"My Dear Boy": Roscoe Cather's Role within Willa Cather's Kingdom of Art

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“My Dear Boy”: Roscoe Cather’s Role within Willa Cather’s Kingdom of Art

by

Laurie Ann Weber

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“My Dear Boy”: Roscoe Cather’s Role within Willa Cather’s Kingdom of Art

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The 2007 donation to the University of Nebraska of correspondence, photos, books, and other materials belonging to the family of Willa Cather’s next younger brother, Roscoe Cather, provides evidence of an intimate relationship between the two siblings. In addition to relying upon Roscoe’s financial management and advice, Willa Cather frequently shared information with him about her writing and the public reception of her writing for which I have identified two main purposes: a desire to favorably influence his opinion of her writing and a desire to seek his input as a middlebrow reader of her literature. This thesis discusses a sampling of letters, a book Willa gave as a gift to Roscoe, and a small scrapbook of English reviews she shared with him to demonstrate her desire to positively influence Roscoe’s perceptions of her level of achievement in the world of literature and to seek his middlebrow reader reaction. Roscoe fulfilled not only the role of her most consistently supportive family member in regards to her writing, but also served as an average reader to whom Willa Cather did desire to appeal, even though she did not publicly articulate that desire.
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Chapter One: Introduction

In 2007, the family of Willa Cather’s brother Roscoe Cather donated over 350 letters exchanged between Willa and her brother’s family to the University of Nebraska. Prior to the surfacing of these family letters, Cather scholars had access to only three known letters to two of her four brothers (“Family Donates Hundreds of Willa Cather Letters”). The Roscoe and Meta Cather Collection of correspondence, photos, books, and other materials, opens a door to an intimate view of Willa Cather’s relationship with her next younger brother, Roscoe, and his family heretofore unknown. The 2013 publication of *The Selected Letters of Willa Cather* and the ongoing online publication of *The Complete Letters of Willa Cather*, begun in 2018, enabled scholars and general readers to view the personal world of Willa Cather in a manner previously only available to persons willing to travel to one of the approximately 95 libraries and special collections housing Cather’s extant correspondence. Prior to the change in policy by the literary trust holding Cather’s copyrights allowing direct quotation of her correspondence, persons unable to personally travel to read Cather’s correspondence on site had to rely upon another scholar’s interpretative paraphrase. With the accessibility of a representative sampling of Cather’s correspondence to family, friends and acquaintances via *The Selected Letters* and *The Willa Cather Archive*, scholars and readers gain new insights into Willa Cather’s interpersonal relationships. One such insight is the frequency with which she discusses her writing with friends and family—both during the writing process in order to seek input and also post-publication to share the public reception of her writing. Willa Cather connected with her community of friends and family for writing advice, recognition, and approval. As Janis Stout observes in *Willa Cather: The Writer and Her World*, “Cather always needed her Kingdom of Art to be peopled by admirers” (51).
A second insight produced by reading Cather’s *Selected Letters* is that there are numerous contradictions and inconsistencies between letters to different individuals. Because of this epistolary unreliability—putting into question any one statement—Cather’s correspondence needs to be read for “characteristic patterns and trends” as noted by Janis Stout in “Writing on the Margins of Biography” (66). Stout explains that “a single nugget rarely proves anything. Letters are (in general) documents of the moment, bearing the traces of shifting opinions and feelings. . . one looks for characteristic patterns and trends” (66). Reading Willa Cather’s letters in which she writes about Roscoe and her letters written to Roscoe reveal the “pattern and trend” of a strong familial bond between these two siblings (in addition to a three-way bond with the next-in-line sibling, Douglass). Willa’s close relationship with Roscoe includes emotional intimacy and reliance upon his financial management and advice. Additionally, Willa looks to Roscoe throughout her life as a receptive, interested audience for her writing and as an interested recipient for news about the public reception of her writing.

Throughout this thesis, I show a “characteristic pattern” found in Willa Cather’s correspondence that substantiates the close bond between Willa and Roscoe, including her belief that he understood the importance of writing for her, and how being a great writer defined her life. Throughout much of her writing career, she shared “book talk” in her letters to Roscoe including her frequent enclosure of book review clippings for him to read. In reviewing the book talk Willa shares with Roscoe throughout their extant correspondence, I have identified two main purposes: a desire to favorably influence his opinion of her writing and a desire to seek his input as a middlebrow reader of her literature. For this paper, I have selected a sampling of letters, a book Willa gave as a gift to Roscoe, and a small scrapbook of English reviews to elucidate my thesis.
First, I address a January 1919 letter Willa wrote to Roscoe in which she discusses a favorable review of *My Ántonia* she had sent him earlier by the newly deceased critic Randolph Bourne. In the review, Bourne praises Cather’s recent novel and criticizes William Allen White’s most recent novel, comparing it unfavorably to Cather’s. Cather uses this correspondence to positively influence her brother’s perceptions of her level of achievement in the world of literature.

Second, I look at Willa’s 1920 Christmas gift to Roscoe and his wife, Meta, Joseph Hergesheimer’s short story collection, *Gold and Iron*. Her message written inside the front cover of this small gift and the 1920 end of year timing strongly suggest another move to influence Roscoe’s perception of her as a highbrow artist.

Finally, I examine three letters Willa wrote to Roscoe in which she shared the public reception of her 1931 novel, *Shadows on the Rock*, including English reviews collected in a scrapbook. Although Cather consistently described and positioned herself as writing for a highbrow audience, many of her marketing decisions—including the serial publication of her novels—indicate an appeal to middlebrow or average readers. Roscoe fulfilled not only the role of her most consistently supportive family member in regards to her writing, but also served as an average reader to whom she did desire to appeal, even though she did not publicly articulate that desire.
Chapter Two: Family Ties That Bind

Before discussing the specific letters and archival materials illustrating Willa Cather’s two purposes in her book talk with Roscoe, I want to provide a biographical portrait of Roscoe and a description of their sibling relationship in order to contextualize their epistolary relationship. Roscoe’s role in Willa’s life extended beyond being a loving sibling and it is significant to note that their close ties in childhood formed the foundation for a mutually supportive relationship throughout their lives. Furthermore, Roscoe’s education and life experiences made him understand and appreciate his sister’s writing and her dedication to her career as a writer.

I. Biographical Portrait of Roscoe

Roscoe Cather was born in Virginia on 24 June 1877, the second child and oldest son of Charles and Virginia Boak Cather. While the Cather family Bible lists his name as Roscoe Boak Cather, he later changed his middle name to Clark. Personally, he often went by the name Ross and by his mid-twenties he professionally went by R.C. Cather. Four years younger than Willa, Roscoe graduated from the Red Cloud High School in May 1895, the same year Willa graduated from the University of Nebraska in June.

Roscoe was intelligent, educated, and well-read. Willa’s letters to Roscoe and his family reference some of the books the siblings read together during their youth. The importance Charles and Virginia Cather placed on education can be inferred from the Cather home library, which boasted an abundance of reading materials. As the second child, Roscoe had access to the same reading material as his sister during his youth, including:
complete editions of the standard nineteenth-century classics: Dickens, Scott, Thackeray, Poe, Hawthorne, Ruskin, Emerson, and Carlyle. . . . volumes of Shakespeare and Bunyan, anthologies of poetry, the works of Thomas Campbell and Thomas Moore, some translations of Latin and Greek classics, religious books, books on the Civil War, [and] bound volumes of the *Century* and ladies’ magazines. (Woodress 50)

During the summer prior to Roscoe’s junior year, Willa mentions in a letter to friends that she was making Roscoe read Caesar every day, an assignment Willa herself followed two summers prior to her first year at the University (#0014, #0002). During the summer of 1894, the summer prior to Roscoe’s graduation from the Red Cloud High School and Willa’s graduation from the University of Nebraska, the siblings read Virgil together, an endeavor designed to prepare Roscoe for admission to the University (#0017). Roscoe’s other intellectual pursuits during high school included a “wild” interest in botany, an interest he shared with Willa, and physics (#0017). During his senior year he directed a school physics experiment (Ronning, *Chronology I* 26). His high school interests and activities indicate an academically strong high school education.

Sharing the Cather family’s pioneering spirit, Roscoe’s high school commencement oration was titled, “Hope of the West.” The local newspaper touted that “Art, thought and truth are three big words for a high school graduate to handle, but Roscoe has some really interesting things to say about them” (“Commencement”). The article went on to summarize his speech as a prediction that “these broad prairies would one day produce a man with a mind as broad as his environments. . . a great thinker” (“Commencement”). Another local newspaper praised his speech claiming, “Of the prose orations the palm undoubtedly must be awarded to Roscoe Cather for originality, literary
merit, and general intellectual superiority” (“From Our Exchanges”). Roscoe’s commencement oration illustrates thought and insight—essential attributes of a well-read, educated person.

For the next ten years, Roscoe primarily devoted his professional life to teaching, further demonstrating a commitment to education. During the first year following his high school graduation, Roscoe taught country school near Campbell, Nebraska, only twenty-eight miles from his home in Red Cloud (Young). In his second year post-graduation, he taught in a country school in his home county of Webster (Young). During the 1897/1898 school year, Roscoe attended the University of Nebraska although due to a serious illness during the fall semester he did not complete any courses (#0047; “Transcript”).

After his illness during the school year of 1897/1898, Roscoe returned to teaching and served as principal/teacher in the Red Cloud schools for two years. In June 1900 Roscoe, accompanied by friends George Overing and William Kellogg, set out on a several months-long trip to the west coast via a wagon with a mule team (Ronning, Chronology I 40-41). While Overing returned to Red Cloud in November of that year, Roscoe and Kellogg sold the mule team in Butte, Montana, and traveled by train to Seattle where they stayed until the end of January (Ronning, Chronology II 1). During the remainder of 1901, Roscoe conducted farm loan business (presumably with his father) before returning to teaching the following fall (Ronning, Chronology II 1, 3). He spent one year as principal/teacher at a school in Carleton (1901/1902), two years as principal/teacher at Oxford (1902/1903 and 1903/1904), and two years as superintendent/teacher at the Fullerton High School (1904/1905 and 1905/1906) (Young). It was at Fullerton where Roscoe met his future wife, Meta Schaper, who was teaching Latin, Botany, and English (Shannon 2). During the 1906/1907 school year, Meta taught at
Valentine while Roscoe went to Wyoming to secure a homestead and pursue business interests (Argus 20 June 1906; Shannon 2).

On 2 June 1906, President Teddy Roosevelt signed Presidential Proclamation 631 opening up 640 acres of the Wind River Indian Reservation in the Big Horn Country of Wyoming to homesteading claims via a lottery system beginning mid-August of that year (“Proclamation 631”). Prior to marriage, Roscoe permanently headed to Wyoming at the end of June 1906 in hopes of securing one of these homesteads. His brother James went with him (Argus 20 June 1906). Roscoe’s brother Douglass at this point had been working for the Burlington Railroad in Cheyenne, Wyoming, for over eight years.

In August 1906, Roscoe opened an abstract office in the county seat of Basin with his brothers Douglass and James and their father (who was visiting from Nebraska) (Basin Republican). In October of the same year, the Cather males incorporated a bank in the nearby town of Greybull (“Notice of Incorporation [Greybull]”). The Big Horn Basin saw its first productive oil well in 1906 (“Big Horn Basin”). Additionally, the Burlington Missouri Railroad had recently expanded south along the Big Horn River through the Greybull Basin and there was speculation that Greybull would become a railroad division point (“New Town of Greybull”). Given these factors, the Cathers presumably anticipated financial success as businessmen and bankers with the growth of the town.

During this time, Roscoe situated himself into the growing county of Basin. In May 1907, he participated in the incorporation of the Wyoming Security Investment Company, a firm located in Basin which handled not only abstracts, but real estate loans and fire and life insurance (“Notice of Incorporation [Wyoming Security]”). In the summer of 1907 he visited Nebraska and married Meta on 28 July, in Havelock, Nebraska, at the home of her mother (“News of Nebraska”). Meta’s mother and oldest brother served
as the witnesses for their marriage ceremony (“Marriage Certificate”). Following the
ceremony, the couple took a train from Lincoln to Red Cloud to celebrate with Roscoe’s
family before stopping off in Denver for a short honeymoon. From Denver they traveled
home to Wyoming (“News of Nebraska”; Shannon 2).

By December 1907, Roscoe and Meta had relocated from Basin, Wyoming, to
Lander, Wyoming, where Roscoe opened his own abstract business serving the Big Horn
area (“Stop!”). In Lander, Roscoe and Meta had three daughters. The eldest, Virginia, was
born on 2 February 1912, followed by twin girls, Margaret and Elizabeth, born on 16
August 1915 (Shannon 2). By 1909, Roscoe was working at the Central Trust Company
where he served as bank secretary and manager (“Messrs. Forbes”; “Report”). Roscoe and
his family remained in Lander until 1921, when he moved to Casper, Wyoming, to serve
as the active manager of the Wyoming Trust Company, a bank he co-founded with six
other prominent businessmen in Wyoming (“Notice of Incorporation [Wyoming Trust]”).
He remained at the Wyoming Trust Company, eventually serving as president until its
merger (“absorption”) by the Casper National Bank in 1934, for which he then served as a
vice president (“Regrets”). In 1937, Roscoe and Meta moved to Colusa, California, where
he and his brother Douglass purchased a controlling interest in the First Savings Bank of
Colusa, and where Roscoe held the position of president until his death in 1945 (R. C.
Cather; “R. C. Cather Dies”; “R.C. Cather, Former Banker”).

Like his father, Charles Cather, Roscoe played an active civic role in his
communities. He served a one-year term on the Lander local school board in 1912;
however, he failed at two additional attempts to hold public office (“School Meeting”).
He unsuccessfully ran as a Republican for the Lander City Council in 1913 and for the
Fremont County Supervisors board in 1916 (“Council Proceedings”; “Final Returns”).
Although his attempts at elected community service were not always successful, he was an active participant in community and professional organizations. Some of the organizations in which he served and held office included the local Chambers of Commerce, the Wyoming and California Bankers Associations, and the Casper Kiwanis Club (“Regrets”; “R.C. Cather Dies”; “R.C. Cather, Former Banker”). Roscoe was an educated professional dedicated to his family and his communities.

II. The Breadth of their Familial Bonds

Willa Cather’s strongest sibling bonds existed with her two oldest brothers, Roscoe and Douglass. The three oldest Cather children made the move from Virginia to Nebraska and were friends as well as siblings. In Nebraska, Willa, Roscoe, and Douglass explored their new country together—canoeing the Republican River “which ran between sand bars and sandy banks under low, wooded bluffs and taking long buggy rides ‘through the Divide country’ to visit their Bohemian and Swedish and German” neighbors (Lewis 23). And at night, the three children slept in the attic with their three beds lined up in a single row, dormitory style, which was conducive to sharing late night confidences. The attic bedroom shared by the three siblings became their childhood oasis: “[n]o one ever disturbed them there, it was their own domain, and it gave them what children need most in the world—the freedom to be alone with their own thoughts and fancies and experiences” (Lewis 18). For Willa, Roscoe, and Douglass, their close childhood ties extended into adulthood.

Willa herself describes the relationship of the three siblings as “the clan” in a fall 1945 letter to Roscoe’s wife, Meta, following Roscoe’s death. In this same letter, she describes the younger siblings as “the wards of the clan” (#2277). Willa reflects in a 1938
letter to Roscoe, “we three older ones did love each other, and we found life pretty
thrilling when we went to the South Ward School” (#2139). As a young adult working in
Pittsburgh, Willa, obviously homesick, wrote to a friend back in Nebraska that although
she appreciated the admiration she was receiving for her work, she’d “rather have
Roscoe’s good opinion and Douglass’ laugh than all of it” (#0045). In her first published
book, a collection of poetry, Willa introduces the collection with a “Dedicatory” poem,
“To R.C.C. and D.C.C.” (Roscoe and Douglass). As a reminiscence of their childhood
time spent on their river island, she wrote, “Of the three who lay and planned at
moonrise/On an island in a western river/Of the conquest of the world together” (April
Twilights 3). And many of her early short stories sprang from memories of their
childhood adventures.9 She never lost her strong emotional attachment to her brothers
Roscoe and Douglass and memories of their childhood stayed with her throughout her life
as evidenced by her short story “The Best Years” written in 1945. Edith Lewis, in Willa
Cather Living, states that Willa wrote the story “for her brother Roscoe, as a reminder of a
time when he and she and Douglass were all children together, and slept in the attic of
their old house, that was like a ‘robbers cave’” (Lewis 196). Sadly, Willa received the
telegram informing her of Roscoe’s death the same afternoon she received the completed
typewritten version of the story which she planned to mail to him the next day. (Lewis
196; #2273).

Cather’s extant letters sent following the death of each brother clearly indicate her
love for each sibling and her sense of loss. What distinguishes these letters are her remarks
about Roscoe’s enduring support for her as a writer. When Douglass unexpectedly died in
June 1938, Cather wrote to Ferris Greenslet in October letting him know, “Douglass, the
one closest to me in my family, died of a heart attack” (#1419). In this same letter, she
wrote that with the death of her dearest friend, Isabelle McClung, the day prior to her writing this letter, she had lost “the two people she loved most in the world” referring to both Isabelle and Douglass (#1419). Yet, when her brother Roscoe died in his sleep a few years later, one of Cather’s epistolary inconsistencies occurs. She wrote to her childhood friend Irene Miner Weisz, “Roscoe’s death broke the last spring in me. He was always the closest of my brothers to me, in years and in feeling. Douglass and I twice had a little quarrel, but Roscoe and I never [did]” (SL 657).\textsuperscript{10} Whether she felt emotionally closer to Roscoe than to Douglass warrants no debate. She loved them both and grieved deeply for both brothers. As I will explore, what holds significance is the role Roscoe played as her literary audience. Based upon extant correspondence, it was her brother Roscoe who consistently served as a supportive reader of her fiction.\textsuperscript{11}

Following Roscoe’s unexpected death on 4 September 1945, Willa wrote condolence letters to his wife, Meta, and his three daughters, Virginia, Margaret, and Elizabeth. Although he had suffered from heart disease like their father, his death in his sleep took her by surprise. As most condolence letters sent about someone we love dearly, her letters to his family served as a means to express her own loss as well as an expression of sympathy. The loss Cather expresses involves Roscoe’s understanding of her writing life. In the letter to his wife, she wrote:

Roscoe was the only one of my family who felt about things as I did, and he was the only one who saw, from the beginning, what I was trying to do. He was my best critic, because he knew both ends of the process; knew the material, and what I had been able to do with it, or had failed in the handling. He knew me better than I knew myself. . . . now I have no one to judge me, no one to tell me if I am off the true pitch—no other judgment that I care a bang about. (emphasis added; #2273)
Viewing this letter as a shared performative act, an aspect of letter writing defined by Bernier, Newman, and Perthers in “Introduction: Epistolary Studies and Nineteenth Century American Letters and Letter-Writing,” Cather is writing herself both privately and publicly (12). Privately, there is no question she truly grieved the loss of her brother Roscoe. Publicly, in her attempt to communicate to Roscoe’s widow his importance to her, she uses absolutes to describe his role. In order to express how important a role Roscoe served as family who understood her writing, Willa overstates at the moment of writing to Meta that he was the *only one* whose criticism she cared about. That performative aspect, however, does not negate a statement within the context of a “characteristic pattern and trend” noted earlier. Willa expressed her sentiment that she valued Roscoe’s understanding and opinions of her writing, and considered him her most supportive family member, throughout a number of letters.\(^\text{12}\) She shared this sentiment in a condolence letter to his daughters. She wrote, “Your father was always then [during her first years in Pittsburgh] and ever afterward my soundest and best critic” (#2391).\(^\text{13}\) Prior to his death, Willa’s letters to Roscoe confirm her reliance on his literary sympathies when she wrote, “[y]ou are the only one in my family who cares a damn [about *Sapphira]*,” and “you have always seen that there was something in it [my writing], ever since that hot afternoon in the ‘rose bower’ when I first read ‘Grandmither’ to you” (#2171; #2217).

References to the “rose bower” and “Grandmither” date Roscoe’s early support of her writing to around 1900. The “rose bower” refers to Cather’s attic bedroom in the Cather childhood home in Red Cloud. An alcove of the attic was partitioned off to provide her with a separate room when she reached adolescence. Cather wallpapered the room with a pattern of “red and brown roses on a yellowish background,” thus prompting
the family references to her room as the “rose bower” (Woodress 47; Bennett 21).

“Grandmither, Think Not I Forget” was one of Cather’s early poems about her maternal grandmother, Rachel Boak, who traveled with the Charles Cather family to Nebraska and lived with them until her death in 1893. This poem followed Cather’s poem, “Dedictory” in her 1903 book of poems, April Twilights. Prior to publication in book format, the poem was published in the Pittsburgh Leader and three periodicals in 1900. Given the publication date of the poem and the fact that the Cather family moved out of this home in 1904, her statement that she read her poem “Grandmither” to Roscoe one hot afternoon in her childhood bedroom would have likely occurred sometime around 1899 to 1903 on one of her summer vacations back home in Red Cloud.

To Margaret, one of Roscoe’s twin daughters, she wrote, “Isabelle, and I think, your father, were the only two people who thought there was any good reason for my trying to write” (#2359). Here again she identifies Roscoe as endorsing her writing career. Lewis notes, “Of all her family, Roscoe was the one nearest to her, understood her best. He had felt from the first the promise and importance of her work, and had followed it with faithful sympathy and devotion” (188). Willa Cather’s reliance upon Roscoe as a receptive reader and as an interested party for news about the public reception of her work is evidenced in two ways: first, by her many references to her writing in her correspondence with him; secondly, by the number of times she discusses reviews of her books and sends clippings of reviews for him to read. Certainly the longevity of their relationship situating Roscoe as someone who had read her writing from her earliest work to her final novel provided him with a unique perspective that Willa would have valued.
Chapter Three: Cather’s Appeal for Her Writing as Art

On Sunday, 5 January 1919, Willa Cather typed a letter to her brother Roscoe Cather. Comprised of three paragraphs, the letter discusses among other news a review of *My Ántonia* she had recently sent to Roscoe by “a critic who has since died of influenza” (#2085). That critic was Randolph Bourne. In the letter she requests that Roscoe return the review and the obituary notice of Bourne indicating that she valued both the review and the reviewer.

In Bourne’s review of *My Ántonia*, which appeared in the *Dial* on 14 December 1918, Bourne compares Cather’s novel with William Allen White’s most recent novel, *In the Heart of a Fool*. He praises Cather’s “brevity” and “simple pictures” with “understanding. . .that goes to the very heart of [the pioneers’] lives” while disparaging White’s “swollen bulk,” “moralizing,” and “stale brightness of conversation” (Bourne 84). In her letter to Roscoe, Willa describes her approval of Bourne’s comparison, and shares her own unfavorable assessment of White’s writing:

> Long before I began to write anything worth while [sic], I hated White and [David] Grahame Phillips for the way they wrote about the West. I knew that there was a common way of presenting common life, which is worthless, and a finer way of presenting it which would be much more true. Of course Antonia’s [sic] story could be told in exactly the same jocular, familiar, grapenutsy way that Mr. White thinks is so American. He thinks he is presenting things as they are, but what he really presents is his own essentially vulgar personality. (#2085)

From a 25 November 1942 letter Willa wrote to her brother, we know that Roscoe was familiar with William Allen White—a Republican, the owner of a small town newspaper in Emporia, Kansas, and a popular writer. In this 1942 letter she reminds
Roscoe that they had read White’s “Court of Boyville” stories aloud in their mother’s room in “the old old [sic] house” (#2242). Bourne, on the other hand, was a Greenwich Village intellectual who leaned decidedly to the left. Cather’s 1919 letter to her brother provides valuable insight into both her relationship with him and her response to the public reception of My Ántonia. This chapter explores what Bourne valued in My Ántonia and how that contrasts with what White represents in terms of approaches to writing about life in the Midwest. Furthermore, this section addresses the significance of her remarks in this letter to Roscoe and what those statements disclose about Willa Cather’s positioning of her writing.

In order to appreciate Bourne and Cather’s commentary on White’s writing, it is helpful to know more about White’s career as a journalist, political party activist, and author. Born in 1868 in Emporia, Kansas and raised in El Dorado, Kansas, William Allen White was five years older than Willa Cather. Unlike Cather, White lived his entire life in the Midwest—primarily small town Kansas. He attended the Presbyterian College of Emporia and the University of Kansas at Lawrence. After leaving school in December 1889, White worked for the Kansas El Dorado Republican newspaper as managing editor. During his spare time, White wrote poetry, essays, and short stories and decided to be both a journalist and an author (Vaughn 336). After leaving the Republican, White worked for the Kansas City Journal followed by the Kansas City Star, before purchasing the Emporia Gazette in 1895 (Vaughn 337). White’s interests in politics grew as a young reporter covering county and state affairs and he became an active and vocal participant in the Republican Party (Vaughn 336). Throughout his life, White used his roles as newspaper editor and author to emphatically advocate his personal beliefs.
White’s literary career included the publication of numerous non-fiction books and articles while his fiction writing was limited to five collections of short stories, a semi-fictional travel story and two novels. White’s first collection of short stories, *The Real Issue: A Book of Kansas Stories*, was published in 1896. The collection consisted of short stories first printed in the local newspapers (Vaughn 337). In this same time period, White achieved national recognition for a scathing editorial piece attacking William Jennings Bryan and the Populist platform (White, *Autobiography* 143-147). In his *Autobiography*, White describes this editorial as “pure vitriol” (144). His “What’s the Matter with Kansas,” editorial gained national recognition when it was reprinted across the nation in papers such as the *Chicago Times Herald*, *Evening Post*, and the *New York Sun*, in addition to its circulation as a pamphlet by the McKinley for President Campaign (Vaughn 338; White, *Selected Letters* 6). White quickly came to regret his continuing identification as the author of this editorial, especially when he later became an advocate for many progressive reforms after developing a friendship and political allegiance with Teddy Roosevelt (Vaughn 339). The editorial, however, advanced his literary career in addition to widening his journalistic influence (Vaughn 339). E. Jay Jernigan, one of White’s biographers, points out that the popularity of the editorial helped promote White’s first collection of short stories with some critics “review[ing] it because of its serendipity with” the famous editorial (79). Jernigan notes that the collection was a “moderate success” commercially but questions “[h]ow much of that success was due to perceived merits” as half the stories in the collection are forgettable and in general “sentiment motivates the characters, didacticism governs the tone, and optimism sweetens the denouement” (79; 77).
White’s editorial garnered the attention of Sam McClure, owner of *McClure’s Magazine* for which Cather later worked from 1906 to 1913. In 1897, McClure purchased two of the stories which appeared in White’s first short story collection, in addition to commissioning more short stories from White (McKee 41). One of the stories reprinted from the collection was “The King of Boyville,” which became the first for a series of stories White later wrote for *McClure’s Magazine*. The reprinted story and the new stories provided the content for his second collection of short stories, *The Court of Boyville*, published in 1899 (McKee 41). The book quickly sold 5,000 out of a first printing of 6,000 though subsequent printings sold more slowly (Jernigan 80). While viewed by many as juvenile literature, White wrote it for adults (Jernigan 80). Everett Rich, author of *William Allen White: The Man from Emporia*, describes the collection’s “chief merit” to be “the author’s sympathetic understanding of boy nature, [while] a part of its charm is due to his wistful longing for the freedom of childhood” (98). In 1901, White published *Stratagems and Spoils: Stories of Love and Politics*, a collection of five stories about Missouri Valley politics he wrote for *Scribner’s* and the *Saturday Evening Post* (Jernigan 83). Jernigan describes this collection as “earnestly didactic in the soon-to-be popular mode of muckraking political fiction” (83). White’s fourth collection of short stories, *In Our Town*, includes eighteen “light fictional vignettes of small-town characters as seen by the local newspaper editor,” the majority of which, according to Jernigan, “are humorous, sensitive, detailed treatments of country-town life” (Jernigan 87).

Following this collection of short stories, White published in 1909 his first novel, *A Certain Rich Man*, a prodigal son story. The novel follows the actions of John Barclay who spends his life ruthlessly pursuing money and power only to discover, once he achieves his success, that he entirely lacks morals. After this realization, Barclay changes
his life and achieves personal redemption through doing good deeds. A detailed summary of the novel plot reads like a modern day soap opera; however, the book was a commercial success and went through four printings quickly and eventually sold 300,000 copies (Vaughn 342).

White published his fifth and final collection of short stories, *God’s Puppets*, in 1916. John DeWitt McKee, another White biographer, describes this collection of five stories as “moralistic” (131). Two of the stories are “retellings of Biblical parables,” two are “spin-offs from the novel to come,” and the final story is a “wistful reaching back to boyhood, coupled with the realization that we cannot go back” (McKee 130-131). McKee sums up the collection as “what White intended all of his stories to be: fictionalized editorials, sermons in print” (131).

The publication of White’s second novel shortly after the publication of Cather’s *My Ántonia* naturally leant to a comparison of the two novels. In October 1918, only weeks after Cather’s 21 September publication of *My Ántonia*, White published his second novel and last work of fiction, *In the Heart of a Fool*, an endeavor he spent seven years writing and rewriting. In his *Autobiography*, White describes the book’s theme—what he refers to as the “spiritual idea behind it”—as “there are no material rewards for spiritual excellence and no material punishments for spiritual dereliction” (225). Despite his attempts to present the two oppositional main characters in “shades of grey,” critics and biographers suggest he failed (White, *Autobiography* 225; Jernigan 102-103; McKee 148). The novel received negative reviews and sold poorly. Rich cites poor timing as a factor: *In the Heart of a Fool* was “a belated problem novel, appearing after the American people had lost their taste for political and economic reform” (200). Biographers Jernigan and McKee blame White’s obvious didacticism for the novel’s failure. McKee
observes, “William Allen White was using the novel as a pulpit, and his sermon was showing” (148).

To Cather, White’s literary career represented mainstream popularity and commercial success. White’s short story publication in popular magazines prior to publishing each of his collections in book format allowed him to develop a book market comprised of primarily the same population—a decidedly middlebrow audience; in other words, an audience comprised of well-read, educated, average readers. When Willa wrote Roscoe in 1942 reminding him of their “reading aloud” in their childhood home White’s “Court of Boyville” stories, she observes that they would “think how wonderful it was for a Kansas man to get printed in McClure’s” (#2242). Although the letter suggests a childhood memory, White’s first “Boyville” story appeared in the February 1897 edition of *McClure’s Magazine*. A second “Boyville” story next appeared in the June 1897 edition. In 1897, Cather was twenty-three, living in Pittsburgh, and working as managing editor of the *Home Monthly*, a women’s magazine. To fill the monthly pages of the magazine, Cather printed eight of her own stories during her thirteen months at the magazine (Woodress 120). To the young fiction writer, White’s publication in the popular New York City *McClure’s Magazine* naturally seemed like a great accomplishment for a writer like her from the Midwest. In 1897, White’s literary accomplishment served for Cather as an affirmation that she, as a Nebraskan, might also achieve national literary success.

In 1919, White’s literary career still represented to Cather mainstream popularity and commercial success; however, by then she had surpassed her youthful literary ambitions of short story publication in popular magazines. With the publication of her second “first novel,” *O Pioneers!* Cather achieved, as noted in the *Chicago Evening Post*
review, “the most vital, subtle, and artistic piece of the year’s fiction” (Stouck 297).

Willa’s 5 January 1919 letter to Roscoe represents an early example of her positioning herself as an “artist” in contrast to a commercially successful writer, specifically White. Sharon O’Brien, in her essay, “Possession and Publication: Willa Cather’s Struggle to Save ‘My Ántonia’,” observes that Cather “viewed [White] as a popular writer who compromised his material to please middle-class tastes” (472). Rebukes of sentimentality and moral didacticism pursued White throughout his literary career. In this letter Cather contrasts White’s “common way of presenting common life, which is worthless” to “a finer way of presenting it which would be much more true” (#2085). Here Cather is saying the “finer way” is the artist’s way.

Throughout her career, particularly after her success with *O Pioneers!*, Cather strove to identify her writing as “high art” while verbally distancing herself from middlebrow identification. Sharon O’Brien observes Cather made many marketing decisions based upon maintaining a “high art” positioning of her work including refusing publication requests for less expensive editions of her work that would have broadened her reading public (“Becoming Noncanonical” 121). Additionally, she refused the inclusion of her writing in anthologies, except for limited excerpts (O’Brien, “Becoming Noncanonical” 121). Alternatively, numerous scholars have well documented Cather’s ambiguity towards her own positioning of her writing within the highbrow/middlebrow identification by also aligning herself with middlebrow marketing decisions. Janis Stout, in her article “Dorothy Canfield, Willa Cather, and the Uncertainties of Middlebrow and Highbrow,” observes that although Cather was “firmly placed” on the side of highbrow within the “literary divide between middlebrow and highbrow,” the “border” was “porous” (38, 39, 29). Matthew Lavin advocates a “border” positioning interpretation by
observing that Cather “consistently [sought] a balance between profit and prestige” with respect to which magazines she considered for short story publication (159-160). Cather, he contends, “worked within a framework of respectability” unlike many authors who chose “whatever venues would make both author and agent the most money” (164). (Nonetheless, Cather did allow serialization of her work in decidedly middlebrow magazines like the *Women’s Home Companion* even late in her career.) While many of Cather’s marketing decisions substantiate a middlebrow or highbrow/middlebrow “border” positioning, her January 1919 letter to Roscoe clearly articulates a positioning of her work as “high art.” In the letter she brushes off White’s commercial success compared to her own—“I don’t deny that Mr. White sells a thousand to my hundred, but nobody can really reach both audiences, so I don’t bother about that, so long as I have some of the savings of my old McClure salary [sic] left to live on” (#2085). This statement entails more positioning than accuracy. We know from Cather’s communications with her publishers that she always had an interest in her commercial success. While working on *My Ántonia*, she remarks to her editor that her literary agent, Paul Reynolds, was going to make her so much money on the sale of some new short stories to magazines that she could “afford to bone down on [her] long story” (#0375). For Cather, periodical publication of short stories financially underwrote her novel writing.

In addition to Roscoe, Willa shared Bourne’s review of *My Ántonia* in the *Dial* with her childhood friend Carrie Miner Sherwood. In this letter Willa remarks that she thought the *Dial* review was the best of all the reviews she had enclosed with this same letter (Stout, *Calendar* 71). Given the proximity of publication dates, Bourne’s decision to compare Cather’s *My Ántonia* and White’s *In the Heart of a Fool* seems natural and he was not the only one to do so. In the February 1919 *Smart Set*, H.L. Mencken similarly
praises Cather’s “high artistic conscience” and damns White’s “viewpoint of a chautaqua spell-binder and the manner of a Methodist evangelist” (87). In 1918, Bourne represented the intellectual, highbrow audience from which Cather sought approval. Stout has documented that their respective social circles included mutual friends; however, no confirmation exists that Bourne and Cather ever met, although both were Greenwich Village residents who lived blocks from each other (“Modernist” 119; Sandeen 492).16 Additionally, both Stout and Guy Reynolds have identified a shared commonality of views, specifically Cather’s sympathies (albeit “circumscribed”) with Bourne’s position on American pluralism as outlined in his 1916 New Republic article, “Trans-National America” (Stout, “Modernist” 126-127; Reynolds 80).

Bourne’s Dial review of My Ántonia appealed directly to Cather’s desire to identify her writing as “high art.” Even the title of the review, “Morals and Art from the West,” outlines the dichotomy between didactic writing and creating art, acknowledging the standard that Cather hoped to achieve with her novels. Four years following the publication of Bourne’s review, Cather wrote her well-known essay about writing “The Novel Démeublé.” Melissa Homestead notes that Cather’s essay publicly positions her writing within a highbrow classification as opposed to the popular middlebrow market. In her article, Homestead writes that Cather “place[s] herself on the side of ‘art’ as against ‘amusement,’” seemingly disavowing “the market and most readers” (“Middlebrow Readers” 78). Cather’s 1922 essay on the art of writing could have been written with Bourne’s Dial review of My Ántonia sitting in front of her. Compare Bourne’s comment “art is suggestion not transcription” to Cather’s “if the novel is a form of imaginative art, it cannot be at the same time a vivid and brilliant form of journalism” (84; 40). Bourne’s review commends “the reflections [Cather] does not make upon her characters” while
Cather’s essay commends Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* for its own lack of reflection by declaring, “one can scarcely ever see the actual surroundings of the people; one feels them, rather, in the dusk” (84; 41). A final comparison finds Bourne’s review contrasting White’s “cluttered” novel with Cather’s “serenity of the story that is telling itself” (84). Bourne elaborates that *My Ántonia* “has all the artistic simplicity of material that has been patiently shaped until everything irrelevant has been scraped away” (84). Reminiscent of Bourne’s “scraped away,” Cather in her 1922 essay prefers the metaphor of “throw[ing] all the furniture out the window” (42). It is uncertain whether or not Bourne’s review of *My Ántonia* helped shape Cather’s “The Novel Démeublé” or whether Bourne’s review just articulated the views Cather already held about writing. However, the similarities in Bourne’s and Cather’s remarks about writing as art reveal why Cather believed that this review on *My Ántonia* was one of the best she had received.

Willa Cather’s 5 January 1919 letter to Roscoe not only illustrates her positioning of her work as “high art,” but also provides insight into her relationship with him. As frequent correspondents, Willa relied upon Roscoe for advice on both family and financial matters. Additionally, she relied upon him as a support for her writing career, and, as identified by Homestead and later in Chapter Five, he served as a middlebrow reader for her work. Although extant letters show Cather shared Bourne’s *Dial* review with others, in her letter to Roscoe she takes the opportunity to elaborate upon Bourne’s review by sharing her own assessment of White’s writing and distinguishing its decidedly didactic style from her own “finer way.” This letter then can be read as almost a persuasive argument; she appeals to Roscoe to make the same progression of discernment she had made between mediocre writing as exemplified by White and her own “high art” writing. This appeal indicates the value she places on Roscoe’s opinion of her writing. She wants
Roscoe to see her as a writer of “quality.” Willa Cather’s 5 January 1919 letter to Roscoe serves as a significant indication of her positioning herself as a highbrow writer and the value she placed upon Roscoe sharing that perspective. In the next chapter, I illustrate how Willa reinforces her positioning as a highbrow writer to Roscoe through a small gift intimating her association with other highbrow authors.
Among the seventy-seven books held by the University of Nebraska in the Roscoe and Meta Cather Collection there is a copy of Joseph Hergesheimer’s short story collection, *Gold and Iron*. The handwritten message penned on the inside cover page reads, “Wishing Roscoe and Meta/ A Merry Christmas/ Willa” with “1920” written and underlined to the bottom left of the message. Appearing in brackets below this message is the handwritten sentence: “[One of the few American writers who interest me.]” Cather’s 1920 publishing activities—the Knopf publication of her collection of short stories, *Youth and the Bright Medusa*, and her admittance to the prestigious Alfred A. Knopf family of highbrow authors signified by her inclusion in and contribution to *The Borzoi 1920*—provide the context to her simple 1920 Christmas gift to Roscoe and Meta of Joseph Hergesheimer’s *Gold and Iron*. The note that Hergesheimer is “one of the few American authors who interest me” can reasonably be interpreted as an interest stemming from her early preoccupation with Knopf’s advertising and positioning of Hergesheimer as a highbrow author along with her new association with him as a Knopf writer herself. The book and the note she gave to Roscoe and Meta can be inferred as Willa, once again, positioning herself as a highbrow writer with her brother; Willa seeks Roscoe’s admiration of her not just as a writer, but as a writer of “art.”

Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.’s September 1920 publication of Cather’s own collection of short stories, *Youth and the Bright Medusa*, marked the beginning of Cather’s change in publishers from the established Boston firm of Houghton Mifflin to the five year old New York publishing firm.¹⁷ Scholars have well documented the story of her change in publishers necessitating no need to repeat it here.¹⁸ Significant to repeat, however, are her motivations for her change in publishers. Cather believed that Alfred A. Knopf
publishing valued its authors as artists and did not measure their worth solely in terms of sales, as Houghton Mifflin did (#0461). Susan Rosowski notes, “Cather wanted a publisher who believed in her as an artist with a long literary life” (178); as such, Mark Madigan argues, Cather’s decision to change publishers hinged upon “her belief that Knopf would further her career in ways that Houghton Mifflin would not” (“Historical Essay” 346). Knopf believed that the goal of advertising was “not to sell just one book but to establish an author’s reputation for the future,” which they did through the power of reviews to sell books (Woodress 307). And finally for Cather, who had always taken an interest in the physical aspects of the production of her books, Alfred Knopf’s commitment to the quality and design of books served as an added dividend. Twenty years after her move to Knopf, Cather’s description of her first meeting with Alfred Knopf in an essay she wrote for the commemorative publication Alfred A. Knopf: Quarter Century highlights her attraction to the design of Knopf books: “I liked the look of those early Borzoi books. Every publisher nowadays tries to make his books look interesting (jacket, cover, type, make-up), but in so far as my knowledge goes it was Alfred Knopf who set the fashion” (qtd. in Lewis 109).

Knopf’s earliest titles were European, but Joseph Hergesheimer, one of Knopf’s first American authors, indirectly played a central role in Cather’s move to the Alfred A. Knopf publishing firm. Today considered a minor writer and fairly obscure, the literary reputation Hergesheimer held in the early 1920’s proved pivotal to Cather’s attraction to Knopf. In 1920, Hergesheimer was relatively new to the literary scene. Following the sale of three pieces to the Forum in 1913, he published his first book in 1914, The Lay Anthony, followed by his second book the next year, Mountain Blood (Gimmestad 2). As Hergesheimer biographer Victor Gimmestad notes, while neither book proved financially
successful “they did draw the attention of critics such as H.L. Mencken and Llewellyn Jones to a new talent” (2). Knopf first met Hergesheimer through Mitchell Kennerley, who published Hergesheimer’s first two novels and with whom Knopf apprenticed to learn the publishing business from March 1914 to May 1915.19 In October 1915, Alfred A. Knopf published its first book, a translation of Four Plays by the then deceased French playwright Emile Augier, followed by a succession of English translations of Russian and other European books (Clements 51, 45-48). In 1917, Knopf debuted Hergesheimer’s third book, The Three Black Pennys which received favorable reviews and proved to be a “top seller” (Clements 38). From 1918 through 1920 Knopf published many Hergesheimer titles including the short story collection, Gold and Iron, in April 1918, and Hergesheimer’s fourth novel, Java Head, in January 1919 (Jones 30-31).

Hergesheimer’s training as a painter at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts influenced his writing, making him one of America’s few aesthetes in the field of fiction. He “approached fiction as an opportunity to demonstrate aesthetic sensitivity while capturing internal worlds of emotion” (Clements 81). Gimmestad describes his literary style during his early career as “downplaying plot and character, while he emphasized the vivid, sensuous accounts of surface life, as in [Java Head]” (37). Hergesheimer’s literary reputation rose rapidly from 1914 to 1924.20 In 1922, he placed first in The Literary Digest poll of “thirty-three eminent critics, columnists, editors, reviewers, and publishers’ advisors” asked to name “the five leading American Literary stars” (qtd. in Martin 16). Hergesheimer received twenty-two votes with the second place winner, Eugene O’Neill, receiving fourteen votes (Martin 16). In his book-length literary critique, Ronald Martin describes Hergesheimer’s literary rise in reputation during 1919-1920 as “meteoric” (15).
This rapid rise in reputation, aided by Alfred Knopf’s aggressive advertising, drew Cather’s attention.  

Cather later recalled taking note of Alfred Knopf’s new firm as early as 1916—“from the time he published Hudson’s *Green Mansions*, (1916) I had watched his venture with keen interest” (qtd. in Lewis 109). And indeed in early 1917 she had made some specific inquiries to her own publisher about sales figures for Knopf’s republication of *Green Mansions* (Thacker 379). But it is Knopf’s publication and advertising of Hergesheimer’s 1919 *Java Head*, coupled with her growing dissatisfaction with Houghton Mifflin, which prompted her move to Knopf. Two letters Cather wrote to Ferris Greenslet chronicle her preoccupation with Knopf’s advertising campaign for *Java Head*. On 17 May 1919 Cather writes to Greenslet that Knopf had made references to *My Ántonia* in his advertising for *Java Head* (#0459; Thacker 381). Two days later, Cather again writes to Greenslet (19 May 1919). In this second letter, Cather references Knopf’s advertising of *Java Head* while outlining her many grievances with Houghton Mifflin, including their reticence to use reviews in their advertising:

| I want to say a word about reviews. I know it is your theory that reviews do not sell a book. But some publishers do make them sell books. Several men have told me here that they believed the review of "Java Head" in the New Republic [sic] sold several thousand copies of the book. I know a number of people who bought the book after reading that review,- I did so, at once,- . . . I think "Java Head" has been splendidly advertised, with real enthusiasm and fire. You may tell me that it has not done a great deal for the sale of this particular book, but I know it has done a great deal for Hergesheimer. ( #0461) |

Further along in this same letter, Cather pointedly asks:
Houghton Mifflin want to publish me enough to put some money into my books, and to give my next novel as many inches of advertising as have been given to "Java Head", [sic] for instance. That book is still being advertised, by the way, while Antonia was long ago do [sic] dropped out of Houghton Mifflin’s ads. (#0461)

Additionally, Cather points out Knopf’s advertising “all of Hergesheimer’s books, even those that are out of print” while Houghton Mifflin fails to advertise her three books together “as a presentation of special features of American Life” (#0461). A few months later, Cather was still preoccupied with Knopf’s promotion of Hergesheimer. In November 1919, Cather wants to know if Houghton Mifflin’s advertising department could insert a note about the plans for publication of My Ántonia in Prague in “the Authors and Publishers column of the Times Book Supplement,” similar to the note in the Sunday Times announcing Hergesheimer’s upcoming publications in Europe (#0483; WCA annotation to #0483). As noted in these grievance letters, Cather yearned for the type of aggressive advertising Knopf embraced in a desire to build her own growing literary reputation.

Aggressive advertising alone, however, fails to capture the unique allure the house of Knopf held for Cather. Amy Root Clements, in her book length study of the formative years of the firm—aptly titled The Art of Prestige—describes the successful early endeavors of Alfred and Blanche Knopf as “forg[ing] a prestigious identity for their firm and for their literature” (3). The Knopfs created this identity through masterful branding, attention to the physical aspects of their books, and the publication of notable authors—many of whom went on to receive literary awards. Cather’s desire to position herself as a highbrow author drew her to the Knopf’s prestigious identity.
Foremost, Knopf’s identity of prestige rested upon its catalog of authors, who further benefitted from Knopf’s marketing. Clements points out that Knopf’s decision to rely upon republication of foreign works in translation during the publishing firm’s first two years had economic advantages for a start-up with limited capital while also providing “cachet...help[ing] them [to] distinguish themselves from other small presses” (56-59, 43). Catherine Turner also notes a complementary role of both Knopf’s quality list of authors and its marketing: “[h]is firm became legendary for publishing only what was best, a legend built both by his list and by his advertising practices” (83). In 1920, when Knopf published Cather’s *Youth and the Bright Medusa*, the firm’s catalog of authors included Carl Van Vechten, H.L. Mencken, E.M. Forster, Wilson Follett, Kahlil Gibran, Thomas Mann, George Jean Nathan, and Ezra Pound. Nine of the firm’s authors won or would win a Nobel Prize during its first fifteen years (Clements 73). And as Clements concludes, “the Knopfs’ editorial choices often proved to be as wise as their marketing and packaging choices, further enhancing a prestigious identity for the Knopfs themselves and for those who were professionally involved with them” (166).

Cather’s 1920 association with Knopf illustrates just such a complement of wise editorial choice with wise marketing and packaging choices. Two years earlier, Greenslet and Houghton Mifflin had rejected Cather’s suggestion of a short story collection about musicians and singers (#0430; Madigan, “Historical Essay” 344-345); this decision proved to be a poor editorial choice based upon the critical and financial success of *Youth and the Bright Medusa*. Undoubtedly, Knopf’s marketing of *Medusa* helped ensure its success. Erika Hamilton describes Knopf’s marketing of *Medusa* as “bold” and filled with “enthusiasm and praise”—a certain change from Houghton Mifflin’s staid, formal “black-tie events” advertising (21, 20, 14).
Republic advertisement for Medusa read: “There are not many living writers from whom a new book commands the attention with which each successive volume of Miss Cather’s is now awaited. There seems to be no disputing the fact that she is our foremost living woman novelist” (emphasis added; qtd. in Hamilton 21). Finally Cather had a publisher who was not “afraid to come out and say that this book was unique in American fiction,” a charge she had made against Houghton Mifflin in May 1919 (#0461). The reviews confirmed the book’s success. Edmund Lester Pearson in the New York Times Book Review called the collection “a literary event which no lover of the best fiction will want to miss” (qtd. in Madigan, “Historical Essay” 358). H.L. Mencken, a reviewer who had “championed” her earlier books (Madigan, “Historical Essay” 358), was a Knopf author himself. In his Smart Set review, he compared the new stories in this collection to the selection of earlier Troll Garden stories incorporated into the collection and declared that:

Miss Cather has learned a great deal since she wrote them [the earlier stories]. . . . [S]he writes with much more ease and grace; above all, she has mastered the delicate and difficult art of evoking the feelings. . . . [The new stories] are the work of a woman who, after a long apprenticeship, has got herself into the front rank of American novelists, and is still young enough to have her best writing ahead of her. (“Chiefly Americans” 103)

In addition to the favorable reviews of Youth and the Bright Medusa proclaiming Cather a “literary event” and a “front rank” American novelist, Knopf published a signed limited edition of thirty-five copies, the first time a limited edition of her work had been issued (Madigan, “Historical Essay” 356). The limited edition conveyed its own message of literary prestige. It not only signaled, as Mark Madigan concludes, “Knopf’s willingness to spend money and care on her books” (“Historical Essay” 356) but also that Cather’s
writing deserved to be showcased as a collector’s item. Financial profit serves as the final indication of the success of Cather’s first Knopf publication. In its first six months of publication, *Youth and the Bright Medusa* earned Cather more money than she had earned in the first year of *My Ántonia* (Woodress 310). With the critical and financial success of *Youth and the Bright Medusa*, Knopf delivered to Cather both the prestige and profit she sought.

A month following the Knopf publication of Cather’s collection of short stories, Alfred A. Knopf published *The Borzoi 1920: Being a Sort of Record of Five Years’ Publishing*. Today considered a collector’s item and generally thought of as an anthology, Geoffrey Hellman called it an “elaborate catalogue” in his 1948 *New Yorker* profile of Knopf (qtd in Clements 122). As such, the obvious audience Knopf was addressing through *The Borzoi* was the readers of Knopf books, with whom he was positioning Cather as one of his highbrow authors. At the same time, however, Knopf utilized *The Borzoi* to communicate to Cather herself (who had not yet fully committed to changing publishers) that she was rightly a Knopf highbrow author.

To that end, Knopf featured Cather prominently in *The Borzoi 1920*, although she had only the one Knopf book in 1920. In addition to her listing in the “Who’s Who” segment and the inclusion of a bibliographic notation for her Knopf publication, *Youth and the Bright Medusa*, H.L. Mencken wrote an essay about Cather for *The Borzoi 1920*. His remarks are very much in the same vein as his *Smart Set* review of *Medusa*: “Bit by bit, patiently and laboriously, she has mastered the trade of the novelist; in each succeeding book she has shown an unmistakable advance” (“Willa Cather” 29). Additionally, Cather was one of only four authors who wrote an essay specifically for this publication that was not a critical appreciation of another Knopf author. This essay
provided a forum for Cather to share her literary principles with readers. To Cather, Alfred Knopf’s invitation to write an essay about writing for *The Borzoi* affirmed her position as a highbrow writer.

In her essay written for *The Borzoi*, “On the Art of Fiction,” Cather articulates her developing literary doctrine, equating “journalistic successes” to journalistic excess and promoting the view that writing as an art “should simplify” (101-102). As already noted by Cather scholars, she further developed and expanded upon these early precepts two years later in her *New Republic* essay, “The Novel Démeuble” (Woodress 342; Rosowski 186; Homestead, “Willa Cather”170-171). Additionally, one can look back two years to Randolph Bourne’s 1918 *Dial* review of *My Ántonia* and a November 1918 letter to Roscoe to find the sparks of what Cather later develops into her essay, “On the Art of Fiction.” As noted in Chapter Three, Bourne’s review “Morals and Art from the West” contrasts William Allen White’s didactic, moralistic writing with Cather’s writing “as art” (84). In her *Borzoi* essay, Cather echoes Bourne’s observation that “art is suggestion not transcription” in her denunciation of “journalistic successes” as an antithetical to a “higher artistic process” (84; 102-103).

Two weeks prior to Bourne’s 1918 review, Willa wrote a letter to Roscoe discussing the reception of *My Ántonia*. After commenting that “[a]ll the critics find ‘Antonia’ more artistic,” she scoffs at the idea that one critic claimed the book "exists in an atmosphere of its own—an atmosphere of pure beauty" (#2083). Willa wrote to Roscoe in this same letter her reaction:

Nonsense, its [sic] the atmosphere of my grandmother's kitchen, and nothing else.

Booth Tarkington writes that it is as “simple as a country prayer meeting or a
Greek temple—and as beautiful.” There are lots of these people who can’t write anything true themselves who yet recognize it when they see it. (#2083)

Consistent with her statements two years later in “On the Art of Fiction,” Cather appreciates the praise of the artistry of her new novel, but mocks the statement of “pure beauty” by pointing out she wrote about the common atmosphere “of her grandmother’s kitchen.” As someone who viewed simplicity as the measure of writing as “art,” she acknowledged the comparison of her novel to the simplicity of a “country prayer meeting” or a “Greek temple,” as high praise, even though the praise came from someone whom she believed could not write well himself.22 With Cather’s knowledge of Greek history and culture, she likely would have known the association of Greek architecture with “precision and excellence of workmanship” and that “every piece” of a Greek building is “integral to its overall structure” (Hemingway). Stout describes Cather’s literary doctrine as “a theory of minimalism” and “an aesthetic of reduced ornamentation” (The Writer 259, 338 note 18). The comparison of her writing to a Greek Temple would have implied her writing demonstrated that same “precision and excellence of workmanship” without excess.

Furthermore, this same letter points to her later articulation of the difference between writing as a market commodity and writing as art. In her essay “On the Art of Fiction,” Cather writes how art (as opposed to stories created for a market demand) “is always a search for something for which there is no market demand, something new and untried, where the values are intrinsic and have nothing to do with standardized values” (103). Two years earlier, she had written to Roscoe, “You either have to be utterly commonplace or else do the things people don’t want, because it has not yet been invented. No really new and original thing is wanted: people have to learn to like new
things” (#2083). These examples illustrate that Cather had considered herself a writer of “art” with her own literary principles well before her essay in *The Borzoi* 1920.23

Innovation, quality, and exclusivity—words describing the Alfred A. Knopf publishing firm—also are words that Cather would have used to describe her own writing. As she had written to Greenslet in May 1919, “among the people who form opinion, I have a very different position from that which I had five years ago” (#0464). Clearly, Cather’s 1919 correspondence to Greenslet throughout May indicates her belief that Houghton Mifflin did not value her or believe in her as a writer of distinction. Her experience in 1920 showed her that Knopf, on the other hand, did value her and did believe her to be a writer of distinction. Cather’s 1920 Christmas gift to Roscoe and Meta of Hergesheimer’s short story collection *Gold and Iron* signified for Cather her association with Alfred A. Knopf and other Knopf writers such as Hergesheimer; an association which carried a prestige that she felt she had finally earned after a long apprenticeship.
Chapter Five: Willa Seeks Roscoe’s Middlebrow Reader Approval

On three occasions, Willa Cather shared reviews of her 1931 novel, *Shadows on the Rock*, with Roscoe. In an August 1931 letter from Grand Manan, she discusses one of the first reviews of *Shadows on the Rock* which appeared in the August 1931 *Atlantic Monthly*. In a 2 March 1933 letter, she encloses a “Topic of the Times” column from the 4 February 1933 *New York Times* referencing the Prix Femina Américain award she received for *Shadows on the Rock*. And in March 1935, she shares with Roscoe a scrapbook of newspaper clippings of several English reviews for *Shadows on the Rock* made by her English publisher, Cassell and Company. Her 18 March 1935 letter to Roscoe serves as an introductory note for her earlier transmittal of the scrapbook.

The publishing history and critical reception of the novel provides a context for assessing her letters to Roscoe about it. Published by Alfred A. Knopf on 1 August 1931, *Shadows* was Cather’s tenth novel. By the end of the year, Knopf had shipped 167,679 copies from ten printings (Woodress 433). *Shadows* was the August 1931 national Book-of-the-Month Club main selection (Madigan, “Willa Cather” 68). While it was Cather’s first time to have one of her books chosen as a main selection, Mark Madigan, in “Willa Cather and the Book-of-the-Month Club,” reveals this was not the first association Cather had with the BOMC. Prior to *Shadows*, *My Mortal Enemy* and *Death Comes for the Archbishop* were reviewed in the *Book-of-the-Month Club News* and available as substitute selections in lieu of the main selection. Additionally, “*My Ántonia* was featured as ‘An Outstanding Older Book’ in the April 1929 issue of the *News* as well” (68).

Although Cather complained about the low royalties, *Shadows*’ BOMC main selection status contributed to the book being Cather’s best-selling novel. (#2099; Madigan, “Willa
Cather” 68). And the *New York Times* reported that the annual Baker and Taylor survey found *Shadows* to be the most popular American novel in 1931 (“Author of ‘Lost Lady’”).

Two days following the publication of *Shadows on the Rock*, Willa Cather appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine. A few days later, the *New Yorker* ran a profile of Cather written by Louise Bogan. Bogan’s profile highlighted Cather’s recent receipt of an honorary degree from Princeton (the first woman to receive such an honor) and assessed her entire body of work, including *Shadows* (Woodress 433; Bogan). Perhaps because of Cather’s national prominence, as evidenced by the *Time* cover photo and the *New Yorker* profile, book reviewers seized the opportunity to shape their reviews of *Shadows on the Rock* into an assessment of Cather’s writing career (Murphy and Stouck 358-359).

In the *Shadows on the Rock* Cather Scholarly Edition historical essay, John Murphy and David Stouck identify one reason reviewers addressed Cather’s writing career in its entirety as opposed to limiting their review solely to *Shadows*: “the appearance of another ‘Catholic’ historical novel [which] proved that *Death Comes for the Archbishop* marked a turn of direction for Cather rather than a mere career pause” (358-359). In their essay, Murphy and Stouck describe the “controversial reception” *Shadows* (and Cather’s career) received during the first year following the publication of the book. In their summation of twenty-five American reviews, the authors categorize the reviews into four groups: positive reviews, positive reviews praising the religious treatment of Catholicism or the “sacred dimension” of the novel, negative reviews, and “emphatically negative” reviews (358-373). Murphy and Stouck identify the positive reviews as “focus[ing] on Cather’s artistry and sympathetic evocation of French-Canadian history and culture” (359). The reviewers responding favorably included Wilbur Cross (*Saturday Review of
Literature), Walter Myers (Virginia Quarterly Review), and Fanny Butcher (Chicago Daily Tribune). Cather was so pleased with these reviews that she wrote letters of appreciation to both Cross and Butcher (Murphy and Stouck 359; SL 451-452, 457). In Cather’s letter to “Governor Cross,” printed with her permission in the October Saturday Review of Literature, she wrote,

I tried as you say, to state the mood and the view-point in the title. . . . An orderly little French household that went on trying to live decently, just as ants begin to rebuild when you kick their house down, interests me more than Indian raids. . . .

And really, a new society begins with the salad dressing more than with the destruction of Indian villages. (SL 451)

To Butcher, Cather’s friend who consistently gave her novels positive reviews, Cather wrote:

your review. . . certainly gave me a hand-up when I needed it—made me feel that I had been able to transfer to you the unreasonable and unaccountable glow that all those little details of life in Quebec gave to me. It’s like a child’s feeling about Christmas—no reason for it, it merely happens to one. (SL 457).

By the time Cather wrote this letter to Butcher on 14 October 1931, Shadows and her writing career had been the focus of numerous “negative” and “emphatically negative” reviews which would explain Cather’s “hand-up” metaphor.

Murphy and Stouck summarize the negative reviews as “chiefly concerned (like critical theorists later in the century) with Cather’s relation to contemporary life” (361). They situate within this grouping reviews by Carl Van Doren (New York Herald Tribune Books), Herschel Brickell (North American Review), and William Soskin (New York Evening Post). The negative assessments included Van Doren’s charge that Shadows on
the Rock was “a novel with no unmistakable hero or heroine, she has written. . . a biography without a subject. Unless the subject is the Rock of Quebec” (Van Doren 361). Additionally, Van Doren concluded that Cather had too enthusiastically “played Miss Jewett to Quebec” while Soskin dismissed Shadows as a “legitimate novel” with “lamentable” character portraits (361; qtd. in Murphy and Stouck 363).

The “emphatically negative reviewers” included John Chamberlain (New York Times Book Review), Newton Arvin (New Republic), Louis Kronenberger (Bookman), and Granville Hicks (Forum). Murphy and Stouck specify that Chamberlain in his review “placed Shadows far down on his merit graph of Cather fiction” (363). Although Chamberlain does concur with other critics that Cather’s writing was “inordinately beautiful,” he contends that her prose was insufficient to save her “household chronicle” (Chamberlain 362, 363). Chamberlain concludes that:

It would be rash to say that Miss Cather had come to the end of her rope, for in the past she has followed indifferent work (Alexander’s Bridge, One of Ours) with excellent work (The Song of the Lark, My Antonia [sic] and A Lost Lady). But perhaps her experience, the “feel of the rock” that the novelist must have, has run out. (364)

Arvin judges Shadows as “a very delicate and very dull book” which was “born dead” (Arvin 369, 370). Murphy and Stouck summarize Arvin’s prime complaint as being that Cather comprised her book with “escapist material she does not believe in and has little experience with” (364). Kronenberger laments that “Miss Cather’s recent books, so much better written, . . . give us nothing beyond good style, shapely form, delicate sensibility. . . . This sterility cannot, of course, do damage to her past achievements” (Kronenberger 383). Granville Hicks’ review, published in the Forum, assesses Cather as “a minor artist”
and derides her “own estimate of her debt to Sarah Orne Jewett [as] perhaps not exaggerated” (Hicks 377). Hicks went on to charge:

[H]er endowment does not include the kind of disciplined resolution that must guide the imagination of a great writer. To-day. . . it takes stern stuff to make a novelist. Miss Cather, one is forced to conclude, has always been soft; and now she has abandoned herself to her softness. (Hicks 378)

Clearly upset by this rash of “extremely negative” reviews criticizing not only Shadows but the direction of her writing career, Cather wrote to Henry Goddard Leach, the editor of the Forum, following the publication of Granville Hicks’ review. Cather wrote, “[T]he tone of this article is sarcastic and contemptuous throughout,” and “[a]n article in this tone, appearing in a magazine of The Forum’s standing, does one harm, certainly, as it was intended to do.” She ends her “letter of protest” explaining this is the only letter she has “ever written an editor concerning a review” (SL 453-454).

As Janis Stout points out in The Writer and Her World, the “Marxist or Marxist-influenced critics such as Hicks accused [Cather] of turning her back on social ills,” to which Cather replied with her essay “Escapism,” published in The Commonweal (277). Stout proclaims that Cather’s “Escapism” essay, “[w]ith its references to ‘the Radical editor’ and ‘loyalty to a party’. . . all but names the camp of the enemy” (278). Sharon O’Brien shares Stout’s depiction of the “extremely negative” reviews as motivated by a socialist perspective. O’Brien elaborates, however, that the Marxist left positioned Cather outside of a newly emerging American Literature canon not only due to her failure to directly address social and economic issues of the day, but also due to the emergence of a new canon within academia that equated canon-worthy texts with a masculine literary tradition. O’Brien expounds that the reviewers of many of the “extremely negative”
reviews of Cather’s career during this time period, comprised a contingent of young, academically-situated professional critics who were attempting to create a new American literary canon to compete with the well-established British literary canon (“Becoming Noncanonical” 110-112). As already outlined above, Cather’s publication of *Shadows on the Rock* in late summer of 1931 yielded this diverse—and somewhat polarized—public reception. The bifurcation of public reception can best be understood through a highbrow – middlebrow distinction. The *avant garde* commonly dismissed *Shadows* and most of her work as insignificant, while the popular marketplace lauded Cather for her beautifully written book.

Joan Shelley Rubin, in *The Making of Middlebrow Culture*, describes the historical usage of the terms highbrow, lowbrow, and middlebrow. Originating from phrenology, the term “highbrow” came to represent “intellectual caliber,” and by the 1880s was “synonymous with ‘refined’” (xii). By the 1900s, “lowbrow” was in circulation to describe a “lack of cultivation” (xii). The terms “highbrow” and “lowbrow” were widely used for two decades before the term “middlebrow” came into use. The term “middlebrow” stems from the 1933 *Saturday Review* essay “Message and Middlebrow,” in which Margaret Widdemer employs the term to describe “the majority reader” situated between the “tiny group of intellectuals” and the “tabloid addict class” (qtd. in Rubin xii-xiii). Melissa Homestead, in “Middlebrow Readers and Pioneer Heroines,” elaborates on the interpretation of the “brow” classifications:

> The middlebrow resides somewhere between the easily identifiable low of mass-circulated dime novels and pulp magazines, written up to plot outlines by nameless scribes, and the edgy *avant garde* of modernism circulated in little magazines and books in small editions as the creative emanations of autonomous authors. Because
of this “betweenness,” commentators have often criticized the middle as violating the proper boundaries between commerce (low) and art (high). (77) Rubin focuses on that literary “betweenness” space that emerged post-World War One in her book-length treatment of middlebrow culture. Specifically, Rubin utilizes the term “middlebrow” to describe consumers of the post-World War One commercial activities “aimed at making literature and other forms of ‘high’ art available to a wide reading public” such as the Book-of-the-Month Club, book groups, radio book programs, and journalistic innovations (xi, xv).

Cather scholars have well documented her ambiguities—a Cather beset with “intellectual and emotional dualities” visible throughout her writing (Stout, The Writer xii). Cather’s ambiguity also extends to her own positioning of her writing within the highbrow/middlebrow identification. After her initial success as a novelist, Cather strove to identify her writing as “high art” while verbally distancing herself from the middlebrow. In a 1922 letter to H. L. Mencken hoping to favorably influence his review of *One of Ours*, Cather reminds him of their common ground in their commitment to a literature “true to facts and existing conditions” as opposed to “Booth Tarkington platitudes” which exemplify, in the words of O’Brien, “a debased, popular American literature,” (SL 508-509; “Becoming Noncanonical” 114). On another occasion, Cather wrote to friend and writing colleague Dorothy Canfield Fisher, commenting on her own “slow” sales compared to Fisher’s “magnificent sales,” which Stout interprets as Cather implying “fewer sales might mean higher art because fewer people might be qualified to appreciate excellence” (“Dorothy Canfield” 46). And as mentioned in Chapter Three, Homestead notes that Cather’s essay “The Novel Demeublé” publicly positions her writing within a highbrow classification as opposed to the popular middlebrow market.
Stout observes that Cather’s association with the “house of Alfred A. Knopf” also contributes to her highbrow identification citing Catherine Turner’s statement that Knopf’s publishing firm “became legendary for publishing only what was best” (“Dorothy Canfield” 38; Turner 83).

Also previously mentioned in Chapter Three, O’Brien argues that Cather made several marketing decisions based upon maintaining a “high art” positioning of her work while Stout points out that although Cather was “firmly placed” on the side of highbrow, that positioning was fluid (“Noncanonical” 121; “Dorothy Canfield” 38). Interestingly, at the same time that Cather was positioning and professing herself a highbrow, numerous scholars identify Cather as also aligning herself with middlebrow marketing decisions. Cather’s middlebrow marketing includes her Book-of-the-Month Club (BOMC) association, serial publications in magazines, and a movie deal with Warner Brothers for A Lost Lady (Homestead, “Middlebrow Readers” 78; Johanningsmeier 94; Madigan, “Willa Cather” 68; Stout, “Dorothy Canfield” 38).

The extent of Cather’s association with the Book-of-the-Month Club has been well-known by Cather scholars since Mark Madigan’s 2007 article, “Willa Cather and the Book-of-the-Month Club.” Started in 1926 by Harry Scherman, a New York businessman with an advertising and direct sales background, the underlying premise of the Book-of-the-Month Club was “that the nation’s bookstores were not meeting the American reader’s desire for new books” (Rubin 94). He targeted BOMC sales to the “average intelligent reader” (Rubin 98), or what can be termed an average middlebrow reader. Henry Seidel Canby, editor of The Saturday Review of Literature and chair of the original board of BOMC judges (Rubin 114, 110), described Scherman’s “average intelligent reader” as someone:
who has passed through the usual formal education in literature, who reads books
as well as newspapers and magazines, who, without calling himself a litteratuer,
would be willing to assert that he was fairly well read and reasonably fond of good
reading. Your doctor, your lawyer, the president of your bank, and any educated
business man . . . (qtd. in Rubin 98)

“Fairly well-read,” “educated,” and “the president of your bank”—all descriptions one
can apply to Willa Cather’s brother Roscoe. As Homestead correctly points out, Roscoe
“fits this profile precisely” (79), thus situating him securely in the realm of the
middlebrow reader.

Despite his lack of a university degree, Roscoe precisely met the Book-of-the-
Month Club’s definition of an average reader: he was a well-read, educated, middle-class
professional—the president of a bank even. Furthermore, he fulfilled the marketing
category of someone whose reading needs were not met by traditional booksellers. Roscoe
and his family lived in Lander, Wyoming (population 1,812 in 1910), Casper, Wyoming
(population 11,447 in 1920), and Colusa, California (population 2,285 in 1940)—all small
towns (“Lander”; “Casper”; “Colusa”). It is unlikely any of these towns boasted a book
store, thus situating their educated residents as the prime target for the Book-of-the-Month
Club. With Willa Cather’s knowledge of the book market, she would have recognized that
her brother was a middlebrow “average reader,” as well as a loving brother who
understood and supported her writing.

The book talk Willa shares with Roscoe about the public reception of *Shadows on
the Rock* holds greater import when positioned within the context of Roscoe’s middlebrow
reader status. Three letters she wrote to him during the years of 1931 to 1935 about
*Shadows* affirm this assertion. Willa wrote the first letter to Roscoe sometime in August
1931 from Grand Manan. Typed on plain typing paper, undated, with her Grand Manan return address stamped in the upper right corner, the short one paragraph message covers two-thirds of the page, ending with the typed closing “Affectionately,” and a hand-signature, “Willie.” The contents date the letter within the month of August post-publication of both Shadows and the August Atlantic Monthly. Willa’s epistolary message to Roscoe begins with a direct, “I hope you will see the sketch and review in the ‘Atlantic Bookshelf’ of the Atlantic Monthly [sic] this month.” She then positions herself as someone the Atlantic Monthly editor has sought out (“I have refused so often to write for the Atlantic”) before assessing the review as “a little sentimental” but in alignment with her intentions: “it gets the chief point; that I tried to make the book sound like a translation from the French.” Additionally, she boasts that Shadows has “started off with a bang; a much larger advance sale than I have ever had before” (#2096).

By the time the Atlantic Monthly August review of Shadows appeared on newsstands, Cather’s new novel and her writing career had already been the subject of at least two negative reviews: William Soskin’s review “dismissing” Shadows as a “legitimate novel” and Carl Van Doren’s review assessing her career and concluding that her new novel depicts “admiration for a society” at the expense of her prior “passion for a hero” (Murphy and Stouck 363; Van Doren 361). After such harsh criticism, Cather naturally found solace and affirmation in the “sentimental” but “understand[ing]” Atlantic Monthly review proclaiming “that Miss Cather’s power of feeling and rendering beauty has never shown itself more superbly” (#2096; O’Connor 355).

Established in 1857, the Atlantic Monthly was one of a number of mid-nineteenth century magazines that sought to replicate British periodicals by treating reviews as “criticism” rather than as book “news” with little critical analysis, as newspapers did
Believing themselves to have a “higher calling” than newspaper reporters, these magazines “compromised” between a highbrow stance of a “genteel commitment to training” and “the demands of a middleclass readership eager for education without excessive effort” (Rubin 37). Positioned to appeal to both a highbrow and middlebrow audience, the Atlantic Monthly was a quality magazine noted for being “high in literary quality” (Peterson 407). Thus, Willa’s remark in her 31 August letter to Roscoe that she had “refused so often to write for the Atlantic” proves puzzling (#2096). Just a few months prior to this letter, Cather’s poem “Poor Marty” appeared in the May 1931 Atlantic Monthly (Crane 235). Cather had written the poem about Margie Anderson after her death in 1928. Margie had traveled with the Cather family as a hired servant from Virginia to Nebraska in 1883 and lived with the family until her death. She is buried in the Cather family plot in the Red Cloud cemetery (Woodress 24). Cather biographer James Woodress describes how Cather loved Margie: “Cather understood this humble and defenseless woman, felt very protective of her, and when [Cather] visited Red Cloud in later years, she often spent hours talking to Margie in the backyard or working with her in the kitchen” (24). In addition to writing the poem “Poor Marty” for Margie, Cather used her as the prototype for the characters Mahailey in One of Ours and Mandy in “Old Mrs. Harris” (Woodress 24). After “Poor Marty” appeared in the Atlantic Monthly, Willa wrote to Roscoe, “Did you see the ballad in the May Atlantic Monthly [sic]? It’s said to be very good” (#2093). In May 1931 she was clearly pleased to have her poem about her beloved Margie appear in the Atlantic Monthly—just three months prior to writing to Roscoe that she had “refused so often to write for the Atlantic” (#2096). Whether Cather’s comment was a move to distance herself from the magazine or a description of prior refusals to write reviews for the Atlantic Monthly is unclear. Two years later, Cather’s writing again
appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*: her essay about meeting Gustave Flaubert’s niece, “A Chance Meeting,” appeared in the February 1933 issue of the magazine (Woodress 421-422; Crane 310).

The August 1931 *Atlantic Monthly* review is the review that “gets [her] chief point” and which she shares with family (#2096). In addition to writing Roscoe about the *Atlantic Monthly* review, Willa informed both her youngest sister, Elsie, and her brother Douglass about the review. In a postscript to a 10 August 1931 letter to her mother, she wrote to Elsie and Douglass to “please be sure to read the sketch and review in the *Atlantic Monthly* [sic]” (#1066). Additionally, she reaffirmed that desire for Elsie and Douglass to read the *Atlantic* sketch and review by including in a letter to her mother that same month an inquiry about whether “Elsie and Douglass [had] seen the splendid review and sketch in the ‘Atlantic Bookshelf’, in the front advertising pages” (#2433).

Significantly, her letter to Roscoe—unlike her notes to Elsie and Douglass—encompasses more than the mere transmittal of review notification. With Roscoe, Willa shares that the *Atlantic* review “gets the chief point; that I tried to make the book sound like a translation from the French. If people understand that, they will understand the book” (#2096). Additionally, she informs Roscoe that she directed “the office” to send him “copies of the book” (#2096). Indicative of Willa’s reliance on Roscoe as representative of her “average readers,” she makes certain to convey to him the central point of this review written for a middlebrow audience and communicates an unspoken hope that he will also understand her intent, once he reads the copy of *Shadows* Knopf has sent him.

Willa next wrote Roscoe about reviews of *Shadows* in a letter postmarked 2 March 1933. In the year and a half since the publication of the book and her August 1931 letter to Roscoe about the *Atlantic Monthly* review, Willa had felt the sting of the vitriolic “career
assessment reviews” judging her recent works as the product of a “minor” writer while praising her early work. Only three months before (December 1932), Clifton Fadiman’s damning review had appeared in the Nation. “Designed as a ‘liberal weekly,’” the Nation included among its contributors “a mixture of professors, intellectuals, and journalists” (Wood 188, 189). For Cather, Fadiman’s condemnation would have held the sting of rejection by the highbrow audience to whom she professed to appeal. Murphy and Stouck summarize Fadiman’s charges as:

[After] repeat[ing] the division of Cather’s career into pioneer sagas, novels of manners, and dream histories, . . . [Fadiman] attached his own list of her limitations. . . . Her world of the mind is shrinking and fastened with shutters, as indicated by the “precious, over-calculated” effects of Archbishop and Shadows. (372)

Although Cather had her supporters (Archer Winsten responded to negative charges similar to Fadiman’s in his “A Defense of Willa Cather,” printed in the March 1932 Bookman), the negative reviews “distressed” Cather, as had the negative reviews she received earlier in her career for One of Ours (Murphy and Stouck 372-373; Stout, The Writer 278).

Perhaps in an attempt to leave the harsh reviews behind, Willa wrote to Roscoe about a New York Times editorial printed in early February of 1933. Handwritten on light tan stationery bearing the Borzoi Books imprint, her short, three-sentence letter asks Roscoe if he had “seen this editorial” that “pleased me very much” (#2103). Cather enclosed with her note the torn and folded page of the 4 February 1933 New York Times with its “Topic of the Times” editorial discussing Cather’s Prix Femina Américain award for Shadows and the publication of “A Chance Meeting” in the February 1933 issue of the
As the discussion of her award and publication was one of three commentaries included in that day’s column, Cather marked the enclosed news clipping by drawing a half-circle in red pencil to the upper right of the column, highlighting the segment that mentions her work. The editorial outlines that *Shadows* was one of three novels nominated by an American committee for “translation and publication in France” with its final selection by a French committee for receipt of the first Prix Femina Américain award. The *New York Times* column points out that the French-Canadian subject matter of *Shadows* “did not hurt its chances with the Paris Committee.” However, besides this obvious fact, the *Times* concedes, “that was not the sole reason. The fact that Miss Cather is our finest novelist may have had something to do with the result” (“Topic of the Times”). Cather would have indeed been pleased with this editorial as both a Francophile and a novelist who had been on the receiving end of negative reviews for the past eighteen months. Additionally, the *New York Times* column refers to “A Chance Meeting,” Cather’s description of her acquaintance with Gustave Flaubert’s niece, as “a portrait drawn with superb skill, with the supreme art which has learned to wrap itself in a mantle of perfect ease” (“Topic of the Times”). While only a few months earlier she had boasted to Roscoe that she had “refused so often to write for” the *Atlantic Monthly*, she now welcomed their receptive readership for her essay. Sharing news of her prestigious award and the very favorable *New York Times* column with Roscoe, Willa sought both his admiration as her loving and supportive sibling, but also she would have expected him to share the favorable middlebrow reception of *Shadows* and “A Chance Meeting.”

Willa’s third letter to Roscoe sharing book news of *Shadows* focuses on the British reception of her novel. In 1935, Willa sent a small scrapbook of English reviews of her novel *Shadows on the Rock* to Roscoe almost three years after she herself had received it.
Having severed her ties with her former British publisher, Heinemann, Cather’s new relationship with Cassell and Company began with the British publication of *Shadows* in January 1932. Perhaps to impress their new author, Cassell compiled the British newspaper notices and reviews of *Shadows*. On 25 May 1932, Cather wrote to Walter Newman Flower, director of Cassell and Company, “I wish to thank you most warmly for your kindness in sending me the English reviews of SHADOWS ON THE ROCK, arranged in such a convenient manner. It was a very kind attention on the part of your office, and pleased me very much” (Letter to Walter Newman Flower). The “arrangement” was a handmade scrapbook comprised of fourteen 8½” by 11” sheets of brown paper, held together with a sky blue ribbon strung through two paper punched holes along the left margin and tied in a bow. The Cassell’s employee constructing the small booklet embellished the cover with a 4” by 3” hand-printed label carefully calligraphed to resemble a printed label. Centered in the top third of the cover page within three framed squares, the label with its black lettering on a colonial blue background announces the contents, “Reviews SHADOWS ON THE ROCK by Willa Cather Cassell—January 14, 1932” (“Cassell Scrapbook [Shadows]”). Glued to the small booklet’s internal pages are over fifty clippings of British notices and reviews.

The Great Britain reception of the first British publication of *Shadows on the Rock* differed favorably from the American reception. Published in January 1932 in London by Cassell and Company, *Shadows* received an overall positive welcome on the other side of the Atlantic (Crane 165-166; Murphy and Stouck 369). Murphy and Stouck posit that “[b]ecause these reviewers had fewer preconceptions about the kind of books American novelists should be turning out, they had fewer reservations about the appearance of a novel not in the mainstream” (369-370). Cather’s receipt of the French Prix Femina
Américain award in early 1933 affirmed this favorable reception in Europe of Cather’s *Shadows on the Rock*.

On 18 March 1935 Willa typed a letter to Roscoe on her W.S.C. monogramed stationery letting him know, “For two years I have wanted to send you a little book, which I want you to read some evening and then return to me by registered post” (#2115). She further explains the source of the small booklet:

> My new publisher [Cassell] began our relations with SHADOWS ON THE ROCK. He got together all the English reviews, good and bad, pasted them in a little scrap-book and sent them to me. I had never done this myself with any bunch of reviews. I think the scrap-book makes quite an interesting picture of “how one stands in England”. [sic] Some of the papers quoted are just sporting papers, and some are the best journals in England. Since you are the only member of my family who takes any real interest in my professional life, I thought I would like you to see this collection of opinions - so generally cordial and friendly. (#2115)

Willa mailed the letter and scrapbook separately as indicated by the folds in the letter which allowed it to be inserted into a 4” by 5” envelope addressed to Roscoe in type. With her request to Roscoe to return the booklet by “registered post,” one assumes she followed the same procedure in transmitting the booklet to him, indicating that she highly valued it.

What prompted Cather to share this small booklet with her brother almost three years after Flowers sent it to her is unclear. Perhaps she desired to revisit the favorable British reviews of *Shadows*, attempting to ease her own worries about the future reception of her soon-to-be-published novel *Lucy Gayheart*. Or she may have been revisiting the British reviews found in this scrapbook and a similar scrapbook Cassell created with the
British reviews of *Obscure Destinies* for an updated revision of the Alfred A. Knopf's 1926 pamphlet *Willa Cather: A Biographical Sketch, an English Opinion, and an Abridged Bibliography*. David Porter outlines in *On the Divide* the direct involvement of Cather in the creation of this promotional publication, including her writing the biographical sketch of herself (17). Porter identifies revised versions of the pamphlet in 1933 and 1941 (314, notes 29, 30); interestingly, the 1941 version of the promotional pamphlet reprints a British review pasted in the *Shadows* “Cassell Scrapbook” and a review found in the *Obscure Destinies* “Cassell Scrapbook.” Perhaps Cather selected these reviews to add to the pamphlet in 1935. That she was looking at both “Cassell Scrapbooks” at the time she sent the *Shadows* scrapbook to Roscoe is apparent as she wrote in the letter,

> Cassell made the same sort of scrap-book for OBSCURE DESTINIES, and that was even more gratifying to me because the sporting papers rather dropped out and the criticism was of a very sensitive and penetrating kind. But I don't want to burden you with too much of this sort of thing all at once. (#2115)

Some of the clippings in the *Shadows* scrapbook are no more than one inch columns announcing the publication of the British edition of *Shadows*; still others consist of at least a quarter-page column or more. Cather correctly describes the reviews as from “some of the best journals in England,” including the *Times Literary Supplement* and *The Saturday Review*. Although a couple of the reviews might be considered “bad,” the majority are quite favorable and consistent with the popular reception of the book by the American middlebrow readership. Positive comments in the reviews include: “One thanks Miss Cather for the simplicity and beauty of this book” (*The Saturday Review*); “a beautifully written story” (*The Weekend Review*); “a prose poem” (*The Church Times*);
“Miss Cather is the first literary artist America has produced with the possible exception of Hawthorne and Emily Dickinson” (*North Mail*); and “a lovely work of art by a stylist with a fine imagination” (*Newcastle Chronicle*) (“Cassell Scrapbook [Shadows]”). The *Times Literary Supplement* proclaimed, “Miss Cather has made a book full of life and brilliance out of material that has become sentimental and unreal in other hands” (“Cassell Scrapbook [Shadows]”). Any author would have been pleased to be on the receiving end of these literary assessments. For Cather, who had been subjected to what Murphy and Stouck term “emphatically negative” reviews from a contingent of American critics after the American publication of *Shadows* (363), the scrapbook would have served as pleasing affirmation of international literary success. Notably, Cather did not acknowledge that this reception was decidedly “middlebrow.” As Stout observes, contrary to Cather’s pronouncements that low book sales indicated “high art,” when “she did enjoy surprisingly high sales with *The Professor’s House* (1925) and *Shadows on the Rock* (1931) she did not take that to mean they were poor artistic achievements” (“Dorothy Canfield” 46).

Roscoe, as Willa would have expected, responded favorably to the *Shadows “Cassell Scrapbook.”* Her letter to Roscoe, dated 23 April 1935, begins by stating, “Don’t think that I did not appreciate your long, understanding, [sic] letter about the English reviews” (#2116). Although Roscoe’s “long, understanding, letter” is not part of her extant correspondence, Willa’s epistolary response confirms that Roscoe reflected back the acknowledgement and admiration she sought when sending him the scrapbook. She continues by saying, “I hope I can sometime have a long talk with you about the peculiar satisfaction I get out of working occasionally in legendary themes. Rotation of crops is a good thing for gardens and writers” (#2116). Assured of Roscoe’s interest in her writing
and in the public’s reception to her writing, she expresses in this same letter a desire to talk at length with him about her writing philosophy sometime in the future. This letter demonstrates Willa’s reliance upon Roscoe’s middlebrow reader response in addition to his interest in her writing, the public’s reception of her writing, and her writing theories.
Chapter Six: Summary and Directions for Further Study

Prior to the 2007 donation to the University of Nebraska of correspondence, photos, books, and other materials exchanged between Willa Cather and her next younger brother Roscoe and his family, little was known about this sibling relationship. The materials in this collection shed new insight into the interpersonal relationship between Willa and her brother Roscoe. The relationship between these two siblings encompassed close emotional bonds established in childhood that extended throughout the remainder of their lives. Willa actively sought Roscoe’s financial and business advice on numerous occasions. Most significantly, extant letters indicate she viewed him as the most supportive family member with respect to her writing. Despite her systematic epistolary inconsistencies, the “pattern and trend” of her statements to and about her brother establish how much she valued their relationship and his support of her as a writer. The many specific references in her letters to him about her writing and about the public reception to her writing, demonstrate her belief that Roscoe understood how important writing was to her and how it defined her life. The specificity of some of her comments to Roscoe indicate how highly she valued his opinion about her as a writer and sought his affirmation. That affirmation, however, takes on an additional dimension when paired with his middlebrow reader status and her unacknowledged marketing to a middlebrow readership.

Despite the narrow focus of this thesis, the materials chosen for explication are meant to render a representative sampling of Cather’s “book talk” communications with her brother. Her 5 January 1919 letter to Roscoe discusses Randolph Bourne’s December 1918 review of My Ántonia which appeared in the Dial. In this letter to Roscoe, she reinforces Bourne’s estimation of her own “high art” writing of My Ántonia compared to
the “moralistic” writing style demonstrated by William Allen White in his novel *In the Heart of a Fool*. The knowledge of their shared history of reading together White’s stories in *McClure’s* magazine, gained from her 1942 letter to Roscoe, contextualizes her message. This 1919 letter represents Cather positioning her writing as “high art” while distancing herself from an author whose writing she once thought of with high regard and whom she now views as a mainstream popular writer only seeking commercial success. The import of this letter lies in Willa’s strong appeal to Roscoe to view her as a highbrow writer of quality.

Willa Cather’s December 1920 Christmas gift of Joseph Hergesheimer’s short story collection *Gold and Iron* to Roscoe and Meta represents another instance of her seeking to influence Roscoe’s opinion of her as a highbrow writer. The timing of this gift coincides with Knopf’s recent publication of Cather’s own short story collection, *Youth and the Bright Medusa*, and Cather’s identification as a Knopf writer via her inclusion in and contribution to *The Borzoi 1920*. Admittedly subject to interpretation, a reasonable argument can be made substantiating this gift as her subtle gesture to reinforce Roscoe’s view of her as a “high art” writer via her association with the then highly respected Hergesheimer and the publishing house of Knopf with its reputation for quality and highbrow works of literature, while at the same time recognizing his position as a middlebrow reader.

Although Cather sought to position herself as a highbrow author—even with her brother—she would have recognized Roscoe’s status as an average middlebrow reader given his education, life experiences, and vocation. Just as she verbally positioned herself as a highbrow artist while making many marketing decisions aimed towards a middlebrow audience, she also sought to influence Roscoe’s opinion of her as a highbrow
writer while seeking his approval as a middlebrow reader. The controversial American reception to Cather’s 1931 *Shadows on the Rock* highlights a significant time period during her writing career in which she was primarily rejected by the avant garde while the middlebrow community and popular marketplace commend her for a beautifully written book. Her three letters to Roscoe about this novel, and her transmittal of the “Cassell Scrapbook” of English reviews, illustrate her desire to appeal to his middlebrow reader-response by sharing book news exemplifying the favorable middlebrow reception to *Shadows on the Rock*. Based upon extant correspondence, Roscoe fulfilled not only the role of Willa Cather’s most consistently supportive family member in regards to her writing, but also served as an average middlebrow reader to whom she did desire to appeal, even though she did not publicly articulate that desire.

As indicated earlier, this thesis serves to represent a sampling of the book news Cather shared with her next younger brother which substantiates the role he played as a middlebrow reader and supportive family member of her writing. The scope of this thesis leaves more material for further explication including: additional instances in which she enclosed book reviews in correspondence to Roscoe about books other than *My Ántonia* and *Shadows on the Rock*, her remarks in correspondence to Roscoe about books other than her own or about other authors, and her comments to Roscoe about her receiving honorary degrees and awards (see #2141, #2203, #2191, #2234, #2077, #2213). Another line of inquiry would be an interpretation of her comments to Roscoe about the writing process for *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*. In addition to her comments about the structure of the book and especially its epilogue, Willa explains to Roscoe that she began writing the book “full of enthusiasm” prior to Douglass’ and Isabel’s deaths, after which she took a break from the story (#2169). In this letter, she explains: “[w]hen I went back to the
manuscripts, I was almost a different person. I had lost my keen interest in the story. I have done all I can to mend that break in the story, and to make the latter part like the first, but the break will always be there” (#2169; see also #2171, #2172). Included as part of the surviving letters to Roscoe, her intriguing statements about “the break” in *Sapphira* lend itself to an interesting inquiry.

Additionally, while Willa Cather’s extant correspondence supports my thesis of Roscoe’s role as a middlebrow reader and a family member consistently supportive of her writing career, much is unknown about the role her other siblings played given the sparsity of known letters between her and her other siblings at this time. Certainly, she had close emotional ties with her brother Douglass, one of the three siblings comprising “the clan” (#2277). Few letters exist between the two siblings, however, leaving a void to establish an accurate assessment of Douglass’ role to Willa Cather the writer. As more Cather correspondence becomes known, letters between Douglass and Willa may surface allowing an appraisal of Douglass’ role based on epistolary evidence rather than assumptions (although reasoned) based upon occasional comments about Douglass that she made in letters to other people.
Notes

1The Complete Letters of Willa Cather is an ongoing project of the Willa Cather Archive to provide a “digital, scholarly edition of Cather’s entire body of correspondence.” As of 18 April 2019, there are 1200 letters published on the site (Jewell).

2The earliest extant letter between Willa and Roscoe is dated 1908. There is thus no record of Willa sharing with Roscoe the reception of April Twilights, The Troll Garden, or her early magazine publications.

3In a 24 February 1958 letter to Mildred Bennett, Elsie Cather stated that Roscoe took the middle name Clark because it was a family name. There is one instance of Roscoe being identified with the middle name of “Conkling.” The 31 May 1895 issue of The Red Cloud Chief reprinted the High School commencement oration of Miss Margaret Pauline Miner, “Class Prophecy.” The prophecy names Roscoe Cather as “Roscoe Conkling Cather, a statesman/Is far up on the ladder of fame/for through the virtue of honest endeavor/He has won for himself an illustrious name” (Young). There is no other record of Roscoe using Conkling as a middle name, thus, it is likely Miner jestingly assigned the name to him in her “Class Prophecy” as a reference to the politician Roscoe Conkling.

4These books include Robinson Crusoe, Treasure Island, William Allen White’s “Court of Boyville” stories, Grimm’s Fairy Tales, and Barry and Thomas Hardy books (#0003; Woodress 59; #2242; #2372; #2274).

5Letters cited which are available via The Complete Letters of Willa Cather are identified by their Cather identification number.
Newspaper announcements indicate Roscoe was appointed as principal in the South Ward School for school year 1898/1899 and appointed principal in the 1st Ward School for school year 1899/1900 indicating his presence at separate schools within Red Cloud over the two year period (Argus 29 July 1898; Argus 23 June 1899).

The Notice of Incorporation lists the officers as: C F Cather, President; R C Cather, Vice President; C D Cather, Cashier; and J D Cather, Assistant Cashier. (“Notice of Incorporation [Greybull]”)

Although most sources say Roscoe Cather was a bank president in both Lander, Wyoming, and Casper, Wyoming, newspaper stories indicate he served as bank secretary and vice president in Lander at the Central Trust Company and entered the Wyoming Trust Company as vice president and bank manager in 1921. Later news articles clearly indicate he served as president of the Wyoming Trust Company from 1932 until the absorption of the WTC by the Casper National Bank in 1934. However, between the years of 1921 to 1932, news articles indicate he served as president for the years 1923 and 1927 and held the title vice president during the other years. This switch in positions back and forth between vice president and president places into question whether he had served as an “acting” president since the bank’s inception.

These stories include “The Way of the World,” “The Treasure of Far Island,” and “The Enchanted Bluff” (Woodress 57, 59).

References to The Selected Letters of Willa Cather, edited by Andrew Jewell and Janis Stout, are abbreviated by SL in the parenthetical documentation within the text.

Cather’s extant correspondence includes few letters between Willa and Douglass. Thus, the exact role Douglass played with respect to her communication about her writing and the public reception of her writing is unclear. However, among Cather’s
extant correspondence, she references two instances in which Douglass Cather apparently took exception to her writing. In a 6 December 1919 letter to her mother, Willa wrote, “I was at home when “The Song of the Lark” came out . . . and Douglass was at home, and he was cross about the laundry bill and the book” (emphasis added; SL 283-284). In a postscript to an 18 March 1935 letter to Roscoe, Willa wrote, “No word from Douglass or Elsie. What’s the matter this time? This story isn’t about Red Cloud!” (#2115).

For purposes of this paper I have not addressed all the inconsistencies found in Cather’s correspondence that would contradict my claim that Roscoe served as her most supportive family member to understand and support her writing life. For instance, in a January 1939 letter to Roscoe she wrote, “[s]ince I have lost Isabelle there is now no one to whom I can show things to,” with no acknowledgment on her part that she had shared reviews with him for years (#2141). In this circumstance, I believe her grief results in her sole focus on the role Isabelle played in her life without consideration of the other people who had supported her writing, including Roscoe.

As outlined in note 2, the earliest extant letter between Willa and Roscoe is dated 1908, providing no letters to substantiate this statement of his role during her Pittsburgh years (1896-1906).

In *Willa Cather: A Bibliography*, Joan Crane notes “Grandmither, Think Not I Forget” was published in *Critic* 36 (April 1900): 308; *Pittsburg Leader* (29 March 1900): 2; *Courier* (28 April 1900): 2; and *Current Literature* 28 (May 1900): 161, prior to the poem’s publication in *April Twilights* in 1903 (Crane 229).

For a more complete discussion of the term “middlebrow,” see Chapter Five, pages 41-42.
In her article “Modernist by Association: Willa Cather’s New York/New Mexico Circle,” Janis Stout lists Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant and Mabel Dodge Luhan as mutual friends of both Bourne and Cather. Stout surmises that Cather “likely . . . knew or knew of” Elsie Clews Parsons (119), who was a close personal correspondent of Bourne (Sandeen 489).

This change would not officially become permanent, however, until 12 January 1921 when Cather wrote a letter to her Houghton Mifflin editor Ferris Greenslet letting him know she was going to allow Knopf to publish her new novel “Claude” (the working title for One of Ours), changing course from her earlier plans. Previously, Cather had indicated to Alfred Knopf that she “felt obliged to give her next book, a novel, to Houghton Mifflin,” but after that she would make the permanent change to Knopf. (Knopf, “Miss Cather” 206).

For a more comprehensive description of Cather’s move to the publishing firm of Alfred A. Knopf see: Woodress, Willa Cather: A literary Life (306-308); the historical essays in the Cather Scholarly Editions of Youth and the Bright Medusa (344-349), One of Ours (614-618), and A Lost Lady (177-233); and Richard Harris, “‘Dear Alfred’/‘Dear Miss Cather’: Willa Cather and Alfred Knopf, 1920-1947.” Studies in the Novel. 45:3 (2013): 387-407.

Knopf’s solicitation of Hergesheimer as an author for his own soon-to-be established publishing firm prompted Mitchell Kennerley to fire him (Clements 39).

Joseph Hergesheimer’s literary career began to decline in 1924 as the post-World War One popularity of writers such as “Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Dos Passos, [and] John Steinbeck” increased (Gimmestad 5, 100). Hergesheimer biographer
Gimmestad notes, “[h]e had difficulty getting his stories accepted from 1930 on; and he published no more novels after 1936” (5).

21 Although Cather thought highly of Hergesheimer in 1920, her estimation of him as a writer would drop significantly. In 1940 she wrote to Roscoe that as a less “practised writer” when she wrote *A Lost Lady*, had she known Lyra Garber was of Spanish descent, she “might have been tempted, as poor Hergesheimer always was, to sue the charm of the ‘exotic’” (#2174). Clearly, Cather later recognized Hergesheimer’s tendency to overuse generic tropes.

22 The *Willa Cather Archive* annotation to Cather Letter #2083 indicates there is no record of the comments about *My Ántonia* that Cather attributes to Booth Tarkington. The annotation does identify that Booth Tarkington made similar comments about S.S. McClure’s *My Autobiography*, which Cather ghost-wrote. In a letter to McClure, Tarkington wrote, “It’s as simple as a country church-- or a greek statue” (qtd. in Peter Lyon, *Success Story, the Life and Times of S.S. McClure*. New York: Scribner, 1963. 347).

23 In *The Writer and Her World*, Janis Stout notes that Cather had shared her literary principle that “art ought to simplify” as early as 1913 in an interview following the publication of *O Pioneers!* (qtd. in, 259). For the full interview see Bohlke, L. Brent ed. *Willa Cather in Person: Interviews, Speeches, and Letters*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1986. 6-11.

24 Cather also may have written to Walter Myers; however, no such letter is part of her extant correspondence.
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