

Willa Cather

NEWSLETTER & REVIEW

Volume 58 • No. 3

Spring 2016



Reflections on Cather and Art

Willa Cather NEWSLETTER & REVIEW



Volume 58 • No. 3 | Spring 2016



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On the cover: Interior, William Merritt Chase, ca. 1912. Photo © Sheldon Museum of Art. See story on page 19.



Letter from the Executive Director Ashley Olson

Oy—I attempted to write this letter several times over the last few days and found myself at a loss for words. Maybe it was the weather. Several days of below-average temperatures, rain, and little sunshine had me in a bit of a slump. But as I drove through the Divide today and gazed across the countryside, I felt a new sense of inspiration. Spring has sprung in Nebraska! The grasslands are greener than they’ve been in ages, trees are lush, and today I caught sight of a duck and her ducklings out for an afternoon swim.

While the natural world awakens, life is bustling at the Cather Foundation too. Before spring is over, we’ll have hosted hundreds of high school students for historic site tours. A collaborative art show entitled *Nature as Muse* has enlivened our gallery walls. The UNL Opera is about take the Red Cloud Opera House stage to present Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro*. And as for the staff, we’re all growing accustomed to the hum of activity next door as construction of the National Willa Cather Center progresses.

As I took in the sights and sounds of spring today and thought about our upcoming events, I was reminded of Alexandra Bergson as she reflected upon the great operations of nature in *O Pioneers!* “She had never known before how much the country meant to her. The chirping of the insects in the long grass had been like the sweetest music. She had felt as if her heart were hiding down there, somewhere, with the quail and the plover and all the little wild things that crooned or buzzed in the sun. Under the long shaggy ridges, she felt the future stirring.”

Our board and staff feel it too. As we prepare to open the National Willa Cather Center, we’re also planning for the expanded educational programming that will emerge from it. Informative exhibits and additional digital resources, as well as residency and fellowship opportunities for artists and scholars, are just a few of the opportunities we’re working to create. There’s much to look forward to (and to keep us busy), even before you toss in our upcoming conferences and seminars, and the special activities to mark the publication centenary of *My Ántonia* in 2018.

So stay tuned. And I hope the pages that follow will interest and enliven you.



Letter from the President Lynette Krieger

As we go about our work, the Cather Foundation’s Board of Governors strives to honor the legacy of our founder Mildred Bennett and her “kitchen cabinet” of charter boardmembers. We try to emulate the commitment to the Foundation’s future that they first felt some sixty-one years ago. We have a new kitchen cabinet now, but our kinship with our founders (and their modest beginnings) inspires us. Why not move to the dining table, now, or even to the conference room? Yes, we can do that—we do often. But we all know decisions at the kitchen table are best!

The challenges we face as an organization are more manageable thanks to our board’s great diversity and range of skills. One might believe all of us are from Nebraska, but only about half our number share that trait. Seven of our members hail from the Red Cloud area—home-town kids. We also currently have members from Colorado, Kansas, Massachusetts, New York, Utah, and Virginia. That speaks to the dynamic influence of Willa Cather across the nation.

We are fortunate to have scholarly representation from Northwest Missouri State, the U.S. Air Force Academy, Webb

Institute, the University of Nebraska (Omaha, Lincoln and Kearney), the University of Minnesota Duluth, Brigham Young University, Le Moyne College, George Washington University, Utah State University, St. Lawrence University and Hastings College. These scholars help bring Cather’s life and works to today’s students and readers. The *Willa Cather Newsletter & Review* and our upcoming Spring Conference are good examples of the distinctive strengths of these board members. Our members also hail from the worlds of banking, law, business, communication, and philanthropy.

This will be an exciting year as we focus on opening the National Willa Cather Center as a whole new educational and archival facility. Our multifaceted board and dedicated staff are working all hours to make this wonderful new Cather center a reality.

My childhood years at our family kitchen table introduced me to the inspiring story of Anna Pavelka (prototype for the title character in *My Ántonia*). I was proud to learn of my own family’s connection to Cather’s world, through my father’s sister, Aunt Fern, and her husband, Uncle Louie. Uncle Louie was Anna Pavelka’s son. As a high school teacher by profession, I found these fond “kitchen” memories and the opportunity to teach Cather’s novels were profoundly important parts of my life.

I look forward to seeing you at Spring Conference and in the months and years to come.



Willa Cather: The Great American Novelist

Richard Norton Smith

Unlike those of you assembled for the 60th Annual Cather Spring Conference and the 15th International Seminar, I make no claim to being a Cather scholar. I come to Red Cloud, not to deconstruct her writings, but to celebrate them, unabashedly, if not altogether uncritically. What follows, then, makes no pretense to being a learned lecture. More like a fan letter from a reader whose life has been enriched by exposure to Cather and her literary legacy. A precursor, if you will, to countless future visitors for whom the proposed National Willa Cather Center will narrate the storyteller's own story, within the setting that nurtured her art.

On the subject of Cather and the arts, I can do no better than to quote from Cather herself, whose insistence on making art out of life was never better stated than in a 1921 interview she gave to the *Omaha World Herald*. "No nation has ever produced great art that has not made a high art of cookery," she began, "because art appeals primarily to the senses." The next day, before another reporter, she defended the artistic properties of the cottonwood tree. For her, standardization was the enemy of art. If "genius is the capacity for taking pains," said Cather, "art is taking the pains for the love of it." If her work transcends the century following its creation, it is because history, for her, is about nothing if not perspective—beginning with Cather's humanist perspective in a country more attuned to acquisition than to introspection.

"What has art ever been but escape?" asked Cather in a typically provocative query. "When the world is in a bad way, we are told, it is the business of the composer and the poet to devote himself to propaganda and fan the flames of indignation. But the world has a habit of being in a bad way from time to time, and art has never contributed anything to help matters—except escape." Escapism, one hastens to add, in the best sense of the word—offering shelter from a contemporary culture that can feel as shallow as it is self-regarding. By contrast history, like literature, enlarges our outlook by multiplying our experience. To open a book is to disprove the limiting notion that we have but one life at our disposal. Open a book, and we can scale the Rocky Mountains with Lewis and Clark. We can reach for the hem of heaven with the Apollo astronauts. Or take our place alongside a weary seamstress in Montgomery, Alabama, whose refusal to move to the back of a segregated bus would launch a revolution in human rights.

Open a book, and minds can never be closed. Curiosity itself becomes a civilizing antidote to blatant materialism. That said, surely it helps to have an equally adventurous guide. For more than a century Willa Cather has performed this function, immersing countless readers in a past more vivid than our Twittering, selfie snapping, virtual reality of a present. Which brings us to this magnificent Opera House, and the adjacent Moon Block, even now being transformed into the *National Willa Cather Center*.

I emphasize "national," with good reason. Today is the latest milestone on a road stretching back sixty years. Originally chartered by Mildred Bennett, over the years the Willa Cather Foundation has benefitted from the involvement and support of numerous Cather family members and friends, Foundation officers and trustees, local and state officials, charitable donors and students of her work. We owe an immense debt to these cultural and intellectual pioneers, and to their modern counterparts—to Tom Gallagher and the Board of Governors, to Ashley Olson and her colleagues at the Cather Foundation, to interpretive staff and volunteers, to our honorary national chairman Ken Burns, and everyone who has had a hand in converting this historic block into a historical repository—part archive, part museum, part welcome center—and all Willa Cather.

Starting in 2016, visitors to the Cather Center will encounter Red Cloud as never before—not to mention Sweet Water, Frankfort, Moonstone and Black Hawk, Haverford and Hanover. Here, if they have not already done so, they will make the acquaintance of Eden Bower and Marie Shabata; Bishop Laval and Bishop Latour; Tom Outland and Sapphira Dodderidge, Nancy Till and a battalion of eminent ladies, far from lost, who persist against all odds in upholding the standards of Cather's "precious . . . incommunicable past."

Cather herself provided the clinching argument for this center's creation when she confided, "America works on my mind like light on a photographic plate." Indeed, it is a great *American* life that will unfold in the former Moon Block: one lived not in isolation but entwined with the defining movements of her time—with the settling of the West, with the polyglot migration out of the Old World into the New, with the Populist uprising and its Progressive-era sequel. These were restless, fertile years during which Cather held center stage in what many regard as the golden age of investigative journalism.



She was still an undergraduate at the University of Nebraska when, in 1893, the historian Frederick Jackson Turner declared the American frontier officially closed. Much of her own literary work would anticipate or react to Turner's thesis. In shimmering prose she captured the promise of morning in America, tracing the heroic era of the pioneer and immigrant before its frontier values were corroded, in her mind, by the acids of modernity. With their subsequent erosion came a darkening of Cather's mood. Yet she never shrank from the most terrifying of all frontiers—the blank sheet of writing paper.

Paradoxically, even as she grew alienated from an increasingly materialistic society, Cather the artist was set free to write half a dozen novels, and at least as many short stories, of imperishable worth. Did she write *the* Great American Novel? I don't know. But I believe that her claim to the title of Great American Novelist surely rivals that of her most distinguished contemporaries. The themes to which Cather gave such vibrant life—the immigrant search for identity in a new land, and the artist's struggle for acceptance in a materialistic one; the price of ambition and the snares of affluence; the cravings of youth, and the compensating rewards of old age—above all, what Cather called “the tragic necessity” of human relationships—these are subjects of universal significance and timeless relevance.

Why a *National* Cather Center? To brand her a Nebraska novelist is like calling Robert Frost a New Hampshire poet. No doubt, to many who come here, Red Cloud may appear a time capsule, as quaintly evocative of a vanished past as Brigadoon. Such impressions overlook the eight trains a day that stoked an exceptional young girl's desire to sample whatever lay beyond the wheat-fringed horizon, or the self-taught Shakespearian scholars and their fellow patrons of this Opera House, incubator of Cather's lifelong passion for music and theater.

Then as now, small towns give rise to large ambitions. Here were formed the demanding sensibilities that earned for Cather the critic lasting infamy among Lincoln's visiting stage companies as the “meatax young girl.” Time would cure her of such excesses, but no reader of her recently published correspondence can fail to locate a turbulent river flowing just beneath the author's supremely self-assured surface. “I only want impossible things,” says Cather. “The others don't interest me.” Does her unspent rage stem from the difficulty of the task? Or is it the emotional residue of the unconventional young woman who made a virtue of standing out because she refused to conform?

To even pose such questions helps to understand how the artist who gave us Alexandra Bergson and the radiant Antonia Shimerda could, just a few years later, present us with Marian

Forrester and Myra Henshawe. “Discerning people are usually discreet and often kind,” wrote Cather, “for we usually bleed a little before we begin to discern.” Nearing the end of her life, she frankly acknowledged, “Things have always hit me very hard. I suppose that is why I never run out of material to write about. The inside of me is so full of dents and scars, where pleasant and unpleasant things have hit me in the past.” Just how unpleasant is hinted at by an early letter, concerning the mother of a Nebraska friend, who wanted Cather to arrange entrée to some of Pittsburgh's leading citizens. “Fancy her coming to me for that,” Cather muses, her sense of grievance still hot to the touch. “O, it does my wickid un-Christian heart good to get even, to . . . make people take back the bitter things they said in those years when bitter things hurt so.” The tone is jocular, bordering on self-mockery, but it also raises the unanswerable question of how much her unorthodox ways, and the whispered disparagement they no doubt provoked on the streets of Red Cloud, may have contributed to her ambivalence about the town she recycled so often in her fiction, and her fierce insistence that love and hate are inextricably mingled.

Why a *National* Cather Center? That rarest of American writers—hailed for her artistry as well as her book sales—



The author leading the audience in a toast to Willa Cather—and the National Willa Cather Center—during his keynote address at the 2015 Willa Cather Spring Conference, June 5, 2015.



Cather encompassed her country in all its versatility and talent for combining opposites. At once a traditionalist and innovator, hell-bent for success and dismayed by its consequences, Cather was, and remains, a legitimate source of Cornhusker pride. Yet she didn't hesitate to label the Nebraska prairies "the happiness and curse of my life," nor to flay her neighbors for their alleged philistinism in such classic tales as "The Sculptor's Funeral" and "A Wagner Matinée." In truth, Cather had a lover's quarrel with the shaggy terrain of Webster County, flat as a mirror and just as reflective. "The West always paralyzes me a little," she once confided to a friend. "When I am away from it I remember only the tang on the tongue. But when I come back I always feel a little of the fright I felt when I was a child. I always feel afraid of losing something, and I don't in the least know what it is."

Her contradictions don't end there. Long portrayed as backward looking, Cather faulted her literary peers for not being sufficiently experimental. She herself was enough of a radical to profess uncertainty, at the height of her success, over what form the novel of the future should take. Although justly famed for her sense of place, she loathed excessive description and what she called "local color." However flattering it may be to the Red Cloud Chamber of Commerce, her boast that most writers gather the material for their career between the ages of eight and fifteen hardly squares with her later forays to Mesa Verde and the looming rock of Quebec. In fact Cather spent less time in Red Cloud than in Pittsburgh, simultaneously the "City of Dreadful Dirt" and the cradle of her literary ambitions. The artist who defined herself through what Stephen Colbert would call "truthiness" shaved three years off her age and often stretched truth in her letters. And it is a mistake to say that she scorned publicity. She welcomed publicity that she could control, withholding autographs lest they damage sales of her collected works; and tending a personal legend of the plucky transplanted Virginian reborn in the tall grass of the Republican River Valley, where she befriended a continent's worth of Old World refugees. Craving freedom, above all freedom of artistic expression, in the next breath Cather could lament that "freedom so often means that one isn't needed anywhere."

The mystery deepens. Among the many reasons we have to be grateful to Andrew Jewell and Janis Stout, editors of Cather's correspondence, is their confirmation of an emotional life long hinted at by feminist scholars and interpreters of gay history. In place of yesterday's stifling decorum, we at last have Willa Cather Living. Indeed. Yet her interior life remains elusive as ever. That she was a woman who loved other women is well documented. But we don't know—we may never know—how much to read into the middle aged *cri de coeur* expressed by

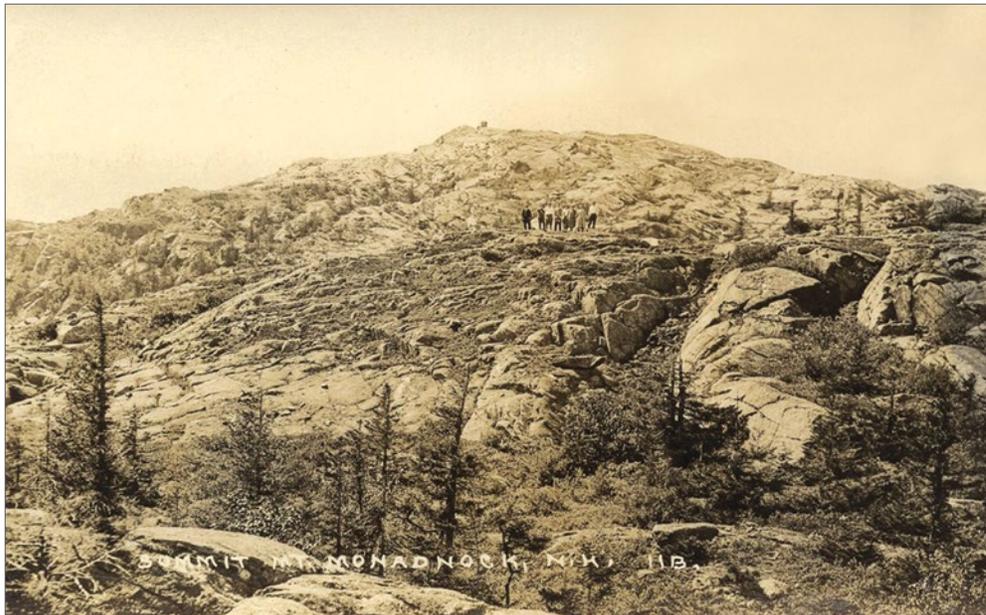
Jim Burden: "I wondered whether the life that was right for one was ever right for two!" On another occasion she lamented that "the heart of another is a dark forest, always, no matter how close it has been to one's own." What all this suggests is that Cather, a consummate artist of ambiguity, contained within herself multitudes—of gender, conviction, and attitude toward her readers. What is unambiguous is her lifelong commitment to art and artists, that special breed "recognizable by their pride and discontent," says Cather, "who are the Future, and who possess the treasure of creative power."

"I seem fated to send people on journeys," she remarked in an oft-quoted passage. Many of these are journeys of self-discovery. This helps, I think, to account for the intensely personal relationship she enjoys with her readers, myself among them. As a child of annoying precocity, a budding nonconformist in the tradition of Willa—or was it William—Cather, the headstrong girl who cut her hair like a boy, I lived barely an hour's drive from the picturesque New Hampshire village of Jaffrey Center. Thus I stumbled upon Cather's final resting place long before I was introduced to her life's work. It is a place of quiet majesty, shadowed by the nearby cone of Mount Monadnock. Even then I wondered why this artist synonymous with the Nebraska prairie should choose to lie in a bucolic Yankee churchyard.

In time I learned of Cather's special bonds to Jaffrey. For fifteen years she made the village a regular stop on her creative itinerary. She wrote much of *My Ántonia* in a tent pitched for her comfort in a local meadow. On other days she worked in a top-floor room of the Shattuck Inn from which she could gaze at Monadnock dressed in its autumn livery of scarlet and gold. Putting down her pen after a morning's labor, she took exercise by scaling the nearby peak, never without her dog-eared copy of Mathews's *Field Book of American Wild Flowers*.

By the time I reached college, I concluded it was time to make my own assault on Cather's literary mountain. Interested in tracing her evolution as an artist, I began one summer by reading a quartet of her novels, chronologically arranged from *Alexander's Bridge* through *My Ántonia*. Then, out of sequence, I opened *My Mortal Enemy* on a Saturday night. I finished it in a single sitting, around two in the morning, sufficiently rattled that I refused to turn out the lights before going to sleep. Next to Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, it remains the single most terrifying book I have ever read. Read it for yourself—preferably during daylight hours—and you will grasp the heartrending logic of Cather's assertion that there is such a thing as constructive hate.





A vintage postcard view of the summit of Mount Monadnock.

By now I was hooked. One reading of *Shadows on the Rock* sent me off to explore Cather's Quebec. I have returned often to Count Frontenac's frowning outpost above the Saint Lawrence. Each trip back has only deepened my historian's appreciation for Cather's insistence, far ahead of its time, that the essential life of Quebec could best be conveyed, not through swashbuckling commanders and scheming statesmen, but by obscure people—the seventeenth century equivalent of Shimerdas and Shabatas—pioneers of another era, whose perseverance was their heroism, and whose seemingly prosaic daily existence is more credible than the stilted confrontations preserved in more conventional accounts.

Still later, Cather would prompt me to discover Santa Fe. Then, in the summer of 2001, my colleagues at C-SPAN made it possible for me to visit Catherland. That experience, and all the living in the years since, has more than validated Stephen Tennant's assessment made shortly after Cather's death: "The great writer assuages and palliates some unanalyzable loneliness that lies deep within each human soul." He elaborates: "We know she is a great writer, not because we feel that she deals with epic themes, passions at white heat, or noble dramas, but because of the curious fact that with a few mild sentences and rather uneventful narrative she convinces us that our lives have given, and received, happiness."

Her own happiness was decidedly muted. A true citizen of the world, she was forced to look on as civilization tore itself apart—not once, but twice. The 1920s were given over to speed and standardization, flappers and flagpole sitters. The world broke in two around 1922, Cather memorably observed, and her popularity, coupled with her reluctance to swim the

political currents of a tortured decade, made her a target for the ideologically driven, those for whom literature must have social purpose to be legitimate. Even now, the word "elegiac" is often applied to her stories as a euphemism for nostalgia. Nonsense. I defy anyone to read her great middle-period novels—*A Lost Lady*, *The Professor's House* and *Death Comes For the Archbishop*—and find in their pages sentimentality or misplaced longing for a glorified past.

Yet even these triumphs came at a cost. "The great disadvantage about writing of the places you love," Cather confessed, is "that you lose your beloved places forever—that is, if you are a quiet

person who doesn't like publicity." In fact, she never returned to Quebec after the 1931 publication of *Shadows on the Rock*, or to New Mexico (except on a passing train) once she released *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. Inevitably death came for those she most cared for. First her parents. Then old friends from Red Cloud. In 1938 it claimed her beloved friend and cultural mentor Isabelle McClung Hambourg, for whom Cather said all her books had been written. Her favorite brother, Douglass, had died just four months earlier. "In great misfortunes people want to be alone," said Cather. Yet it is wrong, I believe, to consign her to the status of recluse. She was a rugged individualist, whose distress over "the new social restlessness" that accompanied the locust years of depression and political appeasement was unconcealed. "The revolt against individualism naturally calls artists severely to account," she fretted in 1936, "because the artist is of all men the most individual." And yet, far from retreating, Cather engaged life with her trademark intensity so long as her health permitted.

If you seek proof of Willa Cather's triumph over her postwar malaise, you will find it in what I regard as her finest novel. Published in 1925, *The Professor's House* compares favorably to two other books of landmark significance that also appeared that year. F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* offered an elegant indictment of unprincipled charisma grafted on to unbridled money lust and a counterfeit soul. In the realm of nonfiction, Walter Lippmann weighed in with *The Phantom Public*, an extended meditation on the shortcomings of American democracy. Blaming the average man for his averageness, he argued that one must not expect



too much from ordinary voters. “The public must be put in its place so that it may exercise its powers,” Lippmann conceded, “but no less and perhaps even more, so that each of us may live free of the trampling and the roar of a bewildered herd.”

Lippmann’s two cheers for American democracy stand in stark contrast to the midlife crisis experienced by Godfrey St. Peter, Cather’s world-weary professor at a Midwestern school. Author of a justly acclaimed eight-volume history of Spanish adventurers in the New World, St. Peter is not an old man, as conventionally measured, but he is aging rapidly under the trappings of success. These include a wife and daughters who confuse prosperity with purpose, petty faculty jealousies, and his own growing detachment from institutions and individuals alike. He refuses to leave his shabby study in the rented dwelling where he produced his magnum opus and raised his children to move into a fashionable house constructed with the newfound wealth generated by his epic.

To combat his lassitude, the Professor has only the memory of Tom Outland, a young protégé uncorrupted by the hugely valuable patents resulting from his scientific research. There is a purity of motive in Tom’s character, demonstrated by his discovery of an ancient cliff city whose invaluable contents he wanted donated to the Smithsonian, but which were sold by his partner while Tom was away in the nation’s capital. But Tom doesn’t live to see his nobility tested. He is killed in the Great War while fighting with the French Foreign Legion. He will remain forever young, unfinished, at once a source of inspiration and a potent rebuke to the fading academic who is more than a little envious of Tom’s ghost.

The crisis comes one afternoon in the Professor’s old study, which is heated by an unreliable stove that is safe only so long as a nearby window is open to ventilate the cramped space. Reflecting on his life, and the driving ambitions he has come to resent, St. Peter nods off. A storm blows the window shut. The room fills with gas. Dazed, cold, and flirting with death, he is rescued by his wife’s seamstress, a stalwart woman of simple faith and peasant shrewdness. Describing the scene, she reveals that the Professor tried to save himself, though he collapsed to the floor before he could reach the doorway to safety.

Therein lies the quiet epiphany of Cather’s story and, I believe, of Cather’s own will to go on. Godfrey St. Peter has faced extinction, and chosen life. In a seemingly casual aside, he equates Art and Religion—“they are the same thing, in the end, of course”—as the ultimate sources of human happiness. It is no accident that, as Cather aged, she became notably more sympathetic to the church. Her reading of history offered reassurance that mankind would discard its present death wish

even though she, like Godfrey St. Peter, might not live to share in the victory.

As a gifted historian herself, Cather understood that old people have at least as much to teach us as old papers. She distilled this truism in one of her later works, a tale of generational crossed signals called “Old Mrs. Harris.” The elderly protagonist of her story lives in a crowded Colorado house with a daughter and granddaughter too immersed in their own ambitions to pay much attention to “Grandma Harris.” They assume—or take for granted—that she will always be there to cook their meals over a wood-fed stove and read stories to the younger children. At night, tossing restlessly on a thin mattress in a cluttered passage that serves as her bedroom, the matriarch returns to the genteel Tennessee of her girlhood, to the private history and the pleasant memories sacrificed for her unthinking family. Yet she never complains. For she has lived long enough to make her peace with imperfection, physical decline, and death itself.

Her wisdom transcends their neglect. To be sure, it will take most of a lifetime for her granddaughter Vickie and Vickie’s mother to outgrow their self-absorption. But the day will come, writes Cather. “They will regret that they heeded her so little,” she says of old Mrs. Harris, “but they, too, will look into the eager, unseeing eyes of young people and feel themselves alone. They will say to themselves: ‘I was heartless, because I was young and strong and wanted things so much. But now I know.’”

Cather’s genius as a writer, the core of her art, is to expedite the process of knowing. I reflected on this the last time I visited Jaffrey, when the mystery of her final destination was at last resolved, to my satisfaction at least. Earlier I mentioned the dominance of Mount Monadnock in the vista that greets Cather admirers approaching the old burial ground. It is a singular mountain, part of no range, a geological aberration. The dictionary defines a monadnock as “a mountain or rocky mass that has resisted erosion and stands isolated in an essentially level area.” Can you think of a more appropriate setting for Willa Cather of Red Cloud, Pittsburgh, and 5 Bank Street—the Great American Novelist whose work has resisted the erosion of time and fashion, to tower over the landscape of her country’s literature? It is an image as striking as that of a Nebraska plow in a deserted field, etched against the setting sun.

This essay was originally presented, in slightly different form, as the keynote address at the 2015 Willa Cather Spring Conference, June 5, 2015.



Willa Cather and Augustus Saint-Gaudens: Idealism and the Artist

James A. Jaap | Pennsylvania State University, Greater Allegheny

Augustus Saint-Gaudens (1848–1907) is considered the greatest American sculptor of the late nineteenth century. The *Sherman Monument* in Central Park, the *Shaw Memorial* in Boston Common, and *Diana*, who once stood atop Madison Square Garden, are just three of the iconic works created by Saint-Gaudens. Willa Cather was a great admirer of the sculptor, and she refers to Saint-Gaudens and his sculptures in at least five different works. She uses a Saint-Gaudens medallion of Robert Louis Stevenson to

help set the scene at the opening of her story “The Professor’s Commencement.”

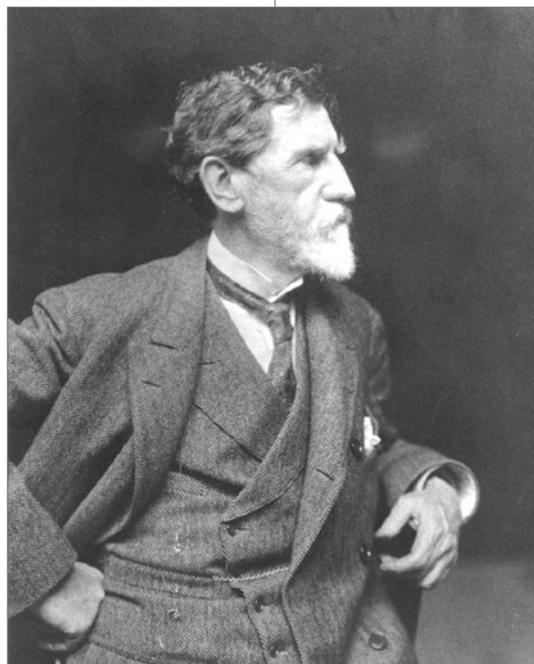
In “A Death in the Desert,” Katharine Gaylord makes a telling reference to *Diana*. In the version of “The Sculptor’s Funeral” included in *The Troll Garden*, Cather’s late sculptor Harvey Merrick is recalled gesturing to “the wings of the Victory” in his studio, which I believe is a direct reference to Saint-Gaudens’s famous *Sherman Monument*. In her story “The Namesake,” the sculptor Lyon Hartwell strongly evokes Saint-Gaudens himself. Finally, in *My Mortal Enemy*, *Diana* is referred to several times, and serves as an important symbol in the first half of the novel. Cather obviously knew and took a sustained interest in the life and work of Saint-Gaudens, including his engravings as well as his iconic sculptures. For Cather, the real-life Saint-Gaudens was the perfect representation of the artist whose pursuit of his craft, as with Hartwell and Merrick, takes precedence above all else. Cather’s allusions to specific works by Saint-Gaudens, the medallion of Robert Louis Stevenson and *Diana*, serve as important symbols of youth, innocence, and strength, and are crucial to understanding the characters and stories.

Augustus Saint-Gaudens was the most celebrated American sculptor of the nineteenth century. As Ann Romines has noted, Cather’s sculptor Lyon Hartwell of the 1907 story “The Namesake” bears both a physical and biographical similarity to Saint-Gaudens (25). Hartwell is described in the story as a “big man” with “big bronze-like shoulders . . . shaggy head, beaked nose, and long chin” (138–139), a description that could easily refer to

Saint-Gaudens. More important, however, is the similarity in their careers. Both Hartwell and Saint-Gaudens trained and lived in Paris, both mentored other artists, and both created powerful Civil War monuments. Although he was known for a variety of subjects, forms, and artistic media, Saint-Gaudens’s Civil War monuments are universally admired. These include the *Admiral David G. Farragut Memorial* in New York City’s Madison Square, *Abraham Lincoln: The Head of State* in Chicago’s Lincoln Park, the *General John Alexander Logan Memorial* in Chicago’s Grant Park, and the *General William Tecumseh Sherman Monument* in Grand Army Plaza in New York City. When describing Hartwell’s career, the narrator states the sculptor had “done so much in a field so amazingly difficult . . . had thrown up in bronze all the restless, teeming force of that adventurous wave still climbing westward in our own land across the waters. . . [and] had invested one and another . . . of the heroes of the Civil War with such convincing dignity and power” (139).

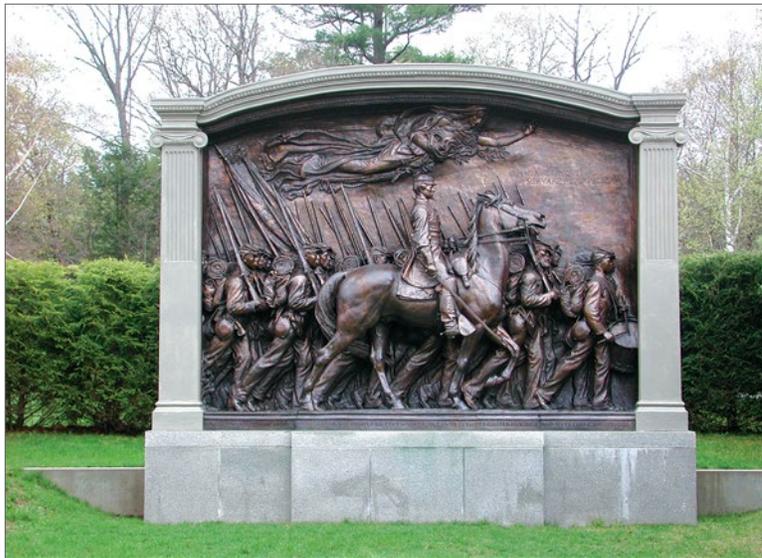
This description echoes the descriptions of Saint-Gaudens’s work, especially his Civil War monuments. For example, the *Robert Gould Shaw Memorial* in Boston, unveiled in 1897, commemorates the soldiers of the 54th

Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, the first Civil War regiment of African-Americans enlisted in the North to serve in the Union Army. In July 1863, the regiment led a charge on Fort Wagner, South Carolina, and many of the soldiers were killed, along with Shaw, their young white commander, who appears in the foreground of the sculpture. Saint-Gaudens took fourteen years to complete this sculpture, and the resulting bas-relief depicts the young commander riding alongside a company of African-American foot soldiers. They march onward, each individual focused on the battle ahead of him. The “hovering angel of death” above them holds an olive branch and poppies, symbols of victory and eternal sleep (Cox 309). When the memorial was first unveiled in 1897, one reviewer in *Century* called it “the most accomplished, the greatest work of plastic art America has yet produced” (312). In his speech at the dedication,



Augustus Saint-Gaudens, 1905.





The Shaw Memorial—cast version on the grounds of the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, Cornish, New Hampshire. Photo courtesy of the National Park Service.

philosopher William James noted that these soldiers were “warm-blooded champions of a better day for man” (quoted in Duncan 126). Saint-Gaudens had, in short, depicted these men with dignity and power. While Cather does not refer directly to the *Shaw Memorial*, in early 1907 when “The Namesake” was published, she was living not far from Boston Common, and she certainly would have seen the monument there. She also had referenced Saint-Gaudens and his work in two previous stories, “The Professor’s Commencement” and “The Sculptor’s Funeral.” Her sculptor Lyon Hartwell is, in many ways, based upon Saint-Gaudens.

Cather also likely had Saint-Gaudens in mind as one of the prototypes for the figure of another celebrated sculptor, Harvey Merrick, in the 1905 versions of the “The Sculptor’s Funeral.” According to Mildred Bennett, Merrick is based upon Charles Stanley Reinhart, a well-known Pittsburgh artist and illustrator (71). Reinhart’s Pittsburgh funeral was sparsely attended, despite his fame, and Cather reported the lack of appreciation for art in Pittsburgh, which she calls a “purely commercial town” (*The World and the Parish* 510). However, there is also a connection in the story to Saint-Gaudens. When the narrator Steavens reflects on the sculptor’s death, he recalls the time Merrick asked that his body be sent home. Recognizing how he would be criticized for his artistic life, Merrick stated, “The townspeople will come in for a look at me; and after they have had their say, I shan’t have much to fear from the judgment of God.” These lines appear in all versions of the story—the 1905 versions published in *McClure’s Magazine* and *The Troll Garden* as well the revision, published in 1920 in *Youth and the Bright Medusa*. In the earlier versions, however, Cather also includes the line, “The wings of the Victory, in there’—with a weak gesture toward his studio—‘will not shelter me.” (*The Troll Garden* 42). This is, I believe, a direct reference to Saint-Gaudens’s famous *Sherman Monument* that stands at the gate to Central Park.

Dedicated in 1903 after more than a decade of work, Saint-Gaudens’s statue depicts General Sherman on horseback being led by an allegorical figure of Victory. She is not hovering, but striding, as if she had just set foot on the ground. Kenyan Cox described her as having a “certain fierce wildness of aspect but her rapt gaze and half open mouth indicate the seer of visions: peace is ahead and an end of war.” She is, Cox declares, “an American Victory, as this is an American man on an American horse” (309). In the 1920 *Youth and the Bright Medusa* version of “The Sculptor’s Funeral,” Cather removed the line referring to Victory. I believe the reason relates directly to Saint-Gaudens. After 1907, Cather came to know several members of Saint-Gaudens’s family, including his niece, Rose Standish Nichols and his sister-in-law Annetta, and was even involved in a bit of a conflict with the sculptor’s wife Augusta regarding the publication of Saint-Gaudens’s letters in *McClure’s* in 1908. Removing the reference to Saint-Gaudens was likely a personal decision to distinguish the narrow-minded family of Harvey Merrick from the family of real-life sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens, a family she came to know in the years after the sculptor’s death.

Although she had referred to the sculptor in several stories, Cather’s first confirmed interaction with the Saint-Gaudens family occurred in late 1907, as *McClure’s* prepared to publish a series of letters by Saint-Gaudens. Cather edited these letters with the help of Saint-Gaudens’s niece, Rose Standish Nichols, an influential American landscape architect who wrote several books on European gardens. Cather was also at the center of a controversy with the sculptor’s wife over their publication. In a series of letters written between November 1907 and November 1908 Cather discusses the publication of the letters of Saint-Gaudens with Nichols. In a letter dated November 15, 1907, Cather writes that she would love to get together for dinner with Nichols, and two weeks later, on November 29, she expresses her excitement about the letters of Saint-Gaudens, asking if Nichols would be willing to “publish the articles at a fairly early date.” On December 9, Cather thanks Nichols for allowing *McClure’s* to publish the letters of Saint-Gaudens because she feels “a deep personal interest in them.” Although Cather originally hoped the letters would appear in the May or June 1908 editions of *McClure’s*, publication was slowed by the sculptor’s wife Augusta, who insisted on excising several portions of the letters. In a letter dated August 29, 1908, Cather writes, “Our troubles with Mrs. Saint Gaudens, it seems, are just beginning.” She has, Cather writes, “threatened us with an immediate injunction.” Soon, however, the issue would be resolved. According to a September 3 letter, after an intervention from painter William H. Low, an acquaintance of Cather and close friend of the sculptor, Mrs. Saint-Gaudens was appeased and the letters were to be published. On October 12, 1908, Cather writes to Nichols that she will be in Boston before long, and by then, “all our troubles about the letters will be over and we can

afford to laugh at them all.” The Saint-Gaudens letters were published in the October and November 1908 editions of *McClure’s*.

Cather’s other noted interaction with members of the Saint-Gaudens family occurred with the sculptor’s sister-in-law, Annetta Saint-Gaudens. Annetta was also a sculptor, as was her husband, the brother of Augustus, Louis Saint-Gaudens. In 1909, Annetta illustrated a book by an author named Maurice Johnson, and she sought Cather’s advice on book publishers. In an unpublished letter, Cather writes: “Dear Mrs. Saint-Gaudens; If you come to Boston please do not fail to let me see you. I shall be glad to be of any service to you that I can. Have you tried Small, Maynard & Co? I think they sometimes publish verses by unknown writers. I think ‘Songs of Pain and Renunciation’ much better than ‘Songs of a Cripple’ as a title.” Johnson and Annetta apparently did not take Cather’s advice: Johnson’s book was published as *Songs of a Cripple* in 1909 by Grafton Press, and begins with this chestnut from the opening poem, “Th’ Journey”: “O yes, sometimes I fall / Right over out my chair. / Don’t allus hurt a’tall, / Jes’ kind o’ makes me scare” (3). Amazingly, it was republished in 1924 as *Songs of Overcoming*.

These are two of the biographical connections Cather has to the Saint-Gaudens family. There may be others. I have found no evidence that Cather and Saint-Gaudens met. He and Mark Twain were fast friends and drinking buddies, but he was too ill to attend Twain’s seventieth birthday party at Delmonico’s in New York in 1905, which we know Cather attended. He died in August 1907. Cather’s first known letter to Rose Standish Nichols, from November 1907, indicates that the two had likely met previously; their correspondence continued until at least 1911. Cather also likely visited Saint-Gaudens’s famous art colony in Cornish, New Hampshire, only seventy miles from Jaffrey, where Cather stayed so often. Cather refers to the art colony in her story “Her Boss,”

published in *The Smart Set* in 1919. Harold, the playwright son of the main character Paul Wanning, “went to Cornish to be in an artistic atmosphere” (102). These interactions with the sculptor’s family and friends, and perhaps caution, are the reasons I believe Cather removed the reference to Saint-Gaudens’s *Victory* in the *Youth and the Bright Medusa* version of “The Sculptor’s Funeral.” Although Merrick is portrayed as a great artist like Saint-Gaudens, Merrick’s family is not portrayed so positively. By the time Cather republished the story in 1920, she knew the family, and likely did not want anything to suggest any biographical similarities between Saint-Gaudens’s family and the family of Harvey Merrick.

In addition to biographical details and connections, Cather refers to specific works by Saint-Gaudens. Her 1902 Pittsburgh story, “The Professor’s Commencement,” begins as Professor Emerson Graves sits “at his library table at six o’clock in the morning. . . his eyes were fixed unseeingly on the St. Gaudens medallion of Stevenson on the opposite wall.” Graves’s library, decorated with photographs of paintings by “Burne-Jones, Rossetti, Corot, and a dozen others,” “testified to the superior quality of his taste in art as well as to his wide and varied scholarship” (*Collected Short Fiction* 283). Of all of the artists listed, only Saint-Gaudens’s work is specifically referred to by name. Although he was most known for his monuments, Saint-Gaudens also created a number of smaller, bas-relief portraits; the Stevenson medallion was his most famous. The first completed portrait, which appeared in 1889, was a circular medallion, thirty-six inches in diameter. Included on the medallion is a quotation from Stevenson’s 1887 poetry collection, *Underwoods*, specifically, poem XI, “To Will. H. Low,” which concludes: “Life is over, life was gay: / We have come the primrose way.” The Stevenson medallion was so successful that Saint-Gaudens had it reduced and copied for resale many times, first as a seventeen-inch version, and then as a twelve-inch version (Tolles 69–70).

It should not be a surprise that Cather knew the Stevenson medallion. We know that from her youth, she adored Stevenson, calling him, in 1895, “the king and father of them all” (“Anthony Hope: Modern Times in Zenda” 6). Stevenson, she wrote soon after his death in 1894, “gave the world an outlook beyond the rigid horizons of social life, of something new, fresh, unheard of, full of brilliant color and rugged life” (“Stevenson: King and Father” 13). In her “The Passing Show” column of Oct. 30, 1897, Cather discusses dining with artist William H. Low prior to the opening of the 1897 Carnegie Exhibition in Pittsburgh, arranging to meet him “Not because he was Will H. Low, but because he was Robert Louis Stevenson’s dearest and nearest friend.” As the two are sitting at dinner, Cather brings up the topic of Stevenson, and Low’s “genial dinnertable expression left his face in a moment.” He gave her a “penetrating look and then dropped his grave eyes to the plate.” Although Stevenson’s death was still painful to Low, he proceeded



The unveiling of the Sherman Monument at Grand Army Plaza in New York City, 1903. Photo from the Robert L. Bracklow Collection, New-York Historical Society.



“to talk of nothing else that evening.” Cather then quotes several lines from Stevenson’s poem dedicated to Low, poem XI of *Underwoods*, the very same poem inscribed on Saint-Gaudens’s medallion of Stevenson: “Life is over, Life was gay: / We have come the primrose way” (3). Although we cannot pinpoint where and when she came to know it, Cather obviously was familiar with Saint-Gaudens’s famous medallion of Stevenson.

The Stevenson medallion is significant to “The Professor’s Commencement.” As he stares at it on the day of his retirement, Graves feels a sense of satisfaction with his career, identifying in some ways with Stevenson, as a kindred spirit. Despite his frailty, Stevenson was a man of adventure who experienced and lived life, and at the beginning of the story, Graves views his own life in much the same way; he has been the noble knight, fighting against Pittsburgh’s industrial machine to bring an appreciation for art and literature to his students. When his sister Agatha questions his impact, the professor quotes Horace, thus comparing himself to Stevenson and the Saint-Gaudens medallion—“I have builded myself a monument more lasting than brass” (285). After he fails at his recitation at his retirement event, however, Graves recognizes his life’s work as a failure. “I was not made to shine,” he says to his sister, “for they put a woman’s heart in me” (291). By the end of the story, Graves realizes that his own work is in many ways meaningless, and he is faced with his reality; unlike Stevenson, who was able to create to become a great author, he remains passive and falters. His monument is no more valuable or lasting than brass. His students will return to the Pittsburgh steel mills, and his battle against Pittsburgh’s industrial machine has been lost. At first, Graves equates his own life with that of Stevenson; by the end, that comparison is no longer possible.

Two final references to the work of Saint-Gaudens, specifically his famous sculpture of Diana, occur in the story “A Death in the Desert” and in the novel *My Mortal Enemy*. Perfectly balanced with her bow drawn, Saint-Gaudens’s gilded *Diana* debuted

atop the tower of New York City’s Madison Square Garden in 1891. Commissioned by architect Stanford White, a friend and collaborator of Saint-Gaudens, the original sculpture stood eighteen feet tall and weighed nearly 2,000 pounds. At 347

feet above street level, *Diana* was the highest point in New York, forty-two feet above the Statue of Liberty. Because of its immense weight, *Diana* did not rotate as planned, and White and Saint-Gaudens realized the figure was out of proportion for the building. *Diana* was removed about a year after her debut and sent to Chicago to be exhibited at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, where she ended up on the roof of the fair’s Agricultural building; the Women’s Christian Temperance Union in Chicago objected to her being placed above the Women’s Pavilion. Saint-Gaudens’s second, smaller version was placed atop Madison Square Garden on November 18, 1893, where it stood over for over three decades. The work is thirteen feet high, weighs 1,500 pounds, and is made of thin sheets of hollow hammered copper. When it first was put on display, *Diana* was immediately praised for its balance and perfection. The statue, however, soon stirred controversy. The depiction of the goddess of chastity seemed anything but chaste as it stood nude atop Madison Square, and local officials began calling the work immoral. For example, Anthony Comstock, the renowned anti-obscenity crusader, demanded the statue be removed. In response, White and Saint-Gaudens designed a gilded drapery to cover Diana’s nudity. But within weeks, the drapery blew away, much to the delight of Saint-Gaudens (Uruburu 68). In 1925, when the Garden was demolished to make way for the New York Life Insurance Building, *Diana* was removed and stored in a warehouse. The statue was presented to the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1932, where it has been prominently displayed ever since.

Cather refers to the famous *Diana* twice in her fiction. In “A Death in the Desert,” Everett, the brother of the famous composer Adriance Hildgarde, calls upon his brother’s former student Katharine Gaylord, who is dying of cancer in Wyoming. In the version of the story that appears in *The Troll Garden*, Katharine pummels him with questions about New York: “How does it look and taste and smell just now? . . . Who conspicuously walks the Rialto now, and what does he or she wear? Are the trees still green in Madison Square, or have they grown brown and dusty? Does the chaste Diana on the Garden Theatre still keep her vestal vows through all the exasperating changes of weather?” (64). Cather revised the story for her 1920 collection *Youth and the Bright Medusa*, altering numerous passages. However, she retained the reference to Saint-Gaudens’s *Diana* (while deleting the mention of her place “on the Garden Theatre”). To Katharine, sick and dying alone in Wyoming, *Diana* is part of a sequence of items that remind her of New York. For her, the sculpture represents youth, culture, and sophistication, specifically New York, which stands in opposition to the rural world of Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Unlike those in “A Death in the Desert,” the references to Diana in *My Mortal Enemy* are not buried in a string of questions



The Stevenson Medallion, from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.



Diana at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, before her 2013–2014 regilding.

related to New York. Rather, the sculpture is referred to twice, and serves as the central metaphor for the first half of the novel, a symbol associated with Myra Henshawe. She is the huntress in her elopement with Oswald, and in New York, although married, Myra still shares some of the qualities of the mythological Diana—mobility, independence, a coterie of female friends and companions. However, after the couple’s exile from New York City in the second half of the novel, *Diana* is replaced by the ebony crucifix, significantly, the image of a suffering, dying, immobilized man that Myra carries with her. While not mentioned at the conclusion, Saint-Gaudens’s *Diana* stands above Nellie’s recollection of the Henshawes in a better, more innocent time.

The first reference to *Diana* occurs in the early part of the novel. Nellie is walking through Madison Square with Myra and describes the scene on Christmas Eve as one of idealized beauty, a place far from the harshness of winter. On this night, Madison Square, she recalls, “seemed to me so neat, after the raggedness of our Western cities; so protected by good manners and courtesy—like an open-air drawing-room.” Here, “the trees and shrubbery seemed well-groomed and sociable, like pleasant

people.” Everything about the place recalls order, sophistication and culture. “Madison Square Garden,” Nellie recalls, “new and spacious then, looked to me so light and fanciful, and Saint Gaudens’ Diana, of which Mrs. Henshawe had told me, stepped out freely and fearlessly into the grey air” (34). The Christmas Eve dinner party that evening at their apartment does nothing to alter Nellie’s idealistic view; “Everything in their little apartment seemed to me absolutely individual and unique, even the dinner service.” She “was sure there were no others like them in the world” (37). The second reference occurs the next morning, Christmas morning, when Oswald calls on Aunt Lydia and Nellie to walk them to church. Nellie writes, “as we stepped out of our hotel that morning, the sun shone blindingly on the snow-covered park, the gold Diana flashed against a green-blue sky.” Nellie thus associates Diana with Myra; both are individual, unique, and one of a kind. In many ways, they symbolize the new, vibrant, and romantic world of New York.

In the second half of the novel, however, the gilded Diana is replaced by the ebony crucifix. The Henshawes have fallen on hard times, and they meet Nellie in a run-down apartment building in a “sprawling overgrown West-coast city,” far from the sophistication and culture of New York City (71). Myra has embraced the strict Catholicism into which she was born, and she “kept beside her now an ebony crucifix with an ivory Christ.” This becomes precious to Myra, a symbol of all she gave up, a symbol of the suffering she now understands as an adult but did not understand at the time of her youthful elopement. Nellie relates that “when I picked it up from her bed to straighten her sheet, she put out her hand quickly and said: ‘Give it to me. It means nothing to people who haven’t suffered’” (109). Later, when they find her body near the sea, Myra is holding the ebony crucifix in her hands. In the hours leading to her death, when she secretly hires a cab to take her to a favorite spot on a high cliff, Myra achieves some of the qualities of Diana again. Finally, she is mobile, independent, alone and above it all, like the naked Diana, looking down upon all of New York. At the book’s conclusion, Oswald remembers the past, and Diana, although not specifically referenced, stands above it all: “Remember her as she was when you were with us on Madison Square, when she herself and we were happy” (120–121). For Oswald and Nellie, Saint-Gaudens’s *Diana* represents life, joy, happiness, a more innocent time before the sickness and poverty and regret that Myra feels at the end. For Nellie, *Diana* represents a time of idealism in an era of sophistication, a more innocent time, before both she and Myra were banished to a raw, struggling Western town. In 1925, *Diana* was removed as Madison Square Garden was demolished. We can assume Cather was not happy with the removal of this sculpture; perhaps this is the reason the statue is such a crucial symbol in the first half of her 1926 novel, *My Mortal Enemy*.





Saint-Gaudens's second Diana atop Madison Square Garden, ca. 1905. Photo from the H. A. Dunne Archive.

It should be obvious that Willa Cather admired the life and work of Augustus Saint-Gaudens. The several biographical connections to the sculptor in her stories “The Namesake” and “The Sculptor’s Funeral” indicate her knowledge of the artist and his family. Moreover, Cather’s allusions to specific works by Saint-Gaudens, specifically the medallion of Robert Louis Stevenson in “The Professor’s Commencement” and *Diana* in “A Death in the Desert” and *My Mortal Enemy*, express her admiration and knowledge of his work, and symbolize for each character an illusion associated with youthful innocence. Emerson Graves in “The Professor’s Commencement” equates the Stevenson medallion with his own career, only to finally realize that for the retiring teacher there will be no lasting monument. In “A Death in the Desert” and *My Mortal Enemy*, *Diana* represents the sophistication and culture of New York, as well as the strength and innocence associated with youth. By the conclusions of both pieces, Katharine and Myra and Nellie have all lost that innocence due to time or illness, and *Diana* stands above New York’s Madison Square now only in their memories. These allusions and references to Saint-Gaudens, however, signify more than simply a prototype. The life of Saint-Gaudens was one spent in pursuit of artistic perfection, and, like Cather’s Lyon Hartwell, Saint-Gaudens was “a man who had done so much in a field so amazingly difficult” (“The Namesake” 139). Clearly, Willa Cather was among his admirers.

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Death Does Not Come for the Professor: Investigating the Significance of Brahms's *Requiem* in *The Professor's House*

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Cather's interest in and appreciation of music, especially that of a dramatic nature, is well known. In *The Professor's House*, music, specifically Cather's allusion to Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem* in the third section of the novel, plays an important role for multiple reasons. First, there are a number of structural parallels. As John Hilgart writes, both the novel and the requiem exhibit a "concentration of the values [both artists] sought elsewhere in life: discipline, formal structure, and stability" (378). Brahms's music provides a structural platform for the "academic sonata . . . handled somewhat freely" that Cather was attempting to reconstruct in her novel (*On Writing* 31). Overall, the novel follows the sonata form (ABA'). Further, the third section of the novel parallels the third movement of the *Requiem*, which is directly referred to by Cather in the first chapter of that section. Just as the third movement of the *Requiem* comprises five sections, Cather gives us five chapters in the final section of the novel. These sections exhibit not only structural similarities, but also parallels in tone and thematic elements.

Cather was familiar with Brahms's music and regarded his craft with great respect. While there is no direct evidence of Cather attending a particular performance of the *Requiem*, the complete work was first performed in New York in 1877, and by 1888 had been performed in a number of U.S. cities (Thuleen). It is not unreasonable to believe that Cather would have heard the *Requiem* in either Pittsburgh or New York while she was living in those cities. There are specific records of additional performances of the *Requiem* by various musical groups in New York in 1904 and 1912, for example. Cather heard numerous performances of Brahms's music, and she admired the depth of the German composer's art even as a young adult. In reviewing a recital of Rafael Joseffy (1899) in which he played the F minor piano sonata, Cather praised Brahms and his musical ideas, writing about "the teeming fertility of his brain, from which thought comes, not a clear and lucid stream, but it gushes torrent-wise, confused and confounded by its own turbulence and mass." She goes on to remark that when Brahms is played poorly it is because the performers are "not equal to this system of

prodigious intellectual gymnastics" (*The World and the Parish* 614). Later evidence supports Cather's lasting affinity for the music of Brahms. In 1934 she wrote to Alfred Knopf requesting tickets for the New York Philharmonic's performances of the "Brahms Cycle."

Given Cather's broad knowledge and memory of music and her respect for Brahms's music in particular, it is unlikely that her direct reference to the *Requiem* in *The Professor's House* is



Johannes Brahms (1833–1897) ca. 1865.



simple happenstance. The intentionality of structural parallels between the music and the novel may be speculative, but these parallels are significant enough to consider, especially knowing that Cather was highly committed to incorporating form and organizational principles from music into her fiction, since the conclusions of both the music and the novel offer comforting solace in the face of death and loss. Perhaps most importantly, Cather's choice to allude to the choral piece at a crucial juncture in her text parallels Brahms's "choice of biblical literature" to address the important concept of "exile communities" and further, as a call to "grieve patiently while looking forward to the promise of future destiny" (Faux and Rayl 21). I propose that Cather mimics the theme and the structure of Brahms's musical work in order to prepare Professor St. Peter (and the reader) to come to terms with the life ahead of him, although she has spent the majority of the novel depicting St. Peter's preparations to relinquish his material world. The text of the *Requiem* functions as a double sacrament—of Reconciliation (also known as Penance) and Anointing of the Sick (formerly known as Last Rites or Extreme Unction). St. Peter's "moment of acute, agonized strangulation" does indeed allow him to "let something go" (282). It is a cleansing ritual that rids him of his rancor and resentment; in religious terms it can be seen as an absolution from sin. His near-death experience becomes a rite of passage from the overwrought material world he wishes to reject toward a spiritual and physical reconciliation—a marriage between the secular and the sacred.

Thematically, the *Requiem* works in concert with the novel on several levels. A "requiem" is a service performed for the dead, or the musical setting that forms a part of this service. Brahms, though an agnostic, turned directly to the Bible in choosing his own text, eschewing a traditional Catholic liturgy. Brahms's agnosticism parallels Godfrey's "free of god" nomenclature and ambivalence in his own religious faith. Cather implies that St. Peter has also eschewed practices of religious observation, if not his faith in God. He confesses to Augusta: "You'll never convert me back to the religion of my fathers now." And he admits that he needs her to remind him of "when it's All Souls' day, or Ember day, or Maundy Thursday" (25). The Brahms work, as Daniel Beller-McKenna writes, also gives expression to "a liberal, secularized form of faith" (10). Part of the reason musical scholars have long considered the piece to be "universal" in its scope and popularity and to be "less like sacred music and more like absolute music" has to do with "the Requiem's confessional neutrality" (Beller-McKenna 16). The term "absolute music" is, interestingly, a Wagnerian one, defined as "music that is free of any explicit connection with words, beyond simple indications

of tempo and genre." Wagner used the term to condemn any music that lacked the "solid basis in poetry and drama" that he considered necessary (Randel 1). He believed that music should not be segregated from the dramatic and theatrical dimensions of the kind of operatic drama for which he was known. If indeed there were a "Brahms-Wagner dichotomy" (Beller-McKenna 17) that Cather might have embedded within her novel, then the Professor represents a reliance on steady, conservative, traditional forms of production (his many years at the university, his volumes of historical analysis, his conventional family) and Tom Outland represents the revolutionarily dramatic artistry illustrated in Wagner's radical theatrical music-drama. Musically speaking, "Romanticism was seen as a revolt against the limitations of Classicism" (Grout and Palisca 664), just as Tom's impulsive responses to the Cliff City relics and to homogenized Washington culture, as well as his forward-looking invention, might be considered "Outland-ish," defiant—even boldly progressive. Tom is innovative; Godfrey is conventional. On balance, it could be said about Cather's construction what a musical scholar notes about Brahms: "His style is romantic, but his form is classic," and in him the two "fused harmoniously" (Ewen 104). Likewise, St. Peter and Tom formed a harmonious relationship in spite of their differences.

The *Requiem* seems a particularly appropriate piece with which to end the novel and St. Peter's meditations upon the events within it. Significantly, the work "has for its text not the liturgical words of the Latin Requiem Mass, but biblical passages of meditation and solace in German" (Grout and Palisca 679), chosen by Brahms himself. "Brahms and his German contemporaries inherited a culture in which it was possible to be 'religious' in a broad, non-dogmatic sense, without holding to the particular tenets of Christianity" (Beller-McKenna 7). His decision to use Luther's Bible (one of the earliest influential translations of the Bible into a vernacular language, in this case German) for his text seemingly indicates his intent to dedicate the piece to people of all races, languages and religions. "Whatever else Brahms may have intended by the unusual title of his piece, ostensibly at least, the word 'deutsch' refers to the substitution of the familiar Latin with the German vernacular. To write a 'German' requiem, after all, is to supplant a foreign text, a willful replacement of Latin with German, and of Catholic with Lutheran" (Beller-McKenna 8). This choice, in particular, to replace the traditional Catholic liturgy with the secularized vernacular, was a controversial one at the time the *Requiem* was written in the 1860s and the first (partial) performance of the piece, on December 1, 1867, in Vienna, was met with a cool critical reception. Subsequently, Brahms wrote to his editor in May 1868, "In my opinion, the text must be printed

This page from the score of Brahms's Ein deutsches Requiem shows a portion of the fugue section of the third movement, "Herr, lehre doch mich." Readers of music will note the continuously held (or repeated) low note in the organ, low strings, low brass, and contrabassoon, as well as the turmoil in the moving parts of the upper strings, woodwinds, and choral lines. Here in one passage, the "steadfast eternity of the solid earth, or God" contrasts with "the chaos of the human condition." (Score page from the German Requiem in Full Score.)

at the head of the full score and of the piano score" (quoted in Faux and Rayl 20), illustrating his view that the biblical text should be the "foundational starting point" (20) of the piece. Brahms insists, with both these stated intentions, upon *integrating* the secular with the sacred—just as Cather finally allows St. Peter to do.

In seeking to make sense of his world, St. Peter muses on the happenstance nature of his connection to Tom Outland: "his strange coming, his strange story, his devotion, his early death and posthumous fame" had all been "a stroke of chance." Just as it was "fantastic" that Tom (the "tramp boy") could "amass a fortune for someone whose name he had never heard" (258), the Brahms work echoes Tom's worldly experience and St. Peter's imagined version of his own final reconciliation before God (or God's equivalent). Tom's strange posthumous accumulation of material wealth is paralleled in "that curiously bitter burst from the barytone" that the Professor recalls: "*He heapeth up riches and cannot tell who shall scatter them!*" (258; readers will note that the translated phrase more commonly concludes ". . . who shall *gather* them").

The verses of Psalm 39, from which the passage above is taken, illustrate further profound parallels between the Professor's life and the choral piece: "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is: that I may know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee. . . . Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them" (all translations of biblical texts in this essay, except where noted, are from the King James Version). Tom heaped up his ideas, his loves, and his relics and never knew who was to inherit or profit from them in the end. Even more striking is the allusion to those people in St. Peter's



life who are “nothing” spiritually in spite of how securely they live, materially.

Musical scholars point out that listeners will “encounter palpable moments of discomfort and even anxiety” in the opening measures of the *Requiem*, which “seem at odds with any pervading atmosphere of consolation for the living.” In fact, the “throbbing low Fs suggest a feeling of deep foreboding” (Faux and Rayl 18). Similarly, the scene in which the Professor almost allows himself to be asphyxiated offers as much distress as consolation, for instead of getting up and undoing the “long-anticipated coincidence” he wonders: “How far was a man required to exert himself against accident? How would such a case be decided under English law?” (276). Even while acknowledging that he may have half-intentionally given himself permission to expire, his first two concerns are about societal expectations and legal requirements—not about squaring himself with God and moral rightness. Secular preoccupations are valued over spiritual concerns here.

Structural parallels between *The Professor's House* and Brahms's music are also striking. The tripartite organization of the novel follows the model of a musical sonata. A sonata generally has three sections: the exposition (presentation of themes or musical ideas), development (of those themes), and recapitulation (of the original material, sometimes with varied details). As a shift into the recapitulation of the sonata form, the third section of Cather's novel reuses the materials of Books I and II, embellishes and dramatizes them, and comes to a form of reconciliation. As St. Peter has used his desk and his work as “a shelter one could hide behind” (159) in the face of physical and emotional exhaustion at the hands of daughters distorted by the material world into “terrifying” (81) hauteur and “green . . . envy” (85), he finds a form of refuge in the third section. Appropriately focused, as its title suggests, on the crisis of “The Professor,” this section makes use of a musical analogy for perhaps its most incisive trope. St. Peter's contemplations near the end of his solitary summer, while his family is in France, bring him “often” to a section of Brahms's *Requiem*, the “vehemence” of which seemed unnecessary until he places it in the context of “the history of his own family” (258). Psalm 39, “understood by nineteenth-century Lutherans to have been written by King David on his deathbed, is a personal reflection on the triviality of life” (Faux and Rayl 23): “Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days. . . .” Appropriately, the speaker (King David, Brahms or St. Peter) turns away from the material world for his answer: “And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee.”

Structurally, the third movement of the *Requiem*, for baritone soloist and chorus, is made up of of A, B, C, D sections

and a fugue, paralleling the five chapters in the final section of the novel. The A, B, and C sections are each introduced by the solo male baritone, and then repeated and elaborated by the chorus. Interestingly, Cather tells us that Tom's voice is “singularly individual . . . seldom varying in pitch, but full of slight, very moving modulations” (124), which recalls the novel's reconstruction of a musical sonata while also registering the *Requiem's* baritone solo. Also, “Tom Outland's Story” is narrated in the first person, paralleling the male soloist. As part of the process of integrating his reluctantly embraced spiritual life with his half-rejected material life, St. Peter, in this last section of the novel, must come to terms with his two ostensibly incompatible loves as well. Appropriately, that initial recognition occurs in the first chapter of the third section. “He had had two romances: one of the heart, which had filled his life for many years, and a second of the mind—of the imagination.”



Brahms in 1889.



Tom Outland's having "brought him a kind of second youth" makes it necessary for him to adapt himself to these "new effects of light" (258).

This brings us to the significance of another artistic allusion in this chapter: the great monument to Delacroix, in the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris. St. Peter grapples with the accidental nature of so many facets of life in the first chapter of Book III, noting that Tom "had been a stroke of chance he couldn't possibly have imagined" (257). He regrets that he did not have the chance to take Tom with him to France, specifically to "stand with him before the monument to Delacroix and watch the sun gleam on the bronze figures—Time, bearing away the youth who was struggling to snatch his palm—or was it to lay a palm?" With an emphasis on the transient nature of time and life, and the haphazard nature of "one great catastrophe" which could sweep away "all youth and all palms, and almost Time itself" (260–61), this allusion to Delacroix's sculpture reinforces St. Peter's profound grief over the elusive and unattainable. The first section of the third movement of the *Requiem* draws upon the Psalm 39 passage already quoted ("Lord, make me to know mine end . . ."). The mood here, reflecting the feeling of the first chapter in Book III of the novel, is plaintive and self-reflective.

The second chapter of this final section of the novel is a tribute to Tom and what he represented, written with nostalgic tenderness, but also as an acceptance of the futility of this world. St. Peter seems to seek an erasure of his own identity. In the B (or second) section of the *Requiem*'s third movement, Brahms cites one of the passages from Psalm 39 discussed earlier—"mine age is as nothing before thee"—here presented at greater length and in a more literal translation: "Ah how absolutely nothing is all mankind, who nevertheless so securely live. They go about like a shadow-figure (vain shadows) and create for themselves much useless (unrest) turmoil (anxiety; agitation); they hoard and know not who it all inherit will (collect things without knowing who will 'get' their possessions)" (Hewitt-Didham 2). Likewise, Cather's novel reveals the tone of relinquishment and a kind of weary acceptance of fate. St. Peter feels that, after he left his "primitive" child self behind in Kansas, "all the years" of his adult life "had been accidental and ordered from the outside" (264–65). If one life had indeed been "grafted" (267) over another, and even if St. Peter recognizes that one life was false, this contemplative chapter allows St. Peter to come to terms with a dichotomous identity. Later, he will acknowledge that he had fallen "out of love" and that he was simultaneously "falling out of all domestic and social relations . . . [but] in trying to see where he had made his mistake," St. Peter subconsciously gives

up on his secular existence: "He lit the stove and lay down on the couch" and falls into a deep sleep (275–76).

Chapter three signals a gesture toward the future: St. Peter thinks of where he might travel next. "Next summer? The Professor wondered. . . ." Yet he can scarcely imagine any future but a pilgrimage to "Outland's country [with] sculptured peaks and impassable mountain passes" (270). Allegorically, this short third chapter recalls the journey of Everyman and reinforces the importance of the third movement of Brahms's work. Brahms's C (third) section of the *Requiem*'s third movement is also quite short, notably paralleling a philosophical question about the nature of the future. Brahms sets the text: "And now, Lord, what wait I for?" While this section becomes more musically urgent, Cather also calls upon epically proportioned allusions—the Rock of Ages, Notre Dame Cathedral, and Napoleon's empire—to give scope to St. Peter's empirically directed but spiritually directionless rudder.

The fourth chapter is about renunciation and withdrawal. St. Peter "didn't belong there" (272), and we note Cather's ambiguity about the antecedent for "there." While "there" is clearly his second house (his "domicile") the term might also refer to his routine, his life. While he can "remember a time when the loneliness of death had terrified him," he now "thought of eternal solitude with gratefulness; as a release from every obligation, from every form of effort" (272), but he does so without any rancor or fear. Likewise, the D section of Brahms's movement is explicit about the speaker's confidence in giving over his faith to a higher power, for he cries in confidence and dramatic resolve: "my hope is in thee." While the source in which St. Peter places his faith is not so clear as for the speaker in the musical work, he has decided that his fate is not for him to determine. Lighting the stove, falling asleep (and even at one point half cognizant of the "long-anticipated coincidence" of the window shutting), he makes no overt move to remove himself from the gas: "But suppose he did not get up—?" (276), he wonders. Later, he thinks to himself: "when he was confronted by accidental extinction, he had felt no will to resist, but had let chance take its way" (282).

The contrapuntal lines of the fugue in Brahms's final section of the movement have been described as depicting the chaos of the human condition. Cather parallels the theme again in the fifth (and final) chapter of the third book of her novel by emphasizing the contamination, dislocation and disappointment of the Professor's material "accidental" life. One of the most remarkable moments in the *Requiem*—"and in all of music history"—involves "a fugue written over one long pedal point (a low D)," which has been ushered in by "rising triplet figures



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and trumpets” (Rushton). This continuously held low note (the “pedal point”) in the fugue section can alternatively be interpreted as representing either the steadfast eternity of the solid earth, or God. Either way, musically, it evokes St. Peter’s return to the foundation of his “solitary” childhood self: “He was earth, and would return to earth” (265). The lyrics read: “But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them” (from *Wisdom of Solomon*). St. Peter has literally placed his life in the “hands” of Augusta. The person closest to spirituality and faith—and in his mind, to God—inserts herself into St. Peter’s “fated” sleep and arouses him from his metaphysical stupor. Augusta “had always been a corrective, a remedial influence” (279) and in this case too she returns him to earth and life.

Cather’s allusive turn in this last section of the novel to a musical composition that is dramatic, and musically and lyrically parallel to St. Peter’s life, finds its source in an appropriate blend of the secular and the sacred. Moreover, in this novel and others, she repeatedly invokes “religion in connection with art” (Hilgart 378). Brahms’s *Requiem*, like Cather’s novel, serves as a vehicle to blend the reverential and the “personal utterance . . . of grief and solace” (Ewen 105, my emphasis). Regarding issues of balance, Cather wrote to Robert Josephy at Knopf on June 26, 1925, that she liked the jacket design for *The Professor’s House* “fairly well,” adding that she “had hoped for something simple in design and brilliant in color” (*Selected Letters* 371). In regard to the content of the novel, she had written to her friend Irene Miner Weisz earlier that year that she was happy that Weisz “got at once the really fierce feeling that lies behind the rather dry and impersonal manner of the telling” (366). It cannot have been accidental that Cather chose to punctuate her simple but precise design with reference to a composer known for his reverence for traditional forms and precedents as well as for his colorful, brilliant, and fierce expression of feeling. In fact, various critics originally described *Ein deutsches Requiem* as “lacking in emotion and sensuality” while others disparaged its “contemplative tone . . . overflowing with fervent appeal” (Thuleen 3). More recently, it has been noted that the thoughtful solemnity of the content of Brahms’s *Requiem* is balanced by an “intensity of feeling” (Grout and Palisca 679). In this way too, it is not unlike Cather’s novel. The “regulated” and “formal architecture” of the music can be said to be “clothed with the opulent colors of nineteenth century harmony” (679). For a writer steeped in the literary and musical traditions of the nineteenth century, it is no surprise that Cather too arrives at “just the right blend of tradition and future” (Rushton 2) in her experiment with form and feeling in *The Professor’s House*.

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Cather Exhibit at Sheldon Museum of Art

A major attraction of the 2015 International Seminar, which focused on Cather and the arts, was a striking exhibit at the Sheldon Museum of Art, on the University of Nebraska–Lincoln campus. Entitled “Willa Cather: The Writer’s Pictorial Imagination,” the exhibit, which included a fascinating variety of paintings, works on paper, photographs, and ephemera, remained on view throughout the summer, offering museum visitors multiple opportunities to explore Cather’s connections to the visual arts through public education programming such as gallery talks, walking tours, and a “family day.” Here UNL PhD student Lindsay Andrews, who co-curated the exhibit with Elizabeth Burke of the Cather Project and Ashley Hussman of the Sheldon, gives us a view of some of its highlights.



The Song of the Lark (1884) by Jules Breton, oil on canvas, from the Art Institute of Chicago. Wikimedia Commons photo.

Narrowing the scope of “Willa Cather’s Pictorial Imagination” was one of the most difficult aspects of staging the exhibit. The objects that ended up in the gallery were intended to capture fragments of Cather’s familiarity with painting and to show how she implemented that knowledge within her writing, from her student days to the 1920s, when she emerged as a major, Pulitzer Prize-winning American writer. Three highlights are illustrated here.

The heart of the exhibit was Jules Breton’s luminous painting, *The Song of the Lark* (1884), on loan from the Art Institute of Chicago. Not only could visitors view the same masterpiece that stunned Thea Kronborg in *The Song of the Lark*, but they could also see the Barbizon style that inspired Cather early in her writing career. In this school of painting, compositions are often hazy, asymmetrical, using robust brushwork and earthen palettes to capture rural landscapes and the dignity of peasant life. Cather’s 1902 sojourn in Europe (and particularly in Barbizon, France) was an important marker in the maturation of her “visual writing.” After this visit, her prose

began to convey the quiet integrity of rural toil, prefiguring her sympathetic portrayals of hard-working and multicultural Great Plains communities in *O Pioneers!* and *My Ántonia*.

William Merritt Chase’s *Interior* (ca. 1912) reflects the impressionist style that emerged in France in the 1870s and became popular in America. Impressionism focused on ordinary subject matter and used small, visible brush strokes to convey changing qualities of light. Significantly, Chase had Nebraska connections. He mentored both Cora Parker



(whose work was also included in the exhibit) and Sarah Shewell Hayden, both influential figures in the Lincoln art scene of the 1890's, when Cather was a student there and beginning to write about art. Cather was familiar with Chase, encountering his work as early as 1900 when she reviewed exhibits at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh. She praised him as "an admirable colorist . . . he believes that there is a sort of divinity in color itself."

Although most of the exhibit celebrated Cather's own artistry as a writer, we also included a few portraits, which highlight moments when Cather was the *subject* of the artwork and was actively involved in the curation of her own image. Nicolai Fechin's *Willa Cather* (circa 1924) is noted for its spontaneous, yet detailed craftsmanship, which conveys the sitter's strong personality. He favored stiff-bristled brushes, palette knives, his fingers, and other instruments to suggest bold lines and "from-life" movements. This portrait, commissioned by Cather herself, was likely painted in Fechin's New York City studio and hung for years in Cather's New York apartment. After the portrait's completion, Cather maintained contact with Fechin, often visiting his house in Taos, New Mexico. The painting was donated to the Sheldon in 2000 by Cather's niece, Helen Cather Southwick, who was also a generous benefactor of the Willa Cather Foundation.

Lindsay Andrews



Willa Cather by Nicolai Fechin, ca. 1924, oil on canvas, from the Sheldon Museum of Art. Photo © Sheldon Museum of Art.



Interior by William Merritt Chase, ca. 1912, oil on panel, from the Sheldon Museum of Art. Photo © Sheldon Museum of Art.

"Chase depicts a woman seated in a rocking chair fanning herself while she gazes out the window. . . . The work is likely one of the artist's later works, as suggested by the loosely applied pigment and the relatively high-keyed palette. . . . The window treatments do not seem to relate to anything seen in Chase's Shinnecock [Long Island] scenes. It could be a hot day in the spring or fall when Chase was in the city, in which case it depicts a room in his home at 234 East 15th Street. There are not enough details to discern the identity of the sitter. More than depicting a particular person or place, Chase's interest here appears to be in contrasting the indoor and outdoor light." (William Merritt Chase: Still Lives, Interiors, Figures, Copies of Old Masters, and Drawings, by Ronald G. Pisano, D. Frederick Baker and Carolyn K. Lane. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010.)

A Glimpse of an Artist: Ernestine Schumann-Heink and the Erlich Family Party in *One of Ours*

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Opera and the profession of singing were lifelong interests for Willa Cather. Her short stories and novels remark on the lives of singers, the circles of people around the performers, and the demands of the profession. One interesting singer-character, who appears in *One of Ours*, perhaps began to take shape for Cather more than twenty years before that novel's publication, when Cather first heard contralto Ernestine Schumann-Heink perform with the Metropolitan Opera in Pittsburgh. Her description of the artist's April 17, 1899 performance, as published in the *Lincoln Courier* on June 10, 1899, blurs curiosity and admiration: "This Schumann-Heink, with her peasant face and her absurd dumpy little figure and short arms simply has unlimited power. She sings down everything before her. She makes you forget that she is not beautiful, and Heavens! what a triumph a woman achieves when she does that" (*The World and the Parish* 621). Clearly young Willa Cather, in the process of claiming her own career as a woman artist in Pittsburgh, found this singer, also in the earlier years of a long career, a compelling figure—a woman who claimed "unlimited power" without the conventional resources of feminine beauty.

Richard Harris has established in his notes to the Willa Cather Scholarly Edition of *One of Ours* that Schumann-Heink became the prototype for Wilhelmina Schroeder-Schatz, the distinguished singer who is the cousin of Claude Wheeler's friend Mrs. Erlich and joins her cousins (and Claude) for a festive dinner party while she is performing in Lincoln (85–90). Although her appearance is relatively brief, Wilhelmina is an important presence in this novel. She offers Claude a first glimpse of the world of musicians that he will enter more fully with his violinist friend David Gerhardt later in the book, and she provides important clues to the changing circumstances and opportunities for women in the United States in the early twentieth century, an important subtext of this novel.

Ernestine Schumann-Heink's long and prominent career, which Cather must have followed from 1899 onward, is reflected in the character of Wilhelmina. After establishing herself singing Wagnerian roles in Germany, the contralto joined Maurice Grau's Grand Opera Company in 1898. Her next years were spent in

European and American venues. Classically trained, the singer (born June 15, 1861 in Bohemia) made her American operatic debut in Chicago on November 7, 1898; her biographer, Joseph L. Howard, comments, "A world class star was born that night" (94). Her January 9, 1899, debut at New York's Metropolitan Opera was also very successful, despite the fact that she had borne her seventh child only four weeks earlier (43–44, 93–94, 101–04). Between her debut and her final appearance in 1932, she sang in 240 operatic performances and appeared in forty-four concerts on the Met stage. Most of her Met appearances took place during the period from 1898 to 1903; the contralto appeared with the company only twenty-eight times from 1904 to 1932. Olin Downes described her final performance, on March 11, 1932 in the role of Erda in *Siegfried*: "... no other artist in the cast, through the afternoon, so held and captured the imagination of the audience as did Mme. Schumann-Heink..." ("Schumann-Heink").

This essay examines the appearance of Wilhelmina Schroeder-Schatz in *One of Ours*, provides context for Cather's development of her, and also supplies information about the artist that Cather must have been familiar with but did not include in her novel. The more one knows about Schumann-Heink, the more one appreciates Wilhelmina Schroeder-Schatz and her role in this novel.

In Book I of *One of Ours*, Claude Wheeler, a college student in Lincoln, befriends the Erlich brothers. Their home is a mix of athleticism, education, and interests far-removed from his rural upbringing and previous experience. Claude is grateful for their acceptance, which overlooks his raw background. If the boys are not at home, Claude enjoys his visits with their widowed mother, Mrs. Erlich: "He loved to hear her sing sentimental German songs as she worked; '*Spinn, spinn du Tochter mein.*' He didn't know why, but he simply adored it! Every time he went away from her he felt happy and full of kindness" (69). Some months after Claude meets the Erlichs, when Mrs. Erlich's cousin, a singer with the Chicago Opera Company, travels to Lincoln to perform, Claude is invited to be part of their family dinner with the famous artist. The novel's first specific mention of Wilhelmina appears in Book I, chapter 10: "That spring Mrs. Erlich's first cousin, Wilhelmina Schroeder-Schatz, who sang with the Chicago Opera Company,



came to Lincoln as a soloist for the May Festival” (85). Cather’s short chapter describes a once-in-a-lifetime experience for Claude. Cather’s familiarity with Schumann-Heink’s life and career first becomes apparent before the dinner, when Cather mentions Mrs. Erlich singing “Spinn, spinn.” The contralto recorded an arrangement of the song on January 16, 1913 (Schumann-Heink). Entitled “Spinnerliedchen,” it was a favorite of her audiences for years. (This recording is available on YouTube.)

Schumann-Heink performed about twenty times in Chicago between 1897 and 1907 (“Schumann-Heink”). When Grau retired as manager of the Grand Opera Company, she chose not to work for his successor. Instead, she chose to perform comic opera and to continue song recital touring (“Schumann-Heink’s New Plans,” “. . . Long Tour”). For the time frame of *One of Ours*, Cather supplies correct details about the artist’s career. She resumed operatic singing and joined the new Chicago Grand Opera Company. This development was reported with the following statement: “Two famous songbirds have been captured for Chicago’s next Winter opera season, it was announced at the Auditorium Theatre today. They are Mme. Nellie Melba and Mme. Ernestine Schumann-Heink”(“Opera Stars”). Among her concert tours from 1914 to 1918, 1915 was a particularly remarkable season: “Throughout 1915 the artist maintained a heavy concert schedule that took her to every corner of the United States, including Omaha, Lima, Clarksburg, Topeka, Utica, and Jacksonville” (Howard 238).

Cather describes Wilhelmina on both her arrival and her departure from the Erlich dinner party. First, the arriving “guest of honour, Madame Wilhelmina Schroeder-Schatz, was some years younger than her cousin, Augusta Erlich. She was short, stalwart, with an enormous chest, a fine head, and a commanding presence” (87). Then, as she prepares to depart, “Having put on first a velvet coat, then a fur mantle, Madame Schroeder-Schatz moved like a galleon out into the living room and kissed all her cousins, and Claude Wheeler, good-night”(90).

These comments provide an objective description of Schumann-Heink’s appearance and personality. Even her most unflattering reviewers attempt a positive view of the contralto’s appearance. Henry Pleasants notes that Schumann-Heink was

an “ugly duckling,” but adds, “Purposeful and intelligent as she was, she turned a liability into an asset and compounded her plainness by a notorious indifference to what she wore” (280). J. B. Steane observes, “In youth and again in old age Schumann-Heink had beauty of a kind, one that had more to do with character than with features. She was also quite short of stature, so that her command of the stage could not have been easily achieved” (3:210). Her biographer comments, “Schumann-Heink was a handsome figure of a woman, not the ugly girl Tini [a childhood nickname] always considered herself to be,

but instead the personification of what men in those days found attractive . . . a full-bodied, healthy, glowing woman whose figure was in the style of the day, and whose countenance exuded the kind of character, kindness, and courtliness that any man worth his salt would have cherished” (Howard 158). Stephen E. Rubin braves the topic of overweight singers and presents a roster of those who performed successfully. Schumann-Heink is mentioned sixth in a list of fifteen of “the greatest vocal heavyweights” (“Now It’s Do-Re-Me-Fat”). Cather evokes many of these qualities when she describes the singer as moving like a “galleon,” a weighty, square-rigged sailing ship used for war or commerce from the fifteenth to early eighteenth centuries. This striking description may refer to Schumann-Heink’s appearance, to her

gait, or to her determination to overcome the obstacles that she faced throughout her life.

At the dinner party, Wilhelmina talks with Claude about his family’s farm: “. . . she seemed to know a good deal about farming and live-stock. She was disapproving when Claude told her they rented half their land to other farmers. ‘If I were a young man, I would begin to acquire land, and I would not stop until I had a whole county,’ she declared” (88–89). Cather likely read newspaper accounts of Schumann-Heink’s land purchases, for she bought land in California in 1910, and two years later purchased farmland, 170 acres near Grand Forks, North Dakota (Howard 203–04). Her immediate connection to the immigrant’s dream of owning land was circulated in articles. In a 1910 *New York Times* interview, for example, the singer said, “I sang a few times this Summer at Chautauquas—in tents—and loved it. The farming people came for miles around, seven or eight thousand of them;



Schumann-Heink in the role of Erda in Das Rheingold, 1899, from the Metropolitan Opera digital archives.

most of them had never been to a concert before and they nudged each other and giggled when I started to sing a German song. But they are my people—the farmers, and all those who are simple and work—and I love to sing for them. I shall go to very many small towns this Winter” (“Mme. Schumann-Heink Here”).

As she prepares to leave the dinner party, Wilhelmina talks with her cousin, Mrs. Erlich, about marriage:

“What a pity, Augusta, that you have not a daughter now, to marry to Claude Melnotte. He would make you a perfect son-in law. . . . Or . . . if you were but a few years younger, it might not yet be too late. Oh, don’t be a fool, Augusta! Such things have happened, and will happen again. However, better a widow than to be tied to a sick man—like a stone about my neck! What a husband to go home to! and I a woman in full vigour. *Das ist ein Kreuz ich trage!*” (89–90)

Schumann-Heink married three times. Her first husband, Ernest Heink, was employed as the secretary for the Dresden Royal Opera. Both lost their jobs as a result of the marriage. The contralto found work with the Hamburg Opera, but her singing schedule was repeatedly interrupted by the births of their children. After a marriage filled with bitter financial struggle, Ernest deserted his wife. According to German law, Schumann-Heink was held responsible for Ernest’s debts. Pregnant with a fourth child, she scabbled along in shabby rooming houses. Driven to considering suicide, the singer sent the children to her parents, where the little ones could be together under improved circumstances. Schumann-Heink eventually had the opportunity to perform the leading role in *Carmen* in Hamburg. In May 1892 she met Paul Schumann, an actor and stage manager for the Hamburg Thalia Theatre. Paul Schumann was a positive influence for the singer, helping her with her interpretation and delivery of texts. They fell in love but could not marry until the death of his first wife, who had been institutionalized. The two married in February 1893. The contralto brought four children to the marriage, three sons and a daughter; the actor brought one son (Howard 37–64).

Schumann-Heink had hopes for the second marriage (65), but Cather’s lines of dialogue for Wilhelmina—“*Das ist ein Kreuz ich trage!*” (“That is the cross I carry!”)—ring true. Paul Schumann developed erysipelas, a bacterial infection of the skin. (In *One of Ours* Claude Wheeler also suffers from erysipelas [191].) His health problem developed when his wife had an opportunity to perform with Grau’s company in the United States. She accepted the position, after stipulating that Grau offer Paul Schumann stage a management position to be paid from her own salary. By the time the contralto finalized these arrangements, her husband was confined to bed and unemployed. The chance for both to work in America put off the inevitable for a while. Schumann was with his wife when she sang



Schumann-Heink as Lina in Love’s Lottery, ca. 1904. Photo from the Burr McIntosh Studio.

her Chicago and New York debut performances, but to relieve his physical discomfort, he relied on alcohol (Howard 87–103, 117, 136–37). American newspaper coverage of the problem is seen by 1900, with comments such as, “Paul Schumann-Heink, husband and manager of Mme. Schumann-Heink, who is now singing at the Metropolitan Opera House, has been ill of erysipelas for the last week at the Belvedere Hotel, but last night was reported to be somewhat better, though still unable to see visitors. He is being attended to by his wife, who rarely leaves his bedside” (“Illness”). After several more years of his worsening health, the family returned to Germany for the summer of 1903. Paul Schumann died there in November of 1904. Schumann-Heink was singing in a comic opera in the United States; she learned of his death by cablegram (Howard 137–41, 153).

To close the discussion of Wilhelmina’s marriages, Cather mentions the singer again in a scene that occurs several months after the Erlich dinner party: “. . . Mrs. Erlich drew Claude aside and told him in excited whispers that her cousin, Wilhelmina, the singer, had at last been relieved of the invalid husband whom she had supported for so many years, and now was going to marry her accompanist, a man much younger than herself” (119). This last



reference is the most biting of all that Cather includes. Schumann-Heink married for a final time in 1905. Her husband was William R. Rapp, Jr. His father had successfully edited German-language newspapers in Chicago, and the family had great influence in the German community there. Twelve years younger than his wife, Billy Rapp had acted as the artist's business associate before their marriage, which took place about six months after Paul Schumann's death. Early press reports include the contralto's denials of the marriage and later items read as rationalizations for it. Howard includes Schumann-Heink's statement, "Mr. Rapp is my manager, whom I employ as every singer does . . . and he is my very good friend and nothing more." Much later the artist explained her decision: "I didn't feel equal to standing up alone with all those children, eight of them, and then it was I married my secretary, William Rapp" (Howard 157-59).

When describing the beginning of this marriage, Howard emphasizes Rapp's honesty and skill as a businessman. Rapp worked side-by-side with the singer to help her with the problems of Paul Schumann's estate and the status of her children. Despite a written agreement between the couple, their children, rather than Schumann-Heink, were deemed heirs to Paul Schumann's German property, which included their fully furnished residence, Villa Tini. After weeks of argument in the German courts, a compromise was suggested that still did not fully represent the artist's rights. Even with the long professional association between the couple, the marriage between Schumann-Heink and Rapp did not last. Rapp's efforts to control the family's excessive spending were clearly unwelcome. The two separated in 1911; in 1913, the singer filed for divorce from Rapp on the grounds of desertion. Rapp filed a countersuit accusing Schumann-Heink of infidelity. This strategy was not successful, however, and Schumann-Heink won the divorce (Howard 159-63, 215-22).

When we first see Wilhelmina in *One of Ours*, Cather not only describes the singer's appearance but also expresses admiration for Schumann-Heink's voice. At the same time Cather questions some of the artist's career choices: "Her great contralto voice, which she used without much discretion, was a really superb organ and gave people a pleasure as substantial as food and drink" (87). Here Cather refers to Schumann-Heink's 1904 resolve to perform in a comic opera, *Love's Lottery*, written for her by Stanislaus Stange and Julian Edwards. The singer would play the role of "Lina the Laundress". Paul Schumann opposed this, fearing that she would waste her talents and lose her artistic status. However, the opportunity to perform comic opera would pay \$250,000 plus a share of the profits. By 1903 standards, the huge amount far exceeded what any other contralto could hope to earn. When the production opened, reviews were uneven, with only her voice, not the use of the voice, or her acting, receiving uniform praise



Schumann-Heink at a war bonds rally at Federal Hall on Wall Street, New York City, ca. 1918. Photo from the Bain Collection, Library of Congress.

(Howard 146-47, 152). Negative reviews did not impede her success; on the contrary, she performed the role in Washington, D. C., with President Roosevelt in the audience ("Pomp"). Steane views her decision as a turning point: "Money, fun, and publicity were the rewards, and there was a lot of this kind of thing (although not taking the same form) from that time onwards" (3:208-209). In a counter strategy, the artist continued presenting song recitals, proclaiming that when she sang on the concert stage, "I have no one to consider. I may be myself" (Howard 148).

Schumann-Heink was already a nationally recognized supporter of the American fighting forces by the time Cather wrote *One of Ours*. In fact, the contralto had been a naturalized American citizen for more than a decade (Howard 160-61). Cather supported the American effort as well; as Richard Harris states in his Historical Essay in the Scholarly Edition of *One of Ours*, "during the war years she [Cather] was evidently convinced that France, England, and the United States, and their allies were fighting for a great cause" (639). Schumann-Heink worked unceasingly to raise money for the troops and to provide assistance to veterans. These activities drew attention to a painful circumstance within her family, because her two older German-born sons, August and Hans, supported Germany. Due to statements that she made supporting German citizens before

the United States entered the war, she received hate mail, and some of her concerts were picketed. She never spoke out directly against Germany, but her support of American forces, as well as her rousing rendition of the *Star-Spangled Banner*, deflected much of the criticism. As the war continued, August died at sea on a submarine and Hans died of typhoid pneumonia before he could return to Germany to enlist (Howard 235–36, 252, 258 and 239, 367). The younger sons served in the American forces, with Henry and George in the Navy, Walter in the National Guard, and Ferd in the Army (250, 253). Newspapers describe the artist’s fundraising performances that supported the troops: “. . . she has met the call gladly. She has sung for the American Red Cross in a little desert town in Arizona and in the great metropolises. . . . So close did she get to the hearts of the members of the Twenty-first Regiment at San Diego that they made her president of the mess” (“Open Concert Season”). As recognition for her exceptional efforts, after her death on November 17, 1936, Schumann-Heink was buried with full military honors (“Rites Tomorrow”).

Ernestine Schumann-Heink was an artist beloved by audiences of all incomes who enjoyed music or who were attracted to her as a genuine and engaging personality. Through the character of Wilhelmina, Cather reminds readers of Schumann-Heink’s importance as a public figure both before and during World War I, for hers was a voice that had a particular and truthful appeal to Americans. Marriage, family and career brought challenges, but the contralto’s magnificent voice rarely failed her as she faced her problems and continued to perform. After World War I, Schumann-Heink sang in opera, comic opera, and vaudeville, presented song recitals, and appeared as a soloist with orchestras. Seeking all venues, she was heard in recordings and radio broadcasts. This larger-than-life personality even appeared (as herself) in *Here’s to Romance*, a 1935 Hollywood film directed by Alfred Green (who also directed the 1934 film version of Cather’s *A Lost Lady*).

Cather was aware of Schumann-Heink as early as the 1890s. Through articles in the *New York Times* and other New York newspapers, articles that Cather certainly would have seen in the years before and during the composition of *One of Ours*, Cather was able to continue to follow the career of Schumann-Heink and then to use details of the singer’s personal and professional life to create her fictional character. Today, with recordings of Schumann-Heink’s performances available to us, we can hear what Willa Cather heard when she listened to these performances or recordings a century ago. In *One of Ours*, we see her fictional recreation in Cather’s depiction of Wilhelmina Schroeder-Schatz.

Cather’s inclusion of details about her singer-character reflect her own regard for the talent and the warmth of Madame Schumann-Heink’s artistic personality. “Schatz” translates as “treasure” and

we see this in Wilhelmina’s behavior. Rather than socializing with wealthy patrons, she chooses to dine with her cousins in their home. Wilhelmina befriends Claude, whose fascination with her and the Erlichs’ way of life clearly appeals to his desire to realize “something splendid” in his own life. Claude treasures the evening at the Erlich home and will carry this experience with him to France. Finally, Wilhelmina leaves the gathering with formality, but with affection. Each detail that Cather supplies provides a distinct glimpse into the life, career, and personality of Ernestine Schumann-Heink, who in Wilhelmina Schroeder-Schatz becomes a minor yet significant character in *One of Ours*.

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“An Artist in Her Way”: An Homage to Joséphine Bourda

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“Is cooking important? Few things in life are more so! My mind and stomach are one! I think and work with whatever it is that digests.”

—Willa Cather, *Century Magazine*, July 1925

Joséphine Bourda was Willa Cather’s cook and housekeeper for most of two decades, from 1913 to 1935. But to Cather, she was more than a longtime employee. Bourda was both her friend and a source of creative inspiration, one who provided a daily connection to the French culture the author loved. In tribute to Bourda, this account of her life recognizes her remarkable skills as a household manager and cook, her buoyant personality, strength, and courage, as well as her importance to Cather.¹

Born Marie Joséphine Bernardine Brun on March 23, 1892, Bourda was raised in Lourdes, France, in the mountainous region of the Pyrenees, near the border of Spain. She was introduced to fine food at an early age as her father, Jean-Marie Brun, operated a well-regarded restaurant nearby. She had one known sibling, a younger sister named Anna. In 1909, Joséphine married Alphonse Bourda, a saddler, who was twenty-nine.² They resided in his hometown of Nay, fifteen miles from Lourdes, where their first child, Marie, was born in 1910. A second daughter, Clémentine (named after Joséphine’s mother), followed in 1912.

In February 1913, Joséphine’s father emigrated to New York City (Record of Aliens). He was joined there by Joséphine and Alphonse, who arrived aboard the S.S. *Rochambeau* on March 31 (List or Manifest of Alien Passengers). Twelve years later, Cather invoked the name of that ship in *The Professor’s House*, perhaps in honor of Joséphine; it is the vessel upon which Tom Outland sails to France (260). The Bourdas’ two daughters stayed in Nay, presumably with relatives. A third daughter, Jeannette, was born in New York in late 1913 (U.S. Census Bureau, Fourteenth Census).

Bourda soon found work with Cather and Edith Lewis at 5 Bank Street, just over a mile from the apartment in which her family lived at 317 West 35th Street (New York City Directory).

In her memoir, *Willa Cather Living*, Lewis recalls, “Josephine . . . was just over from France, and spoke no English. She lived at home, with her father, husband, and one little daughter. They were all rather frightened of America, and suspicious of everything around them. But Josephine came to have confidence in us, and to feel at home with us . . .” (88).

In 1919, the Bourdas’ daughters Marie and Clémentine came to New York; joining them was Joséphine’s sister, Anna. The five Bourdas and two Bruns lived at 406 West 15th Street, a half mile from 5 Bank Street. By then, Joséphine and her husband read, wrote, and spoke English, but her father and sister did not. The Bourdas’ children were enrolled in school (U.S. Census Bureau, Fourteenth Census).

Shortly after her two daughters and sister came to New York, Bourda left her position with Cather, for which she had been paid eighty dollars a month, as Cather shared with her mother in a 1919 letter (*Selected Letters* 281). Her departure may have been due to her new family responsibilities. By late 1921, though, she was working half days again. Cather was elated by her return, as she wrote to her mother in a letter dated November 26, 1921:

So far, it seems too good to be true. She did not have to be told one thing about the house; she walked in after two years’ absence and knew where every napkin and doylie was kept. She was much annoyed because I had put the oyster forks in another drawer, and had put the ice-cream freezer on the top shelf of the kitchen cupboard instead of the bottom. She told me when she came that if she found she would have to neglect her own house, or if the children or her father got sick, she would have to give it up, so it may be too good to last. I’ll enjoy it while it does last, for nobody can take care of me and the house as well as she can. She knows just how I like things done,—and she, too, is an artist in her way; most French people are. She respects my work, and I respect hers. (*Selected Letters* 306)³

In referring to Bourda as an “artist,” Cather was not simply bestowing an accolade, but also articulating an expansive view of art, which included both works displayed in museums and ones



prepared in kitchens, such as a roast cooked perfectly rare. In an interview earlier in November 1921, she asserted, “There is an art in cooking a roast just right so that it is brown and dripping and odorous and ‘saignant.’ . . . The very best cooks I have ever known have been prima donnas” (*Willa Cather in Person* 47).

Cather and Lewis were not alone in their appreciation of Bourda’s culinary skills. Isabelle and Jan Hambourg were enamored of them, too—so much so that they asked Cather to “loan” Bourda to them for the summer of 1918. In a 1918 letter to Ferris Greenslet, Cather wrote that the violinists Eugène Ysaÿe and Maurice Dambois were staying with the Hambourgs in the New York suburb of Scarsdale, and the violinist Jacques Thibaud was in a house across the street. She continued, “They are so fond of her good french food, and so afraid I’ll take her away that they will even play ‘request’ programs for me. It is a glorious party, but the silence of the cornfields will be almost welcome after so much of it. As Josephine says; ‘Les sonat’, les quatuores à deux heures le matin—c’n’est pas raisonnable, vous-savez, mademoiselle!” [“Sonatas and quartets at two in the morning—this is not reasonable, you know, Miss!”] (*Selected Letters* 259). Likewise, opera singer Olive Fremstad remembered “wonderful little French meals” at the Bank Street apartment, which were undoubtedly prepared by Bourda (Hoover 114). In addition to impressing Cather’s guests with her cook, Bourda gave Cather an opportunity to adopt an urbane, cosmopolitan persona and burnish her reputation as a worldly artist. In a December 6, 1919, letter to her mother, Cather wrote that their “haughty French, thrown lightly back and forth when a visitor was brought in . . . made a great impression on reporters” (*Selected Letters* 282–283).

Bourda continued in her position with Cather until 1925.⁴ Her husband Alphonse was working as a longshoreman, after being employed as a wine cellar porter and bartender (New York State Census 1915, New York City Directory, New York State Census 1925). He most likely worked at the Hudson River docks, which were less than a quarter mile from the Bourdas’ apartment. By 1930, seventeen-year-old Clémentine was working, too, as an “office girl,” while her younger sister Jeannette was a “helper in a pencil factory” (as recorded in the 1930 U.S. Census). Their older sibling Marie had moved away. Joséphine’s father may have died, as the last record in which his name appears is the 1920 U.S. Census. The 1930 Census also shows that Joséphine was unemployed in 1930, probably because Cather and Lewis had moved to an apartment without cooking facilities at the Grosvenor Hotel in 1927.

After five years at the Grosvenor, Cather and Lewis relocated to an apartment with a kitchen at 570 Park Avenue, and within a

month, Bourda was rehired. Cather wrote to Irene Miner Weisz on January 19, 1933, “. . . this I do want you to know, dear, that I have a home, that it looks like a somewhat glorified Bank street, and that we have Josephine back! the old original Josephine, somewhat subdued by misfortunes, but with all her bubbling Southern nature still in force,—and a better cook than ever. Gracious goodness, what good food we do have!”

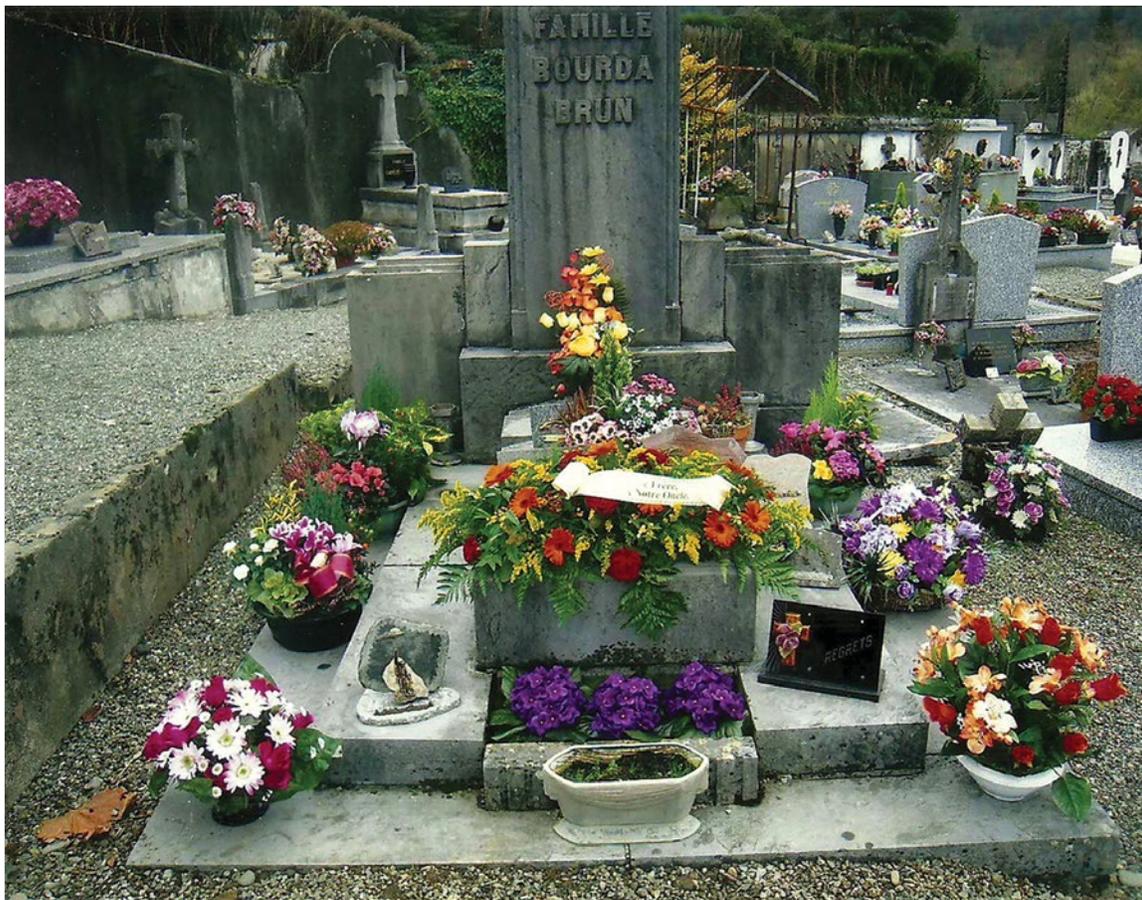
Apparently, Cather not only enjoyed Josephine’s cooking, but also learned from her as well. In a letter to author Julian Street, she wrote, “I studied cookery under a French woman . . . who was my cook for fifteen years. I learned it more thoroughly than I ever learned anything else. The only disadvantage of proficiency in this case is, that when I want something really good, I have to go into the kitchen and make it myself.”

Joséphine’s “misfortunes” probably referred to her husband’s failing health. When Cather learned “by chance” that Alphonse was “very ill,” she sent a check to pay his hospital expenses, as she wrote in a December 31, 1932 letter to Zoë Akins (*Selected Letters* 479–480).⁵ Despite her personal travails, Bourda remained “jolly and resourceful,” which Cather appreciated while she was finishing *Lucy Gayheart* amid a heat wave in 1934, as she described in a letter to her sister Elsie (*Selected Letters* 497). A year later, though, with Alphonse still in poor health, the Bourdas decided to return to France. Anticipating Joséphine’s departure, Cather wrote to her brother Roscoe on April 23, 1935, “Worst of all my perplexities, my dear French woman, who has been my prop and stay ever since I moved into this apartment . . . is going back to her native Pyrenees with her husband and daughter to stay for good. I’m glad she is to be again among her native mountains which she loves, but it will wreck my life, rather. No one else will ever so respect me and my calling” (*Selected Letters* 506).

Joséphine, Alphonse, and their daughter Jeannette left for France on May 25, 1935. Daughters Clémentine and Marie stayed in New York, as did their aunt, Anna Brun. Cather described the impact of Joséphine’s absence in a November 25 letter to Carrie Miner Sherwood. She wrote that Bourda “was not only a marvelous cook and manager, but one of the truest and inspiriting friends I have ever known. The loss of her is just one of those great losses that come to one in this life, but there is never a day I do not rejoice that she is back in her own glorious mountains, to live out her vigorous life in the country she loves so passionately.”

Cather’s friend Zoë Akins, a Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright, was also moved by Bourda’s decision to return to France. She was so fond of Bourda that she wanted to give her





The Brun and Bourda burial plot in Saint Pé de Bigorre. Photograph by Jacques Puntous, Joséphine Bourda's grandson.

Of the “delightful” Bourda letters to which Cather referred, no trace remains.

Joséphine Bourda spent the rest of her life in the Pyrenees. She died in the village of Saint Pé de Bigorre on January 12, 1959, at the age of 66, of an unknown cause. She was predeceased by her husband Alphonse on June 16, 1938, little more than two years after their return to France. Both are interred in the Brun and Bourda burial plot in Saint Pé de Bigorre. Their house was sold outside the family; Joséphine’s relatives do not possess any of her papers or photographs of her. The eldest of her children, Marie, returned to France, married, and had four children.

an unusual going away present: a dog. Why she decided upon a dog is an open question, but in an April 19, 1935 letter to Akins, Cather wrote, “The dog, by the way, never reached her at all—whomever you entrusted with it played false. I offered to get her one, but she said she wanted it ‘from Mme. Rumbold’ [Akins’s married name]!⁶ Don’t, please do anything about it now; she leaves so soon and she is rattled enough, dear soul that she is, and as a result I am rattled!” On May 27, 1935, two days after Joséphine left, Cather wrote to Akins again, thanking her for her gift to Bourda, which was apparently money to buy a dog once she settled in France. In the only known example of Bourda’s correspondence, an undated letter written in French, she thanked Akins [translation mine]: “I was very surprised when Miss Cather gave me your letter, it was very kind of you. Later when I am in France I will buy a small dog, and take a photo and send it to you so you will see that I keep my word and do not forget good people. I thank you very much and wish you good luck” (Bourda).⁷

Cather’s sole known mention of Bourda’s new life in France occurs in an April 27, 1936 letter to Akins: “Even her letters are delightful, and so gay! She did always long for her own Pyrenees. She writes, ‘J’ai ne plus mon visage jaune, j’ai des rosy cheeks!’” [“I no longer have a sallow complexion. I have rosy cheeks!”]

She died on October 7, 1986 in Pau. The middle daughter, Clémentine, remained in the United States, married, had no children, and died in Florida. Jeannette, the youngest daughter, married and had three children. Like her mother, she died in Saint Pé de Bigorre. Joséphine’s sister Anna married and spent the rest of her life in the United States.

Cather’s letters reveal her emotional attachment to Joséphine Bourda as well her profound appreciation for her skills as a cook and housekeeper. In *Willa Cather Living*, Edith Lewis suggests that Bourda also had a remarkable influence on Cather’s work:

She was an important figure in our lives at that time—high-spirited, warm-hearted, impulsive, brimming over with vitality, and intelligent, as the French are; with great humour, very quick perceptions about people, a rather merciless philosophy of life. . . . Her personality was so pervasive and uncompromising that she created a sort of French household atmosphere around us; and I think there is no question that this contributed, to a certain extent, to such novels as *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Shadows on the Rock*. (88–89)

Bourda’s influence on those novels is worthy of consideration. Although Cather was living at the kitchenless Grosvenor Hotel

when she wrote *Shadows on the Rock*, she acknowledged her former French cook's contribution to the novel in her December 31, 1932 letter to Zoë Akins: "I find I learned most everything in 'Shadows on the Rock' from five years of Josephine! And I, conceited donkey, found that knowledge of pots and pans there in my head when I needed it . . . and I never gave a thought as to why I found myself able to write about french household economics with ease and conviction" (*Selected Letters* 480). A central theme of *Shadows on the Rock* is Cécile Auclair's creation of a nurturing domestic space through her work as her father's cook and housekeeper. As Cather writes in the novel, "These coppers, big and little, these brooms and clouts and brushes, were tools; and with them one made, not shoes or cabinet-work, but life itself. One made a climate within a climate; one made the days,—the complexion, the special flavour, the special happiness of each day as it passed; one made life" (*Shadows on the Rock* 227). In the same way that Cécile created a special "climate within a climate" in her father's apothecary shop, so, too, did Bourda create a congenial, decidedly French "atmosphere" in Cather's household. Similarly, Cather's descriptions of Father Vaillant's remarkable onion soup and other French dishes in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* were likely informed by the meals Bourda prepared—as when Bishop Latour tells Father Vaillant, "a soup like this is not the work of one man. It is the result of a constantly refined tradition. There are, perhaps, a thousand years of history in this soup" (41). Lastly, though unmentioned by Lewis, Bourda's influence may have been inscribed in Cather's rendering of the sympathetic relationship between Godfrey St. Peter and his family's seamstress, Augusta, in *The Professor's House*.

Given their differences in cultural background, social and economic class, home life, formal education, and occupation, one might wonder why Bourda so appealed to Cather. Lewis's description of Bourda's winning personality and her talents as a cook and housekeeper provides only partial explanation. Another may reside in Lewis's characterization of Bourda as "high-spirited, warm-hearted, impulsive, brimming over with vitality, and intelligent," which recalls one of the most important figures of Cather's Nebraska youth, Anna Pavelka, and the fictional character she inspired, *Ántonia* Shimerda. Like Bourda, Pavelka was an immigrant, who arrived in the United States with no command of English, was resolute in the face of adversity, worked hard and adapted to her foreign surroundings, and was a maternal figure enmeshed in the life of a large family. Further, Cather's nostalgic comments about Bourda are reminiscent of those Jim Burden makes about *Ántonia*. Bourda

is the "old original Josephine" despite her "misfortunes" in Cather's 1933 letter to Irene Miner Weisz in much the same way that Jim regards *Ántonia* in the final book of *My Ántonia* when he sees her "in the full vigor of her personality, battered but not diminished" (321–22). And just as *Ántonia* is associated with the prairie throughout that novel, so, too, did Cather connect Bourda with the dominant physical feature of her homeland—her "own glorious mountains," the Pyrenees—in her 1935 letter to Carrie Miner Sherwood. For Cather, then, Bourda may have represented a connection not only to France and French culture, but also the European immigrant women she so admired in Nebraska and immortalized in her fiction.

Joséphine Bourda's name does not appear often in Cather scholarship, and when it does, she is recognized for little more than cooking and cleaning. Yet to regard her simply as a talented domestic worker, even one who enriched Cather's home life and thereby facilitated her creative efforts, is to miss that she was an extraordinary person in her own right. She emigrated to the United States at a considerable price, leaving behind her beloved home in France. Arriving in New York, which could not have been more different from the small towns and villages of the Pyrenees, she quickly went to work to help support her family. She then balanced the demands of a large family with her work for a renowned American writer, who had very high standards. From Cather, she earned not only praise for her culinary and housekeeping skills, but also respect and friendship. By any measure, Joséphine Bourda was a strong, courageous, and talented woman. For her way with food and her way with people, for the *joie de vivre* she brought to Cather's home, she might even have been called an "artist," as she was by no less an artist than Willa Cather herself.

NOTES

1. This essay would not have been possible without the assistance of Françoise Palleau-Papin, whose research in public records in France and interviews with Bourda's grandchildren provided a wealth of information. This includes, but is not limited to the dates of Bourda's birth, marriage, and death; vital information on Bourda's daughters; identification of Alphonse's parents and the date of his death; and the sale of the Bourda's house. I also thank Florent Dubois for assisting with the French translations in this paper, Peter Sullivan for calling the reference to the S.S. *Rochambeau* in *The Professor's House* to my attention, and John Swift for suggesting a possible connection between Bourda and Augusta in that same novel.



2. Alphonse was the son of Jacques Bourda, a tanner, and Marie Beigbeder.

3. In the same letter, Cather writes of Josephine, “Her husband works, and the three children are going to school. But she gives me half-time; on Monday she comes for the whole day and does the washing, but on every other day she comes at two o'clock and works for the rest of the day, and gets dinner at night” (*Selected Letters* 305).

4. In a 1925 interview, Cather states, “I had an excellent French cook who made life a joy, but I lost her.” *Century Magazine*, July 1925 (*Willa Cather in Person* 84).

5. In a financial record book, Cather notes the following payment to Joséphine Bourda: April 1, 1932: \$10.00 (Box 3, Folder 2, Charles E. Cather Collection, UNL). This may have been a contribution to Alphonse’s hospital expenses.

6. Akins married Hugo Rumbold in 1932.

7. Bourda wrote, “J’ai été très surprise quand Mlle Cather ma donné votre lettre, cest très gentil de votre part. Plus tard quand je serais en France j’achèterais un petit chien, et puis prendrais une photo et je vous l’enverrais pour vous faire voir que je tiens parole et que je n’oublie pas les bonnes gens. Je vous remercie beaucoup, et je vous souhaite bonne chance.” (Zoë Akins Papers, Huntington Library)

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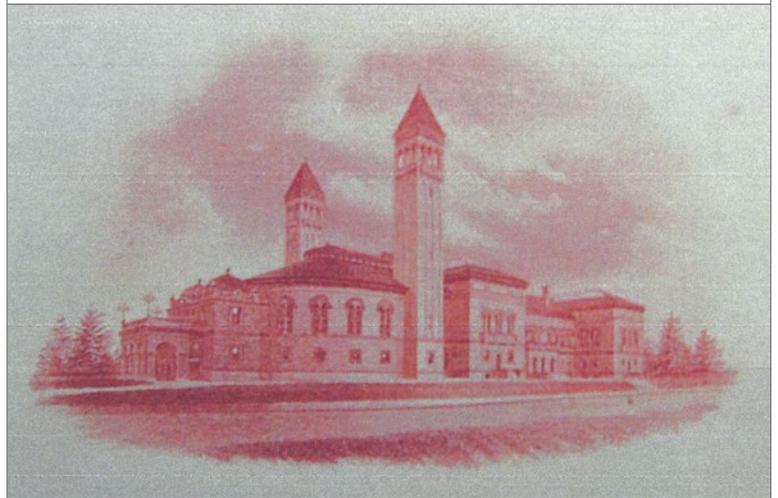
“Beginning a New Life”: Discovering the Exact Date of Cather’s Arrival in Pittsburgh

Timothy Bintrim | Andrew Jewell | Brett Vanderlaan | Kimberly Vanderlaan

This essay describes a research project through which Kim and Brett Vanderlaan unearthed an important piece of archival evidence: a Carnegie Music Hall concert program that not only precisely dates Cather’s arrival in Pittsburgh, but also changes the order and composition dates of two of Cather’s letters to the Gere family. A close reading of the redated letters allows us to deduce her companions at this first concert. Furthermore, the new date coincides with the organization of the Writers’ Club, an eclectic group of a hundred journalists and literary men and women. Affording valuable networking opportunities, the club hosted receptions for Cather’s heroes Anthony Hope Hawkins and Fridtjof Nansen, among others. Finally, the new date places Cather in Pittsburgh one day after her acquaintance, the popular actress Pauline Hall, was arrested for riding her bicycle without a city license in Schenley Park. Conceivably Hall related this ordeal when the two women were reunited at the Casino summer theater where Hall was the featured soprano. Hall’s arrest may have partially inspired “Tommy, the Unsentimental,” widely recognized as a harbinger of Cather’s mature fiction. The Vanderlaans’ discovery at once attests to the efficacy of Janis Stout and Andrew Jewell’s The Selected Letters of Willa Cather as a research tool and the same editors’ foresight in making the forthcoming online Complete Letters easily revisable. We offer this new information now so that readers may (if convinced) add these changed dates to their Selected Letters and so that others may be inspired as they contemplate projects for the next Cather International Seminar, “Beyond Nebraska: Cather’s Pittsburgh,” June 11–17, 2017.

—Tim Bintrim and James Jaap
2017 International Seminar Directors

Kim Vanderlaan: One of the great joys of participating in Willa Cather seminars and conferences is the community’s spirit of generosity. Last June, the 15th International Cather Seminar proved to be fun and inspiring. One lunchtime conversation late in the week turned to the next International Seminar. As we tossed around ideas for sessions and panel discussions, I happened to mention that my husband, Brett, a retired physics teacher, is a certified organist and knows quite a bit about the history of that instrument. Tim Bintrim, one of the 2017 seminar directors, asked if we might be interested in researching the free organ recitals offered at Carnegie Music Hall in Pittsburgh during the time Cather lived there. I think I hinted that Brett might also be persuaded to play for an audience in 2017, especially if we could replicate a performance that Cather would have heard.



Carnegie Music Hall in Pittsburgh, ca. 1896. William R. Oliver Special Collections, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh–Main.

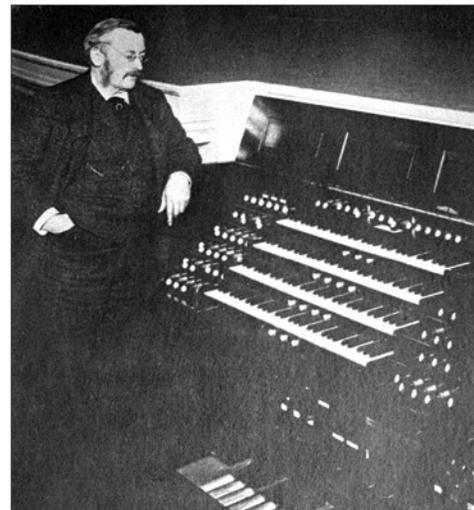
After the conference, Tim and I kept in touch. Our families met for lunch and a tour of the Carnegie Music Hall. Brett and I began to research prospective recital materials for the 2017 seminar. Archivist Greg Priore, at the Carnegie Library’s William R. Oliver Special Collections, was extremely helpful, directing us to dozens of scrapbooks containing programs from events held at the Carnegie Music Hall in the Oakland section of Pittsburgh from 1895, when the Music Hall opened, to 1931 (see illustration above). Brett and I began poring through those that coincided with Cather’s time in Pittsburgh.



One of the few specific published dates for Cather's arrival in Pittsburgh was July 3, 1896, indicated by Kathleen Byrne and Richard Snyder in *Chrysalis: Willa Cather in Pittsburgh, 1896–1906* (2). Although *Chrysalis* (1980) is the most extensive account of Cather's time in Pittsburgh, other biographers have given late June as her arrival date. John P. Hinz's "Willa Cather in Pittsburgh" (*New Colophon* 1950) quotes the *Red Cloud Chiefs* notice that Miss Willa Cather left for Pittsburgh on June 26 (198). E. K. Brown and Leon Edel's *Willa Cather: A Critical Biography* (1953) notes, "Before the end of June Willa Cather was in Pittsburgh" (73). In his Introduction to *Willa Cather in Person*, Brent Bohlke writes that Cather "went to work for a periodical in Pittsburgh, the *Home Monthly*—in June 1896" (xxiii). Phyllis C. Robinson states in *Willa: The Life of Willa Cather* (1983) that "on June 17 the [*Nebraska State*] *Journal* announced her departure and by the end of the month she was gone, having stopped briefly in Chicago on her way to Pittsburgh" (77). In *Willa Cather: A Literary Life*, James Woodress writes, "Still only twenty-two in June 1896, Cather travelled east towards Pennsylvania in a state of increasing excitement" (112).

Recalling that Cather's letter to Ellen Gere (*Selected Letters* 37) mentions hearing "Traumeri" by Schumann at an organ recital on "Saturday night," we scanned the scrapbooks for a program that included the Schumann piece. The only suggestion of a date Cather gave her letter to Ellen Gere was "Monday"; *The Selected Letters* gives it a conjectural July 27, 1896 date. However, the scrapbooks contain *no* program records from July—or August for that matter—of 1896. The final concert before the weather became too warm for large indoor gatherings was, in fact, an organ recital performed on Saturday, *June 27*, 1896 (see illustration). This program included an arrangement of Schumann's "Traumeri" played by Frederic Archer. The June 27 program also states clearly that it was to be the "last evening organ recital until October 3" when cooler weather would allow the fall season to begin.

In the scrapbook collection, there are indeed programs for organ recitals on October 2 (afternoon) and October 3 (evening) as well. When I reported these discrepancies of the programs to Tim and Andrew Jewell, Andy replied that it appeared we had uncovered a new timeline for Cather's arrival in Pittsburgh (see his comments below). Subsequently, we found additional evidence in the *Pittsburg Leader* confirming that Saturday, June 27, was the last free organ recital of the season. The review in the *Leader's* "In Musical Pittsburg" column for Sunday, June 28, states that hot weather was the reason the performances were suspended until the fall: "Last night, Mr. Frederic Archer gave his last organ recital for the present season at Carnegie hall, Pittsburg. It was a sultry evening, but the audience was none the less interested in the program, which despite the intense heat, was magnificently presented by the city organist." The writer goes on to praise Archer's many contributions to the city and mentions that the recitals, as well as Archer's lectures on classical music, would resume in October.



Frederic Archer at the console of the organ in the Carnegie Music Hall, Pittsburgh.

Another discrepancy in Cather's letter to Ellen Gere arose during our research: the name of the recitalist on the night in question. Cather's letter states that the organist was "William Archer." Yet the programs confirm that the twice-weekly organ recitals at the Carnegie Music Hall were given by *Frederic Archer* (including the recitals of June 27, and October 2 and 3, 1896). Born in Oxford, England, Frederic Archer was educated in London and Leipzig and held positions in Manhattan and Boston before he was appointed director of the Carnegie Music Hall in 1895 and director of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra in 1896 (*The World and the Parish* 375–76). Cather later praised his accomplishments, writing, "Mr. Archer is, of course, the leading musician of Pittsburgh. As an organist he is without a peer in America, and as a conductor he is almost equally noted" (506).

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CARNEGIE MUSIC HALL,
PITTSBURGH.

Saturday Evening, June 27, 1896, at 8 o'clock,
SIXTY-NINTH FREE ORGAN RECITAL,
And last Evening Recital until October 3,
BY
FREDERIC ARCHER,
Director of Music at the Carnegie Music Hall
of Pittsburgh.

The Recital this evening will be prefaced by a Lecture on
POPULAR MUSIC OF THE PAST AND PRESENT.
The Programme is framed for the purpose of illustration.

. . . **PROGRAM.** . . .

1.	Overture, "Zampa,"	Herold
2.	Air du Dauphin,	Roedel
3.	(a) Traumeri,	Schumann
	(b) "The Lost Chord,"	Sullivan
4.	"La Belle Amazone,"	Loeschorn
5.	"Les Joyeux Papillons,"	Gragh
6.	Overture, "Guillaume Tell,"	Rossini

The Coat Rooms of Carnegie Music Hall lead from the lower corridor. The attendants will check garments and umbrellas free. All are asked to avail themselves of this privilege. There is a retiring room for ladies on the second floor.

OVER

Program from organ recital of June 27, 1896. William R. Oliver Special Collections, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh–Main.



If Cather bungled Archer's name in her hasty message to Ellen Gere, she undoubtedly got to know him well later, both as a performer on the organ and as the respected conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. She rallied to Archer's defense in her *Nebraska State Journal* column of January 17, 1897, when he was accused of disrespecting the Sabbath. At the start of the program's second year, the public had asked the Carnegie's trustees to have the popular organ recitals scheduled on Sunday afternoons rather than on Fridays when everyone but the elite were obligated to work. A small but vocal group of the city's conservative clergy objected to the Sunday concerts, holding public meetings "denouncing Archer, the flesh and the devil" (507). In the minds of divines such as the Rev. Harvey Henderson, whom Cather quotes, "These [Sunday] recitals are to entertain, to amuse, not to educate. Music is a means of expressing human emotion, human feelings; also a means of arousing human emotions and human feelings. It is not an educating force. . . . It has no moral quality" (507).

In her column for the *Nebraska State Journal*, Cather cited the outrage of the ministers as typical of the narrowness of Pittsburgh Presbyterianism. She scoffed, "Ah, 'a means of arousing human emotion,' that is the seat of the trouble. There is nothing on earth the Pittsburgh Presbyterian fears and hates as he does the 'human emotion.' He has no particular objection to greed or ignorance or selfishness or any other undemonstrative sin, but emotion is his synonym for wrong." Because the Sunday concerts had become so popular that "hundreds of people [had] been turned away at the door every Sunday afternoon," devotees had begun arriving at least an hour early, perhaps interfering with their dutiful appearance at Sunday services. When a delegation of ministers visited Archer to inform him that "ethically an organ recital on the Sabbath was just as depraving as a minstrel show," he listened quietly, later telling journalists, "Why waste rhetoric upon men who are spiritually deaf? I am a musician, not a reformer. If they don't want music, I can keep still. There are other cities" (506–507). Fortunately, Archer did not leave Pittsburgh. Despite pressure from the pulpit, the trustees held firm (backed by Andrew Carnegie's own emotional attachment to organ music) and the Sunday recitals continued. The Carnegie's archives show that Archer gave more than 450 organ recitals during his tenure as civic organist for Pittsburgh. His organ transcriptions of popular opera and orchestral pieces (such as the Schumann) were common for the time period—a practice that reached its apex with Archer's successor in Pittsburgh, Edwin H. Lemare.

We discovered all of this quite by happenstance, simply in the process of trying to learn more about the music Cather might have been listening to during her time in Pittsburgh. But Tim wrote congratulating us on our revisionist discovery: "You

and Brett dove in without accepting as given the July 3rd arrival theory." In fact, we had not much thought about biographers' theories until I literally held up my copy of *Selected Letters* to the program and saw that the dates did not match. But Tim's view is certainly the more romantic one!



Andrew Jewell: Almost all the evidence we have for Cather's arrival in Pittsburgh in the summer of 1896 comes from a few letters she wrote to the Gere family in Lincoln. Typically, Cather dates only a couple of these letters and, much to the bane of her biographers and editors, leaves others with the ambiguous dateline of "Monday" or "Friday." Putting together the evidence previously available in the letters, plus various announcements of her departure in Nebraska newspapers, many biographers have rather loosely indicated that Cather arrived by the end of June. Byrne and Snyder, however, argue that the real date of arrival was Friday, July 3, drawing upon Cather's statement in an undated "Friday" letter to Mariel Gere that she has only been in Pittsburgh "a few hours" and comments, in other letters to the Gere family dated July 13 and August 4, 1896, complaining about specific gaps in time since she's heard from her friends.

Though it pains me just a trifle to realize Janis Stout and I published some incorrectly conjectured dates for these letters in *The Selected Letters of Willa Cather*, it satisfies me much more deeply to have new evidence with which to resolve this biographical ambiguity. In the book, the four letters to the Gere family on pages 33–40 are dated "Friday [July 1896]," "July 13 [1896]," "Monday [July 27, 1896]" and "August 4, 1896." Only two of these dates can now stand: July 13 and August 4. The other two must be revised. Given the discovery of the recital program, which firmly dates the concert Cather discusses in the "Monday" letter to Ellen Gere as Saturday, June 27, we now know that the proper Monday is June 29, 1896. This new firm date reverberates with the "Friday" letter. It is clear that the "Friday" letter was written before the "Monday" letter (most pointedly, Cather writes on Friday, "I have only been a few hours in this City of Dreadful Dirt" and discusses her arrival in Pittsburgh). "Friday" is, then, June 26, 1896. Further solidifying this date: the Red Cloud *Golden Belt* newspaper reported that Willa Cather left for Pittsburgh on Tuesday, June 23. We know she stopped at Chicago on her way east to see an exhibit of Gustave Doré paintings at the Art Institute of Chicago, so it makes perfect sense that her arrival would have been three days after leaving Red Cloud, Nebraska.

These new dates, and all new information we find about the letters, will, unfortunately, not make it into copies of the *Selected Letters* unless readers do as I did and pencil in the right dates on the pages. However, we are at work on a new, digital publication of Cather's letters, *The Complete Letters of Willa Cather*, to be published on the *Willa Cather Archive* (cather.unl.edu) beginning



in January 2018. Funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, this endeavor will feature searchable transcriptions, images of original documents, and full annotations of every known surviving Cather letter. Also, since it is a digital publication, it is fully flexible and can accommodate new information as it is discovered. I have already inserted this new date information into our records for these letters. As Cather scholars, readers, and students everywhere continue to make new discoveries, I hope they will share them with us, so we can have the most reliable and up-to-date information possible for this free resource.



Tim Bintrim: Kim and Brett Vanderlaan's discovery of the Archer recital programs and Andrew Jewell's revised chronology of her first weeks in Pittsburgh both illustrate the possibilities of collaboration and exemplify Sue Rosowski's challenge to scholars: "set aside preconceptions and conduct the research" (221). For many years I had accepted the estimate of Byrne and Snyder that Cather arrived on Friday, July 3, 1896 (97, n. 5). In the thirty-five years since its publication and the twenty years I have used it as a guide, *Chrysalis* has held up well; although Byrne and Snyder sometimes present Cather's bad behavior in a kindly light, one can generally trust their facts. Reading Andy Jewell's explanation that June 26 is the logical arrival date got me thinking how these seven days will change the Pittsburgh section of future biographies. As it turns out, the extra week makes quite a difference.

For her first "week or so" in Pittsburgh, Cather was a guest in the home of one of her publishers, James. W. Axtell (Byrne and Snyder 2–3). If she attended the Archer recital just one day after she arrived in Pittsburgh, who accompanied her? Cather's sentence—"We went of an organ recital by William Archer at the great Carnegie music hall Saturday night"—follows a paragraph about the previous night's dinner guest, "Miss Rush," one of James Axtell's nieces who planned to attend Vassar with Lyda Axtell that fall. "Lyda" was the family name of daughter Clara Eliza Axtell, born in 1876 ("Axtell"). A second niece of the Axtells who resided with the family has not been identified. In an Aug. 10, 1896 letter to Mariel Gere, Cather claimed that the latter young woman "would rather not live at all" than live as Lyda did, only socializing with her family and Sunday School class, making her an early prototype of the disaffected protagonist of "Paul's Case." Because James and Nellie Axtell were not musical people and Lyda was absent, I assume that Cather toured the Carnegie and attended the Archer concert with some of "Lyda's five thousand seven hundred cousins" (*Selected Letters* 37). The museums and library could have easily occupied the young women for much of the afternoon. After touring the institute, given the crowds at the free Archer recitals, Cather's party probably claimed their seats early for the 8:00 p.m. performance.

Redating the letter to Ellen Gere as June 29 also clarifies that Cather attended services with the Axtells at their church, the Shady Avenue Cumberland Presbyterian, on Sunday, June 28, when she made the acquaintance of the church's acting minister, the Rev. J. R. Henry ("To-Morrow's Sermons"), who eventually became a trusted friend. In Henry, Cather discovered an intellectual companion who shared her interest in popular fiction and bicycling (Bintrim and Ronning). Henry became a significant help to her, contributing a comic essay on "Oxford in Old England" to the March *Home Monthly*, challenging her to read all five volumes of Edward Gibbon, and, through the new Writers' Club, introducing her to Anthony Hope Hawkins, whom Henry had known at Oxford. As a newcomer reporting the follies of Pittsburghers to the Lincoln newspapers, she could wish for no better camouflage at Writers' Club receptions than a Presbyterian minister on her arm. After Henry left Pittsburgh, Cather paid him a sort of left-handed compliment by using him as a prototype of the Cumberland minister in "Paul's Case" and the bicycling minister in "A Death in the Desert" (Bintrim and Ronning).

Cather herself may have played a greater part than has been realized in the founding of the Writers' Club, which included several of her friends in addition to Rev. J. R. Henry: Erasmus Wilson (the "dean of Pittsburgh newspapermen" who wrote a feature for the *Home Monthly* from its beginning), Arthur Burgoyne (the *Leader's* "All Sorts" man, prototype of Scott McGregor in *The Professor's House*), and John Hazlett, city editor of the *Leader*, the paper Cather joined as assistant telegraph editor in 1897. We know she attended Writers' Club receptions for novelists Ian Maclaren, Francis Hopkinson Smith, Anthony Hope Hawkins, and Arctic explorer Fridtjof Nansen (*The World and the Parish* 521). Her *Courier* account of the Hawkins reception is broadly satiric, but also suggests that she may have had a hand in preparing these affairs:

Now the Writers Club is composed of poor wretches who have the misfortune to earn their bread by the sweat of the ink pot and is maintained for the express purpose of torturing celebrities. When one of the Great comes to town, "we" of the Writers Club issue invitations and hie us to a florist and invest in palms and chrysanthemums, and find a pianist and a man who can growl out bass solos and proceed to give the great man a reception. That is, he is compelled to stand on his feet for an hour and shake hands with hundreds of people he cares nothing whatsoever about. . . . (564)

Cather does not specify if she helped the club's social committee; she seems to be simultaneously boasting about her privileged access to Hawkins (thanks to Rev. Henry) and distancing herself from "the colossal stupidity of that reception" (565).





The Schenley Park Casino. The ice palace was destroyed by fire on December 17, 1896, just nineteen months after opening. Image from the Oliver P. Merriman Scrapbook Collection, CTC.1964.01, Curtis Theatre Collection, Special Collections, University of Pittsburgh.

In the workplace, her arrival on June 26 would have given her more time—almost a full month—to put together the first issue of the *Home Monthly* from her own writings (some pseudonymous) and materials she solicited from others. Part of her work during these weeks was helping the compositor adapt the forms from the folio pages of the *Home Monthly*'s sister publication, the *National Stockman and Farmer*, to the smaller magazine layout of the *Home Monthly*. Her employers must have liked the result, for the *Stockman* adopted the look of the *Home Monthly* with its twentieth anniversary issue in mid-April 1897. Erasmus Wilson likewise praised the *Home Monthly*'s appearance when he announced the magazine's debut on July 25, 1896 ("Quiet").

On or about the Fourth of July, Cather was reunited with actress Pauline Hall at the Schenley Casino, a sporting arena that had opened the previous year as Pittsburgh's—possibly the nation's—first indoor skating rink.

Impresario Harry Davis wished to build "a place for theater, recreation and social gathering for 'people of stature and the common man'" at the entrance to the city's new Schenley Park near the Carnegie Institute (as recorded on PittsburghHockey.net, a local history site and "online Pittsburgh hockey museum"). The proposal failed to attract investors until Davis and his facilities manager James Conant convinced a group of capitalists that an artificial ice skating surface could be manufactured. Thousands of feet of "chiller pipes" would be connected in a great ellipse and embedded in concrete to create a huge, shallow dish. When the concrete dish was flooded with an inch of water and ammonia gas was circulated through the pipes from the ice-making plant in the rear of the building, a 225-foot by 70-foot skating surface resulted that was far smoother and more uniform than natural

ice. Impressed by Davis's pitch, the investors agreed to finance the \$400,000 construction cost, and Davis went overboard with amenities, exceeding his budget by \$140,000. Reporters and regular Pittsburghers who attended the grand opening in May 1895 were pleased with the ice and the elegant surroundings, and the Casino enjoyed healthy patronage on weeknights (the five-cent admission included skate frames that patrons could tie over street shoes). Thousands also attended the Saturday night hockey games, even though the sport was new in Pittsburgh. The following spring, Davis resolved to complete the Casino with a 400-seat summer theater.

If Cather took a turn around the rink on ice skates, she does not say, but her letters attest that she attended several operettas starring Pauline Hall that summer. She may have even biked the 2.5 miles from her boardinghouse to the Casino. When June evenings became so warm that the conventional theaters closed and Frederic Archer suspended his organ recitals, the Casino boasted open-air verandas, an outdoor smoking garden with an electric fountain, and the new, air-conditioned theater: delightful spaces for young people to meet and flirt on weekday evenings

and Saturday afternoons. The summer theater opened for the first time on June 22, just four days before Cather's arrival ("Music"). Three days after the theater's opening and one day before Cather's arrival, as reported in the *Pittsburg Leader*, leading lady Pauline Hall was entering the park on her bicycle when she was stopped by Assistant Superintendent of Police Sol Coulson, who informed Hall that "she was under arrest for violating a city ordinance in not having a Pittsburg license plate on her wheel." Although Pittsburgh's cycling regulations had a courtesy clause exempting tourists and visitors from the license requirement, Officer Coulson insisted that Miss Hall park her wheel and come with him to be processed at the Oakland District police station. The prima donna was furious, but she did not resist. After Coulson hailed a cab, he tried to make pleasantries by

pointing out local attractions on the way to the station, but "the fair Pauline got even by looking daggers and refusing to converse." Perhaps she was further insulted when Coulson proceeded to "hint that carriage riding was about 50 percent more comfortable in hot weather than bicycle riding." Incensed at being arrested, patronized, and imprisoned in a holding cell, the popular actress



A cabinet card portrait of Pauline Hall by Benjamin J. Falk, ca. 1890.



declared “that once she got out of that ‘horrid’ place she would take the very first train leaving the city and go back to New York.” But a few minutes later Casino Theater manager Harry C. Shwab arrived, apologized profusely to the prima donna, and paid Miss Hall’s fine and court costs. Hall eventually agreed to stay on in Pittsburgh, but told reporters that “[Mr.] Shwab should be arrested for not telling her about the law.” Manager Shwab promised the judge that he would get Miss Hall a license and “post notices in the Casino dressing rooms so that none of the chorus girls (many of whom rode wheels) will meet with similar experiences” (“She’ll Get”).

When Cather caught up with Pauline Hall, whom she had befriended in Lincoln, she no doubt heard Hall’s side of the booking. Cather knew that the 36-year-old actress exulted in physical activity such as bicycling and fencing. In Hall’s air-conditioned dressing room at the Casino, the two may have denounced the passivity some men still expected of professional women. Tommy Shirley, the athletic Western protagonist of Cather’s “Tommy, the Unsentimental,” who covers twenty-five miles of hilly terrain in seventy-five minutes while carrying hundreds of dollars in a canvas bag (and without a police escort), may have sprung from this conversation. This story, begun in Pittsburgh and ready when the first issue of the *Home Monthly* went to press in mid-July, contrasts the freedom of action allowed young women in the West with the more rigidly proscribed gender roles in the East. Hall’s brush with the law must have presented Cather with a warning that women had limited freedom in Presbyterian Pittsburgh, especially women bold and athletic enough to stretch their legs in public.

As this reconstruction of Cather’s first week demonstrates, a serendipitous discovery like the Vanderlaans’ resonates far beyond the archive, just as the mighty Farrand and Votey organ paid for by Andrew Carnegie announced Frederic Archer’s recitals for blocks around the Music Hall on many a Saturday (and Sunday) during Cather’s decade in Pittsburgh. Their discovery bodes well for the Cather International Seminar in June 2017, when other scholars will bring their particular expertise in music, art, theater—even the mechanisms of hundred-year-old pipe organs—to explore the mysteries of Cather’s Pittsburgh decade.

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Remembering David H. Porter (1935–2016)

On Easter evening I received, as did many others, the sad news of David Porter's death, during a solitary evening walk two nights



David Porter performing Schubert, June 11, 2015.

before, on March 25: Good Friday. Immediately my email box began to fill up with messages from friends and colleagues in the Cather community. From their heartfelt words, a portrait began to emerge of a man who had become central to that community and embodied its best qualities. Chuck Johanningsmeier wrote, "David was one of the kindest, most gracious gentlemen (and I use that term because it describes him well) that I have ever met . . . welcoming and generous to all." Sue Maher added, "He was the loveliest man. . . . What a brilliant artist and scholar! What a generous mentor. . . ." Guy Reynolds, who worked with David on his Willa Cather Scholarly Edition of *Lucy Gayheart*, praised David's scholarship: "He was a model of scholarly engagement, tenacity, and courtesy." Jane Hood described his "patient dedication to Cather's living legacy." Other members of the Cather Foundation's Board of Governors chimed in, remembering the insight and wisdom David had brought to our endless meetings. From Richard Harris: "To me he was always the epitome of wisdom and goodness." From John Swift: "David came to epitomize the Cather community's decency, intelligence, and kindness." Ruth Keene recalled "that contagious smile and twinkling eyes," as well as the invaluable "fundraising skills" David brought to the board. And Andy Jewell summed it up, recalling David's "scholarship, his musicality, his thoughtful advocacy, his wit and style, and, perhaps most importantly, his kindness. He gave generously of himself, and he had a lot to give."

When David Porter came to Cather studies about fifteen years ago, he already had an extraordinary career behind him. Born in New York City in 1935, the only child of two musicians, he grew up in the city, studying piano and then harpsichord from an early age and playing baseball so well that a minor league team tried to draft him from high school. He simultaneously attended the Philadelphia Conservatory and Swarthmore College, from which he graduated *summa cum laude*. Next he earned a PhD in classics from Princeton University, while studying with renowned pianist Eduard Steuermann in Philadelphia. Then Carleton College offered him a professorship in both classics and music, and David remained at Carleton for twenty-five years. There he and his musician wife Laudie raised four children, and,

as his youngest son "Davey" recalls, David pursued his "twin passions" for music and classics "with characteristic ambition, publishing

scholarly works on Horace while simultaneously presenting concerts featuring such daunting works as Ives's *Concord Sonata* or the complete *Well-Tempered Clavier* on harpsichord. . . . Dad still found time for family bike rides, evening illustrations of his baseball prowess, rough and ready yard projects, and fishing trips," as well as three year-long family trips to Europe. "Those wildly kinetic years also included music lessons for all of us (sometimes on multiple instruments, usually an hour's drive away)." The Carleton years ended with the much-mourned death of Laudie, who had introduced her husband to two favorite writers, Virginia Woolf and Willa Cather. For Laudie, David began to collect those writers' first editions.

With his second wife Helen, David next spent eleven years as a remarkably successful president of Skidmore College. He led the college's largest-ever fundraising campaign (raising \$86.5 million), enhanced the school's scholarly reputation, and worked to diversify student body, faculty, and staff. He ended his term as president by returning to the classroom as a professor, whose repertoire now included classes in Willa Cather. He taught at Williams College, Princeton, Indiana University and then returned to Skidmore as the first Tisch Family Distinguished Professor. David's students, dating back to 1962, remember him as an invigorating, inspiring teacher and, for many, a lifelong mentor. He retired from the classroom, reluctantly, in 2013.

David first became a familiar figure to the Cather community in the pages of this publication. His first essays, beginning in 2002, explored the various Cather editions and ephemera he had collected, reading them with close acuity that found new insights into Cather's self-invention and art in such apparently unpromising materials as book jacket blurbs and publicity brochures—insights that eventually led to an important book, *On the Divide: The Many Lives of Willa Cather*, published in 2009. Another volume, co-authored with Lucy Marks, appeared that same year: *Seeking Life Whole: Willa Cather and the Brewsters*, which explored Cather and Edith Lewis's revealing relationship with painters Achsah and Earl Brewster. In the following years, he threw himself into scholarly work as historical editor of the Willa Cather Scholarly Edition of *Lucy Gayheart*, bringing his



vast musical knowledge and understanding to this project. This edition was published in summer of 2015, and those who attended the International Willa Cather Seminar that summer had the opportunity to hear him discuss the adventure—and the labor—of working on that volume. They also had the distinct pleasure of hearing him perform sections of Schubert's great late Sonata in B♭ Major as part of *The Fine Things of Youth: Willa Cather's Lucy Gayheart in Words and Music*, presented at close of the seminar. His deep understanding of that Schubert-drenched novel helped create an extraordinarily dramatic evening.

In 2004, David became an invaluable member of the Cather Foundation's Board of Governors and was soon elected board treasurer, a post he held at his death. David's presence was felt on every level—as a constant and thoughtful voice on financial management, as a gifted and inventive performer at the piano, as a delightful and welcoming companion and collaborator, whose presence was punctuated by the sly puns to which he was addicted.

Last summer, David and his family co-sponsored a performance at the Foundation's Red Cloud Opera House of *Song of the Lark: A Lyric Song Cycle*, which the family had commissioned in 2010 in memory of Laudie Porter. Soprano Michelle Dean was accompanied by the composer Barlow Bradford at the piano and the young David Porter—"Davey" to his father, and so to us as well—hosted the evening.

Even in the last weeks of his life, as his health worsened, David's voice was there on the conference calls and he was thinking of the Foundation's future. A few days before his death, David emailed his advice about our celebration of the 2018 centenary of *My Ántonia*, two years in the future. As a scholar, musician, administrator, friend, advocate, mentor, teacher, and colleague—as well as a loving father and husband—David Porter had, as Andy Jewell said, "a lot to give." And we at the Willa Cather Foundation are so fortunate that he generously shared those precious gifts with us.

Ann Romines

Contributors to this Issue

Lindsay Andrews is a PhD student at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, studying American literature and art history with a specialization in nineteenth-century studies. Her field of research focuses on the interdisciplinary relationship between visual and literary aesthetics.

Tim Bintrim is associate professor of English and environmental studies at Saint Francis University in Loretto, Pennsylvania. The friendships of Cather's Pittsburgh years are the focus of his current research, which he is now expanding to a book-length manuscript, and he has published several essays on Cather's Pittsburgh connections. He is codirector of the 2017 International Willa Cather Seminar in Pittsburgh.

Jane Dressler, soprano, is professor of voice at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio. At the 2000 International Cather Seminar, she presented the premiere of *My Ántonia*, a song cycle written for her by Libby Larsen. Her interest in the performance of music in America has led to several articles and presentations related to Cather's writings about classical singers.

James A. Jaap is a senior instructor of English at the Pennsylvania State University Greater Allegheny campus, outside of Pittsburgh. He was a 2013 Woodress Fellowship recipient, and his article on Cather and the painter Ernest Blumenschein will appear in the forthcoming *Cather Studies 11*. He is codirector of the 2017 Willa Cather International Seminar in Pittsburgh.

Andrew Jewell is a professor in the University Libraries at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and the editor of the *Willa Cather Archive*. He is the coeditor, with Janis Stout, of *The Selected Letters of Willa Cather* and has served on the Willa Cather Foundation's Board of Governors since 2008.

Mark J. Madigan is a professor of English at Nazareth College in Rochester, New York. He is the historical editor of the Willa Cather Scholarly Edition of *Youth and the Bright Medusa*, editor of three volumes by Dorothy Canfield Fisher, and author of numerous essays on American writers, including Charles Chesnutt, Nella Larsen, and Richard Wright. He was a Fulbright Scholar in Ljubljana, Slovenia, and a Fulbright Specialist in Zadar, Croatia.

Richard Norton Smith is a presidential historian, biographer of George Washington, Herbert Hoover, Thomas Dewey, and Nelson Rockefeller, and past director of the Hoover, Eisenhower, Reagan, Ford, and Lincoln presidential libraries. He served in a similar capacity at the Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics at the University of Kansas in Lawrence. A familiar face to viewers of C-SPAN and the PBS Newshour, he is currently working on a biography of Gerald R. Ford. He lives in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Brett Vanderlaan taught high school science for twenty years. Now retired from education, he is a freelance musician who plays organ and piano for churches and musical groups. He is helping to plan musical events for the 2017 Cather Seminar in Pittsburgh.

Kimberly Vanderlaan is assistant professor of English at California University of Pennsylvania. Her research interests include Henry James, Edith Wharton, Willa Cather, and Ernest Hemingway, and she has published essays in *American Literary Realism*, *Western American Literature*, *Journal of American Studies*, and other journals. She recently edited a textbook, *Why We Read, Why We Write: an Anthology of Short Fiction*.



Willa Cather NEWSLETTER & REVIEW

Volume 58 • No. 3 | Spring 2016



The Willa Cather Foundation Established 1955 by Mildred Bennett

Ashley Olson, Executive Director

www.WillaCather.org
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Design: Bunny Zaruba Design

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The *Willa Cather Newsletter & 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 Seventh Edition of the *MLA Handbook*.

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The *Willa Cather Newsletter & Review* (ISSN 0197-663X) is published three times a year by:

The Willa Cather Foundation
413 North Webster Street
Red Cloud NE 68970

402-746-2653
866-731-7304

E-mail: info@willacather.org

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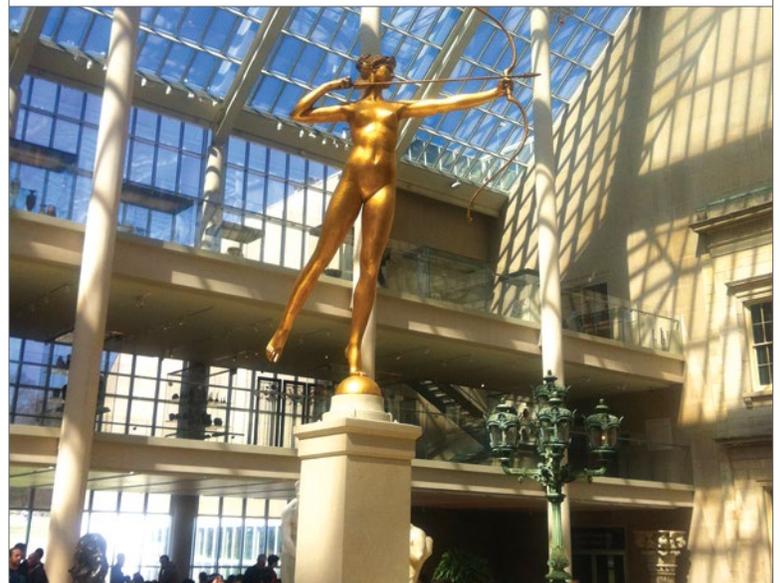
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Diana in New York: A half-size model of Augustus Saint-Gaudens's iconic statue presides over the Engelhard Court in the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. See page 7 for a look at Saint-Gaudens and Cather.



*I need the wadding.

*Don't you need a knife?

*He needs some thread.

*They need some buttons.

*Does he need a cup?

*Do you need a fork?

*He needs a razor.

...some soap and hot water.
What for?

...have himself.

J'ai besoin de l'ouate (zhā lā zwin dī-loo-āt').

N'avez-vous pas besoin d'un couteau? (nā-vā-voo pā bi-zwin dun koo-tō').

Il a besoin de fil (ee-lā bi-zwin dī feel').

Il leur faut des boutons (eel līr fō dā boo-ton').

Lui faut-il un quart? (lwee fā teel un kār').

Vous faut-il une fourchette? (voo fō-teel un foor-shēt').

Il a besoin d'un rasoir (ee-lā bi-zwin dun rā-zwār').

...du savon et de l'eau chaude (du sā-von' nā dī lō shōd').

Pourquoi faire? (poor-kwā fār').

Pour se raser (poor sī rā-zā').

...that the French have two ways of expressing the English verb "to have," avoir with the noun besoin, the preposition de, "of," for example; "I need some paper," "J'ai besoin d'un papier (zhā bi-zwin dun pap-ye), "of the paper."

Where does cold water? (C)

Have you my pencil?

Yes, I have it.
No, I haven't it.

Have you any rooms to rent?

Yes, I have some.
No, I haven't any.

I have no spectacles

I have no pen.

I have enough

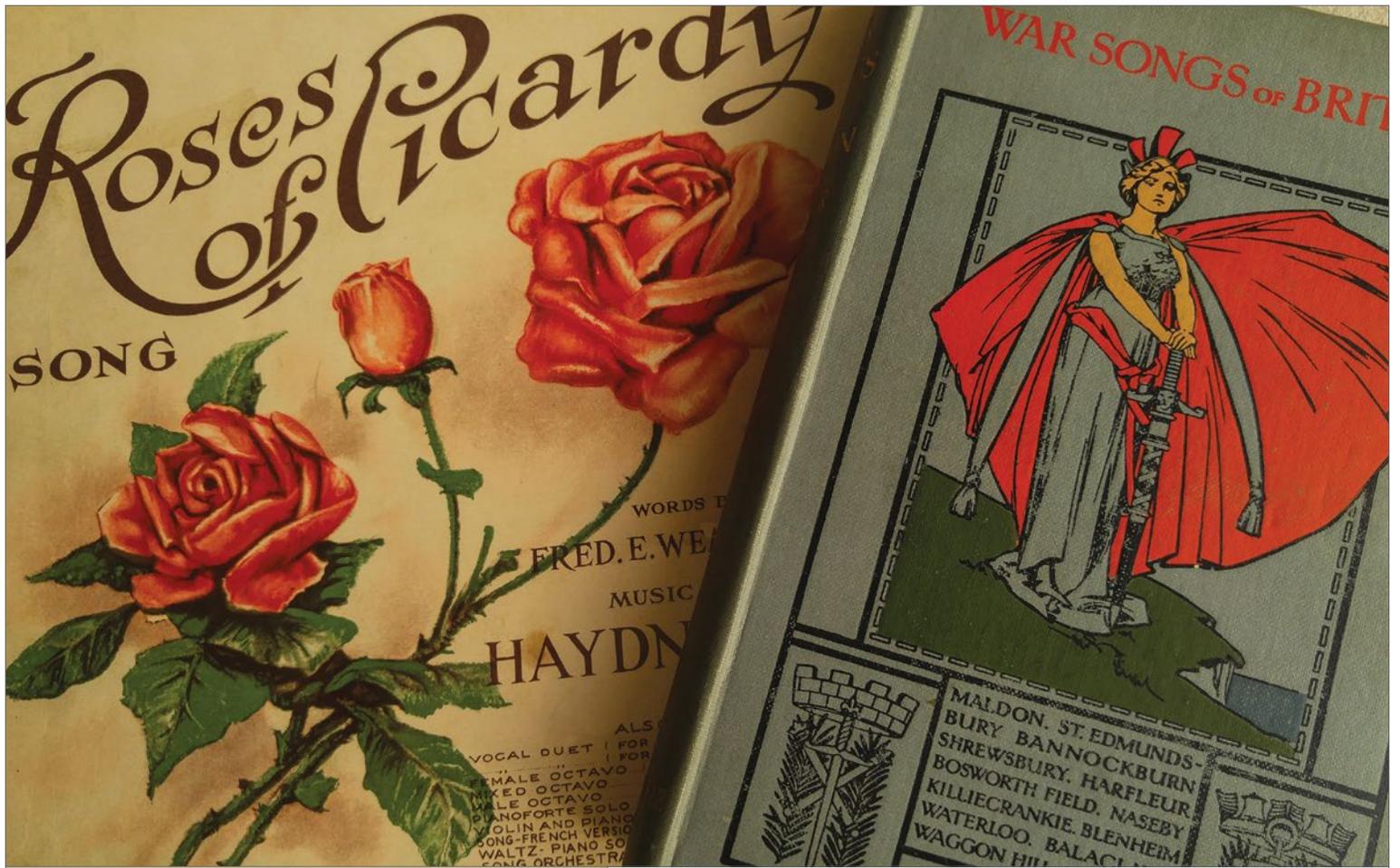
I have too m

I should

Give m

Show





Telling War Stories

At press time we are just beginning installation of our summer exhibit, *Telling War Stories: The Rhetoric of the Great War*, which includes objects from private and museum collections across the country. Pictured are (clockwise from upper left): Soldier's French phrase book; sheet music "The Roses of Picardy" (Richard Harris collection); Jack Cather's copy of *War Songs of Britain* (WCF); Food Administration poster (Library of Congress); silk commemorative handkerchief (Ann Romines collection); *Red Cross Magazine*; and Bennett collapsing typewriter, popular among war correspondents (North Shore Historical Museum).

Tracy Tucker,
WCF Education Director and Archivist

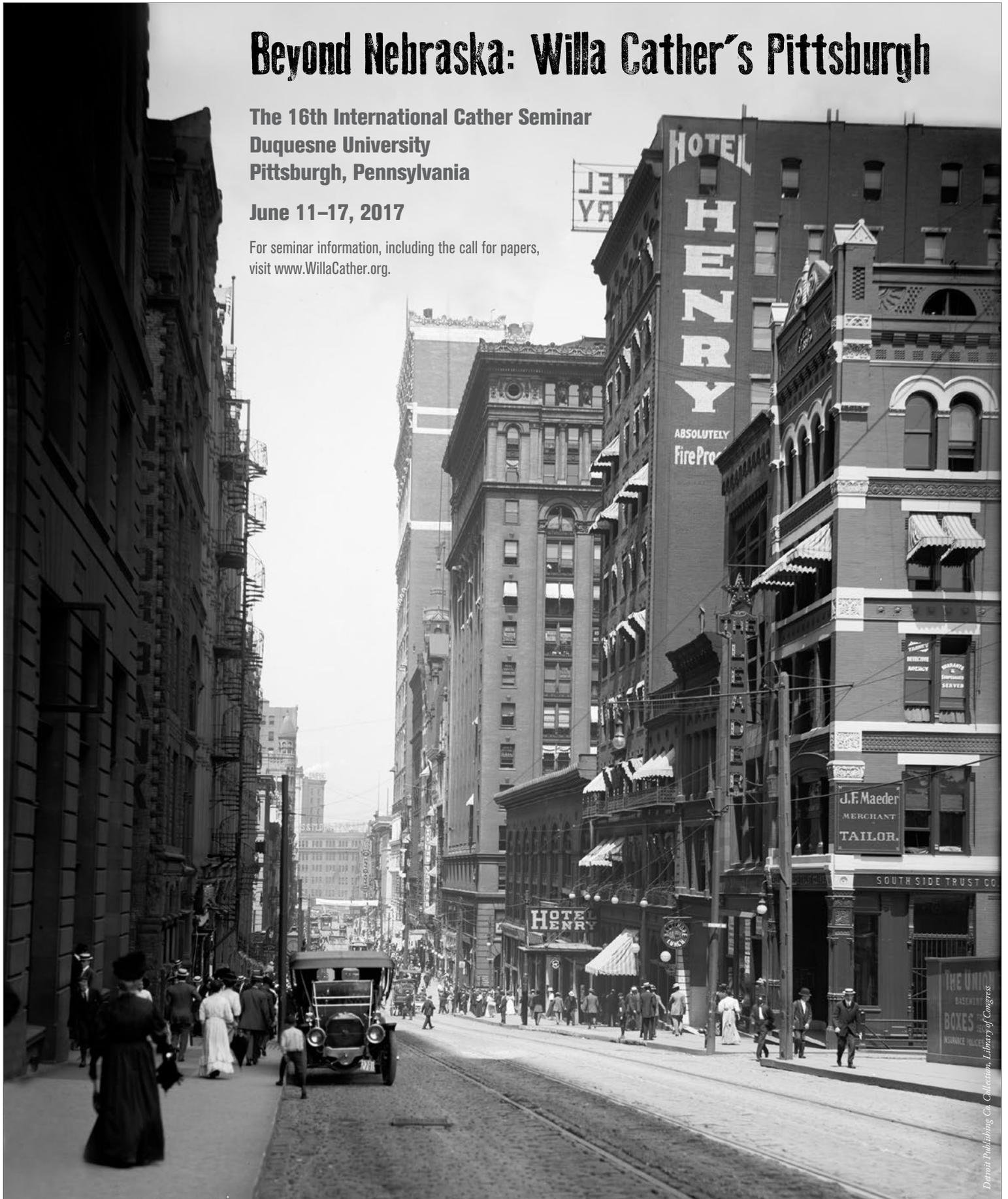


Beyond Nebraska: Willa Cather's Pittsburgh

The 16th International Cather Seminar
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June 11–17, 2017

For seminar information, including the call for papers,
visit www.WillaCather.org.



Seen here: Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, about 1910. The Pittsburgh Leader (at that time the Pittsburg Leader), where Cather was a contributor and later a staffer, is on the right.



Darwin Publishing Co. Collection, Library of Congress