

Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter

The Willa Cather Society

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Seminar Issue

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On April 30, the first afternoon of the expanded Spring Conference, five 6th-graders (left to right: Lisa Schneider, Greg Dohmen, Stephanie Kruse, Emily Wick, and Ryan Schnieders) from St. Isadore's Elementary School in Columbus, Nebraska, repeated the performance that won them first place on Nebraska History Day. Their program about the land presented characters and passages from *O Pioneers!* and *My Antonia*. In June, this group will compete in the national finals in Washington, D.C.

— Photo by Beverly Cooper

One of Ours

I. A Note on *One of Ours*

James Woodress
University of California-Davis

Cather scholars are well aware that the critical response to *One of Ours* was a mixed bag. H. L. Mencken and Sinclair Lewis, who had praised extravagantly Cather's earlier novels, panned her war novel. Heywood Brown and Edmund Wilson also joined the ranks of the detractors. Although Cather had said that the novel was a book she had to write, she herself had feared that the reviewers would savage

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Cather News

I. Distinguished Scholars to Assemble at Seminar

The Fifth International Cather Seminar will gather at Hastings and Red Cloud a greater variety of scholars than previous seminars. Two prominent Edith Wharton scholars, Cynthia Griffin Wolff and Elizabeth Ammons, promise to bring fresh perspectives to Cather studies. In a major address, Wolff, the Class of 1922 Professor of Humanities at MIT, will view Cath-

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Dutch Masters

I. The Third Chapter of "Sampson Speaks to the Master"

John J. Murphy
Brigham Young University

The following analysis is the result of an altercation in my recent Cather course at BYU. Students were assigned to review several chapters in Sapphira and the Slave Girl for composition or structure, for this novel's chapters are frequently mixtures of kinds. Our class went well for about ten minutes, until

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DISTINGUISHED SCHOLARS TO ASSEMBLE AT SEMINAR, (Continued)

er's final novel, *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, as Cather's most successful account of woman as artist, and Ammons, Professor of English at Tufts, will use her recent research on race and ethnic issues to evaluate the same novel.

Terence Martin, Distinguished Professor of English at Indiana University and veteran American literature scholar with significant interest in Cather, will examine in a major address the effect of mystical faith on patriarchy and domesticity in *Shadows on the Rock*. Ann Romines, of George Washington University and author of *The Home Plot*, will explore Cather's writing on aging. The third major lecture will be offered by Merrill M. Skaggs, Baldwin Professor of English at Drew, and be a first — a consideration of Cather's distinguished late story "Before Breakfast" as a component in a dialogue between Cather and Faulkner, a fellow Southerner.

Featured lectures and presentations by other significant Cather scholars will include Susan Rosowski, Seminar Director and Professor of English at U. of Nebraska-Lincoln, on *One of Ours* and *Sapphira*, and an examination by John J. Murphy of Brigham Young U. of Godfrey St. Peter's crisis in the final book of *The Professor's House*. Marilyn Arnold (BYU) will address "The Allusive Willa Cather," and Lucia Woods's photograph essay will be "L'Invitation du Voyage." A special conversation will be arranged with Cather's biographer James Woodress, U. California-Davis, and Bruce P. Baker, U. of Nebraska at Omaha, will direct a section devoted to Cather in the classroom.

There will be special treats like trips to Red Cloud and environs (including Antonia's homestead), a Victorian dinner, films, a service at St. Mark's Pro-Cathedral in Hastings, talks on Old Red Cloud and on Midwestern Opera Houses, and a musical evening. Also, there will be dozens of paper presentations by Cather scholars and students from many states and several countries, and major opportunities (formal and informal) for discussion.

This event is a must for anyone interested in Willa Cather and her work. To reserve the few remaining places available call Foundation Director Pat Phillips ASAP: (402) 746-2653.

II. News from Red Cloud

Recently Charles Jones, director of the Omaha Playhouse, visited Cather country with a group from Iowa Western Community College in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Mr. Jones adapted *O Pioneers!* for the 1992 Omaha Playhouse production. This year the Nebraska Theatre Caravan will tour the state with *O Pioneers!* Jones is currently working on a dramatic adaptation of *My Antonia* which will open in Omaha in March 1994.

Both the travel section of the *Chicago Tribune* for April 25, 1993, and the May/June 1993 issue of *Home and Away*, the magazine of the American Automobile Association, carried articles on Willa Cather's Red Cloud. Bettina Heinz Hurst, editor of the *Red Cloud Chief*, wrote both articles. During the week before the Spring Conference, the *Red Cloud Chief* featured the WCPM as the business of the week.

When Gene Koepke, vice-president at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, recently bought a first edition at a used bookstore in Chicago, he got more than he bargained for. Tucked inside he found a hitherto unknown and substantial Cather letter.

On May 20, the Nebraska tour guides toured the Cather sites in Red Cloud and Webster County. These guides work at visitor information stops along I-80. By the end of May, the WCPM will have conducted more than thirty group tours.

The Webster County Visitors' Committee has erected new signs welcoming travelers to Webster County's "Catherland." Funds from the lodging tax provided money to replace signs that were twenty years old.

On May 7, Edith Mary Ferris of Kansas City, Missouri, gave the WCPM a collection of Cather books which had belonged to her Aunt Mollie Ferris, a life-long friend of Willa Cather. The collection comprises all the novels and *The Troll Garden* and *The Old Beauty and Others*. There are six personalized and signed first editions, two signed books which are not first editions, one book signed by Elsie M. Cather, and three books from Mrs. Charles Cather. The *Red Cloud Chief* for March 8, 1889, contains this story about Mollie Ferris, Willa Cather, and others: "The 'Peak Sisters,' a home talent company, held the boards at the Opera House on Tuesday evening. The entertainment was one that will be remembered in Red Cloud for a long time. The following young ladies took part in the entertainment: the misses Mary Miner, Loua Bellow, Rose Emigh, Nellie Adlesheim, Mollie Ferris, Lavilla Marsh, Willa Cather, and Bess Seymour."

Joel Geyer of Nebraska Public Television has presented transcripts of interviews with Mildred Bennett to the WCPM. Geyer conducted the interviews in preparation for his video production *Singing Cather's Song*, which presented Mildred Bennett and her pursuit of Willa Cather.

Daisy Foote presented the WCPM with a copy of the script of her dramatic adaptation of *O Pioneers!*

Bruce and Karen Baker have given the WCPM a collection of 16 x 20 inch black and white stills from the 1925 silent film of *A Lost Lady*.

Patricia Yongue presented the WCPM with a copy of the film script and dialogue script for the 1934 screen production of *A Lost Lady*, as well as copies of the publicity poster and radio dramatization flashes advertising the movie. Yongue obtained these materials from Warner Brothers. She also presented newspaper reviews of the film.

III. Report of the 38th Annual Willa Cather Spring Conference April 30 and May 1, 1993

Steve Shively
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

*For the joy of ear and eye,
For the heart and mind's delight,
For the mystic harmony
Linking sense to sound and sight . . .*

The words are from one of the hymns we sang at the worship service Saturday morning at Grace Episcopal Church, but they apply to the whole 1993 Cather Spring Conference, which brought a medley of sights and sounds to delight the hearts and minds of participants.

This year's conference featured an expanded two-day format in answer to the common complaint that "There's never enough time to do everything I want to do." A do-it-yourself afternoon on Friday gave people the opportunity to explore Cather sites, leisurely following a new walking tour guide prepared by WCPM Board member Dale McDole. Friday's main event was the presentation of five papers on Cather by a remarkably diverse group of scholars: Jean Keezer-Clayton of the University of Nebraska at Kearney, Dalma Brunauer of Clarkson University, Jim Dalmont of the Omaha World-Herald, Sally Tennihill of Northwest Missouri State University, and Rita Foral of Millard North High School. Friday evening over 80 people watched a videotape of the 1973 Cather Centennial Concert featuring the Menuhins. From all accounts, Friday's experiment was a resounding success!

Sorry that I was unable to attend the Friday events, I left Lincoln early Saturday morning, eager for a pleasant Spring drive through the Nebraska countryside. On this day, however, the fog and drizzle took away the familiar aspects of the trip, robbed me of the views of pastures and fields stretching into the distance, of the sight of grain elevators announcing approaching towns long before I reached them, of the comforting appearance of the line of trees marking the path of the Republican River as I neared Red Cloud. But if the weather was dreary, the stimulating events of the Spring Conference soon provided an antidote.

Somehow the colors in the stained glass windows of the Episcopal Church brightened as the St. Juliana choir began to sing. Fr. Charles Peek gave one of the sermons that are fast becoming a tradition of the Spring Conference, this year connecting *A Lost Lady* to the Gospel of Mark while illuminating issues of sight and blindness in Cather's novel.

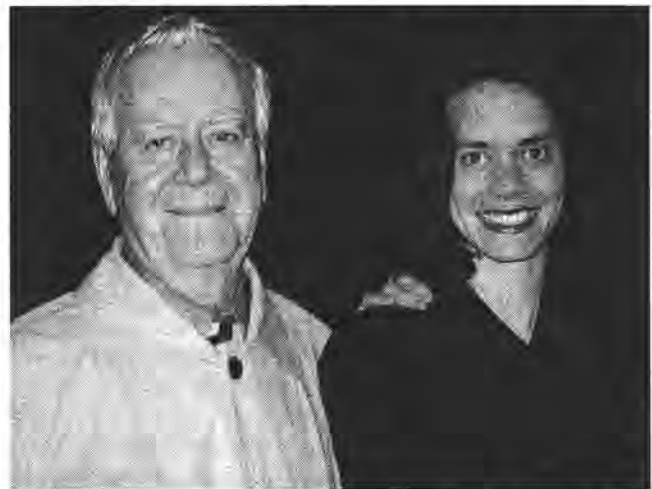
Several times during the day I found myself returning to the Foundation Building, where the taste and smell of kolaches and coffee and the sounds of warm conversations between old friends provided a respite from the gloomy weather. A special attraction in the art display this year were the prints made by

John Baker of scenes from the 1925 silent screen version of *A Lost Lady*. They reminded us that a special time and a way of life characterized by beauty and elegance have also been lost. Conference participants also had several opportunities to view the 1934 film starring Barbara Stanwyck as Marian Forrester and learn firsthand why Cather despised adaptations of her work.

After our guide recited the schedule and our instructions for the bus tour, which included an intricate plan to avoid the other buses, I said, "This will never work." But it did! We acted like schoolchildren, laughing and shouting, clambering on and off the bus, hushing each other when our guide spoke, having a great time as we learned about Cather-related sites in Red Cloud.

"The Passing Show" panel discussion probed wide-ranging issues in *A Lost Lady*, reminding us that Cather scholarship can go in so many different directions. Under the guidance of moderator Merrill Maguire Skaggs, panel participants Nancy Picchi, Laura Winters, Lawrence Berkove, Patricia Yongue, and Gary Brienzo explored worlds ranging from the American South to etiquette books, from literary stereotypes to Cather's geographical imagination and Russian influences in her writing.

After time for visiting with friends or exploring more of Red Cloud or just plain relaxation, we came together for the evening banquet. The marvelous voice of Red Cloud High School senior Darin Stringer as he sang the songs of Stephen Foster and the words of Norma Ross Walter scholarship winner Michelle Dowd from Omaha Central High School reminded us that the dreams that came to Willa Cather over one hundred years ago still come to Nebraska students in 1993.



Banquet speaker Horton Foote and his daughter, Daisy, at the '93 Cather Spring Conference. — Photo by Beverly Cooper

Finally, distinguished playwright and screenwriter Horton Foote stood in front of us to speak on the difficulties of translating novels into films. While his list of credits does not include acting, Mr. Foote has the warm, expressive voice and face of an actor, his twinkling eyes and a smile that's almost a grin high-

lighting his open, expansive visage. He spoke of the necessity for sympathy and understanding but also of the need for careful, hard work. When Mr. Foote said that an adapter must have "dignity, honor and respect" for the author, he certainly was speaking of qualities that characterize him and his work.

We've come to expect certain things from a Cather Spring Conference — good food, red geraniums on the tables, the steady hand and smiling face of Pat Phillips, the hospitality of the people of Red Cloud. These things are important, as are the new insights we get as we explore the life and literature of Willa Cather, but perhaps most important is what Ron Hull told us at Saturday's banquet: "We gather to get in touch with the human spirit and human heart."

A NOTE ON ONE OF OURS

(Continued)

her. Yet Cather knew that she had written an honest book. She knew that she had created an authentic character in Claude Wheeler, whom she had modeled after her cousin G. P. Cather. Also she had talked to many veterans of the American Expeditionary Forces that went to France in 1918 and had fought on the Western Front. That she had to work from second-hand materials in the war scenes was a weakness, she knew, but she did not deserve the charge that she had fallen for the war slogans and had romanticized the conflict.

I recently read David McCullough's excellent biography of Harry Truman and was pleased and somewhat surprised to find validation of Claude Wheeler's character in the experiences of our thirty-third President. When the United States went to war with Germany in 1917, Truman was a Missouri farmer near Kansas City operating the family farm out of a sense of filial obligation. Like Claude Wheeler on his Nebraska farm, Truman did it but did not like it. When the war came to the United States, he enlisted, as Claude did, out of a sense of patriotism and as a way to leave the farm. The war was a pivotal experience for Truman, as it would have been for Claude if he had survived. It gave him self-confidence, taught him how to command (he was a captain in command of an artillery battery), and it prepared him for the life that led to his presidency. Fortunately for the United States Truman returned from the war.

What particularly interested me in the Truman biography was the similarity of response to the experience by both Truman and Claude Wheeler. Truman in his autobiography later recalled that he had felt like "Galahad after the Grail" when he enlisted (McCullough 104). Like Claude Wheeler on his Nebraska farm, Truman had followed the progress of the war as he cultivated his crops in Missouri. He had been stirred by the French defense of Verdun, as Claude had been moved by the defense of Paris in the first Battle of the Marne.

Both Truman and Claude Wheeler reacted to their first days in France with the same delight. They reveled in the food, the gardens, the churches, and generally in the Old World culture so different from anything they had known. Neither had been out of the Midwest or had ever seen an ocean before departing for France on their troopship. While Truman's battalion was training behind the lines in preparation for the front, Truman wrote his fiancée Bess Wallace: "I look like Siam's King on a drunk when I get that little cockeyed cap struck over one ear, a riding crop in my left hand, a whipcord suit and a strut that knocks 'em dead" (McCullough 116). McCullough at that point quotes from *One of Ours*: "That was one of the things about this war; it took a little fellow from a little town and gave him an air and a swagger" (375).

Soon Truman's unit moved to the front and got its baptism of fire in Alsace at the extreme eastern end of the front. Truman in his first action remained cool in command in the midst of a barrage that bracketed his position, though he admitted he was scared to death. Later in the Argonne offensive he showed the kind of courage that cost Claude Wheeler his life during a German attack. Fortunately for Truman the German shell that landed precisely where he had been sleeping one night arrived after he had moved his bed roll to another spot.

Thus I conclude that Cather's critics like Mencken and Broun read *One of Ours* with a bias induced by the post-war disillusionment that had overtaken the United States by 1922 when the novel appeared. Broun admitted that he probably was prejudiced, and Mencken cited as the proper stance for a novel about the war the pessimistic tone of John Dos Passos' *Three Soldiers* that had come out the year before. Viewed from the long perspective of 1993, it would seem that Burton Rascoe's reading of the novel was the better one: he praised the book and agreed with Cather that it really wasn't a war novel but rather that the war was only the *deus ex machina* "which solves in ironic fashion the perplexities of Claude" (Woodress, 334).

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- *Truman*, p. 116. Quoted from HST to EW, 19 June 1918 (MS at Truman Library).
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II. Some of His: Cather's Use of Dr. Sweeney's Diary in *One of Ours*

Rebecca J. Faber
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Willa Cather's *One of Ours* (1922) has received a variety of critical response. Most critics agree that the first three books of the novel are solid writing and that Cather is in control of the Nebraska people and scenes which she knew so well. But the critics also agree that the novel weakens in Books IV and V as Cather portrays troop movement across the Atlantic and actual war scenes in France. H. L. Mencken caustically reviewed the war segment of the book as having "its touches of plausibility, but at bottom it is fought out not in France but on a Hollywood movie-lot" (12). Though Mencken's attitude is consistent with general critical response to *One of Ours*, it is inconsistent with Cather's own practices as an author. Cather was known to research her topics carefully and to rely upon facts for situation and setting.

Her sources for *One of Ours* were primary — her knowledge of her young cousin G. P. Cather and access to the letters he wrote home from France during World War I. These letters provided her with "a young man [who] could lose himself in a cause and die for an idea," a concept that "seemed to her remarkable and exciting" (Woodress 193). She also read the letters of David Hochstein, a concert violinist who died in France in 1918 and whom she had interviewed briefly during his early months in the military service. Edith Lewis explains that Cather

began seeing and talking with a great many soldiers. A former devoted high school pupil, Albert Donovan, had an army post in New York which brought him into contact with numbers of enlisted men; and when he learned that Willa Cather was writing a story that had to do with the war, he used to bring them, three and four at a time, to 5 Bank Street. They would stay for hours talking to Willa Cather. (118)

During the winter of 1918, Cather "visited wounded soldiers in a New York hospital and heard their stories," and "she read newspaper accounts avidly, and other stirring firsthand sources such as the *Letters from France* of Victor Chapman" (Lee 166). Cather began *One of Ours* in 1918, writing it both in New York and Jaffrey, New Hampshire.

Cather biographers have long been aware that she received direct information from a New Hampshire doctor's diary, although until recently the diary has not been available. Again, Edith Lewis explains how Cather came to have the opportunity to read Dr. Sweeney's diary:

Late in the summer [of 1919] she went back to Jaffrey It was a very rainy season, and writing in her tent in the rain, she got a severe attack of influenza. The local doctor attended her; and in one of his visits she learned that he had served as a medical officer on a troop ship of the

A. E. F. during a very bad influenza epidemic which broke out on board, and that he had kept a diary all through the voyage.

He let Willa Cather borrow this diary; and it was from this that she wrote the part of *One of Ours* called "The Voyage of the *Anchises*." (118)

Cather acknowledged her debt to Sweeney by presenting "him a copy of the limited first edition of the book in which she had inscribed, 'For Frederick Sweeney who gave me so much inspiration and information for the fourth Book of the story — from its grateful author Willa Cather'" (Bean 45).

Dr. Frederick Sweeney of Jaffrey, New Hampshire, was a veteran of World War I. Married and a father, Sweeney left his family to serve as an army doctor, first on the troop ship, the *Ascanius*, then in France. According to Margaret Bean, Sweeney was "quick, competent, dedicated to his profession" (45). Like most doctors, Sweeney talked with his patients, and it was through this habit that Willa Cather came to know that Sweeney had served in the war as a doctor. In visiting with Cather, Dr. Sweeney had told her about "the War from which he had so recently returned . . . the character of the men he worked with, places in France he had seen, an influenza epidemic on ship-board, incidents of all kinds" (Bean, 45). Cather asked Dr. Sweeney if he had kept a diary, and he admitted that he had recorded his own thoughts and actions, never intending that anyone else should ever read them. In this diary, he had written, ". . . I [am] trying to keep a diary. Shall try and mail it to the folks by some of the people on this English boat. Do not know as a censor would pass all the simple stuff we have jotted down from day to day" (Sweeney Sept. 28). Because it recorded his private reflections, he was hesitant to loan it to Cather, who had asked to read it. Sweeney "firmly refused, explaining that it was very rough and personal, 'simple stuff jotted down from day to day,' and not meant for anyone but himself to read." Cather persisted, "even using the argument to which he was most vulnerable, that it would be good for her since it would help to pass the time while she was not feeling well. He relented, saying he would bring the scribbled pages on the next visit, reminding her he was a doctor not a literary man" (Bean 45). This was exactly the type of honest first-hand recollection that Cather needed for her novel. Cather borrowed Sweeney's diary, but she neglected to tell him that she had also "borrowed" situations and information from it to use in her novel. When Dr. Sweeney confronted Cather about having heard that she had used some of his material, she explained that "he had been so reluctant to lend her the diary she didn't dare ask him to let her use the material. 'But I had my young soldier in Hoboken, ready to board a troop ship,' she said, 'and had no possible idea what it would be like!' The diary, giving minute details, was more than she had dared hope for" (Bean 45).

The details of the diary not only helped Cather in writing "The Voyage of the *Anchises*" but give insight into the kind of man Dr. Sweeney was. They serve as

a chronicle of one soldier's struggle with loneliness, adjustments to foreign situations, and the harshness of war. The diary is written in three parts, detailing his experiences from Sunday, September 22, 1918, to Friday, April 18, 1919, and covering a period from his departure from Jaffrey by train to his return to New York after serving in France. Sweeney's attitude about leaving home is apparent in his entry for the first day, when he notes, "I did hate to say goodbye to Eva and the boys. We are all so happy and it seemed as if our lovely family circle was broken." Throughout the diary Sweeney refers to letters which he regularly writes to his family and friends, and he often wonders why he doesn't receive mail; his need to be in contact with the familiar is apparent. Sweeney's entries during the troop ship's voyage from New York to France are filled with references to sea-sickness, discomfort, the imminence of attack, and the details of treating so many sick men during an epi-demic of influenza.

Once the ship arrives in France, where food and climate seem to work against him, Sweeney feels alienated. His entries show how much his family, his friends, and his home town are on his mind, and often he wishes for mail or for the chance to see acquaintances who are also stationed in France. More than once, Sweeney is impatient to return to Jaffrey, and he comments that he could be doing more good doctoring at home than awaiting orders in France. He tries to keep abreast of the war news, as an entry from Nov. 1 shows:

Reports are today that Austria and Turkey are giving up and wish peace but we can not tell much about war news here. But I guess there is no doubt but what the thing will be adjusted in a few months. No one seems to trust Germany at all and wants to see her put in a condition so future wars will be out of the question for her . . . War is an awful thing and the more I see of it the more I appreciate this fact!

The frustration of not being busy shows in the entry of Dec. 4: "I feel like some man who is called to a fire and now the fire is out he wants to be released." As Christmas approaches, Sweeney's mood seems more frustrated. On Dec. 17 he writes, "Heard this morning that we were to be sent home sooner at least to be assigned to duty in the states soon. Sincerely hope that this is true and the sooner the better. This is my first Christmas away from home since I was married."

After the first of the year, as an entry for Jan. 16 records, Sweeney has the chance to visit with a friend from home who is in Limoges: "After lunch Kate and I walked around town and saw the sights. Guess this was my happiest day in France." By the end of January, however, his stress is evident, and Sweeney writes, "This country is most certainly getting on my nerves" (Jan. 26). By the beginning of February, he is exploring every alternative he can to be transferred back to the States. "Went in and saw Maj. Barker and had a fine talk with him," Sweeney notes on February 3. "He said there was nothing more I could do that I had not already done to get home and must wait

patiently and in a few weeks we would be sent home." Weeks stretch into two months, and on March 3, Sweeney writes, "Am anxiously awaiting to hear from my last spasm to the Chief Surgeon McCane at Tours and hope he says home for me." On March 17, Sweeney begins to feel that he may soon be headed back to America, but by April 3 he has received no specific orders: "No news as yet as to when we are to get a ship to go home but it does not look very encouraging. I am afraid it will be May 1st before I can get home. Absolutely nothing I can do but wait patiently." On April 7 his entry indicates that two lieutenants came into his ward "tagging men for the British ship [*Sax-vornia*] sailing and thank God I was tagged. It seemed too good to be true . . . How good I feel to think I am going home." On the way back to New York, two days later Sweeney's entry shows his impatience to be home: "A rough sea all day long with lots of people sick abed and they say it is going to be a rough night. Well I do not mind as it is taking me toward home. Only six days more and we shall be in New York." Sweeney's last entry, April 18, shows his relief to be done with the war and back in America: "Started for home at 12 o'clock and I will say I am one happy man!"

Dr. Sweeney is no war hero. He is simply a man who was placed in a military situation and who tried to make the best of it, serving his country with his own specific talents but ever-anxious to return to his family, his home, and the life which utilized his medical skills. But Cather's use of excerpts from Sweeney's diary are important to verify the accuracy of *One of Ours*. The diary is not a Hollywood script or elevated saga of war but a very personal and detailed account of what war was like for a man from a small town. Sweeney would have seen what Claude Wheeler saw; what might differ between the two would be the method of personal processing and the conclusions drawn from such experiences. Edith Lewis explains Cather's attitude toward this novel, noting that Cather

did not choose the war as a theme, and then set out to interpret it through the experience of one individual. The whole story was born from a personal experience . . . from the way in which the news of her cousin's death at Cantigny brought suddenly before her an intense realization of his nature and his life, and their significance . . . Moreover, he did not seem to her exceptional, except in the way that every individual is exceptional; she felt that she had known many American boys like Claude. (Lewis 122)

For "The Voyage of the *Anchises*," Cather relied upon only a small portion of the first segment of the diary, the first pages where Sweeney records his experiences on his troop ship. From these pages Cather found basic military information about the transport process, prototypes for some of the characters, and information about health problems, including the influenza epidemic, on board the transport.

The original point of departure for Sweeney's train was Hoboken, the same destination to which Claude's

troop train was headed. Sweeney's ship was an English one, the *Ascanius*, and Claude's, the *Anchises*, also English. Sweeney's diary tells of 2,300 "private soldiers" on board (Sept. 22), while Claude was shipped with 2,500 men. Sweeney's ship did not have a band, but he notes that some transports have bands "which we hear playing" (Sept. 24). Cather places the Kansas band on board the *Anchises*, and the band plays throughout the voyage. Both Cather and Sweeney catalogue the ships which make up the convoy. Sweeney enumerates, "Eight other troop ships came out with us . . . convoyed by battle ship, cruisers, sub-chasers, dirigible balloon hitched to cruiser. 4 seaplanes are sailing around us all the time" (Sept. 22). Cather lists "ten troop ships, some of them very large boats, and six destroyers" (238). And in a detail which adds an incidental, life-like touch, Sweeney writes that "Walter also gave me a box of 100" just before he sailed (Sept. 22), referring to a gift of cigars. Cather converts this detail into a scene where Claude offers Morse a cigar, telling him, "My brother sent me two boxes just before we sailed" (246).

Sweeney's diary also provides prototypes for some of Cather's characters in "The Voyage of the *Anchises*." Sweeney himself serves as a prototype for Dr. Trueman, the troop doctor, "a New Englander who had joined them at Hoboken" (244). The description of Dr. Trueman affords Cather an opportunity to describe the kind of man she knew Sweeney to be. Sweeney's Lieut. Dugan suggest a prototype for Fanning, Claude's berthmate. Dugan was with Sweeney when he boarded in New York, and, like Fanning, Dugan suffered a prolonged bout with influenza. The diary also contributes to the character of Corporal Tannhauser, although no single character in Sweeney's diary parallels Tannhauser's experience. Cather compiled Tannhauser from a variety of diary entries. Tannhauser suffers from "an attack of nose-bleed" (244), which Sweeney says "is one of the symptoms" of influenza (Oct. 2), adding that "A fellow almost bled to death . . . from the nose." As Tannhauser dies, "Mein arme Mutter!" he whispered distinctly" (256), an incident illustrating Sweeney's entry that ". . . the patient raves and talks of his folks at home, which is very distressing to listen to. Poor boys. I have done all I can . . ." (Oct. 7). Sweeney also mentions "an awful sick fellow named Brennan with pneumonia" (Sept. 26), who is probably a prototype for Bird, the young Virginian who dies and is buried at sea. Sweeney notes that "Some of the men from Virginia . . . are not very strong" (Oct. 3). Sweeney's Captain Lentine, a "senior medical officer of Park Battery and he is a mean cuss as I ever met" (Sept. 26), contributes to Cather's Captain Maxey, whom Claude knew in Lincoln and "hadn't liked . . . then, and . . . didn't like . . . now" and who "was a tireless drill master" (258-59). Like Sweeney, Cather renders the ship's doctor in memorable detail. Sweeney's is "an Australian, . . . the funniest looking little beggar I ever saw . . ." (Oct. 2), while Cather's Dr. Chessup is "a strange fellow to come from

Canada, the land of big men and rough. He looked like a schoolboy, with small hands and feet and a pink complexion. On his left cheekbone was a large brown mole, covered with silky hair, and for some reason that seemed to make his face effeminate" (267).

Sweeney's diary seems to have been of most value to Cather in detailing medical aspects of the voyage to France. Cather points out in a footnote that "the actual outbreak of influenza on transports carrying United States troops is here anticipated by several months" (249), but the details she uses closely follow the description given by Sweeney of the epidemic. His comment that "there are a great many very sick people on board this transport and we shall be very very lucky if we do not lose several cases before we get to land" (October 3) is exactly the situation that Cather describes. The diary often includes details of soldiers suffering from seasickness, and Cather includes several references to this hardship. In both diary and novel the lack of adequate medical supplies is noted. Sweeney says, "We have neither suitable drugs or instruments to care for this bunch of men" (October 1), and "The medicine on board is punk. Castor oil and cathartic pills. We have one severe case of pneumonia in the ship hospital. I gave them some of the drugs I had with me" (September 25). Cather has Dr. Trueman tell Claude, "You see how I'm fixed; close onto two hundred men sick, and one doctor. The medical supplies are wholly inadequate. There's not castor oil enough on this boat to keep the men clean inside. I'm using my own drugs, but they won't last through an epidemic like this" (253). Also, neither ship carries nurses. Sweeney notes, "We have not a woman on board" (September 29). Help with the patients must come from Y.M.C.A. volunteers, who, says Sweeney, "seem to be good fellows and are trying to do all in their power to make the boys comfortable" (September 29). About Claude's ship, Cather observes, "as there were no nurses on board(;) the Kansas band had taken over the hospital" (254). (For Claude, the *Anchises* is a perfect all-male world. There are no women to confuse men's lives and purposes. There is no possibility for complex situations like the one that occurred when Claude was injured and Enid tended him. Sweeney's factual ship of male personnel lends itself well to Claude's need for a male world, a place off limits to Enid, Gladys, Mrs. Wheeler, Mahailey, etc.)

The contrast between those concerned about illness and those indifferent to it is evident in both works. Sweeney says, "Some officers in the next room are playing poker and are apparently enjoying life laughing and smoking. You would think they were in a club at home" (October 3); Cather writes, "Some of the officers shut themselves up in the smoking-room, and drank whiskey and soda and played poker all day, as if they could keep contagion out" (249). Claude's shipmates close themselves off, pull themselves away from the disease which surrounds them, isolating themselves from the reality of death. Although Claude

does realize what is going on around him as his troops fall to disease, he doesn't see the possibility of being wounded or dying at the front.

Another reflection of Sweeney's diary is in Cather's depiction of the illness and exhaustion suffered by Dr. Trueman under these difficult circumstances. Sweeney's entry for September 30 reads, "I was up and down all night last night, never got to sleep at all until after 5 A.M. . . . It was as long a night as I ever put in, but I got up this morning and have worked in the hospital as I was on duty until 5 P.M." In *One of Ours*, Claude "wondered how the Doctor kept going. He knew he hadn't had more than four hours sleep out of the last forty-eight" (255). Cather describes Trueman as having "to leave his post from time to time, when seasickness got the better of his will" (251). Sweeney often refers to this same problem, noting, "have been a little nauseated all day today so have not eaten only a very little food. Shall be glad when we reach land. It is rather hard to work so much all the time on the patients when you feel so sick and weak yourself" (September 26), and "We had over 100 men at hospital sick call this morning, mostly seasickness, for which we can not do very much. Poor fellows, I was sorry for them to the bottom of my heart but there is no special treatment for this and in fact I guess I felt as badly as any of them" (September 27)

Cather's inscription in the edition which she presented to Sweeney acknowledges her debt to him for the "inspiration and information for the fourth Book of [the] story" (Bean 45). However, while Cather drew upon some details from the diary, she omitted others and adjusted characters and incidents to fit her story's needs. Dr. Sweeney is physically affected by the illness and death surrounding him, while Claude is so energized by his chance to go to war, to escape his failures at home and his marriage, it elevates him above the conditions tearing at Sweeney's mind and body. The idealism which surrounds Claude is not reflected in Sweeney's diary. The realities of loneliness, separation from family and home, illness, death, fear of the unknown and of the imminent physical danger of war, and disillusionment with the government permeate Sweeney's diary. His words lack the jingoism evident in Cather's scene of troops passing the Statue of Liberty, the romantic reflection of Mrs. Wheeler standing at the window at home, and sentimental attachments among those who accompany Claude on his voyage. By placing factual entries from Sweeney's diary next to the idealism, romanticism, and sentimentalism in Book IV of *One of Our*, readers can clearly see the difference in attitudes toward war. Sweeney is pained by the experience, saddened by what he sees and is forced to deal with; Claude can only think of how this is the best part of his life, that this is what he has been born to do. Dr. Sweeney is physically and emotionally drained by the experience; Claude is energized and fortified by it. Dr. Sweeney realizes his own mortality; Claude "seemed to begin where childhood had left off" (259).

Why did Cather ignore the mood of Sweeney's actual experience and replace it with the unilateral idealism that makes Claude seem unrealistic to readers? Perhaps Cather is capturing the accurate patriotic and emotional stance of her cousin. Perhaps Claude's idealism is partially a reflection of what Cather heard from her former students who visited with her before their voyage to Europe. Perhaps Cather was showing the extreme patriotism of the times evident in the popular song "Over There" and in the general support among Americans for their doughboys.

David Stouck has projected a possible theory as to what Cather is doing in *One of Ours*. He calls it a novel of satire, pointing out that "as satire [it] is double-edged in its attack: not only does it expose the gross realities of American life but also the perversity of its romantic ideals" (84), and explaining that "in his romanticizing of Europe and the war Claude is revealed as the victim of his society's highest ideals" (84). Early in the novel Cather develops in Claude an interest in martyrs (for example, his term paper about Joan of Arc). For Claude, Stouck explains, "the torments and dissatisfactions of his own life had kindled in him a sympathetic response; moreover, as he explains at one point to Ernest Havel, he felt the martyrs discovered that 'something splendid about life' he was looking for — something outside of themselves to live and die for that was better than anything they had known before" (89-90). It is this attitude that comes through so clearly in Book IV, and it is this same attitude that is so obviously missing from Sweeney's diary. Sweeney was a man who was in the army to do one of the worst jobs a person can do, and the reality of life's pain is on each page of his diary. But, Stouck explains, Cather's "stylistic intention was not to describe the war in a realistic manner, but to reflect the romantic aura that for so many men gathered around the experience" (91-92).

Stouck's explanation of the satire in *One of Ours* helps to bridge the gap between Sweeney's diary and "The Voyage of the *Anchises*." The diary gives us insight into the facts of troop movement and details of military life. More importantly, it reveals how Cather builds her art around facts, taking what she needs for the foundation and developing the fiction from there. Cather was, I believe, very deliberate in her construction of "The Voyage of the *Anchises*." She knew what she wanted to say about Claude and his approach to life, to war, to death. She knew that she was taking on a project that would be out of the ordinary for her as a novelist. Yet the desire to write about her cousin was so strong that the novel had to be written, and she was not the kind of writer to walk away from the task.

Cather's development as a writer included her intense efforts to make her fiction as responsible as possible. What Dr. Sweeney's diary shows us is that Cather maintained her high standards in writing *One of Ours*, possibly devoting more time and effort to her research than she did with any of her other novels. Dr. Sweeney's diary gave Cather the facts needed to

clothe the cousin she knew and to enable her to write with veracity the story of an idealistic young man involved in the world at a time when war was tearing it apart.

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THE THIRD CHAPTER OF "SAMPSON SPEAKS TO THE MASTER"

(Continued)

one young woman announced out of the blue that this novel was "false" because Cather knew nothing about African Americans. Her evidence for this charge was Henry Colbert's reflection on Sampson's refusal of freedom. Although the student's charge might be valid, her evidence was weak, and the protest was simply outside the context of addressing the particular aspect of the art of the novel.

For the next class I wrote the following as an example of what I had expected of my students, and I prefaced it with several reminders of some of the things besides politics that English majors should be about. Henry James, for example, insisted that our critical concern with fiction should be with execution — "that being the only point of the novel that is open to contention." Cather herself insisted that the artist should be "more interested in his own little story and his foolish little people" than in social causes. And Flannery O'Connor remembered the "ways in which the industrious teacher of English could ignore the nature of literature, but continue to teach the subject." She included in these ways literary history, psychology of the author, sociology, and integrating literature "with anything at all that will put off a little longer the evil day when the story or novel must be examined simply as a story or novel." (I wish Flannery were around presently to add to this list.)

The third chapter of Book VI of Cather's *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* is like most of the novel's chapters an artful and, for this novel, characteristic blend of landscape, narrative, and conflict. It opens with Henry Colbert's hope for a reprieve from mill work and domestic squabbles, a hope shattered by the slave girl

Nancy's problem, which, against his will, is occupying Henry. In the coda of the chapter this problem develops into the sexual conflict closing this book's initial chapter, where Henry struggles with his Colbert blood.

Haying time comes during rake Martin Colbert's visit, which had been manipulated by jealous Sapphira to drive Nancy away from Henry. Henry anticipates farm work, which includes directing the haying, as therapy as well as escape: "He believed the work in the open air was good for his health" (890). However, escape is qualified for him when he overhears Nancy's voice and Martin's familiar and demeaning banter. Henry catches Martin in a "lordy" and "lazy" attitude revealing the slave girl's powerlessness and, doubtless, fear of vengeance for the cherry tree fiasco. Cather does not reveal Henry's thoughts at this point, saving them for her climactic coda, but she concludes this initial scene with an indication of Henry's response: "Colbert set his teeth and hurried through the yard down to the mill" (890).

The haying is described from the wide-eyed perspective of the little Blake girls, who are awakened by the sharpening of the scythes. Perhaps Cather's significant achievement in her Virginia novel is her rendering of place, the setting of her very earliest memories. She describes the assembly of mowers scattering over the long meadow and then swinging their scythes to the accompaniment of a musical ground in the chesty "'huh-huh' they made when they chopped wood" (891). References to the sun suggest increasing heat, which causes the first pause in this rhythmic activity at the iron spring surrounded by spotted orange tiger lilies; here the gourd is passed from one worker to the other. The next pause is for the arrival across the meadow of dinner (even Martin is

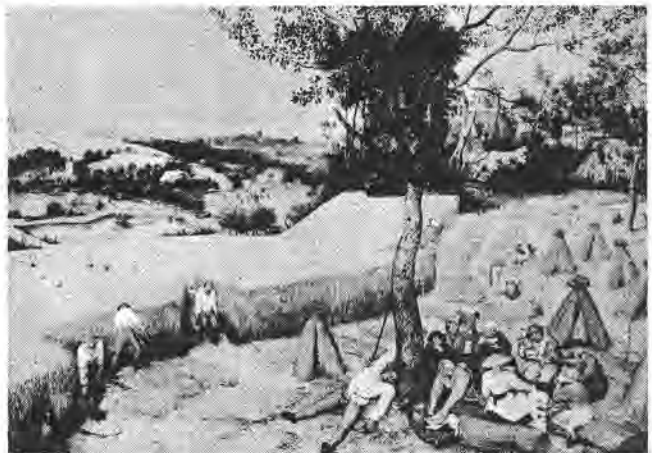


Figure 1 — Pieter Bruegel, *THE CORN HARVEST*
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

utilized along with Nancy and Bluebell), which is spread on a red tablecloth under the mower's tree. Although the description is reminiscent of Cather's favorite Barbizon painters, especially Millet, it also resembles the elder Bruegel's *The Corn Harvest*, which gathers the harvesters under "the mower's tree" for dinner on a hot day, depicts them eating and

drinking, and suggests repose in the sleeping figure in the foreground (Figure 1). Cather's picture is comparable: "After dinner the hands lay under the tree and slept for an hour; lay on their backs with their old hats over their faces" (892-93).

Just as the haying is set within Henry's trouble over Nancy and Martin, the story of Tansy Dave is set within the haying scene. Dave's story is, like Nancy's one of victimization in that white power is behind his profound frustration, his particular insanity. He had fallen in love with a visiting Baltimore woman's slave, Susanna, whom Sapphira in one of her frequent humane gestures offered to buy for him. But Susanna's owner, who ironically "disapproved of slave-owning," refused to sell because she had trained the girl for her townhouse, dismissing the offer with cold assurance that "after [the girl] got back to Baltimore she would never think of this crazy nigger again" (894). Dave's subsequent pursuit of the girl proved abortive, "but he was never the same boy again" (894). When he appears at the mowing he is a pitiful figure, a "scarecrow man, bare-legged, his pants torn away to the knee, his shirt a dirty rag" (892).

Through this story Cather achieves another Bruegelian set-piece, the dancing of the field hands — Bruegel's *The Wedding Dance in the Open Air* communicates the same joy and, for some contemporary mentalities, condescension (Figure 2). Dave is accomplished on the mouth-organ, which "he used to play for



Figure 2 — Pieter Bruegel, *THE WEDDING DANCE IN THE OPEN AIR*, Institute of Arts, Detroit

the darkies to dance on the hard-packed earth" and especially for Susanna: "Colbert and Sapphira sometimes went out to watch her dance, while Dave played his mouth-organ, and the other darkies 'patted' with their hands" (873). However, this achievement hardly justifies the three page inserted story. That justification lies in the sexual passion at the heart of the story, and a clue to it perhaps is in the name chosen for Dave's sweetheart, whom "every night . . . Dave . . . went down the creek to court" (893). The biblical Susanna is not only, like Dave's Susanna, an object of passion but like Nancy the object of illicit passion and the

innocent victim of lecherous power brokers. (Daniel's use of garden trees to catch the elders and their forcing her to display her nakedness relate to other incidents in Cather's novel.) Tansy Dave's story of doomed but healthy passion becomes, then, a counterplot to Nancy's victimization by Martin and to the arousal of Colbert blood in Henry, the subject of the chapter's coda.

The narrator returns to Henry by recapitulating the therapeutic nature of farm work: "He looked forward to the next two weeks, which would take the soreness out of his back and mind. It was good for him to be out in the fields; to feel his strength drunk up by the earth and sun" (895). But this reprieve, as the previous one, is interrupted by the Nancy problem, which raises the poisoned Colbert blood in Henry. Although he is assured that he can control himself, Henry begins to see through Martin's eyes. "Sometimes in his sleep that preoccupation with Martin, the sense of almost being Martin, came over him like a black spell" (895). The complications inherent in this passage are intriguing: Does he see Nancy through Martin's eyes? Does she excite him? Is there good reason for Sapphira's suspicions and jealousy?

Cather caps this chapter, as she had an earlier one (II, 1), when Henry imaged Nancy as Mercy in *Pilgrim's Progress*. Here, however, through passages from the *Holy War* the image of Nancy lapses from the ideal to become the object of lust. Henry first considers Diabolus's invasion of the town of Mansoul and then the escape of Carnalsense, who haunts like a ghost, after Prince Emmanuel has reclaimed the town. Through Bunyan, Cather communicates Henry's lonely and ongoing struggle to curtail his nature as he has the long meadow of hay.

NOTE

Quotations from *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* are from the Library of America's *Willa Cather: Later Novels*, edited by Sharon O'Brien.

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II. Dutch Genre Painting and Sacramental Symbolism in *Shadows on the Rock*

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In her letter on "On *Shadows on the Rock*" to Connecticut Governor Wilbur Cross, Willa Cather writes that in this novel she attempted "to catch the rhythm" of the French culture in Canada (17). To Cather, the early settlers possessed a "mental complexion . . . of pious resignation" (15), while creating an "orderly little French household," preserving their French culture "as if it really were a sacred fire" (16). Cather ends this letter by admitting the difficulty for an American writer to convey a sense of culture "so unlike" the American rhythm (17). However, Cather had no cause for uncertainty about the effectiveness of her "honest try . . . to catch [the French] rhythm" (17). Throughout *Shadows on the Rock*, Cather's prose achievements resemble the visual ones of the Dutch genre painters, establishing, like theirs, a sense of order, serenity, and sanctity within the domestic setting. Cather also employs a rich religious symbolism, drawing parallels between the domestic tasks of the Auclairs and the Sacraments of the church. This religious symbolism endows the domestic arts of French culture with a sacred aura. In this novel, the domestic becomes the divine.

Dutch genre painting flourished during the seventeenth-century, the period immediately preceding the main action of *Shadows on the Rock*. Simply stated, such painting tradition attempts "the description of current life" (Gowing 34), often depicting people engaged in ordinary, everyday tasks. As Murphy says, it is the "painting of the people, . . . [and] depicts group scenes from daily life," and he has shown that "Cather's writings on painting indicate much fascination with genre" (48). Cather's familiarity with Dutch genre painting is apparent in her remarks on *The Professor's House*:

I had seen, in Paris, an exhibition of old and modern Dutch paintings. In many of them the scene presented was a living-room warmly furnished, or a kitchen full of food and coppers. But in most of the interiors, whether drawing-room or kitchen, there was a square window, open, through which one saw the masts of ships, or a stretch of grey sea. (31)

However, Cather's use of images from genre painting in *Shadows on the Rock* is markedly different from her use of these images in *The Professor's House*. In the earlier novel, Cather "wanted to open the square window and let in the fresh air that blew off the Blue Mesa" into a cluttered domestic setting. The interior is a place of "petty ambitions, quivering jealousies . . . [and] trivialities" ("On *The Professor's House*" 31-32). Also, in the novel which immediately preceded *Shadows on the Rock*, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, the wilderness, rather than the domestic scene

is what is highly charged with religious symbolism. But *Shadows on the Rock* is a novel that focuses on the sanctity of interiors, domestic spaces; much of the action of the novel takes place within the Auclair home, a domestic interior with similarities to the Dutch genre paintings Cather describes in her remarks on *The Professor's House*. From the two major domestic settings of *Shadows on the Rock*, "the masts of ships" can be seen: Cecile can see the river from a window of her home (591), while the count sees the ships from the windows of the Chateau (614). Another similarity is apparent in the furnishings of the Auclair home, which include "coppers, big and little" (589).

However, the surroundings of the Auclair home, the environs far and near, lack the fresh feel the air from the Blue Mesa has on the professor's cluttered house. Instead, the wilderness is

the dead, sealed world of the vegetable kingdom, an uncharted continent choked with interlocking trees, living, dead, half-dead, their roots in bogs and swamps, strangling each other in a slow agony that had lasted for centuries. The forest was suffocation, annihilation; there European man was quickly swallowed up in silence, distance, mould, black mud, and the stinging swarms of insect life that bred in it. (467)

The inhabitants in the forest, the Indians, are feared (523), and even the town surrounding the Auclair home is a place of turmoil and strife, a place "always full of



Figure 3 — Jan Vermeer, AN ARTIST IN HIS STUDIO
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

jealousies and quarrels," such as the ongoing "feud between Count Frontenac and old Bishop Laval" (476). The town seems dominated by Saint-Vallier, who "liked

to reorganize and change things for the sake of change" (541). In general, the area around the Auclair home is threatening, a landscape of savages, deathly wilderness, strife, and change.

The interior of the Auclair home becomes a space which preserves French culture. Just as the Dutch genre painter Vermeer depicts "a domestic world . . . refined to purity" (Gowing 17), Cather depicts the Auclair home as a place of order, serenity, and stability. Wilenski points out that in "pictures by Vermeer, we are always conscious of the front plane indicated by a curtain or some other device" (187). His work entitled *An Artist in His Studio* (Figure 3) exemplifies this



Figure 4 — Jan Vermeer, *THE MUSIC LESSON*
Buckingham Palace, London

device. This frame-within-the-frame gives Vermeer's paintings a look of stability and order. As Gowing says, "Overlapping contours, each accessory to the next, confine the space, an envelope of quiet air" (18). Similarly, the domestic area of the apothecary's shop is framed: the reader first "sees" the living room and dining area of the Auclair home from the shop at the front of the house; the living room is "behind . . . partly shut off from the shop by a partition made of shelves and cabinets" (468). Cather thus frames the domestic action, as Vermeer frames his genre subjects. Another example of Cather's framing occurs when Madame Auclair is lying sick on the sofa in the living room. The kitchen, where Cecile labors, is directly behind the living room (469). Cather directs the reader's eye to the reclining mother, and then to the actions of Cecile who can be heard "moving softly about the kitchen, putting more wood into the iron stove, washing the casseroles" (479).

Vermeer's scenes are inevitably illuminated by a soft, non-dramatic light from a window, as in *The Music Lesson* (Figure 4). There is nothing harsh, violent, or emotional about this lighting; it gives a serene, reflective tone to the subject. Similarly, Cather's domestic setting is illuminated by such soft, even lighting. For example, "the snow, piled up against the windowpanes, made a grey light in the room" (479). Later, when Cecile is sick, she rests and watches "the grey daylight fade away in the salon" (564). Another important aspect of Vermeer's technique is his attention to the texture and color of domestic objects. In paintings like *A Maidservant Pouring Milk* (Figure 5) and *A Young Woman with a Water Jug* (Figure 6), meticulous attention to these objects is apparent. Vermeer optically reproduces the texture and color of glass, metal, wood, and cloth. Auclair's house similarly reveals an artist's attention to beloved "things": there is a "walnut dining table," a "cooper-red cotton-velvet" sofa (478), "coppers, big and little" (589), "gilt picture frames," and "brass candlesticks" (564). The domestic area is "made up of wood and cloth and glass and a little silver" (480); these textures are outward symbols of the "individuality" and "character" (480) of the home; they separate it from the rest of the community and the threatening world beyond.



Figure 5 — Jan Vermeer, *A MAIDSERVANT POURING MILK*
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

An earlier painting, van Eyck's *Jan Arnolfini and Wife* (Figure 7), helps to illuminate another important aspect of Cather's domestic setting. According to Musper, "almost every detail [in this painting] has a symbolic significance" (66). All of the domestic objects are endowed with spiritual meaning. Thus, the domestic becomes holy. For example, Musper indicates that the shoes have been removed, to indicate that the



Figure 6 — Jan Vermeer, *A YOUNG WOMAN WITH A WATER JUG*, Metropolitan Museum, New York

Arnolfini floor is holy ground, while "the fruit on the windowsill refers to the innocence of Adam and Eve before the Fall" (66). Helen Gardner says that the single burning candle in the chandelier denotes "the presence of the omnivoyant eye of God" (706). There are some interesting similarities between this room and the Auclair home. The first object mentioned in this home is a solitary burning candle: "On entering the door the apothecary found the front shop empty, lit by a single candle" (468). Like the Arnolfini room, Auclair has "a four-post bed, with heavy hangings," in the corner of the room (480). Like the Arnolfini home, the Auclair home contains several domestic objects laden with religious symbolism. Cecile's silver cup is decorated with an "engraved . . . wreath of roses," bringing an emblem of Mary into the home. Another prominent decoration is the china shepherd boy, which is "the object of [Jacques's] especial admiration" (519). This statuette's association with Christ the good shepherd is confirmed by Jacques's interest, since Jacques himself is connected with the Holy Child by Bishop Laval (511). These images of Mary and Christ make this home into a sort of chapel, a place where holy tasks are done.

The equation of the Auclair home with church is further emphasized by the striking similarities between Jeanne Le Ber's sanctuary and the floorplan of the Auclair residence. Jeanne's cell consists of three separate rooms, one above the other. On the bottom level, she has her closest contact with the external world, as she receives her food through a small

opening. Above that room is her bedroom, while the top level is the space where she does her holy work of making altar-cloths and vestments (549). Albeit on a horizontal axis, as opposed to the Le Ber vertical one, Auclair's home is divided into three similar chambers. In the outer chamber, he interacts with the world in his shop. The room immediately behind it contains the dining table, sofa, and the bed. Finally, the kitchen, where Cecile does her work, is located behind this bedroom. Cecile's kitchen corresponds with the room where Le Ber creates the holy cloths. This correspondence emphasizes the sanctity of the domestic tasks Cecile performs; they parallel the work of holiness. The religious symbolism and the similarities between Dutch genre painting and Cather's descriptions establish the Auclair home as a cherished place, a chapel in which sacred rites are performed. The importance of Cecile's domestic tasks is further emphasized by the sacramental nature of the acts that occur in the home. Two confession scenes take place within this chapel area. Blinker, while insisting that his grief is not due to a sin that should be confessed (565), nevertheless confesses his troubled past to Auclair. Later, following a dinner in the home, Pierre Charron confesses to Auclair his spying on Jeanne (579-80).

More pervasive than these confession acts, however, is the Eucharistic imagery pervading the



Figure 7 — Jan van Eyck, *JAN ARNOLFINI AND WIFE*, National Gallery, London

novel. The dinner table acts as a sort of altar, "set with a white cloth, silver candlesticks, glasses, and two clear decanters, one of red wine and one of white" (469). The "most important event of the day," dinner, takes place here (474). A clear connection between the wine of Auclair's table and the wine of the Eucharist appears in Pierre's comment: "Good wine was put into the grapes by our Lord" (633). Crehan defines the Eucharist as "above all . . . the sacrament of peace for the hour of death" (242), but it also bestows peace on those left behind. While the Count "received the Sacrament in perfect consciousness" shortly before his death, the Eucharist serves as a "sacrament of peace" for the living: Charron tells Auclair, "Let us cheer our hearts a little while we can" (633), and encourages him to drink the wine provided by the Lord. Moloney cites as a "principal effect of the Eucharist . . . our ever deeper incorporation into the unity of the People of God. This effect can be described in various ways: love, community, the body of Christ, the unity of the church" (354). This effect of "communion" is illustrated in Father Hector's meal at the Auclair home. After he has finished eating a meal and drinking wine, he tells Euclide, "These are the great occasions in a missionary's life. The next time I am overtaken by a storm in the woods, the recollection of this evening will be food and warmth to me. I shall see it in memory as plainly as I see it now; this room, so like at home, this table with everything as it should be; and, most of all, the feeling of being with one's own kind" (558). His words about being "overtaken by a storm in the woods" give this passage an allegorical flavor. He emphasizes the sense of community that he has felt during his supper with the Auclairs.

These sacramental symbols and references link Cecile's domestic tasks to holy work. The people on the rock might be in a state of strife and disharmony under the auspices of a bishop who fosters change; however, the Auclair home becomes a sanctuary, a place which will preserve the heritage which makes the French "the most civilized people in Europe" (479). Cather emphasizes the value of domestic tasks in preserving French culture. These tasks are endowed with holiness, grace, and piety through her use of Dutch genre painting techniques and religious symbolism.

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A Note from The Nature Conservancy, Nebraska Chapter

Brent Lathrop

Nebraska Chapter, Nature Conservancy

In 1974 the Nature Conservancy recognized the significance of the Willa Cather heritage to the culture of the Great Plains by protecting 610 acres of virgin prairie south of Red Cloud. The remnant tallgrass prairie has since become the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie and has provided viewing enjoyment to thousands who trek off the beaten path to visit the home and landscape of Willa Cather.

The Nature Conservancy is one of the largest private non-profit environmental groups in the world which specializes in protection of ecologically significant sites primarily in the Western Hemisphere and the Pacific Ocean regions. Today, among other things, the Nebraska Field Office is focused on protection and restoration of wetlands in Nebraska's Rainwater Basin and Platte River which support the Central Flyway migratory bird populations numbering over one million birds annually. Species of note are the endangered Whooping Cranes, Least Tern, Piping Plover, and the popular Sandhill Cranes. There are approximately 800,000 members internationally.

This winter, the Conservancy has taken a hard look at the management practices used to keep the prairie in a "fit" condition and is looking for ways to provide a moderate amount of income to pay local property taxes. The land was taken off the tax exempt rolls in January and to avoid depletion of an endowment which historically has been used for educational purposes, alternative means of funding must be found.

The prairie as we know it developed over eons of time from impact by the severe midcontinental climate, the action of the large herds of buffalo and other herbivores and occasional wildfires. In other words, the grass and forb community needs herbivores and fire to maintain a healthy existence. Without these components present the prairie declines in quality.

With the assistance of a local advisory committee made up of volunteer representatives from the Cather Foundation, Extension Service, the University of Nebraska Kearney, the Soil Conservation Service and cattlemen, a plan has been developed to reintroduce

moderate treatments of grazing and haying on the site. Prior to this review, fire had been the only treatment applied, and due to various local factors its use had been limited to the point of prairie decline.

A great deal of thought has gone into the development of a management plan that will not detract from the aesthetics of the site and viewers' expectations. Due to the limitations of the Cather prairie, the reintroduction of buffalo as an option is counterproductive to the conditions that need to be addressed. The use of cattle and haying operations are a modern equivalent

of the migrating herbivores of the past which will fit into the local regime and allow attainment of goals set forth in the management plan.

In conclusion, when next you visit the Cather Memorial Prairie, you may see cattle grazing peacefully on the landscape or you might see in late summer a haying operation in progress. These actions are for the health and welfare of the prairie so that our children and their children will be able to see the prairie Willa Cather described so intimately in her many stories.

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