Willa Cather REVIEW

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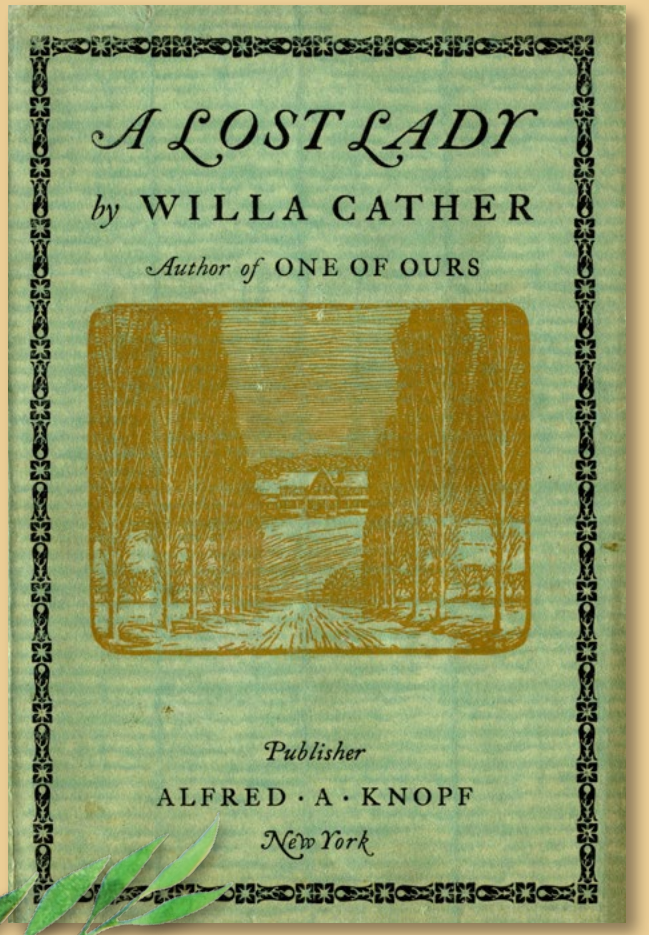

Searching for *A Lost Lady*

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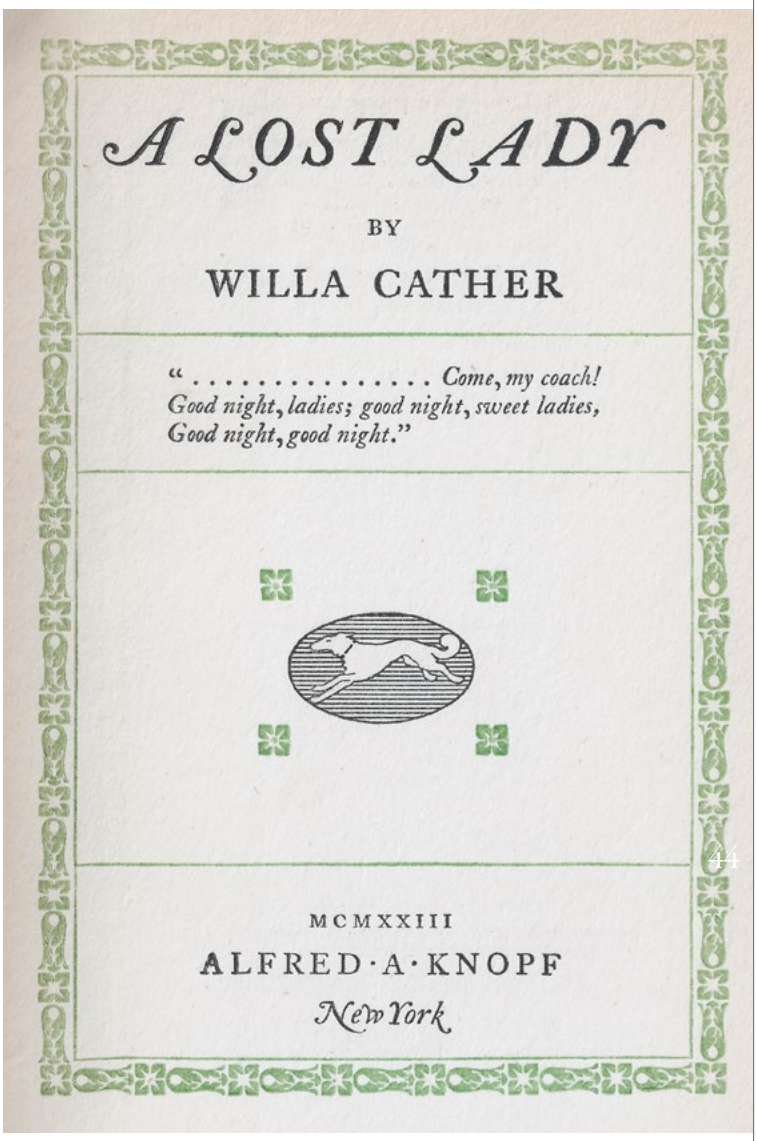


ON THE COVER:

A willow stake grown into a tree
All our West developed from such dreams
Time visibly devoured
(Happy days!)

Willow branch: Dreamstime.com
Sundial: Wikimedia Commons

Letter from the Executive Director

Ashley Olson

As we prepare to close the book on 2023, a moment of reflection seems appropriate. This year offered numerous milestones to celebrate. It marked the 100th anniversary of Cather's Pulitzer Prize for *One of Ours*. She characterized the novel as "the story of a boy's life." While it was (and is) identified as a war novel, I'm often struck by the universality of the storyline—in essence, it's the tale of a discontented young person in search of purpose in life.

The year also was the publication centenary of *A Lost Lady*. In this slim novel, Cather created the portrait of a woman she became acquainted with while growing up in Red Cloud. The story of the woman's love affair, which played out in a small town where indiscretion doesn't go unnoticed, reinforces that Cather's storytelling was driven by both observation and imagination.

You just may have noticed that there was a birthday to celebrate too. The 150th anniversary of Cather's birth was December 7th. Her sesquicentennial year has been commemorated with a series of readings, lectures, and celebratory events staged in partnership with libraries and cultural venues across the country. If you missed the festivities, the Cather at 150 celebration will continue next year.

It was inspiring to see a statue of Cather unveiled this spring in National Statuary Hall of our nation's Capitol. Her likeness by sculptor Littleton Alston now welcomes guests from its prominent location in the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center. A casting of the same statue greets visitors on the trails at the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley in Cather's birth state of Virginia. Another will be installed next year at the National Willa Cather Center.

A vitally important restoration of the Willa Cather Childhood Home has refreshed the National Historic Landmark through improvements to aid care of collections and practical upgrades to enhance the visitor experience. A stable new foundation overlayed with original brick and a replica picket fence are evocative of the period the Cather family occupied the home. The climate-controlled attic now provides a stable environment for the conservation of Cather's bedroom wallpaper, work that is set to resume next spring.

Behind the scenes at the museum was the development of a new permanent exhibit, *Making a Place: A Long History of Red Cloud*, set to open in 2024 in the Farmers and Merchants Bank. This enhancement in our interpretation offers visitors a chance to explore the town's history and its intersections with Cather's life and literature. Also locally, our Red Cloud Opera House celebrated its twentieth anniversary with a season of sold-out concerts by artists identified as fan favorites.

Reducing all of this to numbers, there were eighty-three events that included performing arts programs, gallery exhibits, lectures, readings, educational programs, and author talks. More than 14,000 people visited the museum or attended these programs, and an additional 78,000 were served by our online resources and publications. In reflecting with our team recently, I summarized the year by saying that I felt very tired and very grateful. Thank you to each board member, volunteer, and supporter who helps to make this work possible, and to our staff, a dedicated group with the shared belief that engagement with literature and the arts enriches lives. It does indeed!

Letter from the President

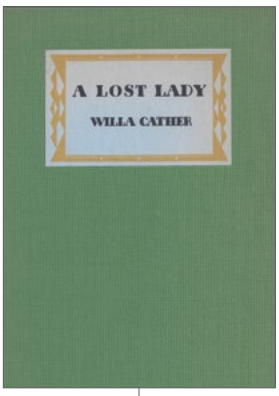
Robert Thacker

Just now is a real moment in the life of the National Willa Cather Center and, as it happens, this issue of the *Review* is something of a synecdoche for that moment. All during 2023 we have been pointing to and celebrating the centennials of three key 1923 publications, foremost among them *A Lost Lady*; as well, we have emphasized and shaped Cather's own sesquicentennial through Cather at 150 programming throughout the country. Complementing all this, Benjamin Taylor's brief but lively new Cather biography, the full life, *Chasing Bright Medusas*, is pointing to Cather's remarkable career through her letters in a way no biographer has done before. Among other things, Taylor cites *A Lost Lady* as the beginning of Cather's late style, a style she effected thereafter once "the world broke in two," as she later wrote in *Not Under Forty*.

The lingering beauty and brief, pointed wisdom of *A Lost Lady* sit shining in the whole of this issue, one ably edited by Sarah Clere, Ann Romines, and Thomas Reese Gallagher. In many ways that book might be seen as a quintessence of Cather's art—it has often been called her most perfect novel—in that it combines deep remembrance with subtle artistry, capturing Marian Forrester in a resonant portrait which details deep humanity. She lingers yet, and still, in affect and in each reader's memory. In a group of brief essays gathered by the editors from a range of critics, we join them revisiting *A Lost Lady* as an old friend, a fond association. Just like so very much of Cather's work. Complemented by four longer pieces touching on the novel, these essays altogether assert the ongoing presence and impress of *A Lost Lady* amid the powerful books from the 1920s, each one different from the others, each one offering a story which challenges the mind, the intellect, and the aesthetic sensibility. As we look forward to more Cather centennials during the years just ahead into the next decades, the trajectory of her career—one still very much being discovered—and the power of her clear and shining prose are ever resonant. Perhaps as much as any Cather text that might be named, *A Lost Lady* encapsulates Cather's power and her ongoing progress. Tracing her career and centennials and all that went into them are moment enough. Do enjoy this issue in *its* moment.

Rereading *A Lost Lady* in 2023

Ann Romines



When *A Lost Lady* was published in 1923, as Cather's seventh—and shortest—novel, most of the reviews were very positive. Major critics proclaimed it "Miss Cather's masterpiece," "a perfect thing," and "truly a great book," with "'rigorous simplicity' of form . . . and 'exquisite perfection' of style" (Rosowski 221). It is a story of the end of a story: the romanticized version of the further settlement and economic development of the American West as facilitated by the (mostly white) men who established the Western railroad and transformed the West into an expanding "empire." The central characters, Daniel and Marian Forrester, are based on a couple Cather knew and admired in her Nebraska childhood, Silas Garber and his much younger second wife, Lyra Garber, the most socially prominent figures in 1880s–1890s Red Cloud. It was the work of Garber and his railroad developer colleagues that had made possible the Cather family's 1883 move from Virginia to Nebraska—by train.

In this book, we see the last years of the Forresters, as an aging and disabled Daniel loses the substantial fortune he amassed in his years as a dreamer and creator of the transformative railroad. His wife survives him, but not as the powerful "lady" she was once admired as by the people of Sweet Water, closely based on Cather's Nebraska hometown, Red Cloud. In September 1923, the same month in which *A Lost Lady* was published, Cather also published an essay in a prominent American magazine, the *Nation*, titled "Nebraska: The End of the First Cycle." In that essay, she tells us she has loved and identified with the stories of Nebraska's "First Cycle" that Silas Garber helped to facilitate. She began to write the story of that West in what she considered her "real" first novel, *O Pioneers!*, and thereafter. But now, in 1923, to her regret, "we must face the fact that the splendid story of the pioneers is finished" (238). And indeed, Cather would never write such a novel again.

When we began to plan this issue of the *Willa Cather Review* celebrating the centenary of *A Lost Lady*, my coeditor Sarah Clere and I asked eleven Cather scholars, at various points in their careers as readers and critics, to reread the novel and to think about how their views of this book and its importance have changed—or not—in 2023. Their brief essays follow. None of them denies the enduring greatness of this novel, but every one suggests another perspective that our own time magnifies—such as the novel's lack of attention to Native American cultures ignored or erased by the railroad, or whether the "loss" of a "lady" is a tragedy, or its opposite, as well as other provocative questions. We hope you will draw your own conclusions! And that perhaps you will begin to ponder what more we and our descendants may discover about this Willa Cather "masterpiece" in the coming hundred years.

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Loving Lost Ladies

Janis Stout

In memory of Susan J. Rosowski (1942–2004), an eminent Cather scholar and nurturing teacher, always a lady, whom we in the Cather community lost far too soon.

Any book genuinely worth reading is worth reading again. *A Lost Lady* is one of those. We read again and we see more. Yet I was somewhat disappointed when I turned to it again for this celebratory issue—not disappointed in Cather's masterpiece but in myself. I had hoped to gain new insights. Instead, I found myself thinking about it in much the same ways as before—only more so. The spark that struck that "more so" came from also rereading Sue Rosowski's fine Historical Essay in the Scholarly Edition.

From what I believe was my earliest experience of reading Cather, the quality I found most appealing in her work was the way her seemingly simple prose—so unlike that of such moderns as James Joyce, where the complexity is obvious—became, with rereading, not more clear but less; how it opened itself to a greater range of possible meanings than I at first saw.

In *A Lost Lady* that is primarily, but not solely, true in relation to the lady herself, and ultimately in the question of how, in what way or ways, Marian Forrester is lost—if indeed she is. The question is posed in the opening chapter when, in a provocative verbal parallel likely to be noticed by only the most observant of first-time readers, the gracious lady is subtly positioned as a piece of property: Captain Forrester is "gratified" by hearing visiting railroad executives comment on his cattle and, in the same paragraph, "gratified" by seeing those visitors "run up the front steps" to receive Mrs. Forrester's greeting (9–10). Is it an expression of pleasure in the fine quality of both cattle and woman? Or is it partly something a little darker, a satisfaction with seeing that other men may be wishing to run after the woman he possesses? This possibility is also raised in the Captain's admission to Judge Pommeroy that he never saw her look "more captivating" than when she was "chased by the new bull in the pasture" (11).[1] Was his gratification also, perhaps, further stimulated by seeing her pursued by Frank Ellinger?—a new bull indeed, compared to the Captain's railroading friends.

After her "fall" into penury and socially unacceptable behavior in the wake of her husband's stripping himself of his fortune to cover a debt of honor before he dies, Marian also seems to be regarded as a possession by the consistently offensive Ivy Peters. We see this in the way he casually, as if entitled, fondles her breasts when she is working in the kitchen (161). Is Niel Herbert, then, by parallel, also asserting a right of ownership when he catches Marian up in his arms "hammock and all" (105) without asking permission? And is he betraying a sense of entitlement when he cuts the phone line so she will not be overheard by listeners on the party line when she abases herself in a call to her recently married lover, Frank Ellinger? Through a subtle network of verbal and situational parallels, the text extends to the three male characters who seem so different—Forrester, Ivy Peters, and Niel—the ambiguity surrounding Mrs. Forrester.

The young Lyra Wheeler Garber.

There is no ambiguity whatever, except Niel's unreliability as a narrator, when he pronounces his final, disillusioned understanding of Marian in terms laden, as ever, with a concern about social class. The set of young men she now invites to dinner, he thinks, are "common fellows" who "knew a common woman when they saw her" (162). Yet Cather herself, writing in her own voice, disputed that judgment in one of the most intemperate letters she ever wrote, using the same word, "common."

This came about after her longtime friend Zoë Akins sent her the draft of an unauthorized stage adaptation of *A Lost Lady* written by one Daniel Totheroh. She responded in a pair of scathing letters. In the first, dated December 15 [1936], she expressed resentment that Akins had tried to use their friendship in such a way and an at least equal resentment at Totheroh's having undertaken the adaptation at all without permission—his having "built his bungalow on [her] land before informing himself whether it was for rent or for sale" (*Selected Letters* 521). Four months later, on April 19, 1937, she discharged her second volley, this time at the draft itself. Lighting on a line Totheroh had invented for Mrs. Forrester—"My, your stairs are steep!"—she denounced the exclamatory use of "my" as "what the scrub woman says" and the kind of thing a "fat old Methodist neighbour" used to say (531).[2] She then invoked the word "common," seemingly offered in the novel as Niel's final, or nearly final, assessment. Totheroh, she wrote, "shows her up for a common, dreary thing," indeed "a common slut" (531–32). In doing so, she continued, he revealed that he lacked the "least idea of the kind of woman she was" (532).[3] The implication, of course, is that neither Marian nor her model, Lyra Garber, had been common at all.

Yet in the novel itself Cather had provided abundant reason to see her as "lost" both morally and socially. After series of scenes in which we see her as a heavy drinker, sexually unfaithful to her husband, the final chapter shows her with heavy makeup and harshly dyed hair, married to a man with money and living in Buenos Aires. That is, it again invites us to view her as perhaps having prostituted herself, not only by marrying this man but to Ivy Peters (who helped her financially in return for favors) and possibly even earlier to Captain Forrester as well.[4] Moreover, in a letter to her mother written in 1925 Cather wrote that as Mrs. Cather could now see, from the novel, she "was never taken in" by "poor Mrs. Garber" despite having admired her for "certain things" (367).[5]

And now I return to the value of rereading. The spark from Rosowski's Historical Essay that lit the "more so" in my reading was her statement that Cather's "freedom from [novelistic] convention opens to the revelation of mystery" (187). She does not seem to have meant a text's allowing readers to find a range of meaning so much as an active pointing toward mystery that defies understanding. Perhaps she was even suggesting that at such textual moments Cather was making an unspoken metaphysical assertion: the semiotic or ontological idea that reality is ultimately unknowable, not to be bound up in words. If so, this other lady whom we lost all too soon may have been hinting at a view of Cather as a philosophical novelist. It is a term that we can ponder as we continue to reread.

NOTES

1. The parallel use of "gratified" is echoed later in Forrester's being "gratified" by seeing Marian wear jewels he has bought (38).

2. Like the "scrub woman" phrase, this is also tinged with classism, invoking a traditional attitude of members of the Church of England toward Methodists. Cather herself had converted, with her parents, to the Episcopal church, but it seems to me that only greater anger indeed would have led her to asperse Methodism, a movement which did so much for the educational as well as spiritual nourishment of people who were indeed typically poorer.

3. In this slap at Totheroh, Cather blurs the distinction between the created Marian Forrester and the actual Lyra Garber, an acquaintance of the Cathers in Red Cloud whom he presumably could not have known.

4. Gustke provides surprisingly pertinent information about Buenos Aires as a refuge for "cadets" and women from the American prostitution trade and observes that in having identified her place of residence and the nature of her marriage Cather "textually inscribes her in slippery territory" (172–74).

5. In much of this brief essay I am also drawing on my own earlier work in *Cather Among the Moderns* (University of Alabama Press, 2019), 198–201.

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Niel and Marian

Julie Olin-Ammentorp

A Lost Lady has long been praised for its artistry; like other great literary texts, it haunts the mind. One subtle yet essential element of that quality is the complexity of Cather's portrait of Niel Herbert, and of his relationship with Marian Forrester. Cather remarked that within the novel, Niel functions largely as a target for Marian's beauty and charm to "hit" (Merrill 78); yet she goes to lengths to make him a complex character.

While the other men in Marian's world—her husband, of course, but also Judge Pommeroy, Cyrus Dalzell, Frank Ellinger, and Ivy Peters—are also drawn to her, Niel is younger and more vulnerable. He is displaced geographically: his family emigrated from Kentucky and never fully integrated into Sweet Water. His home is miserable: his mother died when he was five; his father is barely solvent; the house is badly kept by a relative. Niel feels that his family has fallen socially; when his father's business fails and their home collapses, Niel moves in with his uncle. (This is, however, fine with him: Judge Pommeroy has significant social standing in the community.) Adding to Niel's vulnerability is his age. When the novel opens, he is only twelve—still a child in many ways, though also entering adolescence. No wonder he is smitten by Marian Forrester, whose presence and whose home offer so much that is absent from his life.

Henry James defined realistic fiction as "catching the very note and trick, the strange irregular rhythm of life" (58). Cather's skill "catching" the "note[s]" of Niel's psychology and his complex and shifting relationship to Marian create the novel's texture. In

an early scene, Niel breaks his arm and is carried to the Forresters' and placed in Marian's bed. His reaction to this situation is informed by all his vulnerabilities. As a motherless boy of twelve who is, moreover, in pain, Niel responds as a comforted child to Marian's "cool and dusky and quiet" room; he is soothed by her motherly ministrations and her kiss on the forehead; the narrator refers to him as a "little boy" (25–26). As he admires the room's solid furniture and its touches of beauty and affluence, his social insecurity is also soothed. Yet Niel is entering adolescence, and an incipient sexuality underlies these responses: as Marian bends over him, he notices that "inside the lace ruffle of her dress . . . her white throat [was] rising and falling" (25–26).

Woodcut by Bernhardt Kleboe from the *Century Magazine* serialization of *A Lost Lady*.

As Niel moves further into adolescence, this response transforms itself into a romanticism verging on courtly love. He idealizes Marian, vaguely aware of her as a sexual being while also loving her chastely from afar and wanting, chivalrously, to protect her. A romantic, he gathers a bunch of wild roses for her—only to have his romanticism crushed by the evidence that she is, in fact, a sexual being. Overhearing a charged bedroom conversation between Marian and Frank Ellinger, he hurls the roses into the mud. Yet as an adolescent he is still, in many ways, a boy—a socially insecure boy who, if he has dimly imagined Marian as his mother, has perhaps also unconsciously projected Captain Forrester, the most important man in town, as his father. It is, after all, "as Captain Forrester's wife that she most interested Niel"; he values "her loyalty to him" (75). Her affair with Ellinger may disturb him doubly: it shatters his chivalric ideal of her, and reveals her infidelity to Captain Forrester.

Another aspect of Cather's artistry in portraying this relationship is its change over time. An essential challenge for novelists, as Cather's contemporary Edith Wharton wrote, is subtly yet surely implying the passage of time and the concomitant change in characters (71). Though the novel opens when Niel is twelve, Cather fast-forwards to his late teens and early twenties, when he leaves Sweet Water. Returning two years later, he visits the Forresters and finds the Captain's health impaired. Following the Captain's suggestion, he seeks out Marian, who is "rest[ing] in the hammock" (104). Suddenly his behavior toward her changes, and he literally possesses himself of her: "He stepped forward and caught her suspended figure, hammock and all, in his arms" (104–105). The gesture has undeniable sexual overtones, yet Niel is also chivalric, thinking, "If only he could rescue her and carry her off like this . . . away from age, weariness, adverse fortune!" (105). Marian responds to him both as a boy and as a man, first flirtatiously "laughing up at him" and then "put[ting] her hand under his chin as if he were still a boy"; she speaks as if he were still a boy ("how handsome he's grown! Isn't the old Judge proud of you!") yet also says "now you're a man, and have seen the world!" (105) When she asks him broadly, "what have you found in it?" he replies flatteringly, yet blandly: "Nothing so nice as you, Mrs. Forrester." (105). In addressing her as "Mrs. Forrester," he reiterates her married status and their age difference, effectually reestablishing that she is off-limits to him.

The scene builds in complexity. Anyone wishing to say "they are relating as teenager and adult" or "as two sexually mature adults" or simply "as two mature adults" will be stymied. Niel is older and more experienced than he was, and their conversation takes new directions. Marian reveals her loneliness and begins confiding in him. Niel begins to see her as less ideal and more human, even noting that "there were lines,—something strained about the corners of her mouth" (107). Yet both reverse course: Marian dials back to generalizing her own feelings—"you mean a great deal to all of us"—and Niel's sense of Marian's having aged disappears "in a flash of [her] personality" (106–107).

Later yet, their relationship becomes decidedly familial. When the Captain suffers a stroke, Niel forgoes a year of college to live with the Forresters, caring for them as if they really were his parents. He thinks of their home as if he had grown up there, feeling comfortable with "the old things" from "his childhood" (135). The sexual element in his relationship to Marian dissipates. After the Captain dies, he delivers a bouquet of yellow roses from "the Blum boys" (138) to Marian while she is lying ill in her bed. This scene mirrors the early one in which he, ill, lay in *her* bed, as the roses echo the pink roses he had once gathered for her. But now the scene is purged of the sexual: Marian is merely ill and exhausted. Ivy Peters eventually gets both sex and money through his connection with Mrs. Forrester; Niel accepts merely "the satisfaction of those who keep faith" (135). After the Captain's funeral, Niel and Judge Pommeroy "driv[e] back from the cemetery with Mrs. Forrester" as if they were family (138).

Niel's final comments about Marian suggest the abiding complexity of his relationship to her. Years later, when he hears that she has remarried, he thinks harshly that it would have been better if she had been "willing to immolate herself" when Captain Forrester died (161); the disillusioned, judgmental, and jealous teenager in him remains. Still, his final remark about her, hearing that "she was well cared for" until her death, is "Thank God for that!" (166)—a far more generous and mature perspective.

Another subtlety of the novel which I can touch on only briefly here is the other side of this relationship: how Marian sees Niel. Cather hints at this but reveals little. Marian may see Niel complexly—or he may be simply incidental to her. During her woodland tryst with Ellinger, she tells Frank that she is training Niel to be "useful" (60); at that moment, Niel has been engaged to "amuse" Constance Ogden so that Marian and Frank can be alone (55). Our first view of twelve-year-old Niel is through her eyes: she sees him as "a handsome boy" and knows he is socially prominent (12). Would she *not* care about him if he were plain, or one of the less-important boys in town? Cather leaves such questions unanswered.

Henry James remarked that fiction which "offers us . . . life *without* rearrangement" makes us "feel that we are touching the truth" of experience (58). In the complicated, shifting, and uncategorizable relationship between Niel and Marian, we "touch the truth" of the complexity of many human relationships.

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Confronting Indigenous Erasure in *A Lost Lady*

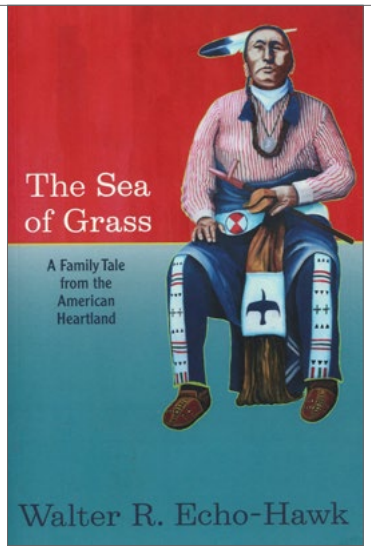
Emily J. Rau

I first read *A Lost Lady* in a 2013 graduate class at Lehigh University called "Modernism and Mourning." Despite having never been to Nebraska and being only vaguely familiar with Willa Cather, I was immediately drawn in by her depictions of space and the way the railroad transformed and shaped that space. In the intervening decade since my first time reading the novel, I moved to Nebraska, started working at the Willa Cather Archive, completed my Ph.D., and took over the Cather Archive a year and a half ago as the new editor, making Lincoln, Nebraska, my home. This summer I returned to *A Lost Lady*, teaching it in my "Literature and the Environment" course at Cedar Point Biological Station, a campus of University of Nebraska–Lincoln in western Nebraska. In this field immersion course, students read literature written in and about the Great Plains while exploring the space that inspired and generated that literature. I teach them to identify birds and wildflowers, have them keep a field journal, and take them on excursions into the surrounding area to experience with all our senses the environmental realities that influenced the literary works. My syllabus prioritizes Indigenous voices, and this year my course list was almost all Indigenous women writers. By reading Cather alongside Zitkala-Ša, Robin Wall Kimmerer, Diane Wilson, and others, Cather's

embeddedness in the settler colonial project and her erasure of Indigenous peoples from the Great Plains became stunningly clear in *A Lost Lady*.

When Cather writes about the Great Plains in fiction, nonfiction, and letters, she chooses not to portray Indigenous presences and histories in the region except in passing references, usually cast into the distant past. In *A Lost Lady* specifically, Cather references Indigenous people in only two moments: first, while Captain Forrester recounts his origin story and how he claimed his plot of land; and second, when Marian Forrester very mildly criticizes Ivy Peters for making his fortune by defrauding Indigenous people of their land. In both cases, these people are described simply as "Indians," with no specificity or real identity. In Captain Forrester's story, he recalls how as a young man working for the freighting company, he came upon "an Indian encampment" near a river (50). Staking the ground with a willow branch, he laid claim to the land in that moment, then worked "helping to lay the first railroad across the plains," before returning and purchasing the land from the railroad company (50). So much is left unsaid in this account, a history that is easy to gloss over in the compelling narrative Captain Forrester creates for himself of "an ideal life for a young man" (50). When the Captain ends his story with a reflection on his generation as one of dreamers, Cather has him stop speaking "with a sort of grunt. Something forbidding had come into his voice, the lonely, defiant note that is so often heard in the voices of old Indians" (53). With this, Cather exposes her awareness of the violence and tragedy of the settler colonial project and the removal of Indigenous people from the Great Plains, but she chooses to turn away from that reality and instead romanticize entire nations of people through the backwards-looking voice of a white man.

If we imagine *A Lost Lady* to be set in a fictionalized version of Red Cloud, as is widely accepted in the scholarship, the Indian encampment Captain Forrester claimed land within would have been a settlement of the Pawnee. After years spent thriving on the Great Plains and in central Nebraska, the last portion of which saw the Pawnee collaborating with the U.S. government and the railroad companies, the Pawnee were finally removed from Nebraska to Indian Territory (present day Oklahoma) by 1875, only a few years before Cather arrived in the region with her family. In her depiction of this space in *A Lost Lady*, the question of where the Indian encampment went in the intervening years of Captain Forrester's narrative remains unasked, let alone answered. I often teach Walter Echo-Hawk's *The Sea of Grass: A Family Tale from the American Heartland* (2018) alongside Cather to recontextualize the space around the Cather family and within Cather's Great Plains novels with the specific history and continued story of the Pawnee people. This summer, I served as the associate director for "Willa Cather: Place and Archive," a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute for Higher Education Faculty directed by Melissa Homestead. We invited Echo-Hawk, a Pawnee author, lawyer, and activist, to run a session for this institute in conversation with Margaret Jacobs, the Director of the Center for Great Plains Studies. Echo-Hawk told the story of the Pawnee through his literary representation of twelve generations of his own family's history, interspersing his story with traditional Pawnee songs. This was likely the first time a Pawnee elder sang Pawnee songs in a Cather classroom. Reading Cather alongside Indigenous writers from the past 125 years and discussing her work with a living Pawnee writer completely transforms how Cather's work is received and understood, especially as representative of life on the Great Plains.



Portrait of Echo Hawk by Bunky Echo-Hawk graces the cover of Walter Echo-Hawk's story of the Pawnee Nation. Fulcrum, 2018.

Cather did so much great work portraying this region and the complex and intimate lives led by women, immigrants, and many others in the Great Plains. But while we celebrate her, we need to hold her accountable for her erasure of Indigenous peoples from her portrayal of the region, as well as her other shortcomings as a writer raised in a particular context and historical moment with a subjective perspective. Recontextualizing Cather is necessary not in order to shame her or take her down, but to model how real reckoning and reconciliation work can happen. We cannot continue to perpetuate her silences and erasures in the way we teach, read, and talk about Cather and her work. Drawing on the enduring social power of Cather and her literary legacy, I hope we can find ways to meaningfully engage in reconciliation work, to make real connections, be vulnerable, and work to understand and honor our world and those with whom we share it.

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The Odalisque and *A Lost Lady*: A Rereading through the Lens of Whiteness

Charmion Gustke

In Nell Irvin Painter's *The History of Whiteness*, she asserts that "by the nineteenth century, 'odalisques,' or white slave women, often appear naked, submissive, beautiful, and sexually available throughout European and American Art" (43). Those images of Circassian, Georgian, and Caucasian women came to symbolize the quintessence of female attractiveness and femininity well into the twentieth century, bringing the "beauty ideal squarely into the history of whiteness" (Painter 43). The odalisque as a subject in art became was well known in France due to the influence of Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824–1904), whose vast array of Orientalist paintings of slave markets and harems emerged alongside the Second French Empire and the colonization of Algeria. As an illustration, *Slave Market* (see image on this page), at once debasing and exoticizing the East, is characteristic of Orientalist paintings that posit white female enslavement at the center of the visual narrative. Exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1867, the painting illustrates a potential buyer inspecting the mouth of a radiant nude woman, presumably to see if she has the "remarkably white teeth" known to be a feature of the beauty ideal (Painter 50). The Moorish arches, the kaftans, and the brown faces of the other figures suggest this exchange is taking place in Egypt or Turkey, countries Gérôme traveled in extensively. A signal of cleanliness and virginity, the odalisque's white abaya is clutched in the hand of the man selling her, brightly magnifying the luster of her ivory skin. As Painter explains, it wasn't until "well into the twentieth century" that the odalisque genre lost its appeal, "as colonial populations began pressing for independence following the First World War" (55). Henri Matisse (1869–1954), however, remained committed to the odalisque and created multiple paintings devoted to a modern version of the subject, capturing women in lush settings, layered with light and texture, their curvy bodies sitting or reclining expectantly amidst fine, luminous fabrics (see image on next page).

Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Slave Market,* 1866. Clark Art Institute, 1955.53.

The ubiquity of these paintings in the 1920s converges with the privileges of whiteness in Cather's *A Lost Lady* to give meaning to Niel's poignant encounter with the "Arab or Egyptian slave girl" figurine in the Forrester home:

> There, by the front door, on a table under the hatrack, was a scantily draped figure, an Arab or Egyptian slave girl, holding in her hands a large flat shell from the California coast. Niel remembered noticing that figure the first time he was ever in the house, when Dr. Dennison carried him out through this hallway with his arms in splints. In the days when the Forresters had servants and were sending over to the town several times a day, the letters for the post were always left in this shell. (110)

The interplay between the "Arab or Egyptian slave girl" and the California coast saliently links Mrs. Forrester to the abject position of the odalisque, who is no longer confined to the East, as she is now part of the global market. The diasporic identity of the figurine pairs well with the calling card holder displayed in the Garber's home in Red Cloud when Cather was a child, featuring a Black enslaved girl holding a mother-of-pearl shell.[1] Cather's decision to Orientalize the figure, while maintaining a tie to Marian Forrester's home state of California, sheds light on the way in which the odalisque, colonialism, and the history of the American slave trade intersect to create American notions of privilege and whiteness. The figurine, for instance, reminds Niel of the first time he was in the Forrester home, "lying on a white bed with ruffled pillow shams," Mrs. Forrester beside him, "her white throat rising and falling so quickly" as she tended to his broken arm. "What a lovely lady she was," her whiteness intensified by

Henri Matisse, *Odalisque*, 1920-21. Stedelijk Museum.

the rich interior of her home with its large windows, polished floors, and "marble-topped washstand" (25–26). Now in dire financial straits, the advantages of this whiteness are under threat; the "servants" and the bustling liveliness of the Forrester home long gone.

This loss is magnified by the precariousness of Mrs. Forrester's position in Niel's encounter with her in the grove, where her "slender white figure" rested in a hammock, as a "white garden hat lay over her face" (104). In what is one of the most intimate scenes in the novel, Niel catches Mrs. Forrester, the white woman in white, in his arms, "hammock and all," thrilled by "how light and alive she was! like a bird caught in a net. If only he could rescue her and carry her off like this,—off the earth of sad, inevitable periods, away from age, weariness, adverse fortune!" (105). The bird metaphor here immediately recalls Ivy Peters's cruel blinding of the "lively" woodpecker who flails about, "wild and desperate," as she instinctively seeks refuge (21–22). Saving the birdlike Mrs. Forrester from Peters's avariciousness, however briefly, redeems Niel's inability as a boy to catch the woodpecker and "put it out of its misery," simultaneously igniting his masculinity and her femininity (23).

Much like the odalisque who inspires "overall sensations of desire and compassion" and "cannot be free, for her captive status and harem location lie at the core of her identity" (Painter 47–48), Mrs. Forrester is trapped by the very circumstances that make her desirable in the eyes of Niel. Her vulnerability and neediness thus work to inscribe Niel's manhood, formalizing his superiority and connecting him more broadly to the other men in her life who want to keep, save, exploit, and/or protect her. Mrs. Forrester, "fantastic and tantalizing,—seemingly so artless, really the most finished artifice," plays the part of his adoring object by cooing about what a man he has become and questioning him about his "sweethearts" (105). In the bright sun of the afternoon, "one saw that her skin was no longer like white lilacs,—it had the ivory tint of gardenias that have just begun to fade" (106). Although Niel's gaze is centered on Mrs. Forrester's aging face, he likens her maturity to the beauty of fading white flowers, proving that his romantic attachment to the beauty ideal and the whiteness it upholds is firmly intact despite these changes. Though the topic of conversation turns to the drudgery of housework and the Forresters' money problems, Niel remains buoyed by the physicality of their interaction and the heroic feeling her helplessness has stirred.

As the episode proceeds to its conclusion, the landscape is transformed into "Elysian fields underneath them" and Mrs. Forrester places "her white hand, with all its rings, on Niel's arm" (108–109), signaling the fleeting return to a pastoral world of wealth and whiteness. Rereading scenes such as these through the iconography of the odalisque and the beauty ideal she represents allows us to see the way in which concepts of American whiteness have evolved in association with racism and the development of a stratified class system that relies on inequality. Studies such as these make visible the epistemological frameworks embedded in the culture and history of Cather's *oeuvre*, encouraging readings relevant to the lived experiences and racial diversity of the twenty-first century.

NOTES

1. For an image of the Garber's calling card holder, see *Willa Cather Review*. vol. 64, no. 1, Spring 2023, p. 32. The decorative piece will be a part of the permanent exhibition at the Farmers and Merchants Bank in Red Cloud.

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A Lost Lady at 100: Imperial Dreams, Indigenous Nightmare

Mark W. Van Wienen

Among the interpretive hurdles for reading *A Lost Lady* one hundred years after its first appearance, I can think of none so knotty as the novel's treatment of settler colonialism. Niel Herbert, through whose point of view much of Cather's novel is focalized, considers Captain Daniel Forrester and other members of his generation who had "settled" the "Old West" to be "dreamers, great-hearted adventurers" (102). Cather presented a similar view in her essay "Nebraska: The End of the First Cycle," also first published in 1923: "we must face the fact that the splendid story of the pioneers is finished, and that no new story worthy to take its place has yet begun" ("Nebraska"). In our twenty-first-century context, with a deepening awareness of the crimes against Native nations committed by European and Euro-American colonizers, what are we to make of Cather's celebration of the colonizers?

One approach, of course, is to distinguish between the two modes of writing, fiction and nonfiction. This strategy is facilitated by attention to Niel's naïve romanticism that strongly colors—and renders unreliable—many of the novel's strongest impressions both of Daniel Forrester and his wife, Marian. Just such an approach is already evident among the novel's first reviewers (O'Connor 195, 199, 212), and over the decades it has become standard practice in interpretation of the novel. Yet skepticism on Niel's reliability has centered on his judgments about the "Lost Lady," Marian Forrester, not her husband. A typical assessment finds the Captain "massive, Biblical. . . . Fit milestone to mark the end of . . . the era of the railroad building west," and frequently attitudes toward the character are ascribed to the author, who "has evoked again an epoch of the West, the epoch which she loves" (O'Connor 193–94, 202).

Only relatively recently, with a wider cultural understanding of the genocidal impact of the Euro-American conquest upon Native nations, have some Cather critics begun to extend their skepticism to Niel's idolization of Captain Forrester. Foremost among these, Joseph Urgo's 1991 book *Novel Frames* casts a critical eye on several of Daniel Forrester's activities that have seldom been scrutinized: Forrester's claiming a recognized Indian camp as his future home site; his railroad-building career generally as integral to U.S. imperialism, and his railroad into the Black Hills specifically as a flagrant violation of the Sioux Reservation Treaty of 1868 (170–71). Noting that Forrester's generational successor, Ivy Peters, is regarded as a villain for his cheating Native Americans out of their "splendid land," Urgo asserts that Forrester's "relations with Indians were not qualitatively different" (168).

The relatively recent advent of readings such as Urgo's doubtless reflects consciousness-raising about Native American lives and histories—and underscores the need for Cather critics to delve into texts outside the Cather canon. Participants in this past summer's National Endowment for the Humanities seminar "Willa Cather: Place and Archive," hosted by the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and directed by Melissa Homestead, were encouraged to do precisely the latter ("Program"), especially in their reading Walter R. Echo-Hawk's *The Sea of Grass*. This folk history of eleven Pawnee generations stretching back to 1806 offers many resonant counterpoints to Cather's Eurocentrism. Just to take one example pertaining to *A Lost Lady*, Daniel Forrester presents the Great Plains in the 1860s as "ideal" for young Euro-American men, finding "all" days were "glorious; good hunting, plenty of antelope and buffalo" when he drove freight wagons there and helped build "the first railroad across the plains" (50). In *The Sea of Grass*, in contrast, the 1860s were catastrophic for the Pawnee people, as they were driven nearly to extinction despite their alliance with the U.S. government, with surviving Pawnee accepting removal to Indian Territory in 1873–75 (Echo-Hawk 251–54). Even as the youthful Forrester is reveling in hunting and building the Union Pacific Railroad (UPR), the third generation in Echo-Hawk's family saga, Young-Buffalo-Calf, is having his own coming-of-age experience, going on a spiritual pilgrimage under the guidance of his uncle. As they follow the Platte River up to Fort Kearney, the vision turns apocalyptic: "Many white settlements, farms, and ranches dotted the land. UPR trains chugged up and down the tracks. . . . We saw the bodies of hundreds of dead buffalo left to rot in the sun" (207).

Such a counter-vision provides substance for those critics who would go beyond distrust of Niel's assessments of Marian to challenge also his celebration of the pioneer generation. It might also catalyze a further examination of those occasional moments when *A Lost Lady*'s narration escapes the heroic imperialism to which Niel subscribes. By my reading, the most startling and destabilizing of those moments occurs at the conclusion of Captain Forrester's dinner-party monologue in which he presents his life philosophy. Just after his speech reaches its climax—"We

"Eine sonderbare Büffel-Jagd. Nach der Stizze eines Augenzeugen auf Holz gezeichnet von M. Berghaus." *Frank Leslie's Illustrirte Zeitung*. [A strange buffalo hunt. Engraving on wood by M. Berghaus from an eyewitness sketch. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*.] Ca. 1871. Original print in author's collection. *Frank Leslie's* was a popular illustrated magazine, published weekly, here represented in its German-language edition.

dreamed the railroads across the mountains, just as I dreamed my place on the Sweet Water" (53)—words suddenly fail him when he expresses his distaste for the "coming generation": "Captain Forrester ended with a sort of grunt. Something forbidding had come into his voice, the lonely defiant note that is so often heard in the voices of old Indians" (53). Evidently coming from a narrator independent of Niel, one with some experience hearing the voices of "old Indians," the remark is audacious to the point of offensiveness: a cultural appropriation of Indigenous sentiments capping a tale that has just erased previous Native residence "on this very hill" (50). Yet the fact that the voices of Indigenous elders are summoned to convey a woe deeper than the Captain can himself express reflects their higher authority. Disconnected as the remark may be from its historical context, its plain statement of Indigenous people's distress, exclusion, and resentment rising to the level of autonomous anger, does in fact reflect the situation and attitudes of Native people throughout the decades covered by Cather's novel—and to this day. That *A Lost Lady* may call for a further understanding of Native people—and their defiance—is a vital part of the cultural work the novel might yet do as it enters its second century.

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Lost Ladies on Page and Screen

Sarah Clere

The 1934 film version of *A Lost Lady*, starring Barbara Stanwyck, directed by Alfred E. Green, and written by the screenwriting team of Kathryn Scola and Gene Markey, is the one surviving film version of a Cather novel. Michael Schueth has delineated how the melodramatic, highly commercialized treatment of her 1923 novel famously provoked Cather to place a ban on any subsequent film adaptations of her work. The film focuses entirely on the relationship between Marian and Daniel Forrester, either omitting or marginalizing the book's supporting characters and larger societal issues, thereby losing the subtlety of the novel.

A Lost Lady was made just after studios began widespread enforcement of the Hays Code, which prohibited everything from the mockery of clergy to "lustful and prolonged kissing" (Doherty 354). Green, Scola, and Markey had all worked on the scandalous 1933 Stanwyck film *Baby Face*, in which Stanwyck plays Lily Powers, the exploited daughter of a speakeasy owner, who coolly leverages sex to gain financial security and eventually wealth. *Baby Face* was, according to Thomas Doherty, "the most notorious of the sex-in-the-workplace vice films of the pre-Code era" (134). *A Lost Lady*'s stringent adherence to Hays Code principles, including the stipulation that adultery "should never be presented as attractive or alluring" (Doherty 343), means that Marian's scenes with Frank Ellinger are confined to picnics, boating, and sitting with her head resting on his shoulder. In contrast to Lily's strength and ingenuity, Marian has virtually no agency. The scandal involving the murder of her fiancé does not simply damage her reputation, as the novel suggests, it also destroys her desire to live. Forrester, her self-appointed savior, is portrayed as rescuing Marian, but he could just as easily be viewed as preying on an isolated, vulnerable, much younger woman.

Marian appears incapable of deciding what she needs. Her uncle and housekeeper send her to the mountains, not to avoid scandal as in the book, but to effect a kind of rest cure for her pervasive ennui. Forrester's initial rescue of her, less dramatic than in the novel, involves him carrying her home in his arms and holding her hand while the doctor maneuvers her leg. As she recovers in bed, he appears at her open bedroom window. Rosa, her devoted housekeeper, invites him in, and he steps through the window and sits down beside her bed. Marian, apathetic, shrugs, while Rosa leaves, shutting the door with a knowing smile on her face. The structure of this scene mimics incidents in *Baby Face* where Lily is shown alone in a room with a man before the door closes. In *Baby Face*, the implication that Lily and the male character are having sex is clear. The scene in *A Lost Lady*, devoid as it is of sexual innuendo, complies with the Hays Code, but puts Marian in a compromised position.

Marian is at times portrayed almost as a psychological case. We see the dated entries of Forrester's journal, which resemble the notes of a doctor or psychologist more than the effusions of a man in love: "She interests me more and more—Today she sat up for the first time—but it meant nothing to her." When Marian finally agrees to marry him, admitting that she will be "afraid" without him but saying that she does not love him, Forrester heartily replies, "We'll have a unique kind of marriage, one that's never been done before. We'll leave the word love out entirely and substitute the word honesty." He then quickly tells the housekeeper to get "a marriage license, a justice of the peace, and two witnesses right away"—presumably before Marian can change her mind. After their marriage, Forrester immediately builds Marian a new house, and she is shown living a life filled with leisure activities; however, the film does not frame their marriage as an exchange of Marian's beauty and youth for Forrester's economic power. Forrester's role is paternal, and Marian seems to need his guidance. Once again, Forrester's journal is helpful: "A tragic destiny—Can I bring her back to life?"

Marian's affair with Ellinger is at first similarly one-sided. In the film, Ellinger makes a crash landing in his airplane as Marian is planting shrubs in the yard of the new house. Marian is typically dressed in fashionable clothing by noted costume designer Orry-Kelly, who also designed Barbara Stanwyck's wardrobe in *Baby Face*. In this scene, however, she is wearing a simple cotton shirtdress. When she chastises him for ruining her shrubs, Ellinger asks, "Say, who do you work for?" before roughly grabbing and kissing her. Due to her occupation and attire, Ellinger types Marian as a domestic worker and thus available to him. This misunderstanding frees Marian of any assumption by the audience that she is leading Ellinger on or instigating an affair. It also keeps Ellinger from appearing according to the mores of the time to be a total cad, indicating that had he known that she was a married, upper-middle-class woman, he would never have let himself be so overcome by passion. Gendered and classed women's labor is also an issue in the novel. Niel Herbert angrily witnesses Ivy, who does not appear in the movie, treat Mrs. Forrester like a servant: "She bent a little with its weight, but Ivy made no offer to carry it for her. He let her trip away with it as if she were a kitchen maid and that were her business" (113–14).

One of the few similarities to the original Marian is the film Marian's reputation as a hostess. This is turned against her by Ellinger, who shows up uninvited for lunch and says to an annoyed Marian, "and being the famous hostess you are, you can't turn me out." Schueth refers to Ellinger as "Ellinger/Peters" (118), and there is something of Ivy Peters's boorishness in Ellinger's behavior. In the novel, Marian's abilities as a hostess provide her with a measure of power and control, albeit heavily structured by gender and social class. In the film, however, Marian Forrester's status as a good hostess carries no power with it. Instead of gracefully ejecting Ellinger, she tells the butler resignedly, "Robert, there will be two for luncheon." Ellinger invades her dining room as neatly as Forrester invaded her bedroom. Niel, relegated to a minor role as Forrester's junior partner, also enters the house familiarly, brushing off the butler to search for Marian himself and finding her in Ellinger's arms.

The theatrical release poster for *A Lost Lady* (1934). Everett Collection / Alamy.

While largely omitting the economic issues Cather addresses, the film contains elements of the novel's grappling with societal changes and transitions, providing a graphic contrast between the conservative and traditional and the new and modern. Ellinger not only descends in an airplane but is "the youngest president of an air transport company." The 1934 jazz song "The Very Thought of You" is the leitmotif of Marian's relationship with Ellinger. It is played by a Hawaiian band at the party where the two formally meet (Hawaiian music was fashionable in the 1930s), then at a club by a jazz band as they dance, before recurring as background music when they are alone together. In contrast to the Forrester home's old-fashioned furniture in the novel, Marian's bedroom is a Hollywood Regency confection of satin and mirrors. In the scene where Niel catches her embracing Ellinger, Marian wears a filmy white dress that appears more like lingerie than outer clothing, hinting at the physical intimacy that, due to the Hays Code's admonition that "scenes of passion . . . must not be explicit in action nor vivid in method" (Doherty 354), the movie cannot directly show. As she paces around her bedroom later that evening, agonizing over the affair with Ellinger, her underwear can be clearly seen beneath her sheer skirt.

The ending of the movie shows both Marian and Forrester developing in unexpected ways. In the novel, her husband's repeated strokes nearly destroy Marian both physically and mentally. In the film, by contrast, Forrester's heart attack and need for Marian's care give her a measure of the control and agency she has previously been denied. Cared for all her life by others, she is now in a position to help someone else. Following the movie's highly personal focus and somewhat didactic tone, Forrester's collapse is brought on by Marian's revelation that she is in love with Ellinger, providing the audience with a stern lesson about the consequences of adultery. Forrester, however, realizes the unequal nature of their relationship and admits that he has been selfish, asking Marian to forgive him. Forrester's revelation and refusal to blame Marian for her affair with Ellinger complicate the patriarchal thrust of the rest of the movie and briefly evoke the novel's complexity and nuance.

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Lost Lading: Freight in Willa Cather's *A Lost Lady*

Elizabeth Wells

lading, *n.* **That which constitutes a load or cargo; freight; burden: as, the** ***lading*** **of a ship.**

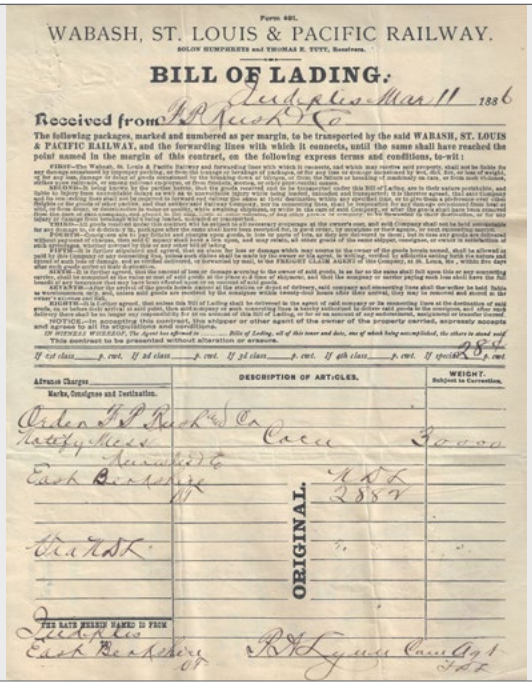
From the *Century Dictionary*, 1914.

Critics writing on *A Lost Lady* have emphasized the thematic importance of motion and stasis, a contrast apparent in the main characters the Forresters, who together embody paralysis and flight.[1] Motion also frames the novel's dominant contrast, that of growth and decline. Depicting the rise of the railroad alongside the gold rush, the novel chronicles the reinvention of motion in Cather's time, as rail travel and prospecting altered what it meant to change one's stars. In stark opposition to motion, Cather depicts characters immobilized by disability, economic depression, and disappointment. Those immobilized then fueled the cycle of motion, as former soldiers and failing farmers migrated westward to start anew. One way of telling the frontier's story, *A Lost Lady* suggests, is through this cyclic duo of bust and boom, the eternal union of stasis and change, exemplified by the invalid Captain Forrester and his electrifying, kinetic wife.

Mark Facknitz has argued that trains in Cather's fiction signify the work of metaphor, a process akin to changing trains by transferring from one aesthetic vehicle to another. But metaphor is not only a transfer but also a *carrying* of meaning; indeed, metaphor literally means *to bear across*. To speak only about motion and stasis in the novel is to overlook the relationship between the two: that of vehicle and cargo. Charmion Gustke's study of the trafficking of Mrs. Forrester makes an example of this point: that reading *A Lost Lady* as a cycle of motion conceals the story of its cargo. Following upon Gustke's insights, we might say the novel's more specific theme is trafficking or *freight*, the process of carrying things and people. Indeed, Forrester first comes to Sweet Water as a freighter himself, working for a trucking company. While the westward migrations that built the frontier—those of Forrester, Niel Herbert and his uncle, Judge Pommeroy, and the Atlantic-seaboard railroaders referred to in the novel's opening paragraph—may appear in perpetual motion, Cather's novel reveals that their migrations are loaded with freight both tangible and intangible, human as well as cultural, aesthetic, and ideological.

Because freight involves people, its representation is tied to Cather's portrayal of disability and prosthesis. The novel features several accidents—from broken limbs to life-changing disabilities—resulting in immobilized bodies that must be carried and cared for. Eliding the imagery of train transport with wheelchairs, Cather configures the anatomy of motion in the novel as a prosthetic coupling: immobilized cargo dependent upon labors of others to move it. Individuals in this novel frequently view their immobilizing burdens as unfairly keeping them from moving forward and living life as planned and desired; however, rather than remaining stuck under the weight of their disappointments, they seek to haul their freight toward circumstances where they are no longer burdensome. That this plan succeeds at all for so many settlers and investors reveals how privilege functions in this text. It is the structures of social power that they bring with them—such as cronyism and the Southern gentleman's code—that allow them to fool others into believing in their superior merit. These social ideologies connect the immobile to the mobile, a pairing that surfaces repeatedly in the novel: invalid and caregiver, ruined and rescuer, cargo and railroad. "I just had my car hitched on to the tail of the Burlington flyer," Cyrus Dalzell explains, claiming one of the premiums available only to railroad barons (and still available to the extremely rich today) (91).[2] Time and again, immobile entities in the novel exercise privilege by hitching themselves toward power and ability.

This theme of freight and fraudulent privilege may even be implied in the novel's title. "Lost lading" is a logistics term still used today to describe cargo claimed by the recipient as lost or damaged. Cather would have been familiar with the term *lading* as a synonym for cargo; however, she also knew its industry meaning from her work at *McClure's*. In 1887, Congress created the Interstate Commerce Commission, a government agency designed to root out problems of favoritism that were rampant in the railroads. Cather refers to one of these discriminatory practices, the controversial Free Pass System, in the novel's opening. But another was the railroad rebate, a form of fraud that industry executives used to favor preferred shippers. In 1904, Ida Tarbell exposed Rockefeller's rebates to Standard Oil in *McClure's*, and in 1906, Ray Stannard Baker wrote a series on railroad corruption, giving special attention to the rebate,



WABASH, ST. LOUIS & PACIFIC RAILWAY.

BILL OF LADING.

Received from

ORIGINAL.

An original railway bill of lading, 1886.

"a sum of money secretly paid back by a railroad company to a favored shipper as a refund upon his freight rate" (185).[3] Filing a rebate claim for lost lading was how privileged shippers received kickbacks from railroads without appearing illegitimate (Sharfman 130–31). Cather signaled her knowledge of these practices in McClure's autobiography, where she wrote "the railroad rebate was the great weapon of the Standard Oil" (240). Rebates, or claims for lost lading, thus characterized for Cather the corruption of monopolies and railroads during her time at *McClure's*.

Thinking about lost lading may also help explain the aesthetic burden of the novel, the freight that Niel cannot accept in his valuation of Marian Forrester. His repeated rejection of Marian's true identity—his choice to silence her rather than tolerate a tarnished version of her—demonstrates his fear of unclaimed cargo, that hidden coarseness lurking beneath beauty's surface. Niel experiences despair when he suspects that all beauty has its origins in something "coarse and concealed" (83), and yet, we discover eventually that the Forresters' chivalric meeting in the mountains began with a murderous duel, and that Daniel Forrester's dream of owning land in Sweet Water involved being freed of his invalid wife and waiting for Indigenous people to be driven away by the railroads. Lost lading could represent these hidden cargoes, the burdens that dreamlike fictions—like romance, Southern courtesy, Sweet Water, the frontier—resist or refuse to show. Discovering lost lading means discovering what has been sloughed off through fiction's enchantment; as such, it is also a description of the reading process, calling readers to reckon with coarse realities instead of clinging to romance's escaping motions. Niel resents Marian's cheapened aesthetics—her preference for "life on any terms" (161)—but this resentment results in a loss of her (and of art's) imaginative freedom, the ability to reject ossification and ideological control. Reading this novel as lost lading involves coming to terms with that resentment.

NOTES

1. Rosowski discusses the novel's "movement and stillness, change and timelessness" (118); Woodress writes, "The dominant theme in the novel is the need to reconcile possibility and loss. . . . [Forrester's] paralysis is both literal and figurative" (349).

2. See, for example, *Vanity Fair*, "The Super Rich Have Found a New Way to Skip the TSA: Buying Private Train Cars."

3. Tarbell writes: "For fifteen years [Rockefeller] . . . received rebates of varying amounts on at least the greater parts of his shipments" (664).

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Niel, the Prophet Samuel, and the Woman of Endor

John Swift

My reading of *A Lost Lady* has most often been dark. The last chapter especially has seemed a disappointed reworking of Jim Burden's return to Black Hawk and Ántonia, his recovery through her of "the meaning in common things" (*My Ántonia* 342), and their final joint possession of "the precious, the incommunicable past" (360). Niel's final return (in memory only) to Sweet Water and Marian Forrester, on the other hand, leaves him with nothing, or almost nothing, but repetitions and confirmations of his loss.

Most recently, I was struck by the way a particular simile in that chapter underscores and responds to the radical nature of Niel's loss, and I'll explore it briefly here. After his outraged, ashamed flight from Sweet Water and Marian's betrayal, his seared memories heal with the years until he can recall without anger or regret the mysterious allure of her eyes, that "seemed to promise a wild delight that he has not found in life," and "he would like to call up the shade of the young Mrs. Forrester, as the witch of Endor called up Samuel's, and challenge it, demand the secret of that ardour" (*A Lost Lady* 163).[1]

The allusion is to a well-known Old Testament story in which King Saul of Israel, on the eve of a battle with an army of Philistines and uncertain of his God's support, consults a necromancer—a "woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor" (King James Version 1 Samuel 28:7)—and asks her to summon the prophet (and his former adviser) Samuel's shade from the realm of the dead. When she does, Saul asks Samuel to "make known unto me what I must do" to restore good relations with God and defeat his enemies (1 Samuel 28:15). Samuel replies that there's nothing to do:

> The Lord is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy . . . Moreover the Lord will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the Lord also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines. (1 Samuel 28:16, 28:19)

Much of the very large body of Jewish and Christian commentary on this striking story has focused on narrow theological questions of Saul's culpability in his own unfolding doom, but I'm interested here mainly in the brutal finality of Samuel's words: your God has abandoned you, you and your sons will die tomorrow, and your kingdom will fall to your enemies.[2]

That's harsh, as my students used to say: harsh for Saul, and also harsh for Niel. He has proposed to ask Marian's shade for the secret of (and perhaps the pathway to) a promised "wild delight that he has not found in life," a loveliness and sweetness that he might still discover (163). But Samuel's cold prophecy—you will die and lose everything—forecloses on that dream, and all others. Niel may not hear the prophecy very clearly—he wistfully imagines one more visit to Marian (a return made impossible by her death)—but Willa Cather surely heard and understood it. She explored mortality, life lived in death's shadow, much more fully in the novel that immediately followed *A Lost Lady*, *The Professor's House*. Like Niel, Godfrey St. Peter near his story's end inhabits a nearly intolerable place: outcast from a bright irretrievable past, learning to live in a present "without delight," traveling into a future whose only certainty is death (*The Professor's House* 282). And, I would add, like Saul, estranged from his God (as his given name suggests)—for Christians the very definition of sin and its consequence.[3]

Most simply, then, the allusion to the witch of Endor is a conventional but powerful memento mori, morbidly ironizing and undermining Niel's and *A Lost Lady*'s romantic dreaming. I won't stop here, though, because the biblical story doesn't end with Samuel's words to Saul. Cather would have known that, hearing his fate, Saul falls to the ground "sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel" (1 Samuel 28:20), and that the woman of Endor offers him words of comfort: "hearken thou also unto the voice of thine handmaid, and let me set a morsel of bread before thee; and eat, that thou mayest have strength, when thou goest on thy way" (1 Samuel 28:22). Saul bucks up; the woman slaughters a calf and bakes bread, and "brought it before Saul, and before his servants; and they did eat. Then they rose up, and went away that night" (1 Samuel 28:25). And on the next day Saul and three sons go out to battle the Philistines and die.

With her eye for domestic detail (and her appreciation of good cooking), Cather probably savored this strange small pause in the downward arc of Saul's tragedy. She would have found in the woman of Endor an appealing figure of human compassion: a comfort and a shield, not against death itself, but against the utter lonely despair that tempts us as we travel to meet it. Cather also (and much more clearly) wrote this figure into the end of *The Professor's House* as Augusta, who literally pulls St. Peter

"Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel" (1 Samuel 28:20).
William Sharp after Benjamin West, *Saul and the Witch of Endor,* engraving on paper, 1788. Art Institute of Chicago.

back from the abyss of despair into which he's falling, a homely presence "kind and loyal," a friend, but a representative as well of all humankind engaged in the common journey: "There was still Augusta, however; a world full of Augustas, with whom one was outward bound" (281). And two years later, the humble ministrations of friendship along the way would illuminate *Death Comes for the Archbishop*.

I'll stop here, with a tentative acknowledgment that my reading of *A Lost Lady* is perhaps not quite as dark as I had thought.

NOTES

1. The word "witch" is not used in the King James Version or any major biblical translation, as far as I know. The original Hebrew, however, implies sorcery and necromancy, and this character is commonly called (in children's Bible stories, for instance) "the Witch of Endor."

2. Marilyn Arnold has written about this allusion, noting that "it is ironic, and terribly characteristic of Niel, that he would wish for news of joy by means of an allusion to gloom" ("The Allusive Cather" 145). I agree, but find the irony's effect more radically destabilizing than a simple critique of Niel's character.

3. John J. Murphy and Thomas J. Ferraro argue, in quite different ways, for St. Peter's state in "The Professor" as a kind of hell. Each suggests, as I do here, that Augusta may offer a possibility of redemption.

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"Nebraska: The End of the First Cycle" and *A Lost Lady*

Robert Thacker

In September 1923, just as Alfred A. Knopf published *A Lost Lady* as a book—that story had already appeared as serial that year in the April, May, and June issues of *Century*—Cather also turned up in the pages of the *Nation* with "Nebraska: The End of the First Cycle." Her essay was the thirty-seventh in that magazine's series, "These United States," each one written by a well-known person from the state. Describing the series, the authors of *The Magazine in America, 1741–1990* (1991) have commented that "One of the most remarkable series of the twenties was an examination of the states. William Allen White wrote on Kansas, Mencken on Maryland, Dorothy Canfield Fisher on Vermont, Zona Gale on Wisconsin, Douglas Southall Freeman on Virginia, Theodore Dreiser on Indiana, Sinclair Lewis on Minnesota, Edmund Wilson on New Jersey, Willa Cather on Nebraska, Mary Austin on Arizona, and Ludwig Lewisohn on South Carolina." "Small wonder the *Nation* tended to overshadow its rivals in those days" (Tebbel and Zuckerman 205; see also Borus). This list of notables, Cather among them, sharply contextualizes her essay and points directly to what she was doing with it. While this may be seen as an excessive claim, it is quite possible to see "Nebraska: The End of the First Cycle" as an advertisement for Cather's new novel and, more than that, her acknowledgement that, as an author of greatly increased prominence in 1923, her own days of pioneering Nebraska were then behind her.

Cather aptly begins by detailing the settlement history of Nebraska, echoing her real "first novel," *O Pioneers!*, and *My Ántonia* too, by describing in expository prose her state's geography, its initial discovery and the many passages it saw before the Civil War—explorers, the Mormons, gold seekers, freighters to Denver and Santa Fe, their displacement by the railroads—before the coming of permanent settlement in the decades just after the war. Of the transcontinental telegraph she notes that "the first message flashed across the river into Nebraska was not a market report, but a line of poetry: 'Westward the course of empire takes its way,'" and she comments there too that "The Old West was like that" (236)—that is, they put the poetry of the moment ahead of commerce. Writing this when she did, Cather probably saw this line's sentiment positively—although perhaps not, given the vision of Ivy Peters's successes she offers in *A Lost Lady*—a view that would hardly be countenanced today. Turning from Nebraska's larger history as part of the West to the specifics of its settlement by emigrants, treating the initial conditions of sod houses set wide apart on the plains as homesteaders arrived, settled, and struggled, Cather comments that "The dugouts and the sod farm-houses were three or four miles apart, and the only means of communication was the heavy farm wagon, drawn by heavy work horses" (237). Continuing, Cather shifts to the pioneers themselves, noting that the "early population of Nebraska was largely transatlantic" and describes the extent of Czech, "French" (some of whom were French, but mostly Québécois), Germans, and Scandinavians settlers in Nebraska, by far a majority of the state's population by the 1910 census. "Unfortunately," she continues, "their American neighbors were seldom open-minded enough to understand the Europeans, or to profit by their older traditions," seeing New England settlers amid the foreign-born as distrustful, Southerners as "provincial and utterly without curiosity." She concludes these characterizations by asserting that "If the daughter of a shiftless West Virginia mountaineer married the nephew of a professor at the University of Upsala, the native family felt disgraced by such an alliance" (237).

Such sentiments were not new to Cather, of course. They may be found throughout her novels of the 1910s. Yet here, in "Nebraska: The End of the First Cycle," they have become explicit and point directly toward *A Lost Lady*. As that novel opens,

Bison panel by Lee Lawrie at the north entrance to the Nebraska State Capitol, built in phases between 1922 and 1932. Photo by Samuel H. Gottscho, 1934. Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Division, Gottscho-Schleisner Collection.

Cather the first-person narrator—as she is there—describes the Forrester house of "Thirty or forty years ago" equally sourly, as one "encircled by porches, too narrow for modern notions of comfort, supported by the fussy, fragile pillars of the time, when every honest stick of timber was tortured by the turning-lath into something hideous" (7, 8). In her excellent historical essay in the scholarly edition of the novel, the late Susan J. Rosowski pauses and meditates on a phrasing found repeated in the text, "looking after things." She sees it underscoring "the idea of change central to the novel: repeated in various forms, it invokes implicit questions: Who will 'look after' Captain Forrester following his stroke, and Marian Forrester after his death? Who will 'look after' the fragile beauty of the marsh, and who will look after the spirit of an age?" "Gradually," Rosowski asserts aptly and precisely in relation to Cather's exceptional art, "'looking after' ceases to mean taking care of someone or something and comes to mean, instead, gazing back upon someone or something. By the substitution of a phrase, Cather contributes to the downward force of this motif" (216).

As Rosowski describes it here, this notion is exactly right—the phrase "looking after" is transformed in *A Lost Lady* from one denoting ongoing care to one of essential remembrance. Those longtime-ago recollections were what this novel was all about, what Cather did best (in contradistinction from what she had done in her previous novel, *One of Ours*, with which she had struggled), and which she would come to valorize when she famously asserted in her Prefatory Note to *Not Under Forty* (1936) that the "world broke in two in 1922 or thereabouts" (Prefatory Note v). For Cather, having ended her pioneering period with this new book, *A Lost Lady*, it had. What Rosowski calls "the downward movement" (200–201) of its story is inescapable. And advertising that new novel, Cather showed in "Nebraska: The End of the First Cycle" that in fact her world had broken in two. So while as she moves toward the end of her essay she acknowledges that the Nebraska landscape "has no secrets; it is as open as an honest human face," Cather also acknowledges there that "we must face the fact that the splendid story of the pioneers is finished" (238).

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When Mountains Fall: *A Lost Lady* in Colorado

Erika K. Hamilton

Willa Cather's *A Lost Lady* is largely considered a Nebraska novel set in a town similar to Red Cloud. Alfred Knopf calls it a "romance of the old West" in an August 4, 1923 advertisement, but "not the West of the pioneer this time" (416). The "old West" could be the Nebraska plains or it could be Colorado. Edith Lewis, in *Willa Cather Living*, says Cather "first set the scene of her story in Colorado" (124). Her memories were so deeply set in Nebraska, however, "she could not transfer them to an artificial climate" (125). The Forrester home is built in Nebraska, but, as Charmion Gustke suggests, "the presence of Colorado . . . pervades the novel" (171). Colorado's mountains have not been deleted. They exist as settings and symbols in this story of fallen mountains.

The mountains of Colorado Springs are the Forresters' escape from Nebraska winters. They leave Nebraska "soon after Thanksgiving" and return in May (*A Lost Lady* 29). This was unusual timing for tourists in Colorado. Four months before Cather's "Nebraska: The End of the First Cycle" was published in the *Nation*, "Colorado: Two Generations" by Easley Jones appeared in the *Nation*'s May 16, 1923 issue. Jones says the deluge of tourists into Colorado begins in June. They come "from the central States sweltering in heat" (63). By the end of September, "the last of the tourists" leave and "outgoing trunks are piled high as the station roof" in Colorado Springs. From September through December, "the mountains, as if to make ridiculous the flight of tourists, assume another mood, and cloak themselves

with color" (69). This colorful Colorado is the winter home of the Forresters. They aren't tourists here, but residents.

"Colorado: Two Generations" shares the same tone of loss as Cather's "Nebraska: The End of the First Cycle." Near the end of her essay, Cather says "In Nebraska, as in so many other States, we must face the fact that the splendid story of the pioneers is finished" (238). Easley Jones agrees:

> The snap of the whip over the six-horse stage where it bowled between red cliffs, laughter of bar-rooms louder than the ring of poker chips, the volley of dynamite opening the gold wealth of the hills: these voices of the frontier are gone, and in their place have come the purr of taxis, the chatter of tourists, the rattle of tea cups in the summer hotels. (62)

Colorado's old frontier had "active life in the clear mountain air" and "lusty music" in the dance halls. "The world was not only young, but on the eve of fortune" (Jones 62). Marian Forrester lives in these comments. She says to Niel, "I've always danced in the winter, there's plenty of dancing at Colorado Springs" (*A Lost Lady* 74). In Colorado, she is young and safe in the arms of fortune.

Captain Forrester's decline begins in Colorado. Before his fall from the horse, Marian already worries. She tells Niel about him falling after drinking with friends. "It was simply because he was unsteady. He had trouble getting up. I still shiver to think of it. To me, it was as if one of the mountains had fallen down" (38). Patricia Lee Yongue, in "*A Lost Lady*: The End of the First Cycle," says "the mountain was an important symbol, particularly in its association with 'the Rock' motif that runs throughout her fiction" (6). Captain Forrester is Marian's rock—solid, steady, stable, and glorious.

The Forresters met in the California mountains after an ill-fated climb left Marian with two broken legs. When she was rescued, "she suffered less when Captain Forrester carried her" (*A Lost Lady* 158). The Captain's presence brings peace and safety to all who know him. "His repose was like that of a mountain," the novel says. "His sanity asked nothing, claimed nothing; it was so simple that it brought a hush over distracted creatures" (46). As Marian tells the story of how they met, she says "I knew that if we fell, we'd go together; he would never drop me" (158). When the Captain falls in fortune, he stands "firm that not one of the depositors should lose a dollar" (86). His name still means safety to the depositors, but he can no longer provide financial stability to his wife. When he falls in health, he finds comfort in the stability of his sundial, made with Colorado sandstone and Garden of the Gods granite, but his wife does not. Marian Forrester and the Captain fall together, but she finds neither safety, comfort, nor stability in the drop.

Two decades after *A Lost Lady*'s publication, Willa Cather wrote to Jean Speiser, a journalist for *Life* magazine, saying "a prairie country is a fluid country and is continually changing. In a mountain country . . . you have fixed features which remain the same" (*Complete Letters* no. 2441). To Cather, mountains are fixed and enduring. They are always there. Always strong. A changing prairie is expected, but fallen mountains are a difficult loss for those who expect them to never change. Perhaps Marian Forrester is a mountain, too, for Niel and those in Sweet Water. When the Captain dies and Marian loses the rock that grounded her, Niel and her friends consider her changed into a "flighty and perverse" woman "like a ship without ballast, driven hither and thither by every wind" (*A Lost Lady* 145). Marian Forrester becomes lost in her own life, but she is also lost in the imagination of her friends who expected her to remain the same. In this story, two mountains have fallen.

"Fisher's Peak Near Trinidad, Colo." as seen in a ca. 1910 postcard printed for Fred Harvey and the Detroit Publishing Co. Willa Cather mailed an identical card from Trinidad to Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant on Sept. 12, 1914. Her message: "You see I'm hunting on old trails. Such a lovely tawny country, yellow like a lion and also big, big - - - -"

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Reading *A Lost Lady* with Older Eyes

Elaine Smith

There is always something new to be learned from rereading Cather's work—a turn of phrase, a description of clothing or landscape, a minor character that once noticed shifts however slightly one's understanding of Cather's intent. This time Daniel Forrester stepped out of the sunset into which Niel's lovely eulogy had consigned him, seeming less the respected but superannuated buffoon and more a sage with something to tell us about living in the present. Time is a major theme of *A Lost Lady*, time rushing us all toward death. I was in my twenties when I first read the novel, I am now past seventy. Cather wrote *A Lost Lady* in 1922, a year when for her an overwhelming chasm opened in history, and "persons and prejudices" dear to those over forty "slid back into yesterday's seven thousand years" (Prefatory Note v). It was published in 1923, the year she would turn fifty.

A Lost Lady is anything but straightforward. Using modernist techniques such as third person indirect discourse, time shifts, and an unreliable narrator, Cather undermines expectations a reader might have of a clear and stable set of values or point of view. Here she employs a narrative structure she will return to in "The Old Beauty" and "Old Mrs. Harris": three different characters represent different stages of life, each with his or her own absorbing interests and fierce passions. Ironically, Niel Herbert, the youngest of the three, is the most backward-looking and nostalgic.

The story centers on Niel Herbert's evolving perceptions of Captain and Mrs. Forrester, "railroad aristocracy," who call the little gray prairie town of Sweet Water home, but spend much of the year in larger, gayer cities. Although the narrator is deliberately vague about the exact time frame of the events, we know Niel is twelve as the novel begins; Marian Forrester is maybe twenty-nine or thirty, and Daniel Forrester is twenty-five years her senior. The opening scene establishes Niel's courage and decency and introduces the loathsome Ivy Peters, who gratuitously maims a female woodpecker. Ivy Peters becomes a foil for Niel, an example of a new, greedier, and more ruthless generation. It is Ivy Peters's ascendency, not Niel's discovery of Mrs. Forrester's affair, that marks the break between Part One and Part Two. Approaching Sweet Water after an absence, Niel reflects on the change: "The Old West had been settled by dreamers, great-hearted adventurers . . . a courteous brotherhood . . . who could conquer but could not hold. Now all the vast territory they had won was to be at the mercy of men like Ivy Peters, who had never dared anything. . . . They would drink up the mirage, dispel the morning freshness" (102). To this point our sympathies are more or less with Niel, but a later passage proves that he prefers his lovely dream of the past to untidy, problematic human realities: "It was what he most held against Mrs. Forrester; that she was not willing to immolate herself, like the widow of all these great men, and die with the pioneer period to which she belonged; that she preferred life on any terms" (161). I find the last paragraph a chilling vision of what a woman owes her husband or history. Such is the cruelty of the ideologue. Niel is not envisioning a real person who needs his help and would have welcomed his friendship.

Once we recognize that Niel Herbert's point of view is for many reasons biased and limited, we notice that other characters assess Marian Forrester differently; Adolph Blum, for example, and Ed Elliott, and Daniel Forrester, whose quiet strength takes on weight as a counterbalance to Niel's youthful judgments. Niel himself turns our attention toward Daniel Forrester when he says (with remarkable lack of self-knowledge) that he is most interested in Marian Forrester as Captain Forrester's wife. (75)

Back cover illustration by J. K. Lambert from the 1972 Vintage Books edition of *A Lost Lady*.

Cather has given Daniel Forrester the virtues of a hero, but from Niel's perspective he and they belong to the past. He is associated with images of magnificent, natural power brought low—"a wounded elephant," "an old tree walking," a "fallen" mountain (89, 109, 38). We note his chivalrous strength and courage when he carries the badly wounded Marian Ormsby down the cliff—as Marian recalls the moment, "I knew that if we fell, we'd go together; he would never drop me" (158). We note also his charisma and gentleness as he brings peace to "distracted creatures" (46) and his remarkable integrity when he impoverishes himself rather than let people who had trusted him lose their savings. "His clumsy dignity covered a deep nature, and a conscience that had never been juggled with." (46) The narrator seems to emphasize Captain Forrester's growing age and frailty. He is made slightly ridiculous with his ponderous, repetitive speech and mannerisms: "What part of the turkey do you prefer, Mrs. Ogden?"; "Is smoke offensive to you, Mrs. Ogden?; Is smoke offensive to you, Constance?" (46, 53). Such old-fashioned phrases and manners might well appear laughable to the young. If this were a stage comedy, we could see his character being played for laughs. Although neither the frame narrator nor Niel voice anything but respect for the aging road builder, the implication remains—his time has passed. Nevertheless, Mr. Forrester has an "iron" constitution and Dr. Dennison says that he may live many years. No one knows when Fate may cut the string. Daniel Forrester's habitual, ceremonious toast—"Happy days!"—makes that point: "Nobody else could utter those two words as he did, with such gravity and high courtesy. It seemed a solemn moment, seemed to knock at the door of Fate; behind which all days, happy and otherwise, were hidden." (48)

However, many of Daniel Forrester's character traits are not obsolete. For example, he is a realist, not an idealist; he knows the human cost when men "put plains and mountains under the iron harness" (160–61). He has seen workers killed and maimed. He knows of the "people who get nothing in this world. There are such people. I have lived too much in mining works and construction camps not to know that" (52). He delights in his beautiful, vivacious, and flirtatious young wife, accepting her as she is. To protect Captain Forrester's feelings, Niel, asked to carry some letters to town, tries to hide a "pale blue envelope" addressed to Frank Ellinger (110). Mr. Forrester's response is telling: he deliberately pulls the letter from the pile and makes a point of admiring his wife's fine penmanship. Niel knows Mrs. Forrester is having an affair with Frank Ellinger; Daniel Forrester lets Niel know that he knows as well. "The longer Neil was with Captain Forrester in those peaceful closing days of his life, the more he felt that the Captain knew his wife better even than she knew herself; and that, knowing her, he,—to use one of his expressions,—valued her." (136) Rather than judging or rejecting his wife, he delights in her charm. Their calls back and forth to each other show a loving, respectful, interdependent relationship.

Captain Forrester differs from Niel in his attitude toward his wife. A second difference between the two is his attitude toward time and history. Unlike Niel, Captain Forrester is forward-looking, and again, he is the realist, recognizing that time inevitably swallows all that one holds dear. The red sandstone sundial he assembles amongst his roses demonstrates daily this known truth—time passes; all we have is the precious, ever-vanishing present to be cherished and enjoyed. Daniel Forrester is a gardener; anticipating spring, he builds a conservatory and fills it with hyacinths. Like all gardeners, like Voltaire, he lives in the present and plans for the future.

In the background of her story about diminishment and loss Cather has created a character, like an oracle or a Buddha, who shows us a way to behave in a diminished world, treating others with kindness and generosity, accepting change as inevitable. Though she may have agreed with the narrator's and Niel's sentiments, an intense longing for a vanished world, Cather knew it was not a plan to live by. In Captain Forrester she creates a saner model for living in a reduced present. On the cusp of age fifty, Willa Cather was, I believe, trying to write her way forward.

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Willa Cather's Multiverse: Boy Prototypes in "The Way of the World," "The Treasure of Far Island," "The Enchanted Bluff," and *A Lost Lady*

Daryl W. Palmer

It is a truth universally acknowledged that Willa Cather, in possession of an idea for some new piece of fiction set in Nebraska, must have been in want of a prototype. Or two or three or six or twelve. As Merrill Maguire Skaggs put it more than two decades ago, Cather was in good company: "novelists frequently begin their fictional creations with models suggested by real people. That practice was certainly the habit of such literary geniuses as William Faulkner, Henry James, and Willa Cather" (5). Over the years, Cather's readers have responded to this aspect of Cather's genius in a variety of ways. Many have had only a passing interest, while others, often with ties to real-life models, have objected vociferously to unkind "portraits." All the while, an eager cadre of readers have been tracking the lineaments of inspiration, digging through old newspapers and letters, uncovering and mapping little mysteries, which often resemble the whodunits we come upon in gossip. I write as an earnest member of this latter party.

John March stands out among my fellow prototype lovers for his decades-long commitment to the hunt. In 1993, thanks to the heroic editorial labors of Marilyn Arnold, aided by Debra Lynn Thornton and a host of other researchers, a capacious version of March's work appeared as *A Reader's Companion to the Fiction of Willa Cather*. Thirty years later, I continue to reach for the familiar green volume to answer questions, knowing that I may find elaborations and qualifications in the explanatory notes for the Willa Cather Scholarly Editions and in the ever-evolving annotations of Cather's letters collected in the Willa Cather Archive.

At first glance, such questioning seems straightforward enough. According to the OED, the term prototype first appeared in 1552 and refers to "the first or primary type of a person or thing; an original on which something is modelled or from which it is derived; an exemplar, an archetype." From the first, we have thought of prototypes in dyadic terms: the author models a single character on a single prototype. If we wonder about Ántonia in the famous novel, March's *Reader's Companion* tells us about "Anna (Annie) Sadilek Pavelka of Bladen, Nebraska. She was born at Krascaslav, Bohemia, on March 16, 1869, and came to Nebraska with her family, prototypes of the Shimerdas . . . " (704–705). A glance at the Scholarly Edition and the Willa Cather Archive confirms this information: the prototype Anna morphed into Ántonia.

But Cather's work with prototypes was more complicated than that. As John Murphy pointed out some time ago, Cather met Anna Sadilek in Red Cloud at the Miners' house. When Cather was inventing the friendship of Ántonia and Jim on the farm, she was recalling "Lydia (Leedy) Lambrecht [who] was Willa's age and explored the country with her, hunting for snakes" (26). It would seem that Cather's most famous character emerged out of two prototypes.

"The natural history of a boy is an interesting study."

The photographs in this story depict boys from Red Cloud and Webster County in the early years of the 20th century. From the Gretchen and John Mino Collection at the National Willa Cather Center.

No one understood such complexities more thoroughly than the author herself. As she did on many matters, Cather spent her career negotiating how much of her understanding she shared with her readers. In 1921, after she visited with W. D. Edson, editor and publisher of the *Webster County Argus*, Edson reported: "Three characters of the story [*My Ántonia*], Miss Cather said, were intended as comparatively faithful pictures of citizens of Red Cloud about 1888 or 1889" ("A Talk with Miss Cather" 27). But a couple of months later, as noted by L. Brent Bohlke in his annotations to *Willa Cather in Person: Interviews, Speeches, and Letters*, "the relationship of her characters to actual people is described a bit differently than it was in her visit with the editor of the *Argus*" (42). This was during an interview with journalist Eleanor Hinman published in the *Lincoln Sunday Star*, November 6, 1921. In that interview, Cather famously declared, "I have never drawn but one portrait of an actual person. That was the mother [Julia Miner] of the neighbor family [the Harlings], in *My Ántonia*" (Hinman 45). She went on to say

that her characters "are all composites of three or four persons," adding famously that it would be "so cold-blooded, so heartless, so indecent almost, to present an actual person in that intimate fashion, stripping his very soul" (45). Cather offered the definitive account of her relationship with prototypes.

Or so it seemed. Four years later, in an oft-quoted interview, Cather explained that she had done "a portrait in ink" of Lyra C. Wheeler Garber. She concluded, "I am amazed that I was as successful as I was in making people who knew the actual model for Mrs. Forrester feel that it was very like her" (Merrill 77). In Cather's mind, *A Lost Lady* was an exceptional work in her practice with prototypes, a judgment that seems to encourage the kind of reading I am about to suggest. In any event, the author was still quite ready to discuss prototypes.

By 1934, her patience had run out. In a letter to her dear old friend Carrie Miner Sherwood, Cather objected, "You never can get it through peoples heads that a story is made out of an emotion or an excitement, and is *not* made out of the legs and arms and faces of one's acquaintances" (*Complete Letters* no. 1214). Quoting this declaration, Tim Bintrim comments, "Of course, scholars know better. Serious readers can both appreciate the aesthetics of Cather's fiction and discern the 'legs and arms and faces' of her friends and casual acquaintances that, more often than not, provided the initial emotion or excitement" (188). Bintrim is right, but Cather would have been unimpressed because she had any number of good reasons to resist talk of prototypes. By the time she wrote *A Lost Lady*, she had run afoul of friends and family a number of times over her use of prototypes.[1] At the same time, the celebrated author believed that too much attention to prototypes might distract readers from her artistic achievements, which (as she goes on to explain in the letter) were rooted in "real feeling," "the one thing you cannot fake or counterfeit in this world."

How then, we ought to ask, can serious readers honor Cather's powerful protest while continuing to study the prototypes that helped inspire her fiction? I suggest that *studying the author's transformation of prototypes helps us understand and appreciate her craft and her motives*. As the novel turns one hundred years old this year, *A Lost Lady* just happens to offer a perfect case study because of the way Cather deploys a series of boy prototypes.

Cather's strategy begins to unfold with Mrs. Forrester watching

> a group of little boys coming along the driveway, barefoot, with fishing-poles and lunch-baskets. She knew most of them; there was Niel Herbert, Judge Pommeroy's nephew, a handsome boy of twelve whom she liked; and polite George Adams, son of a gentleman rancher from Lowell, Massachusetts. The others were just little boys from the town; the butcher's red-headed son, the leading grocer's fat brown twins, Ed Elliott (whose flirtatious old father kept a shoe store and was the Don Juan of the lower world of Sweet Water), and the two sons of the German tailor,—pale, freckled lads with ragged clothes and ragged rust-coloured hair, from whom she sometimes bought game or catfish when they appeared silent and spook-like at her kitchen door and thinly asked if she would "care for any fish this morning."
>
> As the boys came up the hill she saw them hesitate and consult together. "You ask her, Niel."
>
> "You'd better, George. She goes to your house all the time, and she barely knows me to speak to."
>
> As they paused before the three steps which led up to the front porch, Mrs. Forrester came to the door and nodded graciously, one of the pink roses in her hand.
>
> "Good-morning, boys. Off for a picnic?" (12–13)

In this painterly manner, Cather opens the novel with a muster of boys inspired by Red Cloud prototypes. Her faithful "portrait in ink" depends, from the first, on this "group of little boys."

In the 1880s, "boy life" was a popular topic in the United States. In the October 20, 1881 edition of the *Argus*, A. J. Kenney captured the spirit when he declared, "The natural history of a boy is an interesting study" (2). There were always stories to tell. The August 30, 1883 *Argus* reported: "The small boys of this place seem to have a mania for losing the tips of their fingers. Last week Roy Tate, while holding a small snake for a playmate to destroy with a hatchet, lost the tip of a finger by a misstroke . . ." (4).[2]

When Cather remembered those days, she thought of particular boys as worthy of study. According to March, "It was early suggested that Willa Cather wrote something of herself into this character [of Niel], but later commentary tends to

discredit Niel, and hence this view" (354). The implication seems to be that the novelist, using herself as prototype, would never discredit her own youthful views. I would argue that Cather's sense of herself as prototype was more robust. In any event, a dip into the Scholarly Edition and the Willa Cather Archive uncovers Ryland Dillard Bedford as a prototype for Niel. Our authorities offer no help with George Adams and Ed Elliott but agree that the Blum boys—Rheinhold and Adolph—were modeled on the sons of German tailor Fritz Birkner—Herman, Fritz, Carl, and Rheinhart—known as Rhine (1878–1946). Using the prototype's name for the character in the novel, Cather invites savvy readers to pay special attention to this boy, his brothers and his friends.

These readers will notice how the boys function as thoughtful viewers of Cather's most successful portrait. The narrator explains,

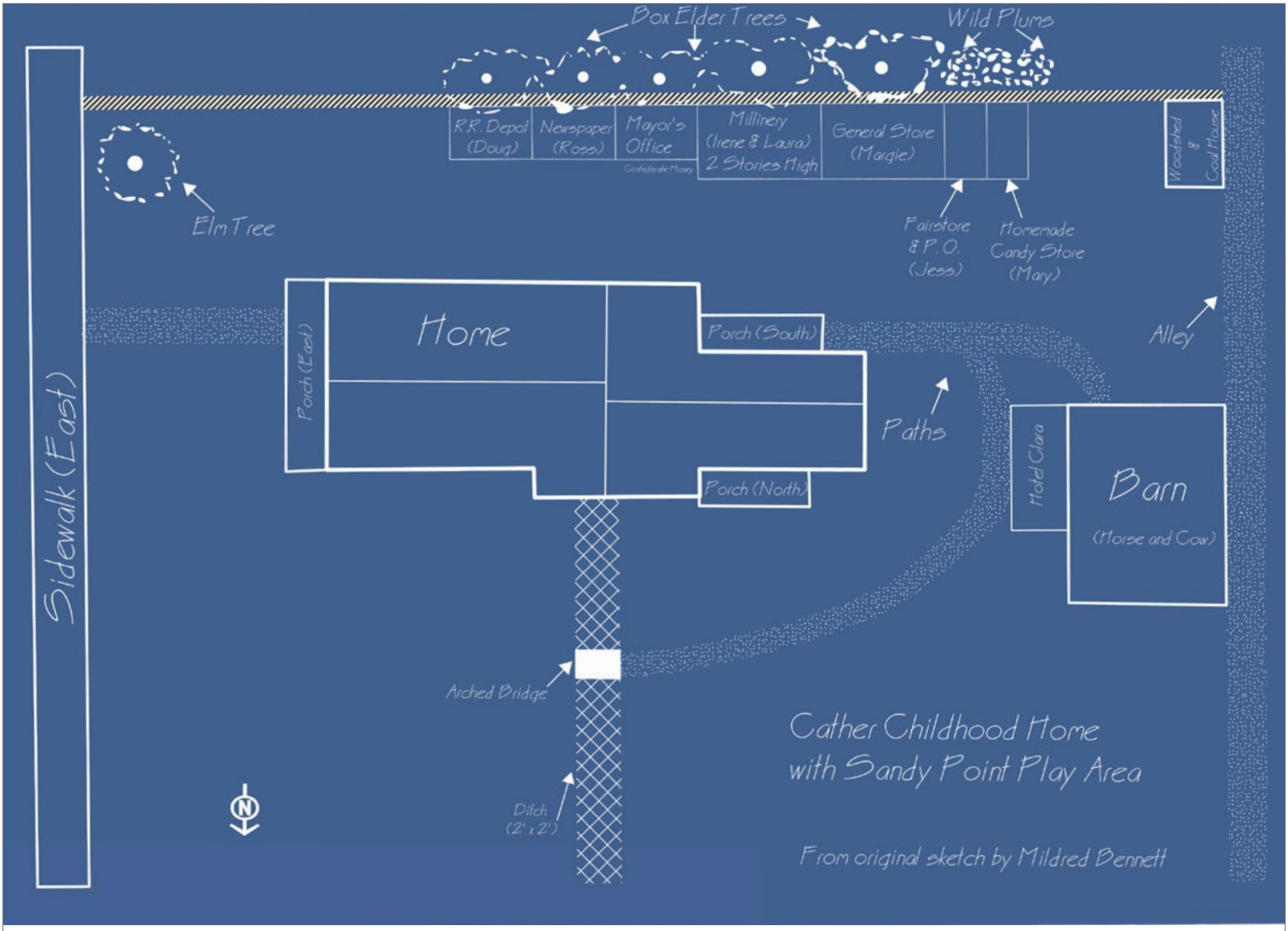
> George and Niel were already old enough to see for themselves that she was different from the other townswomen, and to reflect upon what it was that made her so. The Blum brothers regarded her humbly from under their pale, chewed-off hair, as one of the rich and great of the world. They realized, more than their companions, that such a fortunate and privileged class was an axiomatic fact in the social order. (17)

Like all good viewers of art, the boys "see" and "regard." George and Niel "reflect" and puzzle over her. Rhine and his brother "realize" in ways the other boys do not. In this way, the boys help readers settle into a sophisticated and modern multiperspectivity that becomes even more interesting the more we know about these boy prototypes.

For instance, it seems that the boys in *A Lost Lady*—in addition to having real-world counterparts—are modeled on characters already modeled on those prototypes in some of Cather's early short stories. I am thinking of "The Way of the World" (1898), "The Treasure of Far Island" (1902), and "The Enchanted Bluff" (1909). As Cather moved from one work to the next over a quarter of a century, each prototype branched in her imagination as a distinct counterpart in what I would call Cather's multiverse. My hypothesis is that this little collection of prototypes allowed Cather to create surprisingly sophisticated narrative effects that lead us from the Red Cloud universe of her youth to a kind of multiverse in her collected fiction.

In 2023, mention of "the multiverse" will conjure up the adventures of Flash, Batman, and Spiderman in the DC Comics empire, Dr. Strange and company in the Marvel franchise, and surely the brilliant film *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, written and directed by Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert. Writing in *The New Yorker*, Stephanie Burt comments, "An idea that seemed fantastical in the forties—that our universe is one of many, and that these parallel worlds might share the same past or the same characters—now seems to be everywhere." First articulated in the field of quantum mechanics in 1957 by Hugh Everett III, the multiverse remains an utterly speculative theory. In the world of literature, I would call it a particularly seductive myth. As Burt wittily puts it, "In other words, everything that can happen does happen—in some reality. You may have ordered the chicken, but somewhere you ordered tofu, or grilled stegosaurus; a world exists in which Hillary, and the Mets, and your kid's softball team won."

Once you begin to think of the multiverse as a myth among myths, it becomes easier to conjure up versions that do not derive from the pages of comic books or depend on the conventions of science fiction. As I have suggested elsewhere, Cather, from the beginning of her career in journalism, loved to recycle and repurpose elements from her published works (Palmer *Becoming Willa Cather* 57, 99, 180). What I am describing here is surely part of that practice, but also a kind of intertextuality within Cather's body of works. Acknowledging this intertextuality, we would never want to settle for a mere mapping of the counterparts across the multiverse. *Instead, the goal would be to describe the effects they create when we view them in a series of juxtapositions, fictional world set against fictional world.*



This is a recreation by Terry Tucker of an original sketch created by Mildred Bennett, based on the memories of Carrie Miner Sherwood.

With all this in mind, "The Way of the World" shimmers alongside *A Lost Lady*. In that story, boy hero Speckle Burnham, who seems to have been modeled on the author, demonstrates "inventive genius" while organizing a group of boys into a play village called Speckleville that looks a lot like the village of Sandy Point that Cather created with her childhood friends south of the Cather home on Cedar Street.[3] More than twenty years before she named Rheinhold in *A Lost Lady*, Cather's narrator in "The Way of the World" introduces Reinholt Birkner and so commences a habit of renaming one of her favorite people from childhood. In the story, Reinholt "was the son of the village undertaker and was a youth of a dolorous turn of mind and insisted upon keeping a marble shop, where he made little tombstones and neat caskets for the boys' deceased woodpeckers . . . " (396). Cather's readers have long been obsessed by the significance of the woodpecker in *A Lost Lady*, but this passage from the early story suggests that the woodpecker could be a perfect symbol of Cather's multiverse. More particularly, when set against *A Lost Lady*, Rheinholt's care for the dead woodpeckers in the short story brings a kind of innate compassion into relief, a kind of empathy that might surprise the casual observer of boys.

Not surprisingly, gendered expectations turn out to be pivotal in the story. When the boys admit Mary Eliza Jenkins to their community, it becomes apparent that she "possessed certain talents which peculiarly fitted her to dwell and rule in a boys' town" (400). Jimmy "Temp" Templeton is blinded by youthful misogyny. "Girls," he declares, "always spoil everything a boy's got if you give 'em a chance" (400). Cather homes in on her theme when she introduces "the heavy villain into the comedy," a boy from Chicago who "invariably wore shoes and stockings, a habit disgustingly effeminate to any true and loyal

Specklevillian" (401). Gender norms can be violated in this boys' world, but the narrator spells out the far more radical proposition at the heart of the story: "For all boys will admit that there are some girls who would make the best boys in the world—if they were not girls" (401). This meditation on gender and possibility in the little world of Speckleville helps orient our journey through the multiverse.

Four years later, for instance, Cather's long experiment with her own multiverse began when she wrote "The Treasure of Far Island," wherein a grown "Rhinehold Birkner" is tagged as "old Rhine." I suggest that the shift in naming signals that the author is doing something more interesting than writing a mere sequel. In this story, old Rhine, "who had not been energetic enough to keep up his father's undertaking business," welcomes successful New York playwright Douglass Burnham on the station platform in Empire City as the latter returns home after twelve years away (267). Students of Cather will feel the vibrations of the multiverse as they inevitably connect this Burnham to Speckle in "The Way of the World" while realizing, because of the unusual double s's in the hero's name, that Cather may be invoking her brother Douglass, who just happened to spell his name with the extra s because it pleased Willa. With the nod to the "father's undertaking business," Cather clearly invites readers to see the story as a kind of sequel to "The Way of the World"—but not exactly. As Douglass recalls his childhood adventures related to Far Island, his thoughts never turn to a place called Speckleville. When he runs into Margie Van Dyck, his most important childhood friend, believers in a multiverse may be at a loss or be anxious to come up with an explanation. Margie and family may have moved into town after Speckleville's collapse, but we have no way of filling such gaps.

Instead, we read on and find out more about why "old Rhine" matters. As Margie and Douglass reminisce about their childhood friends and exploits, Margie tells how Rhine once went to Arizona for his health, "but his family never could tell where he was—for he headed all his letters 'Empire City, Nebraska,' from habit" (277). The little anecdote is amusing in the story, but also revealing when we know a bit more about the prototype, who, according to a little note in the *Argus* on December 5, 1902, had just "returned to the city Tuesday, after a sojourn in the northwest for the past seven years" ("Here and There" 5). Cather clearly felt that even the real Rhine needed a bit of mythologizing in order to fulfill his role in the multiverse, which had something to do with Cather's complex feelings about "home."

Some of this sentiment is surely embedded in *A Lost Lady* when Adolph shows up with flowers after Captain Forrester has died. In real life, Rhine delivered flowers to the Miner family after Julia's passing. The "real" Rhine said, "For your mother, from me and the boys" (quoted in Bennett 168). Across Cather's multiverse, Rhine was always at home in Red Cloud and always embodied a certain tenderness at work in "the boys."

Margie, as it turns out, was also one of "the boys." Near the beginning of the story, Douglass quizzes his mother about his childhood friend:

> Little Margie has grown up pretty, you say? Well, I should never have thought it. How many boys have I slugged for yelling 'Reddy, go dye your hair green' at her. She was not an indifferent slugger herself and never exactly stood in need of masculine protection. What a wild Indian she was! Game, clear through, though! I never found such a mind in a girl. But is she a girl? I somehow always fancied she would grow up a man—and a ripping fine one. (268)

Echoing the narrator in "The Way of the World," but with far more conviction, Douglass implies that gender is not destiny, more like possibility, in a world where humans can imagine other worlds. And the very fact that we can move between the two fictional universes seems to underwrite a kind of faith in such possibilities.

Seven years passed before Cather mustered the boys again, this time along the river near Sandtown—a place that echoes the Speckleville universe, and which the narrator of "The Way of the World" refers to as Speckle's "empire" (395), Empire City in "The Treasure of Far Island," and (of course) Red Cloud. Before turning to "the Sandtown boys" (69) in "The Enchanted Bluff," Cather writes beautifully of the island where the boys camp. It is nothing less than "a little new bit of world" (70) where readers of the early fiction will be haunted by familiarities and recognize familiar faces. The narrator reminds us of Douglass Burnham. The Birkner boys make their appearance as "the two Hassler boys, Fritz and Otto, sons of the little German tailor" (70), who "caught the fat, horned catfish and sold them about the town" (70). Once again, gendered assumptions emerge. Arthur Adams "had fine hazel eyes that were almost too reflective and sympathetic for a boy" (71). On the other hand, Percy Pound "took half a dozen boys' story-papers" (70), working hard to explore his gendered role in the universe.

Upon first juxtaposing this short story and *A Lost Lady*, many readers probably feel a kind of delightful recognition. Subsequent rereadings of the works offer a deeper feeling of possibility in a different key. In "The Way of the World," the boys are in the midst of their boy life. In "The Treasure of Far Island," Douglass returns to recall his boy life with Margie. In this later story, the narrator looks back twenty years to the "last watch fire of the year," his final adventure with this group of boys "sworn to the spirit of the stream" (70). It seems this story is rooted in what James Hillman has called the fundamental human experience of *leaving* and *being left* (Hillman 155–60), which the narrator carefully documents in the story's final paragraphs. In this story, no bird is harmed. Instead the boys "heard a scream above our fire, and jumped up to see a dark, slim bird floating southward far above us—a whooping-crane" that flies on mysterious and free, another avian symbol for imagining lives and possibilities in Cather's multiverse (75).

In *A Lost Lady*, Ivy Peters calls this vision into question:

> "Hullo, kids. What are you doing here?"
>
> "Picnic," said Ed Elliott.
>
> "I thought girls went on picnics. Did you bring teacher along? Ain't you kids old enough to hunt yet?" (18)

Mocking the boys for their effeminate behavior, Ivy echoes the Specklevillians' narrow-mindedness in "The Way of the World," but he brings real malevolence to the action. Ivy may poison dogs and torture birds, but he signals his true status as a villain by taunting the boys about the way they do and do not conform to gender expectations. In their prototypical existence, the boys embody a vision of possibilities that Ivy will never appreciate, but Cather always did.

This appreciation—perhaps longing—was at the very heart of Cather's compositional process and, in fact, her career. In the New York interview of 1925, she explained:

> *A Lost Lady* was written in five months, but I worked with some fervor. I discarded ever so many drafts, and in the beginning wrote it in the first person, speaking as the boy himself. The question was, by what medium could I present her the most vividly, and that, of course, meant the most truly. (Merrill 77)

I think we all believe we know what she meant by "speaking as the boy himself." Cather was trying to write a first-person novel with Niel as the narrator. But Cather was also still feeling the need to explore the multiverse she had begun creating in "The Treasure of Far Island," an exploration that began with the boys in "The Way of the World" and their version of the author's childhood village of Sandy Point, where Cather practiced speaking as editor of the newspaper, mayor, as the boy himself. In an uncanny coincidence, the June 13, 1890 *Red Cloud Chief* anticipated this project when it set a story about boys catching channel cats in the Republican alongside praise for Cather's high school commencement speech, "which was a master piece of oratory" ("Annual Commencement Exercises" 5).

A measure of how much this early vision meant to Cather is found in a letter she wrote to Margaret Miner Gund in 1908, around the time she was thinking about "The Enchanted Bluff": "Still, if I had my choice, I would rather be mayor of Sandy Point than Doge of Venice." On July 10 she inscribed a postcard of the Palazzo Ducale to Roscoe, the brother she often addressed as "my boy," who had once helped to build Sandy Point: "Here at last is a place as beautiful as Sandy Point ever was in the days of its pride and power" (*Complete Letters* no. 2063). In an interview published in the *Omaha Daily News* in 1921, Irene (Miner) Weisz got the town's name wrong but made her point emphatically: "There's no question about it. Willa started her literary career in Stony Point [sic]" ("To Live Intensely" 30).[4] Irene's point about the career applies to Cather's multiverse, infused as it is with pride and power. One hundred years after the publication of *A Lost Lady*, we are better prepared to appreciate, with Cather, the fact that our lives are not simply double, but profoundly multiple.

NOTES

1. Cather discusses her family's anger over the "portrait" of her Aunt Franc in "The Wagner Matinée" in a letter to Will Owen Jones on March 6, 1904 (*Complete Letters* no. 0095). Cather also angered her friend Dorothy Canfield with her "portrait" of Canfield's friend Evelyn Osborne. Cather defended herself in a January 1905 letter to Canfield (*Complete Letters* no. 0101). See also Mark Madigan, "Regarding Willa Cather's 'The Profile' and Evelyn Osborne," *Willa Cather Newsletter and Review*, vol. 44, no. 1, Spring 2000, pp. 1–5.

2. For more about Cather's depictions of boy life, see Randall L. Popken, "From Innocence to Experience in *My Ántonia and Boy Life on the Prairie," North Dakota Quarterly*, vol. 46, no. 2, 1978, pp. 73–81; Daryl W. Palmer, "Recomposing Nineteenth-Century Nebraska: Red Cloud Newspapers and Cather's 'Hired Girls' in *My Ántonia*," *Willa Cather Newsletter and Review,* vol. 55, no. 3, Summer 2012, p. 5; Martin Woodside, "Boyhood and the Frontier: Nostalgia and Play in *My Ántonia*," *Something Complete and Great: The Centennial Study of* My Ántonia, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2018, pp. 123–39; Palmer, *Becoming Willa Cather*, pp. 57–58, and *passim*.

3. For an extended discussion of Sandy Point in Cather's fiction, see Palmer, *Becoming Willa Cather*, pp. 21–23, and *passim*.

4. Writing to Irene (Miner) Weisz in 1931, Cather confessed, "I want somebody from Sandy Point to go along with me to the end" (*Complete Letters* no. 1044).

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Lost Lady Found

Lonnie Pierson Dunbier

A Lost Lady by Willa Cather is a novel that stirred my interest and responses on many levels. I first read it in 1973 when I was newly enrolled in Cather studies at the University of Nebraska. Like many readers, I was aware that Lyra Garber, close friend of the author, was Cather's acknowledged prototype for her heroine Marian Forrester. It was shocking to me that Cather would describe her "lost lady" and real-life friend as lost in so many negative ways: from her moral compass, her husband, her lover, her young men friends, best friend Niel, and from any further chance of self-respect. The loss that caught my attention most strongly, however, was the unresolved physical loss of Lyra Garber to Cather and everyone else in Red Cloud. Was this "lost lady" in person ever found? The answer is yes! (With help.)

As a student of Willa Cather's writings, I decided in 1973 that the focus of my research would be to fill in factual data, birth to death, of both Lyra and Silas Garber, prototypes for Marian and Captain Forrester. By 1977, I had done enough of that research and writing to earn a master's degree, but I felt failure in that I had not accomplished my goal of finding the whereabouts of Lyra Garber after she left Red Cloud in 1915. Five years passed . . . then in 1982, mid-evening, I received a phone call from a loud-voiced man who said: "I understand you're looking for my Aunt Lyra." On the phone was Maurice Greene, an attorney from Boise, Idaho. He said he was a great nephew of Lyra Garber and had found my name and contact information in his deceased brother's belongings. From my unanswered letters inquiring about Lyra Garber after leaving Red Cloud, he knew about me, that I was a graduate student at the University of Nebraska and was seeking research information on the whereabouts of Lyra Wheeler Garber, a longtime friend of Willa Cather, who had written a book linked to Lyra.

He knew nothing about the relationship with Cather, but he knew "everything" about Lyra Garber after she left Red Cloud. She had moved to Grangeville, Idaho and lived the first year, 1915, with her relatives, including Maurice and his brother and mother. Maurice was a preteen and teen at the time, so he remembered his Aunt Lyra very well. Lyra had several nieces near the home of Maurice, and was very close to her older sister, Julia Garber, who lived in the largest of the family homes and gave Lyra housing during her first year in Grangeville (Julia Wheeler Garber was the widow of Jacob Garber, a brother of Silas Garber). Lyra married a banker, Swan Augustus Anderson. As a couple they were popular in Grangeville, especially playing the new game of bridge.

Maurice Greene said that before calling me but knowing the information I sought, he had asked his wife, Ruth, a fan of Willa Cather's writing, to read *A Lost Lady* aloud so that he could make his own comparisons. Maurice said he concluded that "Cather's physical description of Mrs. Forrester was like a mirror copy of my Aunt Lyra," but the immorality and self-centeredness of Mrs. Forrester were "pure fiction, impossible to imagine."

Knowing I had a lot more to discuss with Maurice and Ruth, who lived in Boise, Idaho, I accepted their invitation to spend nearly a week with them at their summer home in the mountains at nearby Karney Lakes. To produce an accurate record of his information for me, Maurice talked into a recorder,

Maurice Greene and Lonnie Pearson Dunbier, ca. 1983. Lonnie Pierson Dunbier Collection, National Willa Cather Center.

Dresser scarf embroidered by Lyra Garber, given to Lonnie Pierson Dunbier by Maurice Greene and donated by Dunbier to the National Willa Cather Center.

giving these details: "Lyra always wore jewelry, high-necked lace dresses. Lyra never worked up a sweat. I think she made most of her own clothes. Lyra was always sewing, practical and fancy. She had horrible cough and was skin and bones." With the ensuing discussion, I not only got information from him, but from my extensive research on both Lyra and Silas Garber, I told him about some of his family history. He did not know about Lyra's childhood in the Grass Valley area, or that her parents raised her in their hotel at the rough mining town of Red Dog and then at the guest ranch near Grass Valley. Red Dog and Grass Valley are located near Nevada City, California, north of San Francisco, and very much in the gold mining area. Maurice was surprised at the length of time she lived in Nebraska because in Idaho she had not talked of Red Cloud and around him had never mentioned the word "Nebraska," nor did she talk of being the wife of a governor.

Regarding the passage in *A Lost Lady* that referred to Mrs. Forrester's black hair as looking "as if she dyed it" (165), Maurice said that Lyra's black hair was mentioned a lot by her family when she first arrived in Idaho. "She received much teasing about that black hair as she was the only one in her family with black hair." He said he had admired Lyra for her consideration of family, and for the beautiful way she kept herself and her surroundings. "She wore fashionable clothes, did beautiful stitchery, and although she was delicate from tuberculosis, she helped my mother with light household tasks, especially mending."

Several weeks after I returned from Idaho, Maurice sent me all of Lyra Garber's possessions that remained in her family. I called Bernice Slote, my professor with whom I had learned about *A Lost Lady*. She and I sat at my dining room table and unwrapped the items, which included a pair of small white kid-leather gloves, an East Asian fan, and a dresser scarf embroidered by Lyra with an elegant art nouveau design.

In 1983, the Greenes came to Lincoln, Nebraska, where my husband and I hosted them at our house with a party of many Cather scholar friends. For the guest list, Maurice, an attorney whose specialty was trucking law, requested that I invite his close Lincoln friends Duane Acklie, owner of Crete Carrier Corporation, and his wife Phyllis. I found Maurice's attempt to explain to the Acklies why he was in Lincoln talking about Willa Cather entertaining. After the party, I drove them to Red Cloud, where they were received like royalty.

Maurice Greene died in 1987. Shortly after, his wife Ruth sent me a card with these words: "Maurice died quietly at 9:00 p.m. Saturday January 24th. He treasured your friendship more than you will ever know. You set him on a new path of enjoying his family, his history, and he enjoyed you very much, as do I."

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A Lost Wetland

Patti Burris

"Everything in the environment is connected to everything else" (Commoner 23). William Ruekert argues in his groundbreaking 1978 essay, "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism," that this quote from ecologist Barry Commoner forms the basis of ecocriticism (108). It shows why the actions of Ivy Peters in Willa Cather's *A Lost Lady*—"Poison Ivy" when first introduced in the novel—have repercussions that go beyond the exchange of a marsh for a wheat field. His actions demonstrate the sometimes unfortunate connectedness of us all. According to Ruekert, the science of ecology is important "as the basis for a human vision," and man's downfall will be "his compulsion to conquer, humanize, domesticate, violate, and exploit every natural thing" (113). In her novel, Cather anticipated scientific theories that had not yet taken hold.

In 1938, English inventor Guy Callendar claimed that as carbon dioxide increases, the earth's temperature also rises. Although Callendar did not see his claim as negative (Applegate), it eventually became the concept of global warming, seen today as a major threat to life on our planet. Rachel Carson wrote *Silent Spring* in 1962, and it alerted the world that chemicals such as DDT could have dire consequences for wildlife, the environment, and us all. Willa Cather's *A Lost Lady* was published in 1923, well before Callendar or Carson. Yet, Carson and Cather share the same thought that if we wish to survive, we need to work with the environment rather than trying to dominate it. It took nearly fifty years after the publication of *A Lost Lady* for Americans to sufficiently value wetlands to create legislation for their protection. In 1971, the Ramsar Convention explored the possibility that humans could stop destroying wetlands and the environment in general (Bellamy). Major legislation followed: the Clean Water Act in 1972, the Carter Protection for Wetlands in 1977, and the Swampbuster provisions (which apply to farming practices that convert or increase drainage of a wetland) in 1985. All these acts have helped regulate the use of wetlands. Some farmers object strongly to these laws because of the record high prices of land. They want production not preservation. In the news recently is the Supreme Court's ruling that the Clean Water Act overreaches and should only apply to wetlands that are connected to larger bodies of water that are regulated (Sherman).

To read *A Lost Lady* is to read not only the story of Marian Forrester but also the story of the plants and the land, and in this case, the wetland. Cather's novel abounds with plant references. The plants serve as a sort of leitmotif for the main characters. For example, the briar rose and Mr. Forrester can nearly always be found together. Mrs. Forrester's theme seems to come from her pale beautiful cheeks which "had always the fragrant, crystalline whiteness of white lilacs" (33). Poison Ivy Peters, however, has a less honorable connection to nature and plants. His disrespect for the natural world begins when he is a child and continues into his adulthood, from the graphic bird-blinding incident to the displacement of Native Americans in Wyoming to the draining of the marsh on the Forrester property. Niel "felt that Ivy had drained the marsh quite as much to spite him and Mrs. Forrester as to reclaim the land" (101).

In his book *Nebraska's Wetlands: Their Wildlife and Ecology*, ecologist Paul A. Johnsgard provides a list of plants that grow in marshes or wetlands. Cather and Johnsgard write about some of the same plants: watercress (*Nasturtium officinale*), swamp milkweed, cottonwoods, blue-eyed grass of the iris family (*Sisyrinchium montanum*), honeysuckle.

Cather's reference to "willow stump" may refer to the "peach-leafed willow" that Johnsgard mentions.

The wildlife that populates Cather's marsh consists of the unfortunate woodpecker, the ducks the boys devour for dinner on their cultural evening at Mrs. Forrester's, rabbits, and "birds and butterflies [that] darted everywhere" (15). Several species of ducks and woodpeckers are noted in Johnsgard's *The Nature of Nebraska: Ecology and Biodiversity*, emphasizing the importance of wetlands as spring staging areas for migratory birds. Johnsgard reminds us that, due to the elimination of wetlands, migrant bird populations now congregate in concentrated places which results in greater potential for diseases (165–66). Today, according to the U.S. National Park Service website, wetlands "Provide a home for at least one third of all threatened and endangered species." And over half the North American waterfowl have their breeding grounds in "prairie potholes." More than half of the wetlands that existed in the continental United States in the late 1700s have been destroyed, according to a 1990 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service study. Further, the loss of natural marshes has made it necessary to create manmade flood control ("Why Are Wetlands Important?").

Don Preston, a Resource Conservationist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service branch in Wayne, Nebraska, describes the consequences when farmers remove a wetland in order to grow more corn. One of the most

A Nebraska prairie wetland scene. Photograph by Patti Burris.

essential functions of the wetland is to aid in the conversion of carbon dioxide to organic carbon molecules, so destroying a wetland means the loss of the wetland filter, the habitat, and ecosystem. Flooding and erosion are more likely to occur in the nearby land. Flooding is exactly what happens after Poison Ivy destroys the marsh (from a personal interview with the author, April 3, 2023).

Fields divided the prairie land into measured plots to be plowed, planted, and harvested. A wetland such as the one that Captain Forrester and Niel appreciated for its beauty was no longer part of a productive, profitable future. It was to some merely a wasteland:

> The sky was burning with the soft pink and silver of a cloudless summer dawn. The heavy, bowed grasses splashed him [Niel] to the knees. All over the marsh, snow-on-the mountain, globed with dew, made cool sheets of silver, and the swamp milk-weed spread its flat, raspberry-coloured clusters. There was an almost religious purity about the fresh morning air, the tender sky, the grass and flowers with the sheen of early dew upon them. . . . Niel wondered why he did not often come over like this to see the day before men and their activities had spoiled it. (80–81)

A hundred years ago Willa Cather could see the harm in draining a marsh. Described as the "lungs" of the planet by David Bellamy of the Conservation Foundation, the wetland filters the water, helps prevent flooding, and preserves coastlines. Don Preston says that for a plot to be designated a wetland it must consist of soil, hydrology (the scientific study of water—its cycle and management), and plants. More than three feet of water means no plants. Other names for wetlands are "slough" and "marsh." A creek is a type of linear wetland.

In "Nebraska: The End of the First Cycle," Cather describes in great detail the buffalo wallows and the plants that were able to grow in the water that was held by those wallows. The ground underneath was rubbed hard and held water during time of rain. Wild ducks swam in them, and "golden coreopsis," a plant referred to as "lagoon flower," grew, rooted in the water (236). Were these the origin of what later became rain-water wetlands? In the same essay Cather seems disdainful of those who are ready

to exchange the hard work and persistence of one generation for the ready-made convenience of the next: "Stamped with the ugly crest of materialism," they were all about show and not about the virtues that made Nebraska a place where many different nationalities could come together and create a home (238).

Cather's generation saw the prairie turn into plowed farmland. Human beings have caused many changes to the landscape. Bertha Koch Goodling (my grandmother's sister), born in 1906 on a farm in northeast Nebraska, wrote her observations in "Things I Remember Before 1930" and recalls wildflowers rather than the weeds that came later, bees everywhere, and a slough that ran through the pasture:

> My dad farmed with horses mostly corn some wheat and oats . . . Lots of prairie hay also some alfalfa. We had probably 80 acres of prairie hay. That ground had never been plowed. There were also a lot of flowers in that hay. A lot of sweet Williams and Blue Bells. We also had lots of Pasture land with a creek running thru it. They called those creeks sloughs in Nebr.

Among the apple trees there were no weeds—"only nice blue grass. Also no worms in the apples." "And there were bees everywhere. In the garden, when you hung up clothes, even in the outhouse."

As Johnsgard searches for hope in our uses of the Earth, he credits the Nature Conservancy, which previously owned the Willa Cather Prairie, for saving wetlands. With the Conservancy's assistance, the Cather Foundation acquired the area in 2006. It provides a peaceful setting that serves as a visual reminder of how important it is to live in harmony with nature. Supporting efforts like the Willa Cather Prairie can preserve native plants, unplowed ground, and even wetlands for future generations. Johnsgard writes that "nothing is more valuable than water" (*The Nature of Nebraska* 158), and one of the basic tenets of ecocriticism is Commoner's assertion that "Everything is connected to everything else." Given those statements, ecocriticism carries with it the responsibility of action. Each of us can do something, such as:

- Teach, using a collaboration between English or literature and conservation or biology.
- Plant a themed garden, native garden, or pollinator garden as another possibility for bringing Cather's books to life as well as helping the environment.
- Select children's books about nature to instill a love for the environment in young people.

As Barry Commoner wrote in 1971, "The pattern of economic growth is the major reason for the environmental crisis" (146). The very ways that we make money are the ways that destroy our environment. Cather writes, "By draining the marsh Ivy had obliterated a few acres of something he hated; though he could not name it, and had asserted this power over the people who had loved those unproductive meadows for their own idleness and silvery beauty" (101–102). We now know what Willa Cather knew a hundred years ago—to lose a wetland is to lose something very valuable indeed.

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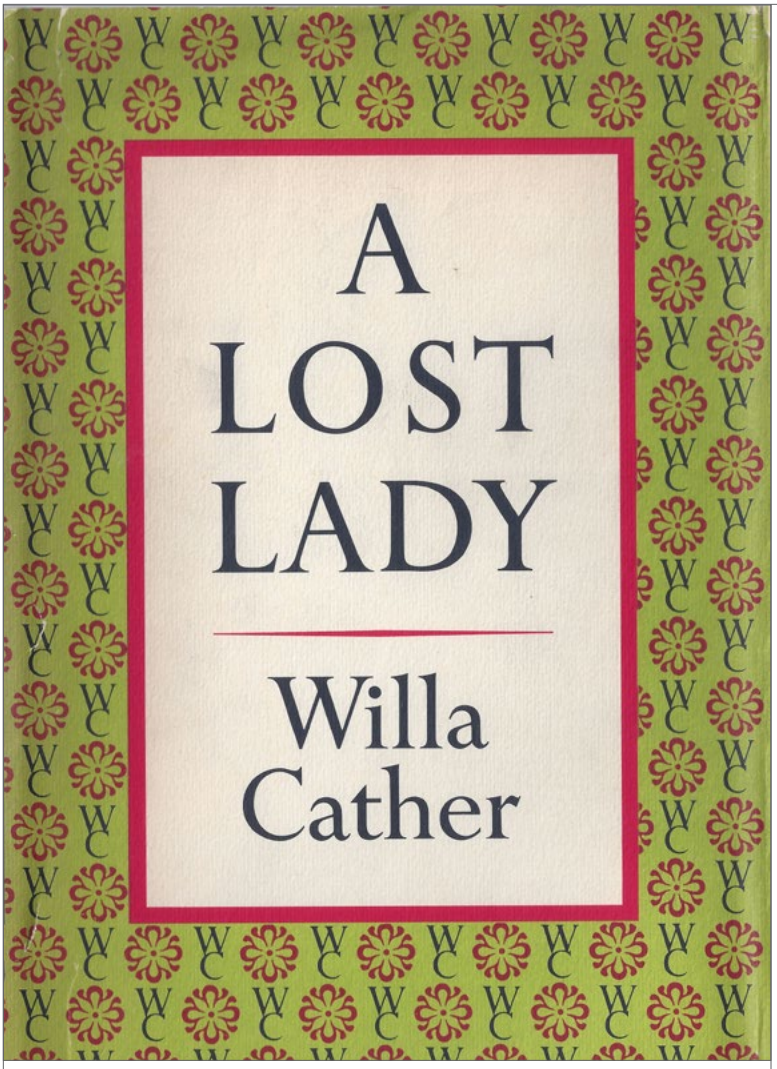
Care Communities in *A Lost Lady*

Sarah Wade

Relationships and communities built through acts of care—particularly of injured or ill characters—pervade the text of Willa Cather's *A Lost Lady*. Whether Marian caring for Niel's broken arm, Daniel Forrester carrying Marian back to camp after her fall from the mountain, or the larger community caring for Daniel after his strokes, caretaking appears throughout the text and changes the nature of the relationships between characters. Scholars of the feminist "ethics of care" have pointed to caretaking as a vital aspect of any community, and one that creates and strengthens bonds between people. Talia Schaffer defines the "care community" as a small, "voluntary" group of individuals "who coalesce around someone in need," and she explores both successful and failed care in Victorian fiction (2). Virginia Held shows that care work and the networks of relationships formed through acts of care go unrecognized in more traditional theories of moral philosophy both because caretaking is undervalued as a form of work that in most societies typically falls to women and because many of these other philosophies view ethical subjects as "free, equal, and autonomous individual persons choosing impartially" rather than as interdependent, relational beings tied to "particular others with whom they share interests" (63). While scholarship around the ethics of care has frequently portrayed care as the cement that connects relationships and communities, it can just as easily expose the cracks in the foundations, and both occur in *A Lost Lady*. Analyzing care in this novel helps us to better understand not only how care forges and fractures bonds between characters within the text, but also the dangers inherent in care itself, particularly when it is co-opted by agents of patriarchal surveillance and control.

In her essay "A Chorus of Gossips: Mistaking Invasion for Intimacy in Willa Cather's *A Lost Lady*," Evelyn Funda provides a helpful tool to examine both genuine and failed care in the novel. She makes the distinction between "invasion" and "intimacy" and notes the confusion some characters experience between the two, thereby naming a useful dichotomy for distinguishing the different forms of closeness that care creates. In *A Lost Lady*, when care is driven by love and affection for the other person, and a knowledge of and desire to meet the care recipient's actual needs, then care builds community. However, when care comes from a desire to "invade" someone's life in order to judge and control their actions from a closer vantage point, then care corrodes relationships and reveals the community's warped values. These same criteria for positive care also surface in scholarship on care ethics, such as Nel Noddings's essay "The Caring Relation in Teaching" and Virginia Held's book *The Ethics of Care*. Both scholars provide further evidence for the importance of addressing care recipients' actual, "expressed" needs rather than projecting assumed needs onto them (Noddings 772). In *A Lost Lady*, patriarchal values sometimes infiltrate care, with certain characters using the closeness brought about by care to preserve an imagined version of womanhood rather than recognize the care recipient as a complete person. Not all care communities in the novel fit within this binary of genuine versus manipulative care, which brings about either intimacy or invasion, but they can be productively analyzed along the continuum formed between these two extremes.

The first major instance of caretaking in the novel occurs when Niel breaks his arm. Here, Mrs. Forrester takes charge of the situation by bringing Niel into her home to care for him, and Niel builds her up as a kind of domestic goddess and ideal woman. Within the scene, Marian exercises class power, making decisions about who can and cannot be included. She exiles Ivy Peters to the porch, and the Blum boys do not even have to be told to remain outside. Niel, meanwhile, as both the injured character and the nephew of Judge Pommeroy, is welcomed into her home to receive Marian's attention and aid, allowing him a closeness that gives him more power later. The narrator states that Niel "was in pain, but he felt weak and contented" (Cather 25). The care of another seems to alleviate pain or at least make it bearable. Notably, this is Niel's first real memory of Marian Forrester and the Forrester household, or at least the first one related to the reader. It holds great significance for him due to the care itself as well as the proximity to Marian it allows him. This care becomes his first up-close interaction with Marian, beginning the path that brings them into (and out of) each other's lives for many years. Here, Funda's dichotomy of intimacy and invasion is very apparent. This instance of caretaking undoubtedly does bring about some form of "intimacy," as Niel is welcomed into Marian's bedroom, and she personally nurses him. However, it seems to also bring about a situation where Niel later feels comfortable invading Marian's life and sexual decisions, casting judgment on her because he assumes a kind of "intimacy" between them that is really the result of "invasion" on his part.



Dustjacket to the First Centennial Edition, September 1973.

Niel's perspective on the care Marian gives him in this scene is also shaped by forces apart from her and more integral to who he is: his past experience with women—particularly female caregivers and housekeepers—his sexual attraction to Marian, and his idealization of her. He notices her "soft fingers," "lace ruffle," and "white throat rising and falling," and under her gentle care he is reminded of his own home, where "everything was horrid when one was sick" (25). Her care seems sweetened by how Niel perceives her and feels about her, as well as by the flattering comparison with the care received in his own home, which lacks a maternal presence. Niel's interactions with Marian, in this moment and others, deal more with his own perceptions and the image he has of her in his mind than with anything specific to her. This precludes any possibility for real understanding between them, despite the reciprocal care they give each other at various points in the novel.

Even when caretaking is mentioned only in passing, it shapes the ways in which characters and the relationships between them are presented to the reader. For instance, Frank Ellinger's reputation as a "model son" who "had been devotedly caring for an invalid mother" adds greater dimension to his more "scandalous" notoriety for less wholesome relationships with women (48). Thus, Ellinger's moral character as perceived in the world of the novel receives a boost from his dutiful caretaking. Cather further complicates this portrait by acknowledging through the narration that despite Ellinger's ability to possess these contradictions, "nobody thought the worse of him." This comes as a result of both "the taste of the time" and his privileged gender and class positioning (48). Captain Forrester's relationship with his first wife is another instance of caretaking that, while mentioned only briefly in the novel, still has great consequences for readers' interpretations of characters and their relationships. The narrator only gives the reader a single sentence about this relationship—a sentence clearly colored by the perspectives of Captain Forrester and those close to him—but the narrator plainly frames this as an instance of care that adversely affects the relationship between a husband and wife, with implications for Daniel's later marriage with Marian. The narrator claims that, when Captain Forrester mentions the moment in his life "when things looked most discouraging," his listeners "understood that he was referring to his first marriage, to the poor invalid wife who had never been happy and who had kept his nose to the grindstone" (51). Here, the care expected of Captain Forrester in his first marriage taints his memory of his late wife. Although he cares for Marian in their relationship, she is young and healthy, and her injuries are temporary. When care becomes long and protracted, it drains Daniel and makes the relationship more of a burden than a boon. Thus, Daniel's caretaking has limits, just as Marian's does in the latter part of the novel.

Marian's care for the boys in town also evolves over the course of *A Lost Lady*. The formal dinner party she organizes for these young men after Captain Forrester's death parallels the earlier scene in which she orders her cook to bake cookies for the boys and then tends to Niel's broken arm. In both instances, Marian uses her class, and arguably gender, to control the situation. Whereas in the earlier scene Marian relegates Ivy (explicitly) and the Bloom brothers (implicitly) to the periphery based on class, in the latter she blurs these class boundaries, inviting the group of young working-class men into her home, serving them dinner, and taking an interest in their lives, all while instructing them in the social niceties of an older system of class hierarchy. Rather than teaching the men to stay in their place, as she did when she handed the boys cookies outside and did not allow them in the house while she took care of Niel, she now teaches these young men the manners and social skills

needed for them to enter her world. When describing her motives for the dinner party to Niel, Marian states: "I've wanted for a long while to do something for the boys in this town, but my hands were full. I hate to see them growing up like savages, when all they need is a civilized house to come to, and a woman to give them a few hints" (148).

Albeit in problematic terms, Marian recognizes that care, education, and community are necessary to give these young men the advantages that more privileged men like Niel enjoy. However, her classed knowledge is no longer as relevant as it once was, and her motives not as unambiguously altruistic. Ivy Peters has achieved success without belonging to the old class system, and the other men at the dinner (except Niel) all respect him "in recognition of his general success" (152). Either Marian does not recognize the outdatedness of the manners she seeks to cultivate in the boys, or her true goal is not solely to give these young men the benefits of belonging in upper-class society. Rather, she also seeks to recreate a version of the social circle that she lost after her husband's death. She further explains her rationale for throwing the dinner party by telling Niel that she "can't sit in the house alone every evening and knit." He replies to her that she should go to California to find "people of your own kind" (146). Without the money to relocate, Marian tries to recreate an approximate version of people of her own kind in these young men.

At this same dinner party, at Niel's prompting, Marian tells the story of how she met her husband. In a passage omitted from Marian's telling of her story, but which Niel gives to the reader, it is noted that Marian "was sent up into the mountains" after the man to whom she was previously engaged "was shot and killed . . . by the husband of another woman" (157). When Marian tells the story, however, she begins with the fall from a mountain in which she broke both her legs. Thus, at the beginning of her love story with Daniel Forrester, Marian needs both social and physical care. The moment he sees the wounded Marian, Daniel assumes the role of caretaker. After the rescue, the narrator states that although multiple men "took turns carrying" Marian, "she suffered less when Captain Forrester carried her" (158). Just as Niel still feels pain but also has some comfort when Marian cares for his broken arm, Marian also "suffered terribly," but "suffered less" in the care of Captain Forrester, in particular (158). As Held explains, the care itself is made more valuable because it comes from a "particular other" with whom the care receiver has a relationship (10). Marian also notes of Captain Forrester that "she had noticed him very little" prior to this act of care (157), but afterward, she becomes close with him and agrees to marry him.

The bond created in the initial carrying makes Marian want further care from him: "It was Captain Forrester I wanted to hold my hand when the surgeon had to do things to me. . . . He stayed at the camp until I could begin to walk, holding to his arm. When he asked me to marry him, he didn't have to ask twice. Do you wonder?" (158–59). Captain Forrester here becomes Marian's regular caretaker, which earns him first her attention and then her love. Through Daniel's care for Marian, she becomes bonded to him and goes from not even noticing him to accepting his marriage proposal. Her question at the end of the passage—"Do you wonder?"—points to the seemingly self-evident effect that positive caretaking, motivated by concern and affection, has on someone's feelings for another. Daniel's care for Marian continues in other parts of their marriage, such as in his tacit agreement to Marian's extramarital affairs, which shows his understanding of Marian's needs and his willingness to acquiesce to them even if they might require some sacrifice on his part.

This care relationship is reversed later in the text, when Daniel Forrester suffers multiple debilitating strokes and comes to rely on the care of his wife and others for support. At this point, however, Daniel has already failed in his care for his wife in other ways. Immediately prior to his first stroke, he does not look out for his wife's financial interests when he decides to pay back the depositors in the failed savings bank of which he was a major shareholder rather than holding onto any savings for Mrs. Forrester's future use. When discussing Daniel Forrester's moral rectitude in not allowing any of these working-class men to "lose a dollar" (86), Judge Pommeroy claims that Captain Forrester "acted just as I hope I would have done in his place. But I am an unmarried man" (85). In the same breath in which he praises the captain's upstanding decision, the judge acknowledges the bonds of care that tie the captain to his wife and which make this action more morally complicated. Held and other care scholars similarly point to the ethical ties that bind us more strongly to certain relationships than others. Held claims that the "central focus of the ethics of care is on the compelling moral salience of attending to and meeting the needs of the *particular* others for whom we take responsibility" (10, emphasis added). Thus, Captain Forrester's decision not to care for his wife's future security, and to choose the financial wellbeing of the depositors over it, sets into motion a series of events that fractures their relationship and necessitates that Marian seek care from other sources.

In the aftermath of Daniel's decision to spend their savings, and feeling the devastating effect this will have on her life, Marian grows "very pale" (84). As she hears further details from Judge

Pommeroy, we see her reaction through Niel's eyes: "It was the first time Niel had ever seen Mrs. Forrester flush. A quick pink swept over her face. Her eyes glistened with moisture" (88). These physical indicators show the inner turmoil rising in Mrs. Forrester, although she remains outwardly supportive of her husband, caring for him when he immediately falls ill and has to lie down. This care comes from a true knowledge of her husband, as she sees that she could not have asked Daniel "to do otherwise for me. He would never hold up his head again" (88). To explain why she cannot imagine asking for a different course of action from Captain Forrester, she says to Judge Pommeroy, "You see, I know him" (88), showing that her knowledge of her husband and his actual needs inform her care for him. Again, as Noddings explains in her essay on the ethics of care, remaining "attentive" to the needs of the other constitutes a crucial aspect of care, and one that both Marian and Daniel Forrester exhibit at different points in their relationship (772). However, these events cause the Forresters' needs to conflict, as Captain Forrester's need to honor his word to the men clashes with Mrs. Forrester's need to live a life of financial security with the comforts she is used to.

The conflict between her own needs and those of her husband causes the care Marian gives Daniel to be more taxing and difficult. She still takes care of him and addresses his needs, but she finds other outlets to ease the pain of these sacrifices. Ivy Peters says of Marian: "She takes good care of [Captain Forrester], I'll say that for her. . . . She seeks consolation, always did, you know . . . too much French brandy . . . but she never neglects him. I don't blame her. Real work comes hard on her" (101, ellipses in the original).

During her actual care for Daniel, Marian seems drained but dutiful. Here, Ivy shows that Marian does care for Captain Forrester and reciprocates the care he gave her earlier in the relationship. This care is different, however, as Captain Forrester's injuries are less temporary and his prognosis less clear. As Captain Forrester does in his first marriage, Marian becomes exhausted with the effort of caring for her spouse without an end in sight. As Ivy suggests, she looks for other ways to make her existence more pleasant, but she never shirks her responsibilities to her husband.

One of the more nefarious instances of caretaking in *A Lost Lady* occurs when the women of the town invade the Forrester home after Daniel's second stroke. The sickness itself seems to make the Forresters vulnerable to the invasion that Funda describes in her essay. Before the second stroke, Marian Forrester had "maintained her old reserve. She had asked nothing and accepted nothing" (131). "But now that the Captain was helpless, everything was changed. She could hold off the curious no longer," as they invade her home under the pretense of caring for the ailing Captain Forrester (131). Here, we see that care closes distance, even when the motives driving it are morally suspect, thereby facilitating the slippage from intimacy into invasion that Funda traces. The pretense of care allows Molly Tucker and Mrs. Beasley to go "in and out of Mrs. Forrester's kitchen as familiarly" as they pleased and to make judgments about her in the process (132). Under the guise of care, the townswomen invade the Forrester home, gain false intimacy, and cast judgment from this privileged, up-close view.

Partially driven by the judgmental women that invade the Forrester home, Niel decides to give up a year of school to care for Daniel Forrester (and by extension, Marian). While ostensibly taking over the Forresters' care in order to save them from the prying, judgmental eyes of the townswomen, Niel possesses judgmental eyes of his own, as we have already seen by this point in the novel. "He met the women with firmness. They were very kind, but now nothing was needed" (134). This deprives them of care as an excuse to get close and judge. He brings "quiet" into the house and does not allow anyone else in. While Daniel certainly appreciates the quiet, the reader can't help but ask what drives this action on Niel's part? Does he really shoo away onlookers for Daniel's benefit? Or is he motivated by his own need to protect the Forresters from the public gaze and preserve their image as it exists in his mind, as an idealized couple from the frontier days? Or is it both? When we examine what Niel actually does in his caretaking role in the Forrester household, it seems that keeping watch—in his silent "vigils" (135)—and keeping others away constitute the principal tasks he performs for the Forresters at this time. Niel not only wants to protect the Forresters from outsiders' judgment, but also to judge them himself, particularly Marian, with his own eyes and to use his role as caregiver to position himself as the only person close enough to judge at all. In her analysis of care ethics in *The Professor's House*, Hyojeong Byun claims that one of the main aims of care should be "helping others grow" (4), which she argues Augusta does for Godfrey St. Peter. However, it becomes clear as we get to know Niel better that his main interest lies not in helping others grow, but rather in keeping others the same and preserving the image of the mythologized frontier figures from the past.

To perform the actual care work needed to tend to the Forresters, Niel brings his uncle's servant, "Black Tom," to help. Tom is mentioned only a few times in the novel, but he performs much of the invisible care work that undergirds the

main characters' lives, maintaining Niel's and Judge Pommeroy's home and helping Marian when she hosts dinner parties. After the stroke, Tom assumes Marian's domestic duties. He also helps Niel lift the Captain into and out of his wheelchair, giving Daniel greater mobility and access to the outdoors, which Daniel values "very highly" (135). Niel's greatest aid to the Forresters therefore comes through his use of Tom, who is not given a voice in the novel while doing much of the care work in it. As Talia Schaffer points out, "invisibilized work is a big part of care," particularly the often underpaid care that typically falls to people marginalized along lines of race, gender, and class (6). Tom stays with the Forresters until Marian "was rested and in command of herself again" (Cather 135), and then he returns to Judge Pommeroy.

Notably, Niel abruptly ends his care for and any connection with Marian after witnessing a moment of physical intimacy between her and Ivy Peters, and after that he does not honor any responsibilities he might once have felt toward her. As soon as he realizes he cannot control her actions or confine her to his own idealized image of womanhood, he relinquishes any duty to aid or care for her and leaves her "without bidding her goodbye . . . with weary contempt for her in his heart" (161). Afterward, Niel thinks, "He had given her a year of his life, and she had thrown it away. He had helped the Captain die peacefully, he believed; and now it was the Captain who seemed the reality" (162). Here, we can clearly see that Niel does not grant Marian full humanity or "reality" in the way he does Captain Forrester. She can either exactly fit the idealized image he projects onto her or be considered a complete failure in his eyes, unworthy of his care. Because he cares more for his own image of Marian than for Marian herself, when disillusioned with the image, there is nothing left with which he feels connected. We also see the obligation Niel feels Marian owes him due to his care and sacrifices. When he hears the rest of Marian's story all these years later, Niel feels relief that someone did care for Marian afterward, and that she continued to care for Daniel through his gravesite, but there is no acknowledgement of his own failures in the past.

The novel ends with care, as Ed Elliot tells Niel the story of Marian's life after Captain Forrester's death. Marian marries another man, moves to Buenos Aires, and dies far away from her previous life. Significantly, Ed's account assures Niel that Marian was "well cared for" at the end of her life (166), and Niel takes comfort in this idea. Ed also details the way in which the care between Marian and Daniel Forrester continues even after death through the caretaking of his gravesite. When she was alive, Marian sent flowers to decorate Daniel Forrester's grave annually, and then her new husband, Henry Collins, sends a letter "with a draft for the future care of Captain Forrester's grave, '*in memory of my late wife, Marian Forrester Collins*.'" (166). In this way, the circle of caretaking continues posthumously, as Marian's caregiving ties to Daniel are honored by her second husband.

Throughout *A Lost Lady*, characters take care of each other, and this care has consequences for the connections formed between them. To have a positive impact on a relationship, care must be based on that person's actual needs, and the intimacy that care creates must be honored rather than twisted into a means of surveillance and judgment. Caregiving in the Forresters' marriage brings them together, but it also pulls them apart when pushed beyond their limits. Niel tries to form a care community with the Forresters by nursing Daniel after his stroke, but he uses the intimacy that caregiving allows to judge Marian's choices. In this way, caregiving reveals both the bonds that unite and the social ills that tear down this community.

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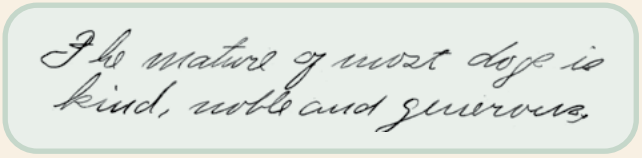
Children's Page:

Cats and Dogs and Willa Cather

Cats vs. Dogs!

The earliest piece of writing we have from Willa Cather is from a family debate: which is the better pet, a dog or a cat? As the oldest of the seven Cather children, Willa was in charge of the argument for dogs. Here is a bit of what she wrote:



The nature of most dogs is kind, noble and generous. O! how different from the snarling, spitting cruel cat. Once my father had a shepherd dog and one day he drove a lot of sheep into a fence corner and said "Milo, keep 'em safe." then he went to do some work, forgot the sheep and went home. That night the dog did not come when he was called and was missed for 3 days. At last papa thought of the sheep and hastened to the field. And there, faithful to his trust was the poor old dog, half starved but still pacing to and fro before the half wild sheep.

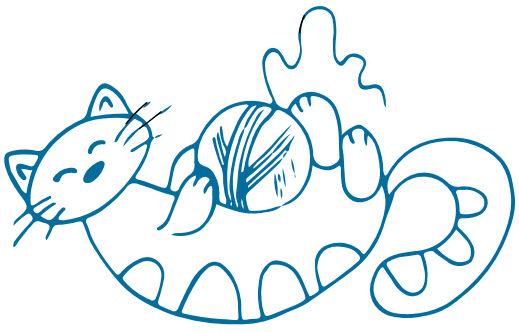
Do you think young Willa is being fair? If you were debating her about cats and dogs, what would you say? Write your response here!

Willa Cather with Giotto. Helen Cather Southwick Collection. Willa Cather Foundation Collections & Archives at the National Willa Cather Center in Red Cloud.

Cats Reconsidered!

Willa Cather changed her attitude about cats after she lost that debate. All through her life, she mentioned cats in letters to friends. When she was a teenager, home from college on vacation, she wrote to friends that she and her family had been feasting on homemade ice cream and feeding whipped cream to their family cat. And she mentioned friends' cats fondly in her letters. When she was 58 years old, in a letter to a young friend, she remembered, "When I was a child I had a male cat who weighed twelve pounds, and I loved him devotedly."

Cats and dogs sometimes appear as characters in Cather's stories. The story "Old Mrs. Harris" seems to be based on Cather's own family, which, like Mrs. Harris's family, moved from a Southern state, Virginia, to a very different state, Nebraska, in the Midwest. The family cat moved with them. The first time we meet the cat in this story, Grandma Harris (based on Willa's own grandmother) is sitting in the family house, talking with a good neighbor, Mrs. Rosen. When she hears "a faint miaow," Grandma gets up and opens the door.



In this space, describe a favorite animal in your life in words that will help readers know that animal as well as you do.

For many readers, the saddest moment in "Old Mrs. Harris" comes when Blue Boy dies of distemper. The whole family, and especially Grandma, mourn for him. And Grandma makes sure that her young grandsons (based on Willa's brothers) understand that Blue Boy's body must be treated with respect and given a proper burial. She says, "You get up early in the morning . . . and go to that crooked old willer tree . . . and you dig a little grave for Blue Boy, and bury him right." Mrs. Harris reminds us that all loved animals must be treated with respect, in life and in death.

"In walked a large, handsome, thickly furred Maltese cat, with long whiskers and yellow eyes and a white star on his breast. He preceded Grandmother, waited until she sat down. Then he sprang up into her lap and settled himself into the folds of her full-gathered calico skirt. He rested his chin in his deep bluish fur and regarded Mrs. Rosen . . . he held his head in just the way Grandmother held hers. . . . "This is Blue Boy," she said, stroking him. . . . She scratched the thick blue fur at the back of his neck and he began a deep purring."

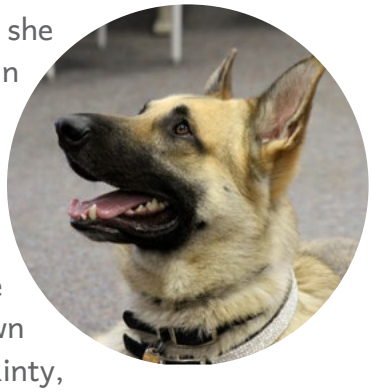
We really get to know Blue Boy. We can see him, the thick fur and the blue and yellow and white. We hear him; Cather chose a special word for the sound of his voice: "miaow." We know that he and Mrs. Harris understand each other's language—she goes to the door when she hears his voice—and that they are alike, as Mrs. Rosen notices. They both have good manners, and they know how to give each other pleasure, as Blue Boy's purring tells us. Willa Cather couldn't have written such a good description if she hadn't watched a cat—and probably her grandmother too—very closely, and noticed many little things.

CUTE KITTENS

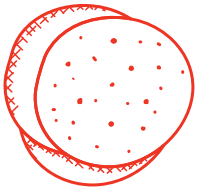
1. Persian; 2. Tortoise Shell; 3. Manx; 4. Silver Grey Persian; 5. Maltese; 6. Angora Tabby; 7. Short Hair; 8. Common Tabby; 9. Angora Orange; 10. House Kittens.

Rin Tin Tin!

Willa Cather's favorite movie star was a great Hollywood performer of the 1920s, when movies were still young. He was a beautiful dog named Rin Tin Tin, whom she called "my crush." In 1926, she wrote an excited letter to a friend, reporting that she "rode on the same train with Rin Tin Tin, and had the pleasure of meeting him. . . . I never was so excited by any celebrity before!" In 2011, the current Rin Tin Tin, known by his many fans as Rinty, visited Willa's Nebraska home town, Red Cloud. Rinty was a direct descendant of the first Rin Tin Tin. He visited with children at the local school and Willa Cather fans at the National Willa Cather Center. As a gift for everyone, Rinty brought his favorite recipe, for peanut butter cookies. Here is the recipe—perhaps you would like to bake some of Rinty's cookies for your own favorite dog.



Rin Tin Tin's "Peamutt Butter Cookies"



¼ cup peanut butter
1 cup water
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
2¼ cups whole wheat flour
1 cup oatmeal

Preheat oven to 375°. Combine peanut butter, oil, and water. Gradually add flour, then oatmeal.

On a lightly floured surface, roll dough out to ¼-inch thickness, then cut out using a small round cookie cutter. Transfer cookies to greased cookie sheets or baking stones. Bake at 375° for 35 minutes, or until set and lightly browned. Place on rack to cool, then store in an air-tight container. Makes about 2½ dozen treats.

Do you have a favorite animal star?
Draw a picture of your favorite here:

Word Search!

Can you find all of these prairie animals that are hidden in the grid below? They run in any direction.

WOODPECKER	SPARROW	FERRET
DUCK	DEER	CRANE
BISON	ELK	COYOTE
JACKRABBIT	BAT	BADGER
FOX	WOLF	RATTLESNAKE
HAWK	SQUIRREL	GOPHER

C	D	F	K	S	N	R	C	I	L	U	G	T	A	B
O	R	N	X	B	M	G	O	P	H	E	R	P	I	A
U	W	A	B	X	A	G	Y	V	V	Y	H	S	C	D
J	U	T	N	M	A	P	O	D	M	X	O	V	Y	G
T	C	E	L	E	M	P	T	R	B	N	D	R	I	E
E	S	B	F	W	G	A	E	Z	R	U	I	C	L	R
K	W	P	F	R	D	B	O	E	D	T	A	H	K	L
A	K	O	A	P	C	M	E	W	C	E	L	K	E	O
N	X	F	O	R	E	D	U	A	B	R	I	C	M	V
S	P	S	O	D	R	K	F	B	Z	R	B	U	A	J
E	F	F	V	E	P	O	A	G	Y	E	Y	D	T	R
L	H	F	P	S	D	E	W	O	L	F	K	B	Y	C
T	R	I	H	U	T	V	C	H	A	S	W	T	A	J
T	S	G	P	N	C	U	M	K	A	X	L	G	H	O
A	S	Q	U	I	R	R	E	L	E	W	F	J	D	G
R	O	P	K	A	T	I	B	B	A	R	K	C	A	J

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF OUR FIRST CHILDREN'S PAGE? LET US KNOW AT editor@willacather.org.

Contributors to this Issue

Patti Burris lives in Winside, Nebraska, and teaches foundational English at Northeast Community College. She was inspired to study Cather's work after reading *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* and discovering resonances with her family history. In 1916 her grandfather came from Virginia to farm in Nebraska, and ancestors from the other side of her family settled in Webster County in 1894–95. Their experiences with draught and financial strains made them part of the exodus of settlers that Cather describes in her writing.

Sarah Clere, an independent scholar, is on the publications committee for the Willa Cather Foundation and will codirect the 2024 Spring Conference. Her research on Willa Cather has appeared in *Cather Studies 9*, *Studies in the Novel*, and the *Willa Cather Review*, and is forthcoming in *Cather Studies 14*.

Lonnie Pierson Dunbier became fascinated by the prototypes for the central characters of *A Lost Lady*, Lyra and Silas Garber, while earning an M.A. in Cather studies at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln in the early 1970s. Her extensive research on the Garbers continued for many years and led to important discoveries about Lyra, as revealed in her essay in this issue. Dunbier is now based in Edina, Minnesota, where she is a cofounder of askART.com and continues to share her Garber research in frequent talks.

Charmion Gustke is associate professor of English at Belmont University in Nashville and serves as coordinator for the First Year Seminar Program. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the Willa Cather Foundation and has published several essays on Cather. She is currently writing her first book, *Dark Autumn: Willa Cather, Whiteness, and the American Class System*, under contract at the University of Nebraska Press, from which her essay in this publication is adapted.

Erika K. Hamilton is director of literary programs for Humanities Nebraska. Her 2014 dissertation examining the influence of historical context on literary advertisements for Willa Cather and her contemporaries has led to published essays in *Cather Studies*, conference papers, and public presentations.

Julie Olin-Ammentorp is a professor of English at Le Moyne College. The author of *Edith Wharton, Willa Cather, and the Place of Culture* (University of Nebraska Press, 2019), she has also published "Thea at the Art Institute" in *Cather Studies 9* and "Willa Cather's 'Individual Map' of Paris" in the *Willa Cather Newsletter & Review* (Winter 2015). In 2023 she published a new edition of Edith Wharton's World War I novel *A Son at the Front* in the Oxford World's Classics series. From 2014 until 2023 she served on the Board of Governors of the Willa Cather Foundation.

Daryl W. Palmer is professor of English at Regis University in Denver, Colorado. His most recent book is *Becoming Willa Cather: Creation and Career* (2019). His articles on Willa Cather and the American West have appeared in journals such as *American Literary Realism*, *Great Plains Quarterly*, *Kansas History*, *Theory & Event*, and the *Willa Cather Review*.

Emily J. Rau is an assistant professor of digital humanities at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, where she serves as the editor of the Willa Cather Archive and as one of the project leads for the Recovery Hub for American Women Writers. She is the book review editor for *Western American Literature* and currently serves on the Executive Council for the Western Literature Association.

Elaine Smith is a longtime scholar of American literature with family ties to south central Nebraska. She has taught Willa Cather's work at Carleton College, Florida State University, and the University of South Florida. She has published several articles on Cather and presented at many Cather conferences, including those in Chicago, Rome, and Pittsburgh.

Janis Stout is professor and dean of faculties emerita at Texas A&M University, from which she retired in 2002. Her scholarship has focused primarily on Katherine Anne Porter and Willa Cather, and she has written and edited many books and essays on Cather's fiction and letters, most recently *Cather Among the Moderns*.

John Swift taught English and American literature at Occidental College in Los Angeles from 1981 until his retirement in 2019. A past Willa Cather Foundation president, he is the author of essays on Cather and other American writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the coeditor of *Willa Cather and the American Southwest* (2002). He lives with his wife Cheryl and their many dogs in Georgetown, Maine.

Robert Thacker is Charles A. Dana Professor of Canadian Studies and English Emeritus, St. Lawrence University. A longtime Cather scholar, he is the current President of the Foundation's Board of Governors and coeditor of the *Willa Cather Review*. Thacker has recently been awarded the Donner Medal in Canadian Studies for distinguished achievement in scholarship by the Association for Canadian Studies in the United States (ACSUS). His *Alice Munro's Late Style: "Writing is the Final Thing"* has just been published by Bloomsbury Academic.

Mark W. Van Wienen, professor of English at Northern Illinois University, is the author of *Partisans and Poets: The Political Work of American Poetry in the Great War* (1997) and *American Socialist Triptych: The Literary-Political Work of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Upton Sinclair, and W. E. B. Du Bois* (2012). He has edited three other titles and published widely in journals including *American Literature*, *American Literary History*, and *African American Review*. His article "Men (and Women) of Iron: Labor, Power, and the Railroad in Willa Cather's Novels," which appeared in *Modern Fiction Studies* in 2016, is part of his current monograph in progress, a study of American literature and culture associated with the railroad.

Sarah Wade is a graduate student at Binghamton University. Her primary field is Victorian literature, but a course on Willa Cather's fiction inspired her to explore caregiving in Cather's works.

Elizabeth Wells teaches composition and literature courses as an adjunct lecturer at SUNY Cortland. She earned her Ph.D. in English at Louisiana State University in 2018 and has received multiple honors and fellowships for her research on disability representation. She has published articles on Willa Cather in *Modern Fiction Studies*, the *Willa Cather Review*, and forthcoming volumes of *Cather Studies*. She is currently at work on a book entitled *Unfit: Disability in Willa Cather's Works*.

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The *Willa Cather Review* welcomes scholarly essays, notes, news items, and letters. Scholarly essays should generally not exceed 5,000 words, although longer essays may be considered; they should be submitted in Microsoft Word as email attachments and should follow current MLA guidelines as articulated in the *MLA Handbook*.

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In Memoriam

Dolores Albertini

Members of the Cather community were sad to learn of the death of Dolores Ann Drenon Albertini, on July 19, 2023. Born in Kansas in 1937, Dolores was educated as a librarian, with a master's degree in library science from Columbia University. She held several library positions, the last and longest as Reference and Periodicals Librarian at Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville, Missouri, where her husband, Virgil Albertini, was a professor of English. It was Dolores, an enthusiastic and discriminating reader, who introduced her husband to the work of Willa Cather and insisted that they visit Red Cloud for the first time in the mid-1970s. With her encouragement, Virgil became a Cather scholar, and his undergraduate course in Cather became one of the most popular English courses at their university. Again and again, Virgil and Dolores returned to Red Cloud, bringing fascinated students to explore Cather's Nebraska environment. And Dolores employed another of her many skills—baking—by making square *kolache* for Virgil's students. Those square *kolache*, unlike the more common round ones, were featured in an ongoing story in the *Omaha World Herald*, "The Great Kolache Controversy."

Eventually Virgil became a member of the Board of Governors of the Willa Cather Foundation, serving for more than thirty years. Dolores almost always accompanied him to board meetings and Cather events in Red Cloud and elsewhere. Like many others, I looked forward to seeing her, enjoying her beautiful smile and talking with her about Cather and perhaps some of the many activities to which she was committed: raising native grasses and wildflowers on their Missouri farm, and caring for needy animals—especially cats!—as a founder and supporter of a new animal shelter in Maryville. Here at the *Willa Cather Review* we are especially grateful for Dolores and Virgil's many years of service to this publication, in which Dolores's skills as a librarian were especially useful. Years ago, they created our first bibliography, and in recent years have served as the *Review*'s copy editors, carefully proofreading every single issue. As an invaluable member of the Cather community and a delightful, thoughtful friend, Dolores Albertini will be much missed.

— Ann Romines

Collections News

Our newest interpretive exhibit, *Making a Place: A Long History of Red Cloud*, is nearing completion, and we look forward to welcoming guests. *Making a Place* will be housed in the Farmers and Merchants Bank building and allow guests to explore Pawnee history, the settlement of Red Cloud, and the importance of the bank to the town, to Willa Cather, and to the National Willa Cather Center. The fate of the bank building has been tied to that of the Potter building—the future home of Hotel Garber—ever since a 1961 fire damaged both structures. Our new exhibit shares home video captured that day, donated to our collection by Kaune Schwartz.

As 2023 draws to a close, we are grateful for your continued support, which has enabled us to undertake these exciting and important projects. Our efforts continue in 2024, and we invite you to join in our work. To support the rehabilitation of the Potter building and the creation of the Hotel Garber or the work of the National Willa Cather Center, contact executive director Ashley Olson at **aolson@willacather.org**.

If you have objects or papers relevant to our collections, our archivist Tracy Tucker would be happy to discuss gifts to our archives or museum collection. She can be reached at **ttucker@willacather.org**.

Nearing completion, the *Making a Place* exhibit awaits its objects.

A fire on August 5, 1961, severely damaged the Potter building, ultimately resulting in the removal of its third story.

The Hotel Garber seen during construction in December 2023, with the building's historic third story restored. Completion is scheduled for late 2024. Hotel guests will have direct access to National Willa Cather Center exhibits housed in the Farmers and Merchants Bank next door.

THE NATIONAL
Willa Cather
CENTER

WILLA CATHER'S

A Lost Lady

1923 ▸ 2023

"When he was dull, dull and tired of everything, he used to think that if he could hear that long-lost lady laugh again, he could be gay."

THE NATIONAL
Willa Cather
CENTER