



Louise Pound: A Folklore and Literature Miscellany

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The Complete Second Issue

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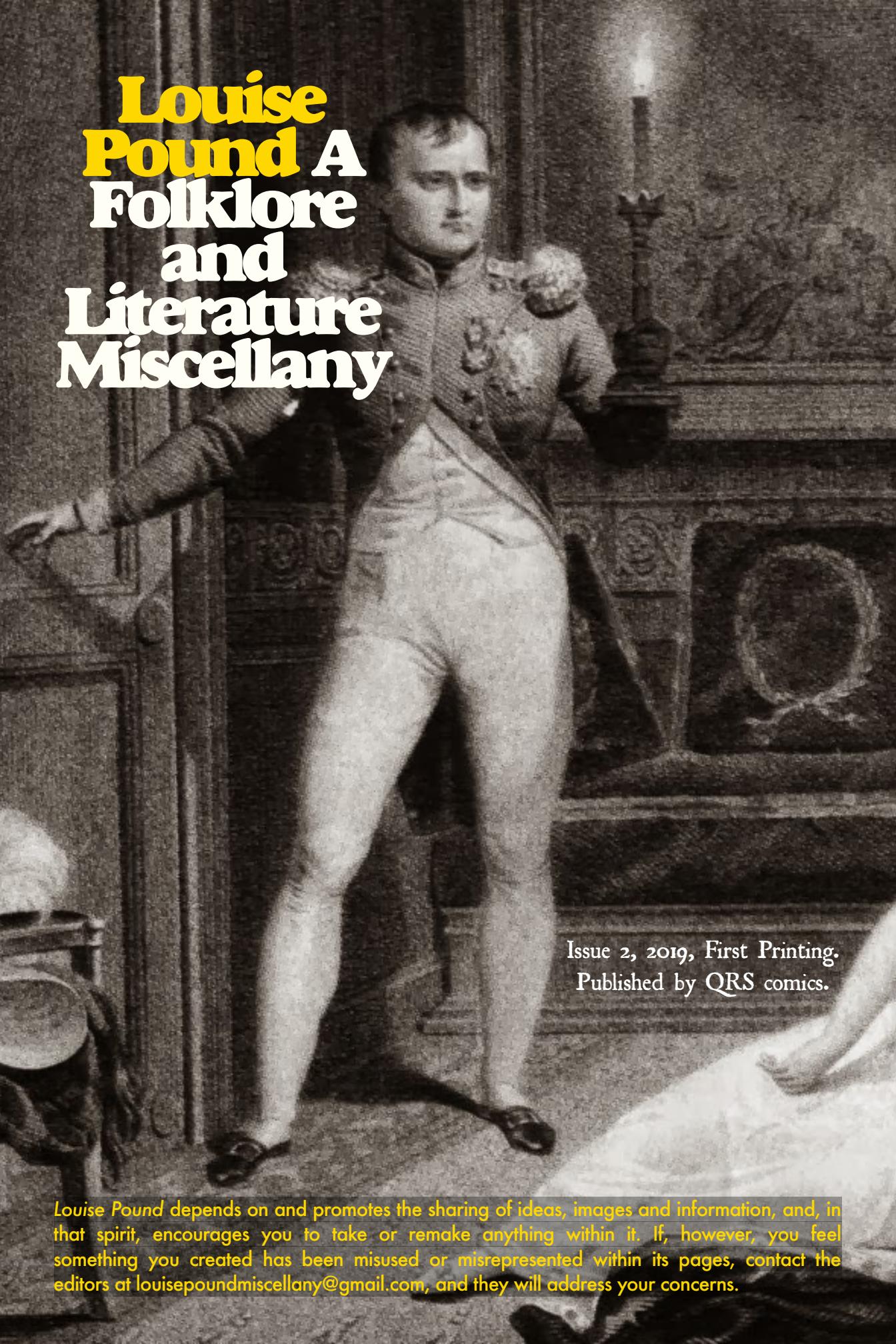


LOUISE *Pound*

A Folklore and Literature Miscellany

No. 2 2019





Louise Pound A Folklore and Literature Miscellany

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Louise Pound depends on and promotes the sharing of ideas, images and information, and, in that spirit, encourages you to take or remake anything within it. If, however, you feel something you created has been misused or misrepresented within its pages, contact the editors at louispoundmiscellany@gmail.com, and they will address your concerns.

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*Napoleon Announces the
Divorce to Josephine*

THE RETURN OF LOUISE POUND

Louise Pound: A Folklore and Literature Miscellany was first dreamed up in the summer of 2014 at a semi-scholarly confab in Red Cloud, Nebraska. Sponsored by the Folklore and Literature section of the American Folklore Society and the University of Nebraska at Omaha's College of Public Affairs and Community Service, the Folklore and Literature Think-Tank brought together a handful of folklorists and literary scholars as a way of generating new ideas about the relationship between folklore and literature. Over the last half century, social scientific approaches have come to dominate the field of folklore, which means the foundational role literary approaches played in the development of folklore studies have retreated to the background. The participants of that summer meeting committed themselves to renovating the study of folklore and literature, and this miscellany is one product of that commitment.



With little advance notice and no promotion, the first issue debuted at the 2015 meeting of the American Folklore Society. Throughout that conference, the editors placed free issues of *Louise Pound* on a table for handouts and other promotional materials, but only a few at a time as they only had so many. Each morning, the editors would check to see if anyone was actually taking copies, and, if the stack was lower, they'd put a few more out. In this manner, all 70 copies were disseminated. Reaction to that first issue, however, was muted, bordering on complete silence. The editors insist they were not bothered, that it is their sincere hope that *Louise Pound: A Folklore and Literature Miscellany* behaves more like rumor than respectable scholarship, that copies of the "journal" will be valued as curiosities, not as research tools. I do not know that I believe them—"It can't be true," a prophet once said, "if you have to say it"—but that is what they say, and, in that spirit, they have put together this second issue of *Louise Pound*.

That the miscellany's namesake Louise Pound is not better known is unfortunate as she was a trailblazer in the field of folklore. At a meeting of the Western States Folklore Society in 2012, Wolfgang Mieder suggested Pound's invisibility is, paradoxically, a product of her success, that no one needs to cite her work anymore because she has been proven right about everything. Of her

many profound contributions, Pound's refusal to take a romantic view of folklore was a major step forward for a field that too often indulges naivety and nostalgia. Likewise, while folklorists of the era located folk authenticity in an idealized European peasantry, Pound wrote about American speech patterns, midwestern storytelling, and the rhetoric of advertising. She, along with her student and friend Benjamin Botkin, significantly expanded the idea of folklore, an idea academic folklorists are, in many ways, still trying to grasp and that this miscellany is designed to explore.

The second issue of *Louise Pound: A Folklore and Literature Miscellany* appropriately focuses on Willa Cather, "appropriately" because the miscellany was first envisioned in Red Cloud, Willa Cather's hometown (one of them, at least), making the issue something of a homecoming. More significantly, Louise Pound and Willa Cather were contemporaries and friends. Actually, "contemporaries and friends" doesn't come close to capturing the depth of their relationship as, in a stunning convergence of character, these two gender revolutionaries attended the University of Nebraska at the same time. They were, in fact, intimately close, and while much has been written of their association—Cather biographer Sharon O'Brien suggests Cather's lesbian identity developed through her relationship with Pound—a definitive account of their influence on one another has yet to be written.

Such an account, unfortunately, is not included in this issue, but there is a short piece about some campus folklore regarding Cather and Pound. That piece is sandwiched between a pair of articles that exemplify the spirit of Louise Pound, the publication, if not the person. On the front side is Evelyn Funda's consideration of mushroom lore in Cather's *My Ántonia*, a stellar addition to the long and distinguished history of the study of folklore in literature. On the other side is an article that reverses things somewhat by considering literature as folklore; Todd Richardson discusses how students reread and rewrote *My Ántonia* in an introductory writing course he taught. As this is a miscellany, an olio of other artifacts related to Willa Cather and folklore appear throughout, highlighted by a collection of award-winning entries from a fan art contest conducted as part of the University of Nebraska at Omaha's Common Reader Experience, which focused on *My Ántonia* in 2018.

All in all, the second issue of *Louise Pound: A Folklore and Literature Miscellany* represents a thoroughly cromulent contribution to the world of niche academic publications, and I am pleased to have written this introduction to it.

YOURS TRULY,

L

MY *ÁNTONIA* & CZECH MUSHROOM FOLKLORE

by Evelyn
Funda

PART ONE: MUSHROOMS: A CLOSE READING

One of the most touching scenes in Cather's *My Ántonia* is Jim and Grandmother Burden's winter visit to the Shimerda's dugout, and it is a scene centered on food culture. At the opening of the chapter, the Shimerda family is so desperate for food that when the rabbits are scarce, they are willing to consider eating the prairie dogs that Ambrosch shoots, news that "alarm[s]" Mrs. Burden to ask her husband about the Bohemian who had sold the Shimerdas their property: "Josiah, you don't suppose Krajiek would let them poor creatures eat prairie dogs, do you?" (69).¹ When Jim and Grandmother Burden visit the family, Mrs. Shimerda insists on showing her their pitiful provisions of rotting potatoes and a little bit of flour. Mrs. Burden shows disdain for her Bohemian neighbor's sourdough method of baking bread, which had "horrified" her in an earlier scene (30), and she presents Mrs. Shimerda with an old stewing rooster, whose comb had frozen. The dugout scene culminates in Mrs. Shimerda, as poor as her provisions are, reciprocating with her own gift to Mrs. Burden:

1. *My Ántonia*, by Willa Cather, The Willa Cather Scholarly Edition. With illustrations by W. T. Benda. Edited by Charles Mignon with Kari A. Ronning. Historical Essay by James Woodress. Contributions by Kari Ronning, Kathleen Danker, and Emily Levine. Nebraska, 1994.

Mrs. Shimerda grew more calm and reasonable before our visit was over, and, while *Ántonia* translated, put in a word now and then on her own account. The woman had a quick ear, and caught up phrases whenever she heard English spoken. As we rose to go, she opened her wooden chest and brought out a bag made of bed-ticking, about as long as a flour sack and half as wide, stuffed full of something. At sight of it, the crazy boy began to smack his lips. When Mrs. Shimerda opened the bag and stirred the contents with her hand, it gave out a salty, earthy smell, very pungent, even among the other odors of that cave. She measured a teacup full, tied it up in a bit of sacking, and presented it ceremoniously to grandmother.

“For cook,” she announced. “Little now; be very much when cook,” spreading out her hands as if to indicate that the pint would swell to a gallon. “Very good. You no have in this country. All things for better in my country....”

Ántonia undertook to explain. “This very good, Mrs. Burden.... Cook with rabbit, cook with chicken, in the gravy, — oh, so good!”

All the way home grandmother and Jake talked about how easily good Christian people could forget they were their brothers’ keepers.

“I will say, Jake, some of our brothers and sisters are hard to keep. Where’s a body to begin with these people? They’re wanting in everything, and most of all in horse-sense. Nobody can give ‘em that, I guess. Jimmy, here, is about as able to take over a homestead as they are. Do you reckon that boy *Ambrosch* has got any real push in him?”

“He’s a worker, all right, ma’m, and he’s got some ketch-on about him; but he’s a s mean one. Folks can be mean enough to get on in this world; and then again, they can be too mean.”

That night, while grandmother was getting supper, we opened the package *Mrs. Shimerda* had given her. It was full of little brown chips that looked like the shavings of some root. They were as light as feathers, and the most noticeable thing about them was their penetrating, earthy odor. We could not determine whether they were animal or vegetable.

“They might be dried meat from some queer beast, Jim. They ain’t dried fish, and they never grew on stalk or vine. I’m afraid of ’em. Anyhow, I shouldn’t want to eat anything that had been shut up for months with old clothes and goose pillows.”

She threw the package into the stove, but I bit off a corner of one of the chips I held in my hand, and chewed it tentatively. I never forgot the strange taste; though it was many years before I knew that those little brown shavings, which the *Shimerdas* had brought so far and treasured so jealously, were dried mushrooms. They had been gathered, probably, in some deep Bohemian forest



That Cather had W.T. Benda illustrate this passage with the scene of a Bohemian woman gathering mushrooms in a forest suggests that she earmarked the scene as an important one. But the illustration does not show them all in the interior of the dugout, peering into the empty barrels or huddling near the fire. Benda's illustration, which depicts an event that Cather only alludes to rather than describes directly, is the only one of the Benda illustrations that depicts a foreign scene that takes place in dramatically different landscape from the Nebraska prairies. Having left everything else behind, the mushrooms are the only remaining token of their life in the Old Country.

The dugout/mushroom scene pivots on the tensions between food cultures, which in turn suggests the subtle tension between the American and Bohemian settlers. Individual responses to the mushrooms offer a correlative for how Americans and Bohemians engage with each other and with the foreignness of immigrants in the early twentieth-century. Suggesting a nativist point-of-view, Grandmother Burden sees the mushrooms as something alien, suspect, dangerous—a product of a dark and distant forest. She has no name for the dried shavings, no point of reference to understand their strangeness (animal or vegetable, neighbor or "creatures"), and she sees them as something that she might even fear, as "queer" and perhaps even beast-like, a response Cather highlights with Mrs Burden's "poor creatures" exclamation at the opening and Cather's depiction of Marek, with his "queer noises" that variously sound like the bark of a dog or the whinny of a horse (74). If Mrs. Burden would rather discard the dried mushrooms that eat them, Jim is nevertheless curious about the shavings

with their “penetrating, earthy odor.” He nibbles at one of the chips, and although he admits it is “strange,” he is willing to concede their importance to the Shimerdas—yet still too unsure about the foreign food to stop Grandmother Burden from discarding it. For Jim, the mushrooms are exotic, evocative of a place he will one day travel and a food he will one day enjoy. By the same token, he is initially guarded with the Shimerdas but more willing to accept their differences in food and culture. Looking from the other side of the mushroom-divide, Mrs. Shimerda presents her gift “ceremoniously,” and in contrast to Mrs. Burden’s gift of the old stewing chicken with its frozen comb, the dried mushrooms are “treasured so jealously.” The Shimerdas recognize them as a potent symbol of homeland, of their ties to the very soil from which the mushrooms were plucked. For all of Mrs. Shimerda’s boasting that food from her country is superior, her generous gesture, especially when her family has so little to give, is a deeply personal gift. Mrs. Shimerda’s cloth bag holds a finite amount of a food that is foraged rather than cultivated; it is, therefore, a limited, non-renewal resource and a reminder that some loss of their Bohemian identity is inevitable.² The mushrooms are a precious, compact emblem of their Bohemian identity and culture in this foreign place.

PART TWO: MUSHROOMS AS EMBLEM OF CZECH CULTURE³

Within Czech culture, mushrooms (“houby,” as they are called in Czech) are an iconic cultural symbol associated with beloved folk customs, and mushroom-hunting has been a quinesentially Czech cultural tradition for families for centuries. On average, today’s Czechs go out into the forests to hunt mushrooms twenty times per year, making it, as Czechs joke, a national competitive sport.⁴ For Czechs, mushrooming is serious business. Mushroom hunters jealously guard the location of their favorite spots. On weekends, especially after a rainy day, they head out to the forests in the early morning and make a day of it with their families. Occasionally, you will even see mushroom-hunters, with their baskets full, coming home from the forests late in the afternoon on the Prague Metro trains.

2. Nebraska does have certain varieties of wild mushrooms—including the morels that Czechs favor, but these grow mostly in eastern Nebraska in the wooded riparian areas. Cather’s Webster County is not known for mushroom foraging. However, Czechs did not give up mushroom-hunting entirely. In Miron Elisha Hard’s 1908 book *The Mushroom, Edible and Otherwise*, he describes how one of the first things that new Bohemian immigrants would do when they came to work in the Ohio mills was go out into the surrounding areas to forage for mushrooms.

3. In this essay, I use the term “Bohemian” to refer to the people Cather was writing about, who, before the book was published in 1918, came from the Bohemian lands that were under the rule of the Austrian empire. I use “Czech/Czechs” more broadly to refer to people who come from a Czech cultural background, including those who speak the Czech language today and those who lived in the post-1918 first republic of Czechoslovakia (1918-1993), which declared its independence from the empire in the closing days of World War I.

4. Jan Velinger, “Czechs Pick Billions Worth of Forest Mushrooms, Berries Annually.” Radio Praha. July 24, 2009.

There is a long history in the Czech Lands of scientific interest in mushrooms as well. In 1909 Czech mycologists (mushroom scientists) established a publicly-funded Mushroom Advice Center in Prague to hold lectures and help amateurs identify their finds, and that office is still active and publicly-funded. There is an important mycology journal that has been regularly published since 1919, and in 1921 Czech scientists established the *Česká Mykologická Společnost* or The Czech Mycological Society, which oversees more than forty branches or clubs in the country. The journal and the society are among the oldest publications and organizations of their kind in the world.⁵

Thanks to such resources and to families who pass along their knowledge, most Czechs are well-versed in identifying the thirty-five edible varieties found in the Czech Republic from among the hundreds of types that grow in the forests. The older generation take great care to teach the next generation tips for how to spot mushrooms in the plant litter of the forest floor and how to gather them (never simply pluck them like you would a flower). But family mushroom-hunting traditions like these are not just about transmitting knowledge—parents and grandparents are also fostering a love of the activity. Because mushrooms often suddenly appear overnight, people sometimes associate them with magic and providence, and throughout Eastern Europe people associate luck in finding mushrooms with general good fortune. For much of the population, gathering mushrooms has sacred overtones as important family time and a kind of spiritual retreat into the majesty of the natural world. Mushrooms also represent life born out of decay, as well as the capriciousness of life where one mushroom can be a treasure while the next one can prove deadly. This intermixing of life and death is characteristic of a Bohemian point of view and is evident in a common Czech joke about mushrooms that goes, “All mushrooms are edible, but some are only edible once.”

Innumerable recipes suggest the Czech’s love of mushrooms, which are thought to ensure health and strength. They are often featured in a variety of soups, stews, sauces and egg dishes, or they can be fried and served as a main dish. At home in Bohemia, the Shimerda children would have almost certainly enjoyed a dried mushroom and barley dish called “Kuba” at their Christmas Eve dinner, which would have followed an all-day fast. (A kuba recipe is included on page 11).

References to mushrooms appear throughout Czech folk, artistic, and literary culture. For instance, beloved nineteenth-century Czech artist Mikoláš Aleš (1852-1913), who was known for his magazine and children’s book illustrations of Czech peasant life, depicted two common adages about how important mushrooms were as a food source.⁶ In the illustration depicting a nursery rhyme, a little boy tells his siblings, “Our father went hunting for mushrooms, and hopefully he won’t get lost! Don’t worry, look forward to the mushrooms he will bring us.” In another illustration, the children themselves are gathering mushrooms and fishing with a trap, and the proverb reads, “Lots of mushrooms [when there is] little bread. Lots of fish [when there is] few grains of wheat.” In both cases, the charming scenes of children and ornate decorative quality of the illustrations are combined with rather ominous undertones of the children fearing that their father might get lost and, in the second example, the approaching lightning storm shown within the letter M. These details underscore that mushroom-hunting wasn’t a game—very often it was a necessity.

Mikoláš Aleš, Špalíček:
Národních Písni a Řikadel
(National Songs and Rhymes)
Prague: Odeon, 1971. pp. 50
& 240.



áta náš šel na houby,
jest-li on tam zabloudí!
„Nezabloudí, těšete se,
on vám houby přinese



noho hřibů,
málo chleba.
* *
Mnoho ryb,
málo zrna.

5. For more on mycology in the Czech Republic, see <https://www.myko.cz/english/>.

6. I suspect that Cather was familiar with Mikoláš Aleš's work, something that I've written about in "Picturing Their Antonia(s): Mikoláš Aleš and the Partnership of W. T. Benda and Willa Cather" in *Willa Cather: A Writer's Worlds*, editors John J. Murphy, Françoise Palleau-Papin, and Robert Thacker. Lincoln: 2010, 353-378.





A 1926 story published in in a weekly newspaper and written by the famed illustrator Josef Lada (1877-1957) humorously describes the typical practices of mushroom pickers. One man parades back and forth through the village with his full baskets just so that his envious neighbors can see just how great is his haul (even if sometimes he fills the bottoms of his

baskets with inedible varieties or even fallen leaves so that he can top the basket with the most coveted mushroom specimens). Another picker abides by the superstition that if you come prepared with knife and basket, you are less likely to find your prey, and so when he finds a good spot, he has to resort to bringing home his mushrooms in his hat. Lada ends the essay with one of his own stories, in which one day he finds a mushroom as “big as a great cobbler,” and carrying the prize on his shoulder as he heads out of the forest, he meets a farmer who remarks, “Why didn’t you say something? I have horses back home. I would be glad to bring that one home for you!” Lada’s humor comes from the fact that his Czech readers could all recognize themselves in these situations.

Mushrooming also finds its way into the 1924 opera *The Cunning Little Vixen: The Adventures of Fox Sharp-Ears* by Leoš Janáček (1854-1928). Adapted from a serialized novella by Rudolf Těsnohlídek, the final scene of Janáček’s opera takes place in the woods where



the main character, an aged forester, realizes that the tragic end that the lovely vixen had met is only another part of the perennial cycle of life’s renewal. He picks a mushroom and softly strokes it as he remembers the day after his wedding when he and his wife went mushroom hunting in a springtime long ago. But they often trampled them because they were blinded by their love. They gathered more kisses than mushrooms. How wonderful is the forest in May, the month of love, the forester

sings, when the fairies come back to touch the flowers and trees in shimmering light and “men and women will walk with their heads bowed... overwhelmed by this miraculous, unworldly bliss.” If Lada’s stories point to the ubiquity mushroom hunting and Aleš to the necessity, Janáček’s opera uses mushrooms as a symbol of noble beliefs about human life and the natural world.



7. Lada’s story was originally published in *Pestrý Týden* as “O Svátečních houbařích.” It has been translated as “The Festive Mushroom Pickers” by Kytka Hilmar-Jezek and appears on the blog *TresBohemes.com*, November 10, 2016. www.tresbohemes.com/2016/11/festive-mushroom-pickers/.

8. Janáček so loved this aria that he asked for it to be played at his funeral. For the translation of Janáček’s libretto, I have quoted from the transcript of *The Cunning Little Vixen* performed by Orchestre de Paris, Choeur du Châtelet and Maîtrise des Hauts-de-Seine, Dir. Nicholas Hytner. ArtHaus Musik, 1995. *Academic Video Online: Premium Database*. Web. I have also consulted the English translation in CD booklet of *The Cunning Little Vixen* the by Yveta Synek Graff and Robert T. Jones, Royal Opera House Production, Chandos Records Ltd, 2003.

But perhaps the story that echoes themes from Cather's novel most clearly is a wonderful mushroom origin story documented by Božena Němcová (1820-1862). Before the nineteenth-century author became famous for her 1855 novel *Babička* (or "Grandmother"), she had traveled to villages throughout Bohemia and adjacent regions gathering and documenting Czech folktales and customs.⁹ As the story goes, one day Jesus and Peter happened upon a Bohemian village where a wedding party was taking place at a humble cottage. They joined the party, but not before Jesus told Peter to accept nothing more than bread and salt from the villagers because they were so poor. They were warmly welcomed into the celebration, and as Jesus had instructed, Peter only ate bread and salt and politely declined the offer of kolace, the small, traditional Czech pastries. But the kolace proved too tempting for Peter, who slipped a few of them in his pockets as they said their goodbyes. Later, as they walked through the forest, Peter lagged behind Jesus so that he could surreptitiously nibble on his pastry. But each time he took a bite, Jesus would abruptly turn around and ask what he was eating. Each time Peter would spit out the kolace and reply with guilt, "Nothing." This went on until there was no kolace left and Peter had to confess his disobedience. As an act of reparation and compassion, Jesus transformed the morsels that Peter had spat out along the way into mushrooms, which would come back year after year. Thus, mushrooms became, as Czechs say, "the meat of the poor."

Like Němcová, the young Cather loved to visit the humble homes of the immigrants who settled in the area surrounding Red Cloud, Nebraska; in their homes, she took careful note of their folk customs and stories in ways that would eventually translate into her own work. Her descriptions of Mr. Shimerda's enjoying the companionship of his old friends in the old country suggests some of the same flavor of communal village life in poor villages that we see in the folktale. Immigrants like the Shimerdas left such villages for America because they wanted to live in a place where a gesture of generosity—whether that be offering a cup of mushrooms or a small pastry—wouldn't have potentially tragic economic consequences for their families. In Němcová's tale, Jesus's transformative miracle of forgiveness for Peter and his grace and compassion for the poor is akin in Cather's novel to the "clemency of the soft earth roads" that curved around Mr. Shimerda's grave, refusing to let his grave be covered by crossroads where superstition meant the sinner would be forgotten (114).

Whether or not Cather ever heard these particular mushroom-related tales from her Bohemian friends isn't my point here, but I do believe she was generally aware of Czech attitudes about the symbolic importance of mushrooms. It is just one more example of her keen instinct for portraying immigrants in ways that honors their folk cultures. And for our part, understanding those folk traditions only enriches our reading of a work like *My Ántonia*.

9. Originally published in *Národní báchorky a pověsti* (*National Stories and Tales*); an English retelling of Němcová's tale can be found in Valentina Pavlovna Wasson and R. Gordon Wasson's *Mushrooms, Russia, and History*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1957, p. 16-17.

Houbový Kuba

(Dried mushrooms are preferred in this recipe because they have more intense flavor, but 1 1/2 cup of fresh mushrooms and 1 extra cup of broth may be used instead. Czechs like a lot of garlic in this recipe, but you can adjust to taste)

- 1 cup dried mushrooms
- 1 1/2 cup cold water
- 1 cup pearl barley
- 4-6 tablespoons butter, divided
- 1 cup vegetable stock or broth
- 2 large onions, chopped
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon caraway seeds (optional)
- 1 teaspoon dried marjoram
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Rehydrate the dried mushrooms in 1 1/2 cup water; let them soak 2 hours or overnight. If using fresh mushrooms, slice and sauté in 2 tablespoons of butter. Rinse barley under running water and drain; then gently toast the barley with 2 tablespoons of butter until light brown (stir often to keep the barley from burning). After barley is toasted, pour in the broth and the soaked mushrooms, along with the soaking water. Add salt and pepper and cook this on medium low heat for 45 minutes until the barley is cooked. Meanwhile, sauté the chopped onions in the remaining butter until they begin to caramelize; add the garlic and allow the mixture to further caramelize to a rich brown but don't burn the mixture. When the barley still has 10 minutes to cook, preheat oven to 350 F, and butter a large baking dish. When the barley is tender, add the onion/garlic mixture and the marjoram and caraway seed. Taste and adjust salt and pepper. Pour into baking dish and bake for 20-25 minutes. Serve as a main dish with a side of pickles or as a side dish.

Allegheny High School
810 Arch St, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
George Wolchek, Principal

December 15, 1904

To Whom it May Concern,

Mr. Paul [REDACTED] has asked me to provide a letter in support of his application for employment at Denny and Carson's and this is me providing such a letter. At present, Paul is a student in my Composition class, and I can say with absolute certainty that he is one of the most interesting young men at Allegheny High School, perhaps even the entirety of Pittsburgh. This assessment is not mine alone, as many members of Allegheny's faculty have told me how interesting they find Paul. Should you decide to hire him, Paul will, without doubt, make an equally interesting employee.

Among his peers, Mr. [REDACTED] stands apart, often quite literally. For this reason, I applaud his decision to stop ushering at Carnegie Hall, which necessarily entails a great deal of human contact, for the more insular work he would perform for you at Denny and Carson's. In particular, I believe he would make a stellar scrivener as the essays he writes for my class are frequently literate and on time, at least more often than they are not. Indeed, when Paul takes the time to write what is asked of him, the words he produces are almost always readable.

To hear Paul tell it, his future is as bright as the red carnation he invariably wears, and I hope he is right. A world with Paul in it is far more interesting than one without him.

Sincerely,



Miss Willa Cather

"FOLKLORE IS THE STUDY OF THE TYPICAL, THE USUAL, THE ORDINARY. FOLKLORE ITSELF IS TRANSMITTED FROM PERSON TO PERSON BY INFORMAL MEANS— CONVERSATION, EXAMPLE, PERSONAL COMMUNICATION— RATHER THAN EDUCATION, FINE ARTS, FORMAL PERFORMANCE, OFFICIAL PUBLICATION PRINT, OR BROADCAST. THAT IS TO SAY, FOLKLORE IS UNOFFICIAL CULTURE, OUTSIDE THE SANCTIONED FORMAT, KNOWN AND USED AMONG THOSE WHO ARE NOT THE AUTHORIZED ARBITERS OF TASTE, KNOWLEDGE, OR EXPERIENCE."

—ROGER WELSCH

"...THE AESTHETICS OF EVERYDAY LIFE."

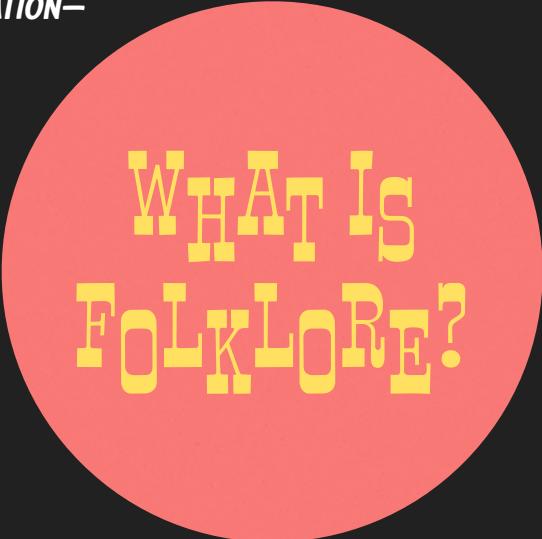
—BARBARA KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT

"FOLKLORE IS ARTISTIC COMMUNICATION IN SMALL GROUPS."

—DAN BEN-AMOS

"IF FOLKLORE IS OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES, IT IS ALSO NEW WINE IN OLD BOTTLES. IT SAYS NOT ONLY, 'BACK WHERE I COME FROM,' BUT ALSO, 'WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?'"

—B.A. BOTKIN



WHAT IS
FOLKLORE?

THE SECRET HISTORY OF CATHER AND POUND HALLS

by **Harry Lime**

Campus folklore assigns a curious origin to the University of Nebraska's Cather and Pound Residence halls, which were demolished in December of 2017. Legend holds that the dormitories, dedicated in 1963, were monuments to the love their namesakes had for one another. As with any oral story, there are as many variants of this tale as there are tellers, but the following version, shared by someone who attended the university in the 1990s, contains the core elements:

When they were students in Lincoln, Willa Cather and Louise Pound fell madly in love with each other, and they used to hook up where Cather and Pound halls are. It was secluded and private and wasn't part of campus then. One night, Louise's brother caught them and told his sister she could never see Willa Cather again because she was ruining his family's reputation. Willa and Louise ended their relationship but they never got over each other, and in their wills, they left money and instructions to build dorms on that spot so that they could be together forever.





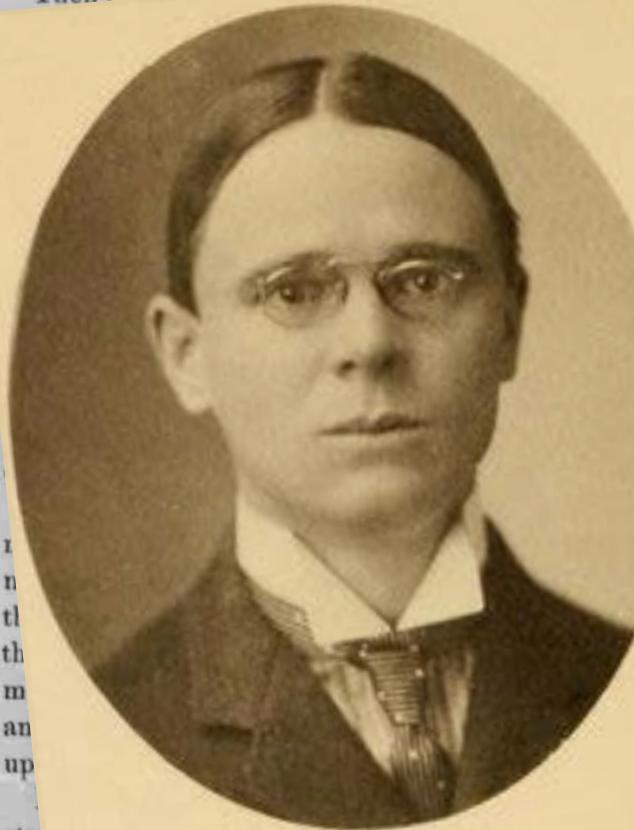
According to preeminent legend scholar Bill Ellis, “legend telling in its natural context is a means of expressing anxieties about a group’s cultural worldview, as well as a safe way of questioning what important institutions define as ‘real’ and ‘proper’”.¹ Legends, in other words, help communities engage with events and ideas excised or omitted from “the official record.” For example, legends about Indian burial grounds, which are popular on campuses across North America, enable students to engage with the bloody history of the land they are on, a history universities rarely promote through official records. In the case of the Cather/Pound legend, students inscribe an LGBT narrative into the margins of the university’s official history through a story that, rather significantly, echoes the idea of college as a time and place for exploration and conflict associated with sexual identity.

Contributing to the legend’s resiliency, a number of elements lend the story an aura of truthiness. For one, Cather and Pound did know one another while attending the University of Nebraska, and they were close. Cather, in fact, was infatuated with Pound, an “infatuation” she later felt she took too far. Moreover, they did have a dramatic falling out that was largely due to Pound’s brother Roscoe, but not because he caught them *in flagrante delicto*. Cather had included a scathing caricature of Roscoe Pound in the *Hesperian* (see following pages), and the Pound family was outraged. Cather and Louise Pound would eventually reconcile, but they would never be as close as they once were.

Most importantly, Cather and Pound’s lives defied gender norms. For a time at college, Cather cut her hair close and went by the name Will, and Pound, who was a pioneer in women’s athletics, generated outraged headlines throughout Nebraska for riding a bicycle from Lincoln to Beatrice. Moreover, neither woman ever married, both living lives that were, in heteronormative terms, unorthodox. All of the intimate relationships in Cather’s life were with women, whereas Pound embodied the New Woman ideal and, other than an intense-but-long-distance relationship with Ani Königsberger resisted romantic entanglement throughout her life. In short, Willa Cather and Louise Pound challenged what important institutions define as “real” and “proper,” and while this part of their stories may not have been noted on plaques of dedication, Nebraska students preserved the “truth” of these women’s lives through campus legend.

1. Bill Ellis, *Aliens, Ghosts and Cults: Legends We Live*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2003, p. 12.

Then a softer



ROSCOE POUND, 1870.

... must drink. "I'll come," he said, and added in a voice that was wild and boisterous, "When there's whiskey round you kin allers count Peachy in."

"PASTELS IN PROSE."

by Willa Cather

The primitive curtain was down, the orchestra were tuning up their peices, and the chapel was full of people waiting for the exercises to begin, when she dropped in, unannounced, unexpected, smiling and bland. She swept up the aisle and her gown seemed to sweep and float wide in the same manner that her Senior robe used to. Her head was thrown back and a little to one side, and her lips were parted in a smile that was thoroughly jolly and utterly insincere and supremely delightful. It was a pleasure to be within the radius of that smile, even if one knew it was entirely heartless. Her eyes shone with the old enthusiasm and vivacity which made even those who disliked her admire her. She passed on up the

le with that air of semi-abandon and
er sang froid which was always particu-
y her own, and the same little breeze
ch used to make the halls so dangerously
ghty seemed to follow her still. As she
ed along, she embraced friends and foes
y, freely and with ardor. Her caresses
a peculiar mixture of sentimentality and
iness which is hard to define. She
ed the laugh that everyone remembered
l, even the skeletons in the museum
he meditative bust of Socrates, and
one could not tell why, it made one
ther gay and "festive" and like old
o hear that laugh, that, like her man-
s breezy and audible, never blowy or
She passed on, embracing subject
bject and handling them all just as
l to handle her many friendships and
ips, with neatness, enthusiasm and
Yes, she is still the same, and one
of it. Probably for generations to
will be suddenly dropping in on
g and inexplicable as an animated

Roscoe Pound

* * *

He was one of those who came back to us on Charter Day, in his own mind, at least, one of the heroes of yore days. He was tall and slender and wore his hair parted in the middle. He stood around the halls button-holing old acquaintances and showing the University to them. He exhibited the campus, buildings and faculty with an air of proprietorship and pleased condescension. He was, by the lengthy words he used, a member of the botanical seminar. He called everything by its longest and most Latin name, and the less his victim knows about botany the more confidential he becomes and the more copiously he empties forth Latin words upon him. In his early youth he was a notorious bully, and all the very little boys of the neighborhood used to be afraid to go past his home. Now he bullies mentally just as he used to physically. He loves to take rather weak minded persons and brow-beat them, argue them down, Latin them into a corner, and botany them

into a shapeless mass. It is the same bully instinct a little refined. He seemed very enthusiastic about University matters, but it seemed rather boyish and minature in a man of his age. It was not a large kind of enthusiasm, that could take in principles and beliefs, it was a petty traditional sort of enthusiasm that was confined to a few people and incidents. He is liberal to all University enterprises, but it seems to be rather to perpetuate his own name and fame among the students. He has no particular business except hanging around the University in order that people may ask who he is and be told what fine marks he used to get in his classes. He has ability enough, but he just seemed to quit growing when he graduated. He has never got past the blue-ribbon, sheepskin, "vos salutamus" stage. He is a University graduate, and that's all he ever will be in this world or that to come.

high gods who dwell at ease beyond reach of sunlight or shadow. She has nothing to hope, nothing to fear. She can flunk no flatter, profs. and instructors have lost their power over her. She has been released from an evil spell. She no longer trembles when she meets her French prof. When one skips class occasionally it is not pleasant to meet one's prof., but when life is one long delicious skip, it is different. She even feels rather superior to her French prof. now, she has got so far beyond French, she rather pities him. She is a sort of Childe Roland who is beyond the power of fate.

It was at the Junior promenade. He had never danced in a large crowd before, and he was initiated in that terrible struggle. He was young and he was a thor-

Ahem... * * *

She sits in the back row in the chapel talking to a boy. She makes every effort to entertain him and seems to succeed. At last his class bell rings and he goes. She smiles and waits patiently for the youth who enters. So she continues chapel time, after chapel she goes to the hall and converses until dinner time, home, dinner and hurries back to the office of her duties. The afternoon she goes to chapel, until drill time. Then she goes to the armory and smiles sweetly down at the gallery. The next day her routine is the same, save that she does not have drill. She carries a few books but never opens them. Those who sit in the back row of the chapel toil and they spin. The first term she goes to chapel and gymnasium and the second semester her interest in it will not be necessary for any more, and she is glad to stop work getting very heavy. The bell does not trouble her bland serene thrill her soul with terror. She is like the

Roscoe Pound of Harvard Dies; Headed Law School 20 Years
from front page of NYT, July 2, 1964
 His 'Social Interests' Theory Influenced the New Deal — Scholar in Many Fields

Special to The New York Times

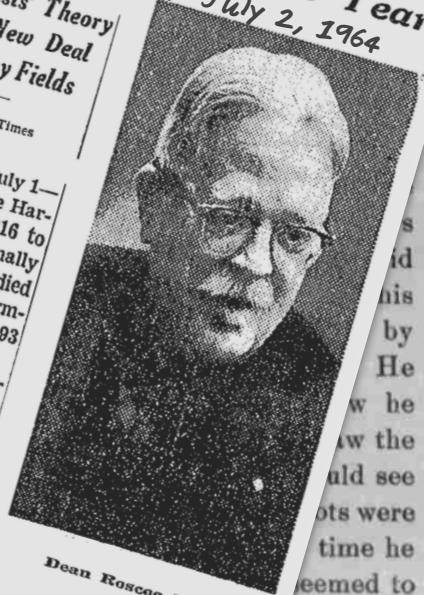
CAMBRIDGE, Mass., July 1—Roscoe Pound, dean of the Harvard Law School from 1916 to 1936 and an internationally known authority on law, died tonight in the Stillman Infirmary at Harvard. He was 93 years old.

From 1953 until last year Dean Pound had been at his office in Langdell Hall daily, continuing his writing and keeping up with his correspondence.

Observing Dean Pound's 92d birthday on Oct. 27, 1962, Earl Warren, Chief Justice of the United States, paid him this tribute:

"His devotion to the law, his contributions to the education of members of both bench and bar, and his great contributions to the jurisprudence of our country have not been excelled in history."

In certain parts of Nebraska there grows a rare plant — a lichen known as the roscoepoundia. It was discovered by Roscoe Pound, the man who di-



Dean Roscoe Pound

rected the botanical survey of the state from 1892 to 1903, and was named after him. At one time the future dean of the Harvard Law School was as enthusiastic a botanist as he was a jurist.

This contrast was typical of Dean Pound's remarkable diversity of interests. One of the world's first scholars in modern jurisprudence, dean of Harvard Law in the 20 years that have

Continued on Page 31, Column 1

MR. SHIMERDA

A VIOLIN chirped playfully, like little chicks, through the stone streets of Prague.

The night was thick and smelled faintly of pipe tobacco.

A lively trombone danced along with the strings of the violin, spinning songs of youth and energy.

Shimerda, the young violinist of Prague. Although he had frequent sick spells, the music revived him and he played all night.

Mr. Shimerda lived on the outskirts town. Only the age of twenty, he still resided in his parents' cozy wooden house.

The Shimerdas were fond of music, poetry, literature, anything that got right down to the heart of human existence.

Long nights were spent by a blazing fire listening to their son play his violin.

After his parents retired to bed, the young Shimerda would sneak into the night to play his violin near pubs, which steadily made him a small fortune.

No lonely man drinking late into the night wished for the violinist to cease, so they paid him everything they had to continue the jolly song.

DUST

Dust is death

Dust is the end of an era, of excitement

Dust slowly drowns the energy of my endeavor

Dust collects slowly on my violin case

Dust rolls lazily over the plains of corn and soy beans

It suffocates me until it fills my mind

And to the Dust I shall return

COUNTRY EVENINGS

Winds blow cool and soft down
across the prairie after supper

They dance along the open fields
and slight valleys

There are people in the winds out on
the plains

The Bohemian violinist plays along
those winds-

watching his little family from
Bohemé

On this vessel he floats back to the
old world

Back to the stone streets

Back to home

ANTONIA

LAUGHTER sends me into a haze

The river flows beneath the bank

Brown eyes sit by me and meet my
gaze

We reminisce over people who could
not float and sank

SHE lays next to me

I close to her

The faint buzz of bees

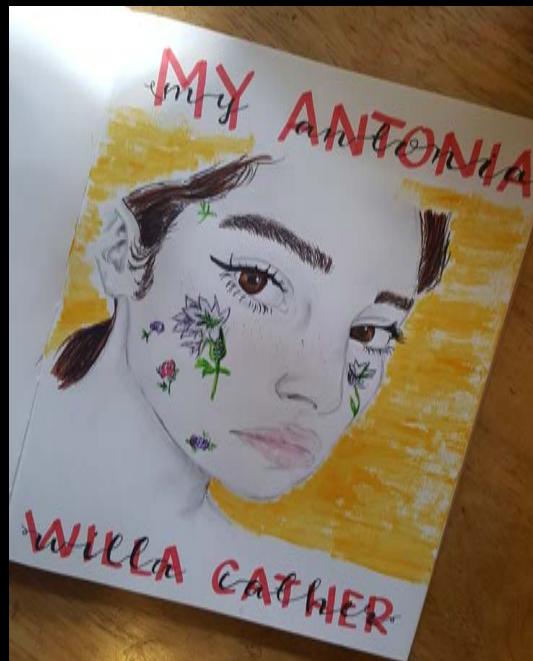
Golden skin of summer

WARMNESS spreads throughout

And we share words about those
gone above

Cheery girls run and dance about

But I can only think of love.



Christine Robino's quartet of poems (on opposite page), won the University of Nebraska at Omaha's Common Reader Experience 2018 fan art contest, which invited students to artistically respond to Willa Cather's My Ántonia.

Runners Up (clockwise from top): Emmanuela Ahianti's drawing, Wisdom Folly's poem "So it goes...", Brooke Butler's portrait of Willa Cather, and a painting by Courtney Cox that was inspired by the novel.

So it goes...

By: Wisdom Folly

The Nostalgia, it rushes back to you like a wave
 A return, even though known of, the impact still keeps one in awe.
 All those memories built, a stone at a time, all through the years,
 Suddenly play by, all in an instant.

That feeling of "where has time gone?"
 Of how time goes by so slowly fast, streaking by in the slowest motion ever.
 That feeling of "what happened to us?"
 Of how you would give almost anything to go back, to live IT again!

It's all but a wish, a dream, a moment so true you could almost touch it, feel it
 You want that moment to last forever
 You want to enjoy every picosecond of that short episode
 That wave of memories and emotions crashing at the shore of your mind,
 You wish for it, not to return to the dark sea of forgotten

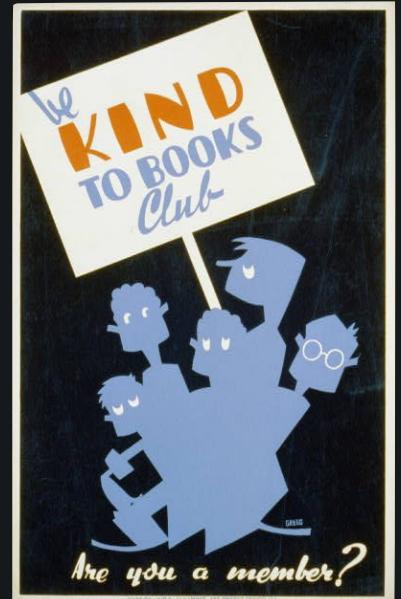
All thanks to a totem, a place, a smell, a touch....
 That takes one to the past, to the good ole days...
 When kids, we were back then.....running around.....
 The place we grew up, the people we grew up with, the friends we had
 The events that happened along the years, the experience acquired,
 The sadness, the laughs, the love, the anger, the deaths, the changes,
 Perhaps of residence, of school, of neighbors....
 The sight of ones you have lost contact with for years,
 Or of ones you still talk to now and then...
 The stories to be told, the things you've been through, the secrets you held,
 And perhaps still hold.
 The stories told at night, ones that would haunt your dreams for nights to come,
 Beautiful memories....
 the contemplation continues with a sigh, a laugh, a tear....
 The film currently playing
 Takes one back to the simple things...

IT IS TRUE,
 Wounds heal, People move, Things change, But....it still HURTS.
 However, Life must go on.



FAN FICTION, MY ÁNTONIA AND CREATIVE CITIZENSHIP

by **Todd Richardson**



Before discussing the pedagogical potential of participatory approaches to Willa Cather's 1918 novel *My Ántonia*, I need to say something about the unique department I work in because the program's demographics played a crucial role in my initial decision to use fan fiction as a teaching tool. The Goodrich Scholarship Program provides full-tuition scholarships and a specialized curriculum to smart Nebraska students with financial need. When the program started in 1972, the students who qualified were more conventionally poor, but dramatic rises in tuition, which are certainly not unique to the University of Nebraska at Omaha, mean that more and more middle class students are qualifying for the scholarship. Nevertheless, 88% of our most recent cohort received Pell Grants, and three out of four are first generation students. The majority are non-white—Latino/Latina students make up almost half the cohort—and their ACT scores range from 31 to 14. In short, many of the students I work with are not part of the collegiate mainstream and need to be invited into college level material and thinking.

I was initially drawn to fan fiction for its folkloric appeal, as folklore is my supposed expertise. Broadly speaking, folklore consists of the non-hierarchical, non-institutional aspects of culture, those expressions and customs that change as they're shared, things like legends, rumors and recipes. Fan fiction's willingness to reinterpret and reinvent tradition make it a prime candidate for folksiest folklore of the young 21st century. My view of fan fiction expanded considerably, however, after encountering the work of Henry Jenkins, the most influential scholar currently working in fandom and fan studies. His book *Reading In a Participatory Culture: Remixing Moby Dick in the English Classroom*, coauthored with Wyn Kelley, Katie Clinton, Jenna McWilliams, Ricardo Pitts-Wiley and Erin Reilly, convinced me that fan fiction could help welcome Goodrich students into intimidating academic conversations.¹ In this book, the authors discuss using fan fiction, along with a variety of other participatory strategies, as a way of making Melville's novel more approachable, emphasizing that fan fiction allows students to create their own entries into obscure and alienating texts.

1. Henry Jenkins, Wyn Kelley, Katharine Anne Clinton, Jenna McWilliams, Ricardo Pitts-Wiley and Erin Reilly *Reading in a Participatory Culture: Remixing Moby Dick in the English Classroom*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2013.



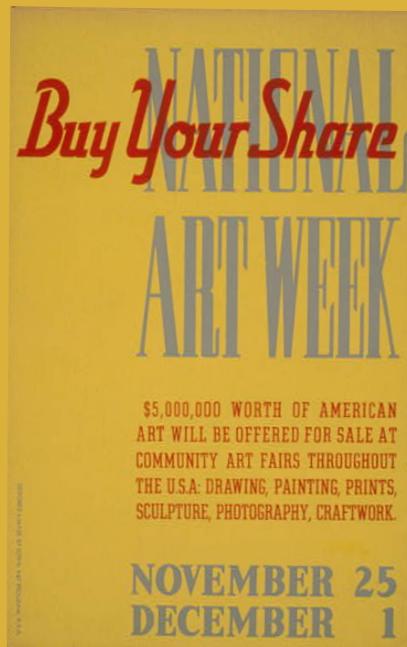
Inspired by Jenkins's example, I decided to adapt their strategies for *My Ántonia*, yet my motives were many and not all of them pure. I was looking for a way to justify including *My Ántonia* in Freshman Composition because I was dreading teaching Freshman Composition. It had been a few years, but departmental needs had trapped me in a comp-shaped corner, and I was hoping to make the class more interesting and, frankly, useful to me. I knew *My Ántonia's* then-impending centenary would play an outsized role in my life as I am a Nebraska-based, Cather-adjacent scholar—I actually prefer Cather fan, but “fan” isn't an acceptable designation in academia—and I was looking for ways to deepen my familiarity with the book. That being said, *My Ántonia* was an ideal choice for the sort of sustained engagement that Jenkins and company model in their approach to *Moby Dick*. Cather's novel is an endlessly challenging work, and the more time a person spends with it, the more meaningful it becomes. More significantly, *My Ántonia* is a text that the students I work with struggle to relate to, and the participatory tactics I wanted to explore would definitely be tested by 21st Century students of color looking to pry their way into a book about 19th century white people.²

Many of the assignments in the class were rather conventional—for instance, students analyzed the rhetoric of early 20th century newspaper editorials about immigration—so I'm going to focus on the more participatory assignments here, two in particular. In the first assignment following

the class's completion of the book, students composed missing scenes, events that were not represented in the novel but are nevertheless consistent with the events of the novel. Borrowing terminology from Jenkins and company, I encouraged students to explore *kernel*s, which are bits of information introduced in the novel that are not fully explored, *holes*, which are plot elements that are missing from the narrative but essential to the story, *contradictions*, which are suggestions of different possibilities, *potentials*, which are speculations on what happens after the novel's end, and *silences*, which are elements and voices excluded from the novel.³

Whatever missing scene students opted to compose, it had to fit within the world of the novel. As much as they may have wanted to, they could not overwrite anything in *My Ántonia*. For example, if someone was adamant that Jim Burden should have not gone to Harvard so he could stay in Lincoln to be with Lena Lingard, they were out-of-luck. Jim going to Harvard is, as they say, canon. For what it's worth,

canon within fandom is fascinating and contentious. The intellect spent in dissecting the minutiae of fictional universes is enough to make even the most obsessive literature scholar seem well balanced. The discussions can seem absurd—is Luke Skywalker left-handed, right-handed or ambidextrous?—before remembering that they closely resemble theological debates and that pop culture is religion to many. But that's not why canon is important here as I'm not trying to convert the students to Catherism. Canon, by



2. I understand there's a powerful argument about the racial otherness of 19th century Bohemian immigrants, but black and brown freshmen today definitely see the Shimerdas as white.

3. *ibid*, p 141-145.

which I mean the most genuine reading of text, is crucial to the unique value of participatory assignments as it imbeds critical thinking within an ostensibly creative endeavor. Students must critically analyze a text before determining what fits within it. As an example, the most popular “missing scene” proposed was a small-r romantic union of Jim and *Ántonia*, yet only a few followed through after a spirited class debate about whether such a union made sense within the world of the novel. Most came to the conclusion that *Ántonia* as Cather presents her didn’t really like Jim that way, but a couple of students were insistent that nothing in the novel precludes such a union and went ahead and wrote the scene.⁴

I emphasize the critical thinking element of the assignment because critical thinking is the cardinal virtue of a liberal arts education in general and composition courses in particular. In other words, it was what made this endeavor salable to writing program administrators. And of course I believe critical thinking is essential, as I am the product and purveyor of a liberal arts education. A professor who doesn’t revere critical thinking is akin to being an anti-Capitalist salesman; sure it’s possible, but so is a union between Jim and *Ántonia*. While critical thinking was not what most appealed to me about the approach—more on that in a moment—I was deeply grateful for the critical thinking aspect as it gave me something to evaluate. Creative thinking, after all, doesn’t fit easily into the A through F grading scale. An instructor may be able to bend it to fit writing workshops and studio

classes, but the students in those courses are converts. Nebulous expectations and instructions are a tougher sell for gen-pop students, most of whom expect “standards” and clear directions for success in a course, who recoil when I tell them the best paper is a paper I didn’t anticipate. But I fear this is becoming a jeremiad denouncing institutionalized hostility toward creative thinking, a lamentable tendency that exists throughout higher education. I will simply say that it is incredibly difficult to make students comfortable with thinking differently and taking chances when they have been trained to follow directions all their academic lives. Consequently, I was only too happy to festoon the syllabus with demonstrable critical thinking outcomes.

The resultant papers thrilled me. I read stories about Jim coming home for his grandfather’s funeral, Otto Fuchs becoming a father in a Colorado mining town, Wick Cutter’s criminal life prior to his arrival in Black Hawk, and a particularly thoughtful one about Ole Benson’s ongoing pursuits of Lena. All told, they were the most inventive and memorable papers I’ve ever read in a freshman composition course, stunning from the big ideas down to sentence level execution. That being said, one paper stood out as an especially strong argument in favor of the value of participatory assignments. The Blind d’Arnault sequence of *My Ántonia* is terrible. Its romanticized grotesquery can never be explained away, and while it provokes profound discussion among upper level students, freshman non-majors are leagues



4. The most remarkable version had *Antonia* running away to live a glamorous life in New York, leaving her husband Cuzak to take care of their many, many children, to hell with that Earth Mother imagery.

away from the sort of contextual knowledge and critical experience such discussions require. Sure, I can tell them what to think about it, but that's not teaching; that simply shames them into saying what I want to hear. Well, this particular paper made better use of the Blind d'Arnault episode than I ever have in any class discussion. As mentioned above, one of the "types" of inspiration for this assignment was "silences," and this student rewrote the scene from d'Arnault's unheard perspective. It was a brilliant paper as not only did the author have to rely exclusively on non-visual description—he's

Blind d'Arnault—she countered Cather's portrait of d'Arnault as an animalistic savant by sharing the pianist's inner monologue, revealing a savvy and sophisticated musician keenly aware of his audience's inability to see his humanity. More than any other "missing scene," this paper validated the idea behind the assignment.

The other assignment I want to discuss had students reimagine *My Ántonia* by re-situating the story. They proposed alternate settings, whether in time or place or both, and explained how these new settings preserved or accentuated the book's themes. One of the most original papers turned the Shimerdas into the Kims, a Korean family who moved to Los Angeles just prior to the riots in 1992, yet that was only one of many thought-provoking takes on the novel I could never have anticipated. Another student made Jim a Martian and the Shimerdas Earthlings moving to Mars to start a new life, and yet another transplanted the story to Hawkins, Indiana in 1983, which is the setting for the wildly successful show *Stranger Things*. By far the most popular new setting was 21st

Century Omaha, Nebraska, the authors working their own experiences into it by having the immigrant family match their place in time and space, along with their heritage. In these various papers, the Shimerdas became Thai, Ethiopian, Palestinian, Guatemalan or Mexican, in each instance the student connecting with the novel's themes in deeply personal ways. Even more than the first assignment, this one empowered the students to read the novel closely and then remake what they read so that it was relevant to them, not just taking meaning from Cather, but *making meaning with her*.

I am going to put this in explicitly political terms. These participatory assignments enact what President Franklin Roosevelt called creative citizenship. In an address to the University of Pennsylvania in 1940, just prior to U.S. involvement in World War II, Roosevelt said, "It is the function of education, the function of all of the great institutions of learning in the United States, to provide continuity for our national life- to transmit to youth the best of our culture that has

been tested in the fire of history." This, I believe, is what we do when we introduce our students to great literary works like *Moby Dick* and *My Ántonia*, works that have been tested by the fire of history. But Roosevelt continued, "It is equally the obligation of education to train the minds and the talents of our youth; to improve, through creative citizenship, our American institutions in accord with the requirements of the future. We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future."⁵



5. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Address at University of Pennsylvania, September 20, 1940: www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-university-pennsylvania

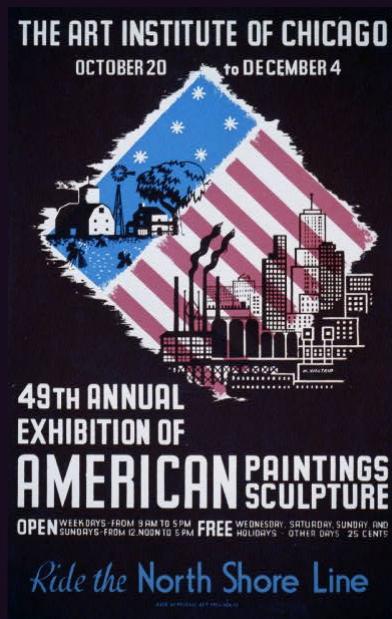
I believe encouraging students to rework *My Ántonia* so that it better resonates with 21st century audiences and concerns responds to Roosevelt's suggestion that educators prepare students to improve American institutions in accordance with the requirements of the future. It encourages students to soberly assess what has preceded them while empowering them to rework what they have inherited so that it remains vibrant and useful. I'm not so foolish to think that their essays really make an immediate difference in our national life, but I do think it provides practice for reworking other institutions, encourages students to view their country and culture as things they collaborate with, not just things they simply obey. Or such is my hope, and I need a little hope right now.

By way of conclusion, I will briefly assess the value of such participatory approaches on three levels, starting with the book level: it was good for the book. Esteem for the novel improved substantially by semester's end. One student in particular, who read and hated the novel in high school—I don't know that I've ever seen a student so visibly disturbed by a syllabus—became one of the novel's strongest defenders, and a number of students volunteered to lead discussion groups of *My Ántonia* when the novel was later selected as our university's common reader text.

It was, as well, a good experience for me. Teaching composition is never something I look forward to even though I've been doing it off and on for two decades now. It's not the freshmen that are a problem—I rather enjoy working with them because new ideas are so new to them—It's the grading that makes teaching composition such a chore. The papers are never-ending. Well, grading

these more participatory papers was not such a chore. The students continually surprised me with the way they entered the novel, and more often than not, they got me to see *My Ántonia* in new and engaging ways. I found myself grading papers more promptly and enthusiastically than I had in years.

Finally and most importantly, I think it was good for the students, but I can't say for certain. I've talked to many of the students about what we did, and some liked it and others did not. Were I a more diligent researcher, I would at this point provide data about the effectiveness of the fan fiction approach, but I have no such data, and, honestly, I don't think the course can be evaluated at this point. The true value can't be measured for another twenty years until one of the students, by then in her late thirties and established in a career, does or does not rethink and reinvent an idea that's presented to her as immutable and timeless, whether that idea is professional, personal or political. I hope that she does.



Note: All images taken from the Library of Congress's WPA Poster Collection, available at www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/wpapos/

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MAKE A MASTERPIECE WITH WILLA CATHER!

I sat down in the middle of _____, where snakes could scarcely approach unseen, and leaned my back against a warm yellow _____^{place}. There were some ground-cherry bushes growing along the furrows, full of fruit. I _____^{noun} turned back the papery triangular sheaths that protected the berries and _____ a few. All about me giant _____, twice as big as any I had ever seen, were _____^{verb} doing acrobatic feats among the _____^{plural noun} dried vines. The gophers _____^{verb} up and down the ploughed ground. There in the sheltered draw-bottom the wind _____^{adjective} did not blow very hard, but I could hear it singing its humming tune up on the level, and I could see the tall grasses wave. The earth was _____^{adjective} under me, and _____^{adjective} as I crumbled it through my fingers. _____^{adjective} little red bugs came out and

_____ moved in slow squadrons around me. Their

_____ backs were polished vermilion, with black

_____ spots. I kept as still as I could. Nothing

_____ happened. I did not expect anything to

_____ happen. I was something that lay under the sun

_____ and felt it, like the pumpkins, and I did not want

_____ to be anything more. I was entirely _____.

Perhaps we feel like that when we die and _____^{adjective} become a part of something entire, whether it is sun and

_____ air, or _____ and _____.

At any _____^{noun} rate, that is _____^{noun} happiness; to be

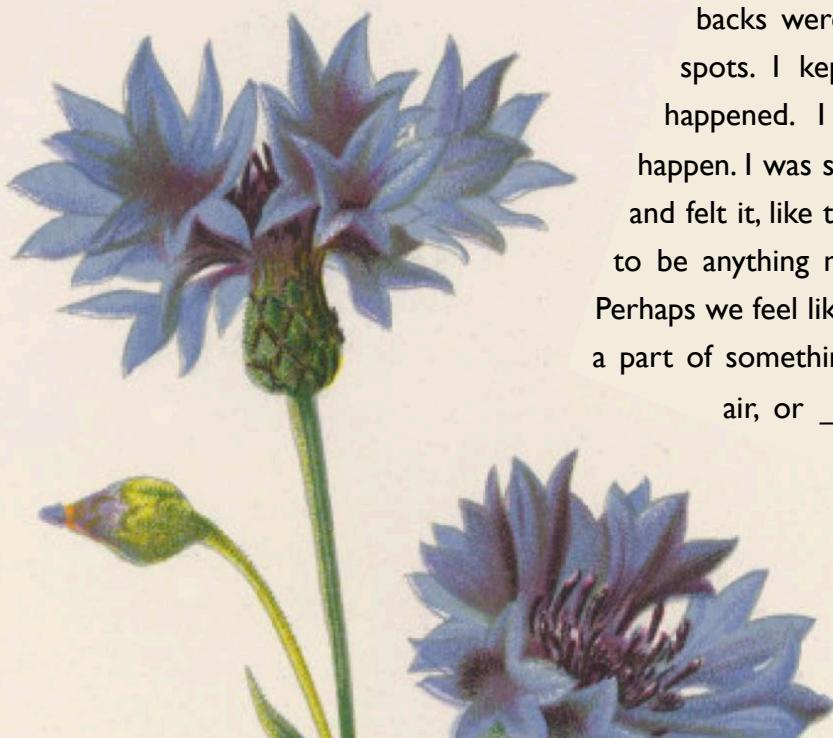
_____ dissolved into something

_____ and _____.

When it comes to one, it _____^{adjective} comes as naturally as _____^{adjective}

_____ comes as naturally as _____.

_____^{noun}



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LOUISE
Pound
A Folklore and Literature Miscellany

CONTRIBUTORS

Evelyn Funda specializes in western American literature and culture. She has published many critical essays on Willa Cather and is presently at work on a book about Cather's interest in Czech culture. Her award-winning memoir *Weeds* was published in 2014. She was co-author and editor of the textbook *Farm: A Multimodal Reader*.

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Cult show *Mystery Science Theater 3000* has twice included riffs that reference Willa Cather. In episode 315 during the "Aquatic Wizards" short, Crow, in reference to a bonneted water skier named Willa, jokes, "Let's watch Willa Cather doing her Baby Snooks impression." In episode 903, Mike Nelson, when a character tries to hide in an old building, quips "Ahh! I'll duck into Willa Cather's ancestral home."