of the Drew Colloquium, Joseph Urgo, University of Mississippi-Oxford, treated the Colloquium audience to a volley of information ranging from satire to hyperbole to dead-pan humor as he reacted to a Cather letter of equal range. Cather obviously did not like Mr. Munson and responded to him in a bizarre manner. Urgo doesn't seem to like Munson much either and gives a full range of his unique expertise upon the life and times of Gorham Munson in a paper called "Gorham Munson Falls Out with Cather: A Letter."

Cather's letter does show another side of her personality and Urgo was up to the task of elaborating on this issue. Urgo's fast-paced performance left the audience in awe of his creative tenor in this unique presentation. He found the letter, by the way, in the Drew University vault when thumbing through a copy of *My Ántonia*. The heretofore unknown letter quite opportunely fell into his lap!

> inside it. The audience, stirred from its indifference, was awed and thrilled—and gave the most complete attention to every word she sang until she finished . . . . (136-37)

Similarily, one of Thea's staunch supporters, Dr. Archie, says that when Thea performs, it is "as if a lamp had suddenly been turned up inside of her" (162). Viewing Thea as an accomplished Wagnerian singer near the end of the novel, he explains the transformation this way: "this woman [the one singing] he had never known: she had somehow devoured his little friend, as the wolf ate up Red Ridinghood. Beautiful, radiant, tender as she was, she chilled his old affection," and her voice allows him to begin "to feel the exhilaration of getting free from personalities, of being released from his own past" (343). Therefore, it is the audience's perceptions that are actually changed by the power of these voices—voices that come from within, carrying both fire and ice. It is as if Thea mesmerizes the audience with her gift in much the same way that Lind does. Physical beauty is not what captures either singer's audience. It is the intensity with which they apply their desire, their art, that enables them to reach the "frozen heights of perfection" ("Three American Singers" 42).

Thea's piano teacher A. Wunsch, a brilliant musician whose alcoholism has reduced him to giving piano lessons in the small Midwestern town of Moonstone, says that a voice "must be in the baby when it makes its first cry, like *der Rhythmus*, or it is not to be" (70). The fact is, "a voice is not an instrument that's found ready-made. A voice is personality" (297), and both Lind and Thea are characterized as being born with a special gift or natural talent—a voice. Lind's natural talents for singing and playing the piano are evident from the time that she is three to four years of age, and because of her gift, Herr Croelius and Count Puke induce Lind (at the age of nine) to join the Royal Theater School, which is attached to the Royal Opera House in Stockholm (Benét 19)—the place where Lind learns about discipline, practice, and work.

Thea, however, mistakenly believes that she is to be a concert pianist and studies hard to achieve this goal with Wunsch, who trains her under the rigid Stuttgart method. When she is eleven years old, her brother, Thor, is born, and she takes on the added responsibility of caring for him. Two days a week, she practices piano for four hours, and one day a week, she goes to Wunsch for a piano lesson. It is not until Thea sings for Andor Harsanyi, her Chicago piano teacher, that her special natural talent for voice is discovered. Harsanyi describes her voice as simple and beautiful:

> The machine was so simple and strong, seemed to be so easily operated. She sang from the bottom of herself. Her breath came from down where her laugh came from, the deep laugh which Mrs. Harsanyi had once called "the laugh of the people." A relaxed throat, a voice that lay on the breath, that had never been forced off the breath; it rose and fell in the air-column like the little balls which are put to shine in the jet of a fountain. The voice did not thin as it went up; the upper tones were as full and rich as the lower, produced in the same way and as unconsciously, only with deeper breath. (160)

The voices of both singers are also said to be sympathetic. According to Benét, Lind has a voice "which charms and moves all hearts" (167), and Thea's voice is described as one which has all "the feeling . . . in the voice itself" (69). Both their voices are also compared to the warbling of birds. Harsanyi describes Thea's voice as being "like a wild bird that had flown into his studio on Middleton Street from goodness knew how far" (160), and Lind is frequently compared to a "Nightingale" because of the birdlike quality of her voice. Both Lind and Thea develop beautiful, distinctive voices in spite of the fact that they have been trained in faulty methods of instruction. Lind has been "trained in a faulty method of breathing" (Stirling 198), and according to Harsanyi, Thea "had been given no direction" (149), leaving them with the need for a master's training. Therefore, Lind goes to Paris where she studies voice under the Italian singing-master, Signor Manuel Garcia, "the father of the great singer Malibran" (Stirling 198), while Thea begins a study of music under the concert pianist, Harsanyi, before ending her study of voice in Germany under the guidance of Lilli Lehmann, a respected and admired Wagnerian singer considered to be "the most exacting teacher in the world" ("Three American Singers" 38).

Harsanyi, when he realizes Thea's natural singing ability, goes to his close friend, Theodore Thomas, for advice on where to send Thea to study voice. Thomas, who led the Chicago Symphony Orchestra from 1891-1905, recommends Madison Bowers, "a man he did not personally like but one who was an intelligent teacher" (173). Thea says that Bowers is "a cold, bitter avaricious man" who "knew a great deal about voices" (183). Bowers is quite similar to Garcia, Lind's teacher who "was a very good man" but also a master who takes "but little notice of [the students], apart from his lessons" (Benét 89). Another connection to Lind in *The Song of the Lark* is the fact that Thomas was the first violinist in the orchestra that accompanied Jenny Lind and Henriette Sontag (422), two

Drew Colloquium: Findings

Wendy Perriman. Photograph by Betty Kort.

Willa Cather and Ballet

Wendy Perriman, independent scholar, began the final plenary session by going "Straight to the Pointe: Willa Cather's Training for the Ballet." In her presentation, Wendy showed Willa Cather to be extraordinarily well versed in ballet—not that she danced—but that she used ballet and the stories told in ballet, weaving the plot elements into her novels and stories.

Cather's article for *McClure's* called "Training for the Ballet," was published during a dearth of dance. The article can be found in the Caspersen Collection.

"of the greatest coloratura sopranos of the nineteenth century" (Pleasant 191) on their American tours—a fact of which Cather is clearly aware. In *The Song of the Lark*, Cather writes that Thomas is awakened from his "adolescent drowsiness" by "two voices, by two women who sang in New York in 1851,—Jenny Lind and Henriette Sontag. They are the first great artists he has ever heard, and he never forgets his debt to them. . . .

Jenny Lind. Photograph from http://www.lkwdpl.org/wihohio/lind-jen.htm

He told Harsanyi that he got his first conception of tone quality from Jenny Lind" (176). Thus, their connection to Thomas is another strong link between Lind and Thea.

Another parallel found between Lind and Thea is the depth of their commitment and desire. Each singer takes on the characteristics of the part that she is singing—actually becomes the character herself—and thus depletes her strength. Lind writes to Anderson that "[she] gave too much of herself in her art; all [her] life's strength was on the point of being extinguished" (Stirling 337), and according to Harbison, Thea's "art takes every ounce of her strength, leaving her drained, aged, and often unfit for company" (Harbison xvii). Because of the drain upon their physical and emotional strength, these two great singers suffer when their roles are over, finding themselves exhausted. Lind and Thea do not just perform the roles they are assigned; instead, they put their own marks on their roles, leaving them forever altered. Their remaking of these roles leaves their audiences with a new perception of an old work of art.

Thea's and Lind's desires and drives for perfection in art are not enough, however. Their desires must be coupled with something which has been inside them from birth—an innate understanding of life, humanity, and nature. Ottenburg explains that Thea is able to touch people with the parts that she sings because instead of inventing a lot of business and expedients to suggest character, she knows the thing at the root, and lets the musical pattern take care of her. "The score pours her into all those lovely postures, makes the light and shadow go over her face, lifts her and drops her. She lies on it. . . ." (351).

Lind says that when she begins to sing a part she becomes that part—"while I am on the stage I am Angela and can feel myself right in her skin" (Benét 23). She finds that she is "absorbed, body and soul, in the personality she was acting. Here was a character whose flesh and blood she could actually take on" (190). The melodies that she sings transform her into the character that she becomes—which in turn transforms her audience. The same it true for Thea who has the natural ability to "become" any character, but it is the score that sweeps her along and transforms her. Cather says, Thea "could 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" (251). She has the power to transform herself in the eyes of her listeners—taking them with her on her vibrant and exciting journey.

Each of these singers gives her all to the cold, exacting master of art, and, after reaching the epitome of her artistic desire, each marries a man who puts her wants, desires, and needs first. Lind marries Otto Goldschmidt, her accompanist, a man who she believes to be "entirely free from greed" and who has "no religious scruples as to what she should and should not do" (Benét 446). And Thea, eventually, marries Fred Ottenburg, the "beer prince" (230), who had once tricked her into having an affair with him but who has also always encouraged and supported her career—a man much like Lind's husband. However, art always comes first for both women.

Lind comments that she "would with joy have died for [her art, which was her] first, last, deepest and purest love" (Stirling 337), but Thea goes even further. After attending an opera and feeling the ecstasy brought about by the music, Thea is willing to "live for it, work for it, die for it; but she was going to have it, time after time, height after height" (171-72). Both women exemplify their commitment to art in the way they choose to live their lives. According to Harbison, Cather believes "that lovers or children could never fully share such an impersonal mission, nor would they be satisfied with the husk of humanity left after the artist's vitality was drained away" (xiii). This is a belief that is established in Lind's life and reflected in Thea's life. As a matter of fact, the lives of both of these women can be read as what Harbison defines as "a female Künstlerroman, [a story] in which the male characters are satellites and willing servants to a woman's career" (vii).

The loss of their mothers forms another parallel between the two singers. Lind is on an American tour when her mother dies, and Thea is in Germany when her mother dies. Nevertheless, neither goes home for the funeral. Lind discovers a deep feeling of love and loss while studying in Paris at Christmas time, long before her mother's death. She writes to Madame Lindblad about her mother, whom she has left alone—a mother who "has no child who can bring her the least pleasure. If you knew how she is ever before me! how constantly she is in my thoughts! how I love her, as I never loved her before!" (Benét 94). Then, when Mrs. Kronborg is ill, Thea has to choose between fulfilling the terms of her contract and singing the coveted part of Elizabeth at the Dresden Opera or going home and losing the one chance for which she has worked so hard. Thea writes Dr. Archie that she wanted to "go to her mother more than she wanted anything else in the world, but, unless she failed,—which she would not—she absolutely could not leave Dresden for six months" (336). Thea chooses to stay because she feels as though she has no choice, but her mother says she stays because "when these things happen far away they don't make such a mark; especially if your hands are full and you've duties of your own to think about" (337). Thea, the child who was always so serious, has already made her choice when she leaves Moonstone, in order to pursue art, and her mother understands that choice. The

love that both Thea and Lind feel for their mothers is clear, and the depth of their loss is evident in both singers' lives. However, both remain committed first and foremost to their art.

Cather's allusions are never incidental or trivial. Rather, as in *The Song of the Lark*, she illuminates her work with a complex web of subtle references, allowing readers to participate in the intellectual enlightenment necessary for a deeper appreciation and interpretation of her work. Because of the complex interconnections between Cather's novel, Andersen's story "The Snow Queen," and the importance of Jenny Lind to each, a careful reader begins to consider the possibility of Jenny Lind as another source for Thea Kronborg. However, it is Cather's direct allusions to Jenny Lind and Theodore Thomas, and the many close parallels between the life and talent of Jenny Lind and those of Thea Kronborg that validate this interpretation.

Thea and Lind climb from their middle-class status, discipline themselves, work hard to pay their own way, and are away on tour and cannot return when their mothers die. Yet, they are both ultimately able to rise above all these adversities and reach the "frozen heights" of their art. Although critics have not previously recognized Jenny Lind as a possible source for Thea Kronborg, these close parallels suggest that the Swedish Nightingale should be allowed to join Olive Fremstad and Cather herself as the third great artist from whom the character of Thea Kronborg is drawn.

Notes

[1]For a more detailed explanation of the composite of Thea by Willa Cather and noted Cather scholars see Susan J. Rosowski, *The Voyage Perilous: Willa Cather's Romanticism* (Lincoln: U Nebraska P, 1986) 63; James Woodress, *Willa Cather: A Literary Life* (Lincoln: U Nebraska P, 1989) 87, 252-275; Janis P. Stout, *Willa Cather: The Writer and her World* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 2000) 120, 129, 133-35; Sharon O'Brien, *Willa Cather: The Emerging Voice* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1997) 447-448; Hermione Lee, *Willa Cather: A Life Saved Up* (London: Virago P, 1997) 120-125; Edith Lewis, *Willa Cather Living: A Personal Record* (Lincoln: U Nebraska P, 2000) 30, 91-93; and the summaries of Cather's letters "To Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant," 22 April [1913], letter 257; "To Ferris Greenslet," 28 March 1915, letter 295; and "To Ferris Greenslet," 16 December [1916], letter 375 found in Janis P. Stout's book, *A Calendar of the Letters of Willa Cather*, (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2002) 42, 48, 59-60.

The passage to which Cather refers (*SL* 23) is the very last line of "The Snow Queen" (Andersen 105). This allusion was initially identified and explained to me by Dr. Ann Moseley in a graduate course in children's literature, but it is also discussed by John March in *A Reader's Companion to the Fiction of Willa Cather*, ed. Marilyn Arnold (Westport, CT: Greenwood P, 1993), 18.

[3]Hans Christian Andersen's fairytale, "The Snow Queen," exemplifies the belief that art is a cold and exacting master—a belief which is held by Jenny Lind and Willa Cather and one which is reflected in the life of Thea Kronborg.

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Tim Bintrim. Photograph by Betty Kort

Cather as Illustrator

Tim Bintrim, Saint Vincent College, presented a paper at the Drew Colloquium called "Cather as Illustrator." Bintrim speculates about the inspiration behind Cather's drawings. Finding numerous examples in the Caspersen Collection, Bintrim surmises that there are far more illustrations than previously believed. Most are from her days at the University of Nebraska, where she served as editor of the *Hesperian*, but Bintrim finds evidence to suggest that she continued creating drawings well after that period.

Americanizing Cather: Myth and Fiction in *My Ántonia*

Diana H. Polley

In 1924, Willa Cather denounced "this passion for Americanizing everything and everybody," calling it a "deadly disease" (qtd. in Reynolds 73). Although Cather was specifically referring to the nationalistic impulse to transform ethnic immigrants into "Americans," her protest is relevant today. As Susan J. Rosowski notes, "a writer is important not because she represents transcendent values or universal truths, but because she is inscribed into a culture" (147). In attempting to understand how Cather's *My Ántonia* "fits" into American literary culture, the critic, it would seem, is participating in exactly this type of "diseased" activity.

It is difficult, however, to read *My Ántonia* without acknowledging its ties to a national identity. Indeed, the text has repeatedly been read in terms of classic American myths, often as a longing for an earlier, more innocent America. For example, David Stouck has read it as an American pastoral, James E. Miller as a "commentary on the American experience" (112), Harold Bloom as "an intense vision of a lost America" (1), and Robert E. Scholes as "the myth of Adam in America" (19). Even more contemporary critics who have acknowledged the novel's *counter*-cultural ties have reconfigured American myths to incorporate these new ideologies; thus, Mary Paniccia Carden suggests that *My Ántonia* "recasts the starring role in the national romance with pioneering women . . . " (295). The subject positions may shift, but the overall identification with American mythology remains.

In examining the development of Cather criticism, these readings of *My Ántonia* make sense. Guy Reynolds explains that early critics, such as Van Wyck Brooks, overlooked Cather as worthy of canonicity because they felt that she wrote against the "'significant tendencies'" of current American ideology (35). In a 1995 *New Yorker* article, Joan Acocella argues that Cather finally gained attention in the academy when her literature began to "fit" and affirm new critical trends (65). Thus, in part, Cather has been canonized as critics have been able to write her into changing grand narratives of American culture. In a sense, we help to transform Cather into a cultural icon by Americanizing her, by inscribing her into a dominant national discourse.

It may not be possible to avoid this critical paradox in reading Cather's work. It is important, however, to qualify Cather's relationship, specifically in *My Ántonia*, to American mythology. *My Ántonia* clearly employs and even celebrates certain core American myths. In particular, the text pays homage to the philosophical teachings of Ralph Waldo Emerson; through setting, symbolism, character, and plot, *My Ántonia* applauds such classic American ideals as self-reliance, spiritual independence, and nature. As so many critics have noted, Jim's story mourns the loss of this epic Emersonian tradition. In *My Ántonia*, however, Cather also writes *against* these cultural myths; it is not that she denies the ideals inherent in the myths but, rather, that she recognizes them as fictions.

In *The Sense of an Ending*, Frank Kermode distinguishes between myth and fiction:

> Fictions can degenerate into myths whenever they are not consciously held to be fictive. . . . Myth operates within the diagrams of ritual, which presupposes *total* and adequate explanations of things as they are and were; it is a sequence of radically unchangeable gestures. Fictions are for finding things out, and they change as the needs of sense-making change. Myths are the agents of stability, fictions the agents of change. Myths call for absolute, fictions for conditional assent. (my italics 39)

In *My Ántonia*, Cather writes two stories: one of myth and one of fiction. Jim's story is the story of American myth, which celebrates the Emersonian vision of an American Adam and laments the intruding machine in the garden. Against this epic ideal, however, Cather offers us another story, one that honors Jim's vision but also understands it as fiction. Specifically, this larger story questions Jim's narrative by recognizing him as an unreliable narrator. The text distances itself from Jim's story in two ways. First, it questions the myth of the American Adam; through the characters of Ántonia and Lena, it applauds Emersonian heroism but reads such ideals as fictive. Second, the text critiques Jim's mythic reading of the machine in the garden; although Jim chooses to naturalize the loss of innocence onto the inevitable passage of time, the text ultimately suggests that the American individual is not the passive victim of history but, rather, the enabler of his own destruction. By fictionalizing the myth, Cather inscribes herself into American mythology but also writes against it. While Jim's narrative is an agent of stability, Cather's narrative is an agent of change. While Jim calls for absolute, Cather calls for conditional assent.

When we first meet Jim Burden in the Introduction, our external narrator, presumably a fictional version of Willa Cather, makes it clear that the elder Jim lives a sterile and far from romantic life. He has moved from the "freemasonry" of the West to the urban metropolis of New York, he is married to a cold and detached woman, and, "as legal counsel for one of the great Western railways," he has aided in the development of the land he loves (711). While Jim's spirit is still considered "naturally romantic and ardent," his romance finds its home in memory and desire (712). We learn that he has written a narrative about his childhood friend, Ántonia Shimerda. His narrative, not *Ántonia* but *My Ántonia*, will act as a remembrance of things past, a personal, unorganized recollection of "what Ántonia's name recalls to me" (714). Although this story will be about Ántonia, we sense that it will also be about American possibility and loss.

In Book I, we become immersed in Jim's Emersonian childhood. The Book begins when Jim, an orphan at age ten, moves from Virginia to Nebraska to live with his grandparents. His first encounters with the land seem to come right out of the pages of Emerson's philosophy, his descriptions "enumerating the values of nature and casting up their sum" (Emerson 8). Emerson's concept of the "transparent eye-ball" is notoriously difficult to express or conceive of within the realm of experience.

And yet, Jim's descriptions of Nebraska embody just this concept. Bumping along the road to his grandparents' farm, Jim notes the empty landscape:

> There was nothing but land: not a country at all, but the material out of which countries are made. . . . The wagon jolted on, carrying me I knew not whither. I don't think I was homesick. If we never arrived anywhere, it did not matter. Between that earth and that sky I felt *erased*, blotted out. (my italics 718)

Jim literally seems to "become a transparent eye-ball," where, as Emerson explains, "I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God" (10); "mean egotism vanishes," the past is forgotten, and Jim experiences an "original relation to the universe" (7).

This first romantic encounter with nature continues throughout Book I, as Jim explores the prairie with his new Bohemian friend and neighbor, Ántonia. Although they come from remarkably different cultures, in childhood, they share this same freshness, vitality, and spiritual awareness of landscape. For both, the land acts as material out of which to shape self. Book I comes to embody each of the central tenets of Emerson's "Nature": nature becomes commodity, beauty, language, discipline, idealism, spirit, and prospects. The story of Jim and Ántonia's childhood is a story based on this classic American mythology; Emersonian possibility comes to life through their "unaffected, unbiased, unbribable, unaffrighted innocence" (Emerson 261).

Books II through V chart another American myth, what Harold Bloom calls "an intense vision of a lost America" (1); as Jim grows up, life continually seems to pull him further away from this Emersonian possibility. In Book II, his grandparents retire to the town of Black Hawk and send Jim to a local school. An older and more restless Jim expresses the town's sterility:

> People's speech, their voices, their very glances, became furtive and repressed. Every individual taste, every natural appetite, was bridled by caution. . . . The growing piles of ashes and cinders in the back yards were the only evidence that the wasteful, consuming process of life went on at all. (851)

It is not simply that Jim loses all sense of his childhood idealism. He still maintains his pastoral vision of America. He laments "the lost freedom of the farming country" and remembers weather on the farm as "the great fact" (805). This "great fact," however, now becomes recast, in Black Hawk, as a "bitter song" (823). Country life is seen as fruitful, town as "wasteful" and "consuming."

It may seem ironic, therefore, that, at the end of Book II, Jim decides to move further away from the country, to the city of Lincoln to continue his education. Jim, however, does not view this move as ironic but, rather, as the unavoidable process of growing up. Soon before Jim leaves Black Hawk, he spends a day in the country with the three "hired girls": Tiny, Ántonia, and Lena. Jim's description of a plough joins man and nature in one stunning image:

> There were no clouds, the sun was going down in a limpid, gold-washed sky. Just as the lower edge of the red disc rested on the high fields against the horizon, a great black figure suddenly appeared on the face of the sun. . . . Magnified across the distance by the horizontal light, [the plough] stood out against the sun, was exactly contained within the circle of the disc; the handles, the tongue, the share—black against the molten red. There it was, heroic in size, a picture writing on the sun. (865-6)

This beautiful image is ephemeral: "even while [they] whispered about it, [the] vision disappeared." As natural as the sun setting, Jim must grow up, and the vision must recede. Jim laments: "When boys and girls are growing up, life can't stand still, not even in the quietest of country towns; and they *have* to grow up, whether they will or no" (my italics 835).

In Book II, Jim's personal narrative is cast against the continued story of Ántonia. Like Jim, Ántonia moves to town, not for school but financial necessity. Unlike Jim, however, Ántonia does not seem to mourn the loss of her childhood but adapts well to changing circumstances; despite her new surroundings, she displays the same level of vitality and Emersonian self-reliance. Her spiritual individualism is now associated with a larger group of Bohemian and Scandinavian women, all of whom live outside of the strict conventions of American society and exhibit "a positive carriage and freedom of movement" (838). As a result of their "vigor," they are "considered a menace to the social order"; Jim tells us that "[t]heir beauty shone out too boldly against a conventional background" (840). In fact, Ántonia loses her job when she continues to attend the forbidden Vannis dances; she makes the important choice to overcome social and financial pressure in order to maintain her self-determination. Ántonia seems to acknowledge, as does Emerson, that "nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind" (Emerson 261).

It is interesting that critics have viewed Lena Lingard as Ántonia's foil (Bowden 16). Although Ántonia's and Lena's desires suggest certain binaries, they share many values in common. Jim explains his earliest memories of Lena as "out among her cattle, bareheaded and barefooted, scantily dressed in tattered clothing, always knitting as she watched her herd." He describes her as "something wild," quite unabashed about her "ragged clothes," with an "easy" and "gentle" disposition matched equally against her ruggedness (817). Although she ultimately comes to represent an urban contrast to the earthy Ántonia, they both share the same heroic individualism, the same fierce sense of self-reliance that privileges personal integrity and independence above conformity and social convention. Jim explains how Lena manages to succeed in Lincoln business without giving into the capitalist American model: "Lena's success puzzled me. She was so easy-going; had none of the push and self-assertiveness that get people ahead in business"; even in the urban world, Lena manages to translate her country qualities into a "blissful expression of countenance" (885). Rather than a foil, one might say that Lena Lingard is Ántonia's doppelganger; their paths may diverge, sending one out into the world and the other back to the earth, but their similar spiritual drive renders them complementary Emersonian heroines.

This idea is fostered by the fact that Jim comes to idealize and love them both. Rather than translate his ideals into reality, however, Jim distances himself from these two women. In Books III and IV, Jim has the opportunity to connect with each of these Emersonian heroines, but, instead, turns

away. In Book III, he becomes physically and spiritually close to Lena. Yet, at a critical moment, Jim chooses to detach. He has the choice to remain in the West or to move East and study at Harvard. He seems to make this decision during a conversation with Lena. Lena teases Jim: "'What's on your mind, Jim? Are you afraid I'll want you to marry me some day?'" (893). Jim's response is telling: "Then I told her I was going away." Although Lena has made it clear that she has no intention of getting married, the juxtaposition of the two lines reflects Jim's fear, not necessarily his fear of marriage but, rather, his fear of embracing that Emersonian sensibility that he has already written off as lost.

In Book IV, we find Jim in a similar circumstance, this time with Ántonia. Having gone away and finished his studies at Harvard, he returns to Black Hawk for the summer and learns that Ántonia has been deserted by her American beau and is now unmarried with a baby girl. Despite her hardship, Ántonia retains a calm and "deep-seated health and ardor" (909). Recognizing the beauty and vitality intrinsic in her character, Jim confesses:

> 'Do you know, Ántonia, since I've been away, I think of you more often than of any one else in this part of the world. I'd have liked to have you for a sweetheart, or a wife, or my mother or my sister – anything that a woman can be to a man. The *idea* of you is a part of my mind; you influence my likes and dislikes, all my tastes, hundreds of times when I don't realize it. You really are a part of me' (my italics 910).

The obvious question is: why does he not, then, choose to "have" Ántonia for a "sweetheart, or a wife"? He even admits that he feels the "old pull of the earth," and yet he still decides to return back East, away from the country, towards the center of sterile materialism (910). Rather than admitting his failure, however, Jim deflects his loss onto the landscape; as they walk "homeward across the fields," he describes the setting sun and rising moon as "resting on opposite edges of the world," as if to elegize and naturalize the position in which Ántonia and Jim now find themselves (910).

Jim relieves himself of the "burden" to act by relegating Lena and Ántonia to the world of ideas and assigning them the status of Muse. Specifically, Jim inscribes these women into the "poetry of Virgil," and, as he reads, actually sees the image of Lena "float[ing] before [him] on the page like a picture" (880). Blanche Gelfant reads this as evidence of Jim's fear of sexuality, which acts, she argues, as "a determining force in his story" (62). I agree with Gelfant when she suggests that "by relegating Lena to the ideal but unreachable world of art he assures their separation" (69). However, rather than associating this with Jim's fear of sexuality, I understand it in terms of his allegiance to American mythology. Ántonia's and Lena's ability to maintain their vitality and independence threatens Jim's *inability* to maintain such ideals; thus, he views them as inherently impalpable, intangible. By recasting them into the role of Muse and himself into the role of epic poet, he, in effect, rewrites Virgil into his own American myth of possibility and loss. His failure suddenly becomes heroic.

Nowhere is this tendency more obvious than in the last paragraph of Book V. It is here that Jim's role as unreliable narrator becomes solidified, and the essence of his story can be understood. In one of the most beautiful passages of the book, Jim explains the "circle" of man's experience:

(Continued on Page 64)

Moon Block to be Restored

The Moon Block. Photograph by Barb Kudrna.

The Cather Foundation Board of Governors, at its January meeting, voted to begin the process of restoring the Historic Moon Block on Webster Street in Red Cloud. Owned by the Cather Foundation, the Moon Block is on the list of National Historic Sites.

The Moon Block occupies nearly half of the city block and shares a common wall with the newly restored Opera House. The entire site is in serious need of structural repair. Restoring this historic building will provide an assurance of the long-term health of the Opera House, secure the coveted archive and additional office space for the Foundation, and preserve a historic building on Red Cloud's famous Webster Street.

Nebraska's three Congressional representatives have endorsed the project and have secured a $300,000 fund from Congress to initiate fundraising for the project. A private donor has pledged an additional $100,000. The Foundation is now applying for several grants.

Plans include placing a new, state-of-the-art archive on the second level of the building. The Opera House stage will be expanded to include access from the north, a green room, and dressing rooms for performers. The offices and bookstore on the first story of the Opera House will expand into the first bay of the Moon Block to provide needed space.

The Moon Block was built in 1886, just three years after the Cathers arrived in Nebraska. The completion of such a structure would have provided much excitement in the community and magnetized Cather's interest. It was here that Cather visited the office of Dr. McKeeby, called Dr. Archie in *The Song of the Lark*. The Moon Block is also an important site in *A Lost Lady*.

> For Ántonia and for me, this had been the road of *Destiny*; had taken us to those early accidents of fortune which *predetermined* for us all that we can ever be. Now I understood that the same road was to bring us together again. Whatever we had missed, we possessed together the precious, the incommunicable past. (my italics 937)

Despite the brilliant poetics of the language, there are certain troubling inconsistencies in Jim's seeming "epiphany" (Helmick 113). In particular, the words "destiny" and "predetermined" are completely out of synch with Jim's story. In this passage, Jim naturalizes his failure; his empty marriage, his destructive job, and his overall parasitic relationship to society get displaced onto some larger force that lies beyond individual choice. Jim's narrative, of course, undermines this notion. Beginning in Book II, each Book begins with a choice that moves Jim further and further away from the land he loves. In Book II, Jim's grandparents *choose* to move to town, in part to send Jim to school and help him integrate into American society. Book III opens with Jim's move to Lincoln, where he *chooses* the realm of ideas over experience. At the end of Book III, Jim *chooses* to leave Lena and follow his teacher East to the center of urban life. At the end of Book IV, Jim *chooses* to return to Harvard, to go to law school rather than stay in the country with Ántonia. And now, Jim *chooses* to romanticize and mythologize his loss in order to make sense of his empty life. In *The American Adam*, R.W.B Lewis addresses the myth that Jim embraces: "Instead of looking forward to new possibilities, we direct our tired attention to the burden of history, observing repeatedly that it is later than you think" (196). This is precisely the myth that Cather understands as fiction. Jim Burden may envision himself as the symbolic "burden of history," but, instead, he represents the "burden" of all Americans who blame external forces on their own spiritual failures.

Although Cather recognizes that the "burden" of Emersonian possibility rests with the individual, she also recognizes that the myth of the American Adam is, itself, a fiction. The text certainly celebrates Lena and Ántonia as Emersonian figures and applauds their persistence, despite all odds, to preserve their individualism. Their lives, however, are far from ideal. If Lena and Ántonia act as complementary heroines, they also lack what the other manages to incorporate. Thus, although Ántonia is often cited as an Earth Mother goddess, by the end of the text, she is "battered [if] not diminished"; Jim describes her as "a stalwart, brown woman, flat-chested, her curly brown hair a little grizzled" (914). Likewise, while Lena maintains her independence and, as Tiny explains, is "the only person . . . who never gets any older," she sacrifices community and family in order to maintain her spiritual integrity (896). Any sense of pure idealism is mitigated by stark reality. More importantly, even this tempered vision of Emersonianism is figuratively relocated outside America; neither Lena nor Ántonia is American born, and Ántonia, ultimately, reintegrates herself back into Bohemian culture. These "new Americans" give up that American myth of unadulterated idealism because they are willing to transform the "ideal" into the "real." Thus, the myth of the American Adam, the possibility of mapping the Emersonian self onto an empty landscape, is applauded, but it is also fictionalized.

There is much resistance to the idea that Cather does not fully embrace Jim's vision. Hermione Lee, for example, states that "Jim's elegiac pastoral expresses Cather's deepest feelings: it would be *perverse* to argue that his reading of Ántonia is meant to be distrusted" (my italics 150). Lee argues that Jim's story is Cather's story and, in many ways, it is. Cather does seem to "trust" Jim's mythological reading and to identify with the characters she introduces. After all, the novel's epigraph repeats a quote used by Jim in Book III, a quote by Virgil that mourns the inevitable passage of time. In this way, Cather inscribes herself into Jim's story, into American mythology, and into a national discourse. However, she also writes against this discourse; she affirms the national myths, but, at the same time, consciously holds such myths "to be fictive."

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Willa Cather: The Secret Web

Bernice Slote

Once, some years after they had been young together, Willa Cather was speaking in vivid detail to Louise Pound and other friends of some experiences with Lillian Russell. "But, Willa,' said Louise after a time, "you never knew Lillian Russell." "Why, so I didn't," said Willa, smiling.

With Willa Cather, the imagination was a way of being. What came to her of experience, in any form, became a part of her. And in turn she became an actress creating and recreating for herself and in her writing new landscapes, voices, rooms. There were hidden selves, as she said often in her novels, and created selves, and masks to transform the literal. The person, who is also the artist, becomes the instrument. Willa Cather knew this, and felt it with some intensity, as she wrote when she was twenty-two that art is expression: "To keep an idea living, intact, tinged with all its original feeling, its original mood, preserving in it all the ecstasy which attended its birth, to keep it so all the way from the brain to the hand and transfer it on paper a living thing with color, odor, sound, life all in it, that is what art means, that is the greatest of all the gifts of the gods." And that journey from the brain to the hand she called "the voyage perilous."[1] By what circuitous ways, by what passages and peaks it may travel, the experience of the self is burdened and shaped by its own complexity, and even by the journey itself. Willa Cather later emphasized that in writing a new thing may be created on the page, and beyond it. The two concepts blend: from life into art into life. To look at Willa Cather with both brain (or life) and hand (or art) in view is to find a fascinating pattern, a secret web of connections and relationships that, I think, illuminate and in many ways redefine her as a person and as an artist. For one thing, secrecy itself was a part of her creativity; both person and art become more complex the more they are studied.

Some clues about Willa Cather's mind and person are at hand, enough to bring the life closer to us. I have been studying a group of books that belonged to her in her early years, and in them I find revealing moments: candy-smeared pages in a *Century* magazine of 1890; her Bible with "Wm. Cather, Jr." written on the title page and marks, for example, at Genesis 27 (the Jacob and Esau story) and at Psalms 30:5 ("weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning"); and a copy of Frank Norris's *McTeague* with a paragraph cut out of page three. For *McTeague* Willa Cather the journalist evidently had a deadline—the paragraph reappears in her review of the book in the Pittsburgh Leader on March 31, 1899. But it is as a journalist—the drama critic, book reviewer, columnist, and feature writer—that one can best see the directions and dimensions of her mind. In reading all of Willa Cather's known journalistic writing published before she wrote a single book (hundreds of thousands of words), I find her a young woman quite astonishing intellectually with a background of reading and knowledge that seems to have no boundaries. In that early writing, for example, it is apparent that she knows Shakespeare well, that she loves Keats and Shelley (the "high noon meridian ecstasy that Keats and Shelley knew how to breathe into song"), and reads deeply in Continental writers such as Tolstoi, Turgenev, Dumas, Daudet, Flaubert, Heine. All these elements emerge later.

And she has a wicked pen. One classic play review is that of Lillian Lewis in *Cleopatra*, at the Funke Opera House in Lincoln, Nebraska.

> The serpent of old Nile uncoiled at the Funke last night before a large and amused audience. While the text was considerably mutilated in places, still the general outline of the play was recognizably Shakespearean. The fortune telling scene was put first and after that a barge drew up and from it descended a large, limp, lachrymose "Kleo-paw-tra," with an

John Murphy's Favorite Cather Essay

Thirty years ago last fall this beautiful seminal essay by Bernice Slote was published in *Five Essays on Willa Cather: The Merrimack Symposium* (1974). Bernice had delivered her paper two years earlier for the twenty-fifth anniversary of Merrimack College, North Andover, Massachusetts, at what was the first significant gathering of Cather scholars, a year prior to the Cather centenary celebration in Lincoln, Nebraska, in 1973.

The essay has been much quoted in Cather scholarship, and it has become the simplest and most graceful summary of Slote's discovery of the key to Cather's fiction, the essential meaning of "the thing not named," of the cultural sources Cather had at her disposal and drew upon, usually silently.

Bernice was a short, stocky woman and had to stand on a wooden Coke box to reach the microphone. Hers was a resonant voice and her articulation was reminiscent of a mezzo-soprano's. Like Cather, Bernice Slote had the ability to be profound and insightful in the simplest language.

I am pleased that the *Newsletter and Review* is reprinting the essay, since its earlier printing was limited in circulation and truly done at a country press without experience in scholarly publication. I know. I edited the Merrimack collection.

John Murphy. Photograph by Betty Kort

> Iowa accent, a St. Louis air and the robust physique of a West England farmer's wife. This ponderous personage descended from the barge and perching upon the back of a stuffed tiger somewhat moth-eaten she began gleefully coquetting with Mark Antony, recently of Rome, whom she occasionally called "Me Anthony," which showed that she had been reading *The Prisoner of Zenda*. . . .
>
> And how was it with the rural, robust queen, the royal Kleopawtra? Miss Lewis walks like a milkmaid and moves like a housemaid, not a movement or gesture was dignified, much less regal. She draped and heaped her ample form about over chairs and couches to imitate oriental luxury. She slapped her messenger upon the back, she tickled Mark Antony under the chin. She fainted slouchily upon every possible pretext and upon every part of the stage. And it was no ordinary faint either, it was a regular landslide.

The review concludes:

> Her death scene was done in the modern emotional drama ten, twenty and thirty-cent carnival style. She took a few tears from *Camille*, a few from *Article 47*, a few from *Credit Lorraine*, a few from *As in a Looking Glass* and made a death scene. She sat down upon a cane bottom dining room chair, took her crown from a little sixteenth century oak table, sighed and wept and heaved her breast and then died from an imaginary serpent hidden in a ditch of lettuce after having worn most atrocious gowns and having drawn and quartered and mangled some of the greatest lines in all the poetry of the world. *Requiescat in pace*. Was ever Shakespeare in this fashion played?[2]

There is also her statement on women, written in answer to the query, "Does the Bible teach that woman was created subordinate to man?" She begins, "The Bible undoubtedly teaches that woman should be subservient to man, but does it say that she was, is, or ever will be?" She then cites numerous examples of female trickery in the Bible, like the acts of Eve, Rebekah, Delilah, and Jezebel, concluding: "These are only a few of the hundred Biblical instances in which the women who were undoubtedly created subservient turned the tables. In theory the Jews maintained the superiority of man but in practice it did not always follow. Woman may be man's inferior but she makes him pay for it." It is quite wrong, I think, to say that Willa Cather had no sense of humor, or to think of her as—always—a serene, self-contained writer.

It is true, however, that Willa Cather was most of the time her own woman. She was not only fiercely independent, but secretive—and she enjoyed having secrets. This aspect of her personality is not easy to define, but it emerges in various ways. It is clear from her letters that she could be S.S. McClure when she wrote his *Autobiography* in 1913, and that she did not want to be recognized as the author. Just before that, in 1911, she took another name when she submitted *Alexander's Masquerade* (later published as *Alexander's Bridge*) to the McClure publishing company, sending it from St. Louis under the name of "Fanny Cadwallader." Earlier, when she went to Pittsburgh in 1896 to edit the *Home Monthly*, she sent back many letters to her friends and weekly columns to the *Nebraska State Journal* but said not a word about her extra job as drama critic for the *Leader*. Nor did she tell of another editorial job, which I have only recently discovered. In that first year in Pittsburgh, 1896-97, Willa Cather edited the children's page—"Our Young Folks"—for a weekly magazine called *The National Stockman and Farmer*. This portion of the secret web is interesting enough to describe more fully.

In some papers belonging to the Cather family I found a marked clipping, the "Young Folks" page from the *National Stockman and Farmer*, which Willa Cather had apparently sent home in early 1897. The magazine turned out to be a weekly periodical issued by the same company which published the *Home Monthly* (Axtell, Rush, and Orr) and located at the same address (203 Shady Lane) in Pittsburgh. Willa Cather's unmistakable hand is there as editor of the page from August 27, 1896 (about the time she finished the first issue of the *Home Monthly*); to June 17, 1897 (about the time she left the *Home Monthly* to go home to Nebraska for the summer). Published in the "Young Folks" department are pieces of her own, or variations of them, reprinted from the *Home Monthly*, other biographical references; and several stories by friends at the University of Nebraska to whom she had written for manuscripts, as she had mentioned in letters to Mariel Gere. Under the column "Editor's Talk" she has notes on such Catherian heroes as Fridtjof Nansen and Caesar, and in the December 24, 1896 issue, the story of Jim, who experimentally puts his sister Elsie part way down the chimney to test its capacity for Santa Claus. These children are easily identified as Willa Cather's younger brother and sister (members of her family agree). The most interesting story, however, is "Wee Winkie's Wanderings" (Nov. 26, 1896).[3] It is certainly by Willa Cather and probably autobiographical. Until her last novel, *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* (1940), Willa Cather published little about Virginia, where she had lived from her birth in 1873 to 1883, when the Cathers moved to Nebraska. The scene of "Wee Winkie's Wanderings" uses many details of the later novel – the Cather home of Willow Shade on Back Creek, the footbridge over the creek, the haying meadow and sassafras bushes, the familiar Hollow road, North Mountain in the distance, and the slopes which rose in front and behind the house. The name "Wee Winkie' refers to the nursery rhyme, "Wee Willie Winkie"; Willa was principally known as "Willie" (or Daughter) in her family, but she was also called Winkie, as her cousin Bess Seymour later recalled in a letter which I have seen.

"Wee Winkie's Wanderings" is about a restless and imaginative little girl who tried to run away. It begins:

> Wee Winkie sat looking sadly about her that July afternoon. She was tired of playing and nothing would go right. The acorn cups would not stand up properly on the little moss bank around which her dolls were seated, and the pies made of pinning sassafras leaves together over ripe cherries did not taste as good as usual. Winkie explained to her corn-cob doll that the

> pies did not "rise." She was not absolutely sure that this was right, but she had a vague idea that everything that was baked should rise. Then her dolls were glum and would not talk; they were all pouting, Winkie said, because she would not let them play in the mint bed along the creek and soil their white frocks. Winkie considered it a great misfortune to have children with sullen dispositions. As she was meditating upon these things she heard the sharp click of the mower in the meadow.
>
> Now she had it! She would bundle every one of those sullen dolls into bed, it would be good for them, and she would break the unsatisfactory acorn cups and give the sassafras pies that had not risen to her pet pink pig, and she herself would put on her wide white sun hat with the blue ribbons and go down and ride on the mower with her father. That would be something like it.

Winkie's mamma says no. But then to the intense little girl ("When Winkie wanted anything she wanted it very much as mamma knew") who threatens to run away, she agrees to such an exodus and packs Winkie's belongings, and some cookies. Frightened by gypsies and even their familiar cow, Winkie spends the afternoon sitting on the hillside, unable to go out of sight of her home towards "the mountain that seemed so big and dark and steep."

The story ends:

> Mamma, from the window where she watched, saw that disconsolate little figure sitting upon the hill top in the sunset, and she laughed and cried a little too. She watched a long time, but Winkie sat very still. At last Mamma saw her get up and come slowly down the hill toward the house. Then mamma went about her work, and presently she heard the door open softly and poor tired little Wee Winkie with her head hanging low and her bundle in her hand came slipping in. Her dress was wet with the dew of the long grass, and her shoes were scratched by the briars, and her ears were full of dust. But mamma washed her and gave her her supper, and tucked her into her little bed and never said a word about her running away, and neither did Winkie.

It was like Willa Cather never to say a word about the whole affair.

The secret web was internal, but it always moved outward from this time and place, or returned inward from all farther distances. Willa Cather's curiosity and ways of young learning are legendary; I have heard her close friend, the late Carrie Miner Sherwood, remark often on Willa's insatiable desire to know. Quite early in her life she came to live with distances, of both time and place. One revealing statement is the first sentence of her Commencement oration of 1890, as it was printed in the Red Cloud *Chief*: "All human history is a record of an emigration, an exodus from barbarism to civilization." Here is another "voyage perilous, and one which held her imagination from her first story, "Peter," through *My Ántonia*, and *Shadows on the Rock*, and to even her last book, *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, which records something of another kind of human barbarism in the South of 1856. In other ways, too, the search for truth went on. In a copy of *McClure's* (August 18, 1894) is written a note in Willa Cather's hand to her brother: "Roscoe, Read this." The article is on "The Search for the Absolute Zero."

"All human history is a record of an emigration, an exodus from barbarianism to civilization." One dimension of *My Ántonia* is that the order of the book takes us from the kind of country Willa Cather first knew in Nebraska of the 1880's—unsettled, young, rough (how close to the earth in the country scenes—heat, tall grass, storms, cold!); to the first small communities, like Black Hawk; to cities and universities; and while there, through the mind and imagination, to the world of ideas and the arts, of history alive. In *O Pioneers!* Alexandra Bergson says to Carl Linstrum, who has come back from far places: "If the world were not wider than my cornfields, if there were not something beside this, I wouldn't feel that it was much worth while to work." Neither *My Ántonia* nor *O Pioneers!* are paeans to the rural life, though superficially they may seem to glorify the land and a countryside. They are books in which the secret web is more intricate than that.

Cather's art, it seems to me, is apparent simplicity, actual complexity. Books, when read for all nuances, all allusions and implications (and with a writer like Cather whose fierce intelligence and comprehensive knowledge suggest that she is capable of many complexities, indeed)—these books show many strains, chords, counterpoints. They come from an intricately civilized mind, and when taken all together in one movement they comprise a kind of new, and subtle, imaginative world.

Let me take *O Pioneers!* and suggest some of the complexities—the operation of the secret web—which are not on the surface and which do relate to some facts about Willa Cather's life. Of the many possible relationships, I shall mention only those of three books which are linked with *O Pioneers!* organically. In the first chapter of the last part of the book, after Frank Shabata has killed his wife, Marie, and her lover, Emil Bergson, Alexandra's friend Crazy Ivar sits before his dugout reading the 101st Psalm. A storm has come up. The storm of human evil is already around him. We find that the Psalm opens, "I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O Lord, will I sing. I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." It concludes, "I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord." Willa Cather's early Bible, which I have mentioned, is the kind with cross references cited in the margins, directing the reader to other related passages on a given theme. For those who know their Bible well, each reading will be a chord of meaning, containing all those other notes. Ivar was a Bible-reader; he might well be thinking of some of the passages associated with the 101st Psalm, as cited in Willa Cather's Bible: "Is it not wheat harvest today? I shall call unto the Lord, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking you a king" (1 Samuel 12:17). "For thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks" (Psalms 18:27). "A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood" (Proverbs 6:17). Some of these allusions fit the

situation almost more literally than the original 101st Psalm; they are embodied in the created world so aptly that it seems they were most probably in Willa Cather's mind as well.

The title, *O Pioneers!*, was recognized in early reviews and articles as an allusion to Whitman. But it is far more than a surface gesture. The substance and the structure of *O Pioneers!* are Whitmanesque, and if one reads the book with *Leaves of Grass* in mind many of the details and passages take on a different meaning. Cather lines like "The air and the earth are curiously matted and intermingled, as if the one were the breath of the other"[4] suggest Whitman's central theme—the oneness of all of nature, man and woman and earth. Alexandra and Carl mate not as passionate lovers but more like Whitman's camerado and the self, the ongoing companions. One comment by the narrator of *O Pioneers!* may seem a false note until it is linked with Whitman. Cather writes, "Fortunate country, that is one day to receive hearts like Alexandra's into its bosom, to give them out again in the yellow wheat, in the rustling corn, in the shining eyes of youth" (309). In Whitman, we recall "We Two, How Long We Were Fool'd" ("We are Nature . . ./ We become plants, trunks foliage, roots, bark, / We are bedded in the ground . . . ."), but particularly the last lines of "Song of Myself": "I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love, / If you want me again look for me under your bootsoles." I believe there was a deliberate effort to join *O Pioneers!* with the Whitman spirit, even by its apparently loose structure, filled with contrasts and repetitive symbols. Most directly, of course, the title of Cather's novel refers to Whitman's "Pioneers! O Pioneers!"—especially to several of the later stanzas of the poem. Note how elements of *O Pioneers!* are suggested in these passages:

> Life's involv'd and varied pageants,
> All the forms and shows, all the workmen at their work,
> All the seamen and the landsmen, all the masters with their slaves,
> Pioneers! O pioneers!
>
> All the hapless silent lovers
> All the prisoners in the prisons, all the righteous and the wicked,
> All the joyous, all the sorrowing, all the living, all the dying
> Pioneers! O pioneers! (11. 61-68)

I believe the connection is less with the pioneer movement as such than with the concept of the great and varied scope of ongoing life in America. The effect of combining Whitman with Cather in *O Pioneers!* is to see a few decades of human experiences in Nebraska in a special way—cosmic as well as American.

Whitman's "varied pageants" blend with the epigraph Cather chose for *O Pioneers!*—"Those fields, colored by various grain!" Only its author, Mickiewicz, is cited. The epigraph leads us into another literary world which we may join to Whitman and the Bible – to the 1834 epic, *Pan Tadeusz*, by the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855), who used national and folklore themes in his poem, writing movingly of the world of his childhood in Lithuania, and from which he was long exiled. In the 1885 English translation by Maude Ashurst Biggs, *Master Thaddeus*, or *The Last Foray in Lithuania*, the poem opens:

> Litvia! My country, like art thou to health,
> For how to prize thee he alone can tell
> Who has lost thee. I behold thy beauty now
> In full adornment, and I sing of it
> Because I long for thee. . . .
> . . . Meanwhile
> Bear thou my soul, consumed by longing, to
> Those wooded hills, unto those meadows green
> Broad stretching on the azure Niemen's shore;
> Towards those fields, rich hued with various grain,
> Golden with wheat, and silvered with the rye . . .

Cather's wording of the line is a variation on any translation I have seen, however. In the 1917 translation by George Rapall Noyes, the line reads, "to those fields painted with various grain, gilded with wheat, silvered with rye. . . ." The epigraph directly refers us to Mickiewicz's long poem—to its themes of memory, of exile, of country places and people, all those varied days of youth. Some passages, too, reveal how strands of the secret web are joined to the later books, *The Song of the Lark* and *My Ántonia*: "Who among us does not remember the years when, as a young lad, with his gun on his shoulder, he went whistling into the fields, where no rampart, no fence blocked his path . . . . he talks with the earth . . . . [the] lark sings" (Book II). *Pan Tadeusz* is set in Lithuania, in 1811 and 1812, just before the conquering by Napoleon. The effect of joining a European world to the Nebraska scene of a hundred years later is to make history alive in the present, with the action set in a universal geography. What Willa Cather had before her in Webster County, Nebraska, when she was young, was not only the varied fields that came with cultivation of the land but also the varied peoples who came as immigrants from the old world to the new. She described this diversity in her 1923 essay in the Nation, "Nebraska: The End of the First Cycle.": "Colonies of European people, Slavonic, Germanic, Scandinavian, Latin, spread across our bronze prairies like the daubs of color on a painter's palette."

But the web spreads onward. When *A Lost Lady* appeared in 1923, the *New York Times* reviewer compared the opening pages of the book to "the opening of a long short story by Turgenief, say, out of the *Annals of the Sportsman*." Willa Cather's early, and continuing, interest in Continental literature and a long interest in the Slavic world form strands which support such analogies, but the link with Europe is affirmed even more strongly to those who have read *Pan Tadeusz*, or *Master Thaddeus*. The opening of *A Lost Lady* is actually a very close parallel to the opening of that poem. The manor house described by Mickiewicz and the society which is soon to be taken over by another power under Napoleon blend into the house of the Captain Forresters in Sweet Water, Nebraska, and their railroad society of tarnished grandeur, soon to be consumed by the cruder, more ruthless world of the Ivy Peterses. Willa Cather writes in *A Lost Lady*: "Thirty or forty years ago . . . there was a house well known from Omaha to Denver for its hospitality and for a certain charm of atmosphere. . . . The house stood on a low round hill, nearly a mile east of town; a white house with a wing, and sharp-sloping roofs to shed the snow. . . . It stood close into a fine cottonwood grove


Bernice Slote. Photograph courtesy of the Cather Foundation.

that threw sheltering arms to left and right."[5] To approach it, one crossed broad meadows and two creeks, and went up a lane bordered with poplars. Mickiewicz's description at the opening of *Master Thaddeus* reads as follows: "Amid such fields years ago, by the forder of a brook, on a low hill, in a grove of birches, stood a gentleman's mansion, of wood, but with a stone foundation; the white walls shone from afar, the whiter since they were relieved against the dark green of the poplars that sheltered it against the winds of autumn. The dwelling house was not large . . . . The gate wide-open proclaimed to passers-by that it was hospitable, and invited all to enter as guests."

In this parallel Cather was not imitiating Mickiewicz. The Silas Garber house in Red Cloud, Nebraska, which was her model, fits this description exactly except, some recall, there were no poplars bordering the lane. It is more likely that she found the Polish poet supporting her theme, and could take pleasure in another hidden link that affirmed the continuity of history and the oneness of human experience. (Although there is no direct reference to Mickiewicz, as there was in *O Pioneers!* , she did name one of the boys Thaddeus Grimes.) In both works the old days are recalled with nostalgia by the storytellers who, like the voice in the opening chapters of *A Lost Lady*, seem to be recounting with pleasure something of the lovely but irrevocable past. The second chapter of *A Lost Lady* begins with that storyteller's voice, common to much folk literature and to epics: "But we will begin this story with a summer morning long ago." And a companion voice comes over the years in the concluding couplet of Master Thaddeus which imitates (according to a note in the Noyes translation) the conventional ending of a Polish fairy tale: "And I was there among the guests, and there drank wine and mead; / And what I saw and heard I wrote, that all of you might read."

The secret web links experience to art; it also operates by allusion within a work, surrounding the created world with other regions, and eloping from the page toward other distances. I shall give, for example, just two modes of reference in Cather's *My Mortal Enemy*—one which is a range of direct allusions, fairly easy to recognize; the other, which is my assumption, is based on more elusive elements.

My Mortal Enemy is the story of Myra Henshawe, who left her Catholic religion and her father-like uncle to marry a "free-thinker," live with him happily and gracefully in the New York of the turn of the century, and die in poverty somewhere on the West coast, turning unhappily against her husband and passionately toward her old religion. The allusions to Shakespeare in the course of the story are insistent—allusions to *Hamlet, King Lear*, the history plays, all works dealing with families, heirs, divisions. The narrator, Nellie Birdseye, goes to see *Hamlet* with Oswald Henshawe; Modjeska is seen as she was in *Henry VIII*. In their poor hotel in the West, Nellie hears the dying Myra recite Shakespeare repeating "the old ones she knew by heart, the long declamations from *Richard II* or *King John*. As I passed her door I would hear her murmuring at the very bottom of her rich Irish voice, *Old John of Gaunt, time-honoured Lancaster*."[6] In *Richard II* Gaunt's speeches match Myra's mood:

> O, but they say the tongues of dying men
> Enforce attention like deep harmony . . . .
> More are men's ends mark'd than their lives before.
> (II, i, 5-11)

And "violent fires soon burn out themselves" (II, I, 33-39). There are also the great and familiar speeches, Gaunt's "This royal throne of kings . . . ." (II, i, 40-68) and Richard's "Let's talk of graves, of worms, and epitaphs" (III, ii, 145-177). These are all passages turned toward diminishment, as in *King John*:

> I am a scribbled form, drawn with a pen
> Upon a parchment, and against this fire
> Do I shrink up. (V, vii, 32-34)

Again, in Myra's mood, are the King's lines in *Richard II*: "I'll give my jewels for a set of beads, / My gorgeous palace for a hermitage" (III, iii, 147-48), and "the unseen grief / That swells with silence in the tortur'd soul" (IV, I, 297-98).

In Myra's estrangement from her uncle one might see the likeness to King Lear, even without the direct allusion: the cliff on which Myra is to die she likens to Gloucester's cliff in King Lear. That play is in the book, certainly, but it leads on to another of Willa Cather's favorite poets (Myra says once, "How the great poets do shine on, Nellie! Into all the dark corners of the world. They have no night" (82).). One poem by Keats, his sonnet "On Sitting Down to Read *King Lear* Once Again," seems to me to be a paradigm of the Cather book:

> O golden tongued Romance, with serene lute!
> Fair plumed Syren, Queen of far-away!
> Leave melodizing on this wintry day,
> Shut up thine olden pages, and be mute:
> Adieu! For, once again, the fierce dispute
> Betwixt damnation and impassion'd clay
> Must I burn through; once more humbly assay
> The bitter-sweet of this Shakespearian fruit:
> Chief Poet! and ye clouds of Albion,
> Begetters of our deep eternal theme!
> When through the old oak Forest I am gone,
> Let me not wander in a barren dream,
> But when I am consumed in the fire,
> Give me new Phoenix wings to fly at my desire.

Here is the same two-part rejection of romance and turn toward the necessities of tragedy that we find in *My Mortal Enemy*; the sharply contrasting parts of the book take their place in a larger context. In the first part of the book, Myra is queenly, supreme in the fairy-tale world of a New York Christmastime, a world seen by Nellie as idyllic. Enchanted. It is indeed Romance, and I think Willa Cather has an allusion that echoes Keats. His "Romance" sings with "serene lute"; Myra is first seen by Nellie as "a short plump woman in a black velvet dress, seated upon the sofa and softly playing on Cousin Bert's guitar (5). Ten years later for the Henshawes comes the "fierce dispute / Betwixt damnation and impassion'd clay," a burning through. And Myra, like the Phoenix, dies to ashes. At the end of the book Oswald says, "'I shall scatter her ashes somewhere in those vast waters.'" And does that Phoenix rise again? Even though Nellie sees the end of Myra's story as an unlucky omen for happiness, there is one way in which romance and tragedy are made whole again: Nellie told Myra's story, and in that story, which we read, Myra Henshawe is alive.

Willa Cather: The Secred Web
(Continued)

The history we trace in *My Mortal Enemy* is not from barbarism to civilization but from romance to tragedy, from youth to age. Yet there is also an overtone of something else that does fit into history. The journey goes from East to West, from pagan to Christian. In the first part we celebrate in a rather pagan fashion the festivals of Christmas and New Year's. Allusions are to Diana, to *Norma* and the worship of the moon, to Sleeping Beauty's palace. The last part of the book is in the West rather than the East like Donne, a "going Westward"; it is spring—and the festival is Easter, with the tree where Myra dies. References are made to absolution, a religious house, the symbolic snake, the poor-sinner's flower. Of Myra the priest says, "'I wonder whether some of the saints of the early church weren't a good deal like her. She's not at all modern in her make-up, is she?'" And for the early Christian there are candles, and an alcove that suggests where "the church began in the catacombs" (93-94).

Such notes on *My Mortal Enemy* touch only a few of the possible involvements in this very short but intense novel. Yet to think of at least these portions of the web, to hold them in the mind at once, letting all exist in one whole, will give the work other dimensions. "Whatever is felt upon the page without being specifically named there—that, one might say, is created,"—so Willa Cather suggested her intentions in "The Novel Démeublé" (1922). She speaks of the "presence of the thing not named," of overtones, the "verbal mood," an "emotional aura."[7] So complexity is determined by simplification. When we read Willa Cather's work creatively, something like a web of living thought shimmers in the air between us, and around us, involving reader, book, and the writer herself.

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[5] *A Lost Lady* (New York: Random House, Vintage Book, 1972), p. 9.

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[7] *Willa Cather On Writing* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), p. 41.

Foundation Receives Jane Geske Award

Betty Kort accepts the Jane Geske Award from Shelly Clark, President of the Nebraska Center for the Book. Photograph by Ron Kort.

At its annual meeting held at Love Library in Lincoln, the Nebraska Center for the Book presented the Jane Geske Award to the Cather Foundation. Given annually for exceptional contribution to literacy, books, reading, libraries, bookselling, or writing in Nebraska, this year the award was presented in conjunction with the Cather Foundation's work with the first One Book One State Nebraska Reads *My Ántonia* project.

The Jane Geske award was established by the Nebraska Center for the Book in recognition of Jane Geske's contribution to libraries in Nebraska.

David at the piano playing the keys with a 2" x 4" block of wood.

David, it is a piano, not a harp!

David gets some help from Andrew Scrimgeour, Director of the Drew University Library. Below, Merrill leads him away. . . .

(Photographs by Betty Kort.)

How many ways can you play a piano, David?

Readers of the *Willa Cather Newsletter and Review* have no doubt grown accustomed to the highly sophisticated scholarly pieces from the pen of David Porter, but participants at the Drew Colloquium saw another side of David, as he explored the limits of sound that can be produced by a piano!

On Friday evening of the Colloquium in a concert called "The Well-Tampered Clavier: Play—Musical and Otherwise," David stunned the audience with his versatility. It is no wonder that his mother asked, "David, why can't you play the piano like other people do?" The audience saw him crawl into the body of a grand piano to strum the strings in the fashion of a harpist and play the keys with the aid of cardboard, elbows, a 2" x 4", screws, and rubber bands, all the while expounding on the creative process.

To say the least, David delighted his audience.

In Pursuit of the Outland Engine: A Fictional Source for *The Professor's House*

Nichole Bennet

Before I could even begin to attempt an understanding of *The Professor's House*, I felt that I had to understand Cather's science. Tom Outland is presented as "a brilliant young American scientist and inventor who . . . discovered the principle of the Outland vacuum [and] worked out the construction of the bulkheaded vacuum that is revolutionizing aviation"(121). When I learned that Steven Trout's lecture at the 2005 International Cather Seminar would discuss a possible historical source for the mysterious Outland vacuum, I was very excited. A historical source had eluded me, but I had found what I believed to be a fictional source.

Perseverance (and Google) had led me to Rudyard Kipling's "With the Night Mail." James Woodress makes it very clear that Cather enjoyed reading Kipling and even met him, so it seems logical that Cather may have read "With the Night Mail" (107, 115, 200, 249). The connection becomes increasing probable since "With the Night Mail," like many of Kipling's works, was published in *McClure's* Magazine. The connection becomes strong when the dates are in place. Although most frequently referenced in the *Actions and Reactions* version of 1909, "With the Night Mail" actually first appeared in *McClure's* in 1905. Cather's literary connection to *McClure's* was firmly established with her May 1, 1903, meeting with S.S. McClure (Woodress 171). Thus, it is very likely that she read Kipling's short story as it first appeared in *McClure's*

"With the Night Mail" is science fiction. Kipling uses the nautical terminology of his time to create a fantastical future world, set in 2000, a period when dirigibles are the modern marvel of travel. Told from the point of view of a newspaper reporter traveling on a mail packet, "With the Night Mail" is not the most scientifically sound source. However, similarities to Cather's language are striking:

> Here we find Fleury's Paradox of the Bulkheaded Vacuum—which we accept now without thought—literally in full blast. The three engines are H.T.&T. assisted-vacuo Fleury turbines running from 3,000 to the Limit—that is, up to the point when the blades make the air "bell"—cut out a vacuum for themselves precisely as overdriven marine propellers used to do. "162's" Limit is low because of the small size of her nine screws, which though handier than the old colloid Thelussons, "bell" sooner. The midships engine, generally used to reinforce, is not running; so the port and starboard turbine vacuum-chambers draw directly into the return-mains.
>
> The turbines whistle reflectively. From the low-arched expansion-tanks on either side the valves descend pillarwise to the turbine-chests, and thence the obedient gas whirls through the spirals of blades with a force that would whip the teeth out of a power-saw. Behind, its own pressure is held in leash or spurred on by the lift-shunts; before it the vacuum where Fleury's Ray dances in violet-green bands and whirled turbillons of flame. The jointed U-tubes of the vacuum-chamber are pressure-tempered colloid (no glass could endure the strain for an instant) and a junior engineer watches the ray intently. It is the heart of the machine – a mystery to this day. Even Fleury who begat it and, unlike Magniac, died a multimillionaire, could not explain how the restless little imp shuddering in the U-tube can, in the fractional fraction of a second, strikes the furious blast of gas into a chill greyish-green liquid that drains (you can hear it trickle) from the far end of the vacuum through the eduction-pipes and the mains back to the bilges. Here it returns to its gaseous, one had almost written sagacious, state and climbs to work afresh. Bilge-tank, upper tank, dorsal-tank, expansion-chamber, vacuum, main-return (as a liquid), and bilge-tank once more is the ordained cycle. Fleury's Ray sees to that, and the engineer with the tinted spectacles sees to Fleury's Ray. If a speck of oil, if even the natural grease of the human finger, touches the hooded terminals, Fleury's Ray will wink and disappear and must be laboriously built up again. This means half a day's work for all hands and an expense of 170-odd pounds to the G.P.O. for radium-salts and such trifles. (128-130)

A comparison of Kipling's description of the bulkheaded vacuum and Cather's Outland Engine clearly suggests why Cather's "scientific" terminology is unstable and her references have led many scholars on wild goose chases. Kipling's story is full of technical mumbo-jumbo that makes it seem that Kipling knows what he is writing about. However, Kipling uses "Engine," "Vacuum," and "Gas" interchangeably throughout the passage without providing a clear depiction of how the Engine/ Vacuum/Gas works. Cather also uses the terms interchangeably, and even goes so far as to change her terminology. As Sharon O'Brien points out, in the first eight printings Cather used "Outland bulkheaded vacuum," but from the ninth printing on Cather used "Outland engine" (168).[1] Moreover, the confusing terminology of Kipling's passage partially explains Cather's inability to clearly develop or explain her novel's science.

Even the references to Fleury and Magniac resonate with elements of Cather's narrative. Like Fleury, Tom needs someone else's help for his invention. Despite Tom's scientific brilliance, he never could have completed his work without Dr. Crane (186). And like Magniac, Tom "got nothing out of it [his invention] but death and glory" while Louie and Rosamond reap the financial rewards (121).

While I cannot yet prove that Cather re-read "With the Night Mail" before writing *The Professor's House* or that Kipling's story is a direct source for *The Professor's House*, these similarities make it very difficult to ignore "With the Night Mail" when searching for sources for the Outland Engine.

(Continued on Page 73)

Annual Willa Cather Spring Conference in Red Cloud Moves to June in 2006

Webster Street in Red Cloud. Photograph by Betty Kort

The 51st annual Willa Cather Spring Conference, June 1 through June 3, will feature *Shadows on the Rock*. This is a particularly propitious choice for the conference as the *Scholarly Edition of Shadows on the Rock* has recently been published. The theme of the conference is "Cather's International Connections," a fitting topic as *Shadows on the Rock*, with its strong French-Canadian flavor, provides a wonderful primer for the upcoming 2007 Cather International Seminar to be held in France.

The date of the conference has been moved to June 1 through June 3. The Cather Foundation Board of Governors has for a long time considered the idea of moving the Conference from the traditional first Saturday in May, hopefully a more convenient date for participants and scholars alike. The May date has been fraught with conflicts with other literary conferences and the business of ending the school year with its accompanying turmoil for scholars, teachers, and other participants.

Thursday Events. Not only has the date of the Spring Conference been changed, but also a day has been added. Thursday scholars and graduate students are invited to read papers during the first Spring Conference Scholar's Symposium. A "Call for Papers" is found on page 50 of this issue of the *Newsletter and Review*. John Murphy will direct the symposium, which is open to the public.

Friday Events. Introducing the theme of "Cather's International Connections," Friday morning at 10:00 a.m. Cather Scholars Virgil Albertini, Bruce Baker, and Chuck Peek will form a panel to discuss their "International Connections" as they explore their experiences of "Teaching Cather Around the World."

Friday afternoon, the conference turns to the Foundation's newly acquired Willa Cather Memorial Prairie. Nature walks, focusing on science, art, and poetry, will be conducted by nature expert Chris Helzer, Director of Science & Stewardship at the Nature Conservancy; artist Nadine McHenry, whose work is featured in the Gallery during the conference; and Nebraska State Poet Bill Kloefkorn. Whether you prefer studying nature, being inspired to draw or paint the prairie, or writing about the prairie, you will find these walks enjoyable. The schedule should allow for participants to choose two of the three categories, each one hour long.

At 4:30 everyone will want to join the wine (and that is Nebraska wine, of course) and cheese reception on the Prairie, which will include a dedication ceremony as the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie is publicly transferred from the Nature Conservancy to the Cather Foundation. 7:30 will find participants back at the Red Cloud Opera House for the traditional music of the St. Juliana Choir, directed by John English. Then at 8:00 p.m. the Opera House will be filled with the music of the Hastings Symphony Orchestra as they hold forth in celebration of the Prairie with primarily French-inspired music. Look for a visual as well as a musical experience on Friday evening.

Saturday Events. Saturday will begin with the traditional continental breakfast at the Opera House, this time with a "French" twist, followed by a service at Grace Episcopal Church with the Rev. Charles Peek officiating. At 10:15 the conference will again turn its attention to the "Passing Show" panel in the Opera House Auditorium. John Murphy will present the keynote paper, "*Shadows on the Rock* and the French Canadian Connection." Robert Thacker will moderate the response panel, which will include Kathleen Danker, South Dakota State University, and Ann Moseley, Texas A&M-Commerce. The panels always inspire general audience discussion, which makes this a particularly popular event.

Following a much anticipated lunch prepared by the Red Cloud PEO women, conferees will carpool to nearby St. Ann's Catholic Church in Campbell, Nebraska. Kathleen

Danker will again take the stage and discuss Cather's connections to the French Canadians who had recently settled in that community during Cather's time in Nebraska. Participants will want to explore with Kathleen the ways in which Cather's French Canadian experience at Campbell inspired her writing of *O Pioneers!* and *Shadows on the Rock*.

Back in Red Cloud for a late afternoon reception in the Gallery, the conference will have an opportunity to learn more about Nadine McHenry's special Gallery exhibit. Nadine, inspired by *O Pioneers!* and *Shadows on the Rock*, will be discussing her own connections to Willa Cather as they have evolved in her newly created paintings. Nadine's exhibit will be in the Gallery from May to mid June.

Following a sumptuous French-inspired banquet dinner, at which the Norma Ross Walter Scholarship will be awarded, the conference participants return to the Opera House for a performance featuring Normand Perron, sponsored in part by the Government of Québec and the Government of Canada.

The Cather Foundation, as always, is appreciative of the support of the Nebraska Arts Council, the Nebraska Humanities Council, and a number of individuals whose matching contributions have helped make this 51st Cather Spring Conference possible.

The Spring Conference Committee invites readers to "Save the Dates" for these very special three days. Visit www.willacather.org for updates and look for the 2006 Cather Spring Conference flyer, with all the details, coming in the mail this spring. See you in RED CLOUD!

In Pursuit of the Outland Engine
(Continued from Page 73)

Note

1 For a more detailed discussion of changes between editions, please see the Nebraska Scholarly Edition of *The Professor's House* (U of Nebraska P, 2002).

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Board Members Receive Awards

Carol Cope and Rhonda Seacrest have received prestigious 2006 Governor's Arts Awards. Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman personally presented the awards at a luncheon in Lincoln attended by over 700 individuals, including dignitaries from throughout the state.

Carol Cope, from Kearney, Nebraska, received the Thomas C. Woods III Partner in the Arts award. Carol's commitment to the arts has been a life-long endeavor. She has been involved with the Museum of Nebraska Art from its beginning, has provided endowment scholarships for music students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and at the University of Nebraska-Kearney, and was instrumental in the support of many other organizations and projects.

Rhonda Seacrest and her husband Jim, from Lincoln/North Platte, received the Leonard Thiessen Award. Jim and Rhonda give to both cultural and journalistic causes. They serve as Board Members or Advisors to the Nebraska Cultural Endowment, the Lincoln Children's Museum, and Nebraskans for Public Television. The Seacrests played a critical role in the establishment of the Sheldon Statewide, an art education program through the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery.

Carol and Rhonda are both members of the Cather Foundation Board of Governors.

Julie Harris Honored at Kennedy Center

Actress Julie Harris was recently honored at the annual Honors Gala at the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts in acknowledgment of her long career and contribution to the arts. Harris, considered one of the country's most acclaimed and revered actors, has been an important supporter of the Cather Foundation over the years. She is presently the National Honorary Chair of the Cather Foundation endowment campaign.

A "Weekend of Willa"

Friday-Monday, October 21-24, 2005

John A (Jay) Yost

A beautiful autumn weekend in New York City—what better time could there be to celebrate Cather's literary legacy; and what better place than Manhattan, where she lived the last 41 years of her life. A "Weekend of Willa" was a series of five events over four days organized to assist the Cather Foundation's ongoing quest to meet its NEH Challenge Grant goal. If a total of $825,000 can be raised by this July, the NEH will give the Cather Foundation $275,000. Together, these two amounts will create a $1.1 million endowment for educational and artistic programming at the Red Cloud Opera House and professional support for the Cather Archives.

The inaugural event of the "Weekend of Willa" featured actress Marian Seldes (seated) and tenor Scott Murphree (right), who are shown with "Weekend" co-chairs (left to right) Jay Yost, Amanda Straub and Tom Gallagher. Photo courtesy of Jay Yost.

The current grande dame of the New York stage, Marian Seldes, commenced the weekend on Friday evening at the Public Theater. Her beautiful interpretation of selected passages from Lucy Gayheart was interspersed with songs noted in the text and performed by the tremendous young tenor, Scott Murphree. Accompanied by Grant Wenaus, both the readings and the music were magical, resulting in what can only be described as a near religious experience. Even Ms. Seldes commented that she could feel the audience not wanting to breathe too loudly. Everyone who attended, if not already, became a true Cather fan.

On Saturday morning, local Cather enthusiast, Tom Gallagher, and his literary sidekick, Merrill Mcguire Skaggs, led us on a wonderful tour of Cather-related sites in Greenwich Village. Merrill is a professor at Drew University and a member of the Cather Foundation Board. An encore performance of this tour is scheduled for March 11th.

Saturday evening found us back at the Public Theater for readings by noted figures from Broadway and the big screen: Lynn Cohen (My Mortal Enemy), Mark Blum ("Tom Outland's Story") and Ellen McLaughlin (O Pioneers!). Each of these actors did a wonderful job of bringing their text vividly to life. Lynn Cohen, who was the nanny in "Sex and the City" and is featured as Golda Meir in the Oscar-nominated film, "Munich," told us later that the reading made her remember how much she loved Cather's writings and that she had just finished another Cather novel.

Omaha native, Kurt Andersen, the host of public radio's "Studio 360," led a superb panel discussion on Sunday afternoon. His guests were cultural critics, Margo Jefferson of The New York Times, Joan Acocella of the New Yorker, and David Porter. David is a past president of Skidmore College and a member of the Cather Foundation Board. The panel went so well that Kurt is now hoping to re-create it for one of his weekly radio shows.

Monday evening was our main event—a fundraiser hosted by the New School's President, former Nebraska Senator Bob Kerrey. After cocktails, both Margo and Joan spoke as to why Cather's work is so important to us today, and the brilliant actress Kathleen Chalfant did an amazing reading from *My Ántonia*. Even the Acting Deputy Chairman of the NEH, Tom Mallon, flew up from Washington to encourage those gathered to support the challenge grant. All of this was followed by dessert and a showing of the new PBS American Masters film, "Willa Cather: The Road is All."

The New York Cather Committee, led by three expatriate Nebraskans, organized the "Weekend": Tom Gallagher, Amanda Straub and Jay Yost. They were incredibly pleased with how well received all of the events were and happy to see old and new Cather admirers coming together for a common cause. "Weekend" attendance honors went to Lincoln native, Susan McClanahan, and her intrepid fellow traveler, Dr. Ted Gannon, who attended every event.

All of us here in New York encourage you to give early and often to help raise the final $200,000+ still needed to meet the NEH's challenge.

Guests of Cather Foundation Enjoy Tour

Typical of guests to the Cather Historic Site is Dr. James Calvin Schapp, Professor of English at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, who brought the exuberant students pictured here to Red Cloud. Tour guide Barb Kudrna led them on a tour of the Cather historic buildings in Red Cloud on November 5th. "...our tour was great, students loved it, and Barb was terrific," according to Jim. Then they headed out on their own to complete the country tour. The photograph was taken behind an old wagon frame on the Cather homestead spot, according to Jim.

Dr. Schapp has enjoyed making the trip with students many times and knows the country tour well. It is not hard to imagine why he keeps coming back. Those smiling faces tell the story.

Dr. Schapp poses with his students at Cather site. Photo courtesy of Dr. Schapp.

Steve Shively Receives Awards

Steve Shively, professor at Northwest Missouri State University and member of the Cather Foundation Board of Governors, recently received the Dean of Arts and Science award for excellence in teaching. This was the first time that the Arts and Science Department at Northwest Missouri State has presented such an award. Shively also received the Governor's award for excellence in teaching, the only one given by Northwest this year.

A Message from the President

Dear Reader:

Through your generous gifts, you have become our partners in reaching the goal of building an endowment to support the mission of the Willa Cather Foundation. Together we have made dramatic progress.

You will recall that the National Endowment for the Humanities gave us a grant of $275,000, to be matched by the Foundation on a 3 for 1 basis to build a total endowment of $1,100,000. It was a wonderful gift, but the requirement that we raise $825,000 in matching funds presented a challenge such as this organization had never before taken on.

I am excited to report that with the help of many of you we have met each deadline and now have our goal in sight. We have raised close to $600,000 of the needed funds, and this together with what we have received from the NEH has created an endowment that is already transforming the Red Cloud center, the world's window on Willa Cather.

The Opera House auditorium now offers regular programming, both for Cather admirers and students, remarkable shows have hung in our gallery, demand for Cather books and scholarly materials is up, and we are moving forward with the other initiative that this endowment is designed to support: the creation of an archive that will meet the State Historical Society's standards for both preserving the Foundation's remarkable holdings and also making them available to students, scholars, and the public.

None of this would have been possible without the vision, generosity, and support of many of our readers, for which, on behalf of The Cather Foundation, I offer you my profound thanks.

Raising the remaining $225,000 must be accomplished by July 31, 2006, if we are to receive the full $275,000 from the NEH.

I believe, as I hope you do, that we must make this final match—we cannot afford to forgo any of the funds from the NEH, or to sacrifice any of what these funds will enable us to do.

Thanks to you, the mission of The Cather Foundation has come further than anyone believed possible. Now, so close to our goal, is not the time for our hopes and spirits to flag. Knowing how much this initiative means to all of us who value Willa Cather, please allow me to encourage you to consider making a gift, or an additional gift, as we enter the final stages of this effort.

Remember, to qualify for the match, gifts must be in hand by the July 31, 2006, deadline. Thanks in advance for any help you can give us, and please, if there is more I can tell you, feel free to email me at twinpeeks@charter.net.

Charles A. Peek, President
Willa Cather Foundation

Cottey/Cather Emerging Writers Conference Held at Cather Center

Nine young women, competitively selected, were honored at the Cather Center in November, as the Cather Foundation hosted the second Cottey-Cather Emerging Writers of the Heartland Symposium. This is an important event for the young women who come to compete for honors and scholarships.

These junior and senior high school women, from Nebraska and neighboring states, were at the Cather Center for the second round of competition for Cottey-Cather Writing Award cash prizes in four categories, including poetry, drama, short fiction, and non-fiction. Students were asked to submit their best work in a category of their choice. From these submissions ten finalists were chosen to compete in a second round at the Cather Center. Extemporaneous writings were written and judged on the morning of November 4th. These writings, along with the original submissions, were used to determine the Cottey-Cather prize winners.

Participants pose in front of the Upper Lobby Donor Wall. Photograph by Harriet Zade.

Judges for the event were Dr. Bruce Baker, Professor Emeritus, UNO; Dr. Virgil Albertini, Distinguished Emeritus Professor of English, Northwest Missouri State University; and Dr. Susanne George Bloomfield, English Professor, UNK. Baker, Albertini, and Bloomfield took part in a panel discussion in a morning session where they discussed the elements that make up good writing.

Participants enjoyed a number of activities while in Red Cloud. They saw Cather's new biography, "The Road is All," on the big screen in the Opera House Auditorium, toured the Cather historic sites in Red Cloud, and visited the Cather Memorial Prairie. Members of the local P.E.O. chapter graciously housed the participants and their sponsors for the two-day event. The Symposium ended with an awards luncheon in the Opera House GALLERY.

The Cottey-Cather Emerging Writers of the Heartland Symposium is slated to become an annual fall event.

The Executive Director's Report

So much has happened since the fall issue of the *Willa Cather Newsletter and Review* was published that I hardly know where to start. A quick review of this winter issue of the newsletter suggests the general scope of activities. There is no doubt that the Cather Foundation is a growing organization with important cultural, literary, and historic roles that are of national importance. The passage of the prairie from the Nature Conservancy to the Foundation is just one indicator of our growth. The possibilities for future programming in this area are bountiful.

Another huge step for the Cather Foundation is the decision to restore the Moon Block. This two-story building that shares a wall with the Opera House is in much need of repair. The building offers an opportunity to expand the Cather Center and the Opera House stage, but, most important, it opens the possibility of creating appropriate archival space that has been the goal of the Foundation for the past fifteen years.

In cooperation with the City of Red Cloud, the Foundation is encouraging the general beautification of the area in and around Red Cloud. A citizens group is working on a project right now in partnership with the Nebraska State Arboretum. Recently acquired grant funds will make possible the first steps in creating a walking/hiking trail, complete with appropriate plants and trees. The trail will eventually extend around the town of Red Cloud and on south across the Republican River and up to Indian Princess Hill. Future visitors as well as local residents will have the opportunity to take advantage of new and exciting recreational activities thanks to these endeavors.

The Cather Foundation takes a strong interest in these local projects. They complement the general growth of the Foundation and provide assurance that the city of Red Cloud will continue to thrive and provide needed services necessary for the Cather Center, the Opera House, and the important historic sites. Tourists continue to flock to Red Cloud, one of the most famous towns in America, thanks to the legacy of Willa Cather. We want them to find a thriving Cather Foundation and a thriving host city.

One of the real concerns at this time that affects the functioning of the Cather Foundation is the need to finish the Opera House endowment NEH Challenge grant. Everyone needs to pitch in and help. So many people have contributed to this challenge and the goal is within our reach. But we must find another $200,000 in the next few months. If at the end of July we do not have the money in hand, we will not receive a significant portion of the promised NEH grant funds.

These funds are needed for Opera House programming, maintenance, and to help us continue to preserve the valuable letters, papers, and artifacts that have come to the Foundation through the generosity of many people from here and around the country. You, our readers, can help. Your ideas and suggestions, your contributions, and your general good will are invaluable as we finish this important task. One of the most precious aspects of the Cather Foundation, in my opinion, is the fact that for fifty-one years now, people from all over the United States and, in fact, the world have contributed to the growth and prosperity of the Cather Foundation. This organization belongs to all who have contributed their time and resources. The staff and the Cather Foundation Board of Governors are thankful for this important resource. Without the support of you, our members and readers, the Cather Foundation is doomed; with your support, the possibilities are endless.

Opera House and Baptist Church Receive Thorough Scrubbing!

Thanks to the efforts of Cather Foundation Board Member Dee Yost, sponsor of the Hastings College chapter of the English Honorary Fraternity Sigma Tau Delta, the Opera House Auditorium furniture has received a thorough cleaning.

Dee Yost has organized several projects in Red Cloud for the Sigma Tau Delta group. The first project was the painting of the Childhood Home in 2004. Nebraska State Historical Society workmen had repaired the home and put on a primer coat of paint in the fall of 2003. In the spring, Dee Yost and the students from Hastings College finished the job by adding a final topcoat that helped to transform the Childhood Home.

Following this effort, the group again convened several times to clean out the sanctuary of the historic Baptist Church in Red Cloud where Willa Cather's family were members until 1922. The church had been the holding place for Mildred Bennett's papers and a host of items stored by the Foundation. All of these materials were removed to safer quarters or thrown away. Mildred Bennett's papers are now safely stored in the Opera House basement.

The Cather Foundation is indeed appreciative of these noble efforts on the part of students from Hastings College and their trusty sponsor, who always carries her share of the workload.

Photographs by Dee Yost.

Cather Foundation President Receives Award

At its 2005 winter Commencement Exercises, the University of Nebraska at Kearney recognized the work of Dr. Charles A. Peek with the Leland Holdt/Security Mutual Life Distinguished Faculty Award. Dr. Peek, Professor of English, and a Fulbright Senior Lecturer in the Spring of 2005, is a former holder of the Martin Distinguished Professor Chair of English, and currently serves as President of the Cather Foundation.

This is UNK's most prestigious faculty award. Each year, it recognizes an outstanding teacher-scholar at UNK who is an exemplary citizen of and contributor to the UNK academic community. The example the awardee sets must inspire students and colleagues alike.

NSHS Has New President

Patricia Phillips, former Executive Director of the Cather Foundation, is the new president of the Nebraska State Historical Society. She assumed office in January. The organization also has a new director/CEO. Mike Smith has now taken over those duties and will work closely with the Cather Foundation to continue the important partnership between the two organizations to maintain and promote the Willa Cather State Historic Site and Cather Foundation properties at Red Cloud.

The Cather Foundation turned over six of its properties to the Nebraska State Historical Society in 1978. Today the Cather Foundation manages the properties for the Historical Society.

From the Cather Foundation Archives

Nancy Finnie from Redding, Connecticut, recently donated to the Cather Foundation Archives three original letters written by Willa Cather to Nancy's great aunt, Mrs. Todd. Of particular interest is a comment in a letter dated December 28, 1934, from Cather to Mrs. Todd thanking her for influencing Cather's life a long time ago by suggesting that art simplifies. Cather says that she had never thought of that before and that the suggestion struck her like an arrow and changed her life forever. She ends by wishing Mrs. Todd a Happy New Year!

Jim Southwick, member of the Cather Foundation Board of Governors, recently donated Willa Cather's passport to the Cather Archives. This along with Cather's steamer trunk, featured in the fall edition of the Newsletter and Review, *rounds out the "traveling" aspect of the Helen Cather Southwick Collection held by the Cather Foundation.*

Cather Scholar Inducted into Athletic Hall of Fame

Newsletter readers, accustomed to seeing the scholarly side of Virgil Albertini, may be surprised to learn that in October of 2005, Albertini, a Cather scholar, Distinguished Professor Emeritus, and member of the Cather Foundation Board of Governors, was inducted into the 2005 M-Club Hall of Fame at Northwest Missouri State University.

THE CATHER FOUNDATION EXTENDS APPRECIATION TO

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OF THIS EDITION OF THE
WILLA CATHER NEWSLETTER AND REVIEW

WILLA CATHER NEWSLETTER AND REVIEW

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The *Newsletter and Review* welcomes scholarly essays, notes, news items, and letters to the Managing Editor. Scholarly essays should not exceed 2500-3000 words; they should be submitted on disk in Microsoft Word 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 Govenors 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.

The 11th International Willa Cather Seminar

Willa Cather: A Writer's Worlds

The Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation, in cooperation with Brigham Young University, St. Lawrence University, the University of Provence at Aix, and the University of Paris 3 (Sorbonne Nouvelle), announces the 11th International Willa Cather Seminar. It will be held 24-30 June 2007 in Paris and at the Abbey St-Michel de Frigolet. The Abbey is located in Tarascon in the south of France, midway between Avignon and Arles.

A committed Francophile, Cather first visited France in 1902 and returned for long stays many times throughout her life. Her companion and biographer Edith Lewis explains that "French culture, coming to it as [Cather] did in her most impressionable years, . . . spoke more directly to her imagination [than English culture], and most definitely influenced her writing." Cather and Lewis spent the summer of 1920 in the Latin Quarter of Paris in order to imagine living in the Middle Ages, an experience that affected Cather's subsequent novels.

"A Writer's Worlds" has been chosen as the seminar theme to encourage broad explorations of Cather's various imaginative intersections--biographical, geographical, historical, philosophical, literary, social, and others. Cather's works as seen from a European perspective will be a particular emphasis. Given this, the keynote speakers are A. S. Byatt, the Booker Prize-winning novelist and author of introductions to Cather's works in Virago Editions, and Marc Chénetier (University of Paris 7), whose well-regarded work on American Literature includes translations of most of Cather's novels into French.

In Paris, seminar sessions will focus on sites in the city that Cather drew upon, most especially for *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Shadows on the Rock*. Most seminar sessions will be held at the Abbey, to which seminarians will travel on Tuesday, 26 June. From there, excursions will depart to places in Provence related to Cather's writing, including Avignon, where Cather set "Hard Punishments," the novella she left unfinished at her death.

The seminar will be codirected by John J. Murphy (Brigham Young University), Francoise Palleau-Papin (University of Paris 3--Sorbonne Nouvelle), and Robert Thacker (St. Lawrence University).

August 1, 2006 is the deadline for receipt of proposals and papers. Due to a capacity limit, an early response is encouraged. Inquiries about the 11th International Seminar, including ideas for sessions, expressions of interest, particular themes to be addressed, and other considerations, should be directed to:

Robert Thacker
Canadian Studies Program
St. Lawrence University
Canton, New York 13617
315.229.5970 or 5826
rthacker@stlawu.edu

Scholary Symposium—Passing Show
Banquet—Tours—Concerts
In the GALLERY: Paintings by Nadine McHenry

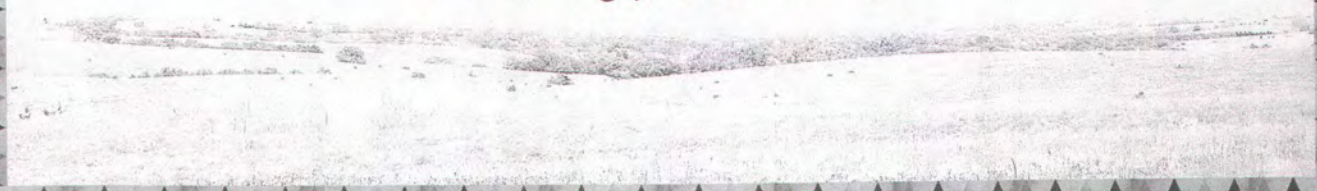
CATHER FOUNDATION
51st ANNUAL SPRING CONFERENCE
JUNE 1-2-3, 2006

Willa Cather's French Connections

Featuring

Shadows on the Rock

Willa Cather Memorial Prairie Dedication
Friday, June 2



* The harlequin border design (above) is inspired by a painting by Nadine McHenry which can be viewed in the GALLERY during the Spring Conference.

Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation
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