

Willa Cather

Newsletter & Review



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As David Porter moderates the Passing Show Panel, his infectious laugh emphatically suggests the mood of the April 2005 Spring Festival and 50th Anniversary Celebration in Red Cloud.



John Swift introduces the winners of the Seminar Scholarship during the opening dinner at the 10th International Willa Cather International Seminar. Photographs by Barb Kudrna.

50th Anniversary of Cather Foundation Marked by Spring Conference Celebration and 10th Willa Cather International Seminar

Spring Festival Centers on *My Ántonia*

The 50th anniversary of the Cather Foundation was marked by a number of extraordinary events at the annual Spring Festival held April 29-30. Highlights included the dedication of the Mildred Bennett Wall; the Friday panel which met to discuss the history of the Foundation; the Saturday Passing Show Panel and afternoon tour, both featuring *My Ántonia*; Mary Vaughan's delightful exhibit of prairie vistas in the Gallery of the Opera House; and the premiere of "An Adaptation of 'A Singer's Romance,'" commissioned by the Cather Foundation in celebration of its 50th anniversary.

The celebration actually began in January when citizens were invited by Nebraska Governor Mike Johanns to read Cather's *My Ántonia*. Nebraskans complied in impressive numbers. At the Spring Festival, Ann Romines' keynote paper presented at the Passing Show Panel centered on the question of why we read and re-read Cather's novels, particularly *My Ántonia*. Panel participants Joe Urgo, Jane Hood, and John Murphy continued the discussion.

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10th International Cather Seminar In Nebraska

Wendy K. Perriman

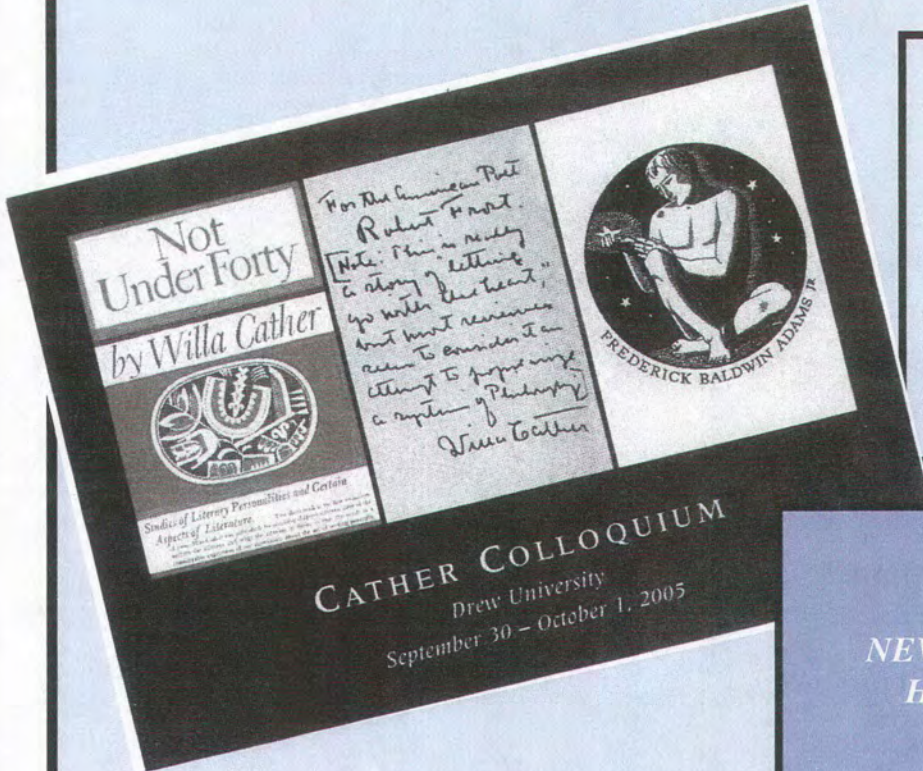
Over 140 scholars from Britain, India, Egypt, and the United States gathered in Nebraska for the Willa Cather International Seminar, 2005. The first part took place from Saturday June 18th – Tuesday June 21st in Cather's childhood home town of Red Cloud. The Seminar then switched location to the campus of the University of Lincoln-Nebraska (Tuesday June 21st – Saturday June 25th) where Willa Cather had been an undergraduate. The main focus of discussion was "Violence, the Arts, and Cather."

People who arrived early in Red Cloud on Saturday were able to tour the historical sites in town, which included the newly-restored Opera House, the Garber Bank / Museum, and the Cather childhood home. Following a late afternoon reception hosted by board member Dee Yost and sponsored by Hastings College, a formal introduction was made by Guy Reynolds, the Seminar Director. Late night hospitality was provided by the Depot Master of Ceremonies, Bob Thacker.

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Cather Foundation Calendar



**Cather
Colloquium
Drew University
September 30-October 1,
2005**

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HIGHLIGHT OF FALL 2005
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from May to June!**

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“Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places”: Voyeurism in Cather’s 1920s Fiction

Mary R. Ryder

In three works from the early 1920s, Cather presents male characters whose voyeuristic tendencies embody her own struggle to adjust to a post-war society where sensual indulgence was undermining aesthetic ideals. Cather found herself on the outside, looking in, attempting to cope with a world where human passions seemed misdirected. The voyeurism of Don Hedger in “Coming, Aphrodite!,” Niel Herbert in *A Lost Lady*, and Claude Wheeler in *One of Ours* reflects her concerns, both personal and societal. In each case, her character fails to reconcile opposing impulses—the desire for a fulfilling sexual partnership and the adoration of woman as inviolable goddess. His resultant voyeurism becomes a way to fulfill repressed desires to subdue women, to repudiate female autonomy, and to recover his own sexual identity.

Cather’s descriptions of male voyeurs follow the profile suggested by post-Freudian psychological studies that define voyeurism not as watching others engaged in sexual activity but as “the illicit watching of others who are not specifically indulging in sexual activity” (Haslam 155). In this sense Cather presents her young, male protagonists who suffer from what theorists call “courtship disorder” (Langevin, Paitich, and Russon 78), that is the inability to seek and obtain a partner prior to physical intimacy. Their voyeurism is not a true paraphilia, that is, a compulsive and consistent behavior, but is “pleasurable and incidental” (Byer and Shainberg 540). These men, usually single and in their twenties, are frequently the youngest of their families, have no or few sisters, and have “a history of very deficient social relationships with the opposite sex” (541). Patrick Carnes notes that the “atypical pattern” of such voyeurism stands in opposition to the established courtship patterns which the affected males may not have learned from “family, culture, religion, and childhood” (57). Shrinking from the intimacy of a fully developed relationship, they fail to move beyond the first two steps of traditional courtship, as defined by Carnes: first noticing the attractiveness in others, and then imagining acting on one’s feelings (57). Voyeuristic behavior affords them the opportunity to be “nonparticipants

in the sex game” (60), to assume a passive role. This “unusual searching stage” of courtship (Langevin, Paitich, and Russon 78) precedes and displaces the need for tactile interaction and intimacy. Such intimacy is also taboo for these voyeurs since the women they observe are often symbolic mothers, the forbidden (79). While some psychologists argue that this type of voyeurism is an “attempt at reassurance against castration anxiety” (Metzl 128) or evidence of a “reciprocating aggression” against the father but not the mother (Langevin, Paitich, and Russon 86), most agree that the disorder results from socio-sexual underdevelopment and “inadequate heterosexual lives” and may signal “strong homosexual tendencies” (Lester 23).

But, their misdirected passion is not solely individual; it is also symptomatic of the times in which Cather was working—the Twenties, an age of confused identities, conflicting sexual impulses, and gender struggles for power. The Victorian concept of sexual purity had served as the norm until the post-war period, the very time Cather defines as when the world broke in two. John Anders in his insightful work *Willa Cather’s Sexual Aesthetics and the Male Homosexual Tradition* notes that by the 1920s “Freudian self-consciousness about sex and sexuality had also entered American minds, and what had once been seen as effusive sentiment was now viewed as sublimated desire” (10). And, while Cather was not a fan of Freud and psychoanalysis, she would have recognized that, as Anders points out, along with Freudian self-consciousness came a cultural “awareness of deviance and perversion” (10). Cather certainly perceived “the ‘vulgarity’ of mass culture and the demands of the market” as a kind of perversion and as “intimately related to the propagation of [unrestrained] heterosexuality” in her world (Nealon 8). If voyeurism is “a means of deflecting awareness of the emptiness in the self,” as Jonathan Metzl claims, then the Twenties’ casual acceptance of liberated and sometimes aberrant sexual behaviors and accompanying profligate lifestyles reflects a cultural emptiness, as well. The voyeurism that consequently appears in Cather’s works at this time implies more

Scholarly Contributors

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Neil Gustafson is an assistant professor of journalism and media arts at Eastern Oregon University. He is interested in Cather’s and Garland’s presentations of life on the agricultural frontier and is currently working on an article on Garland.

Jo Ann Middleton’s bibliographical essays have appeared for several years in the *Newsletter and Review*. The author of *Willa Cather’s Modernism* and many essays on Cather, she directs the Medical Humanities program at Drew University.

Mary R. Ryder, author of *Willa Cather and Classical Myth: The Search for a New Paranasus* and many articles on Cather and other American writers, is Professor of English at South Dakota State University.

“Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places”

(Continued)

than “a specifically developmental pathology”; it is indicative of a “pathology of the culture” where the nation as a whole is the deviant (Metzl 129).

I.

In the most erotic of all her works, “Coming, Aphrodite!” (1920), Cather depicts the first of her post-World War I voyeurs, an artist whose celibate life is intruded upon by the arrival of Eden Bower, an aspiring actress whose goddess-like pose both attracts and repels him. While James Woodress contends that Cather wrote this long story “just for fun” and to raise money for a European tour (309-10), the story is crucial for understanding Cather’s subsequent male narrators and voyeurs in *One of Ours* and *A Lost Lady*. In “Coming, Aphrodite!” Cather experimented with sexuality as a descriptor of a world run amok morally and spiritually. Under fear and pressures of the Comstock Laws, the *Metropolitan* magazine refused to buy the story, *Century* was afraid to publish it, and *The Smart Set* (which eventually published the work) insisted on reducing the sexually explicit passages so as to protect public morality (Woodress 315-16). What was not eliminated was Cather’s essential message of Don Hedger’s voyeurism as indicative of patriarchal dominance and potential violence, both stemming from a disturbed male psyche and male resistance to women’s sexual and artistic liberation.

Don Hedger matches many of the characteristics of a voyeur suffering from courtship disorder. A foundling with no traditional family, he was taken at age sixteen by a Catholic priest “to keep house for him” (CA 9) and was encouraged to develop his artistic skills. He has no social life, belongs to no clubs, visits no houses, and has no artist friends (10). Still, very masculine in the conventional sense—he has developed himself by lifting weights—Hedger has failed to develop skills for attracting a mate. His reaction to Eden Bower’s moving next door is that her piano might be a “nuisance” and her trunk “obtrusive” (12-13). His almost monastically regulated life is thus threatened with disruption. Yet, in his first glimpses of her, Hedger mentally notes Eden’s “splendid figure,” “slowly curving upper lip and half-closed eyes,” and “the warm perfume of lilacs” that envelops her (7-9). While Hedger’s response is couched in words masking sensuality as artistic admiration, Cather subtly introduces his imminent resistance to awakened passion: “He was used to the old smell, and he preferred it to that of the lilacs. . . . Hedger shut his door vehemently, and fell to work” (8). His socio-sexual development is stunted; “Nobody had ever taught him that he ought to be interested in other people” (14), and especially in the opposite sex. He is woefully unprepared to deal with the gleaming goddess who rebukes him for bathing his dog in the bathtub that she, too, will use.

When, however, Hedger discovers in his closet a knot hole which admits light from Eden’s adjacent apartment, he peers through it to watch her exercising naked before the mirror:

Hedger did not happen to think how unpardonable it was of him to watch her. Nudity was not improper to any one who had worked so much from the figure, and he continued to look, simply because he had never seen a woman’s body so beautiful as this one—. . . (17)

He makes his secretive observations part of his daily routine and yet, Cather writes, “It did not occur to him that his conduct was detestable”: “Hedger scarcely regarded his action as conduct at all; it was something that had happened to him” (20). Subconsciously absolving himself of guilt for invasion of Eden’s privacy and for violating standards of proper behavior, Hedger falls victim to another trait of courtship disorder by convincing himself that he seeks no sexual contact with Eden (Kilman et al. 223).

While Woodress credits Cather for being able to depict Hedger’s voyeurism as “aesthetic experience” (314)—undoubtedly pleasing to the magazine editors—the details of the scene disavow the purity of Hedger’s intentions, undercut the reliability of Cather’s comment that Hedger acted “without realizing what he was doing” (17), and call into question Marilyn Arnold’s supposition that Hedger is “stunned by what he sees” (249). Masturbatory imagery abounds in the passage: “muscular energy,” “soft flush of exercise,” “shoulders and thighs dissolving in each gesture.” Hedger’s imaginary charcoal crayon “explodes in his hand . . . where the energy of each gesture was discharged . . .” (17-18). He feels sick when he crawls from the closet but returns daily to that “fatal aperture” that was “stronger than his will” (20). Watching Eden Bower drains him of artistic energies, his work ceases, and he cannot understand the mysterious hold this woman’s body has over him (21).

Attempting to analyze his life, he notes that he never “had a mother to begin with” and his resultant relations with women “whether amorous or friendly, had been casual” (21). Not knowing how to proceed as a suitor, Hedger resorts to voyeurism and relegates all women to being insincere and enslaved by materialism (22). His comment that desire for “merchandise and manufactured articles” has only made life “complicated and insincere . . . embroidering it with ugly and meaningless trivialities” (22) could be Cather’s own and anticipates both the Professor’s tirade against modern science in *The Professor’s House* and Claude’s loathing of his brother’s accumulation of “things” in *One of Ours*. In her virtual retreat from society in the Twenties, Cather is also a secreted observer, resenting and disdaining the grasping materialism of the post-war era.

Hedger then resists the reality of Eden Bower, the facts that she wears shirt-waists and gets letters from Chicago, and would keep her instead in his “closet,” as a body “never having been clad” (22), and at the mercy of his eyes and his possessiveness. He listens for her comings and goings but only “to avoid her” (22). Typical of voyeurs suffering from courtship disorder, he would avoid any encounter that might take him to the third step of courtship, flirtation (Carnes 58), for he does not know how to employ the social cues or appropriate signals needed to convey his interest in a woman. Consequently, Hedger becomes jealous of the young men in white flannels who succeed where he fails, who visit Eden in her rooms and breakfast with her at fashionable restaurants. He rationalizes that association with Eden is “unendurable” (23) and, with murderous thoughts, he follows her admirers after they leave Eden’s apartment. The voyeur turns stalker, if only temporarily, and a resultant sense of power leads him to invite Eden to his rooms ostensibly to see his paintings. He struggles to work within the rituals of courtship and finally dares to take the first steps that could lead to intimacy.

When he rather off-handedly asks Eden if she would be interested in visiting Coney Island to see one of his models go up in a balloon, she assents but only if Hedger agrees to leave his dog behind. In this one demand, Eden unmans Hedger. His control over her, a control he has felt in his clandestine observance, is relinquished. The Coney Island incident only further diminishes his power when Eden replaces his model Molly in the stunt and exposes to other men's eyes her legs, now clad in black tights. While furious at losing his private ownership of her, Hedger is still drawn to Eden in a "subtle, almost painful sensibility" (41).

In an attempt to regain authority over her and to punish her for betraying the mother-goddess role he would have her hold, Hedger recounts the brutal story of another jealous voyeur, the castrated Captive of the Rain Princess legend. Feeling his manhood threatened by her overt sexuality, Hedger frightens Eden with a story of the eunuch, once the Princess' lover, who loyally disposes of a series of his mistress' paramours after "one night stands," that is, until the Princess asks that one specific lover be spared. The Captive then betrays the Princess, delivers her and himself unto death at the hands of her father, and once again achieves control in a life where his sexuality has been stripped from him. In telling the story, Hedger both punishes Eden and "almost barbarically make[s] love to her at the same time," as Arnold writes (254). Although Eden capitulates and becomes Hedger's lover, she still, as Cather puts it, was "pulling the long black hair of this mightiest of men, who bowed his head and permitted it" (51). Delilah ultimately subdues her Samson, and Eden, in Hedger's view, goes on to prostitute her acting talents for professional success, something he refuses to do with his art. By failing to command Eden or to govern her artistic career, Hedger loses the control he thought he had achieved over her and again becomes a voyeur of "the wonder of Eden Bower" (55). He can only see her on the stage and share her with the eyes of the world. Hedger then retreats to the isolation "tank" of his apartment, sitting in the dark and becoming again like the paradise fish he paints, "staring out at the people through the glass . . . of their tank" (5).

II.

Susan Rosowski has argued that "Coming, Aphrodite!" "evokes the discomfort of voyeurism inescapably presented as voyeurism" (51) but situates Hedger's voyeurism within the

context of love and exploitation of art. While the argument has merit and is supported by the text, it is Hedger's inability to deal with the elemental, sexual woman, except in the perversity of his voyeurism, that is central and provides a mirror for other characters in Cather's 1920s fiction "who are dwarfed and rendered impotent . . . by awesome women" (Arnold 249). Hedger's resorting to anger and then to violence in telling the Rain Princess legend anticipates Claude Wheeler's association of passion with violence in *One of Ours* (1922), where, as Stanley Cooperman notes, "death is [Claude's] only possible aphrodisiac" (129). While *One of Ours* has received much critical abuse for its unrealistic rendering of war, the novel merits special attention in this study of voyeurs who suffer from courtship disorder.

Claude Wheeler, like Don Hedger, comes from a dysfunctional family. The middle son, he early exhibits an aggressiveness toward his father—as typifies male voyeurs—and is repulsed by the crudeness and materialism of both his father and his brother Bayliss. He develops a "sharp disgust for sensuality" (51), as exhibited by the farm hands, and allies himself with his mother in an ambiguous relationship. Cather describes Mrs. Wheeler as "almost like being a bride" in her attentions to her son (69). His childhood friends are few, principally just Ernest Havel with whom he enjoys an idyllic and Hippolytean camaraderie until the War disrupts it. In accordance with his mother's wishes, he attends a small, denominational college where faith "was a substitute for most of the manly qualities he admired" and where most men "wanted to be pampered by a kind, trusting woman like his mother" (46). His experience with women is limited and, if close to an attractive woman, he is pulled between "the desire to look at her and the wish to seem indifferent" (31). He idolizes Joan of Arc and virtually falls in love with his ideal mother figure Mrs. Erlich, but rejects outright the bold intimacy and physicality of his classmate Peachy Millmore.

At first attracted to this "Georgia peach" (50), Claude participates willingly in courtship rituals, picking up her dropped gloves, pulling on her rubber boots, and even posing in his track clothes for her art class. But, like Hedger before him, Claude is unschooled in these rituals and confused by the warnings his fellow students offer. That Peachy might not be the pure and inviolate girl he would believe her to be but a siren bent on "subdu[ing] by clinging contact" is beyond his understanding. His "strong impulses" are checked by his entrenched "sharp disgust for sensuality" (51). Having succeeded at steps three



Board Member "Retires" to Advisory Board

Board member Marge VanMeter has retired from the active Cather Foundation Board of Governors after forty years of service. She was appointed to the Foundation's Advisory Board at the May board meeting. In the photograph at left, Marge enjoys conversation with fellow board member Virgil Albertini during afternoon events on Friday of the Cather Spring Festival in April. Friday afternoon of the Festival was devoted to remembering the history of the Foundation. Few can match Marge's first-hand experiences during the development of the Foundation.

Marge seldom missed a board meeting. She was involved in the acquisition of many of the historic sites, helped make the decision to restore the Opera House, and was present to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Foundation. The Foundation exists today because of the dedication of people like Marge who give generously of their time, talents and resources.

Photograph by Dee Yost.

“Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places” (Continued)

and four of courtship, namely flirtation and demonstration of his prowess, he fails at stage five, romance. He is unable to express or to receive passion, fearful of his own vulnerability and of taking risks (Carnes 58). Claude also dismisses his one female high school friend, Gladys Farmer, as unworthy when she begins to accept Bayliss' attentions, and he is “offended” without “stop[ping] to reason about his state of feeling” (80-81). Again, he finds excuses to retreat from courting the one woman who is his spiritual counterpart.

When, therefore, Claude is injured in a farming accident and is nursed back to health by the pious Enid Royce, he decides to marry her, the model of unstained mother woman. He seeks out a nurturing mother who is sexually appealing, but not sexually threatening, and whose religious fervor he is confident he can subdue into complete “acquiescence” to his own desire (Ryan 69). Bolstered by his belief in “The natural purity and passivity of women,” Claude knows that his passion for Enid “is not reciprocated” (69) and feels guilty for his sexual desires, “as if he must beg her forgiveness for something,” Cather writes (127). In spite of the warning of his future father-in-law that one's idea of marriage will prove a lie, Claude persists in believing that he can transform Enid into a passionate lover: “Marriage reduced all women to a common denominator; changed a cool, self-satisfied girl into a loving and generous one” (152). Nonetheless, Claude continues to feel “lonely” as their relationship progresses (152) and feels guilty about his sexual fantasies. When a whirlwind scatters the corset covers Enid is embroidering as part of her trousseau, Claude gallantly retrieves the garments, that is, all but one which he secrets in his pocket. Cather writes, “He hurried toward the car to hide his guilty face” (158). The courtship itself is undergirded by an inversion of gender roles, as well. Enid handles the car when Claude cannot, she dominates at the chessboard when entertaining the invalid Claude, and she even brings flowers to his sick room in a kind of reverse courtship ritual. The stage is thus laid in courtship disorder for Claude's later voyeuristic behaviors.

Claude does marry Enid, only to find himself closed out of his wife's stateroom on their wedding night. Abiding by the societal expectation of “compulsory” heterosexual union, Claude finds in marriage one further humiliation (Goldberg 91). With his marriage never consummated and Enid eventually pursuing a mission to China, Claude becomes a watcher of love, peering into other doorways in search of sexual fulfillment. Finding that he can neither thwart his wife's autonomy nor possess her, he struggles to recover his sexual identity on the battlefronts of Europe.

Landing in France, Claude soon becomes a troop leader but remains aloof from the blatant sensuality of his men. Still, he makes no effort to intervene in their philandering with the women of Beaufort. For one who prided himself in a well-ordered lifestyle (3), “unmastered sexual emotion [was] both disordered and dishonest,” and Claude “grimly disapproves” of his men's sexual adventures (Cooperman 130). He prefers to remain apart, to immerse himself in a tale of love and death, a modern recounting of *Romeo and Juliet* in the story of a German officer and the French curé's niece. By desensualizing all human

relationships, placing them in the realm of fiction or religion, Claude thus protects himself from the painful reality of his own unsatisfied longings, and he becomes a voyeur.

On his first night in France and deserted by his comrade Victor Morse who goes in search of “amorous adventure,” Claude moves toward a movie theater whose marquee blares, “*Amour, quand tu nous tiens!*” (282-83). But, instead of entering to watch love on the screen, he stands “watching the people” (283). Under the light of the “Amour” sign he sees an American soldier, whose left arm has been amputated, walking hand-in-hand with a tearful, country girl. “Without realizing what he did, Claude followed them,” Cather writes (284), until they retreat into the deep doorway of a church. There, in profile, they “clung together in an embrace so long and still that it was like death” (284). Claude romanticizes the scene into a Piéta, as the soldier rests his head on the girl's lap and she bends over him. Claude is enthralled by the girl's soft stroking of the soldier's head as if she were “putting him to sleep” (284). One would recall that Claude dreamed of making love to Enid only when “she was still and unconscious like a statue” (126). Unable to experience love except as a dreamer or observer, the “only wife he can embrace” is war itself, and the death it brings translates “violence into erotic fulfillment,” as Stanley Cooperman argues (129). Cooperman goes on to point out that Claude, like Don Hedger, recovers his sexual identity through violence, unconsciously blaming his own brokenness on betrayal by the Ideal Woman (Enid), his home, and society in general (136). Enid's “repugnance for everything physical” (Schaefer 141) has left Claude looking for love in all the wrong places.

Much recent criticism has focused on Claude's probable homoerotic tendencies and attraction to David Gerhardt, but that was not Cather's way of evading the “Enid problem,” as Sinclair Lewis called it (31). Claude is, in fact, naïve and obtuse about homosexuality (Griffiths 267)—even if he, like many suffering from courtship disorder, has homoerotic feelings. Upon discovering the picture of a young man in a dead German officer's locket, he doesn't even consider the possibility that the two were lovers. “It looks like a poet, or something. Probably a kid brother, killed at the beginning of the war,” he comments (367). Lewis further claimed that Claude's relation with Enid was left unresolved at the novel's close and that Cather simply threw away the greatest possible interest in the book (32). On the contrary, Cather continues this “interest” to the end, making Claude's “sexual and emotional deprivation” (Schaefer 141) the root of his voyeurism, a voyeurism which arises from failure to bolster his virility through making a woman acquiesce and relinquish her autonomy. Since Claude cannot find in one woman both the sexual being he desires and the perfect unstained goddess he worships, his sexual energies become self-defeating (Griffiths 266), and he must remain merely an observer of love.

Claude feels betrayed by a family and society that has left him untutored in the ways of courtship and unprepared for the dynamics of male-female relationships. In keeping the Victorian ideal of woman as sexually pure, passive, and feminine, he has worshiped her as goddess and finds only disappointment in the reality of womanhood. Shortly before setting out for France, he ponders, “Perhaps if older people were a little more honest, and a boy were not taught to idealize in all women the very qualities which can make him utterly unhappy—” (215). His thought goes unfinished. Like Cather, Claude rejects a world gone astray

aesthetically, socially, and morally, and he looks elsewhere for love—to the faithful men under his command, to the artist David Gerhardt, and to France itself, the cultural icon of what civilization should be.

III.

One year after the publication of *One of Ours*, Cather published *A Lost Lady*, a finely honed novel whose young male protagonist also struggles with the awakened sensual appetite of a budding voyeur. Like Don Hedger and Claude Wheeler, Niel Herbert is oblivious to courtship strategies that would bring him a lover and sexual fulfillment. While he does not feel Claude's open aggression toward his father, Niel identifies "more strongly" with his dead mother (Schwartz 40) and rejects the slovenliness of Cousin Sadie who acts as housekeeper. An only child, he participates in the boyhood rituals of fishing in the Forrester marsh but exhibits a sophistication and sensitivity which set him apart from his peers. No mention is made of girlfriends in his youth, and as an older adolescent studying in his uncle's law offices, Niel envelopes himself in a kind of "monastic cleanliness and severity," resolving to remain a bachelor (33). Just as Claude found his identity in a sense of order, Niel wants to order his world and all who are in it "exactly to suit his taste" (33). When, therefore, he takes on the Forresters as substitute parents (Cousineau 307), he would make Mrs. Forrester both the mother he lacks and the beautiful woman he desires.

From the outset, Niel worships Marian Forrester from afar, casting her in the role of aesthetic ideal, nurturing mother, and inviolable goddess, all roles he has gleaned from his reading. He delves into Ovid's *Heroides*, stories of legendary lovers, and, Cather writes, his reading becomes a kind of "eavesdropping upon the past" whereby he lives "a double life, with all its guilty enjoyments" (81). The language Cather chooses here reinforces Niel's voyeuristic tendencies. He safely distances himself from Mrs. Forrester, rationalizing that "it was as Captain Forrester's wife that she most interested [him]" (78). Still, his first memory of her is fraught with sexual overtones, hardly the respectful admiration for a father-figure's consort: "As the carriage stopped she lifted her dress to alight; out of a swirl of white petticoats she thrust a black, shiny slipper . . . The little boy followed her through the open door, saw her enter a pew and kneel" (42). Mrs. Forrester is at once both holy figure and fully woman for the boy Niel. Even when half conscious at the time of his childhood accident, Niel notices "her white throat rising and falling" inside the lace ruffle of her dress and notes the sweet smell of her nearness (28-29). Acutely aware of his attraction to Mrs. Forrester, Niel masks his sexual interest by playing devotee to a goddess. As John J. Murphy has so aptly pointed out, Niel becomes an Hippolytus to his Artemis but is simultaneously attracted to her Aphrodisian side (73).

Unskilled and untrained in proper courtship etiquette, though, Niel is destined like Claude and Hedger to become a secretive observer of what he cannot possess. When Marian Forrester asks Niel to entertain Constance Ogden for the afternoon, she calls him "a good boy" (61), and he plays out his role as dutiful son but shows no romantic interest in this woman of his own age. Niel has great difficulty grasping that his quiet devotion to Mrs. Forrester makes little impression on a woman who is attracted to "strong, aggressive, even disdainful

men" (Harris 86). He is disturbed by his rival Frank Ellinger's "muscular energy" and observes that Frank's "whole figure seemed very much alive under his clothes . . ." (46). Later, Niel wonders what Mrs. Forrester did with her exquisiteness when she was in the company of a man like that (100).

Outdone by age and masculinity, Niel keeps a respectable distance from the object of his desire until his sexual impulses drive him to his "fatal aperture," the doorway or window through which he realizes that Marian Forrester has taken Frank Ellinger as a lover. He had often watched her through the double doors of his uncle's law office as she flirted with men, shook her muff at the Judge, or "bewildered [a] Swede farmer" (34), but to encounter her engaged in sex had never occurred to him, except perhaps in his own fantasies. When, therefore, he approaches Mrs. Forrester's bedroom at dawn, bearing the just-opening buds of flaming wild roses as tribute to his goddess, Niel falls into the knowledge of her fallibility and humanness. Placing the flowers on the sill, he hears her soft laugh and Ellinger's "fat and lazy" yawn (86). "[B]lind with anger" at his own displacement and realizing that the urges which had kept him awake all night will find no suitable outlet, Niel overthrows "that admiration and loyalty that had been like a bloom on his existence" (86).

If Claude Wheeler finds escape from unfulfilled passion in war and Don Hedger in art, then Niel Herbert finds it in retreat from Sweet Water. In many ways, Marian Forrester becomes a "mirror image of Niel's sexual tensions" (Cousineau 310). Like him, Mrs. Forrester feels some guilt over her flagrant sensuality, even at one point imagining that some voyeur (ostensibly Constance Ogden, but perhaps Niel himself) might be watching her with Frank in the back parlor. "I have a distinct impression that there is some one on the enclosed stairway," she remarks (59). Later, she does not suspect the Blum boy's furtive observation of her tryst with Frank in the cedar-lined ravine. But, least of all, does she suspect Niel's voyeurism as he spies upon her repeatedly after that morning when everything changed for him. Like Hedger, he is unwilling to share his goddess-woman with the world. He would prefer her drowned like Ophelia, as the book's epigraph implies. Even when returning from college after a two-year absence, Niel watches Mrs. Forrester from the top of the hill before stealthily approaching. Unbeknownst to Niel, he, too, was being watched, and Mrs. Forrester delights in catching him at his own game (110). He relishes that she shows no impatience to be released from his arms and accepts her proffered closeness as a token apology for her tucking her hand under his chin "as if he were still a boy" (110).

But, after the Captain's death Niel is forced to confront his ambivalent feelings toward Mrs. Forrester. The youth, who once protected her reputation by cutting the phone line as he eavesdropped on her distressed interchange with Frank Ellinger who had betrayed her, must reassess his relationship with the woman with whom in his dreams he would be a sexual partner. When Mrs. Forrester subtly suggests that his coming to see her so frequently might raise some talk about their relationship and might lead to rumors like those circulating about her and Ivy Peters, Niel is taken aback. "I wish you wouldn't talk to me like that," he answers coldly (154). He is both offended by the sexual innuendo and perturbed that she, not he, should suggest a sexual connection between them. With that comment alone, Mrs. Forrester violates all "the old things that had seemed so beautiful to him in his childhood" (142), the ideals of a lost era. Mrs.

“Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places”

(Continued)

Forrester has, in his mind, capitulated to the misplaced values that would characterize the world broken in two.

He finally dismisses her as a muddled and fallen woman, much as Don Hedger did Eden Bower after she exposes her body to public view. Going to see her one summer evening, Niel stops briefly outside the dining-room window, supposedly to look at the honeysuckle. But, *deja vu* sets in as the reader recalls Niel's reason for pausing before another window, that “fatal aperture” in Part I of the novel. Again, his momentary voyeurism causes his world to collapse: “Ivy Peters came in at the kitchen door, walked up behind her, and unconcernedly put both arms around her, his hands meeting over her breast. She did not move, did not look up, but went on rolling out pastry” (170). Rather than confront Mrs. Forrester with her actions, the voyeuristic Niel retreats down the hill, curses himself “for the last time” (170), and leaves her to become a lost lady. What Niel cannot confront is a woman who will live “life on any terms” (169) rather than on *his* terms. Like Cather's other voyeurs, Niel cannot accept female autonomy. Having never secured a sexual identity in relation to Mrs. Forrester and never having avowed his passion for her, Niel cannot maintain his manhood except in escape from the scenes he has repeatedly and furtively observed. The reader can only predict that Niel will continue to be an observer of, rather than a participant in, love.

Perhaps like her characters, then, Willa Cather had in the 1920s become a watcher of love. Unable to reconcile herself to the rampant sensuality of the post-war era, she suggests through her portraits of male voyeurs not that sensuality is wrong but that it is wrongly directed. Victims of their own psychosexual disorders, and specifically of courtship disorder, Don Hedger, Claude Wheeler, and Niel Herbert cannot come to terms with who they are in relation to what women are and must be. As a result, they and their contemporaries were “always looking for something outside [them]selves to warm [them] up,” as Ernest Havel remarks to Claude early in *One of Ours*. Cather's voyeurs thus become symbols of a larger problem, of a culture looking for love in all the wrong places and at love in all the wrong ways.

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Alicia Dallman. Photo courtesy of Dee Yost.

Alicia Dallman Wins Norma Ross Walter Scholarship

Virgil Albertini, chair of the Education Committee of the Cather Foundation, presented Alicia Dallman with the 2005 Norma Ross Walter Scholarship at the Spring Festival Banquet. Alicia is from Franklin High School, Franklin, Nebraska. Applicants must be senior women graduating from a Nebraska high school.

Willa Cather and Hamlin Garland: Parallel Early Lives

Neil Gustafson

In the Winter 1985 issue of *The Willa Cather Memorial Newsletter*, Michel Gervaud writes of similarities in the general subject matter of Willa Cather's and Hamlin Garland's pioneer fiction. In "Two Children of the Prairie," Gervaud notes that



Hamlin Garland. Photograph courtesy of Keith Newlin.

in Garland's *Boy Life*, "Young Lincoln Stewart, just like Jim Burden in Nebraska, arrives at night in Mitchell County, Iowa, in the fall of 1868. The next morning, just like Jim again, he gazes on the strange flat land and its boundless stretches of wild shaggy grass strewn with thousands of purple and yellow flowers" (2). Gervaud writes of thematic parallels in the early work of both writers but deems it necessary to add, "Such similarities, however, do not of course mean that

W. Cather was deliberately imitating Garland. Considering their personal experience of the middle West, it was almost inevitable that these two gifted children of the prairie should use the sparse material it afforded their imagination" (2).

What he does not provide us with are the details of that shared "personal experience," which are indeed remarkable.

In the years after the Civil War, in which Garland's father participated, homesteads spread across the Midwest and the Great Plains like the unrolling of a great carpet. By the time Garland's family homesteaded near the north-central Iowa town of Osage in 1870, the advancing line of the frontier was there. Garland was nine years old. Thirteen years later, that line had moved into central Nebraska, and nine-year-old Willa faced a similar treeless, wind-swept plain upon her arrival. Cather biographer Sharon O'Brien writes, partially in error, about Willa's experience: "Cather had an experience no other writer of her generation, male or female shared. No other writer moved West at the same crucial age: old enough to remember the past, young enough to adapt quickly to the new world" (74). While it is true that Cather moved from the East to Nebraska, Garland also left an established, if western, community in Wisconsin, where his grandparents had moved from Maine and Ohio in 1850. And he arrived on the flat Iowa prairie at the exact same age of nine.

Cather and Garland were born into farming families that lived in established areas that were hilly and wooded, Cather in extreme northern Virginia and Garland in the coulees of Wisconsin. They grew up in civilized, pleasant circumstances. The countryside in northern Virginia "was a sympathetic, picturesque landscape of willows and dogwood and azaleas, sheepfolds and streams and winding, wooded hill roads" (Lee 24). James Woodress writes of Cather's early childhood as "orderly, comfortable, and continuously interesting. It was a stable world for a child to grow

up in" (25). In Garland's *A Son of the Middle Border*, he describes his childhood home as nestled in a little valley "crumpled against the wooded hills" (12). Both children grew up among large, active extended families. Hermione Lee discusses the powerful matriarchal influence in Cather's life, which came from both sides of her family. Cather was to maintain relationships with her grandparents even after her move to Nebraska, as her maternal grandmother accompanied the family when it left Virginia and her paternal grandparents had moved to the Divide some six years earlier (Robinson 14). Both sets of Garland's grandparents lived nearby his childhood home in the coulees.

It would seem that both children did have a similar experience—and at the same age. Though one came from Virginia and the other from Wisconsin, it is not the distance traveled, but rather their removal from comfortable existences at an impressionable age and their having faced the shock of the flat plain that is to the point.

The reactions of the two youngsters to their new worlds were remarkably similar. As Gervaud notes, the thoughts of their fictional counterparts, Lincoln Stewart and Jim Burden, seem to present the first impressions of the two writers upon arriving on the edge of the frontier, which Garland called the Middle Border and Cather called the Divide. First Cather's Burden: "There seemed to be nothing to see; no fences, no creeks or trees, no hills or fields. . . . There was nothing but the land: . . . I had the feeling that the world was left behind, that we had got over the edge of it, and were outside man's jurisdiction. . . . Between that earth and that sky I felt erased, blotted out" (*My Ántonia* 718). Garland's Lincoln "rustled along through the tall grass. . . . It was as though he had suddenly been transported into another world, a world where time did not exist . . . and the grass waved forever under a cloudless sky. A great awe fell upon him as he looked, and he could not utter a word" (*Boy Life* 2).

Cather recalled her own arrival on the prairie in her family's Studebaker wagon: "I felt a good deal as if we had come to the end of everything—it was a kind of erasure of personality" (*Kingdom* 448). Garland wrote of riding the family wagon into "this sheltered sweep of prairie, . . . a land melted into blackness, silent and without boundary" (*Son* 82, 83). "As far as I could see," he wrote, "the land billowed like a russet ocean. . . . I cannot say that I liked or disliked it. I merely marveled at it" (83). And both wrote of the only sign of human habitation being the roads their wagons followed onto those wild-grass prairies (*Son* 82, *Kingdom* 448).



Willa Cather. Photograph courtesy of the Cather Foundation.

Willa Cather and Hamlin Garland (Continued)

For both, the shock of the vast, flat grasslands was short-lived. Both seemed to revel in the open space, the freedom of movement, the possibility of exploration that was suddenly part of their lives. O'Brien writes that this new world served as a release from the female restrictiveness Cather had experienced in her matriarchal Virginia life (69). Cather herself wrote of the excitement she experienced ranging about the prairie countryside: "I have never found any intellectual excitement any more intense than I used to feel when I spent a morning with one of those old [immigrant] women at her baking or butter making. I used to ride home in the most unreasonable state of excitement . . ." (*Kingdom* 449). Eldon Hill writes that Garland "found time to range the prairies like an untamed colt" (13). Though he was by age ten bound to the hard work of the pioneer farm boy, Garland writes of times spent on horseback with his siblings and friends "chasing rabbits, killing rattlesnakes, watching the battles of the bulls, racing half-wild colts and pursuing the prowling wolves" (*Son* 131). While both had been torn from civilized comfort and thrown into the unknown, both seemed to find their imaginations stirred by this uncivil, untamed blank sheet of prairie. It was, perhaps, the *tabula rasa* their imaginations thirsted for. And as Roy Meyer has written, these two children of the prairie would write the only fictional accounts of that life that were "not negligible" (667-68).

Of these two Midwest chroniclers, it is Garland who better provides a modern reader with the day-to-day details of that pioneer life. Seven years after he left the farm near Osage, Garland wrote a series of articles in *American Life* magazine—whose titles included "The Huskin'," "The Trashin'," and "Between Hay an' Grass"—that provide the copious detail required by his devotion to realism, his own branch of which he called "veritism." Garland, after all, spent eight years on the prairie, most of them hard at work on the land. Cather's time on the prairie lasted a mere eighteen months, but during that time, her mind and body would range free on the vast, open landscape, and the people she met would become the Rosickys, Shimerdas, and Bergsons of her novels and short stories.

Much is made by many Cather biographers of the provincial, claustrophobic, backward, educational pig sty that was Red Cloud, Nebraska, when Willa and her family moved off the farm and to this small town. And Garland's Osage, Iowa, is similarly characterized, or pillaged, by Eldon Hill, the major source of early biographical information about Garland other than Garland himself. Hill writes that the town was "not a place to satisfy aesthetic hungers. Though it may have seemed like a shining metropolis to the farm boy, it was in truth a dull little hamlet" whose buildings were "architectural abominations" (23). These are curious ideas. And as Mark Twain might have said, they get curiouser and curiouser the more you think about it. If Twain had grown up in New York or London or Boston, would we have *Huckleberry Finn*? If Cather had stayed in Virginia, would we have *Antonia*? Would we have *Boy Life on the Prairie* if Garland had lived out his life in the coulees of Wisconsin?¹

It seems that these two youngsters found exactly what they needed to feed their minds and imaginations in these little towns and the prairie lands around them. And when they had outgrown those places, they moved on and continued to feed their inquisitive minds. Certainly, the limited opportunities in Red Cloud and Osage would have encouraged them to seek a broader world, but it is the very mix of experiences they both had on that prairie and in those small towns

(and their eventual need to leave them) that formed minds and characters of these two most important chroniclers of that life.

Yet Cather's intellectual opportunities in Red Cloud seem anything but bleak. E.K. Brown writes that she had three excellent teachers "of remarkable gifts" as well as a talented old-world music teacher (32-33). James Woodress writes that she was introduced to classical music by Julia Miner, the mother of two of Cather's childhood friends. Brown writes of a "brilliant Frenchwoman," Mrs. Charles Wiener, who made her library—that was "extraordinary in both size and quality"—available to Cather (33). He also notes that she had access to the library of Silas Garber, former Nebraska governor; Brown lists *Huckleberry Finn*, *Paradise Lost*, *The Iliad*, *Sartor Resartus*, and *Anna Karenina* as being among the many works available to her (37). Mildred Bennett writes that Wiener also read and translated French novels to Willa (119). Brown writes that William Ducker, a store clerk and lover of the classics, tutored Willa in Greek and Latin literature (34). Hermione Lee herself notes that Willa attended numerous productions at the Red Cloud opera house, including *The Mikado* and *The Bohemian Girl* (37). Her friendship with two Red Cloud physicians provided her with an interest and experiences in medical science (Woodress 52).

To have these resources (and the mind to take advantage of them) and to live the life of open freedom that she did, playing with her brothers in the Republican River and ranging carefree around the countryside, was a fertile mixture for such an imaginative mind.

And now to Hamlin Garland's life of drudgery and deprivation on the prairie. His brother Franklin wrote of Garland's prowess as a baseball pitcher, his repertoire featuring curves and "a particularly effective sinker" (Hill 14). In an unpublished manuscript on which Garland wrote "about 1886," he discusses the country school house as "the intellectual center of the community. There the people flocked on winter nights to the Singing School, Lyceums, spelling bees and protracted meetings" (14). It is clear that Garland was also a voracious reader, albeit some of that reading material was less than classic literature. He notes in *A Son of the Middle Border* that he read "nearly one hundred" dime novels one year (186), which might explain his own ventures into Western novels later in his career. But his readings were not confined to popular works. Even before he left the Wisconsin coulees for the Iowa prairie, Grandmother Garland "taught him to enjoy the New England poets" (Hill 10), an experience that may have been the genesis of what Garland called his "hunger for print" (*Son* 35). His family library was sparse, but included *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, *Paradise Lost*, and *Ivanhoe*. To supplement these works, Garland borrowed books from his prairie neighbors (Hill 17).

In the summer of 1876 at the age of sixteen, Garland got permission from his father to work as a grain harvester on other farms so that he could earn money to pay the tuition at the Cedar Valley Seminary in Osage. That fall, he moved to town and attended the school where his literature options increased to include Shakespeare, Thackeray, Dickens, Scott, and others. But his seminal discovery was Nathaniel Hawthorne, "who laid his spell upon me everlastingly" and created in him "a worshipful admiration" (*Son* 219). He contends that after Hawthorne he could no longer stomach the dime novels.² Jean Holloway writes that while at Cedar Valley, Garland obtained "a reading knowledge of French" (9).

Cather and Garland concluded their prairie educations by delivering graduation speeches. Cather's defended the practice of vivisection (Robinson 38); Garland's subject was "Going West" (Son 230-231). Three months after their speeches, each left home on a train, Garland to Minnesota in search of a teaching position, Cather to Lincoln and the University of Nebraska.

Though Garland was thirteen years older than Cather, he began his fiction-writing career only four years before she did when he published, in 1888, fourteen articles and stories, including some of his series of *Boy Life* articles. By 1892, he would have published fifty more articles and five books, including his most famous, *Main-Travelled Roads*. In that same year, Cather's "Peter" appeared in *The Mahogany Tree*. Ironically, since Garland is known—incorrectly, I believe—for his scathing accounts of pioneer life, his earliest writings about that life were clearly positive. And though Cather is known for having immortalized and idealized the immigrant pioneer farmers of Nebraska, her earliest works about the prairie life were quite "Garland-like."

Even though Cather's own early stories were of a naturalistic tone, she at least a few times criticized Garland's descriptions of pioneer life. Once, after hearing that a play titled *Nebraska* had been written, she wrote, "Probably the drama will deal with 'barren, wind swept prairies; fields of stunted corn, whose parched leaves rattle like skeletons in the burning south wind,' and all that sort of rot which Mr. Hamlin Garland and his school have seen fit to write about our peaceable and inoffensive country" (*Kingdom* 223-24).

But Cather was later to have more a pleasant connection with Garland. In late 1919, in what would seem to be a response to Garland's invitation to have tea with him and his wife, Cather wrote thanking Garland for the invitation.³ She also wrote that she was grateful to have attracted his notice and obtained his apparent approval of her work. She commented that he was among the very few whom she would care about pleasing and whose disapproval would matter to her at all. She closed by reiterating her gratefulness and by acknowledging that the two of them would certainly have much to discuss.

Since Garland had two years before published his acclaimed *A Son of the Middle Border* and Cather had the year before published *My Ántonia*, it's clear the two of them would have had much to talk about. And Garland was by then an important literary figure: ten years later Sinclair Lewis, in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, would refer to Garland as "the Dean of American Letters today." Yet, it is unknown whether Garland and Cather ever did get together at that time.

Though the two children of the prairie left their homes in their teens, the land held them in its grip. Both returned to their rural roots several times in their lives. Garland even became a South Dakota homesteader on his own in April 1883, the very month Cather arrived on the Divide. Garland measured off his quarter section by counting the revolutions of the wagon wheel (Son 304), just as Cather's Uncle George and Aunt Franc had done in Nebraska some ten years earlier when trying to locate their own homestead (Bennett 12).

Garland died of a cerebral hemorrhage in Hollywood, California, in 1940. He had long since abandoned his work in serious fiction and had become a writer of Western romances and a collector of famous acquaintances. Cather died of the same cause in New York City in 1947. She continued to use her Nebraska background in her work until the end. So they had drifted in their

own directions—Cather to the cultural center of the country, Garland to its capital of glitz. Finally they seemed to share only that one thing neither ever shook, an abiding love of the prairie life of the late nineteenth century.

Notes

¹ It's unfortunate that people who are ignorant of rural life in general tend to characterize such places, as Hermione Lee did, by picking out a "very old lady with no teeth" as the type of the place, a person who says, "I'd have given him a piece of my mind cepn I wouldn have had none left" (2). As Cather and Garland attest quite adequately—not to mention that other boy from a small, Midwest town, Sam Clemens—these are not places where, necessarily, the imagination withers or the mind dies.

² Many have noted Cather's own reverence for Hawthorne's work. Jamie Ambrose notes that she "adored" him (40).

³ Two letters from Cather to Garland are contained in the Garland collection at the Doheny Library at the University of Southern California. I am grateful to Susan Rosowski for deciphering Cather's handwriting for me.

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Album: 50th Anniversary & Spring Festival 2005



Top left to right: Katy Cardinal teaches children at an intergenerational activity, Yost Farm; Passing Show panelists Joe Urgo and John Murphy discuss *My Antonia*; John English prepares to direct the St. Juliana Choir. Row two: Nancy Picchi, center, and Charles and Darlene Reiher host guests at the Harling House; Jane McLaughlin presents Foundation president Mellanee Kvasnicka with gift of a first edition of *December Night*; and is that really Willa Cather standing at center? Row three: Jim Ford and Ariel Bybee stand to receive applause, along with other cast members; Ron Hull explains; staff member Jan Offner and participant Tom Hutson check it out; Row four: High school writing contest winners pose for photo; and a "few" children listen carefully at the intergenerational event. Photographs by Barb Kudrna and Dee Yost.



Album: The 11th Cather International Seminar 2005

Top left to right: Seminar participants gather in Gallery; Richard Harris talks to interested group at the Bladen Eastlawn Cemetery where G.P. Cather is buried. Row two: Honor Guard gives 21 gun salute at Eastlawn Cemetery; participants gather in Opera House Auditorium—"Moving the Fire" exhibit in background. Row three: participants gather at Pavelka House; Opera House Volunteers wait to begin serving Victorian Dinner; Jay Yost, Charles Cather, and Harriet Zade have a serious talk. Bottom left: Lucia Woods Lindley and husband Dan listen carefully at Eastlawn Cemetery; Joe Urgo supervises as Janis Stout reads her paper at Bladen open-air pavilion; participants gather at Community Center; and Bob Thacker delivers a paper at Bladen Pavilion. Photographs by Barb Kudrنا and Dee Yost.

A Note on Documenting Cather

In Winslow, Arizona

Paul J. Ferlazzo

The Winslow Mail had a practice of keeping the townspeople of Winslow informed of the comings and goings of its citizens and of its visiting luminaries. For the first issue of May, 1912, the *Mail* printed the following about Willa Cather's arrival in town: "Miss Willa Sibert Cather of New York City is here visiting with her brother Mr. C. D. Cather in the employ of the Santa Fe as extra conductor" (4 May: 6).

By the following month, shortly after Cather had left Winslow, the staff of *The Winslow Mail* apparently had done additional research on their guest and was able to describe Cather with a few more details. For the first issue of June her departure is described as follows:

Miss Willa Sibert Cather of New York City who has been visiting here for sometime with her brother, Conductor C. D. Cather left this week for El Paso and other points in Texas, accompanied by her brother to that city before her return to New York. While visiting here Miss Cather visited at the Grand Canyon. Miss Cather is well known in literary circles thruout the east, having written numerous magazine articles and a few popular books, a number of articles and stories written by her have appeared recently in the McClure magazine (1 June: 6).

These newspaper notices are interesting for two reasons. They provide corroboration of Cather's southwestern travels, and they reveal a set of early misperceptions of her. Cather is described essentially as a New York tourist with an eastern reputation as a writer. Attributing "a few popular books" to her authorship and understating her importance to *McClure's Magazine* as a writer of "stories and articles" were other errors on the newspaper's part. In a very short time Cather would distinguish herself as the period's eminent voice of the American West. Unbeknown to itself, Winslow shared a part in creating that voice. Her experiences in and around Winslow during the spring of 1912, including her visits to the Painted Desert, the Grand Canyon, and Walnut Canyon, formed the basis for a vision of the land, people, and history to which she would later devote a major portion of talent and creativity.

Spring Festival Centers on *My Antonia*

(Continued from Page 1)

Saturday afternoon, discussions were held at the Depot, the Childhood Home, and the Harling House, centering on topics related to *My Antonia*. Other participants chose to take the *My Antonia* country tour. Still others chose to view the new film biography of Willa Cather, *The Road Is All*, produced by Joel Geyer and Christina Lesiak, which will premiere on PBS's *American Masters* September 7, 2005.

Following these events, Mary Vaughan presented a Gallery Talk in which she discussed her exhibit of prairie paintings. During the banquet, Virgil Albertini presented the Norma Ross Walter Scholarship Award to Alicia Dallman from Franklin, Nebraska.

Ariel Bybee gave an outstanding performance as the lead in James E. Ford's "Adaptation of 'A Singer's Romance'" at the Opera House Auditorium. Mr. Ford also directed the performance. The production was commissioned by the Cather Foundation and sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Nebraska Humanities Council, the Cooper Foundation, and donations to the Cather Foundation.

On Friday, Spring Festival participants were treated to the readings of delightful prize-winning high school entries in the One Book One State Nebraska Reads *My Antonia* essay competition. The two top entries in the Norma Ross Walter Scholarship competition also read their papers. The students were introduced by State Legislator Ed Schrock, Virgil Albertini, and Sue Maher, chair of the One Book One State task force.

Don Connors led dedication ceremonies for the Mildred Bennett Memorial Wall. This event was followed by a panel discussion focusing on the fifty-year history of the Foundation. The St. Juliana Choir, ably directed by John English, provided music for the Friday evening gathering where participants listened to readings from Cather's works presented by Mellanee Kvasnicka.

The mixture of traditional and experimental programming characteristic of the Spring Festival continues to promote enthusiasm among the participants. In a distinct break from tradition, next spring the event will move to June 2-3. Festival planners hope to avoid many of the scheduling conflicts that have plagued the event over the past few years.

WILLOW SHADE IS FOR SALE!

"Willow Shade," the famed childhood home of Willa Cather, is a remarkable historic home that has been lovingly restored.

Features include 10 working fireplaces with original mantels, original windows and doors, 3 porches, pine floors, summer kitchen and spring room. Located on 4 1/2 acres just 10 miles from Winchester Medical Centre, this home shows beautifully.

For additional information go to www.jackiegilman.com.

JoAnn Middleton

Cather's "fine readers" have long known that her work is inexhaustible; each re-reading of the texts rewards us with a deepening appreciation of the depths to be plumbed beneath that "deceptively simple" style (and more about that later). As each successive critical approach evolves, Cather scholarship expands to include it. The fifth volume of *Cather Studies*, *Willa Cather's Ecological Imagination*, (Nebraska) ed. Susan J. Rosowski, collects sixteen essays first presented at the 2000 International Cather Seminar which took as its focus ecocriticism, the burgeoning field of environmental literary studies. Setting the stage for the essays to follow, in "Nature and Human Nature: Interdisciplinary Convergences on Cather's Blue Mesa" (1-27), Glen A. Love argues for the role of science in literary criticism to reinvigorate it by "reconsidering the interpretation of archetypes." Cheryll Glotfelty, in "A Guided Tour of Ecocriticism, with Excursions to Catherland" (28-43), reflects upon ecocriticism in general and on ecocriticism of Cather, specifically noting the "interconnections between human culture and the material world, between the human and the nonhuman." In "My *Ántonia* and the National Parks Movement" (44-63) Joseph Urgo situates Cather within the conservationist debate of her time between utilitarians and preservationists and demonstrates that *My Ántonia* models a preservationist aesthetic in which landscape and memory are inextricably entangled. Patrick K. Dooley draws on Aldo Leopold's classic statement of ecological ethics "The Land Ethics" to explore Cather's "divided alliance" in "Biocentric, Homocentric, and Theocentric Environmentalism in *O Pioneers!*, *My Ántonia*, and *Death Comes for the Archbishop*" (64-76).

Joseph W. Meeker reads the same three novels as espousing an ethic of development rather than of the environment in "Willa Cather: The Plow and the Pen" (77-88), arguing that Cather "shows little knowledge or curiosity about the natural processes surrounding her characters" and is "disinterested in her ecological context." Taking a diametrically opposed position, in "Willa Cather, Learner" (89-102), Thomas J. Lyon contends that "Willa Cather is one of our greatest nature writers—without even being a nature writer—because she had this living sense of the biotic community."

In "The Comic Form of Willa Cather's Art: An Ecocritical Reading" (103-127) Susan J. Rosowski proposes that the interrelatedness of ecocriticism calls for reading Cather's work as a whole, and takes Susanne K. Langer as a starting point to show how Cather moved away from the ego consciousness of tragedy's end-directed plot with its heroic individual and toward the episodic, contingent form of comedy which celebrates the "pure sense of life itself" in a pattern of eternal renewal. Beginning with a print of Albrecht Dürer's hare and the copy of F. Schuyler Matthew's *Field Book of American Wild Flowers* that Cather took on nature walks throughout her life, Janis P. Stout reminds us that Cather was attuned to natural detail and suggests that an "observant eye" might lie behind her choice of Benda for the drawings in *My Ántonia*, in "The Observant Eye, the Art of Illustration, and Willa Cather's *My Ántonia*" (128-152).

Jan Goggans, in "Social (Re)Visioning in the Fields of *My Ántonia*" (153-172) proposes that ecological theory and botanical

guides represent "significant ways of thinking about how humans exist in their environment." An understanding of native and exotic plants illuminates our understanding of the way in which Jim (a native) tells the story of *Ántonia* (an exotic). Frank Lloyd Wright is the starting point for a discussion of the "fit" or spatial symbiosis between the man-made and the natural which constitutes the "regional style" in Guy Reynolds's "Modernist Space: Willa Cather's Environmental Imagination in Context" (173-189); Cather's Midwestern environments are "akin to the spatializing tactics of radical modernists—artists working in literature but also in architecture and painting."

Philip Kennicott, in "Wagner, Place and the Growth of Pessimism in the Fiction of Willa Cather" (190-198), suggests that Cather might have had *One of Ours*, not *The Song of the Lark*, in mind when she wrote that she stole from Gertrude Hall and speculates that her alertness to the encounters between characters and natural spaces in Wagner and also her awareness of the political and philosophical debates surrounding his music had a profound influence on her writing and world-view. In "Willa Cather's Great Emersonian Environmental Quartet" (199-215), Merrill Maguire Skaggs recalls the role that gender plays in culture and environment and persuasively argues that Cather played "riffs" on Emerson's *Nature* when she wrote an environmental tetralogy that began by critiquing phallogocentric Western culture in *The Professor's House* and culminated in the fully realized female lives of "Old Mrs. Harris."

Ann Moseley includes splendid photographs to underline the interrelationship of the natural and the artistic in "The Creative Ecology of Walnut Canyon: From the Sinagua to Thea Kronborg" (216-236); by recalling the actual place that Cather drew upon for her character's artistic awakening, we see how "her life becomes inextricably intermingled with its ecology—with its geological and cultural history and with its natural life." Photographs also figure in Charles Johanningsmeier's "Unmasking Willa Cather's 'Mortal Enemy,'" in which he proposes S. S. and Hattie McClure as the models for Oswald and Myra Henshawe.

Ann Romines asserts that one of the "major tasks" of Cather's life was how to remember Virginia, how to live and write with her Southern inheritance in "Admiring and Remembering: The Problem of Virginia" (273-290) and suggests that much of Cather's best fiction before her specifically Southern novel of 1940 was engaged with the problem of how to remember and render the South. And, lastly, in "Characters, Compromise, and Idealism in Willa Cather's Gardens" (291-307), Mark A. R. Facknitz reminds us that the interconnections between culture and nature are revealed in gardens; "what happens at the threshold between garden space and wilderness is transcendence . . . of basic categories of understanding."

In a companion essay to this collection, "Where Do I Belong?": Willa Cather's Apocalyptic Landscapes," Robert Thacker explores the ways in which Cather's use of landscape shows a progression from grim Nebraska backgrounds portending despair to "profound re-inhabitations" that transform

landscape into place (*CRvAS* 32: 2 (2002),193-207). With *Practical Ecocriticism: Literature, Biology, and the Environment* (Virginia), Glen A. Love hopes to initiate a more biologically informed ecocritical dialogue about literature and its relationships to nature and to environmental concerns, and, in his chapter on Cather (pp. 89-116) offers a scientifically informed approach to place and human nature in *The Professor's House*, from a perspective like E. O. Wilson's which acknowledges all human thought as embodied.

Paula Kot, in "Speculation, Tourism, and *The Professor's House*" (*TCL* 48: 4 (2002), 393-426), examines Cather's account of Mesa Verde recorded in a 1916 article for the *Denver Times*, to find that she ignored the commercial aspects of tourism in the national park to put forth an idealized conception of visitors gazing on healing landscape that could bridge the gap between modern man and the natural world. Although she sought in *The Professor's House* to validate this ideal, she could not avoid the specter of Western speculation nor could she separate the entrepreneurial and idealistic impulses that find expression in Tom Outland. In "The Enclosure of America: Civilization and Confinement in Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!*" (*AL* 75:2, 275-303), Melissa Ryan identifies a fundamental conflict and radical ambivalence at the center of Cather's frontier hagiography, a deep anxiety about the taming of the wilderness makes itself felt in *O Pioneers!* which arises from the connection between the project of pioneering and a process of enclosure that cannot be completely dispelled by the novel's rhetoric. Current discourses of discipline and Americanization underlie Cather's treatment of Mrs. Lee, Ivar and Frank Shabata, and this narrative of Nebraska origins is haunted by a shadow text, a silenced historical narrative that may be read out of this connection between civilization and confinement which evokes the removal of Native Americans to reservations.

Focusing on the social forces that intersect to shape Cather's fictional constructions of gender and on her own "conflicted, antimodernist perspective," Reginald Dyck's "Willa Cather's Reluctant New Woman Pioneer" (*GPQ* 23:2, 161-73) points out that Alexandra Bergson's career as an unmarried farm owner and manager would have been a historical anomaly as well as a contradiction to the Turnerian myth, then demonstrates how Cather overlays particular eastern urban qualities associated with the New Woman on her western rural pioneer protagonist. Alexandra pays the price for her independence in isolation and becomes an emblem of the struggle the United States faced at the turn of the century in reconciling its rural, pioneer past with the cultural transformations inherent in the urban New Woman and the industrialism from which she emerged. Margaret Marquis considers the far-reaching legacy of feminist ideals associated with the New Woman and largely unappreciated until the second half of the twentieth century as she compares Cather's Alexandra Bergson (*O Pioneers!*) and Margaret Deland's Sarah Maitland (*The Iron Woman*) to Dreiser's *Jennie Gerhardt* in "The Female Body, Work, and Reproduction in Deland, Cather, and Dreiser" *WS* 32:8, 979-1000). By depicting unusual working positions and equally unusual womanly bodies, Cather and Deland, unlike Dreiser, emphasize the potential of working women beyond the constraints of marriage and motherhood, challenge traditional notions of physical beauty and allow women a capacity

for productive work that replaces procreative activity and correlates to the industrial growth that occurred at the beginning of the century. In "*The Awakening* and *A Lost Lady*: Flying with Broken Wings and Raked Feathers" (*SLJ* 35:3, 13-27), Elizabeth Elz joins Kate Chopin and Cather in a "conversation" informed by bird imagery about entrapment and choice. Edna, caught in the True Woman role, chooses death as her only option while New Woman Marian is strong enough to survive, but selects a True Woman role to do so. Ann Fisher-Wirth takes a look at anxiety about female sexuality and the troping of this anxiety in terms of overrun boundaries between the human and the nonhuman in *My Ántonia* and Kent Haruf's *Plainsong*, both of which have as their focus a working-class unwed mother. Both novels rewrite the story of the unwed mother, both insist on the "cleanness" of sexuality, pregnancy, and birth, and both affirm the elemental physical processes of birth as a source of ritual and community ("Clean as a Cow That Calves": *My Ántonia*, *Plainsong*, and the Semiotics of Birth" [*ISLE* 10:1,185-193]).

Seth Clabough addresses the conflicting and largely ignored alternate representations of masculinity in *A Lost Lady* that "thrive in a symbiotic and hegemonic relationship with history," and contribute to a "mythogenesis" arising from Cather's desired version of the frontier, the mythological history of the region encoded within her and actual historical record in "Negotiating the Afterglow: Masculinity in Willa Cather's *A Lost Lady*" (*WS* 32:6, 719-734). Although Captain Forrester's outgoing, rugged, frontier masculinity is doomed from the start, Cather pits his imagination that can dream an idea into reality against the petty emerging masculinity associated with the violence, commodification, and manipulation of Ivy Peters. Joseph L. Coulombe asserts that Cather's achievement in depicting the westward movement was made possible by Mark Twain's example in *Mark Twain and the American West* (Missouri); Cather, a "direct literary descendant" of Twain, advanced his masculinist approach to writing as she simultaneously complemented and corrected his vision of "western opportunity, western people and western writing" (pp.137-159).

Two authors consider Cather's debt to Henry James. Susan Goodman, in *Civil Wars: American Novelists and Manners, 1880-1940* (Hopkins), attributes Cather's attention to manners to the influence of Henry James; in her "own, modernist way," she arrests a moment in history and tests her characters against accepted standards of conduct. *The Professor's House* conveys the power of manners to impart and comment upon individual and cultural mythologies; *Shadows on the Rock* illustrates how manners permeate barriers to recreate a texture of life that is at once modernist in its fragmentation and antimodernist in its spiritual wholeness; *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* raises interesting questions about the relationship of manners and systems of oppression and shows how traditions can be perpetuated by the very people they have most harmed (pp. 83-103). In *Henry James and Queer Modernity* (Cambridge), Eric Haralson proposes that James served as an "essential foil" to Wilde's "hyperaestheticism at the expense of both moral sincerity and masculine integrity"; Cather preferred the more subdued and less overtly effeminate James in her working out of her own lesbian and in many ways masculine identity. Haralson provides insightful discussions of "Flavia and her Artists,"

“Paul’s Case.” *Pioneers!*, *One of Ours*, and *The Professor’s House* to demonstrate how Cather’s queerness crosses gender lines to resemble, but not to mimic James’s (pp. 134-172).

Dawn Trouard’s “Burying Below Sea Level: The Erotics of Sex and Death in *The Optimist’s Daughter*” (*MissQ* 56:2, 231-250) provides a splendid intertextual explication of Welty’s “not-so-subtle” debt to Cather that not only notes points of contact between some key works of fiction, but also establishes that both writers shared a view of art and creation founded on the erotic. *The Optimist’s Daughter* “vibrates with both [Welty’s] debt and pleasure” and, secreted within the novel, is an extended *homage* to an erotics of survival and answer to grief redeemed found in *My Mortal Enemy*, *A Lost Lady* and *Song of the Lark*.

In “Fragmentary and Inconclusive’ Violence: National History and Literary Form in *The Professor’s House*” (*AL* 75: 3, 573-99), Sarah Wilson argues that neither the historical nor the formal context can be ignored in any discussion of Cather’s work and explicates her historicist critique of nostalgia and her wariness of the nationalistic consumption of the Southwestern Native Americans in the early twentieth century in a perceptive reading of *The Professor’s House*. This text reveals that Cather both understood history as an ever shifting web of interrelations and competing affiliations and interests and saw historicism as an ethical activity, very much in line with the recent work of Martha Nussbaum on the ethical understandings enabled by literary texts. For Cather an ethical relation to one’s contemporary community is indissoluble from an ethical understanding of history.

Recalling that F. Scott Fitzgerald re-read *My Antonia* as he was writing *The Last Tycoon* Stanley Brodwin recognizes a “moral affinity” between Fitzgerald and Cather, but proposes that they had radically different perceptions and emotional confrontations with the relationship of the past to the present. Cather was able to fuse her informed sense of the past with the nostalgia for the self’s personal history in a “drama of memory”; Fitzgerald’s power resided in his nostalgia for the history of the self and its quest for the “ineffable gorgeous” (“F. Scott Fitzgerald and Willa Cather: A New Study,” pp. 173-189 in *F. Scott Fitzgerald in the Twenty-First Century* [Alabama], ed. Jackson R. Bryer, Ruth Prigozy, and Milton R. Stern). Leonard Diepeveen poses the question: Is it indeed the art that is driving the aesthetic, or the aesthetic driving the art? in *The Difficulties of Modernism* (Routledge) to frame his discussion of Cather and Robert Frost as “simple moderns” without the particular form of difficulty taken on by high modernism as an aesthetic principle central to canonization. Although the best critics acknowledge the centrality of “deceptive simplicity” to the aesthetic experience of reading these writers and although the common reader’s attachment to simplicity bases itself on an emotional attachment congruent with a view of art as emotional expression, writers such as Cather and Frost will never be “really canonical” until we engage in a serious examination of difficulty as an aesthetic principle (pp.188-214). Stephanie Lewis Thompson, in *Influencing America’s Tastes: Realism in the Works of Wharton, Cather & Hurst* (Florida 2002), proposes that Cather belongs, not to modernism—“a particularly masculine affair”—but instead to an aesthetic based on the rhetoric

of “women’s influence;” particularly in works such as *My Antonia* and *The Song of the Lark*, Cather intertwines the modernist autobiographical impulse with her desire to bridge the growing gap between artist and audience fostered by high modernism with its inherent difficulties and focus on the self (pp. 123-154).

Readers of Dan Brown’s *Da Vinci Code* will relish Klaus P. Stich’s wonderfully intricate and important essay, “Historical and Archetypal Intimations of the Grail Myth in Cather’s *One of Ours* and *The Professor’s House*” (*TSL* 45:2, 201-230). In a remarkable intellectual feat, Stich explicates the rich subtext of the Grail myth in *One of Ours* and *The Professor’s House*, linking Cather and her texts to the Grail-related importance of Mary Magdalene in France, the controversy surrounding Bérenger Saunière, the Merovingians, the Knights Templar, the Cathars (Albigensians), notions of chivalry embodied in the Grail romances of the troubadours, the Plantagenets, and Solomon’s fabled treasure which was taken to Spain and lost. Cognizance of the Grail accommodates all the life-giving connotations of the archetypal feminine symbols of earth, rock, cavern, and spring in *The Professor’s House* as well as Mother Eve, Augusta, and the Song of Solomon, and offers a satisfying explanation for Rosamond’s turquoise bracelet. John J. Murphy points out that Avignon had captured Cather’s imagination in 1902, then defines Cather’s life and art by expertly tracing her “pilgrimage” through landscapes that took her from aesthetic to religious concerns, from “On the Divide” to the last remaining fragments of “Hard Punishments,” her unfinished novella in “Sacred Places Along Cather’s Route to Avignon” (*R&L* 35:2-3, 29-47). In “Hallowed Ground: Landscape as Hagiography in Willa Cather’s *Death Comes for the Archbishop*” (*C&L* 52:3, 367-85), Pam Fox Kuhlken calls our attention to “two fleeting glimpses” of the Sangre de Cristo mountains in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* to begin her discussion of Cather’s ability to communicate the sanctity through her use of metonymy, the substitution of the mountains for the redemption of Christ. From four sources—her own experiences in the Southwest, a statue of Father Lamy, a biography of Father Machebeuf, and the blood-red landscape—Cather fashions a text that also communicates her own vision of “a redeemed earth and a Creator immanent in creation.”

In “Immovable: Willa Cather’s Logic of Art and Place,” *Western American Literature* 38 (Summer 2003): 116–30, María Carla Sánchez analyzes Cather’s construction of art, mimesis and movement in “A Death in the Desert” and *Lucy Gayheart* to show that, although in Cather’s narrative worlds, the forces of national identity, economic expansion, and historical change may require people to move, it is not at all clear that art can, or should, do so as well. Cather’s “enormous investment in the meaning of things and how, when and where things might gain or lose that meaning” finds a corollary in the artistic concerns of Walter Benjamin.

Finally, in “The Gerwig House: Willa Cather’s Friends on Pittsburgh’s North Side” (*Western Pennsylvania History* 86:2, 20-26), Peter M. Sullivan documents Cather’s friendship with the George Gerwig family and others in the “Deuschtown” section of Pittsburgh, her activities in Pittsburgh, and the ways these connections figure in her stories.

Check out our website for special holiday selections at www.willacather.org.

International Connections:

Bringing Cather to the World

For the last several years, WCPM Board of Governors member John J. Murphy of Brigham Young University has been busy promoting Cather's fiction to university students in Europe and Asia.

In April, Murphy introduced Cather to American Studies graduate students at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun, Poland, and at the University of Rome 3. In September 2004, he gave the keynote address on *Shadows on the Rock* for a "Writers and Their Travels" conference at Université Catholique de l'Ouest, Angers, France. The November 2003 issue of *Chung 'Wai Literary Monthly* (National University of Taiwan) included a Mandarin translation of a paper on Cather and Dante he presented the previous year at a Dante conference at Fu Jen Catholic University, Taipei.

In spring 2003, Murphy conducted a six-week Cather seminar for Ph.D. students at the University of Santiago, Spain, and, in 2001, included *Death Comes for the Archbishop* in an American literature seminar for graduate students at the University of Léon,

Spain. Murphy has lectured on Cather twice in China, in 1993 and 1995, at Beijing Foreign Studies University.

Plans are being made to take the International Cather Seminar 2007 to France, where it will be directed by Murphy, Board member Robert Thacker of St. Lawrence University, and Françoise Palleau-Papin of the University of Paris. The seminar is to begin in Paris and relocate to the Avignon area.

In April, Murphy was told by Dr. Cristina Giorelli, American Studies Director at the University of Rome, something he already figured out during his travels—that compared to her literary contemporaries (many of them of deãedly lesser quality), Cather is relatively unknown abroad. Murphy and the others plan to do something about this. European faculty and graduate students are expected to be a major component of this seminar. A world writer, he says, needs to be known by the world. Perhaps the task of the seminar will be to demonstrate world aspects of Cather's work.

Cather Foundation President Spends Six Months Teaching in China



Charles Peek at the Great Wall. Photo courtesy of Charles Peek.

Charles Peek, President of the Cather Foundation Board of Governors and Professor of English at University of Nebraska-Kearney, recently spent six months in China through a Fulbright Fellowship, where he taught Cather and other American authors to Chinese students.

Dr. Peek continues a tradition established by other Cather scholars including Bruce Baker, who taught in Afghanistan, and Virgil Albertini, who has taught in China. Presently Joe Murphy,



Unidentified student of Wang Jianping, Chuck Peek, Wang Jianping, and Nancy Peek. The location is the Emperor's tomb in Shenyang. Photograph courtesy of Charles Peek.

son of John Murphy, is teaching in Taiwan. At the 2006 Spring Conference scheduled for June 2-3, 2006, these four scholars will be part of a special panel which will discuss teaching Cather in other parts of the world. The Cather Foundation is placing special emphasis on its international connections during the next two years in preparation for the 11th International Cather Seminar to be held in France in 2007. See back cover of the *Newsletter* for further information.

10th International Cather Seminar (Continued from Page 1)

Marilee Lindemann and Joseph Urgo opened the Sunday program, which featured concurrent paper sessions throughout the day. Conference participants were treated to a lavish seven-course Victorian Dinner and "An Adaptation of 'A Singer's Romance'" (James E. Ford), commissioned by the WCPM for its 50th anniversary. Audience members commented on the strength of the vocals, and guest speaker Michèle Barale enjoyed how this melodramatic period piece "really captured the Cather character well." Nightcaps were again provided at the Depot.

Monday 20th June was dedicated to the memory of the late Susan Rosowski. It began with a Country Tour of local places of interest; those who took their own 'scenic route' were exposed to rather more sunshine and prairie than anticipated, but all eventually arrived at the Bladen Fairgrounds in time to hear the plenary speakers, Robert Thacker and Janis Stout. After a picnic lunch the tour moved to the Bladen Cemetery where local war veterans fired a 21-gun salute over the grave of G.P. Cather, the first Nebraskan to die in World War One (and the prototype for Claude Wheeler in *One of Ours*). Later that afternoon the keynote speaker, Michèle Barale, offered some interesting insights into Cather's short-story "Coming Aphrodite!"; and, after a picnic dinner, Jack Cardinal (Creek Tribe) gave a presentation on Native American life, with an unusual array of authentic weaponry. The evening concluded with a memorial celebration for the friends of Sue Rosowski where many of the participants echoed sentiments similar to those of Merrill Skaggs: "It was moving and gratifying to hear so many happy memories and funny anecdotes recording Sue's productive life." The celebration continued on a less formal basis at the Depot.

On Tuesday the Seminar moved to Lincoln. Evening entertainment included an open-air jazz session on the campus lawn featuring local musician Kathy Kosins; a "Railcats" / "Saltdogs" AAA Baseball game; and an open-mike session with the Nebraska Summer Writers' Conference. Wednesday's plenary speakers (David Porter and Ann Romines) were followed by morning break-out sessions to discuss a variety of diverse topics. After lunch there was an informative introduction to the UNL digital website and a tour of the library archives. Various Cather treasures were on display, including the controversial 1923 Cather portrait painted by Léon Bakst (which was analyzed by Vicki Martin and Evelyn Haller). Tom Quirk and Richard Harris spoke before dinner; then conference participants heard the keynote speaker, Marxist critic Terry Eagleton. Eagleton's comments on Cather were disappointingly limited, but his witty, caustic approach proved popular with many listeners. "Club Thacker" provided a well-attended social that allowed for much intellectual argumentation.

Song Cycle Published

The song cycle, *My Antonia*, composed by Libby Larsen through support from NEA, NAC, NEH, and the Ohio Arts Council has been published by Oxford University Press (ISBN 0-19-386721-4). Linda Jones and Jane Dressler performed the song cycle at the Brownville Theatre as part of the June 2000 Cather Seminar. Jones and Dressler have since performed the songs in college locations in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Missouri, Michigan, and Iowa.

The next day opened with lectures from John Murphy and John Swift, and then concurrent paper sessions filled the morning. After lunch the plenary sessions featured Merrill Maguire Skaggs and Steven Trout, and a new potential source for the "Outland Engine" (*The Professor's House*) was suggested by graduate student Nichole Bennett. Melissa Homestead and Anne Kaufman led a plenary session on "Edith Lewis's Nebraska," which was followed by an interesting tour of "Cather's Campus," with Kari Ronning. The rest of the evening was left open for individuals to explore the city.

On Friday, Mark Madigan and Timothy Bintrim lectured on a historical source for Cather's short story "Paul's Case." Then there were two break-out sessions that lasted until mid-afternoon, followed by a screening of the new PBS American Masters Series film, "Willa Cather: The Road Is All." Viewers got a chance to discuss the biography with NET producers Joel Geyer and Christine Lesiak, and the movie was generally well received. Tim Bintrim summed up his reaction by saying, "It wasn't any one person's vision, but it brought things alive for me." The film was also appreciated by Charles Cather (Willa's nephew) who arrived that day to observe his first international Cather seminar. Several entertainment options were offered for the evening: dinner in town with friends; a wine tour of the James Arthur Vineyard (in Raymond); or a visit to the home of Jim Rosowski where a food-tasting session featured recipes from a new Nebraskan cookbook. Back on campus "Club Thacker" provided libations through to the early hours of the morning, and some time around midnight the room erupted into a lively rendition of "O Bury Me Not On the Lone Prairie" (complete with all nine verses!)

As people said their goodbyes, many commented that this International Seminar had been one of the most interesting, pleasant, and successful ones to date. There was a widespread appreciation for all the hard work performed by Guy Reynolds; Beth Burke; the WCPM Staff and Board of Governors—especially Betty Kort, Jan Offner, and Robert Thacker; the Nebraska Humanities Council; the Academic Senate Committee of the University of Lincoln-Nebraska; the University of Lincoln-Nebraska; and the residents of Red Cloud. Participants are looking forward to the Cather Colloquium at Drew University in September, and everyone went home to brush up on French conjugations in anticipation of the 2007 Seminar in Paris . . .

(Editor's Note: Brief synopses of several of the papers presented by graduate students at the International Cather Seminar will appear in the Fall issue of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter and Review.)

Philip L. Gerber Dies

Philip L. Gerber, former professor and chairman of the English Department at the State University College at Brockport, died of cancer January 5, 2005. He was 81. Mr. Gerber was instrumental in establishing a master's degree program in English and the Writers Forum at Brockport. He joined the college in 1966 and retired 25 years later.

Readers may remember him at the Mesa Verde Symposium in October of 1999.

New Incentive to Give to Endowment

The Willa Cather Foundation's endowment received two important gifts this summer toward the match required by the National Endowment for the Humanities challenge grant: \$25,000 from the *Omaha World-Herald* Foundation and \$25,000 from the Carmen and John Gottschalk Family Foundation. The Willa Cather Foundation has raised a total of \$577,996 toward the \$825,000 it must raise by July 31, 2006.

All of us who value Willa Cather's Red Cloud as a national literary heritage site appreciate the generosity of these two Omaha Foundations, and we invite you to join them in ensuring that Cather's legacy will endure through a permanent endowment.

If you live in Nebraska, the State of Nebraska has given you further incentive to contribute to the Willa Cather Foundation's endowment. Effective January 1, 2006, Nebraskans can receive a 30% tax credit up to a \$10,000 total for planned gifts to a Nebraska endowment. Corporations can deduct 20% of their contribution up to an annual \$10,000 cap. For information about how your gift may qualify for the tax credit, please contact the Willa Cather Foundation or consult with your financial advisor.



A Message from the President

As I become your president, I have a lively sense both that much has been accomplished which we need to celebrate and that there is much yet to do for which we need to prepare.

The series of accomplishments have been a team effort, from the office of the president on up the ladder to you who provide the support and do the day-to-day work that makes them possible. These accomplishments include but are by no means limited to the Spring Festival, the International Seminar, and meeting our 2005 Endowment goal. The development committee chaired by Jane Hood, our program committees chaired by Bob Thacker, John Murphy, Steve Shively, and

Mellanee Kvasnicka, the Cather Project and Guy Reynolds, the Opera House programming arranged by Stephany Thompson, the city of Red Cloud, and most particularly the Cather Foundation office directed by Betty Kort all deserve special thanks.

In addition, we will soon assume ownership of the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie and enjoy the dedication ceremony at next year's Spring Conference.

What remains to be done will call on us all for our dedication to the work of the Cather Foundation. This work includes maintaining and improving our Red Cloud properties (the like of which no other author enjoys), planning for the enhancement of future seminars and conferences, raising the 2006 funds to secure our endowments and develop the archives, and increasing awareness of Cather and her heritage around the world.

Cather stands today as one of America's great writers. In their poignant and beautiful mapping of our past—the past that shaped our national psyche and institutions—her works provide a compass for our current personal and peculiarly American journeys, as well as present a portrait of American life and values to the world. Her work, however, belongs not just to America but also to literature, and literature knows no national boundaries. I was made keenly aware of Cather's global impact while recently teaching Cather in China. It was in reading Cather that my students first began to understand literature as a window on their personal and social worlds. It was from the stories in *Obscure Destinies* that they began to see a truer and more complex America than the Internet and pop culture had shown them. It was in grasping her varying points of view that they began to probe their own history and its meaning in new and more critical ways.

This means that, like many at-one-time parochial enterprises, the Cather Foundation needs to continue finding ways to "internationalize" or "globalize" its effort and impact. You can expect to see more evidences of this in the coming years.

The Cather Foundation is not engaged in self-promotion. Its "memorial" and "educational" missions impact other's lives and other societies in profound ways. Working toward the goals of the Cather Foundation is a "high calling"—one with rich rewards for all of us and one I eagerly anticipate helping us fulfill. The Cather Foundation itself began with an "obscure destiny," one we are only now beginning to grasp more fully.

Welcome to all the new and returning members of the Board of Governors. I look forward to the opportunities before us to build on the work of those who have gone before us and those who still labor among us.

Most sincerely,

Chuck Peek, President
Cather Foundation Board of Governors



The Executive Director's Report

This spring and summer we celebrated a 50th anniversary, held the Spring Conference, and hosted a Cather International Seminar at the Cather Center. It is easy to report the facts that accompanied all of these events but much harder to convey the all-encompassing ambience. Our Foundation photographers, Dee Yost and Barb Kudrna, snapped a truck load of pictures. What we see over and over again are smiles. Yes, smiles, smiles, smiles! We will let you, our readers, decide how participants reacted to various events.

Do you recognize all of these smiles?





**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 Governors defined the Foundation's mission, which has evolved into these

AIMS OF THE WCPM

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

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

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

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

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Red Cloud Opera House Schedule

Remembering World War II . . .

On any given day during World War II, as many as 100,000 troops were on trains bound for military training camps or embarking to theaters of war around the world. Sensitive to the human dimensions of these dislocations and their impact on Americans, Grant Reynard provided an insightful and entertaining record of Americans in transit in the crucible of wartime. To celebrate the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II, The Red Cloud Opera House remembers the people and the times connected to World War II in the Gallery and on Stage. Reynard's images in the Gallery form the focal point for our scheduled events. Join us to commemorate this epic time in history.

“Grant Reynard & WW II: Images of the Home Front”

Gallery exhibit—sponsored by NEA and the Museum of Nebraska Art, September—October 16

“In Connie’s Cabana” by Theater of the American West

September 8 at 7:30

Big Band Reprise

September 23 at 8:00

Pearl Harbor

Movie, starring Ben Affleck, showing September 25 at 2:00

“The War Comes to Nebraska”

Sponsored by Nebraska Humanities Council,

A production of KYNE and UNO Television, October 2 at 2:00

“Meet Eleanor Roosevelt: 1905-45 Wife, Mother, and First Lady”

Sponsored by the Nebraska Humanities Council, October 16 at 2:00

Holiday Programming

“New Beginnings”

Prairie Winds Art Center—In the Gallery October 20-November 30

“The Gift of the Magi” & “The Best Christmas Pagaent Ever”

Red Cloud Community Theatre—Sponsored by the Republican Valley Arts Council

November 18, 19, 25, 26 at 7:30 & 20, 27 at 2:30

“The World of Willa Cather”

Paintings by John Blake Bergers—In the Gallery December—January 15

“A Festival of Carols and Lessons”

Hastings College Choir, Directed by Fritz Mountford—December 6 at 7:30

Holiday Inn

A movie starring Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire—December 11 at 2:00

Theater of the American West Christmas Play

December 15 at 7:30

Thalken, Tesdall, & Tahalken — Holiday Jazz Concert

December 17

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 and St. Lawrence University, 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 World" 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, one of the keynote speakers will be Marc Chénétier (University of Paris 7), whose work includes translations of most of Cather's novels into French. Other invitations are pending.

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, 27 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).

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 at the address listed to the right.



Send inquires to:

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