

Willa Cather Newsletter and Review

The Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation
(Willa Cather Society)

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Memorial and Educational Foundation
ISSN 0197-663X



Volume XLVII, No. 3
Winter/Spring 2004

Grace Episcopal Church Receives Sower Award

“[Niel] could remember the very first time he ever saw Mrs. Forrester, when he was a little boy. He had been loitering in front of the Episcopal church one Sunday morning, when a low carriage drove up to the door. Ben Keezer was on the front seat, and on the back seat was a lady, alone, in a black silk dress all puffs and ruffles, and a black hat, carrying a parasol with a carved ivory handle. As the carriage stopped she lifted her dress to alight; out of a swirl of foamy white petticoats she thrust a black, shiny slipper. She stepped lightly to the ground and with a nod to the driver went into the church. The little boy followed her through the open door, saw her enter a pew and kneel. He was proud now that at the first moment he had recognized her as belonging to a different world from any he had ever known.” - *A Lost Lady*



Grace Episcopal Church—February 2004. Photograph by Betty Kort.

Willa Cather's inspiration for the Episcopal church of Sweet Water in *A Lost Lady* was Grace Episcopal Church in Red Cloud. Among the founders of the church were Silas Garber, former governor of Nebraska, and his wife Lyra Wheeler Garber, the prototypes for Daniel and Marian Forrester. Grace Church's most illustrious parishioner, however, was Willa Cather herself.

The Grace Church building, completed in 1883, played an important role in Cather's life and continues to be enjoyed by those who come to Red Cloud to learn more about Cather and her work. In recent years the building has developed serious problems with its brick veneer, the foundation masonry, and the chimney bricks. Now, thanks to gifts from the Sower Fund of the Episcopal Diocese of Nebraska and St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Kearney, necessary repairs can be made and this beautiful little church can continue to be a prominent part of Red Cloud's Cather Historic Site.

The Cather family, originally Baptists, had moved their membership to the Episcopal Church by 1906, when Willa's sister Elsie was baptized and confirmed. From then on the Cather marriages, confirmations, burials, and baptisms were Episcopalian. Willa served as godparent for her niece

Helen's baptism in 1918, and in December 1922 Willa Cather and her parents were formally confirmed by Bishop George Allen Beecher at Grace Church, shortly after the Bishop had served as master of ceremonies for the 50th wedding anniversary celebration of Willa's parents.

Cather's friendship with Bishop Beecher continued long after her last visit to Nebraska; the two communicated regularly by letters, and Bishop Beecher dined with Cather when he was in New York. The last letters between these two friends were exchanged only one month before Cather's death in 1947.

Willa Cather maintained her membership in Grace Church until her death. Her letters to friends in Red Cloud include frequent inquiries about the church. On a visit to Red
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The Cather Foundation Calendar

Spring Festival 2004

“Aging and Dying in Willa Cather’s Fiction”

Obscure Destinies

April 30-May 1, 2004

Fall 2004

Premiere in Red Cloud of PBS Cather Biography

Spring Festival 2005

Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation and

“*The World of Willa Cather*”

Premiere Performance of “A Singer’s Romance”

A musical production commissioned by the Cather Foundation

Written and produced by Jim Ford

April 29-30, 2005

10th International Seminar

“Violence, the Arts, and Cather”

June 18-20, 2005 Red Cloud, Nebraska

and

June 22-24, 2005 University of Nebraska-Lincoln

“Exploring the Caspersen Cather Collection at Drew”: A Colloquium

September 30-October 1, 2005

Drew University, Madison, New Jersey

Contributors to this issue

Dr. Margaret Doane has taught at Cal State San Bernardino for the past 26 years, has published or presented more than twenty articles and papers on Cather, and has received the 2001-2002 Outstanding Teacher Award for the California State University system. Her present article is a companion piece to “The Non-Interpretation of Dreams,” which we were privileged to publish in last year’s winter issue of the WCPM *N&R*.

Dr. Matthew Hokom, a graduate of the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, currently teaches at Fairmont State College in West Virginia. He is interested in reading Cather through her literary predecessors, particularly Ralph Waldo Emerson and the writers of classical antiquity.

Dr. Nancy Holland, Gauguin scholar (Dissertation: *Paul Gauguin, Alienated Artist*, Ph.D. History and Literature, Drew University, 1998), is a professor of European History at Kean University in New Jersey. She lectures on the life and art of Paul Gauguin, as well as the art and culture of French Polynesia, on the *Aramui*, a cruise ship/freighter to Tahiti and the Marquesas Islands in French Polynesia, Gauguin’s *Te Nave Nave Fenua* (delightful land).

Dr. Jo Ann Middleton begins her bibliography of Cather scholarship in 2002.

Willa Cather and Paul Gauguin

Nancy M. Holland

This study is about the connections between the writer Willa Cather and the painter Paul Gauguin. In this study, the links between the two artists are examined on several levels. First, the connection of time and place is established. Second, the South Seas connection is explored in Cather's attachment to Robert Louis Stevenson. Then, the links between the, in many ways, parallel lives of these two artists are examined. The converging philosophies of the two are studied, as well. The preponderance of the essay explores the affinities between images in the writings of the two artists in depth: Gauguin's journal, *Noa Noa*, and Cather's novels, *The Song of the Lark* and *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. Furthermore, a link between images in these two Cather novels and the iconography of some of the paintings of Gauguin are examined as well.

Although Willa Cather's later years are better documented, her early years of apprenticeship, when she was absorbing as much as she could while she read, wrote, and traveled, leave many stories untold. Her public record of her first exposure to the European art scene, now collected in *Willa Cather in Europe*, repeatedly mentions her judgments on art. We therefore know that Willa Cather was attuned to that scene while in Paris in 1902 and probably would have read the object of the latest talk, Paul Gauguin's illustrated journal *Noa Noa*, published the year before.¹

The journal had created quite a stir in artistic circles. The poet Charles Morice, whose survey of literary theory became the crux for the Symbolist movement,² had collaborated with Gauguin on *Noa Noa*. The collaboration began with Morice as the journal's editor.³ Eventually, however, he published the complete version in the French journal *La Plume*, May 1901, with his name alongside Gauguin's as joint author (Sweetman 366, 489-490). Moreover, various critics from the popular little newspaper *L'Echo de Paris* had written of it. For example, Eugène Tardieu, in an interview with Gauguin, called him the "wildest of all the innovators" and said *Noa Noa*, which means "fragrant," would be about "what Tahiti exhales."⁴ These advertisements had arrested widest attention and may explain why affinities exist between Gauguin's work and that of Cather, particularly *The Song of the Lark* and *Death Comes for the Archbishop*.

In addition to the journal *La Revue blanche* or *La Plume*, Cather could easily have viewed Gauguin's Tahitian paintings in Paris at Vollard's gallery at 6 rue Laffitte, or at Durand-Ruel two doors down. There was a great deal of interest in these mythological, barbarous, at times voyeuristic paintings. Gauguin had an exhibition there in 1901, and was offered the leading role in a 1903 exhibition, the year of his death (Sweetman 488). Many of his paintings were on view at these galleries in 1902, and many reviews had appeared on previous shows. The paintings and prints that Vollard owned were some of the artist's greatest works.

In addition to Gauguin's work exhibited while Cather was in Paris, another link to Gauguin is Cather's attachment to Robert Louis Stevenson, who wrote about the South Seas, including the Marquesas Islands where Gauguin lived and worked and died. This admiration for Stevenson may have drawn her to that other artist of the South Seas, Paul Gauguin. While Stevenson had died in Samoa on December 3, 1894, a few years

before Gauguin's death in French Polynesia, he had earlier spent time in the Marquesas. It is also very possible Cather read Stevenson's *In The South Seas*. Her profound interest in Stevenson most certainly would have piqued Cather's curiosity about Gauguin and his journal *Noa Noa*. In Cather's early writing in the *Nebraska State Journal*, December 23, 1894, she commemorated Stevenson's death.⁵ Earlier, in November of 1894, she had written of his letters which appeared in *McClure's*, expressing modesty and self-deprecation.⁶ Further, in 1897, Cather wrote on Stevenson in the Nebraska weekly, the *Courier*, from the perspective of two people who knew the artist.

Even with the Stevenson connection added to Gauguin's notorious journal and paintings, Cather and Gauguin may at first glance seem oceans apart; but actually the two are kindred spirits. Both traveled from place to place, searching for the locale in which to achieve the creative explosion that both subsequently realized. Both left the place in which they grew up because of an uneasiness with the status quo, with modernization, and with the rapid changes that seemed to beset a world out of control; both tried eventually to find a place of refuge, a place where life could be lived simply without the shattering cacophony of modern civilization. Yet what Cather hated in Red Cloud, and Gauguin hated in Europe, was the narrow rigidity and conventionality.

The Gauguin of *Noa Noa*, and other alienated artists of the late nineteenth century whom Cather came to study and admire, were deliberately escaping from civilization. Cather was not an alienated artist in Gauguin's sense, but she was certainly intensely curious about his type: her whole first book of fiction, *The Troll Garden*, depicts artists from various angles. She would have responded to his pronouncements against nineteenth-century European society. In his journal, Gauguin declared, "Yes wholly destroyed finished, dead, is from now on the old civilization within me. I was reborn; or rather another man, purer and stronger, came to life within me . . . the supreme farewell to civilization, to evil. . . . from now on I was a true savage, a real Maori" (*Noa Noa* 48). Gauguin compared civilization with his new-found "primitive" world by contrasting two women, his new *vahine* (Tahitian "wife")⁷ and a Frenchwoman: "On the one side a fresh blossoming, faith and nature; on the other the season of barrenness, law and artifice. Two races were face to face, and I was ashamed of mine" (67). While Cather eschews this kind of flat and judgmental rejection, she certainly employs oppositions among wives such

Cather and Gauguin

(Continued)

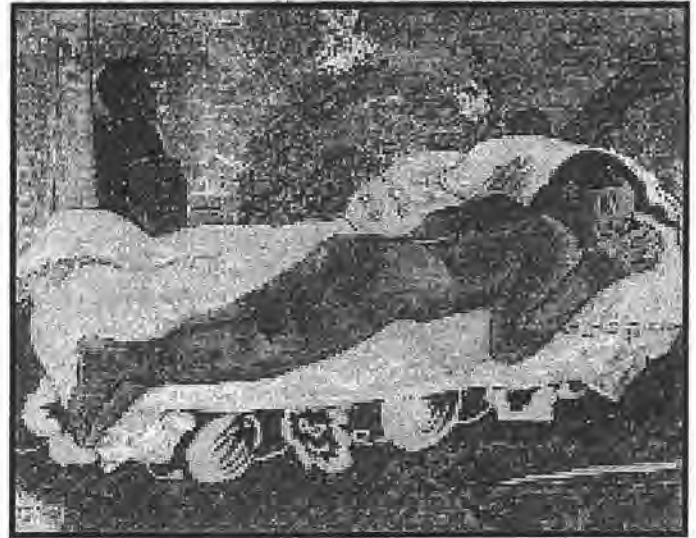
as Magdalena and Madame Olivares in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. And both artists presented themselves as pointedly opposing the conventional. Writing to his wife, on the voyage to Tahiti, Gauguin claimed: "On the bridge of our ship, in the midst of all these civil servants in stiff collars with their children, etc. . . . I really am the odd man out with my long hair" (Thomson 166). Adolescent Cather enjoyed the same eccentric view of herself, with her cropped hair and men's clothing.

Cather must have sought a place of exile, of refuge, where life could be lived in "the old way." Laura Winters sees exile as the key to Cather's work. Winters argues that Cather's "restless exiles are never a return to the landscape of memory." In *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, for example, "the physical world is a shadowy reflection of interior, spiritual landscape" (76). The landscape of central New Mexico suggests Plato's Parable of the Cave," where the shadows are a mere reflection of the true world of the soul.⁸ Cather certainly valorizes a former way of life in *Shadows on the Rock* (Middleton 63). But much earlier, her voyage to Paris was as much a turning point in her life as was her voyage to the Southwest. It is possible she discovered in France the "artists' life" she could enter. In Arles, for example, artists were drawn to that locale for inspiration as were Gauguin and Van Gogh earlier. And Gauguin's voyage to Tahiti was such a turning point in his life. As Cather's, Gauguin's withdrawal and escape came in stages; he left over-civilized Paris, first for Brittany (considered "primitive" at the time), then for Panama and Martinique, and finally for French Polynesia. When Tahiti seemed too civilized, he moved to the Marquesas, trying to halt the inroads of civilization into his sullied paradise until the end. There he drew his last breath; his choice provided the ultimate exile.

Cather's discomfort with tawdry modernization and her restless pursuit of exile was evident throughout her work and life. As Winters said, "Cather learned to live in exile, and she kept repeating this familiar pattern throughout her life" (8). She also continued to repeat the landscape of Panther Canyon which Ellen Moers calls "the most thoroughly elaborated female landscape in literature."⁹ In *Song of the Lark*, Thea Kronborg leaves Chicago for Arizona, echoing Cather's uneasiness with modernization. Reflecting upon her adopted city, Thea observed it to be a "rich, noisy city, fat with food and drink, . . . a spent thing . . . Money and office and success are the consolations of impotence. Fortune turns kind to such solid people and lets them suck their bone in peace" (223). Traveling to Northern Arizona to escape over-structured Chicago, and finding another, sounder civilization, Thea contrasted her former life with that of her sojourns in Panther Canyon where "her power to think seemed converted into a power of sustained sensation" (251). Panther Canyon was Thea's refuge as New Mexico and Arizona were Cather's.

In Panther Canyon, Thea visits the houses of the Ancient People, the Sinagua,¹⁰ prehistoric inhabitants of the American Southwest (249). She could see, in imagination, the "coppery breast . . . of an Indian youth there against the sky" (253). It is the home of an ancient cliff dweller, lined with Navajo blankets, where Thea "stretched her body on their warm

surfaces" (251). Similarly, in *Noa Noa*, Gauguin describes going through "the wilderness with its perspective of great forests" and finding his hut (67); Gauguin describes the Tahitians, like Cather's Indian youth, with their "coppery breasts" (34). Akin to Cather's Ancient People, Gauguin portrays *les anciens*, the ancestors of his *vahine* Tehura¹¹ who had given him "a complete course in Tahitian theology."¹² In his journal, Gauguin depicts an image of Tehura "immobile, naked lying face downward flat on the bed. . . . Never had I seen her so beautiful, so tremulously beautiful. And then in this half light, which was surely peopled for her with dangerous apparitions and terrifying suggestions . . . , was soft, soft and ardent, a night of the tropics . . ." (*Noa Noa* 73). The



Gauguin, *The Spirit of the Dead Watching (Manao Tupapau)*, 1892. Oil on canvas, 73 x 92 cm. W 457. Albert-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York. A. Conger Goodyear collection.

image of Thea asleep on the sun-warmed blankets, taking in the fragrance and color and sound of the canyon, echoes Gauguin's description of his mistress, except, of course, that Thea sleeps alone. One of his paintings, *Manao Tupapau (Spirit of the Dead Watching)*, based on this scene described in his journal, depicts the sensual form of a young Tahitian woman, her skin burned by the penetrating sun. This is Gauguin's definition of pure nature, a view reflected in the riotous native design of the coverlet, the violet background. Cather, of course, picks up all three: the maiden, the blankets, and the violet sky.

Writing of this painting in 1893, Charles Morice, in his catalog introduction to a Gauguin exhibition, described it as "a rite in a religion of joy," but he adds that it is also sometimes altered with terror. "The soft night of Tahiti is populated with fearful, unknown and unnameable beings . . . ; the ancient dead looking on . . . make the androgynous little girl lying there toss in her half-sleep; she can no longer rest peacefully because the dead return—dead lovers or dead gods."¹³ As Jo Ann Middleton has pointed out, Cather recognizes in her analogous description the androgynous godliness in Thea and its potential danger (20, 90).¹⁴

Cather's accomplishment is to create works that can be read on different levels at once, each level enhancing the others without canceling them out. Cather proves an image of the sinuous form of a figure asleep on the sun-warmed blankets, taking in the fragrance and color and sound. She felt herself "becoming a mere receptacle for heat, or . . . a color, . . . or . . . a continuous repetition of sound" (*SL* 251). The language of the images in this highly-charged scene is enriched by an oblique

psychological edge. In a womb-like hut, Thea gestates, with the “sensuous form” of music in her head, while the image of herself develops as a “receptacle.” The cave, of course, also becomes a tomb, reflecting the death of the Ancient People, as well as the ephemeral life of art. The former occupants leave only their long-dead charcoal fires, their primitive pottery, and their ancient footpaths. Eros and Thanatos, love and death, intertwine here as they do in the music of Wagner Thea will sing or the canvases of Paul Gauguin she echoes.

Another scene described by Gauguin in his journal, which corresponds to one of his paintings,¹⁵ is composed of a naked young girl, drinking from a spring, who “caught the water in both hands, and let it run down between her breasts” (*Noa Noa* 53-54). This incident actually refers to an old Polynesian myth, reflecting Gauguin’s sensitivity to ancient legends, another link to Cather.¹⁶ The scene of the Polynesian girl at the pool, however, foretells the scene where Thea Kronborg bathes at the bottom of the canyon, in a sunny pool. Cather describes her “standing upright in the pool, splashing water between her shoulder-blades. Her bath came to have a “ceremonial gravity” within the “ritualistic” canyon (*SL* 254).

Images in Gauguin’s *Noa Noa* prefigure not only Panther Canyon moments but also several in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. For example, Latour’s Indian cave resembles Gauguin’s depiction of the grotto in his journal *Noa Noa*. The cave scene in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* brings Father Latour into an enclosure where he enters through a “mouthlike” opening suggesting “stone lips” and through an “orifice,” into the “throat” of the cave (126). This powerful vulval image produces in the priest a feeling of aversion and abomination intensified by the vibrations of the underground river, a symbol of sexual desire.¹⁷ The clues suggest the worship of a serpent goddess. There were stories involving an enormous serpent to which the natives of the Pecos Pueblo sacrificed their young babies (122). These stories were reinforced by the trader Zeb Orchard, who told Father Latour of a native woman who begged his mother to hide her baby to avoid its sacrifice to a snake (135). The behavior of the Indian Jacinto in the ceremonial cave makes the stories even more plausible.

The images of the Indian Cave suggest Gauguin’s depiction of the grotto in *Noa Noa*. In the grotto scene, Gauguin describes what seem to be serpents on the wall of a cavern. Thereafter Gauguin often used the serpent as a traditional symbol for temptation in his paintings.¹⁸ He wrote, “Here and there on the walls enormous serpents seem to extend slowly as if to drink from the surface of the interior lake” (78). This lake, like the primal underground river in Cather’s *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, is full of foreboding, but Gauguin is determined to swim to the opposite shore and asks his *vahine* Tehura to join him. She replies, “Are you mad? Down there, so far. And the eels? One never goes there.” To prove himself, Gauguin began to swim: “I was continually advancing, and from each side the huge serpents viewed me ironically.” He sees a head emerging from the water, with “two brilliant eyes fixed suspiciously on

me.” He knows it is not a sea-turtle in the fresh water. It must be the snake-like eel.¹⁹ As he rests on a little plateau he sees “a yawning orifice. Wither does it lead? A mystery whose fathoming I renounce!” Finally he turns back afraid, rejoining Tehura after a full hour of swimming. She utters a prayer and they leave (79-80).

In *Noa Noa*, Gauguin inverts images of foreboding with that of life and love. From the lethal and malevolent landscape of the grotto, Gauguin depicts a landscape inhabited by guileless and simple people: “Between two mountains, two high and steep walls . . . there yawns a fissure in which the water winds among rocks. These blocks have been loosened from the flank of the mountain by infiltrations in order to form a passageway for a spring” (40). Gauguin recounts his journey from Papeete, already Europeanized, to a “rich, monotonous country,” with the sea, the waves and the rocks, on the right, and on the left, the “wilderness. . . .” Advancing even further to other parts of the island, Gauguin reaches “a little valley where the inhabitants still lived in the ancient Maori manner. They are happy and undisturbed. They dream, they love, they sleep, they sing, they pray” Gauguin is charmed with these Polynesian inhabitants, with their guileless simplicity, in the same way as Father Latour with the Mexican peasants of Agua Secreta. Like the homely sculptures of the saints favored by the priest, Gauguin admires the statues of the Tahitian divinities (58).

In *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, Cather inverts effects in much the same way as Gauguin. From the empathetic and beautiful Panther Canyon of *Song of the Lark*, the landscape becomes lethal and malevolent in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. It is described as “heaped up into monotonous red sand hills.” Everywhere he looked, the wandering Father Latour saw the same red sand hills like Mexican ovens and the uniform, blunted pyramids of juniper trees. For miles, the sameness of the landscape made it impossible to find his way. Lost, tortured by thirst, the priest suddenly comes upon a cruciform tree, a juniper which differed in shape from the others. Fixing his mind on the cry of the Savior on the Cross, “*J’ai soif!*” “I thirst,” and praying, he then continues on his way until soon he comes upon a river winding between two hills. The river is described as a “green thread of verdure” in the midst of a “wavy ocean of sand.” In the valley is a Mexican settlement called Hidden Water, the home to an artless and innocent people. He is charmed by their simple faith.

He admires the wooden figures of the saints, “carved by some devout soul, and brightly painted.” The figures appear to personify their Mexican carvers (17-27). With the hidden valley, the desert becomes, for Father Latour, a paradise.

Inversions described in *Noa Noa* are echoed in Gauguin’s paintings. Most of what we know of these paintings, exhibited in Vollard’s Gallery in Paris in 1902, is derived from Thadée Natanson’s “On M. Paul Gauguin” in *La Revue blanche*, December 1898, a critique of his show that year.²⁰ We know, for example, his *Vairumati* of 1897 most certainly was in Vollard’s gallery in 1902, the year before Gauguin’s death. Gauguin’s



Gauguin, *Vairumati*, 1897. Oil on canvas, 60 x 116 cm. W 559. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Cather and Gauguin

(Continued)

Vairumati relates directly to one of the Tahitian legends which inspired the work of Gauguin, the accounts of the long vanished Arioi, a priestly *élite* whose communion services were sexual as well as religious (*Noa Noa* 118-119), not unlike the hints aroused by Jacinto's cave in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* or Thea Kronborg's ancient people in *Song of the Lark*: A vanished race, . . . with "bits of their frail clay vessels, fragments of their desire (269)." In Gauguin's *Vairumati*, a bird clutching a lizard seen to the left of the goddess is perhaps a symbol of Evil and Death. Gauguin's dazzling gift for allusive iconography and instinct for metaphor is apparent in this image. The beautiful

Aori woman symbolizes the sexual rites which were a component of her religion, echoed by two worshipping women to the right. She joyfully awaits her sexual communion. Cather would have been entranced by this brilliant depiction of a Polynesian goddess with her sensuous form framed by a fabulous throne and the brilliant red which outlines the

luminous bird grasping the evil lizard, the Polynesian version of the serpent. (There were actually no snakes in French Polynesia.)

The painting *Vairumati* and its description in *Noa Noa* may have inspired Cather in her various overt and implied references to goddesses in her novels (Hively 23, 37, 49, 58, 61, 157-158). According to Evelyn Hively in *Sacred Fire*, Mary "thus takes her place in the panoply of the goddess figures in the background of Cather's novels" (158). The image of the mother goddess is repeated when Manuelito, the fugitive, tells the bishop that the canyon was their mother. Hively argues that in Cather's ceremonial scenes of the goddess, the worship of the goddesses in mystery religions was a way to satisfy a passionate approach to life (23). She asserts that Cather's inclusion of the themes of the mystery religions in her novels suggests her search for answers to the "questions of death and rebirth, redemption, and ultimate destiny of the soul" (29). Deborah Williams, in her essay on *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, sees the pagan lying under the Christian surface in the cave, implying the "presence of an earth goddess whom Latour senses but cannot name" (85). Later Bishop Latour himself speaks of the Virgin as another version of the goddess: "Long before Her years on earth, in the long twilight between the Fall and the Redemption, the pagan sculptors were always trying to achieve the image of a goddess who should yet be a woman" (*DCA* 255). Like Cather, "Gauguin visualized a . . . distinctive and unconventional philosophy of existence, of life, of death and of love and creation" (Holland 147).

Another painting, which Cather must surely have seen in Paris, was Gauguin's monumental²¹ *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* In this extraordinary tableau, Gauguin presents another parable of Love and Death. Exploring the mystery of time and space, he deals with the age-old question

of why there must be death in the world. Gauguin said that the bird represented "the vain futility of words."²² The bird was placed near an old woman in the "death pose."²³ Because of its placement, the bird can be seen to represent the futility of words when life closes. Death and Love in the cycle of regeneration, not words, conquer evil. Words are futile. Sexuality rules over all. This painting can be seen to symbolize a pagan cycle of existence. It is this pagan cycle that is most threatening to Father Latour in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. This cycle, however, closely resembles Cather's "symbolic death and rebirth of the artist" as the "central Motif" of her *Song of the Lark* (Hively 52). The same cycle of existence is seen in her exploration of "death and rebirth, redemption, and ultimate destiny of the soul" in various novels, as Hively mentions in *Sacred Fire* (29).



Gauguin, *What Are We? Where Do We Come From? Where Are We Going? (D'où venons-nous? Que sommes-nous? Où allons-nous?)*, 1897. Oil on canvas, 139.1 x 374.6 cm. W561. Tompkins Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Love and Death, or Life and Death, are prominent themes in Cather's work (23, 25). Brilliant colors also shimmer in her landscape images. The contrast of the lethal red desert in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* with the brilliant gardens of *Agua Secreta*, as well as the erotic, life-

giving landscapes described in *Song of the Lark* seem to have such an affinity to passages in Gauguin's journal *Noa Noa* that his great vibrant, symbolic paintings emerge like pentimento in Cather's great fiction.

Notes

¹ *Noa Noa* was first published in 1897, but without the extraordinary wood-block prints which were prepared to illustrate the book, and which first appeared in 1901 with the journal text.

² Charles Morice, *Littérature à tout à l'heure*.

³ Morice first published a version, edited or rewritten by himself, the first installment of which appeared in the October 1901, edition of *La Revue blanche*, with the promise of a subsequent installment the following month. Under the editorship of Félix Fénéon, the *Revue* was the most influential of the French literary/artistic periodicals (Sweetman 459) and anyone investigating culture in Paris should have known it.

⁴ Eugène Tardieu, "M. Paul Gauguin," *L'Echo de Paris*, 13 May, 1895 quoted in Maria Prather and Charles F. Stuckey, *Gauguin: A Retrospective*, 250-253.

⁵ Willa Cather, *The World and the Parish*, *Willa Cather's Articles and Reviews 1893-1902*. Volume One, 135-137.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 271

⁷ Gauguin had a legal wife of eighteen years, Mette Gad, and 5 children in Copenhagen. Tehura was, as he wrote in *Noa Noa*, a child of about thirteen years (the equivalent of eighteen or twenty in Europe)" (*Noa Noa* 61).

⁸ Plato, *The Republic Book VII*, trans. Philip G. Rouse, ed. Eric H. Warmington and Philip G. Rouse (New York, Mentor, Published by Penguin, 1984, 1st printing 1956.) 315.

⁹ Ellen Moers, *Literary Women: The Great Writers* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977) 391 (quoted in Winters 8).

¹⁰ The Sinagua, a member of the Hakataya regional group of prehistoric inhabitants of the American Southwest (SL 249 note 2).

¹¹ She was called Teha'amana, but Gauguin refers to her as Tehura in *Noa Noa*.

¹² Gauguin actually fostered the myth that he learned the stories, which he related in his journal and created in the iconography of his paintings, from his Tahitian *vahine*. The truth is that his active source was J. A. Moerenhout's *Voyage aux îles du grand océan*, published in 1837 when Tahitian society was already disintegrating due to Western colonial influence. This work was lent to Gauguin on a visit to Papeete in March 1892. Although it was full of false interpretations, this book influenced Gauguin in his work.

¹³ Charles Morice, "Exposition d'Oeuvres Recentes de Paul Gauguin: Preface, November, 1893" (Prather and Stuckey, 217).

¹⁴ Middleton also points out the profound influence of Gustave Flaubert on Cather in *Willa Cather's Modernism*, 40, 96-98. Mario Vargas Llosa, in *The Perpetual Orgy: Flaubert and Madame Bovary*, emphasizes androgyny in Flaubert's character of Emma (144).

¹⁵ *Pape Moe (Mysterious Water)*, 1893. The title also refers to a work of poetry by Charles Morice.

¹⁶ He goes on to describe her reaction on seeing him. "Scarcely had she seen me, than she plunged below the surface. Quickly I looked into the river – no one, nothing – only an enormous eel which wound in and out among the small stones at the bottom." There is a legend of the goddess Hina, who was seduced by an eel while bathing in a pool. The angry people destroyed it, cutting off its head. The eel's buried head became the first coconut tree. In another myth it struck her with its tail so that she fell in the water, where it had intercourse with her. Her enraged husband (the god Maui) killed the giant eel, the various parts of its body becoming several varieties of eel found in the waters of New Zealand as well as edible plants found growing near these waters (Roslyn Poignant's *Oceanic Mythology: The Myths of Polynesia, Micronesia, Melanesta, Australia*, 23, 48, 51-52). This description in the journal is embodied in one of Gauguin's paintings, *Pape Moe*. Both legends to which the painting alludes interlink the motifs of Love and Death, which can be seen in the disquieting image of the painting.

¹⁷ Barbara G. Walker, *The Woman's Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects*, 350, and Hively, *Sacred Fire: Willa Cather's Novel Cycle*, 158.

¹⁸ One of the earliest uses of the serpent is found in *Eve bretonne*, 1889. He used the snake again in *Nirvana*, 1890. Gauguin tended to substitute the lizard for the serpent after his visit to the South Pacific, because there are no snakes in Polynesia. This can be seen in the painting *Te Nave Nave Fenua*, 1892. The snake, however, did not entirely disappear in his works of Tahiti and the Marquesas. For example in the companion panel of the carved door frame for Gauguin's House in the Marquesas, on the lower right of the door frame, a snake appears under the words, *Soyez amoureuses et vous serez heureuses*, 1902. Both the snake and the lizard seem to symbolize the temptation.

¹⁹ See note 16, above.

²⁰ Quoted in Prather and Stuckey, 224-226.

²¹ Over 12 feet long.

²² Mme. Joly-Segalen, ed. *Lettres de Gauguin à Daniel de Monfreid*, XL, 119.

²³ This reading, indicated by the old woman's pose, is the same pose of the Peruvian mummy seen by Gauguin in the Trocadero Museum in Paris. In much of Gauguin's work, this pose along with bluish-green tones became a symbol of Death.

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“Houses founded on the sea”: Skepticism and Human Relations in *A Lost Lady*

Matthew Hokom

Scholars have long recognized the sophistication of Willa Cather's literary conversations with fellow writers. Her engagement with literary tradition can be seen in a variety of ways, from the subtle allusions she weaves into her fiction, to the prominent roles of books in the lives of her characters. One immediately thinks, for example, of how the *Aeneid* functions for Jim Burden and Tom Outland. In *A Lost Lady*, Cather explicitly raises the theme of literary influence by providing us with Niel Herbert's reading list, consisting of "Don Juan," *Tom Jones*, *Wilhelm Meister*, Montaigne and Ovid. Niel "always went back." This emphasis on Montaigne is important, but vague enough to be more intriguing than genuinely helpful. Where, precisely, is Cather pointing us with this reference? The answer can be found in the work of another writer who exercised a profound influence on Cather, Ralph Waldo Emerson.¹ The title of his essay "Montaigne; or, the Skeptic" gives us the hint we need. Once we realize the importance of the word "Skeptic," it is possible to interpret *A Lost Lady* using as a tool the skeptical tradition which comes to Cather from Montaigne through Emerson, a tradition teaching tolerance, adaptability, and intellectual humility.

When Cather turns to skepticism, she faces two of the same questions Emerson wrestled with. The first is epistemological—what do we really know about the world around us and the people we are close to? The moderately skeptical answer both Cather and Emerson arrive at in their middle works is "not much." Experience has led them to doubt (not deny) the possibility of certain knowledge about the world, especially of other people. Given this answer, a second ethical question arises—how do we act in this mutable world among people we can't really know? If there is an unbridgeable gap between every "me and thee" (to use Emerson's phrase), then how do we conduct the most intimate of relations—between husband and wife, parent and child, friend and friend?

Preparing to grapple with this and other questions raised by skeptics, Emerson begins his essay on Montaigne with a series of dualisms: "Every fact is related on one side to sensation, and on the other, to morals. The game of thought is, on the appearance of one of these two sides, to find the other: given the upper to find the under side" (312). This is, as B. L. Packer notes, the "key strategy of classical Pyrrhonism—setting opposed dogmatisms against one another until both cancel each other out" (201). Cather employs the same strategy in *A Lost Lady*. Ivy and Niel represent the two sides of this antithesis: sensation and morals. Niel is idealistic and moralistic, seemingly without a sense that the world changes or that the mundane and petty must be given their due. He perceives Mrs. Forrester as belonging to another, better world and prides himself both on his recognition and on the fact that she admits him into her charmed circle. This pride often translates into scorn for his fellows and even his own family, a pride Mrs. Forrester herself chides him for. Emerson describes Niel's class of men (the moralists and idealists) by writing, "Read the haughty language which Plato and the Platonists speak of all men who are

not devoted to their shining abstractions: other men are rats and mice. The literary class is usually proud and exclusive" (312-3).

Ivy, in contrast, is all sensation, concerned with dollars and cents, material profit without moral scruple. Of this type, Emerson relates the following story:

Mr. Pope was with Sir Godfrey Kneller, one day, when his nephew, a Guinea trader came in. "Nephew," said Sir Godfrey, "you have the honor of seeing the two greatest men in the world." "I don't know how great you men may be," said the Guinea man, "but I don't like your looks. I have often bought a man much better than both of you, all muscles and bones, for ten guineas." Thus the men of the senses revenge themselves on the professors, and repay scorn for scorn (313).

Ivy's reaction to those around him echoes the behavior of the "Guinea trader." Ivy, who believes "in a world of pig lead" (Emerson 314), also revenges himself on the Forresters and Niel by buying the marsh and converting its beauty into crop land whose only purpose is profit. Fortunately, "there arises a third party to occupy the middle ground between these two, the skeptic, namely. He finds wrong by being in extremes" (313).

There are two candidates for this third party in *A Lost Lady*. The first is Captain Forrester himself, an aged version of the pioneer dreamer Cather had portrayed in earlier novels. He, like Alexandra Bergson, can be possessed with an idea and transform the world according to his vision. For instance, the Captain advises Niel that "a thing that is dreamed of in the way I mean, is already an accomplished fact. All our great West has been developed by such dreams" (52). The Captain, however, does not live exclusively in the realm of ideas. He is also a man of action and recognizes that in spite of his belief in the power of dreams there are "people who get nothing in this world. . . . I have lived too long in mining works and construction camps not to know that" (52). The Captain, then, is basically an idealist, but one who tempers his idealism with a pragmatic knowledge of the workaday world. He is an admirable figure who occupies a middle ground between the visions of Ivy and Niel.

What dooms the Captain is not the substance of his vision but its resistance to change, symbolized by his granite-like solidity. He is often compared to rock—"His repose was like that of a mountain" (46)—and his phrases have "the impressiveness of inscriptions cut in stone" (51). After his strokes, when he can no longer support his own weight, he undergoes an Ovidian metamorphosis, growing more and more rocklike until eventually he is buried under his great stone sundial. The Captain is a man who did "not vary his formulae or his manners. He was no more mobile than his countenance" (46). He is, in other words, not given to change with circumstances.

In the decline of the Captain, Cather confronts the heroes of her earlier work and asks, How would these sorts live in the world of Ivy Peters? The answer is not an optimistic one. So, while Captain Forrester presents us with an alternative to the one-dimensional idealism of Niel and the crass materialism of Ivy, it is an alternative that doesn't fit the times. Only Marian Forrester ultimately survives loss (in the words of *My Ántonia*) "battered but not diminished" (MA 332).

Mrs. Forrester endures through change because she herself can change. Whereas the Captain is associated with objects of massive solidity like boulders, his wife is portrayed in terms of growth and flexibility. She is, for instance, linked with organic objects like flowers. Physically, she is a world apart from her husband. In the same chapter in which the Captain is shown watching "time visibly devoured" (106) as he sits immobile in front of his stone sundial, Niel surprises Mrs. Forrester by picking her up as she rests in her hammock. Niel thinks "How light and alive she was! Like a bird caught in a net. If only he could rescue her and carry her off like this,--off the earth of sad, inevitable periods, away from age, weariness, adverse fortune!" (105). We know Niel can't do this and that Mrs. Forrester, like the woodpecker Ivy blinds, will suffer horribly.² What enables Mrs. Forrester to survive this suffering is that she is light instead of heavy, slight rather than massive, changeable rather than immutable.

Niel, however, interprets Mrs. Forrester's willingness to change as fickleness in contrast to the Captain's rock-like constancy. He notes that when the Captain dies, Mrs. Forrester "was like a ship without ballast, driven hither and thither by every wind. She was flighty and perverse" (145). In some respects, this is true; Mrs. Forrester is flighty, and when the Captain dies she is profoundly affected by her loss. But her actions may not be as despicable as Niel would have us believe. One of the keys to seeing this is his comparison of Mrs. Forrester to a ship without ballast. When we realize that in "Montaigne" Emerson uses the exact same comparison as does Niel, but favorably, we can reinterpret Niel's metaphor in a positive light. Emerson argues that "We want a ship for these billows we inhabit. . . . An angular dogmatic house would be rent to splinters in this storm of many elements. . . . Adaptiveness is the peculiarity of human nature. We are golden averages, voilant stabilities, compensated or periodic errors, houses founded on the sea" (317). Emerson recognizes that we must either be driven hither and thither or else be beaten apart by life. If Mrs. Forrester tried to live in "the angular dogmatic house" Niel would have her inhabit, she would be smashed to splinters. The ballast Niel believes she has lost is her allegiance to the pioneer code incarnate in the Captain. Her sense of propriety, her class consciousness, her marital fidelity to her husband, are what Niel thinks important. Emerson tells us differently when he argues that, "It is a tempest of fancies, and the only ballast I know, is a respect for the present hour" (223). This respect for the present is precisely what Mrs. Forrester has and Niel lacks.

According to Emerson, the credo of the skeptic is that "we ought to secure those advantages which we can command, and not risk them by clutching after the airy and unattainable. . . . A world in the hand is worth two in the bush. Let us have to do with real men and women, and not with skipping ghosts" (316). Emerson here perfectly captures the conflict between Mrs.

Forrester and Niel. Niel wishes that Mrs. Forrester would live a dignified widowhood dedicated to the memory of her husband. She, however, refuses to live with the "skipping ghosts" of the past and insists on living with the real men and women of the present. As it so happens, the "heavy lads" Niel so despises are the real people available to her in Sweet Water.³ Circumstances have not been kind, but Mrs. Forrester refuses to acquiesce to them. Instead, she tries to secure those advantages she can command rather than fade into the dignified widowhood Niel envisions for her.

Niel's own failings become especially clear when we compare his reactions to change and loss with those of Mrs. Forrester. Niel first realizes the disparity between his conception of Mrs. Forrester and her reality when he visits the Forrester place one morning. As Niel places a bunch of roses on Mrs. Forrester's window sill, he hears Frank Ellinger's "fat and lazy" laugh from within the house, and subsequently,

found himself at the foot of the hill on the wooden bridge, his face hot, his temples beating, his eyes blind with anger. . . . In that instant between stooping to the window sill and rising, he had lost one of the most beautiful things in his life. Before the dew dried, the morning had been wrecked for him; and all subsequent mornings, he told himself bitterly. This day saw the end of that admiration and loyalty that had been like a bloom on his existence. He could never recapture it. (82)

This scene demonstrates Niel's tendency to see the world in absolutes. He begins with an idealized conception of Mrs. Forrester as a woman too good for Frank Ellinger. When he reverently kneels before her window with his offering of roses and hears Ellinger and Mrs. Forrester together, his opinion instantly switches to the other extreme. He believes that "all" mornings have been destroyed and that he will "never" recapture the admiration he has lost. His disillusionment is profound and, he tells himself, permanent.

The second such moment is what finally drives Niel from Sweet Water and Mrs. Forrester.

It happened like this, had scarcely the dignity of an episode. It was nothing, and yet it was everything. Going over to see her one summer evening, he stopped a moment by the dining-room window to look at a honeysuckle. The dining-room door was open into the kitchen, and there Mrs. Forrester stood at a table, making pastry. 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. (161)

Compared to the previous scene this is a painfully prosaic anti-climax. Cather's depiction of Niel, however, is much the same. Again, the key terms, "nothing" and "everything," represent opposed extremes. Dogmatically sticking to absolutes, Niel loses his sense of perspective and even meaning. He doesn't consider the skeptic's middle view and consequently his all or nothing attitude isn't adequate to an experience which lies between the two extremes. (Continued on page 65)

Life is but a Dream: Reality Romanticized in *A Lost Lady*

Margaret Doane

In *After the World Broke in Two*, Merrill Skaggs writes that Cather “relied from the beginning through the end of her career on a repertory of trusted devices to get her to her desired new goals” (12). “Cather’s work,” she explains, “has a continuity in which symbols and themes and techniques repeatedly resurface” (14). Dreams are one such device in Cather’s art: in eleven of her novels, dreams are used to reveal or emphasize character.¹ Curiously, however, not a single dream appears in a novel where they might be most expected, *A Lost Lady*. This book, about the illusions and brief awakenings of a romanticizing idealist, would seem to be a novel full of the stuff that dreams are made of. Point of consciousness figure Niel Herbert idealizes Daniel and Marian Forrester, whom he sees as symbols of the grandness of the American West and the pioneer spirit. Both the West and the Forresters are already in decline, however, and there is an elusive interplay between the childlike idolatry Niel hopes to maintain and the realities he experiences.

Niel’s life is so much a dream that Cather reverses her usual pattern of using dreams to reveal character. Here she shows the illusions of an awakened but dream-like state, in order to reveal character. Although Cather “mastered the poetic use of reverberating symbol and image,” she also “actively tried a new approach with each book, and each book dictated its own experiment” (Middleton 10, 41); Niel’s dreamy reality seemed to dictate that it be the vehicle for characterization, rather than Cather’s usual pattern of including dreams in sleep. In *A Lost Lady*, readers purposefully realize much more about Niel’s character than he does (Rabin 43); perhaps this happens throughout the text, but it is especially emphasized in four memorable scenes in which he romanticizes and idealizes Marian Forrester while in an awakened but dream-like state. The scenes build upon each other by the “incremental repetition” (Rosowski 122) of details, and climax in the waking dream sequence in which Niel believes he will save his “lovely lady” by presenting her with roses on her windowsill. Cather is very careful to tell readers that Niel is awake during these scenes, each of which ends so negatively that it could be seen as a genuine awakening. All of these dream-like, idealizing scenes except one occur in Part I; after Niel’s illusions about Marian are shattered by Frank Ellinger’s yawn, his illusions and his dream-like idealizing states diminish markedly.

In Part II, Cather so wants to emphasize the loss of dreams that she refuses to use the word, even where its use is appropriate and where its omission seems strained. Niel romanticizes and idealizes both Marian and the American West to such a degree that his waking life has a dream-like, fantasy quality. He so pronouncedly lives in fantasy that he does not need to dream. When his lovely lady is lost to him, even the word *dream* purposely vanishes from the text.

The overall effect of *A Lost Lady* is produced by a series of scenes both very fixed and very elusive. Skaggs notes that “the recording camera of Cather’s prose seems to freeze the action for a moment, to add symbolic weight to a particular frame or

detail” (22). At the same time, these moments form “a loosely connected series of pastoral scenes with the mobile, elusive figure of a woman at their center” (Lee 198). It can be argued that Niel so wants to hang on to a past already lost that he idealizes and romanticizes the Forresters, particularly Marian, to such a degree that his waking life is full of illusion and he lives in a dream-like state; his life itself becomes a dream. Cather carefully crafts each of these memorable scenes in the book to have both a frozen, permanent quality and an elusive quality, as remembered dreams have. The scenes also “begin in time, move to a core episode that contains a moment of recognition and an escape from time, then return abruptly to the historical, real world” (Rosowski 124). The first scene with Marian is the briefest and least fully drawn of the dream-like sequences, yet it establishes the essential elements that will be developed in subsequent scenes. Niel sees Marian as special, as pure, and as motherly; his physical perceptions of her are flickering and changing, as in a dreamy state; he has reason to believe she would like to be rescued; and he sees his relationship to her at all conscious levels to be that of a pre-sexual child to an adult. Niel locks in these perceptions of Marian; and although later interactions with her should cause most of these views to change, he never genuinely breaks from them.

The scene in which Niel is lunching with a group of boys in the Forresters’ grove begins in a harsh reality: Thaddeus Grimes “scorn[fully] . . . bawl[s]” at the Blum boys for bringing unappetizing food when they, after all, “live on wienies to home.” “Hush,” responds Niel, reverentially “point[ing] to a white figure . . . flickering through the leaf shadows,” a woman whose “white figure [they later watch] drifting along the edge of the grove” (11, 12). In this “glimmering landscape,” Marian seems almost a “white ghost” (Lee 198), an elusive symbol of purity, almost an illusion even in her reality. The scene itself seems unreal and evanescent in its “drifting” and “flickering.” Marian has brought the boys cookies, symbolically a very motherly activity, and chats with them both “light[ly] and confidential[ly]” (11). She asks the boys for protection from snakes—she questions why the boys did not kill a water snake they saw that morning, for it will “bite [her] toes the next time [she] go[es] wading” (12)—and it is not farfetched for Niel to conclude from this that he should guard her from this snake and from other reptilian creatures such as Ivy Peters and Frank Ellinger.

While we know that Niel believed Marian to be special even when he was five, when he followed her into a church (32), this scene is the first major one to identify Marian as Motherly and as needing and desiring protection. The scene itself is actually an ambiguous, elusive one: Marian is in white, both pure and ghostly; she seems a motherly figure, but has no children and only brings the cookies made by another; she asks for protection from “water snakes and blood-suckers” (12), yet both “shiver[s]” and “laugh[s]” as she does so. Niel does not consciously interpret the significance of the experience at this

point more than, apparently, to agree with the boys' collective appraisal that "Mrs. Forrester was a very special kind of person" (12).

The next dream-like scene appears only a few pages later, after Niel has broken his arm while attempting to rescue, by attempting to kill, the female woodpecker Ivy has maliciously blinded. Although Niel will later believe Marian needs rescuing, here she is seen by the other boys as highly competent, the one who "will know what to do," and so Niel is brought to the Forrester house. He may even have been unconscious, for he "lay without moving" (18). Cather definitely establishes that Niel is awake by stating that he "opened his eyes" (20), for otherwise the scene is so inviting, so sensual, and so perfect that it could easily be mistaken for a fantasy. Although Niel is in considerable pain, and "perspiration [has] broke[n] out on his face" (20), Marian is so "lovely" that Niel becomes completely caught up in her beauty and forgets his arm. The amount of time Niel will have for this experience is immediately established as brief, for Dr. Dennison will arrive "in a few minutes" (20). Nonetheless, Niel gazes at the scene "wonderingly." Mrs. Forrester is taking care of his every need, "kneeling beside him, bathing his forehead with cologne" (20). He is in "her own bedroom" (19), lying on a white bed with ruffled pillow shams. She is connected with the bed a few lines later when he notices that "inside the lace ruffle of her dress, . . . her white throat [was] rising and falling so quickly" (20), and she even removes her wedding rings for him (Skaggs 52).

The scene builds to a point where Marian "[runs] her fingers through his black hair and lightly kisse[s] him on the forehead." "Oh, how sweet, how sweet she smelled!" exudes the smitten Niel (21). Niel is a child "on the verge of puberty" who actually "is responding to Marian both as maternal presence and as sexually-attractive woman" (Nichols 189). However, at all conscious levels, he experiences Marian as a "little boy" interested in light on the "green shutters" and in inlays—whatever double meanings there may be to this word appear to escape him—in the bedroom furniture. The scene has built to fingers in his hair, a light kiss, and a conscious realization on Niel's part of how sweet Marian smells. Left to continue, it might be impossible even for a prepubescent boy to escape experiencing the scene in a consciously sensual way. However, the scene is abruptly interrupted by the announcement that Dr. Dennison's "wheels [are] on the bridge" (21).

Cather very definitely stops the scene, Niel's reverie ends, and no further mention of Marian is made in the chapter. The scene has all the elements of the dream-like reality episodes: we are told that Niel is definitely awake; he perceives Marian as a "lovely," "white" presence; there is a "glittering," "quivering" quality to the scene paralleling the "drifting" and "flickering" of the previous one; and the scene ends abruptly with literally a rude awakening out of reverie into a negative reality. Perhaps the most important element of the episode, however, is the information it provides readers about Niel's character. It is virtually impossible to read the scene without being struck by its great sensuality and sexuality, yet all of this escapes Niel, at least at a conscious level. While Cather makes no authorial comment, "there is a great deal that Niel does not notice but that Cather leads us to notice" (Stout 81). Perhaps it is attributable to either his age (twelve) or to the abruptness with which the scene ends, but Niel most certainly has been profoundly influenced by this experience. He attempts to

return to it in the next dream-like episode seven years later.

The roses-on-the-windowsill episode, the most memorable and defining scene in the novel, also has a dream-like, fantasy quality. This experience seems deeply rooted in Niel's previous experience in Marian's bedroom: at twelve, Niel believed that he would "probably never be in so nice a place again" (21); and Niel, at nineteen, seems to be trying to return to that Edenic place and those Edenic emotions. All of the qualities of the first bedroom scene appear in this episode, either in exactly the same way as the previous sequence, or altered and expanded to "[bring] forward . . . accumulated associations" (Rosowski 122). The episode is so dream-like that Cather repeatedly tells us it is not a dream so that the episode cannot be interpreted as an actual dream: Niel "awakened before dawn," "he tried to muffle his ears . . . and go to sleep again [but could not]," he "could not shut out the feeling it was summer," he "had awakened," "he rose quickly and dressed" (69).

In the previous episode, Niel seemed to realize that his time with Marian would be short, and even at the outset stated that Dr. Dennison would be there in a few minutes. Here, again, Niel seems to realize he has only a short time, paradoxically, to establish a timeless moment: he must "get over to the hill before Frank Ellinger could intrude his unwelcome presence," before "men and their activities had spoiled [the day]," which "must fade, like ecstasy" (69,70). He believes an "impulse of affection and guardianship" is drawing him to Marian so that she will "perhaps [have] a sudden distaste for coarse worldlings like Frank Ellinger" (69, 71), perhaps an echo from the first dream-like sequence that he can be her knight (Helmick 181), rescuing her from "water snakes and blood-suckers" that may indeed be "bit[ing] her toes" (12). Although he does not see her, he calls her by the exact term—"lovely lady"—he used in the previous bedroom episode (20, 71). Importantly, Niel does seek to return to her bedroom: from any number of the windows of other rooms could she find roses soon after rising; but he places them by the "green shutters" that had "let in streaks of sunlight" before (21). The "drifting" and "flickering," "glittering" and "quivering" quality of the previous experiences now is a "glistening," also a moving, not quite constant, dreamy light.

It is obvious to almost any reader that this is at some level a fantasized courtship scene—the beautiful roses, the delighted recipient, the attempt to get there before an obvious rival can intrude. It is obvious to any reader, but it is not obvious to Niel, who early in the scene casts himself as a child (69), as he actually was in the two previous scenes; the scene as epic and "heroic" (70) and therefore not sexual; and his motives as being those of a guardian-rescuer (69, 71). He is awakened emotionally, when, as he "bent to place the flowers on the sill, he heard . . . a woman's soft laughter . . . and a man's . . . fat and lazy [laugh], end[ing] in something like a yawn" (71). Not only is Marian Forrester not part of a timeless, "heroic" world, she is making love, and not to her husband, but to the "coarse worldling" Frank Ellinger. It is even a coarse moment for a coarse Frank, since it is a "fat," "lazy," and "yawn[ing]" one.

Most importantly, Niel is angry because Marian is not, in what must certainly be perceived as a sexual fantasy, making love to him. Perhaps he removes himself from sexual interest in Marian by casting himself as a child, but readers once again know more about Niel than Niel does (Rabin 43); once again, "there is a great deal that Niel does not notice that Cather leads

Reality Romanticized

(Continued)

us to notice" (Stout 81). He is abruptly awakened from his "heroic ages"-and-flowers fantasy by the yawn, just as he was also called back into the world of time by Dr. Dennison's wagon wheels. Niel does not seem to realize—even though readers do—that he feels personally betrayed by Marian. He believes it "was not a moral scruple she had outraged, but an aesthetic ideal," that the day "saw the end of that admiration and loyalty that had been a bloom on his existence," and that he had "lost one of the most beautiful things in his life" (71-2).

While Niel's admiration and romanticization of Marian markedly diminish by the end of Part I, he occasionally still idealizes her and sees himself as her rescuer. As his fantasies diminish, so do his dream-like episodes. A single, short fantasy appears in Part II, but there is a great difference between this and previous dream-like episodes. While the scene retains many of the characteristics of these episodes, here both Marian and Niel move into a decidedly realistic, extended conversation, and the scene closes with genuine insights into the Forrester marriage. Niel, now twenty-one, has been studying architecture at MIT, and on a visit home comes to see the Forresters. He approaches Marian when she is in the grove, and Cather is careful to tell us it is at the site of the first dream-like episode, "where he had fallen the time he broke his arm." This time, he is awake, but she is "rest[ing]," and he "wonder[s] if she [is] asleep." In a scene which seems both to recall and to build on the images of the first episode, she is a symbol of purity, a "white figure" with a "white garden hat" and a "white hand"; and, once again, she "laugh[s]" (92, 96). The light, as in all the episodes, is inconstant and dreamy, and—here—idealized: there are "sharp shadows, [. . . and] quivering fans of light that [seem] to push the trees farther apart and ma[k]e Elysian fields underneath them" (96).

Once again, Cather definitely gives us insights into Niel's feelings that he fails to realize: in a gesture anyone would see as intimate but which he does not, he "step[s] forward and [catches] her suspended figure, hammock and all, in his arms." "How light and alive she was!" he fantasizes, "like a bird caught in a net. If only he could rescue her and carry her off like this—off the earth of sad, inevitable periods, away from age, weariness, adverse fortune!" (92). He once again sees himself as her rescuer, and he need not acknowledge the intimacy of the scene since he—once again—sees himself as a child. She intimately or very familiarly "put[s] her hand under his chin," and he interprets this as an action performed "as if he were still a boy" (93).

All of Marian's statements, however, indicate that she sees him as a man: she comments that he has "grown . . . handsome," that "now [he's] a man, and [has] seen the world," and asks if he "ha[s] sweethearts" (93). She intimately "[takes] his hand and turn[s] a seal ring about on his little finger absently," and even must "[catch] herself" when she finds she has been "telling too much" in indicating that she has been waiting "every night for weeks for Niel's return" (93). Niel acknowledges his importance, an adulthood not-at-all, and—as far as readers know—he does not realize that Marian holds him dear. Unlike the other dream-like scenes, which are brief and end abruptly, Marian then extendedly, confidentially, and realistically tells Niel about the oppression of the house and the importance of money (95-6). The two have been talking for some time when they go to Captain Forrester in

the garden. It is jarring but not abrupt for Niel to realize that the Captain has deteriorated so much that he "look[s] like an old tree walking" (97). As the chapter closes, the Captain has given Niel letters to mail, including one from Marian to Frank, and Niel is "sure that [the Captain] knew everything; more than anyone else; all there was to know about Marian Forrester" (99). The episode moves from an idealistic, romanticized vision of Marian into a realistic one. The otherworldly, Elysian, heroic illusions of Marian largely end at the close of Part I; despite brief idealizations, Niel perceives Marian largely as a lost symbol in Part II.

Niel so greatly loses his dream vision of Marian Forrester after the roses-on-the-sill episode that the word itself virtually vanishes from the text; it is used a single time in all of Part II, and Cather seems so purposefully to omit the word that its absence seems strained. In Part I, however, it is a noticeable, definite part of the text. The dream of the American West is so dear to Daniel Forrester that he uses, or overuses, *dream* five times in a brief speech he means to be seen as inspirational. In a narrative at a dinner party, Marian urges her husband to tell his guests his "philosophy of life" (44). While he means for his speech to be lofty (Peck 165), the Captain actually is rather bumbling. His "philosophy is that what you think of and plan for day by day, in spite of yourself, so to speak—you will get. You will get it more or less. That is, unless you are one of the people who get nothing in this world. There are such people. . . . If you are not one of those, . . . you will accomplish what you *dream* of most" (44; emphasis added). The fumbling Captain can no longer exhort others to grandeur, but inarticulately says that people will get their dreams, more or less, unless they do not. The Captain continues, "[A] thing that is *dreamed* of in the way I mean, is already an accomplished fact. All our great West has been developed from such *dreams*; the homesteader's and the prospector's and the contractor's. *We dreamed* the railroads across the mountains, just as I *dreamed* my place on the Sweet Water. All these things will be everyday facts to the coming generation, but to us'—Captain Forrester ended with a sort of grunt" (44-5; emphases added).

The speech seems to overuse the word *dreams*, perhaps to emphasize the dream-like quality of the Western experience. At best, even dreams achieved do not have staying power: "while Captain Forrester's philosophy promises that consistently dreamed goals will usually be achieved, he does not promise that anybody can keep what she or he has once gotten" (Skaggs 61). The Captain's speech itself emphasizes development rather than simple vision: he describes concrete, hands-on, forward-moving enterprises such as twice-mentioned contracting and prospecting, as well as homesteading and railroad building, as being the "accomplished fact" of the American West. Much like Niel's dream visions, the speech is cut off abruptly and a bit jarringly by a "sort of grunt" (45). Niel, however, interprets the speech as a rousing success and believes others are inspired by it, too. Niel "liked [Mrs. Ogden] better" for the sympathy she showed, and "even the preoccupied Constance seemed to give it her attention" (45). The success of the speech is interpreted for us solely by Niel, however, and no objective actions or statements are made by other characters so that readers can judge the speech's influence for themselves.

Dream appears three times in a conversation Marian has with Cyrus Dalzell. When Marian uses the word, it is synonymous with *illusion*. After Captain Forrester's stroke, Cyrus Dalzell visits and urges the Forresters to come to Colorado the following winter. "That, I'm afraid," Marian replies, "is a pretty dream. But we'll dream it, anyway!" (80). "No dream at all," Dalzell reassures her, following his statement with concrete ideas on how the Captain will get to Colorado Springs and how his care will be managed. Marian is considerably cheered when "pretty dreams" give way to substantive suggestions.

Much of Niel's life is dream-like in Part I, and he himself makes the only use of the word whatsoever in Part II. Early in the book, he seems to be using the word in the same way that Daniel Forrester does: that a true dream can become an "accomplished fact." When Niel is reading classics of the past, he thinks of "the great world that plunged and *glittered* and sumptuously sinned long before little Western towns were *dreamed* of" (67; emphases added), presumably dreamed of in a way that brought them into existence. In the first pages of Part II, he seems to be making the opposite point, that something actually brought into existence by dreamers does not necessarily have permanence: he muses that the "Old West was settled by dreamers, . . . a courteous brotherhood . . . who could conquer but not hold" (89).

The loss of the dream of the American West is so great, and the loss of Marian to Niel so complete, in Part II that even the word itself vanishes from the book. Cather's omission seems purposeful: in a number of instances, not-as-accurate substitutes are used for *dream*, as if to call attention to its omission. Possible words *dream* might replace are italicized: "all those who had shared in fine *undertakings* and bright *occasions* were gone"; "[Niel] had come upon [the pioneering era] when already its *glory* was nearly spent"; "It was already gone, that *age*; . . . the

taste and smell and *song* of it, the *visions* those men had seen" (143-5). While the word need not be used in each cited case, the fact that it is used in none of them seems to further underscore by absence the loss of the Western dream. Cather "insist[s] on the importance of what is *not* in the text, as [being as] integral to the created whole as the techniques that produce it" (Middleton 11); as the use of the word ends, so does the dream itself.

When Niel grows older he sometimes has moments of insight, but overall grows no wiser: he moves not into reality but simply into disillusionment. "What he most held against Mrs. Forrester [was] that she was not willing to immolate herself . . . and die with the pioneer period to which she belonged" (145). She, a generation younger than her husband, was never a pioneer; and the demand for self immolation is incredible in its extremism. Cather includes this stark statement without authorial comment, allowing it to hang in judgment on Niel, both the author's view and readers' views clearly at great odds with his. Niel never truly moves beyond two genuinely perfect experiences he has with Marian when he is twelve. The experience in the grove and the experience in her bedroom are so actually perfect, yet at the same time so dream-like and romanticized, that Niel continues throughout his life to idealize Marian and to see himself as a child in his relationship to her so that experiences like these can be repeated. Each of the dream-like sequences includes images which build and layer on each other by "incremental repetition" (Rosowski 122) to create both extended dream visions and a portrait of Niel as a romanticizing and, eventually, brittle idealist. Cather reverses her usual pattern of using dreams to reveal character here, to using a dream-like reality to show the limitations of Niel's character. While Cather does not comment either on his waking fantasies or on his harshness, readers readily grasp Niel's limitations, and his waking fantasies show a man existing in illusion so profoundly that his life is but a dream.

(Notes and Works Cited on Page 67)



A Message from the President

Mellanee Kvasnicka, President, Cather Foundation Board of Governors

One of my students recently told me that he found Willa Cather's method of characterization extraordinary. Jon talked about her subtlety in creating people who were so human he felt as if they were real. We had just finished reading *A Lost Lady* in Advanced Placement English, and he had just completed *Death Comes for the Archbishop* as part of the Academic Decathlon curriculum. I took great pleasure in his remarks. For those of us who work with young people, such moments are priceless. I think Cather would have been as pleased as I was by his praise.

As a teacher herself, Cather would have understood this kind of intellectual discovery. Cather's university years were full of exhilarating discovery. Jim Burden remarks of his early days in Lincoln that "I shall always look back on that time of mental awakening as one of the happiest in my life." Teachers held an honored place in Cather's memory and experience. She pays tribute to them by filling her novels with educators, from Gaston Cleric to Andor Harsanyi to Godfrey St. Peter. Cather's teacher characters are often the keepers of a very special flame—the notion of all that is valuable in education, the idea of what it is that literature allows us to become, and the ultimate promise of our nation. In Cather's work, students are often valued and encouraged by teachers who are themselves missionaries. For Cather, education was a rare gift and teaching an almost religious calling. She viewed education as pure possibility.

Today, we public school teachers struggle with the challenges of standardized testing, limited funds, endless paperwork, and bureaucracy. Thankfully, whenever I begin to doubt the value of it all, someone like Jon reminds me of what education really is about. Ultimately Cather's work champions the idea that education shows us how we are not alone. Surely Jon is proof positive of that.

Cather Studies 2002

Jo Ann Middleton

Cather scholarship in the past year proves that the work and the person of Willa Cather remain a rich source of academic satisfaction and discovery. This year saw the publication of two volumes of primary sources, a book-length critical study, two collections of essays, over seventeen chapters and articles, a new volume in the Nebraska Cather Edition, and a student casebook, *Understanding O Pioneers! and My Antonia* (Greenwood) by Sheryl L. Meyering—all in addition to the scholarship found in the pages of the *Newsletter and Review* itself.

Because Cather's papers and letters cannot be published until 2017, Janis Stout offers the impatient among us the next best thing in *A Calendar of the Letters of Willa Cather* (Nebraska), which includes summaries of all 1800 Cather letters currently known to Stout, arranged in chronological order. This important collection includes a biographical directory and a list of repositories. *Willa Cather Remembered* (Nebraska) marks the completion by Sharon Hoover of the two-book project planned by L. Brent Bohlke before his untimely death. *Willa Cather in Person* (1986) offered the ways in which Cather presented herself to the public through interviews, speeches and published letters; this book, revealing a more personal and private Cather as colleague, novelist, aunt, friend, is drawn from newspapers, journals, books, and previously unpublished personal recollections. This volume is a fitting tribute to Cather and to the legacy of a gifted scholar, L. Brent Bohlke.

The eagerly-awaited sixth volume in the Nebraska Cather Edition, *The Professor's House* (Nebraska) lives up to its predecessors. We have come to expect the highest standards of scholarship and meticulous attention to detail in this series, and here again we find them. Photographs tying the text to Cather's life are included, and Cather biographer and editor James Woodress provides the engrossing historical essay that locates the novel in its own time and Cather's career. Comprehensive explanatory notes by Woodress and Kari A Ronning and textual editing by Frederick M. Link make this a valuable resource for scholars. This beautiful book makes us anxious for *Shadows on the Rock*. Steven Trout's *Memorial Fictions: Willa Cather and the First World War* (Nebraska), places *One of Ours* and *The Professor's House* solidly within the canon of World War I literature. In a thorough and extensive analysis, Trout identifies the modernist attributes of *One of Ours* and then reads *The Professor's House* as an extension of the earlier novel, in which World War I is "the thing not named." The book also contains a dozen illustrations as well as helpful notes.

Willa Cather and the American Southwest (Nebraska), eds. John N. Swift and Joseph R. Urgo, collects thirteen papers first presented at the Willa Cather Symposium on Mesa Verde in October 1999. In "Unwrapping the Mummy: Cather's Mother Eve and the Business of Desire" (13-21), John N. Swift argues that the need to make Mother Eve "something other than what she is" arises from a cultural system that signifies and envelops the female in ways that serve masculine interests. Ann Fisher-Wirth identifies our tendency to idealize peoples about whom we know very little, by considering Anasazi cannibalism and Cather's anti-Semitic portrayal of Louis Marcellus as examples of our

predicament in reading through the varied lenses of history, in "Anasazi Cannibalism: Eating Eden" (22-30). Matthias Schubnell provides an historical context for German collector Fechtig's role in *The Professor's House* in "From Mesa Verde to Germany: The Appropriation of Indian Artifacts as Part of Willa Cather's Cultural Critique in *The Professor's House*" (31-42). In "Fear of a Queer Mesa?: Faith, Friendship, and National Sexuality in 'Tom Outland's Story'" (43-54), Marilee Lindemann contends that Teddy Roosevelt's pronouncements on the virtues of the morally and physically "strenuous" life occasion Tom's "homosexual panic" when he returns to the Blue Mesa from Washington. Cather's own spiritual journey informs John J. Murphy's "Holy Cities, Poor Savages, and the Science Culture: Positioning *The Professor's House*" (55-68), in which he reads her two Anasazi-inspired novels (*The Professor's House* and *The Song of the Lark*) in the context of her travels to France and in relation to her career as a whole. In "The Experience of Meaning in *The Professor's House*" (71-79), Richard H. Millington asks what would happen if we look at the "meaning-structure" of the Professor's life; he finds a pattern of meaning that defines the emergence of meaning in both the domestic scenes and that is confirmed by "Tom Outland's Story."

Companion essays by Merrill Maguire Skaggs ("Cather and the Father of History" [80-88]) and Tom Quirk ("Twain and Cather, Once Again" [89-93]) engage in conversation about the "conversation" between Cather and Mark Twain. Skaggs traces the line of succession, mutual interests and exchanges between the two writers so compellingly that Quirk sees here a convincing explanation of why Cather thought of herself as a western writer within the American literary tradition. Mary Chinery in "Willa Cather and the Santos Tradition in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*" (97-107) offers the *retablos* and *bultos* of the santos tradition as an embodiment of the convergence of Indian and Hispanic cultures which Cather consciously integrated into *Death Comes for the Archbishop* as a reflection of the modern response to folk art rooted in pre-Christian spirituality. Proposing that Cather's "understanding of culture underwent numerous changes in response to her readings in archeology and anthropology and to her personal encounters," Christopher Schedler focuses on the interaction of cultures in the American Southwest in "Writing Culture: Willa Cather's Southwest" (108-124). Manuel Broncano reads Cather beside Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972) to show that despite their "cultural, racial and ideological differences," Cather and Anaya are kindred artists who share a "magical perspective on reality and a profound indebtedness to the aesthetics of the grotesque" in "Landscapes of the Magical: Cather's and Anaya's Explorations of the Southwest" (124-135). Describing Cather's Archbishop and Faulkner's Isaac McCaslin as men who "wrestle with the fundamental American dilemma of how to contemplate difference," Joseph R. Urgo suggests the product of a cultural variety that does not interfere with capitalism is an "American form of *indifference*" and links late-century concepts with

Cather's sense that multiculturalism is "the product of a universal longing for nativity" in "Multiculturalism as Nostalgia in Cather, Faulkner, and U.S. Culture" (136-149).

Willa Cather and the Culture of Belief (BYU Press), ed. John J. Murphy, represents an effort to encourage exploration of the "religious values, the pursuit of moral order, the mystery of the universe and human destiny [that] give Cather's fiction universal dimension." Charles A. Peek begins this collection of essays with a homily, "Cycles of Retribution and Dreams of Grace" (1-5), in which he uses quilts and Joseph's many-colored coats to illustrate Cather's understanding of our need for kinship. Janis P. Stout counters in "Faith Statements and Nonstatements in Willa Cather's Personal Letters" (7-27) that although her letters show Cather responded to the aesthetic experience of religion as well as to its moral and cultural associations, she had "an essentially secular and skeptical mind." Kari A. Ronning reads "A Death in the Desert" as a rejection of Christian fundamentalism in "The Jumping-Off Place: Facing Death in 'A Death in the Desert'" (29-39); Matthias Schubnell sees Ivar as a model for an environment ethic grounded in faith and links him to fourth century Christian desert saints in "Religion and Ecology on the Divide: Ivar's Monasticism in *O Pioneers!*" (41-49); Steven B. Shively notes the three times in *My Ántonia* Cather uses the image of the lamb to underscore her notions of sacrifice and redemption in "My Ántonia and the Parables of Sacrifice" (51-62). Ann Moseley surveys the development of Romanesque and Gothic architecture as perfections of natural landscapes in "The Religious Architecture of *The Professor's House* and *Death Comes for the Archbishop*" (63-80); for Cather, both landscape and architecture are intimately associated with creation and redemption. In "'Why Must I Die Like This?': 'Last Things' in *My Mortal Enemy*" (81-99), I suggest that we focus on the *mortal* in the title to find the fundamental truths Cather probed in the novel: Myra's sins, her fear of dying, and her terror at the expectation of encountering God in judgment.

Merrill Maguire Skaggs clearly places Cather within the American philosophical tradition in "*Death Comes for the Archbishop*: Willa Cather's Varieties of Religious Experience" (101-121); by juxtaposing passages from *Death Comes for the Archbishop* with passages from William James, Skaggs demonstrates how Cather wrote her narrative within the guidelines James established in *Varieties of Religious Experience*. Patrick K. Dooley connects Bishop Latour's superior eyesight to Jamesian pragmatism, thereby suiting him to episcopal office in "Philosophical Pragmatism and Theological Temperament: The Religious and the Miraculous in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*" (123-137), and Charles W. Mignon, in "Willa Cather's *Archbishop*: The Legible Forms of Spirituality" (140-166), demonstrates the effects of the complex connection between words and image by a careful and fascinating discussion of the illustrations in the 1929 edition of *Archbishop*. Evelyn I. Funda finds that the nearly thirty discrete narratives Cather includes in *Shadows on the Rock* combine to produce a work in which the act of storytelling becomes a process of negotiation and reciprocity that "can lead individuals from isolation to involvement . . . ultimately to community, and frequently to transcendence" in "New World Epiphany Stories: Transformation and Community Building in *Shadows on the Rock*" (169-201). John J. Murphy's "Building the House of Faith: 'Hard Punishments,' the Plan and the Fragment" (203-227) provides the background to Cather's

Avignon story, offers an expert analysis of the extant fragments, and illuminates Cather's long and perceptive interest in things theological. Marilyn Arnold discusses "Eleanor's House" and "Behind the Singer Tower" and concludes this collection by urging us to read Cather's fiction for its spiritual power, for the characters' humanity and Christian charity, for her sense of reverence in "Willa Cather After All" (229-237).

An impressive number of imaginatively creative lenses offered new ways into Cather's work. In "The Law of the Heart: Emotional Injury and Its Fictions," Jennifer Travis considers *A Lost Lady* in the light of "criminal conversation," a tort meant to redress the apparent loss of reputation that comes with the "conversation" of those who may learn of and gossip about a spouse's "crime." For Cather, the social landscape of post-Civil War America provides an acute occasion to explore the emotional authority of men; *A Lost Lady* and its cultural framework offer a sustained example of how such authority invokes and shapes the injured psyche, casting it as a valid subject for protection, recognition, and, quite often, recompense, pp. 124-140 in *Boys Don't Cry?: Rethinking Narratives of Masculinity and Emotion in the U.S.* (Columbia) ed. Milette Shamir and Jennifer Travis. Christopher Nealon's *Foundling: Lesbian and Gay Historical Emotion before Stonewall* (Duke, 2001) introduces "foundling"—a term for queer disaffiliation from and desire for family, nation and history—and posits his thesis that the history of gays and lesbians reveals a constant movement between the opposing poles of inversion (the soul of one gender trapped in the body of another) and ethnic (distinct and collective culture among gay men and lesbians), not a linear progress from one to the other. Nealon asserts that Cather projects a gender inversion that can be understood only as "a relationship to history, usually a nostalgic and primitive one, occasionally a 'new' one, but a relationship significant at every turn for being out of step with modernity." The way Cather shuns "the modernity of nation (mobs) in favor of ethnicized, embodied 'number' and family in favor of its runaways, confronts a question haunting our much later generation: what sodality or affiliation will give sense to late modernity, scene of clamoring nationalism and mutating family structures?" Cather's insistence that the "real life" is to be found on bodies and in voices, not in "social units," offers a "startling and strangely exhilarating discovery, which is just how far the allegory of history-as-body, as morphology, can go before it collapses" (pp. 61-97). A related essay, Deborah T. Meem's "Teaching 'Paul's Case' as a Gay Text" (*ESTSF* 3:1, 20-28) offers a careful and detailed discussion of a proactive teaching approach to guide students toward the reading of "Paul's Case" as a piece of gay literature.

Karen A. Hoffman explains that *My Ántonia* offers a conception of identity that is far more complex than some critics have claimed, with a particularly complex case of crossings that can be read not so much as a desire to be a man as a resistance to restrictive categories of gender that would lock her into a feminine position in "Identity Crossings and the Autobiographical Act in Willa Cather's *My Ántonia*" (*ArQ* 58:4, 25-50). Through Jim Burden's fictive act of writing, Cather draws attention to the autobiographical act as an ongoing performance of identity at the time of composition and underscores the performativity of identity to suggest a circulation of power among male and female subjects that is in keeping with feminist goals. Douglas W. Werden considers *O Pioneers!* in relation to the gender role

Cather Studies

(Continued)

redefinitions of Cather's adult life to discover a work that is not primarily about homesteading pioneers, but rather two women who are pioneers in crossing socially constructed gender barriers in "She Had Never Humbled Herself: Alexandra Bergson and Maria Shabata as the 'Real' Pioneers of *O Pioneers!*" (*GPQ* 22: 3, 199-215). By reenvisioning "pioneers" as women who break down society's gender barriers, Cather subtly establishes feminist concerns at the heart of the novel, undermines the discursive power of male writers over American mythology, and transfers this power to a less aggressive female discourse.

In *The Word Rides Again: Rereading the Frontier in American Fiction* (Ohio), J. David Stevens proposes that the biases and events of *Death Comes for the Archbishop* can be understood as a whole if the book is read as a thematically straightforward, if slightly amended, version of the popular frontier novel, and argues that the connections between Cather's book and popular western writing are both profound and pervasive. Like the cowboy protagonists of Cooper, Wister and Zane Grey, who also celebrated the splendor of the Western terrain, Cather's Archbishop must choose between two moral imperatives to achieve what he sees as a just peace by the story's end (pp. 134-153). Audrey Goodman examines the basis of Cather's "Success" with both Great Plains and Southwestern landscapes and considers how this success has become intertwined with the author's narrative experiments, popularity, and critical status (pp. 137-164) in *Translating Southwestern Landscapes: The Making of an Anglo Literary Region* (Arizona). Cather develops a new landscape convention out of the interplay of external and internal conditions in Nebraska producing gaps between the interior and the exterior and posing the question of whether those gaps can be transcended through the senses or the imagination. In "The Open Window: Domestic Landscapes in Willa Cather's *My Ántonia* and *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*" (*AmS* 43:2, 103-22) Diane D. Quantic draws on *My Ántonia* and *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* to explore Cather's depictions of "domestic landscapes," a term that describes Cather's deliberately ordered places, especially the built structures that counter the apparent formlessness of "natural space." Noting that women's relationships to the physical and social space around them reveals complex environments in which the women attempt to control the domestic space that they inhabit, she points out how "a dwelling creates a place in a space that has no clear or marked boundaries; the dwelling exists in a context (landscape); the spatial arrangement of the built environment affects the social structure of the community."

Marion Fay traces the personal, philosophical and literary considerations that underlie Cather's musical references in "Making Her Work Her Life: Music in Willa Cather's Fiction," pp. 23-46 in *Literature and Music* (Rodopi), ed. Michael J Meyer, to reveal that one of Cather's primary reasons for using music in her fiction was to advance the quasi-philosophical belief that the single-minded dedication that artistic achievement demands inevitably involves a personal sacrifice that isolates or estranges the artist from others. Cather's prescription for "complete self-abnegation" may not be possible to realize just as Platonic ideal Forms remain unobtainable. In "Singing an American Song: Toquevillian Reflections on Willa Cather's *The Song of the*

Lark" (pp. 73-86 in *Seers and Judges: American Literature as Political Philosophy* (Lexington Books), ed. Christine Dunn Henderson), Christine Dunn Henderson contrasts Cather's criticisms of democratic individualism in *The Song of the Lark* with Toqueville's; he emphasizes its harmful effects on American politics, while she subtly draws our attention to individualism's deleterious effects upon human relationships.

For Ludwig Detinger, Cather's oeuvre presents America as a multilingual, multiracial, multiethnic, and multiregional nation that captures the New World's interrelations with the Old and anticipates post-colonial discourse by critiquing any form of cultural dominance (pp. 253-65 in "The Pluralist Vision of Willa Cather." *American Vistas and Beyond: A Festschrift for Roland Hagenbüchle* (Wissenschaftlicher Verlag), eds. Marietta Messmer and Josef Raab. Heidi N. Sjostrom contends that if Cather's Nebraska novels have any political effect, it is in showing that a pluralistic society of travelers from different landscapes can succeed, and argues that as the characters in *My Ántonia* travel away from the Nebraska prairie, either permanently or for a time, they come to value the prairie's spirit in a new way as they contrast it with the city in "Willa Cather's Nebraska Prairie: Remembering the Spirit of its Land and People," pp. 197-211 in *Issues in Travel Writing: Empire, Spectacle, and Displacement* (Peter Lang) ed. Kristi Siegel. Terrell L. Tebbetts argues that a simplistic polarity between city and country values leads to an inaccurate reading of "Neighbour Rosicky" in his essay "'Throwing Down the Idol: An Iconoclastic View of 'Neighbour Rosicky'" (*PhilR* 28:1, 31-42) and asserts that a careful reading of the story shows that, while endorsing the values Rosicky associates with agrarian life, Cather suggests that those values are in fact independent of place. In doing so, the story takes an independent, nuanced stand outside the polarized social movements of its time and demonstrates Cather's modernist, "essentialist" view of human nature.

Drawing on the popularity of the tourist Indian-detour of Cather's time, Caroline M. Woidat, in "The Indian-detour in Willa Cather's Southwestern Novels" (*TCL* 48:1, 22-50), reads her three Southwestern novels as "a trilogy that offers such a retreat to the past, not as veritable escapes, but as detours that must return us to present realities." Cather's experience of the Southwest was shaped by her identity as an outsider and her willingness to "go native" by vicariously living as both cowboy and Indian and mirrors the complex and often contradictory desires of Americans in confronting racial difference and the legacy of a pre-Columbian past. In "Slavery as Illness: Medicine in Willa Cather's *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*" (*SoQ* 40:4, 68-82), Nancy Chinn proposes that her use of medicine and illness in *Sapphira* points to the complexity of the world she was writing about—its ambiguities and her own ambivalence toward her native state and its history, noting that "the novel itself becomes medicine—sometimes it is hard to swallow but still necessary in the America of the 1940s as well as the twenty-first century."

Jeff Webb makes a compelling case for *My Ántonia* as a modernist novel in "Modernist Memory; or, The Being of Americans" (*Criticism* 44:3, 227-47), arguing that Jim's attitude towards representation which recalls Freud's "contemporary experience" is typical of the style of more overtly modernist works like Hart Crane's *The Bridge* (1930), Paul Strand's

photograph, "Wall Street" (1915), Frank Stella's aluminum stripe paintings (1960), and Cather's own later novels: *A Lost Lady*, *The Professor's House* and *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. Moreover, because Cather conceptualizes the problem of memory in terms of representation in the novel she also demonstrates how, for American modernists, experiments with form are simultaneously efforts to realize a peculiarly American ideal of identity and why that ideal is so often emblemized by racial bodies, making the emphasis on race, which is characteristic of so much of this literature, almost inevitable.

Finally, we must note that the delightful collection of recipes and stories, Roger L. and Linda K. Welsch's *Cather's Kitchens: Foodways in Literature and Life* (Nebraska) originally published in 1987 has been reissued by Bison Books.

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Skepticism & Human Relations

(Continued from page 57)

In both scenes, Niel's romanticized ideal comes crashing down under the weight of reality. His picture of Mrs. Forrester, a picture he uses to orient himself in his polarized world, is one that depends on his ignorance of her character. When this ignorance is challenged in two wrenching moments, Niel's disillusionment is deep. If he was mistaken about this, what else might he be wrong about? But, Niel doesn't consider that he might be wrong about other things. And, because Niel is a "peephole" into the world of the novel, it is easy for us to uncritically accept what he says, especially early in the book. As we continue to read, however, Mrs. Forrester's story gradually undermines Niel's account, and we begin to suspect him as we might an unreliable narrator. Initially, we share his moral absolutism, but eventually realize that our judgment of Mrs. Forrester needn't be as harsh as his. This happens to different readers at different times but, hopefully, whenever this moment of realization does arrive, we admit our errors and become more critical of Niel's perspective and less dogmatic in our own judgments.

Thus, part of Cather's strategy in filtering our reading experience through Niel is to teach us the lesson he never learns. She does this by leading us to make the same mistakes Niel does while also giving us clues to help us realize our misperceptions. Cather doesn't merely explain skepticism, but, using Niel, tries to lead us through a process that will cause us to be skeptical about our own judgments. Readers, through judging, erring, and then realizing their errors, become more careful with their criticism. Cather teaches us to react as Montaigne and Emerson would have us do, by realizing our intellectual limitations and the necessity of adapting to change.

Emerson ends "Montaigne" with an affirmation which might serve as a fitting coda for *A Lost Lady*. He writes, "Let a man look for the permanent in the mutable and fleeting; let him learn to bear the disappearance of things he was wont to reverence, without losing his reverence; let him learn that he is here, not to work, but to be worked upon; and that, though abyss open under abyss, and opinion displace opinion, all are at last contained in the Eternal Cause" (328). This seems to be the sort of affirmation Cather is struggling for when Niel forgives Mrs. Forrester and we are told that she was "well cared for, to the very end" (166). In both her fiction and life, Cather was trying to discover a means "to bear the disappearance of things [s]he was

wont to reverence, without losing reverence," to find a coherent explanation for change and loss. Understanding this struggle is one of the keys to reading not only *A Lost Lady*, but all of Cather's fiction.

Notes

¹We know of Emerson's connection to Cather from a variety of sources including a childhood listing of Emerson as her favorite prose writer (Bennett 112), quotations of Emerson in her journalistic writing (see *The World and the Parish* and *The Kingdom of Art* for examples), and Cather's interaction with Emerson scholars like Louise Pound and George Woodberry. These connections have been explored by a number of writers, most recently by Demaree Peck in her book *The Imaginative Claims of the Artist in Willa Cather's Fiction*.

²The woodpecker scene provides an excellent example of Cather's subtlety. It is no coincidence that the Latin word for woodpecker, "picus," is an animal whose origin Ovid—one of Niel's favorite authors—explains in the *Metamorphoses*, is etymologically linked to the Greek verb *skeptomai*, meaning to see or consider, which in turn stands behind the English word *skeptical*. Cather, drawing on her background in Classical languages, packs a great deal of significance into Ivy's mutilation of the woodpecker.

³The nephew of Dorothy Strang, once a wealthy resident of Swickley, Pennsylvania, recently reported to us that she lived next to the home of Paul and Ethelbert Nevins (of which two, the neighbors judged Paul the more musically talented brother). He added that his aunt frequently entertained Willa Cather. He also said that then as now, Swickley residents proudly bragged on their town name, the native American phrase for "sweet water." We infer that Swickley was thus the location of at least one dream house built on land once stolen from the Indians, as was the Forrester's dream home also. Willa seems to have remembered.

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College Intern Joins Foundation Staff



Cari Woodward, a student at Hastings College, is serving an internship with the Cather Foundation during the spring semester. Cari is from Kearney, Nebraska, and is a senior majoring in media production with an emphasis in public relations and advertising. She will work with the Foundation throughout the second semester.

Visit the Cather Center Bookstore

Here are four books from the Cather Center Bookstore that may be of interest to you. Call our toll free number 1-866-731-7304 to order. For other Cather-related books, check our website: www.willacather.org



Collected Stories
Vintage, paperback - \$15.00

All the short stories Willa Cather wanted published in book form--collected in one volume. This book includes *Obscure Destinies*, feature stories for the Spring Festival 2004.



Stories, Poems, and Other Writings
Library of America, hardback - \$35.00

Contains stories, poems, novellas, essays, and reviews by Willa Cather. Includes *Obscure Destinies*, featuring stories for Spring Festival.



The World of Willa Cather
by Mildred Bennett
University of Nebraska Press - \$16.00

This biography of Willa Cather continues to be our "best seller." It describes the people and places in Nebraska that figure prominently in many of Cather's best novels and short stories. Mildred R. Bennett was the founder of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial.



Writer of the Plains
by Tom Streissguth
Carolrhoda Books, Inc., paperback - \$5.95

If you are trying to encourage a young person to become interested in Willa Cather, this book is an excellent choice. It is clear and concise, and the story-like tone makes it easy to keep the attention of young readers.

Sweatshirt

Also available is the sweatshirt worn by our new intern, Cari Woodward, pictured on the previous page (65). This 50% cotton, 50% polyester fabric has a comfortable heavier weight, with a new design created by Nancy Sherwood, who manages the Cather Center Book Store. The sweatshirt comes in Burgundy, Forest Green, and Navy. Sizes small, medium, large and extra-large. The price is \$25.00.

The Arts and the Economy

This summer the Getty Foundation sent out a flyer advertising a conference targeting museums management personnel. The core idea of the planned conference was that museums and other art-related organizations must learn how to rely more and more on retail sales to meet budget needs. This concept has some validity, and the Cather Center is certainly attempting to take advantage of selling unique Cather-related items to our ever-increasing numbers of visitors. Our Christmas cards and holiday ornaments are a good example of this type of activity. With limited funds, these activities have become a necessity for non-profit organizations such as the Cather Foundation. We want to become more self-supporting and this is not going to change in the arts.

Now, however, the arts are being seen in a new economic light. We all know that the arts have been traditionally considered dispensable in mainstream America. Many, maybe most of our *Newsletter and Review* readers, have fought hard to keep the arts viable when the economy has been under strain. This general state of affairs may be changing. Recently, a member of the Cather Foundation Board of Governors handed me an article titled "The Arts as Economic Development," written by Larry G. Meeker. This article suggests that the arts are gaining significant potential as a means of economic development for their surrounding communities. Some communities are actually coming to embrace the arts for economic reasons. The Cather Foundation seems to be taking advantage of this situation.

The Cather Center is located in one of the most famous small towns in America, Red Cloud, Nebraska; certainly the Foundation is not about to move its offices away as we have the largest number of historically designated building sites in America related to an American author. It is therefore important to the Cather Foundation that Red Cloud continues to be an economically viable town. What is happening now is that the Foundation itself has become one key to the town's economic revitalization. As the Meeker article points out, this situation is occurring all over America and, in fact, throughout the world—the Cather Foundation is no exception.

The restored Red Cloud Opera House has brought hundreds of people into Red Cloud. They eat in the local restaurants, and they frequent the main street stores. A new fast food restaurant has appeared. This spring a new candle company will occupy one of the the historic main street buildings. Add to this the fact that in 2003 the number of tourists coming to the Cather Center more than doubled over the count in 2002, a 111% increase, and it becomes clear that the Foundation is having an impact on main street.

According to the Meeker article, "... cities worldwide are actively pursuing arts projects to define their images and build a tourist industry" (17). Economic statistics show that the arts as an industry contribute \$3.5 billion to the national economy. "Further, cultural tourists 'outnumber sports events tourists by over 5 to 1 and . . . theme park visitors almost 3 to 1'" according to a National Association of Counties Economic Performances study (Found in Meeker 17).

A survey of Webster County buildings completed in 1981 for the Nebraska State Historical Society recognized "the historical and architectural significance of twenty-six individual resources and four historic districts within Red Cloud and Webster County related to Willa Cather's life and writings"(49). The Foundation and the State Historical Society manage to maintain many of the most significant of these properties; but sadly, thirty properties (or 13%) of the 224 buildings in the Willa Cather Thematic group now no longer exist. Other properties have been modernized and have ceased to reflect the historic period linked to Cather's life and writings (49).

This summer the Foundation, with the help of local grants, painted the Moon Block façade. The temporary facelift has done wonders, but eventually serious renovations will need to be undertaken. It is not a decision of whether or not to renovate and restore; rather, it is when this work will be undertaken. Treasures that belong to everyone are at stake, and it is worthwhile to know that preservation and renovation are economically sound ideas too.

Red Cloud and the Cather Foundation have a symbiotic relationship. Each needs the other and each needs to succeed economically. The arts can be a dynamic economic development tool. Let's hope this continues to be the case in the town that Willa Cather made famous.

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Webster County Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey. Prepared by Mead & Hunt, Inc., Madison, Wisconsin, August 2003

Grace Church Receives Award

(Continued from Page 49)

Cloud in 1931, she hosted a party for the Sunday School children. She regularly contributed to the financial support of the church and its guild, sometimes sending extra gifts for flowers and other needs. Her donations made possible the installation of new electric lighting and a new gas furnace.

Two of her gifts are more visible: memorial windows to her parents and to the Rev. John Mallory Bates, long time rector of the church and friend of the Cather family. Cather pilgrims admire the Good Shepherd window in memory of her father (he had been a sheep rancher in Virginia) and the Nativity window in memory of her mother. Cather and her friend Carrie Miner Sherwood gave the window above the altar in memory of the Reverend Bates. In addition, the altar rail at Grace Church is in memory of Willa's brother Douglas.

Both Mellanee Kvasnicka, President of the WCPM Board of Governors, and Betty Kort, Executive Director, have expressed thanks for the timely donations to the Rt. Rev. Joe Burnett (Bishop of Nebraska) and the Rev. Dr. Tom Hansen (Rector of St. Luke's). They have also thanked the Rev. Dr. Charles Peek, who is Professor of English at the University of Nebraska-Kearney, an Episcopal priest, and a member of the WCPM Board of Governors.

[Written by Betty Kort, Chuck Peek, and Steve Shively, with appreciation to the late Rev. Dr. L. Brent Bohlke, who documented much of the history of Grace Church.]

Reality Romanticized

(Continued from page 61)

Notes

¹ For a discussion of Cather's use of dreams in her other eleven novels, please see Margaret Doane, "The Non-Interpretation of Dreams: Cather's Use of an Unfurnished Detail in Characterization," *Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial*.

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Central Wisconsin Symphony Orchestra to Perform Symphony Inspired by *One of Ours*

As part of its fifty-fifth anniversary season, the Central Wisconsin Symphony Orchestra (CWSO), University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, has commissioned internationally renowned harpsichordist and composer Barbara Harbach to compose a piece based on the life and work of author Willa Cather. Harbach's three movement orchestral work, based on the 1922 Pulitzer Prize winning *One of Ours* reflects the themes, desires and struggles of an American from the Midwest who goes to the front during World War I. The concert premieres April 17-18, 2004, at Stevens Point. As part of the project, Dr. Harbach and CWSO Music Director, Dr. Patrick Miles, will visit area elementary and secondary classrooms to discuss their work and help students compose their own original works based on stories familiar to them.



The Opera House Endowment Fund

In recognition of the need for the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial & Educational Foundation (WCPM) to establish an Endowment Fund for the 1885 Opera House in Red Cloud, Nebraska, and to assist the WCPM in raising \$825,000 before July 31, 2005 so as to enable the WCPM to obtain \$275,000 in challenge-grant funds for such purpose from the National Endowment for the Humanities, I/we hereby state my/our intention to contribute to the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial & Education Foundation's Opera House Endowment Fund the sum of \$_____

I/We expect to make this gift payable over a period of one year, with the initial payment to be made as follows:

1. \$_____ hereby: [] Check enclosed [] Visa [] MasterCard

Account # _____ Expiration Date _____; and/or

2. \$_____ on or before July, 2005. 3. Other _____

I/we also understand that all contributions are deductible for federal and state income-tax purposes.

Date _____ Signature _____

Please complete as you wish to be listed.

Name _____ Title _____

Address _____ Zip _____

Day Telephone _____ Evening Telephone _____ E-Mail _____

Planned Giving...

The Willa Cather Foundation has been making an important contribution to higher education since 1987 through its Norma Ross Walter Scholarship. The recipient of the scholarship must be a young woman majoring in English. The amount of the scholarship varies from year to year, having provided as much as \$8,000 for a four-year college scholarship. In 2004, a one-year, \$1,000 non-renewable college scholarship will be awarded. Since its inauguration, seventeen Nebraska women have benefited from the Norma Ross Walter Scholarship. Those of you who have been in Red Cloud for the Cather Spring Festival and have heard the winners read their essays will remember their high quality and originality and know how important the Norma Ross Walter award is to its recipients.

The Willa Cather Foundation is able to offer these scholarships because of the generous bequest that Norma Ross Walter made to the Foundation. It is a gift that has given talented young women the inspiration to continue in higher education. Generous donors who have included the Willa Cather Foundation to their estate planning have made it possible for the Willa Cather Foundation to support our current programming and sustain the Foundation's future work through its endowment.

Why do people make a charitable gift to the Willa Cather Foundation? The reasons are as varied as the people who have included the Foundation in their annual giving. There are nearly as many ways to make a gift as there are reasons to give! Proper planning can make it easier and more effective to make a substantial gift, due to certain tax benefits. Such planned gifts may be made during your lifetime or through your will in the form of a simple bequest, a life insurance policy, a charitable gift annuity, a charitable remainder trust, and other means as well.

Despite all of these possibilities that give donors significant tax benefits, studies have shown that only 4% of Americans have done any estate planning. Are you among the 4% who have made such plans or are you among the vast majority of Americans who have put off that important task until sometime in the future? If you are among the latter, we urge you to think about estate planning and to include the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation among those institutions and causes that you want to support with a last gift.

Your gift will ensure that the Willa Cather Foundation will continue to preserve Cather's literary legacy through scholarship, the historic buildings that make up Catherland in Red Cloud, and, perhaps, most importantly, the introduction of Willa Cather to future generations. Please contact the Willa Cather Foundation for additional information if you would like to support this important work through planned giving.



News from the Executive Director

WCPM Board Member Laurie Smith Camp gave a positive start to the new year by hosting a brunch at her home in Omaha on January 18th for some of our Cather friends and members of the WCPM Board of Governors. Laurie placed quotations from Willa Cather's

writings describing snow scenes on the tables where the food was served. We commented on the number of times Cather so beautifully described the winter snow. But then, as I look outside today and see huge snow flakes simply tumbling out of the sky, I understand why the snow would be so appealing to her sense of artistry.

The Omaha event at Laurie's house capped off a weekend of activity for the Cather Foundation Board of Governors who on Saturday had just spent a full day of deliberation centering on Cather Foundation activities, past, present, and future. An impressive array of events is being planned for 2004 and 2005.

The Spring Festival, scheduled for Friday, April 30, and Saturday, May 1, is shaping up to be a particularly special time. The theme of the Festival is "Aging and Dying in Willa Cather's Fiction" (see announcement in this issue). Steve Shively, chair of the Spring Festival Committee, has done a terrific job of leading the committee and finding talented presenters. Dr. Marjorie Sirridge, Professor of Medicine and Director of the Sirridge Office of Medical Humanities, will lead the Passing Show Panel with a paper exploring the physical aspects of aging and dying. Her daughter Mary, a philosopher, will add the philosophical aspects; and Sue Rosowski will discuss Willa Cather's perspective, with special emphasis on *Obscure Destinies*.

We are already planning for the 2005 Spring Festival, which will celebrate the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation. Plans are very tentative, but guests of this event can already look forward to activities and discussions surrounding *The World of Willa Cather* and the work of Mildred Bennett. A high point of the celebration will be an Opera House production commissioned by the WCPM to be created and produced for this event.

If you live on the East Coast or are planning to visit this area, you will want to attend a Cather fund raising event to be held at the home of Emily and James Scheuer in Washington D.C.

on June 8th. Let us know if you will be in the area, and we will be sure to send you an invitation. Ann Romines and I had lunch with Emily last week. She has some exciting ideas for the event.

Looking back to December, Christmas was a highlight at the new Cather Center. From the Opera House Auditorium to the offices below, the holiday season was evident. John Berger's beautiful paintings, depicting scenes from Cather's novels and other related subjects, proudly hung in the Gallery. John's wonderful work is a tribute to Cather, and his generosity to the Foundation cannot be overstated.

Four huge Christmas trees were donated to the Cather Center; one tree, twelve feet tall, stood in the lower Lobby welcoming all who passed by. And many, many guests were lured into the Cather Center for programs, concerts, or just to share holiday greetings with the staff. The Christmas concerts and plays were well attended. One event was sold out two weeks in advance, with a long waiting list of disappointed potential guests.

Speaking of guests, our visitor count at the end of December was 111% over that of last year. We are delighted that more and more people from near and far are discovering Cather and visiting the places that inspired her writing.

On behalf of the staff and Foundation Board of Governors, I send a hearty thank you to those of you who made end-of-the-year contributions to the Foundation. We are carrying

on important work, but there are costs. We continue to appreciate the support of you, our readers, and others who have recognized the importance of promoting the life, the times, and the work of Willa Cather.

All in all, it was a good year for the Foundation. The move into the Cather Center, the dedication of the newly restored Red Cloud Opera House, the increase in visitors to the Cather Center,

the highly successful Spring Festival and 9th International Seminar, and the wonderful support of the Cather community are but a few of the reasons to celebrate 2003 and look forward to 2004.

I am looking at the snow as it continues to fall here in Nebraska today. I love snow days. They are times to cuddle up with a good Cather book or write to friends as I have done today. Activity slows down in winter, and we probably need to relax a bit. I suppose everyone eventually gets tired of winter. As Cather says, "Winter lies too long in country towns; hangs on until it is stale and shabby, old and sullen." It won't be long before we are anticipating spring, the Cather Spring Festival, and a new issue of the *Newsletter and Review*. Until then, take care.



Snow on the prairie. View from Willa Cather Roadway—January 2004. Photo by Betty Kort.

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 (8 and up) 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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Opera House Schedule

At the Cather Center

“Open Door Lecture Series”
“Cuba”

*The Pulitzer Prize nominated project
by Red Cloud native
Matthew Hansen and other journalists.
February 29th at 2:30*

Dave Stewart
*Sculpture & “History of Aprons”
Display Gallery Exhibit
March 5th - April 15th*

“Bully: An Adventure with Teddy Roosevelt”
*Theatre of the American West
The Teddy Roosevelt of Cather’s day speaks out!
March 13th at 7:30 & 14th at 2:30*

“Steel Magnolias”
*Community Theatre
Sponsored by
Republican Valley Arts Council
March 26th, 27th at 7:30 & 28th at 2:30
April 2nd, 3rd at 7:30 & 4th at 2:30*

Republican Valley Arts Council
Annual Membership Tea
*“History of Aprons” Program
March 27th at 10:00am*

Gabriel Seymour
“Willa Cather’s Red Cloud”
*Gallery Exhibit in place for Spring Festival
April 16th - May 21st*

“Silk Pajamas & Long Underwear”
*Theatre of the American West
April 17th at 7:30 & 18th at 2:30*

Gil Garcia Quartet
“A Touch of Jazz”
April 23rd at 7:30

“Class Acts”
*Featuring Red Cloud Alumni Talent Sponsored by
Republican Valley Arts Council
May 30th at 2:30
Reception following*



Preserve the Treasures

Please help to preserve the treasures in Red Cloud that honor Willa Cather and her work. Make a special gift to the Cather Foundation.

A gift of \$ _____ is included. [] Check enclosed [] Visa []
Mastercard

Account # _____ Expiration Date _____

I/We also understand that all contributions are deductible for federal and state income tax purposes.

Date

Signature

Thank you for helping preserve for future generations the special work of Willa Cather.

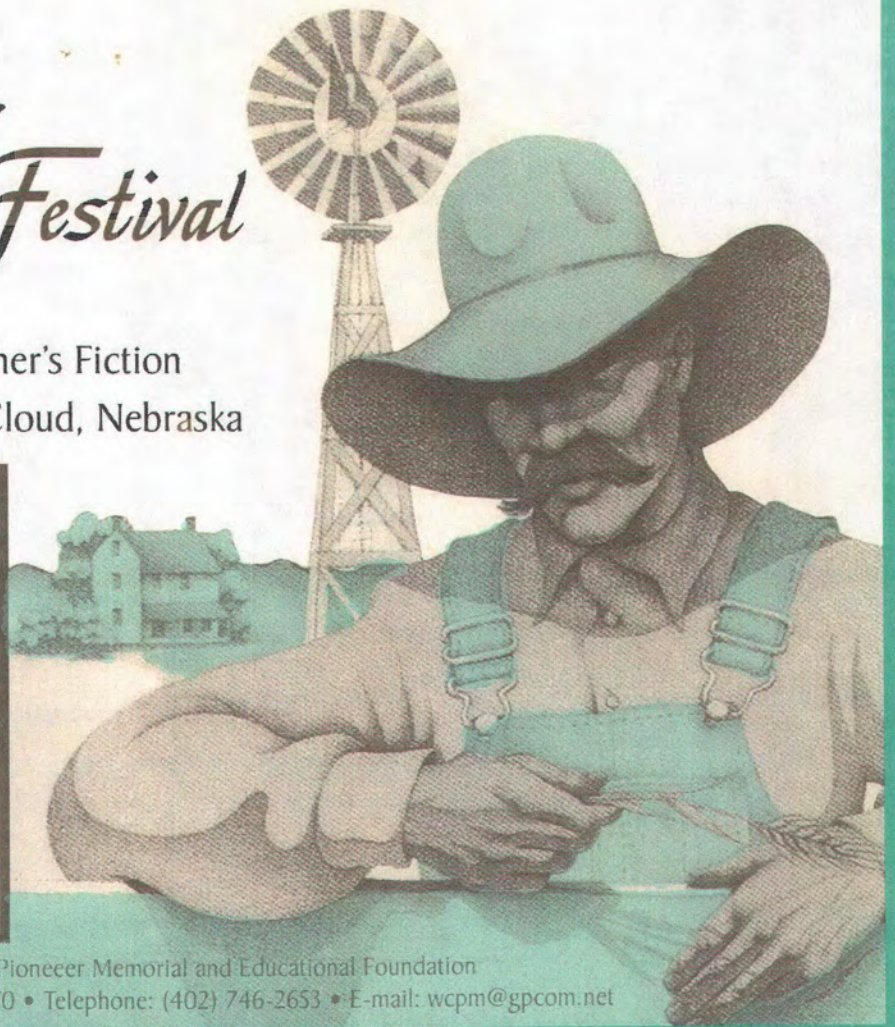
The 49th Annual
Willa Cather
Spring Festival

Obscure Destinies:
Aging and Dying in Willa Cather's Fiction
April 30-May 1, 2004 • Red Cloud, Nebraska

Activities

- "The Passing Show" panel discussion featuring experts on medical and ethical aspects of aging and dying in Cather's writing
- Art gallery exhibit
- Tours and open house at Cather historic sites
- Historic church service
- Opera House performance
- Book discussions
- Banquet and scholarship presentation
- Reading from Cather's work

For more information contact the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation
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