

WILLA CATHER

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Telephone (402) 746-2653 • Facsimile (402) 746-2652
www.willacather.org • wcpm@gpcom.net

326 North Webster Street
Red Cloud, Nebraska 68970



Distinguished panelists Kari Ronning, Paulette Peters and Mellanee Kvasnicka. Photo by Bev Cooper.



Mellanee Kvasnicka
quilt (Raffled to benefit
NEH Challenge Grant for
Opera House Endowment)

Quilt Photos by
Bev Cooper and
Nancy Sherwood

Kari
Ronning quilt

“Under the quilting frames”: Storytelling, Memory and Art at the Cather Spring Festival

One of the highlights of the 2002 Spring Festival in Red Cloud was the Saturday morning panel discussion, in which three distinguished panelists spoke about their own work as quilters in relation to the conjunction of storytelling, memory and art in Willa Cather's life and fiction. The speakers included Paulette Peters, a professional quilter; Kari Ronning, the assistant editor of the Willa Cather Scholarly Edition; and Mellanee Kvasnicka, a Cather scholar and high

school teacher. The discussion was an unprecedented and intimate opportunity to see and to hear how commitments to quilting and to reading Cather's fiction have come together in these three women's lives—as expressed in their words and in the unique, Cather-inspired quilts that they shared with the audience. A sampling of the three panelists' comments follows, along with pictures of the quilts they created.

Comments from these panelists on page 28.



Paulette
Peters quilt

BULLETIN!

The re-opening of the Opera House—originally scheduled for November 30—has been postponed. Stay tuned for further updates. The 9th International Seminar will be in Bread Loaf, Vermont, May 28–June 2, 2003.

In This Issue...

- An Object Lessons by Ann Billesbach
- Bintrim & Madigan on Charles Stanley Reinhart
- Jo Ann Middleton on Cather Studies
- Jennifer Bradley on Cather's scrapbook
- Comments from Spring Festival Panel
- Lisbeth Fuisz on Cultural Imperialism

Contributors to This Issue

Ann Romines, Issue Editor, hopes that the varied features in this issue will give you a lively glimpse of what has been happening on the many fronts of Cather studies. You'll see the work of Cather-inspired quilters, explore Willa Cather's childhood scrapbook—one of the treasures of the WCPM archives—and learn of the newest work of the Willa Cather Scholarly Edition, as well as sampling new scholarship and catching up with the latest Cather publications. Please enjoy every page—and send us your comments and contributions! —AR

Ann Billesbach is head of Reference Services for the Library Archives Division of the Nebraska State Historical Society and the former Curator of the Willa Cather Historical Center in Red Cloud, as well as a member of the WCPM&EF Board of Governors.

Timothy Bintrim, who teaches literature and writing at Butler County Community College, co-directed the 1996 "Cather's Pittsburgh" colloquium at Duquesne University, where he is a Ph.D. candidate. His dissertation-in-progress is a cultural geography of Cather's Pittsburgh writing.

Jennifer Bradley, Associate Professor of English at Mercy College of Health Sciences in Des Moines, Iowa, received her Ph.D. from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in August, 2002. Her dissertation explores Cather's participation in the discourse of etiquette and the democratization of manners. This essay is based on Jennifer's chapter on the Cather scrapbook in *Layered History: The Scrapbook, the Commonplace Book, and the Album*, forthcoming from the Smithsonian Institution Press.

Lisbeth S. Fuisz is a Ph.D. candidate and Teaching Fellow at The George Washington University, where she is currently writing about Willa Cather and the debate about the classical curriculum in early twentieth-century America as part of her dissertation. Lisbeth has been a Cather fan since she first read "The Sculptor's Funeral" in her tenth-grade English class.

Mellanee Kvasnicka is a much-honored high school English teacher in the Omaha public schools. Her work as a Cather scholar has focused on Cather and education, and she has recently published essays in *Teaching Cather* and the *N&R*. She is a member and incoming president of the WCPM&EF Board of Governors.

Mark Madigan is a newly tenured Associate Professor of English at Nazareth College of Rochester. His current project is the Nebraska Scholarly Edition of *Youth and the Bright Medusa*, of which he is volume editor. Cather scholars are indebted to Mark's important work on Dorothy Canfield Fisher and her relationship with Cather.

Jo Ann Middleton is the author of *Willa Cather's Modernism: A Study of Style and Technique* and contributed the bibliographic essay on "Fiction: 1900-the 1930s" to *American Literary Scholarship* from 1990 to 1996. She presently directs the Medical Humanities Program at Drew University and the Raritan Bay Medical Center.

Paulette Peters, past president of the Nebraska State Quilt Guild, served as the Guild's liaison for the 2002 Willa Cather Spring Festival. She is a nationally known quilt teacher and the author of four instructional books on quilting. Her quilts have been widely published and have won national recognition.

Kari Ronning is Assistant Editor of the Willa Cather Scholarly Edition and volume editor for two volumes in that series, *Obscure Destinies* and the forthcoming *My Mortal Enemy*. She is also a prolific quilter, having created an ongoing series of quilts based on historic American prototypes.

CATHER CALENDAR

2003

May 2 & 3

48th Annual Willa Cather Spring Festival
Theme: Willa Cather and Children/Childhood
Core Texts: *My Ántonia*, *Shadows on the Rock*
"The Enchanted Bluff," "The Best Years," "Jack-a-Boy"
Red Cloud

May 28-June 2

9th International Willa Cather Seminar,
"Willa Cather as Cultural Icon"
Bread Loaf, Vermont

Patchwork Images: Cather-Inspired Quilts at the Spring Festival

As many readers know, Willa Cather came from a family with a strong quilting tradition and learned to do patchwork at an early age. Quilts and quilters figure in several of her novels and short stories. With this in mind, the Nebraska State Quilt Guild and WCPM&EF collaborated to sponsor a quilt competition and exhibit for the 2002 Willa Cather Spring Festival in Red Cloud.

Invitations were issued in local and national publications, with these criteria: the quilt must depict a passage from one of Cather's works; it may be abstract or representational, may be quilted by hand or machine, and must measure between 30" and 42" in each dimension. Nineteen entries from ten states were exhibited at the Webster County Historical Museum during the Festival, and awards were based on adherence to theme, artistic interpretation, and technical skill. Festival attendees were treated to a rich array of original quilt creations, each offering a different and provocative perspective on Cather's fiction. They also saw a Cather family quilt (the Robinson-Cather quilt, lent by the Kit Robinson family of Winchester, Virginia) which was made in Virginia in the 1850s, before the family emigrated to Nebraska—confirming that quilts and fine quilting were an important part of Willa Cather's personal and artistic history.

The five prizewinning quilts from the Festival exhibit are illustrated here, along with comments from the makers about their inspiration. Perhaps they will inspire you to try your hand at your own Cather quilt!

First Place: "Shimmering Cottonwoods." Lois E. Wilson, Lincoln, Nebraska. Based on this passage:

The glittering tops of the cottonwoods. . . . Some of the cottonwoods had already turned, and the yellow leaves . . . look like the gold . . . in fairy tales."—*My Ántonia*

Quiltmaker's comments: [Inspiration came from] a trip across Nebraska in the fall of 2001 watching the golds of the cottonwoods and viewing Gai Perry on Alex Anderson's show on TV,



"Shimmering Cottonwoods" by Lois E. Wilson. Courtesy Nebraska State Quilt Guild.



"An Archbishop's Legacy: from Yellow Rocks to Blessed Stones," by Charlotte Elm. Courtesy Nebraska State Quilt Guild.

and a greeting card watercolor.

Second Place: "An Archbishop's Legacy: From Yellow Rocks to Blessed Stones." Charlette Suder Elm, Apple Valley, Minnesota. Based on this passage:

"Yes that rock will do very well. . . . Every time I come here, I like this stone better. . . . This hill confronted me as it confronts us now, and I knew instantly that it was my Cathedral. . . . I would rather have found that hill of yellow rock than have come into a fortune to spend in charity.—*Death Comes for the Archbishop*

Quiltmaker's comments: My husband and I vacationed in Santa Fe last summer, enjoying the New Mexico countryside and landmarks, including the historic Cathedral. This beautiful church captured my imagination. And then, in a small quilt shop in Denver, I found the striking batik that became the border, enhancing the color scheme and determining the size. (I only bought a fat quarter!) The flowers in the foreground symbolize the purple verbena that reminded the Archbishop of his beloved France; the Santa Fe blocks in the corners to me resemble adobe construction and also reinforce the overall "cross" pattern of the quilt.

Third Place: "January Solitude." Carol Kusek, Albion, Nebraska. Based on this passage:

Winter comes down savagely over a little town on the prairie. The wind that sweeps in from the open country strips away all the leafy screens that hide one yard from another . . . This is reality whether you like it or not. . .
—*My Ántonia*

Quiltmaker's comments: Willa Cather was a lover of trees. Their importance is evident in many of her books. Therefore, this cottonwood—beautiful even in its bare state—depicts the isolation of winter and even life on the prairie. A cold January day when spring seems far away.

Honorable Mention/Traditional and Viewers' Choice at Spring

PATCHWORK IMAGES

(Continued)

Festival: "Picking Cherries," Peggy Parrott, Lakewood, Colorado. Based on this passage:



"January Solitude" by Carol Kusek. Courtesy Nebraska State Quilt Guild.

After the apple and cherry trees broke into bloom, we ran about under them, hunting for the new nests the birds were building, throwing clods at each other, and playing hide-and-seek with Nina. Yet the summer which was to change everything was coming nearer every day. When boys and girls are growing up, life can't stand still, not even in the quietest of country towns. That is what their elders are always forgetting.

It must have been in June, for Mrs. Harling and Antonia were preserving cherries. —*My Antonia*

Quiltmaker's comments: As I read this passage, I couldn't help but think of the cherry trees in my parents' yard and the challenge of picking the cherries to make pies and jam before the nesting birds got them all. My own children are all nearing adulthood, and though I would love to preserve these days and keep them young, I know that time and nature are irresistible forces; life truly can't stand still and I must find the beauty in change as I learn to accept altered plans and uncertain futures.



"Picking Cherries" by Peggy Parrott. Courtesy Nebraska State Quilt Guild.

Honorable Mention/Innovative:

"Solemn Magic." Virginia Spiegel, Nebraska City, Nebraska. Based on this passage:

As we walked homeward across the fields, the sun dropped and lay like a great golden globe in the low west. . . . In that singular light every little tree and shock of wheat, every sunflower stalk and clump of snow-on-the-mountain, drew itself up high and pointed; the very clods and furrows in the fields seemed to stand up sharply. I felt the old pull of the earth, the solemn magic that comes out of those fields at nightfall. —*My Antonia*



"Solemn Magic" by Virginia Spiegel. Courtesy Nebraska State Quilt Guild.

Quiltmaker's comments: As soon as I read the words "solemn magic," I knew the quilt I would make. I took the liberty of making the sunflowers full and voluptuous (as they are portrayed elsewhere in the novel by Cather) but kept the gorgeous

"rose colour" of the twilight.

Comments from the Panelists:

Paulette Peters

As a quilter and Cather fan, my comments relate to the exhibit of quilts made for this Spring Festival and to its theme: memory, storytelling and art.

We know that old quilts evoke memories for many people and provide a legacy from women of the past. Quilters often hear the phrase, "My grandmother used to quilt." There's a wonderful scene in "The Bohemian Girl":

They were a fine company of old women. . . . There were fat, rosy old women who looked hot in their best black dresses; spare alert old women . . . and several of almost heroic form. . . . they sat chattering. . . . their fingers never lagging behind their tongues.

That could be a quilt group today, except now we wear jeans, and we're not as old as she thought.

Just as Cather used language to tell her stories, quilters also have a distinctive language. Our vocabulary is visual, with a long tradition of naming patterns and shapes. Many quilts in this exhibit use traditional patterns as a subtext, interconnected with Cather's words. The "Attic Windows" pattern appears in the quilt about *The Professor's House*. There is a "Santa Fe" block in the quilt about *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (see illustration, p. 27). Quilts have always been used to tell the maker's story, including the choice, for this exhibit, of which Cather passage to portray.

Art and creativity are ongoing themes in Willa Cather's work. She writes of the longing for creative expression among the very talented, but she doesn't ignore that same drive in the ordinary person. Look at the first line in "Old Mrs. Harris": "Mrs. Daniel Rosen, cross-stitch in hand, sat looking out the window." Later in the story, "she reached for her work-basket and began to do cross-stitch. It made her nervous to sit with folded hands." Cather observed the meditative quality in the act of slipping needle through cloth.

Cather certainly recognized the value of work of the hands. For example, in *One of Ours*, Mahaily's prize possessions are her three quilts, and a quilt is the best gift she can offer Claude. However, Cather might be surprised at the quilts made for this exhibit. They are not the bed quilts that she knew. Recently, quilters are tending toward less functional forms. Artists are using quilting as a medium; quilters are taking tentative (or bold) steps into art as a form of expression. These quilts are measured by different standards than were quilts of the past, and there is more than one way to measure value in art and in quilts.

It is generally understood that Cather didn't want her work interpreted in other media. She may have been right. We can't get it exactly the same. But, because there is such a strong connection between her written work and our common experience, we find ourselves "seeing" and "feeling" her pieces and her characters. And we say, "Yes, I have to try to record that from my own experience."

For my own contribution to the exhibit, I made "Two Friends," using the following passage:

Dillon had one of his clerks bring two arm chairs out to the . . . sidewalk that ran beside the red brick wall,—office chairs of the old-fashioned sort with a low round back which formed a half-circle to enclose the sitter.

The red brick wall is a character in the story, as are the chairs. The main character is the friendship between two men which ended in a disagreement. I thought it was an unpleasant story, not happily ever after. But it led me to reflect on friendships over the years that are intense for a time, then move on as circumstances change. This seems to be a natural, universal experience.

According to Edith Lewis, “[Cather] always said it was what she left out that counted.” I left out a lot of Cather’s story to tell mine, in my quilt. And, even though she disliked change, I hope that Willa Cather would recognize the new directions of some quilting as creative expression. We continue to find inspiration in her legacy.

Kari Ronning

I came to love history before I came to quilting, and to quilting before I came to Cather. Now all three are inextricably linked. These interests came together in the first Cather-related quilt I made: a Red Cross quilt. During World War I, a Red Cross fundraising quilt pattern was published; people paid a dime to have their names embroidered on a quilt, which then would be auctioned or raffled off to raise more money. On my quilt, I embroidered the names of the characters in Cather’s World War I novel, *One of Ours*, with Claude Wheeler’s name in the place of honor, in the center.

This year, the quilting theme of the Willa Cather Spring Festival gave me the chance to make a quilt-map of Cather’s Webster County, like some nineteenth-century makers of show quilts, who made maps of the United States, of states, or of the districts in which they lived. My quilt is generally based on the plat book maps of Webster County and the other maps in Mabel Cooper Skjelver’s informative book, *Webster County: Visions of the Past*.

The pieced silk squares represent the thirty-six sections in each of Webster County’s sixteen townships, in autumn colors of wheat, corn, alfalfa, and plowed ground. In the Catherton area, purple represents Charles Cather’s land, dark blue represents his parents’ land, and the brighter red represents George P. Cather’s land. Another spot of color represents the Sadilek quarter-section in Batin Township, just north of a half-section Charles Cather owned.

Over this legal landscape the Republican and Little Blue Rivers are appliquéd and embroidered. The major roads are off-white; as Cather said of country roads in “Two Friends”: “Nothing in the world, not snow mountains or blue seas, is so beautiful in moonlight as the soft, dry summer roads in a farming country, roads where the white dust falls back from the slow wagon-wheel.”

Railroads are in gold for the prosperity they meant to the county. Towns are done in beadwork, in appropriate colors: Red Cloud and Blue Hill, Inavale in green, Rosemont in pink, and Bladen in gold for its World War I hero, Grosvenor Cather. Over this I’ve embroidered the major streams of the county. (I didn’t realize how extensive they and their tributaries were until I started this part of the project!)

Little glass beads top the stitches that tack the layers. Red beads represent the location of schoolhouses in Webster County; white ones represent the churches. Other colors mark cemeteries and post offices.

Willa Cather loved Webster County and drew so much inspiration and knowledge from it. This map will serve as a reminder of how much we owe to the county that inspired Cather. It also

reminds me that some of the same things that appeal to me in pieced quilts—the variety and richness of pattern achieved through simple means and materials—are also a part of what appeals to me in Cather. The deceptively simple style plays on the ordinary everyday subject matter and elevates and transcends the materials of her fiction into works that show us new patterns, new ways of looking at the world.

Mellanee Kvasnicka

When I chose the blue and yellow fabrics for my Cather Spring Festival quilt, I was thinking of Archbishop Latour’s meditation on morning, near the end of *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. However, as I began my piecing, I realized that my quilt also reflects my own earliest memories of childhood. My grandmother taught me to embroider when I was very young. I recall sitting on the front porch of her ramshackle old house watching skeins of thread spill from her lap onto the porch floor below. My grandmother was also a quilter, and I have clear memories of a quilting frame which could be raised to the ceiling to be out of the way and lowered to work on a quilt in progress. I watched my mother quilt, but I never thought to ask her to teach me because it never occurred to me there would be a time when she would be unable to do so. When my mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s Disease, she continued to work on patchwork quilts, but with increasing difficulty. By the time I became a quilter, my mother was lost to me as teacher. My own determination to learn how to quilt is, in a very significant way, an attempt at homage to my mother and grandmother. For me, quilting is at once a very personal and private pastime and yet, strangely, I feel very connected, not only to these two singular women in my life, but to so many others who belong to that community of women.

It seems clear to me that in Cather’s work, references to quilts and quilting serve several purposes. Quilts often make connection between past and present. Mahailey in *One of Ours* plans to give Claude for a wedding gift the quilts made by her mother. Mrs. Lee, Marie, and Alexandra create a community centered around quilting in *O Pioneers!* Clearly Cather understood the need for creativity which often shows itself in her references to quilting. History and heritage become an important part of the quilting process. In *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, Cather remembers being allowed to sit with Till, Nancy and Mrs. Blake and sew patchwork. The young Willa understands that she is not to interrupt by asking questions: “Nancy wanted to know what had happened during the war and what had become of everybody,—and so did I.” Perhaps most significant, in terms of Cather’s art, is the connection between quilting and storytelling. Mrs. Lee in *O Pioneers!* “talked incessantly about stories she read in a Swedish family paper. . . . Sometimes she forgot which were the printed stories and which were the real stories, it all seemed so far away.” Edith Lewis writes of Cather’s early Virginia days, “When the old women came from Timber Ridge to make quilts, Willa Cather would creep under the quilting frames and sit there listening to their talk. Mrs. Anderson, the original of Mrs. Ringer in *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, was the best of the storytellers. . . .”

When I look at the quilts that my mother made for me, I understand much more clearly, I think, Cather’s artistic and literary principles. And I can’t help but make my own connections among the past, memory, my mother, and Cather. When I see my mother’s quilts, I understand that for my mother and me, what Cather said is still true: “Whatever we [have] missed, we [possess] together, the precious, the incommunicable past.”

Cather Studies, 2000-2001: Part One

Jo Ann Middleton



All of Willa Cather's book titles, as well as books about Cather and her work, are available at The Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Foundation Book Store in Red Cloud. —Photo by Mike Offner

Cather studies at the turn of the century are both prolific and profound; in the last two years scholars have been enriched by the publication of a volume of primary sources, four significant critical studies, two collections of essays occasioned by Cather conferences, over thirty articles, and a new study guide, *CliffNotes™ Cather's My Ántonia* by Susan Van Kirk and David Kubicek (IDG Books, 2001).

Welcome news for Cather scholars is the publication of *Willa Cather: The Contemporary Reviews* (Cambridge, 2001), ed. Margaret Anne O'Connor, a volume in the American Critical Archives Series, which reprints contemporary reviews of book-length works that Cather herself prepared for publication, many in their entirety. This fine resource also has the advantage of O'Connor's excellent introduction.

Willa Cather and the Politics of Criticism (Nebraska, 2000) expands the 1995 *New Yorker* essay, in which Joan Acocella critiqued the overt politicization of Cather studies. In her haste to return Cather studies to the discussion of idealism and aesthetics, Acocella risks throwing the baby out with the bath

water by devaluing the work of critics such as gender-studies scholars and "multiculturalists." One of the most compelling reasons to study Cather texts is that they *can* be mined in so many ways that there *is* room for everyone; recent scholarship certainly attests to that wonderful variety.

Janis P. Stout's solid, scholarly biography, *Willa Cather: The Writer and Her World* (Virginia, 2000), challenges all narrow interpretations of Cather, introducing a conflicted "modernist conservative" who, like T.S. Eliot (with whom she shared a publisher), was fully engaged with the artistic and ideological issues of her day. Although Cather seems preoccupied with a simpler past in her books, she was, in fact, deeply concerned with modern issues, including gender, ethnicity, pluralism, social class, and Manifest Destiny, making her in all respects a New Woman of her time.

In *Willa Cather & Others* (Duke, 2001), Jonathan Goldberg reads Cather through the lens of queer studies, to illuminate the "intricacies, twists, and crossings" that result from the intersection of gender and sexuality in "the suggestive

silences" of Cather's prose. By juxtaposing Cather to the "others" of the title (Olive Fremsted, Blair Niles, Laura Gilpin, and Pat Barker), Goldberg offers provocative readings of *The Song of the Lark*, *One of Ours*, and *The Professor's House*, but his single-minded focus on cataloguing sometimes far-fetched textual "proof" of Cather's lesbianism detracts from a substantially interesting study.

Deborah Lindsay Williams persuasively argues that Cather and Edith Wharton, who maintained an hostility toward other women writers, did so as a deliberate strategy to further their careers and to assure their status in literary history in *Not in Sisterhood: Edith Wharton, Zona Gale, and the Politics of Female Authorship* (Palgrave, 2001), her brilliant study of the consequences of political activism for women writers. Zona Gale, a feminist who espoused a literary sisterhood, has not been accorded canonical status, though she attained popular and critical success in her lifetime, because feminist critics have subconsciously adopted the belief "that literary authority is at odds with literary sisterhood." Williams offers the long overlooked Cather-Gale-Wharton correspondence to establish each writer's ideas about the literary marketplace, about literary authority, and as proof that, despite their public stances, both Cather and Wharton wanted literary sisterhood.

Willa Cather's Southern Connections: New Essays on Cather and the South (Virginia, 2000), ed. Ann Romines, collects papers from the Seventh International Willa Cather Seminar, held in Winchester, Virginia, near Cather's birthplace. The volume begins with "Willa Cather and the Question of Sympathy: An Unofficial Story" (10-21), Judith Fetterley's proposal that we place Cather's southern beginnings and *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* at the center of Cather's career. In "'Dock Burs in Yo' Pants': Reading Cather through *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*" (24-37), Joseph R. Urgo looks at typically Catherian narrative strategies in *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* and suggests that the text supplies a means of understanding the disturbing and disruptive moments in all of Cather's texts. Tomas Pollard suggests we read the novel against the abolitionist politics of the 1850s in "Political Silence and Hist'ry in *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*" (38-53), and Shelley Newman, in "No Place like Home: Reading *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* against the Great Depression" (54-64), places the text within "the transitive meanings and transformative powers of remembered homes" engendered by the cultural milieu of the Depression.

Four essays deal with issues of race in *Sapphira*. Roseanne V. Camacho locates Cather within regional politics of race during the thirties and forties in "Whites Playing in the Dark: Southern Conversation in Willa Cather's *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*" (65-74); Mako Yoshikawa explores the intersection of incest and interracial sex in "'A Kind of Family Feeling about Nancy': Race and the Hidden Threat of Incest in *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*" (75-82); Marilyn Mobley McKenzie explicates the politics and influence of Toni Morrison's reading of *Sapphira* in "'The Dangerous Journey': Toni Morrison's Reading of *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*" (83-89); and, in "Race, Labor, and Domesticity in Cather's *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*" (90-95), Gayle Wald focuses on

a crucial scene in the novel to read the novel in terms of African American women's labor history.

Lisa Marcus begins a broader consideration of Cather's southern connections in "'The Pull of Race and Blood and Kindred': Willa Cather's Southern Inheritance" (98-119), which identifies "the appropriations of racial and gender identity revealed in Cather's gender crossing." In "'A Race without Consonants': *My Mortal Enemy* as Reconstruction Narrative" (120-29), Robert K. Miller shows how Cather juxtaposes the disenfranchised Henshawes and the "palavery" Poindexters to challenge the American cultural myth that we can construct and reconstruct our lives at will until we find a version we like. Mary R. Ryder's "Henry Colbert, Gentleman: Bound by the Code" (130-37) proposes that Henry Colbert's conflicted morality arises from a clash between "two concepts of being a gentleman—the nineteenth-century view, which his wife embraces, and the Jeffersonian ideal of the yeoman aristocrat." Patricia Yaeger places Cather among other white southern women writers to show how Cather's "image-saturated landscapes" reflect the complexity and disappointment in her struggle with race in "White Dirt: The Surreal Racial Landscapes of Willa Cather's South" (138-55).

Four essays place Cather next to other southern writers. Merrill Maguire Skaggs deftly traces a lifelong rivalry in "The Interlocking Worlds of Willa Cather and Ellen Glasgow" (158-69); Elsa Nettels draws on Allen Tate and the major southern literary-political group to which he belonged to help read *The Professor's House* in "'Aeneas at Washington' and *The Professor's House*: Cather and the Southern Agrarians" (170-179); John J. Murphy applies Flannery O'Connor's premise that "there is something Christian in the southern way of seeing" to Cather, locating and explicating moments of "clear vision and transcendence" in her work in "O'Connor's Vision and Cather's Fiction" (180-88); Janis P. Stout identifies "the good mother/bad mother ambiguities," which are related to North/South ambiguities, as a central concern of both Cather and Toni Morrison in "Playing in the Mother Country: Cather, Morrison, and the Return to Virginia" (189-95).

The collection concludes with Cynthia Griffin Wolff's persuasive and fresh look (complete with illustrations) at Cather's youthful experiments with clothes and "masculine" personae in the context of contemporary theater, fashion, and adolescent rebellion in "Dressing for the Part: 'What's the Matter with Clothes'" (198-220).

Let Us Hear
from You!



Send letters to
Steven P. Ryan
WCPM&EF
326 N. Webster
Red Cloud, NE 68970
sryan@gpcom.net

A Glimpse Inside Childhood: Willa Cather's Childhood Scrapbook

By Jennifer L. Bradley. Photos by WCPM and Nebraska State Historical Society.

Locked in a large iron safe in the old Farmers' and Merchants' Bank in Red Cloud, which now serves as the archives at the WCPM, is Willa Cather's childhood scrapbook. The brightly colored cover of the book, made with woven fabric depicting circus scenes stretched and glued around the outside, instantly catches your attention and imagination (fig. 1). Inside the front and back cover is a lengthy poem written by and about its author which begins:

This book was made by little Willie
When he was rather young and silly.
He was of an artistic mind
And all his friends inside you'll find.
This book, made when he was a kid
Is the best thing he ever did.
His cheek was red, his eye was keen
His brain was of a tender green.
This book with many sorrows rife
Is but a history of his life. [. . .]

Willa Cather, or Willie as she called herself in childhood, made her scrapbook by sewing together pieces of cotton cloth and binding them with her fabric-decorated cover. She filled her book with Sunday school cards and awards of merit, pictures cut from magazines and advertising cards of all kinds. In the above poem, which serves as a preface to the scrapbook, Cather suggests that this book, filled with different artifacts, needs to be "read" as a "history" of her life. That is to say, Cather invites the creation of a narrative inspired by her scrapbook.

Little is known about the actual creation of Cather's scrapbook. It was given to Bernice Slote, Cather scholar at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, by Cather's niece, Helen Cather Southwick, with the understanding that it would be transferred to the WCPM after Slote's research was complete. The opening poem is not dated, and there is no other handwritten indication of a date inside. Based on the copyright dates on some of the advertising cards in the scrapbook and Cather's use of her nickname "Willie," it seems likely she compiled the scrapbook between the ages of nine, when she arrived in Nebraska in 1883, and seventeen, when she left Red Cloud to attend the University in Lincoln in 1890.

Scrapbooks were immensely popular between the 1870s and 1890s. According to Deborah A. Smith, the scrapbook was the

"most accessible" collecting phenomenon of the American Victorian era and came in many forms. Willa Cather's scrapbook falls into the most popular category—those made up of "compilations of many kinds of printed paper ephemera, saved for the novelty of color printing (chromolithography)" (Smith 63). Scrapbook creators included a variety of materials in their albums, including advertising trade cards, business cards, calling cards, greeting cards, postcards, rewards of merit, scraps, tickets, price lists, and almost anything else (*Emergence of Advertising*).¹ Creating scrapbooks appealed to a wide audience, and Cather appears to have made her scrapbook largely on her own.

Children and adolescent girls were the primary targets of literature designed to attract people to collecting and compiling scrapbooks. Scrapbooks were used as a way to teach children to organize and classify information and to help adolescent females in particular develop their artistic sensibilities. In *Scrap-Books And How To Make Them* (1880), E. W. Gurley advises that, with help from their mother or older sister, children "will soon show much skill and taste in arranging their little books, and also grow into a love for order and beauty" (52). Gurley even suggests that a home where the family scrapbooks together "will be pleasanter, and that family will take an advanced standing in society" (13).

Creating a scrapbook was presented as a form of self-expression and play whereby adolescent girls could use their imaginations to interact with the products and settings presented in the pictures they cut out and pasted into their books. Advertisers, in particular, were well aware of the collecting craze and encouraged girls to use trade cards and other advertising materials in their scrapbooks. Some cards addressed the collecting phenomenon directly, instructing the "'lively little card collector' to show the card to mother," and other advertising materials "were intended as toys, incorporating paper dolls or puzzles" in an effort to attract children's attention and desire (Strasser 166). By encouraging play with advertising materials, advertisers worked to introduce such materials into the home. They wanted to naturalize consumerism, making it seem a natural

part of home life. By creating scrapbooks, children gained experience interacting with local and national advertising, and advertisers found their admission into the home.

Adolescent girls were encouraged to fantasize and play within the realm of advertisement, to use the images and language of the commercial world for self-expression. A young female scrapbook



Figure 1—Willa Cather's childhood scrapbook.

maker was to use her gender-specific skills as arranger of material goods and decorator to create an aesthetically pleasing representation of herself and her world. Scrapbooks, then, worked on many levels. They allowed girls the opportunity to learn the importance of organizing and classifying materials and invited imagination and creativity in selecting styles and modes of display within their pages. Scrapbooks offered adolescent girls the possibility of trying-on or trying-out different social roles and status and trained them as future consumers who would automatically view consumerism as a natural process.

Pictures cut out of magazines make up the smallest category in Cather's scrapbook. While magazines were an easily accessible source of illustrations, only a limited number provided the color pictures Cather was obviously drawn to. The color cut-outs Cather did include are of botanicals, fruits, and women in formal attire, including a large, page-size cutout of one woman in a floor-length emerald plaid dress with a silver fitted jacket. The woman dons white kid gloves, carries a walking stick, and wears an elaborate tall black hat with a large matching emerald bow (fig. 2). Her formal attire suggests an evening at the theater or at a dinner party, or any other context a young Cather might have imagined. Many of the women Cather cut out and pasted in her scrapbook wear elaborate hats, perhaps an early sign of her own affinity for them. While it was her prerogative to call herself "Willie" or "William" and look like a tom-boy, Cather's selection of elaborately and formally attired women suggests she was at least aesthetically attracted to an upper class life style and feminine dress her mother would have greatly preferred.

Some of the Sunday school cards celebrate religious holidays, particularly Easter and Christmas. Like stories from the Bible, these cards tell stories. One card celebrating Easter shows a boy adrift in a turbulent ocean with an egg shell as his vessel (fig. 3). Although the image of a boy adrift on the water might be a reference to the disciple Peter adrift in the water prior to Christ's appearance, the introduction of an egg shell as the vessel opens the image up to alternate interpretations and invites recipients to create a suitable narrative of their own. Cather perhaps considered her Sunday school cards reminders of special events or people. In any case, they are the only group that, as a



Figure 2—Color cut-out from a magazine.

whole, do not contain any additional captions or names hand written by Cather, which suggests a certain sacredness or authority. Advertising cards, also known as trade cards, make up the largest and most varied collection within Cather's scrapbook. At the height of popularity during the 1880s and 1890s when Cather assembled her scrapbook, the cards were either included in the packaging of a product or, more commonly, given away by local shopkeepers. While they were intended as advertisements, the cards became popular collectibles and many families kept albums filled with advertising cards. "No other medium could reach so many households, and no other one was saved and cherished by the consumers themselves" (Jay 3). The cards themselves became as or more valuable as a commodity than the products they were created to promote.

Reflecting her interest in medicine, Cather includes a card for Clark's Spool Cotton that shows a little boy who has pulled the head off a doll. The printed caption reads, "Born to be a surgeon." While on one level this card can be read as strictly humorous, this card might also offer an explanation for early childhood behavior, perhaps even offering comfort to a mother disturbed by her child's actions. Further, it suggests a larger story about destiny and callings.

Another card Cather includes from the Clark Thread Company is printed in the shape of a spool of O.N.T. thread with a picture of a mother using a piece of thread looped under her infant's arms to help him take his first steps (fig. 4). The caption reads, "Nothing stronger can there be, but mother's love and O.N.T." The card invites the consumer to share this moment with the proud mother and to reflect on a similar moment in her own experience. The card is designed to suggest the strength of the thread, but it suggests much more, including the bond between mother and child, milestones in a child's development, and hopes for the future.

Another card focusing on the strength of thread in Cather's collection depicts Jumbo, the elephant from P.T. Barnum's circus, being captured and dragged by Willimantic Thread (fig. 5). The card capitalizes on the sensationalism surrounding the purchase of the largest and most commercially exploited elephant in captivity and uses thread as part of the story about his capture and transport to America in 1882. This card is meant to further the growing legend of Jumbo by helping the public visualize the efforts needed to capture such a large animal. More importantly, by depicting thread performing heroic feats, the advertiser's message "resonates with the idea that the domestic spreads out to a larger world, even the unknown world" of places like Africa and England, the former homes of Jumbo (Garvey 39). Advertisers wanted women, and the adolescent girls they were training as future

consumers, to look beyond the home to the larger world of consumerism. Scrapbook compilers often acquired several copies of the same card, or several stock cards with the same image advertising different businesses. Duplicate cards allowed the opportunity for even more creative play. Some girls designed pages of their scrap-



Figure 3—"An Easter Blessing"

consumers, to look beyond the home to the larger world of consumerism. Scrapbook compilers often acquired several copies of the same card, or several stock cards with the same image advertising different businesses. Duplicate cards allowed the opportunity for even more creative play. Some girls designed pages of their scrap-

CHILDHOOD SCRAPBOOK

(Continued)

books to feature duplicate cards arranged in intricate patterns. Advice authors who promoted scrapbooks as educational tools for children also offered creative options: "Instead of pasting in those cards which have become too familiar to awaken much interest, let the young bookmakers design and form their own pictures by cutting [...] parts of figures, from different cards, and then pasting them together so as to form new combinations [...]" (Beard 396-7).

As if following this advice, Cather actually cuts one of her Jumbo cards apart and pastes in a picture of Jumbo alone with the thread and captors cut out. With this omission Cather demonstrates her critical reading of the trading cards. She evaluates and rejects the narrative suggested by the card, substituting her own desired outcome—a free Jumbo. In each of these examples, something incidental like thread becomes part of a larger narrative about a boy's destiny, a mother's love, or animals in captivity.

Cather's collection of trade cards also reveals some of the themes and social influences featured in the trade card sets of her time. For example, Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado* made an extraordinary debut in the theaters in 1885, and characters from the play appeared on sets of advertising cards. Cather, a great fan of the theater even at a young age, had two complete sets in her collection. The *Mikado* cards allowed consumers to learn or retell the narrative they had heard in the play. Cather, as in the example of Jumbo, again rewrites this narrative by inscribing the name of a friend or family member under each character's picture. She gives her brother Roscoe the honor of being the prideful Pooh-Bah, even adding a cartoon-like balloon coming out of his mouth that demands, "Shut up Smart Ally." By assigning fictional advertising characters the names of friends and family, Cather ties the commercial world to her family's sphere. Through such labels she could perhaps express her frustration over a bossy brother or assign herself a new role. This type of dynamic play allowed for self-expression and encouraged compilers to use the advertising materials to speak for their interests and desires.

The collection of items gathered, arranged, and captioned by Cather in her scrapbook as a whole provide a narrative of her childhood, revealing her likes and dislikes, early talents and interests, and social influences. Each item in the scrapbook—each Sunday school card, cut out picture, and advertising card—however, invites its own narrative as well. As a result, the scrapbook provides narratives within narratives, resulting in layers of meaning. The memorabilia she includes are artifacts that reveal cultural and social layers of history, and Cather's hand-written captions provide her commentary on these memorabilia. Each layer of his-



Figure 4—"Nothing stronger can there be, but mother's love and O.N.T."



Figure 5—Jumbo

tory works alone and in combination with others to provide a complex and intricate look at one woman's childhood and the influence of consumerism, particularly as it influenced the definition of appropriate behavior, on that childhood. Cather's first exposure to advertising and the ways it attempts to shape behavior through trade cards introduced her to the language of consumption and taught her how to interact and play within that language. Although she may not have been aware of it at the time, Cather was a participant in advertising's influence on the definition of proper behavior. The experience must have made a lasting impression, for Cather returned to the process of creating her scrapbook when she "gave" it to Jim Burden in *My Ántonia*. Jim presents a scrapbook matching Cather's in description to Yulka as part of the Burden country Christmas. In reintroducing her scrapbook in her novel, Cather reflects upon the benefits and consequences of the scrapbook craze and the influences of the consumer culture.

'Scraps were "multi-colored illustrations on embossed paper that were die-cut into shapes."

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"Washed Ashore" won Reinhart critical acclaim at Paris, Philadelphia, and Chicago expositions, as well as in Pittsburgh. Today its whereabouts is unknown. Image courtesy of Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, North Side Branch.

New Discoveries from the Willa Cather Scholarly Edition

A Palm for Stanley: Reinhart's Grave Restored Through Cather's Writing

By Timothy Bintrim and Mark Madigan

I never knew the emptiness of fame until I went to that great man's funeral. I never knew how entirely one must live and die alone until that day when they brought Stanley Reinhart home.

Willa Cather penned these words in October 1897, one day after she attended a memorial ceremony for artist Charles Stanley Reinhart at Pittsburgh's Allegheny Cemetery. As she watched the gravestone purchased by Reinhart's family being lifted into place, she remembered the artist's sparsely-attended burial the previous August and reflected "how incongruous, how little short of miserable it is for an artist to come out of Pittsburgh" (qtd. in Curtin 510). New York City had made a respectable showing at the burial, sending "a number of artists and literary men and several great editors" on the train that brought the body, but Reinhart's home city had provided fewer than a hundred mourners. Cather claimed to have heard from at least as many Pittsburghers dismissive comments to the tune of "'Reinhart dead? Oh yes, his brother is a man of means I guess. Stanley never amounted to much'" (qtd. in Curtin 510).¹ Pittsburgh's disregard for a man she considered a true artist evidently stuck with Cather, for seven years later she used the incident as the core of "The Sculptor's Funeral" (Byrne and Snyder 84, Duryea 255). Although the action of the story is moved to provincial Kansas, the audience that inspired Jim Laird's stinging speech may well have hailed from Pittsburgh.

Charles Stanley Reinhart was born in Sewickley, a town on the Ohio River near Pittsburgh, on May 16, 1844. He worked in the steel and railway industries into his early twenties and then left for Europe to study art—first in Paris, and later Munich. He came back to the United States after two years and began working as an illustrator at *Harper's Weekly*. His pen and ink drawings and gouache illustrations made him one of the best-known artists of the Golden Age of magazine illustration. Returning to Paris in the 1880s, Reinhart devoted more time to painting in oils and watercolors—work that won critical praise and medals at the Paris Salon. Cather thought much of Reinhart's Civil War sketches for *Harper's*, which were informed by his observations of the war in her native Virginia;² she also praised his paintings of working people, both American and French. In her pseudonymous eulogy in the *Home Monthly* she wrote, "Among American authors of his generation there are men more poetic in conception and graceful in execution, but none with the same power of suggesting character, none who have introduced the average man and all the quaint ironies of commonplace American life so successfully into art" (17). Reinhart died of Bright's disease (a kidney ailment) on August 31, 1896. His wife, Emilie Varet, had died the previous year. He was survived by a son and two daughters ("C.S. Reinhart Dead").

Because Cather specifies in her "Passing Show" column that she had watched Reinhart's stone being lifted into place, Jeanne

REINHART'S GRAVE

(Continued)

Shaffer and Tim Bintrim were surprised when, while preparing for Duquesne University's "Cather's Pittsburgh" conference in 1996, they found Reinhart's stone in Allegheny Cemetery to be a prostrate cross, level with the grade of the hillside. Had Cather lied about attending the service, or had the grave been disturbed?

Their questions remained unsolved until last autumn, when Mark Madigan, volume editor of *Youth and the Bright Medusa* in the Willa Cather Scholarly Edition, asked Tim to photograph the grave for the forthcoming book. Tim submitted several photos, glad to be Mark's "point" man in Pittsburgh. Then came e-mail from Mark, asking for a better image—could he clear the grass away, especially from the base of the cross? Grumbling about the obsessions of scholarly editors, Tim returned to Allegheny Cemetery, this time packing a garden trowel along with his camera. Digging about the base of the stone, he discovered something surprising, something which confirmed Mark's editorial instincts. At the base of the marble cross were several deep grooves (see illustration) which appear to be vestiges of holes drilled for metal rods—rods that once held the stone upright on a foundation. When the stone broke or was deliberately broken, the rods clove its face, leaving grooves which were hidden from view as the cross settled into its new position. We no longer had reason to doubt Cather's words: she had attended the 1897 ceremony and reported exactly what she saw. More surprises were in store, however.

Upon presenting this evidence to Allegheny Cemetery, we soon received a reply from Thomas J. Roberts, the cemetery's president, who not only thanked us for identifying another accomplished Pittsburgher resting there, but (to our delight) promised to have Reinhart's stone raised, cleaned, and mounted on a new concrete foundation. Roberts explained that the cemetery's records, maintained since 1844, do not include biographies of those interred within its limits; consequently, Reinhart's identity as one of the foremost magazine illustrators of the nineteenth century had been lost. The cemetery's current guidebook lists Reinhart only as a "known artist." The updated guidebook will include references to Cather's writings and Reinhart's illustrations for *Harper's Weekly* and the *Century Magazine*, as well as his rarer work in oils, including "Washed Ashore" (1887), the painting Cather chose to illustrate her *Home Monthly* profile of the artist in October 1896 (see illustration).³

In 1897, Cather expected her Lincoln readers to know

Reinhart's name with only the slightest prompting, writing "you all admired his work in Harper's publications for years. You all saw his picture 'Washed Ashore' at the [World's Fair] in Chicago" (qtd. in Curtin 511). "Washed Ashore" shows a little band of French villagers gathered about a drowned fisherman, one of their own. Cather wrote, "The picture has in it the same melancholy spirit of patient endurance and the bitter-sweet smell of the sea that haunt Pierre Loti's inimitable sea tales.... It suggests a story without blatantly telling it" (17). She added, "the scene of the picture was an actual one which the artist witnessed while he was summering down on the French coast" (17). In 1890, Henry James wrote glowingly of the same picture in *Harper's Weekly*, an appreciation Cather may have read, calling it "a masterpiece in direct representation . . . , excellently composed, but not artificial, deeply touching, but not sentimental;



This portrait of Charles Stanley Reinhart accompanied Cather's tribute to the Pittsburgh-born artist in the Oct. 1896 Home Monthly. Image courtesy of Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, North Side Branch.

large close, and sober, [an] important work [that] gives the full measure of Mr. Reinhart's great talent" ("Charles Stanley Reinhart"). Cather found it hard to believe that an artist who had earned such praise from James and accolades in Paris and New York would want to return, even in death, to Pittsburgh. Harvey Merrick, in "The Sculptor's Funeral," is likewise "strangely loyal to the country of his youth" (qtd. in Curtin 511), although his townsfolk neither appreciate his art nor understand that the palm leaf on his coffin is reserved for those who have achieved great things.⁴

Happily, Allegheny Cemetery has done much to remedy Pittsburgh's neglect of Stanley Reinhart at the time of his death. The restoration of the grave was completed in July 2001 (see illustration) and was funded by the nonprofit Allegheny Cemetery Historical Association, whose mission is preserving the cemetery's horticultural and architectural heritage. Founded in 1844, Allegheny is one of the oldest and best-preserved "rural" cemeteries in the United States (McGough 2). More than 117,000 Pittsburghers are memorialized within its three hundred acres, includ-

ing such notables as Gettysburg General Alexander Hays, actress (and Cather's contemporary) Lillian Russell, and the parents of industrialist Andrew Carnegie (Kidney 95). And it is hard to imagine Willa Cather visiting the cemetery in 1896 and 1897 without paying homage to composer Stephen Collins Foster, whose grave is marked with a modest white marble tablet.

Would Cather view Allegheny Cemetery's recent tribute as evidence that Pittsburgh has come to recognize and even revere its artists? Would she be surprised that, after more than a century, her occasional journalism had the power to move stone? If we take as an answer the affection for rural cemeteries displayed in her fiction, she would indeed be pleased.

We have found two plausible explanations for the lowering of Reinhart's gravestone. The simplest explanation is that the metal rods corroded, allowing the cross to lean (Held, Personal Communication). A leaning marble cross understandably might have been viewed as a safety hazard, and the stone may have been lowered to safeguard visitors. An alternate scenario is suggested by Walter C. Kidney's *Allegheny Cemetery: A Romantic Landscape in Pittsburgh*. According to Kidney, the cemetery experienced severe flash flooding throughout the mid-1890s that was especially damaging near the Butler Street entrance, where Reinhart's grave is located. The cemetery's rolling terrain (falling three hundred feet in under a mile), aggravated by torrential rains and insufficient city sewers, was blamed for the problem. Major flooding again occurred in 1909, and "trees, roads and walls [were] undermined" (74). Possibly Reinhart's stone was upset or undermined by the floodwaters, and, lacking a photographic record, workers placed the stone on its back. In 1911, the artist's younger brother, railroad executive Joseph W. Reinhart, was buried in an adjacent plot under a flat marble marker. Quite possibly the disturbance occurred after Joseph's burial, or the surviving family might have brought the error to the cemetery's attention.

Thomas G. Roberts is pleased by the outcome of this collaboration between Cather scholars and the Allegheny Cemetery Historical Association; Reinhart's story will be told in a future issue of the Association's *Heritage* newsletter. He notes that the cemetery's immediate neighborhood of Lawrenceville has recently become something of an artists' colony—visual artists can afford large studio spaces in this once-depressed district. Whenever visitors identify themselves as Pittsburgh artists, drawn to this green space by its picturesque landscape and lapidary treasures, he will be sure to point out the grave of their famed predecessor, Charles Stanley Reinhart.

Note of Thanks

The authors wish to thank the following individuals: Mrs. Jeanne A. Shaffer of Pittsburgh, who, upon finding Reinhart's grave, asked all the right questions; Thomas G. Roberts and Barbara Held of Allegheny Cemetery, for graciously answering our questions and arranging to have the stone raised; C. Prentiss Orr of the Pittsburgh Regional Alliance, for documenting the project in Allegheny Cemetery's *Heritage* newsletter, and Kaarin van Austel, reference librarian at the Music and Art Department of Pittsburgh's Carnegie Public Library, for helping us search for "Washed Ashore." We also thank Susan Rosowski for reading an early version of this article and Kari Ronning for assistance in reproducing the *Home Monthly* illustration of Reinhart.



Reinhart
gravestone before restoration.
Photo by Timothy Bintrim.



Reinhart
gravestone after restoration.
Photo by Timothy Bintrim.

Notes

¹William M. Curtin identifies Stanley's brother as Joseph W. Reinhart (1851-1911), "a railroad and financial expert, subsequently president of the St. Louis and Santa Fe Railroads" (512 n.15). On 1 April 1893, *Harper's Weekly* chronicled Joseph's Algeresque rise from a railyard office boy to the presidency of the largest rail system in the nation, at age forty-one ("A Young President" p. 311). According to *Harper's*, J.W. Reinhart was "probably the youngest man who has ever been assigned to so important a post." Joseph's forte was accounting, and the auditing system he developed was widely adopted in other large railway offices. Although Cather in her *Courier* article emphasizes the material disparity of C.S. Reinhart and his younger brother—"a man of some means" even by Pittsburgh standards—Stanley probably also made a handsome living. *The Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* lists more than ninety of his drawings appearing between 1890 and 1896 in leading magazines such as *Harper's Weekly*, *Scribner's*, and the *Century*. Like fellow Sewickley native Ethelbert Nevin, whom Cather was still to meet, Reinhart would have represented for Cather the artist as heroic laborer.

²In the *Home Monthly*, Cather described Reinhart's wartime experience thus:

In 1859, when he was about 15, [Reinhart] entered the offices of the Allegheny Valley Railroad under Isaac Morley. When the war came on and the government took charge of the railroads, Isaac Morley was given supervision over several lines then in government use. He took Reinhart with him to Alexandria, Virginia. There, on the hotly disputed battleground of the great conflict, the young man got the groundwork and detail of the war sketches which made him an invaluable member of Harper's staff. Indeed, only three days before his death, when his final illness struck him in his studio, he was engaged in making a series of illustrations for General Porter's war papers for the *Century Magazine*. His "Crossing at Fredericksburg" and "High Tide at Gettysburg" are among the strongest of his drawings. (16)

Century Magazine serialized General Horace Porter's "Campaigning with Grant" in six installments between November 1896 and April 1897. Reinhart completed only three of the drawings before his death; the remaining illustrations were done by B. West Clinedinst in a similar style. "High Tide at Gettysburg" appeared in *Harper's Weekly* of 19 Sept. 1896 (vol.

REINHART'S GRAVE

(Continued)

53, 924-26); Cather's other reference is to a drawing titled "Seventh Michigan at Fredericksburg, December 11, 1862," in the 4 July 1896 issue (vol. 53, 660-61). Polly Duryea asserts that "the Civil War pictures by Reinhart and/or Winslow Homer probably influenced Cather's image of the lost Civil War Sergeant in [her story] 'The Namesake.' Such pictures were engraved either from actual sketches, from memory, or were taken from Civil War photographs like those taken by Matthew Brady, Alexander Gardner, and Timothy O'Sullivan who did their work right on the battlefield" (256). Duryea's dissertation is available online as part of the University of Nebraska's Cather Archive: <<http://www.unl.edu/Cather.cather.htm>>. Occasionally Reinhart illustrated Harper's short fiction, including Sarah Orne Jewett's "The Taking of Captain Ball" (1889; collected in *Strangers and Wayfarers*, 1890). Thanks to WCPM member Terry Heller, this illustration is available online as part of the Jewett Text Project, hosted by Coe College: <<http://www.public.coe.edu/uktheller/soj/saw/ball-il.htm>>

³John March and Marilyn Arnold's *A Reader's Companion to the Fiction of Willa Cather* is correct in stating that "Washed Ashore" was owned by the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C. We have learned from the Corcoran that the painting was deaccessioned in 1957 and sold to Coleman Galleries. At the time of this writing, we have been unable to locate the painting.

⁴The use of the palm leaf as a symbol of distinguished achievement dates from ancient times when victorious Roman gladiators were awarded a branch of the palm tree. James Woodress notes that Merrick may have been an *officier d'académie* of France, a holder of the *palmes académiques* for excellence in instruction in sculpture (*Troll Garden* 125).

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My Antonia Selected for City-wide Reading Program

By Patrick T. Reardon
Chicago Tribune

First it was a novel about racism. Then a Holocaust memoir. Now, Mayor Richard Daley and his library chief are inviting Chicagoans (and any interested suburbanites) to read Willa Cather's classic *My Antonia* as part of the book club that is Chicago.

The third installment in the One Book, One Chicago initiative—unveiled August 14 by Daley and Library Commissioner Mary Dempsey—is a story of the settling of the American prairie in the 1880s, centered on Antonia Shimerda, a strong-willed earth mother from Bohemia.

Although first published 84 years ago, *My Antonia* remains resonant of the American experience, according to Daley and a Cather scholar.

At a news conference at the Thurgood Marshall branch library in the Auburn-Gresham neighborhood, the mayor acknowledged the novel's subject "may seem pretty far-removed from Chicago in the 21st Century." But he noted the book grapples with such modern-day concerns as class, religion and immigration.

Not only are immigrants again a growing segment of the U.S. population, but, given the history of the nation, Daley said: "We're all immigrants, except the Native Americans."

The One Book, One Chicago program was initiated last fall by the Chicago Public Library to encourage reading and to knit together the social fabric of the city.

In a telephone interview, Susan J. Rosowski of the University of Nebraska, where Cather was a student, described *My Antonia* as "a story of immigration and change and dislocation and building community." [Rosowski also serves on the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial board of governors.]

Indeed, *My Antonia* is so accurate in its portrayal of the pioneers and their struggles that it is even taught in history classes, said Rosowski, one of two editors of scholarly editions of Cather's books being published by the University of Nebraska Press.

The Chicago initiative, inspired by a program in Seattle, began with Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a story of race, injustice and courage in a small Southern town.

The idea drew international attention, and One Book, One Chicago became a model for efforts in more than 40 cities, numerous states and even nations, such as Canada. In April, library officials followed the Lee novel with *Night*, Elie Wiesel's story of living through the Holocaust.

The third installment will kick off August 31, when free reading guides will be available in the city's 78 public libraries, as well as nearly 3,000 copies of the novel itself. In addition to the 300 copies of *My Antonia* already on the system's shelves, another 2,500 in English have been ordered, 150 in Spanish and 25 in Korean. Dempsey said attempts are being made to obtain copies in Polish.

The reading will culminate with festivities throughout the week of October 14, including more than 65 book club discussions, screenings of documentaries about Cather and a panel discussion of her work.

One addition this time around will be a 10-week graduate course on *My Antonia* and related topics, offered by DePaul University for \$1,520 and open to anyone with a bachelor's degree. The class will meet Wednesday evenings from September 11 through November 13.

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Discovering the Southwest: Cultural Imperialism in Willa Cather's *Song of the Lark* and Sharon O'Brien's *Willa Cather: The Emerging Voice*

By Lisbeth S. Fuisz

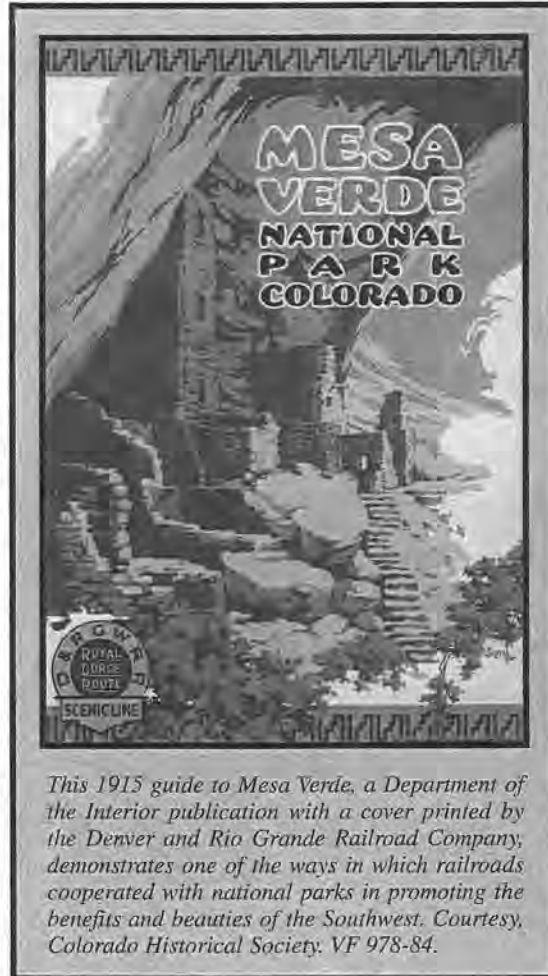
In *The Song of the Lark* (1915) and *Willa Cather: The Emerging Voice* (1987), the protagonists, Thea Kronborg and Willa Cather respectively, mature as artists as a result of discovering a landscape represented as geographically, culturally, and temporally distant. It is significant that they “discover” their vocation as they “discover” a place. Thea and Cather can only become great artists once they have taken literal and figurative possession of a place and people coded as Other. Thea’s blossoming as an opera singer and Cather’s as a writer are contingent upon an imperial project of appropriation. How and why do these two developmental narratives, that of the artist and that of the explorer, become intertwined? And why must it be the “Southwest” and the people native to it, selected Mexicans and Indians, who inspire the changes in Thea and Cather? This essay will explore these questions to establish the inextricable links between art and imperialism in these two twentieth-century texts. Although some scholars hesitate to admit that U.S. culture has grown (and continues to grow) out of an imaginative and literal space called empire, we have the critical tools now to undertake such investigations. Using David Spurr’s theory articulated in *The Rhetoric of Empire* (1993), which delineates a variety of rhetorical strategies underlying imperialism such as *negation, idealization, naturalization, and aestheticization*, this essay will explore how imperial discourse enables Cather and O’Brien to tell their stories. I compare Cather’s and O’Brien’s narratives to suggest ways in which early twentieth-century rhetoric informed by the United States’ colonization of Western territories was prevalent and unquestioned at the time of O’Brien’s composition in the late 1980s, and, as many postcolonial scholars argue, is still present in popular imagination today.

Although *The Song of the Lark* is a work of fiction and *Willa Cather: The Emerging Voice* a literary biography, both construct linear, developmental narratives. By comparing the two texts I want to be provocative: I am consciously divorcing the “Cather” who wrote *The Song of the Lark* from the “Cather” O’Brien constructs. Although O’Brien problematizes Cather’s understanding of herself as a cohesive individual, she replicates Cather’s racial views without questioning them. Interested in Cather as a lesbian,

O’Brien’s text privileges a reading of the impact Cather’s gender and sexuality had on her personal and intellectual growth and, therefore, is not attuned to how race influenced her. O’Brien later acknowledged this in her 1991 introduction to *The Song of the Lark*, stating that she now “find[s] Cather’s, and Thea’s, treatment of the Indian women and their pottery problematic” (xv).¹ My reading will elucidate why such actions and representations are problematic by exploring the imperial discourse that enables Cather’s and O’Brien’s writing.

Constructing the Southwest
The Song of the Lark and *The Emerging Voice* rely on notions of geography informed by America’s imperial past. The texts position the Southwest as a temporary place of relaxation and restoration: a tourist spot. The benefits and beauties of the Southwest were heavily promoted, beginning in the late nineteenth century, by organizations such as railroads and national parks that sought increased regional travel (Dilworth 16-17; Blodgett 277). To represent the Southwest as restorative involves an act of negation through which, according to David Spurr, “Western writing conceives of the Other as absence, emptiness, nothingness, or death” (92). For Spurr, “negation acts as a kind of provisional erasure, clearing a space for the expansion of the colonial imagination and for the pursuit of desire” (92-3). Operating in both narratives, this rhetorical strategy constructs the Southwest as an empty space for the flowering of the artist’s imagination and the realization of her desires.

For Thea Kronborg, depleted by Chicago, America’s West represents renewal. Fred Ottenburg’s family ranch in Arizona offers a solution to her problems. According to Fred, the area is only good for rest and recreation: “He [his father] has a big worthless ranch down in Arizona, near a Navajo reservation, and there’s a canyon on the place called Panther Canyon, chock full of that sort of thing [ruins]. I often go down there to hunt. [. . .] It would make a new girl of you” (242). Subsequent events in the narrative endorse Fred’s opinion about the transformative effect of the landscape. This exchange functions because the characters share the notion that the “West” is valuable only for what it offers them. They see the landscape as empty and, therefore, as a place of potential, even though, paradoxically, Native Americans are living



This 1915 guide to Mesa Verde, a Department of the Interior publication with a cover printed by the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad Company, demonstrates one of the ways in which railroads cooperated with national parks in promoting the benefits and beauties of the Southwest. Courtesy, Colorado Historical Society. VF 978-84.

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there on reservations.

Once Thea attains her desires (both artistic and sexual) in Panther Canyon, the Southwest ceases to matter to her and Fred. In language that clearly demonstrates the imperial nature of the act of negation, the narrator explains their feelings as they leave the region by train: "With complete content, they saw the brilliant, empty country flash by. They were tired of the desert and the dead races, of a world without change or ideas" (276). Having met their needs, the Southwest is drained of possibility. The emptiness that once signified endless opportunities now represents absence.

The Emerging Voice constructs a similar, restorative Southwest through the strategy of negation. According to O'Brien, Cather visits her brother in Winslow, Arizona, in 1912 to recuperate from an illness: "like many Americans who migrated to the Southwest for its dry climate, she associated the region with a return to health" (403). O'Brien implies that Cather values the landscape because it serves her needs. Once those desires are satisfied, Cather is ready to leave. O'Brien explains Cather's attitude by summarizing some correspondence with Elizabeth Sergeant: "After two months Cather had had enough of Julio, the desert, and ecstasy. She needed to get away, back to civilization and tranquility so she could savor the Southwest's 'golden elixir' [. . .]. One could play with the desert, she said, love it, be filled and intoxicated with it, but then the time came when one had to go" (418). This vision, like Fred and Thea's, participates in a cultural construction of the Southwest as a respite from the modern, industrialized world: "a magical place remote in time and space" (O'Brien 405).

The southwestern landscape gives Thea and Cather back their health, but more importantly, it inspires their art. The Southwest can inspire because it is aestheticized. Aestheticization, Spurr explains, assigns objects inherent aesthetic value and endows them with a "material unity and coherence" (142). Thea's and Cather's temporary relationship to the place allows them to transform it into an object of beauty detached from the historic reality of colonial dispossession and violence towards indigenous cultures. By tapping into the "inherent" aesthetic temperament of the Southwest, both narratives argue, Thea and Cather realize their own "inherent" artistry.

For Thea, contemplation of the landscape leads to an artistic epiphany. The narrative explains, "Here [in Panther Canyon]

everything was simple and definite, as things had been in her childhood. [. . .] Her ideas were simplified, became sharper and clearer. She felt united and strong" (257). Similarly, in *The Emerging Voice* the Southwest's inherent aesthetic value fosters Cather's creativity. According to O'Brien, "In this new land—which affected her emotionally, spiritually, imaginatively, erotically—polarities seemed momentarily reconciled. The Southwest offered her a magical, harmonious balancing of earth and sky, nature and culture, life and art, body and soul, feminine and masculine" (403). By imposing unity upon the landscape, O'Brien's language aestheticizes and idealizes it, just as Thea's had done. Both *The Song of the Lark* and *The Emerging Voice* represent the artist's experience by employing rhetorical strategies underlying empire. By reinscribing Cather's idealized assessment of

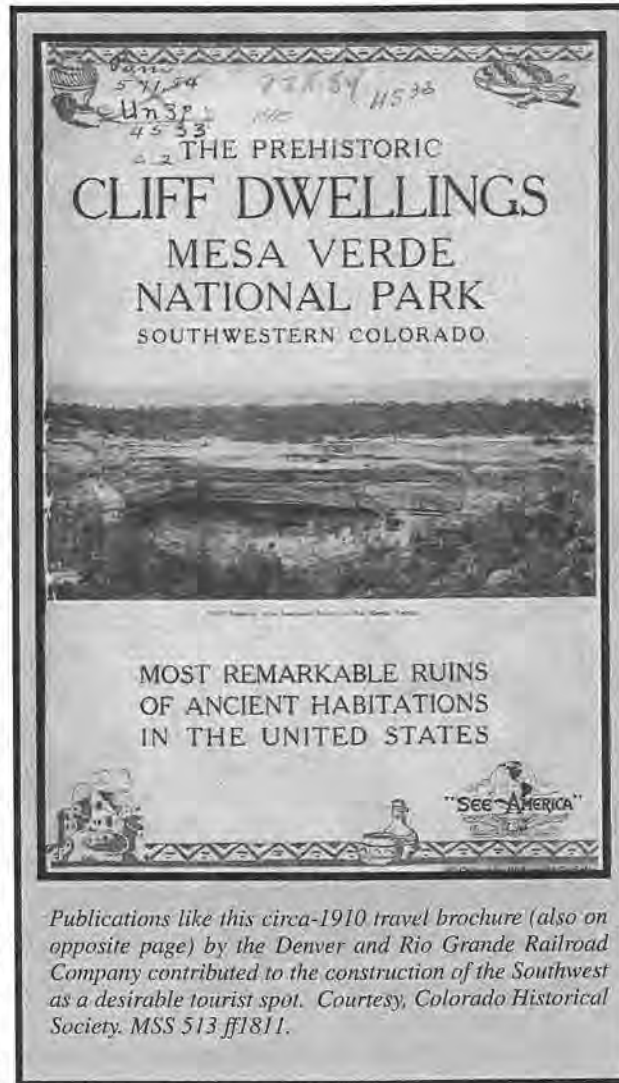
Arizona, O'Brien demonstrates that the Southwest still functions in American culture as an imperial place of possibility. In both Cather's and O'Brien's texts, the Southwest offers experiences not available in urban United States.

Constructing the Inhabitants of the Southwest

Throughout my discussion of the Southwest as a construct, I have intentionally refrained from addressing the inhabitants of the land, yet to distinguish the two is artificial. Both writers represent the indigenous people as part of the landscape. The association of the Southwest with indigenous cultures is not unique to Cather and O'Brien. The Southwest functions as one of two locales in which mainstream American culture places homogenized Indians. Keetoowah Cherokee critic Ward Churchill explains that in twentieth-century film and literature indigenous peoples are relegated to a Western setting because they have been frozen in a particular time period, about 1850-1880. Churchill demonstrates that this connection between people and place is a result of historical events:

Constricting the window of Native America's celluloid existence to the mid-nineteenth century has, because it was then the locus of Indian/white warfare, had the collateral effect of confining natives to the geographic region known generically as the "West." In truth, the area is itself divided into several distinct bioregional locales, [. . .] the Plains and the Upper Sonoran Desert region of New Mexico and Arizona (often referred to as the "Southwest"), [selected] as being representative. (170)

The location of Thea's and Cather's artistic discoveries is impli-



Publications like this circa-1910 travel brochure (also on opposite page) by the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad Company contributed to the construction of the Southwest as a desirable tourist spot. Courtesy, Colorado Historical Society. MSS 513 ff1811.

cated in a cultural logic born out of the colonial contest between Native Americans and white settlers. In addition to the representation of Indians in these two texts, I also will address the construction of Julio, a Mexican with whom Cather reportedly associated in Arizona. In both narratives, the imagined inhabitants play an instrumental role in the artist's development.

The narratives' equivalency between the people and the land is a form of naturalization, as Spurr defines it (157). A "natural" extension of the landscape, the Indians of Panther Canyon represent a physical presence in harmony with the environment. Claiming "they must have been a reserved, somber people, with only a muscular language," Thea denies the cliff dwellers verbal language and intellect (384). By focusing on their physical attributes, Thea renders the Indians equivalent to the terrain, her ideas for opera roles coming "[o]ut of the [canyon] rocks, out of the dead people" (383). The narrative endorses the idea that Thea's tapping into the Indians' "primitive" ways enables her artistry. Thea explains: "They [the cliff dwellers] taught me the inevitable hardness of human life. No artist gets far who doesn't know that. And you can't know it with your mind. You have to realize it in your body, somehow; deep. It's an animal sort of feeling" (384). In her explanation, the natives represent a physicality distinct from intellectual knowledge. Thea needs both attributes to be a great artist. Had Thea not discovered the ancient ones, the text implies, she would not have been able to fully develop her operatic skills.

While Thea uses her stay in Panther Canyon to establish contact with a sensual, physical self, in *The Emerging Voice* Cather does so through a relationship with Julio, a Mexican. According to O'Brien:

Much of Julio's appeal must have been his otherness: younger, male, from another culture, he was an emissary from the sensual Latin races who were at home in the desert, Cather's land of passionate revelation. In her letters she refers to him as silent and opaque; perhaps because of the language and cultural difference, he did not speak enough to intrude upon her as a real human presence. (412)

Lacking a critical tone, the passage accepts implicitly Cather's own consciousness of racial difference. Associated with sensuality, Julio is denied access to language and humanity. In letters to Sergeant, Cather depicts Julio as a natural extension of the landscape: "like the desert, he was timeless, without beginning and without end" (O'Brien 412). A momentary diversion, "he would never be integrated into her life" in New York (412). Once Julio has fulfilled her needs, he is expendable.

Cather's experiences in Arizona are set against a backdrop of Indian cultures, about which, according to O'Brien, she displays

an "exultant feeling of acquisition" (414). O'Brien writes that, like other (white) visitors, "Cather was enthralled by Pueblo civilization. Communal, ritualistic, mystic, the Southwest Indians' culture seemed a healthy counterpart to the aggressive individualism, spiritual emptiness, and corrupt materialism of modern American life" (414). By opposing native culture to capitalistic society, this depiction idealizes the indigenous, deemed valuable only as a restorative for the white visitor. Idealization represents the primitive as the antithesis of the civilized (Spurr 127). As O'Brien argues that Cather's interaction with native cultures is instrumental in developing her artistry, she implicitly endorses Cather's idealization.

Both Thea and Cather take pottery from the ruins they visit in the Southwest. Thea's guilt at taking the pottery suggests that the

literal appropriation of Indian relics hides an acknowledgment of a figurative appropriation of their cultures. The logic of appropriation universalizes the resources of the colonized land: they belong to all people and they are everyone's inheritance (Spurr 28). O'Brien inadvertently makes the connection between the literal and the imaginative expropriation of indigenous life when she calls Cather's act of taking the pottery fragments "a visible sign" that Cather "felt herself heir of a female artistic tradition; having been granted this gift by the Indian women [. . .]" (415). The "gift" is both the pottery and the tradition, the one a visible indication of the other. Thus, in a rhetorical move typical of the strategy of appropriation, the Indians are seen to be giving away their resources when they are actually being bought or stolen.

The tradition that the pottery symbolizes for Thea and Cather allows them to figure the Indian women as their ancestors. Integrated with the land, their artistry a part of

their everyday lives, the natives in both texts are represented as natural artists who inspire Thea and Cather. Thea imagines that the pottery signifies a connection between her own artistic desires and those of the ancient ones: "All these things [in the ruins] made one feel that one ought to do one's best, and help to fulfill some desire of the dust that slept there. [. . .] These potsherds were like fetters that bound one to a long chain of human endeavor" (256-7). These thoughts reveal how her appropriation of their tradition is masked as a spiritual and artistic affinity. Thea sees herself as obligated to fulfill the natives' artistic potential; her desire is displaced onto the "dust." Spurr shows that one way the proprietary gaze of the colonizer erases itself is by imagining that it acts only in "response to a putative appeal on the part of the colonized land and people" (28) — as Thea does here.

Cather also feels a bond with the long dead women. O'Brien explains Cather's attraction to the indigenous cultures: "As representatives of a native American artistic tradition, the cliff-dwellers and their present-day descendants were artistic forbears and rela-



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tives she wanted to claim" (415). The word "claim" indicates Cather's desire for possession, but by figuring this claim as matter of inheritance, O'Brien mystifies the act of appropriation. In *The Song of the Lark* and *The Emerging Voice*, appropriation takes the form of a universalized continuum of female artists that elides the history of the violent contact between European Americans and Native Americans. The artists create a usable past that erases unwanted elements.

Both *The Song of the Lark* and *The Emerging Voice* explain where their characters get their information on the Southwest. Establishing the cultural context for their knowledge reveals that Thea's and Cather's beliefs are shaped by the dominant, imperialistic culture. The main sources for Thea's information about the cliff dwellers of Panther Canyon are Ray Kennedy and Henry Biltmore. Ray initiates Thea's fascination, providing a script about the Indians; many of his explanations and descriptions reappear in her thinking about Panther Canyon. Confirming much of what Ray told her, Biltmore supplies additional details such as "Their pottery was their most direct appeal to water, the envelope and sheath of the precious element itself" (254). Immediately afterwards, Thea has her breakthrough that art is "an effort to make a sheath" (254). The men's knowledge and actions inform her attitudes towards Indian culture.

O'Brien claims patriarchal sources for Cather's knowledge of Southwestern cultures. She explains that "Cather approached the Southwest's arid climate and desert landscape with contrasting associations drawn from nineteenth-century French fiction, the Bible, and church history: the desert was the locus both for primitive passion and for celibate withdrawal, for sensual indulgence and aesthetic revelation" (407). Cather learned about the cliff dwellers and Mexican culture through childhood stories and histories. O'Brien reveals the cumulative effect of these exposures: "Cather had already traveled to the Southwest in her mind, and so [. . .] the region was emotionally and psychologically mapped before she ever arrived there" (405). These sources predetermined Cather's response to the Southwest, a response O'Brien finds instrumental in her artistic development and hence unproblematic.

Scholars recognize this preconceived mindset as part of imperial thinking. In an article about the tourist industry in the Southwest, Theodore S. Jojola explains that, "In the face of the exotic and primitive, the outsider draws on his or her own preconceptions and experiences to selectively appropriate elements of the 'Indian'" (173). Ward Churchill observes that the absence of reliable information about Native Americans licenses people "to figuratively reconstruct native culture(s) in accordance with their own biases, preconceptions or sense of expediency and convenience" (175). O'Brien does not allow Cather's preconceived notions of the Southwest to disturb her otherwise meticulous reading of the writer's life, which suggests that views like Cather's on the Southwest and its indigenous cultures remain normative in late twentieth-century mainstream U.S. culture.

Even though *The Song of the Lark* and *Willa Cather: The Emerging Voice* mention other cultures, the narratives position the middle-class, white American's experience as normative. Mexicans and Indians serve Thea's and Cather's needs as developing artists. By tracing the processes of discovery and erasure that characterize the women's growth as artists, I have demon-

strated that the texts' representations of the Southwest are rooted in "the rhetoric of empire." It is important for scholars to continue to analyze representations of indigenous cultures; to examine, in particular, the discourses that figure the Southwest and its inhabitants as a remedy for industrialized, white America; to question further Cather's self-representation as an artist who discovered her calling in the Southwest; and to acknowledge the unintentional use of imperialistic rhetoric by artists and their critics. O'Brien's representation of Cather's Southwest reveals the historically contingent nature of scholarship. As diverse theories become available to literary scholars, we deepen our critical understanding of how empire impacts U.S. cultural production.

'Despite this acknowledgement, O'Brien still idealizes the indigenous women by representing them as the antithesis of western values: "Not only do Cather and her heroine take something that does not belong to them, but both are using the art of a communal (and eventually colonized) culture—which is anonymous, domestic, and ritualistic—to empower an individualistic notion of the artist that is anything but anonymous" (xv-xvi). Leah Dilworth has identified the characteristics of anonymity, domesticity, and ritualism as integral to early twentieth-century mainstream constructions of southwestern Indians that she argues still have currency in American society.

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Second-Year Goal Met for NEH Challenge Grant

When people, serious people, believe in you, they give you some of their best.

—Willa Cather, *Song of the Lark*

The generosity of “serious people” who believe in preserving Willa Cather’s literary legacy in Red Cloud, Nebraska, made it possible for the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation to reach its second-year goal in the challenge grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Over 235 individuals, foundations, businesses and others have pledged and given over \$250,000 by July 31 so that the Willa Cather Foundation could reach the important second-year deadline in its four-year challenge from NEH.

The generosity of the donors listed below will help the Foundation provide public and scholarly programming in the newly renovated Red Cloud Opera House. This edition of the *Newsletter and Review* includes essays and pictures from the 2002 Spring Festival. Next year, you will be able to attend Festival events in the reopened Opera House. There is also a story about Willa Cather’s childhood scrapbook, part of the Foundation’s extensive collection of documents and artifacts. The NEH challenge grant will also provide support for the WCPM archives which, future plans provide, are to be housed in the Opera House lower level.

Help us reach the third year’s goal for the NEH challenge grant: \$325,000. Please send “some of your best” in a contribution today to the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation. See coupon on back page.

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Object Lessons: The “Good Shepherd” Window at Grace Episcopal Church

For many visitors to Red Cloud, the Grace Episcopal Church is memorable for its beautiful stained and painted glass windows. The story of Willa Cather’s role in the acquisition of the “Good Shepherd” window dedicated to her father unfolds in letters, contracts, and newspaper articles in the archives of the WCPM&EF and the Nebraska State Historical Society.

The first documented reference to this window appeared in early June 1928, three months after the death of her father, when Willa Cather wrote to her Red Cloud friend Carrie Miner Sherwood asking her to send measurements for the window. Only a week later, she again wrote to tell Carrie that shopping for the stained glass window was too difficult and that she would let it wait until fall. A tentative decision about the window may have been reached by that autumn, for the original typed date on the contract for the windows was October 25, 1928. But in a letter dated early January of the following year, Cather confided to Carrie that her mother’s illness left her unable to deal with ordering the window, though she did like the design.

A final decision on the “Good Shepherd” window must have been made in early 1929, for in an undated letter, probably from May of that year, Willa Cather instructed Carrie that the inscription on the window should read simply, “In Memory of Charles Cather, who loved this church.” And on August 3, 1929, Carrie Miner Sherwood, acting on behalf of the Grace Episcopal Church of Red Cloud, signed a contract for the window with the Emil Frei Art Glass Company of St. Louis and Munich, one of the premier stained glass studios in the United States.

The contract signed by Mrs. Sherwood specified that the “Good Shepherd” window would be “executed according to design 3476,” would cost \$150.00, and would “be made in the Munich Studio of the Frei Art Glass Company of the finest antique glass.” A typed addendum noted “Attention is directed to customer’s preference for deeper colors than shown on design,” a change quite possibly requested by Willa Cather, given her frequently mentioned love of vivid colors.

The Red Cloud *Weekly Advertiser* of January 31, 1930, announced, “the placing of two beautifully designed colored glass

windows in the Episcopal Church. . . . The one window which has been placed in the north wall, was given by Miss Willa Cather in memory of her father, C.F. Cather. The subject so elaborately and beautifully represented in glass is that of ‘The Good Shepherd.’”

With the window in place, Willa Cather wrote to Carrie on April 21 to say that the consecration of the window would have to wait and that perhaps it could be held at Christmas. If and when that dedication was held is not known, but Cather herself would have undoubtedly seen this window for the

first and only time when she spent Christmas in Red Cloud in 1931. A fire in the church on December 6 might have hampered her enjoyment of the window, but “Fortunately,” as the *Commercial Advertiser* noted, “none of the beautiful and expensive memorial windows recently installed and dedicated, were injured, they being so constructed as to withstand more than the ordinary amount of abuse.”

In 1969 the Episcopal Diocese of Nebraska deeded the Grace Episcopal Church to the WCPM&EF, and the church and its windows are now preserved as an important part of Willa Cather’s Red Cloud.

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Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation Collection, Nebraska Historical Society



She was one of ours and yet, the talents of Willa Cather far surpass us.

By Darrel Miller, The Smith County (Kansas) *Pioneer*

Way back in 1883, a ten-year-old girl moved with her parents to the Great Plains. Here she grew up, observing with great interest the frontier farming scenes and small-town life that surrounded her. In many ways, she was just like the hundreds of thousands of other children who grew to adulthood in similar situations.

And yet, this girl named Willa Cather was vastly different from most. After she graduated from college and wrote for magazines, she called on those childhood memories to write vivid and descriptive stories about the people and places of her childhood.

As a result of her genius, more than a century later my family was lured to the Red Cloud vicinity the past weekend to tour the rural scenes that were so closely entwined in Willa's formative years. We found the Cather homestead, which she turned into a memorable spot as the Burden homestead in *My Ántonia*. Beginning in 1883, this was her first enduring view of the Nebraska landscape—"the light air, the earth, the sun and sky, with hawks circling overhead."

Continuing on to the Divide between Red Cloud and Bladen, we took in the "windy plain that was all windmills and cornfields and big pastures," as she described it. In *O Pioneers!*, Willa mentioned the furrows that "often lie a mile in length" and the frank, joyous, young "open face of the country."

We visited other sites that are well known from reading her novels. Next came the George Cather home, which was the setting for *One of Ours*. Then we walked through the Catherton cemetery where her grandparents are buried. Using simple words that are familiar to all of us, she has written many vivid descriptions of cemeteries, and in "Neighbour Rosicky" penned these words:

"The moonlight silvered the long billowy grass that grew over the graves and hid the fence; the few little evergreens stood out black in it, like shadows in a pool."

Finally we came to the Cloverton Cemetery where Anna and John Pavelka are buried. They are Ántonia Shimerda Cuzak and Anton Cuzak of *My Ántonia*, and also are the Rosickys of "Neighbour Rosicky."

The written tour guide noted another paragraph that Willa Cather wrote in "Neighbour Rosicky": "But this was open and free, this little square of long grass which the wind forever stirred. Nothing but the sky overhead, and the many-coloured fields running on until they met that sky . . ."

Those were among the simple rural settings that we visited. Then, as we drove homeward, I steered our vehicle past a similar farm where I grew up in northeastern Smith County. Similar many-coloured fields also ran on there until they met the sky, but somehow they weren't as meaningful.

What was the difference? What magic had a small-town girl visited upon Webster County, Nebraska, that we didn't possess in Smith County, Kansas? The answer is both simple and complex. The two landscapes were and are similar, and the experiences of the people who lived there a century ago were almost identical.

The difference exists in the genius of Willa Cather. With her acute observation and the literary talents that she developed, Willa brought the Nebraska landscape to life—and will hold it so for

centuries to come—while describing it as the background for several of her memorable novels.

When we muse about the manner in which a thoughtful small-town Nebraska girl wrote these insightful stories, which forever memorialize the lives of her friends and neighbors, inspiration grips us. We realize that such genius could be buried in all of us.

Willa Cather stands out as a great talent among the millions of people who have inhabited these plains. If her parents had settled across the line in Smith County, Kansas, the scholars and fans would be visiting famous sites here just as we toured the farms along the Divide in Webster County.

Willa became one of the most notable literary figures in American history. And yet, what did she possess that isn't available to all of us? Certainly, it wasn't luck. Neither can such stories be wrought with bluster, hype, and the public relations razzle-dazzle that is so prevalent today.

With nothing more than blank sheets of paper, she gave us a treasure of stories that ring true to life, that live and die, and breathe and sigh. Perhaps, if we care enough and labor untiringly, we can develop such talents in our own lives. At least, we know that the possibility is there. The results remain in our hands.

—Reprinted with permission of the author.



Antonette "Toni" Marie Kort

1905-2002

Last surviving child of Anna and John Pavelka

Antonette "Toni" Marie Pavelka Kort died peacefully Saturday, May 18, in Merced, California. She was born September 16, 1905, in Bladen, Nebraska, to John Pavelka and Anna Sadilek Pavelka. Her mother was the inspiration for the central figure in Willa Cather's Plains classic, *My Ántonia*. Toni was one of 13 children who grew up on the family farm outside Bladen, Nebraska; the family figures prominently in Book V of *My Ántonia*.

Toni was married to Robert Dvoracek from 1924 to 1930. They had a daughter, Mildred. In 1932 she married Emil Kort. They lived on a farm east of Blue Hill, Nebraska, until 1975, when they moved to a home in that community. Toni moved to Merced, California, in October 1999 to be closer to family.

Toni was preceded in death by her parents; her 12 brothers and sisters; her first husband, Robert; her second husband, Emil.

She is survived by daughter Mildred Neff and son-in-law, Kenneth Neff, of Atwater, California; by grandson Randy Neff and wife Rosemary of Fresno, California; and by grandson Jerry Neff and wife Karen of Fresno. She also leaves behind five great-grandchildren: Amy Neff, Bryan Neff, Paul Neff, and Brad Neff, all of Fresno; and Kara Neff of Sacramento.

Memorial services were held in California and Blue Hill. Interment was in Blue Hill cemetery June 20, 2002.

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Send essays or inquiries to

Ann Romines
Department of English
The George Washington University
Washington, D.C. 20052
(annrom2@cs.com)

-or-

Merrill M. Skaggs
Department of English
Drew University
Madison, NJ 07949
(mskaggs@drew.edu)

-or-

John N. Swift
Department of English
Occidental College
Los Angeles, CA 90041
(swiftj@oxy.edu)

Send news items to

Bruce P. Baker II
11419 Castelar Circle
Omaha, NE 68144
(brucepbaker@aol.com)

Send letters to

Steven P. Ryan
WCPM&EF
326 N. Webster
Red Cloud, NE 68970
sryan@gpcom.net

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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News From The Executive Director

Elsewhere in this issue you will find extensive coverage of the 47th Annual Spring Festival. For two splendid days in May otherwise farflung Catherphiles converge on Red Cloud. We always look forward to it, for it is the only time of year we see many of you. When you go, we sift through our memories . . . and your comment cards. Here are some excerpts and a few responses.

Congratulate the people of Red Cloud for making this Festival so enjoyable. They have made us feel very welcome in the community.

This town is to be commended for making us feel so welcome! The staff at [the] book store and for [the] morning and afternoon tours were so gracious, [and] so well versed in Cather territory!
Is this a great town or what? And our staff is terrific.

Paper presentations of students were excellent.

[The Memorial] Prairie needs to be burned.

I wish the prairie would get burned. It needs management.

The Cather Memorial Prairie is owned and maintained by The Nature Conservancy, which for some years has had a comprehensive management plan in place. "We haven't excluded burning for that property," explains TNC project director Brent Lathrop of Aurora. "We just haven't been able to work it out logistically. We are using grazing for plant and animal diversity, and are starting to use haying as a temporary surrogate for burning. We want to move forward on burning as soon as we can, but it is a complex operation--such a large tract and so rough, and would require having the right equipment and a large number of the right personnel on hand to oversee. But stay tuned, for next year may be the year we finally return fire to the Cather Prairie."

Quilting is a beginning of consideration of Cather's interest in visual art. I would like it considered further. Cather's interest in painting should be a conference topic, as should her interest in tapestries.

This is a wonderful cultural event for Red Cloud and the state so I would encourage that more time, effort, and \$ be put into publicity.

Publicity could be improved. The media needs to be here.

Letters and advance press releases went to state and regional media. The Red Cloud Chief, the Hastings Tribune, and KHAS-TV covered the Festival.

[The] music, wine [at banquet were] nice touches . . . [The] kids [waiting table] always do a great job as do all the volunteers.

Head table and speakers need to be on a platform.

Head table should be on a platform. Would like to see speakers.

The newly opened Red Cloud Community Center did not yet have a dais. The Center now has a platform available for future banquets.

I very much enjoyed my trip to Red Cloud and look forward to reading more Cather.

Is there any way to time the conference so young people (college students) can come?

This was our 47th annual event. We have found that, over the years, school calendars have shifted underneath us. Our traditional weekend--the first in May--is now a common time for examinations, graduations and proms. Even so, a sizable contingent of students from Fort Hays State University in Kansas attended the Friday of Festival, and a number of secondary and higher education students presented papers.

A year ago we tried the third weekend in May, but this still conflicted with a number of academic calendars. The last weekend in April is the Niehardt conference in Bancroft; earlier in April risks disagreeable weather. The second weekend in May belongs to Mother's Day. Alas, there is no perfect time for the Spring Festival.

An outstanding year.

A very successful year. Thanks.

Thanks again for a wonderful weekend and the weather you ordered!
It was our pleasure having you. Please come again.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

The WCPM&EF sends you warmest wishes from Willa Cather's Red Cloud. Perhaps you would like to celebrate with us by baking Antonia's nut cake. Here is Mrs. Harling's recipe:

Hickory Nut Cake

1½ cups powdered sugar	2 teaspoons baking powder	4 egg whites
½ cup butter	2/3 cup water	2/3 cup nuts,* chopped
2 cups flour [sifted]	1 teaspoon vanilla	[Add 1/2 teaspoon salt. Ed.]

Cream sugar and butter together until fluffy. Sift together flour and baking powder. Add alternately to creamed mixture with the water. Add vanilla and fold in stiffly beaten egg whites. Add nut meats and bake in greased loaf pan or 2 layer pans. Bake at 350 degrees, 50-55 minutes for the loaf, 25-30 minutes for layers. Frost with boiled icing or whipped cream.

[*If hickory nuts are unavailable, other nuts, such as black walnuts or pecans, may be substituted. Ed.]

This Hickory Nut Cake, which is mentioned in *My Antonia*, was a recipe of my grandmother, Mrs. J.L. Miner. She is Mrs. Harling in *My Antonia* and so she taught Antonia to make the cake when she came as a hired girl to work for the Miner family. The Charley Harling that Antonia baked the cake for was my father, C.H. Miner.

Jennie Miner Reiher, Red Cloud, Nebraska

From Maxine Morrison and Catherine J. Hillegass, *Nebraska Centennial First Ladies' Cookbook*. Lincoln: Centennial Press, 1966, 73.



Yes, I want to help the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation meet the National Endowment for the Humanities Challenge. I understand that my gift will be used to match the grant from NEH.

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