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Willa Cather Editing Sarah Orne Jewett

“In reading over a package of letters from Sarah Orne Jewett,” Willa Cather wrote in her preface to the Mayflower Edition of *The Best Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett* (1925), “I find this observation: ‘*The thing that teases the mind over and over for years, and at last gets itself down rightly on paper—whether little or great, it belongs to Literature.*’”¹ Cather’s private letters and her public statements in the form of essays, interviews, and speeches testify abundantly that Jewett had teased Cather’s mind over and over in the years following her friend and mentor’s death in 1909. Furthermore, as Cather critics and biographers have noted, in editing and writing her preface to *Best Stories*, Cather staked a place both for Jewett and herself in literary history.² In the rousing final paragraph of her preface Cather classes Jewett’s *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896) with Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* and Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* as one of “three American books which have the possibility of a long, long life.” Turning to *Firs* in particular, she continues, “I like to think with what pleasure, with what a sense of rich discovery, the young student of American literature in far distant years to come will take up this book and say, ‘A masterpiece!’”³ Critics have also noted interesting resonances between Cather’s editorial work and preface and her creative work occurring around the same time, especially her novel *The Professor’s House* (1925), which features the titular Godfrey St. Peter editing the journals of his dead friend, Tom Outland.⁴

Cather has also been assigned responsibility for the form in which Jewett’s *The Country of the Pointed Firs* appeared as part of *Best Stories*—with Cather’s preface, *Firs* constituted volume one of the two volume set, the second volume encompassing eleven short stories. After the initial publication of

Firs as a book, Jewett wrote four more stories featuring the same Dunnet Landing setting and characters, but she never incorporated them into *Firs* before her death. In the 1925 collection, two Dunnet Landing tales Jewett published during her lifetime (“The Queen’s Twin” and “A Dunnet Shepherdess”) and one left in manuscript at her death and published a year later (“William’s Wedding”) are interpolated into *Firs*.

Cather biographers and critics, who have made Cather’s desire to control the form in which her own works appeared before the public central to our understanding of her career,⁵ give Cather entire credit for the interpolation and blame her for bad judgment. Thus biographer James Woodress expresses “surprise” that “a writer so sensitive to the integrity of a work of art . . . apparently never thought of the 1896 edition of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* as an autonomous entity” and thus incorporated the three stories in a way that “does violence to the unity of the original work.”⁶ Ann Romines suggests that because Cather felt that she “herself [was] the discerning creator” of *Firs* as masterpiece, she felt no compunction about “commit[ing] what most Jewett readers consider the most egregious error of her edition, fracturing the formal unity” of the 1896 *Firs* through “an editorial judgment that seems to violate the ethic of sympathy that she describes as central to Jewett’s art.”⁷ Finally, Marilee Lindemann describes Cather as using “her editorial power” to “violat[e] the integrity of the maternal text she was promoting as a masterpiece of style and structure” resulting in a new version of *Firs* that followed “the narrative logic of the heterosexual love plot that Jewett’s text had assiduously avoided”⁸ (“A Dunnet Shepherdess” and “William’s Wedding” together introduce the extended courtship and long-delayed marriage of Esther Hight and William Todd—although William appears in the 1896 *Firs*, nothing intimates that the elderly bachelor fisherman who lives with his mother has a romantic life and marriage prospects).

Certainly, *Best Stories* was consequential for Jewett’s twentieth century reputation. With Cather’s preface, it was long kept in print and in 1954 Doubleday transformed it into a single-volume when it launched its cheap mass-market paperback imprint Anchor.⁹ As *The Country of the Pointed Firs and Other Stories*, the Anchor-Doubleday edition retained Cather’s preface and selection of contents—I myself first encountered *Firs* in this paperback edition in an undergraduate classroom in 1985. Critics have rightly argued that these unacknowledged interpolations changed the form and genre of *Firs* and may have injured Jewett’s artistic reputation.¹⁰ However, my focus is Cather as editor and critic: precisely what editorial work did she do, when did she do it, and under what conditions did she write her preface? Evidence suggests that Cather may have been involved in the publication of

“William’s Wedding” and its incorporation into a new edition of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* in 1910; in 1924–1925, however, her editorial control over the form in which *Firs* appeared in *The Best Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett* was negligible rather than “magisterial.”¹¹ Furthermore, Cather wrote her preface under extraordinary pressure: the Jewett family tried to get her removed from the project as a result of her negative statements reported in the press about them and the dead author’s works.



In May 1924, as Cather was making decisions about the contents of *The Best Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett*, she wrote to Ferris Greenslet, an editor at Houghton Mifflin, that “William’s Wedding” was “paler” than “A Dunnet Shepherdess” because “it did not have that final clarifying touch by the writer’s hand.”¹² This same claim reappears in her preface to the volumes: “The story ‘William’s Wedding’ at the end of the ‘Pointed Firs’ volume was uncompleted at the time of Miss Jewett’s death, and while the essentials of the picture are there, the writing is in places a little vague, lacks the last coordinating touch of the writer’s hand.”¹³ Where did she get this information about the status of the story at the time of Jewett’s death?

Jewett’s will, signed in 1897 and probated in the fall of 1909, gave her sister Mary Rice Jewett and Annie Adams Fields, Sarah’s partner in a Boston marriage, joint ownership of her “unprinted papers and unfinished manuscripts” and authority to publish them.¹⁴ When she died on June 24, 1909, Sarah Jewett left a voluminous collection of manuscripts, including nearly a thousand pages of manuscript and typescript associated with *The Country of the Pointed Firs* and the Dunnet Landing stories. A few weeks later, Annie Fields had already consulted with Ferris Greenslet, the same Houghton Mifflin editor with whom Cather would work on *Best Stories* fifteen years later, about a “plan” for *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, and Mary Jewett supported Fields’ plan.¹⁵

“William’s Wedding” made its first print appearance in the July 1910 issue of *Atlantic Monthly*, a magazine published by Houghton Mifflin in which all but the concluding two chapters of *Firs* had been serialized in 1896. The headnote explains:

After the publication of ‘A Dunnet Shepherdess’ in the Atlantic for December, 1899, and its subsequent appearance in a volume of collected stories, Miss Jewett received many appeals to bring William Blackett’s lifelong love of Esther Hight, ‘the shepherdess,’ who had given the better part of her days to the care of her stricken mother, to a happy termination. The story of ‘William’s Wedding’ was written, but the manuscript was mislaid, and has only just been found. Miss Jewett had hoped to give to it an hour or two of final revision to

make it conform more perfectly to her fastidious taste, but few lovers of her work will find any flaw.¹⁶

The new edition of *Firs*, printed primarily from the 1896 edition stereotype plates, appeared on October 8, 1910.¹⁷ Houghton Mifflin was able to add “A Dunnet Shepherdess” to *Firs* without the expense of a new typesetting because most of Jewett’s books had been printed in a uniform style and the existing stereotype plates could be duplicated and/or amended as needed, for example chiseling out old page numbers and soldering in new ones.¹⁸ “A Dunnet Shepherdess” had appeared in 1899 in *The Queen’s Twin and Other Stories*, while “William’s Wedding” had to be set anew for book publication, following the typographical and page design of the 1896 edition. The two stories were appended to the end of *Firs*, numbered as additional chapters, XXII and XXIII respectively (there were twenty-one chapters in 1896), and “A Dunnet Shepherdess” was repaginated.

Simultaneously with the separate issue of a new edition of *Firs*, Houghton Mifflin issued a seven volume collected “Tales and Stories.” The set, printed from existing plates but adding frontispiece illustrations, encompassed three novels, *Deephaven* (1877, reissued with a new preface in 1893), *A Country Doctor* (1884), and the extended *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, plus four volumes of short stories already in circulation, *Tales of New England* (1890), *A Native of Winby and Other Tales* (1893), *The Life of Nancy* (1895), and *The Queen’s Twin and Other Stories* (1899).¹⁹ Because the circumstances surrounding the publication of book collections of Jewett’s short stories figured in the conflict between Jewett’s family and Cather fourteen years later, a few words are necessary here. With the exception of *Tales of New England*, these volumes collected Jewett’s stories that had appeared in magazines since her then-most-recent short story collection (sometimes supplemented by a story or two not previously published in a periodical). Jewett herself made all selections, leaving some stories uncollected. *Tales of New England* was part of Houghton Mifflin’s “Riverside Aldine Series,” “Choice Books of American Literature. Printed and bound in a style which aims to preserve the traditions of ALDUS and PICKERING.”²⁰ Jewett again selected the contents, but from her four volumes of stories published before 1890 rather than from her magazine publications, and she had to work within the length constraints of the series.²¹ In the context of the seven-volume “Tales and Stories,” *Tales of New England* served as highly-selective representation of the earliest decades of Jewett’s short story production.

The documentation of the recovery of the “William’s Wedding” manuscript, its publication in the *Atlantic*, and its incorporation into *Firs* is incomplete.²² Nevertheless, evidence hints at Cather’s possible involvement.

William's Wedding ^{XXIII}

Coming back the little room at Sunset
Landing the scent of fir balsam that
blows in at the windows with the lovely
~~fragrance~~ found of the living sea on
these summer nights! It was all
so homely so natural, so ^{easy} perfect
in its conditions that my life at
Mrs. Woods' ^{so} interrupted ~~capable~~
~~of self-direction~~ and swayed by the
stupidest ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~instinct~~ ^{instinct} ~~to which one can submit~~
was nothing but a ^{happiness} ~~of life~~
~~given way~~ ^{seemed} to me more and
more a kind of beatific state. The
hurry of life in a large town the
constant putting aside of preference
to give to a most unsatisfactory ^{activity} ~~life~~
began to vex me, and one day I took
the train and only left it for the Eastman
bow boat. Carlyle says somewhere

The first page of the "William's Wedding" manuscript in Sarah Orne Jewett's hand. The crossed out material was not published. Courtesy of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

She remained close to Annie Fields after Jewett's death and made regular annual visits to her house on 148 Charles Street in Boston until Fields' death. Cather was in Boston from April 6–14, 1910.²³ By early May 1910, arrangements for publication of "William's Wedding" in the *Atlantic* were in place.²⁴ There is a single copy of the story in Sarah Jewett's hand, written in pencil on small sheets of note tablet paper and featuring multiple cross-outs. The story in this form is complete but not thoroughly revised and finished. Jewett revised the chapters of *Firs* multiple times, using both pen and pencil, but she wrote setting copy for the *Atlantic* in pen or occasionally had it prepared by a typist—setting copy occasionally features minor edits but not wholesale crossouts, as in "William's Wedding."²⁵ A fair copy of "William's Wedding" in Mary Jewett's hand survives, but no setting copy in any hand is extant.²⁶ Intriguingly, an initialed penciled note in Cather's hand appears on another page in the *Firs* manuscripts: "[Probably used in a discarded ending, W.S.C.]." The page, written entirely in pencil, features a snatch of what seems to be unused dialogue in the voice of Mrs. Todd for "William's Wedding" ("I declare, said Mrs. Todd reflectively—aint it beautiful there should be such a thing as marrying an givin in marriage, so's the law itself stands right behind them that loves each other an wants to spend their lives together"), a few sentences of crossed out text about John Paul Jones, a central character in Jewett's historical novel of the American Revolution *The Tory Lover* (1901), and a doodle. That the unused snippet for "William's Wedding" shares a manuscript page with *Tory Lover* material suggests that Jewett composed William's Wedding around 1900–1901, following on the heels of the *Atlantic Monthly* publication of the three other Dunnet Landing tales ("The Queen's Twin" and "A Dunnet Shepherdess" in 1899 and "The Foreigner" in 1900). However, there is no similar evidence for establishing a date for Cather's note on Jewett's manuscript page. Nevertheless, in 1910 Mary Jewett and Annie Fields were jointly contemplating a new edition of *Firs* and facing the daunting task of sorting through a voluminous manuscript collection to locate unpublished material. As a knowledgeable reader of Jewett's fiction, an editor at *McClure's*, and the author of many published short stories, Cather was ideally qualified to aid Fields in the editorial project of expanding and reconfiguring Jewett's text. Furthermore, Cather had already served once as Jewett's editor—in 1908 Jewett submitted to Cather as editor at *McClure's* her poem "The Gloucester Mother." Published in October 1908, it was her last work to appear in print before her death.²⁷ Because of gaps in key archives, we may never know for sure,²⁸ but the possibility is intriguing.

In any event, the published text of *Firs* continued to evolve thereafter. In 1919, Houghton Mifflin created a "Visitors' Edition" of *Firs*. They consulted

[Probably used in a discarded ending, W.S.G.]

I declare, said Mrs. Todd ^{reflectively} - Aunt ch
beautiful there should be such a thing as
marrying and going in marriage, so is the
law ^{itself} stands right behind them that loves
each ^{other} and wants to spend their lives together.

[Scribbled text]
The
Mrs.
Todd
said
beautiful
marrying
going
in
marriage
so
is
the
law
stands
right
behind
them
that
loves
each
other
and
wants
to
spend
their
lives
together.

~~Paul Jones after W. S. G.
wondered - put to his pocket and
opened it and looked at the
Ring Boy and W. S. G. and
looked to the stupid boy!
he said~~

~~Minister been too busy for me - that
I spent it for piece of mind - But I shall
get something some day soon that will always
remind me of your kindness -~~

A page from the *Country of the Pointed Firs* manuscripts featuring an initial noted in Willa Cather's hand at top center. Courtesy of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

with Mary Jewett about some aspects of this illustrated edition designed for summer tourist reading, but they did not consult her about the text. Writing to Roger Scaife at Houghton Mifflin acknowledging receipt of the published volume, Mary Jewett professed it “a surprise and treasure when I found the Queen’s Twin added as my sister always hoped it might be sometime.” The changes went further than adding a story, however.²⁹ Houghton Mifflin did not trail “A Dunnet Shepherdess” and “William’s Wedding” off the end of the book, where, chronologically speaking in terms of the imagined world of Dunnet Landing, they belong (their events take place during two summers subsequent to the one narrated in the 1896 volume). Instead, someone at Houghton Mifflin moved them and “The Queen’s Twin” into the body of the 1896 *Firs*, making the final four chapters of the 1919 edition “A Dunnet Shepherdess,” “William’s Wedding,” “The Queen’s Twin,” and “The Backward View.” Houghton Mifflin renumbered chapters and pages from the 1910 plates and copied and amended “The Queen’s Twin” plates from the *Queen’s Twin and Other Stories*.³⁰ The firm did not use these amended plates only for the Visitors Edition—added photographic illustrations appeared on unnumbered, separately-printed pages, so the plates were also used to resupply stock for the ordinary edition.

The Visitor’s Edition of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* pleased Mary Jewett, but in the early 1920s the low sales of her sister’s books and the fact that some of them were out of print or in danger of becoming so dismayed her. “Is there any chance of a Small Edition of the Tory Lover being printed?” she wrote plaintively in August 1923. “I am being inquired of about it from time to time,” she continued, “and told that it is ‘out of print’ which seems a pity since people want it.” She also suggested that she might make a personal visit to Houghton Mifflin’s offices in Boston.³¹ Greenslet welcomed the prospect of Mary Jewett’s visit to their new offices, but he was firm about the impossibility of reprinting *The Tory Lover*. He explained that in the wake of World War I, the firm had studied the costs of printing and keeping printed stock on hand and had reached the conclusion that “we cannot afford to print less than 1000 copies of a novel, or more than five years’ supply, else all possible profits are eaten up by the interest charges on the stock. In other words, unless a novel sells at least 200 copies a year, we cannot afford to keep it going.” When the firm ran out of stock of *The Tory Lover* in 1921, he explained, it was selling about twenty copies a year. Houghton Mifflin’s sales registers confirm his claims:³² *The Tory Lover* sold 14,254 copies in 1901, but annual sales dropped precipitously thereafter, never reaching two hundred in any subsequent year, falling below a hundred in most years, and dropping to zero in two. Jewett was primarily a writer of short stories rather than novels, and most of her books sold

by Houghton Mifflin were short story collections. Whether *The Country of the Pointed Firs* is, properly speaking, a novel or a collection of interlinked stories is debatable, but from a market perspective within Jewett's *oeuvre* its status was clear: of her works for adult audiences in print in 1923, *Firs* was the only volume even regularly approaching Greenslet's mark for viability. It sold 205 copies in 1922 and 155 in 1923 in its regular edition, plus more than a hundred per year in the Visitors Edition (while Cather would soon claim that adults a generation younger than she mistook Jewett volumes for children's books, sales of Jewett's *Betty Leicester: A Story for Girls* [1890] and *Betty Leicester's Christmas* [1899] far outstripped sales of *Firs*).

Mary Jewett made her promised visit to Boston on February 13, 1924, and the next day Greenslet wrote to Willa Cather describing the visit as "a delightful and chastening experience. In the course of a rambling conversation about the present state of her sister's books, I mentioned to her the project that we entertained two or three years ago, of a selection of her best stories by you, with a critical and appreciative preface. She was very strong for it, but no stronger than I myself have always been and am. Is it at all within the range of possibility that you would feel like taking on this small enterprise soon?"³³ Houghton Mifflin was no longer Cather's own publisher in 1924: she had moved her business to Alfred Knopf's firm in 1921 because she was dissatisfied with the marketing and distribution of her books, and particularly *My Ántonia* (1918).³⁴ Her first novel published by Knopf, *One of Ours* (1922), was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1923. Nevertheless, she maintained a cordial relationship with Ferris Greenslet and responded immediately and with enthusiasm to his proposition, laying out her ideas in such detail that one suspects she had been imagining such a task for years.

"Yes," she proclaimed, "I'd much rather do this than make my fortune at the various lucrative commissions that are constantly pressed on me" (a postscript bragging that Blanche Knopf had sold the film rights to *A Lost Lady* [1923] for \$12,000 implies that she could afford to be generous with her time). Cather imagined a two-volume collection with the "first volume . . . tak[ing] in all the Pointed Firs sketches, including 'The Queen's Twin,' 'A Dunnet Shepherdess,' and 'Williams's [sic] Wedding.'" Cather thus had formed an intention to include these three stories in the same volume as *Firs*, but it is not clear whether she imagined them as part of *Firs* or as an appended group of related stories (late-twentieth and early-twenty-first century editors have taken the latter approach, although they add "The Foreigner," published in the *Atlantic* in 1900 but uncollected at Jewett's death). Cather anticipated a second "equally fat" volume of "only the very best" of Jewett's stories and further directed that these volumes should be

larger than in their original editions. Such a “fresh envelope” would ensure that the “young intellectuals of Greenwich Village” would not mistake them for “children’s books.” Cather also suggested a new typesetting in “type like that you used in ‘Antonia’” that would look more “modern” without being “loud.” She further asked Greenslet to “send me down a complete set” of Jewett’s books in “the original edition[s]” so she could “cut them up myself and bind them up into volumes in the sequence that seems best.”³⁵

This vision of an imperious Cather ripping up volumes of Jewett’s works to make them over in her own, modern image has been appealing to critics, but things did not go as Cather planned. Greenslet sent the requested books, but he gently pushed back against the idea of two volumes, suggesting it was “doubtful” that such a collection would produce the desired goal, namely “extension and perpetuation of Miss Jewett’s public.” He also noted his plan to be in New York in early March.³⁶ Mary Jewett, for her part, was “glad” that Cather was undertaking the project “for I am sure she brings real friendship as well as real ability to what she undertakes.”³⁷

By mid-March, however, trouble was afoot. “I can’t go on with this selection from Miss Jewett’s work until I see you,” Cather wrote Greenslet on March 13, giving him her new telephone number.³⁸ Two days later, the following item appeared in the “Writers and Books” column in the “Books” section of the Saturday *Boston Evening Transcript*:

Listen to the condescension of Willa Cather when she speaks of Sarah Orne Jewett: “She was a voice—a voice for not a very large section of the country, for a very small one, in fact, but she was a voice. Her work is remarkably uneven, and the collections that have been made of them are very bad, because they have been made by relatives who insisted that this story should be included because it was Uncle John’s favorite and that one because it described Mrs. Blank’s home so accurately. Ferris Greenslet has asked me to make a collection, and I want to do it and write a preface and introduction for it. Two volumes will suffice.” What, may we ask, is Willa Cather the voice of when she writes “One of Ours” and “A Lost Lady?” [sic] Not, we may be sure, the voice of one who is competent to view her predecessors in American fiction, even though she has met the approval of certain “judges” who have awarded her a prize for her work.³⁹

This regularly weekly column was an unsigned feature by the paper’s literary editor, Edward F. Edgett, and his reviews of the two Cather novels he mentions here had been lukewarm at best and snide at worst. In his review of *One of Ours*, he mocked the extravagant claims of the novel’s excellence featured on the jacket copy.⁴⁰ In his review of *A Lost Lady*, he was snide about the Pulitzer awarded to *One of Ours* in light of the stated standard for the prize (“best presents the wholesome atmosphere of American manners and

manhood”) and predicted that as “the story of an adultress” *A Lost Lady* would certainly not be awarded the same prize.⁴¹

Both Mary Jewett and Theodore Jewett Eastman immediately sent irate letters to Greenslet about Cather’s remarks as reported in the *Transcript*. Eastman, a Harvard-educated physician who lived in Boston, wrote the day the item appeared, while Jewett, who lived in Maine and likely got the Boston paper a day later, wrote the next day. Eastman was hyperbolically angry. He cited Cather’s “obvious lack of appreciation” of Jewett’s work, her “absolute lie” about the Jewett family’s involvement in previous collections, and “the stench which has pervaded all of Miss Cather’s later work which I have seen” (one suspects he objected to her “story of an adultress”) as the sources of his “one BIG protest against her having anything whatsoever to do with any edition of Miss Jewett’s work!!!”⁴² Mary Jewett was more sorrowful than angry but equally adamant that Houghton Mifflin must remove Cather from the project. She explained that Cather’s “unjust criticism” had made her decide “that under no possible circumstances is Miss Cather to have anything to do with any forth coming issue of my sister’s stories whatever.” Citing the evidence of letters published and unpublished, Mary protested, “My sister was much interested in Miss Cather’s early work and tried to help her in every way. . . . I regret deeply that she proved so faithless a friend.” Pointing to her power as literary executor to prevent Houghton Mifflin from carrying out the plan and adopting a nautical metaphor worthy of her sister’s fiction, Mary Jewett expressed sorrow “that what seemed a pleasant plan should come to such shipwreck at the hands of one I should instinctively have trusted in the light of what had seemed to be friendship in other days.”⁴³

Edgett at the *Transcript* did not acknowledge that he had excerpted Cather’s quoted words from “The Bookman’s Day Book,” a Sunday feature in the *New York Tribune* “Books” section by Burton Rascoe, the paper’s literary editor. Every week Rascoe published a day-by-day account of his activities as a literary gadfly the previous week. On February 18, the day after Cather had written her detailed letter to Greenslet about her plans for the Jewett volumes, she met Thomas Beer, a fellow Knopf author and most recently author of a celebrated biography of Stephen Crane, for lunch at a French restaurant on Park Avenue. Beer brought along Rascoe, who published his account of this luncheon on February 24. Rascoe had already publicly proved himself a Cather enthusiast. While a number of critics savaged Cather’s treatment of the protagonist’s World War I battlefield experiences in *One of Ours*, in the *New York Tribune* Rascoe gave the novel one of its most unambiguously positive reviews. Rascoe liked it so much he effectively reviewed it twice,

including additional praise in an essay in *Shadowland* magazine in which he compared Cather to Edith Wharton. He proclaimed that Wharton gave “correct pictures,” while Cather surpassed her by “giv[ing] us life and the poetry and beauty of its emotions.”⁴⁴ His review of *A Lost Lady* in the *Tribune* was even more extravagantly positive, proclaiming it “one of the best novels in contemporary English and American fiction.” With the exception of Ivy Peters’ maiming of a female hummingbird early in the novel, an “excruciating detail of characterization” that induced in him “a violent nausea,” he proclaimed the novel “perfect” in all ways.⁴⁵

Rascoe’s account of the February 18 luncheon has long been known to Cather scholars through *Willa Cather in Person: Interviews, Speeches, and Letters* (1986). However, editor L. Brent Bohlke relied on a 1929 collection of Rascoe’s columns in which only the first half of Rascoe’s account appears, and Cather’s comments on Jewett appeared in the second half.⁴⁶ Cather did not, it seems, know that she was on the record during the luncheon. Based on Rascoe’s published opinions of her work, one suspects he flattered her. Indeed, Cather knew and approved of his two reviews of *One of Ours*, sending them home to her sister in Nebraska to be shared with friends and family.⁴⁷ Before the *Day Book* entry about the February 18 luncheon appeared in the *Tribune*, she invited Rascoe and his wife Hazel to Friday tea at her Greenwich Village apartment on February 22, which he reported in “A Bookman’s Day Book” on March 2—her remarks there on point of view in *A Lost Lady* (a point of technique he praised in his review) would not have offended anyone, and Rascoe did not present them in quotation marks as he had her remarks on Jewett.

Perhaps Cather insisted on seeing Greenslet in person in March because she had read Rascoe’s report of the luncheon and worried that it might come to the attention of Mary Jewett and cause trouble. Mary Jewett and Theodore Eastman’s letters were forwarded to Greenslet in New York, where he and Cather had one or more long meetings about the Jewett project, and on his return to Boston he wrote a long, pleading letter to Mary Jewett, of which he sent carbons to Eastman and Cather. “The simple truth is that the note as printed just wasn’t so,” he wrote of the *Transcript* paragraph. He described Cather during his New York visit as being “very deeply grieved and concerned over the whole sorry business.” He then described “the actual sequence of events”—Cather being invited to lunch by Beer, being surprised to find Rascoe in attendance, and then talking “at some length” about the Jewett editorial project. “She did say,” he conceded, “that earlier collections like ‘The Tales of New England’ and the grouping in the seven-volume edition had been made not so much with a view to collecting together stories by Miss Jewett likely to have an enduring life, as because of

some special similarity of subject or other adventitious principal of selection. The disparaging phrases about your sister's work, the allusion to 'Uncle John,' etc. she tells me never passed her lips. They were simply put in by Rascoe . . . to make them more readable to the general public." He pointed to Rascoe's "trick of distortion of emphasis" as typical of "all journalists, and one to which Rascoe is notoriously prone." He concluded with a plea on Cather's behalf, assuring Mary Jewett that she was "deeply loyal to Miss Jewett's memory. I doubt if any living person has been more active and intelligent in the spoken appreciation of your sister's work in the last ten or fifteen years than Miss Cather." And, despite being "the leading woman novelist of America" with great demands on her time, she was undertaking the project as "a labor of love" (that is, she wasn't being paid).⁴⁸

In his brief letter forwarding the carbon to Cather, he exclaimed, "God help us all!"⁴⁹ God, it seems, was on Cather's side. "You surely did your derndest for me," she responded from a resort in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania, where she had gone to recover from the stress of the episode. "It was funny that Mary Jewett should so readily believe an unknown reporter, when she had so much evidence to the contrary."⁵⁰ Cather also attempted to set the record straight publicly: both Thomas Beer and her old friend from Nebraska, Professor Herbert Bates, who heard her lecture at Columbia University on a visit to New York City (in which she presumably made flattering reference to Jewett), promised to write letters to the *Transcript*.⁵¹ Dr. Eastman asked for a copy of the original *Tribune* article, and when Greenslet saw him at a model ship show in Boston, he "found him cooling off."⁵² Later, having made some inquiries about Rascoe ("I am told this insufferable 'Rascal' 'takes' greatly in the middle west, and that his slops are eagerly devoured there and that is why he is retained on the paper"), Eastman was placated.⁵³

Mary Jewett seems to have waited on her nephew and on a personal letter from Cather, who sent an entire page of the *Tribune* to put Rascoe's report in context. If she sent the page on which Rascoe reported his lunch with Cather and Beer, Mary Jewett would have read Rascoe's impertinent description of author Konrad Bercovici's personal grooming ("Konrad hasn't had his hair or mustache trimmed since the last time I described him looking like the figure labeled 'Anarchy' in the cartoons, or the bandit in the second act of a road-company melodrama"), and his repeated and extravagant praise of Beer's biography of Crane accompanied by a description of Beer personally that made him look rather ludicrous ("He has a peculiarity, which takes one some time to get onto, of referring to people of whom he is really very fond in terms which are generally used opprobriously. Thus when Beer refers to some one as a bounder or a swine you may be sure he is really on very good

terms with that person"). Cather also wrote Jewett "sorrowfully that she wishes to give up the plan, the promise of which made me so happy to hear about. I do not wonder when so much sorrow has come to her in connection with my sister's name but I have written her, hoping she may reconsider, for no one that I know could do the work so well." Mary Jewett concluded by asking Greenslet to persuade Cather to take up the project again.⁵⁴

The crisis over, Greenslet professed to feel that they had been "less than just" to Rascoe, who was "'only a baby' and is probably entirely unconscious of wrong-doing-like the puppy who has chewed up your most valuable possession and wags his tail for approval!"⁵⁵ As Cather reported to Greenslet in her reply, "I understand that a garbled version" of the February luncheon party with Rascoe and Beer "was written by him for a small magazine, with many offensive statements about me, supposed to be complimentary. I have not seen it, and do not want to."⁵⁶ In the April number of *Arts & Decoration* magazine Rascoe again quoted Cather as saying unflattering things about Jewett and her family, not precisely the same things he had reported in the Day Book, but in the same vein: "Sarah Orne Jewett was too much cuddled by her family. They'd have kept her in cotton-wool and smothered her if they'd had entirely their own way about it. She was a very uneven writer. A good portion of her work is not worth preserving. The rest, a small balance—enough to make two volumes—is important. She was a voice. She spoke for a slight but influential section of the American people. She was clearly a voice, an authentic voice."⁵⁷

Notably, Cather did not write her glorious preface praising *The Country of the Pointed Firs* until after Mary Jewett pleaded for her reinstatement. She sat down and began writing it the next week, telling Greenslet that she wanted Mary Jewett to read and approve it. "I do not want her to have any more care or worry," she wrote in the same letter in which she reported the existence of Rascoe's second version of the luncheon (which does not seem to have come to the attention of Jewett or Eastman). "I want to please her in this undertaking if it is within my power." "If Miss Jewett will only trust me," she closed her letter, "*I will do my best.*"⁵⁸ Cather's hesitation and need for Greenslet's approval has puzzled scholars who have read only Cather and Greenslet's correspondence and not Greenslet's correspondence with Jewett and Eastman.⁵⁹ In the context of what that correspondence reveals, however, her hesitation makes perfect sense. Indeed, in the context recovered here Cather's preface looks like an act of overcompensation, an attempt to maintain her relationship with Mary Jewett as a living connection to an important friend and literary mentor. When Cather sent the preface to Greenslet, she explained, "My heart and mind have been full of it for years; but when I sat down at the desk, it was not an easy piece of work to

do. The tone, of course, is the difficult thing; I have tried for a tone which would not have displeased Miss Jewett herself, but in these things one never knows."⁶⁰ Greenslet was delighted by her preface: "The reader feels that the characteristic quality of Miss Jewett's writing has, in her own phrase, teased your mind on and off for years, and that now it has got itself put down rightly on paper. Nothing could be more perfectly felicitous than the closing paragraph" (in which Cather holds *Firs* up to the Hawthorne and Twain standard).⁶¹ Cather was pleased with Greenslet's approval, noting that she did "want it to please all Miss Jewett's friends."⁶² Mary Jewett was equally enthusiastic. "[H]ow can I say how delighted I am with it?" she wrote Greenslet. "It is all that I hoped for as I shall try to tell her at once."⁶³

A few bumps remained on the road even after this rush of enthusiasm. Mary Jewett disputed Cather's claim that Sarah Jewett's favorite among her own stories was "The Hilton's Holiday" (Mary said it was "Decoration Day"), and she pointed to W. D. Howells' anthologizing of "The Courting of Sister Wisby" as a possible warrant for including it. Mary Jewett also suggested that a memorial sonnet on Sarah Jewett's death by her friend poet Elizabeth Nelson Fairchild might be used "in connection with Miss Cather's beautiful preface."⁶⁴ She was extremely careful in her letters to Greenslet on these matters not to quarrel with Cather's professional judgment on aesthetic matters. The tentative, delicate quality of Mary Jewett's suggestions was lost in translation as Greenslet relayed them to Cather, however. "I do beg you not to use the Fairchild sonnet!" Cather wrote Greenslet, characterizing it as "distinctly third rate," "a tiresome piece of 'old-lady-poetry,'" a "feeble, foolish verse" that had no place in "a volume whose avowed excuse for being is its literary excellence." She went so far as to threaten to withdraw her preface if the "old-lady-poetry" appeared in the volume.⁶⁵ Her response on the inclusion of "Decoration Day" was slightly softer. Mary Jewett had cited as authority her sister's statement to her friend Laura Richards that the story was her favorite, while Cather recalled a conversation in which Sarah Jewett had "said with a sigh that ["Decoration Day"] was one of the ones that had grown old-fashioned." Cather proposed an odd compromise between her professional judgment and Mary Jewett's wishes:

You see, in the preface I've made a very high claim for these stories, and I can defend it with any first rate writer of any country; but no critic, no writer, could make such a claim for a conventional magazine story like 'Decoration Day.' If you have to include it, I must say that it is done by request (which sounds foolish); otherwise that one story would quite invalidate the preface.⁶⁶

She thus proposed to acknowledge that Jewett's sister had influenced the selection of stories based on a principle other than literary excellence—or,

put another way, she proposed to acknowledge that Jewett's family had insisted that an aesthetically inferior story be included, precisely what, in Rascoe's first account, Cather identified as marring previous collections of Jewett's works. As Theodore Eastman and Mary Jewett both insisted in their letters of protest to Greenslet and as my examination of the Jewett's books and her correspondence with Houghton Mifflin confirms, Jewett herself was responsible for the contents of the collections of her short stories. Nevertheless, the parallels between Cather's proposed compromise and her reported remarks ("the collections . . . are very bad, because they have been made by relatives") suggests Rascoe's report was, if exaggerated, more accurate than Cather admitted. Greenslet considerably softened Cather's strong letter in relaying its contents to Mary Jewett, and she agreed that to "keep to Miss Cather's plan. Of course, I should be very sorry to seem to interfere with that to its harm, in any way."⁶⁷

Buried in this correspondence is an important acknowledgment of the material and financial constraints impinging on this publishing enterprise. In Cather's first letter about the project, she imperiously proposed to rip up volumes of Jewett's works and have them newly made over—re-typeset and redesigned—in her own modern image. However, no such thing happened. As she wrote to Greenslet in April, just as she was resuming work after the drama subsided:

As I told you, I think the last edition of the "Pointed Fir" stories can stand as it is, for the first volume, with a slight change of paging; I would strongly suggest that "The Queen's Twin" be placed *between* "A Dunnet Shepherdess" and "William's Wedding," both to suggest the passage of time, and to make less obvious the difference in treatment of William and Esther in the two stories,—the latter, of course, is something paler than the former, as it did not have that final clarifying touch by the writer's hand.⁶⁸

We have no record of Cather and Greenslet's conversations in New York in March 1924, but this letter implies that Greenslet told her the project was not worth the cost of typesetting Jewett's works anew. Examining the volume that eventually appeared in 1925 confirms what Cather's letter suggests and also follows the logic of the previous versions of *Firs* discussed above—Houghton Mifflin once again recycled the plates, only changing page numbers to the extent necessary to reorder the two chapters to accomplish Cather's request. The same is true of the selected stories in the second volume—Houghton Mifflin transferred and/or copied plates from previous collections and repaginated them. The firm did slightly increase the size of each page and the boards, making for larger volumes, but the size of the text block and the typographical design on each page is identical

to “those dumpy little books” as Cather had called the original editions.⁶⁹ Even with recycled plates rather than Cather’s imagined redesign, copying and altering plates cost \$520, nearly one quarter of the \$2355.50 total production cost. Houghton Mifflin calculated they needed to sell 1178 copies before *Best Stories* would produce a profit.⁷⁰ Furthermore, even though Mary Jewett did not dictate the expansion and reordering of *Firs* in 1919, the result pleased her. Greenslet likely knew of her endorsement of it, either from reviewing the firm’s correspondence files or from his meeting with her, and could have conveyed this information to Cather as well.

This drama in two acts about *The Best Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett* took just six weeks to play out. However, just as all parties were scrambling to reach a resolution, the project ground nearly to a halt: Houghton Mifflin decided to hold back publication until spring 1925 because they had a glut of books, including other reissues, scheduled for the 1924 Christmas season.⁷¹ Cather added a few key paratextual elements to the volumes during these months of waiting. Writing from Jaffrey, New Hampshire, in early October 1924, she asked Greenslet for a copy of *Happy Ending: The Collected Lyrics of Louise Imogen Guiney*.⁷² Guiney (who died in 1920) was a friend of Jewett and Fields, and Cather had met her in England in 1909. Rather than Elizabeth Fairchild’s “old-lady” sonnet, Cather selected lines from a section of Guiney’s “Ten Colloquies,” “IV. Of the Golden Age” to serve as the epigraph to her preface: “*But give to thine own story / Simplicity, with glory.*” She also suggested that Houghton Mifflin “excerpt the last paragraph of Charles Miner Thompson’s Atlantic article, in which he likens Miss Jewett’s work to the Mayflower” and call the volume “The Mayflower Edition of Sarah Orne Jewett’s Best Stories.”⁷³ They took up her suggestions, merely inverting the word order in the title. Before the end of the year, stereotype plates were ready, printing from them took place, and Houghton Mifflin filed for copyright.⁷⁴

In January 1925, Greenslet told Mary Jewett that Houghton Mifflin “want[s] to arrange for some special articles about [Sarah Orne Jewett] and her work in the papers in the hope of promoting something like a ‘Jewett revival.’” The firm thus sent two members of the publicity staff, one being Esther Forbes (soon to be a published novelist) up to South Berwick.⁷⁵ *Best Stories* was published on March 20, 1925: its two volumes housed in a brightly-colored green-and-white slipcase, it was expensive at \$4—Houghton Mifflin’s new novels of the spring season were \$2 or less. “I hasten to tell you,” Mary Jewett wrote to Greenslet after she received her advance copies, “that Dr. Eastman and I have nothing but praise to give about the way that both cover and contents seem to be the right thing. . . . [M]y sister always cared so much . . . to have the thing just right. Miss

THE MAYFLOWER EDITION

THE BEST STORIES OF
SARAH ORNE JEWETT

SELECTED AND ARRANGED
WITH A PREFACE BY
WILLA CATHER

VOLUME I



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1925

Willa Cather was responsible for many of the elements of this title page even though she had less control over the contents and form of the volumes than previously assumed. Courtesy of University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries.

Cather's preface cannot be excelled any more than can her choice of the shorter stories, and so I am filled with gratitude for all the unusual care and skill with which the work was done."⁷⁶ Dr. Eastman, who once protested the "stench" emanating from Cather's works, was so pleased that on March 17 he inscribed an advance copy to poet Amy Lowell "with affection."⁷⁷

To Cather, Greenslet wrote that if "a real Jewett revival . . . comes off you will be its direct first cause to which we shall all be very grateful."⁷⁸ Houghton Mifflin did little to promote the volumes nationally, however. They provided only basic data about the volumes in *Publishers' Weekly* in a broader listing of their spring books: "THE BEST STORIES OF SARAH ORNE JEWETT. Selected and arranged with a preface by WILLA CATHER. 2 volumes, boxed, \$4.00."⁷⁹ No follow-up ads appeared, as they did for the new novels of the season, and, unfortunately, Houghton Mifflin's sales registers end in 1923, making it difficult to measure the success of *Best Stories* in market terms. However, it does seem that the pre-1925 editions of many of Jewett's books went out of print and Houghton Mifflin allowed *The Best Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett* to stand in for most of her *oeuvre*.

Nevertheless, the collection generated symbolic capital in the form of prestige. Reviewers rose to the bait of Cather's preface, quoting liberally from it and lauding both Jewett's achievement and Cather's appreciation. Richard Le Galliene, who reviewed *Best Stories* for the *New York Times*, confessed that he had not previously read Jewett but had read Cather and felt "confidence in accepting her as a guide without question." In his concluding paragraph, he referred back to Cather's comparison of Jewett to Twain and Hawthorne, quoted earlier in the review: "Whatever rank among masterpieces 'The Country of the Pointed Firs' may hold a masterpiece of flawless art it unquestionably is, and a model for all those who would depict some corner of the world so that we may forget its superficial provinciality."⁸⁰

Houghton Mifflin made a greater effort to promote the book in New England. They placed a separate ad in the "Books" section of the *Transcript* a day after publication:

Among the world's great short story writers must be included Sarah Orne Jewett, a doctor's daughter, who saw and described life in her Maine village with the absolute reality of an American de Maupassant or Chekov. For this new edition Willa Cather has made a selection of Miss Jewett's finest and most permanent work that will be a revelation to readers who have yet to discover her supreme mastery of the short story.⁸¹

In his column in the same issue, Edgett awkwardly balanced his admiration of Jewett and her fiction with his disdain for Cather. "An introduction . . . is supplied by Willa Cather," he observes, "who has long been 'a disciple of

Miss Jewett and an ardent admirer of her work.’ It is doubtful, however, if anyone would ever have suspected such a literary liking from the author of ‘A Lost Lady,’ or if Miss Jewett could have returned the compliment.” Nevertheless, Edgett could not resist quoting from the final paragraph of Cather’s preface. Esther Forbes’ article “Sarah Orne Jewett: The Apostle of New England,” which quotes liberally from Cather’s preface and presents both Jewett and her family surrounded by a rosy glow, appeared in the *Transcript* on May 16, 1925, occupying the entire front page of the books section. Nothing identifies the article as what it is—a publicity piece produced by Jewett’s publisher—but its placement in the *Transcript* seems a strategic bid by Houghton Mifflin to cancel out retrospectively Cather’s words about Jewett and her family quoted in Edgett’s column fourteen months before.

Three days before the publication of the Forbes article, Cather spoke at Bowdoin College in New Brunswick, Maine, as part of its “Institute of Modern Literature” commemorating the centennial of Hawthorne and Longfellow’s graduation from the college. Professor Frederick Brown, who introduced her, praised her work as an editor and critic of Jewett, and Cather prefaced her formal remarks by saying “I want to confirm the saying of Professor Brown as to my purpose in coming here. . . . Longfellow and Hawthorne, whose commencement anniversaries you celebrate, did not bring me here. After all, Longfellow and Hawthorne both undoubtedly had good credits and, therefore, had to graduate from Bowdoin College. But this institution did not have to confer a degree upon Sarah Orne Jewett, so fine an artist, among the foremost in this country. And by conferring the degree Bowdoin College placed itself irrevocably on the side of the highest tradition in American letters. I have come, therefore, to express my gratitude to Bowdoin College.”⁸² A beaming Mary Jewett was in the audience, and as Cather wrote to Zoe Akins just before she departed for Maine, Mary Jewett was to “motor [her] home to South Berwick” so Cather could spend a few days with her there.⁸³



Had the blowup with Mary Jewett and Theodore Jewett Eastman never occurred, would Cather have written the same sublime preface to the *The Country of the Pointed Firs* that framed for many of us our first reading of Jewett’s book? There is no way to know for sure, but this counterfactual may tease our minds over and over again. Is it possible that an indiscreet Cather, believing herself to be speaking off the record, said the hurtful things about Jewett and her family (or something very much like them) that she later strenuously disavowed? Contemporary comment on Rascoe’s veracity is suggestive but does not settle the question. When the dust over his report of Cather’s remarks was settling in April 1924, Ferris Greenslet sent

to Mary Jewett a profile of Rascoe published in *Bookman*.⁸⁴ Its anonymous author (Isabel Patterson, Rascoe's assistant at the *Tribune*) treats him as irreverently as he treated others.⁸⁵ Patterson both praises Rascoe's "courage" in writing the "Bookman's Day Book" and acknowledges his rather broad interpretation of accuracy in literary journalism:

The original quality of the Day-book is that it reports the intellectual news of the day; here is the newspaperman to the fore, though he happened to be "covering" literature. The superficial gossip is mere window dressing. Mr. Rascoe is intent primarily upon giving a reflection of contemporary thought. And he goes after it like a reporter; gets it from a source. Probably a good deal of it is inaccurate in detail, colored by his own theories and predispositions; but essentially it is truthful. His victims sometimes object that they never said what he imputes to them. Maybe not, but the substance of the conversation is generally characteristic; he conveys the speaker's personality, though it be by means of an imaginary dialogue. It is what they were leading up to, or might have said; it sounds like them. And one must bear in mind that few of us can recall exactly what we did say on a given occasion.⁸⁶

In his preface to C. Hartley Grattan's 1929 collection of his columns, Rascoe both proclaimed his own accuracy and noted that it sometimes got him into trouble. Writing about his earlier self in the third person, he explains:

He was not only irreverent toward many of the revered ones of his time; he was not only frankly unimpressed by many reputations upheld with a sort of awe: he actually broke some of the laws of hospitality. That is if some mediocrity, avid for publicity, invited him to lunch, he accepted the invitation and did not hesitate to report verbatim whatever banalities his host uttered. . . . This faithfulness to the record, as I remember, caused him numerous difficulties, none of which ever seemed to feaze him.⁸⁷

It was Thomas Beer, not Cather, who invited Rascoe to lunch. Nevertheless, in the context of shop talk with a literary critic and an author, both men in their thirties, it seems plausible that Cather, a fifty year-old woman, might very well have sought to distance herself from her nineteenth-century female predecessor.

Mary Jewett died in 1930, leaving her nephew to take over duties as executor, but he died the next year. When Cather revised her preface to *The Best Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett* for publication under the title "Miss Jewett" in *Not Under Forty* (1936), her most extravagant claims for Jewett and *The Country of the Pointed Firs* disappeared. In a recent analysis of the evolution of Cather's representations of Jewett in interviews, speeches, and essays, Deborah Carlin observes that "'Cather's Jewett' . . . undergoes an evolution, from the powerfully enabling guide of the almost universally laudatory interviews Cather gave from 1913 to 1925, to a different, distant,

increasingly shrunken and memorialized figure who comes to embody nineteenth-century artistic constraints from which Cather distinguishes herself in the 1930s as an established, twentieth-century writer." Carlin's qualifying "almost" refers to "one notable exception," namely Cather's words about Jewett as reported in *Arts & Decoration*.⁸⁸ I would propose, however, that 1936 marks less a genuine shift than Cather's public declaration of a judgment she had already conceived more than a decade earlier. She thus walked back her extravagant praise in the 1925 preface to *The Best Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett* to a more modulated, cautious, and critical position. "Among those glittering novelties which have now become old-fashioned," she wrote in 1936, "Miss Jewett's little volumes made a small showing. A taste for them must always remain a special taste,—but it will remain. She wrote for a limited audience, and she still has it, both here and abroad."⁸⁹ This sounds suspiciously close to her reported remarks in 1924: "She was a voice—a voice for not a very large section of the country, for a very small one, in fact, but she was a voice." Certainly, Cather's changes to the text of her preface reflect her less optimistic view of the future as she aged. On the other hand, as Carlin suggests, her changes were a defensive response to 1930s-era leftist critiques of both Jewett and herself as outmoded in their approach to literature. However, I also suspect that, without Mary Jewett and Theodore Eastman looking over her shoulder, she felt free to express publicly ideas she had already formed in 1924. Furthermore, in *Not Under Forty* her evaluation of Jewett appears in the context of her own critical and cultural commentary—her words belong to her alone and construct her authority as a critic. As author of a preface to *The Best Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett*, she wrote in the service of Sarah Jewett's reputation and at the sufferance of Mary Jewett as executor—Cather's words belonged to someone else. In 1924, she clearly *wanted* to give her words as a gift to Mary Jewett and to make a public offering to the memory of Sarah Jewett, but in 1936, she reclaimed and revised those words to suit her own purpose. Even then, her revisions did not withdraw the earlier version from circulation—it continued to circulate as a preface to Jewett's work and was also put into circulation in the posthumous collection of Cather's critical writings, *Willa Cather on Writing: Critical Studies on Writing as an Art* (1949).

Cather's control over the form in which *The Country of the Pointed Firs* and eleven Jewett stories appeared in 1925 was less than has been assumed. She reordered two stories in the existing plates of *Firs* and argued successfully for a two-volume set, for her own selection of stories for the second volume, and for the paratextual elements framing the volumes, but the volumes were produced from existing stereotype plates. If my hypothesis about

her work with Jewett's manuscripts in 1909–1910 is correct, she may have participated in the beginning of the process of the fracturing of the 1896 *Firs*, but in 1924, economic limits and her desire to appease Mary Jewett constrained her power to make over Jewett in her own modern image. By lending the prestige of her name and selecting stories for the second volume, she did contribute to establishing the shape of Jewett's *oeuvre* as it would continue to circulate for much of the twentieth century. And even if her preface to the volumes was not entirely sincere or represents only one half of her engagement as a critic with Jewett's work, she powerfully framed the experiences of generations of Jewett's readers and gave voice to their feelings. Thirty years ago, I lived out her imagined script: I was that "young student of American literature," already a Cather fan but a new reader of Jewett, who took up *The Country of the Pointed Firs* with "pleasure" and "a sense of rich discovery," proclaiming "A masterpiece!"⁹⁰

—University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Notes

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1. Willa Cather, preface to *The Best Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett*, ed. Cather (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1925), I, [ix].

2. See especially Sharon O'Brien, *Willa Cather: The Emerging Voice* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1987), pp. 350–51; and Marilee Lindemann, *Willa Cather: Queering America* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1999), pp. 90–100.

3. Cather, preface, I, xviii–xix.

4. Lindemann, *Willa Cather*, pp. 110–14; Ann Romines, "The Professor and the *Pointed Firs*: Cather, Jewett, and Problems of Editing," in *Jewett and Her Contemporaries: Reshaping the Canon*, ed. Karen L. Kilcup and Thomas S. Edwards (Gainesville: Univ. Press of Florida, 1999), pp. 153–66.

5. For example, the Willa Cather Scholarly Edition privileges, in a way unusual for critical editions, Cather's aesthetic preferences in relation to book design. See also David Porter on Cather's control over self-representation in promotion and advertising in *On the Divide: The Many Lives of Willa Cather* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2008). Porter makes Jewett central to Cather's "divided" approach to authorial self-fashioning.

6. Woodress, *Willa Cather: A Literary Life* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1987), p. 357.

7. Romines, "The Professor," p. 155.

8. Lindemann, *Willa Cather*, p. 96. In a footnote, Lindemann acknowledges that she overstates Cather's role in the changes but does not recognize (as I discuss below) that Houghton Mifflin did not re-typeset *Firs* for *Best Stories*.

9. Untitled, undated clipping enclosed in Edith Lewis to Patrick Ferry, 1 July 1954, Patrick Ferry Willa Cather Collection, Bowdoin College Library, Waterville, Me. Copies

of the Anchor Books edition feature a 1956 date on the verso of the title, but as this clipping demonstrates, it first appeared two years earlier.

10. For a recent survey of debates about *Firs* and genre, see Deborah Carlin, introduction to *The Country of the Pointed Firs* by Sarah Orne Jewett (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2010), pp. 25–29. Warner Berthoff was the first to argue for the importance of Jewett's intentions embodied in the 1896 edition for analyses of form but confines textual issues to a footnote ("The Art of Jewett's *Pointed Firs*," *New England Quarterly*, 32 [March 1959], 31–53). For detailed discussions of the textual history, see Marco A. Portales, "History of a Text: Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs*," *New England Quarterly*, 55 (December 1982), 586–92; and Cynthia J. Goheen, "Editorial Misinterpretation and the Unmaking of a Perfectly Good Story: The Publication History of *The Country of the Pointed Firs*," *American Literary Realism*, 30 (Winter 1998), 28–42.

11. Romines, "The Professor," p. 154.

12. Cather to Greenslet, 15 April [1924], in *Selected Letters of Willa Cather*, ed. Andrew Jewell and Janis Stout (New York: Vintage, 2014), p. 357. I cite *Selected Letters* for letters included in it, but as I demonstrate below Jewell and Stout's note prefacing this letter (p. 356) is inaccurate.

13. Cather, preface, I, xiv–xv.

14. Sarah Orne Jewett's Last Will and Testament, 5 July 1897 <www.public.coe.edu/~theller/soj/bio/soj-will.htm>

15. Mary Rice Jewett to Annie Adams Fields, 15 July 1909, Sarah Orne Jewett Additional Correspondence, MS Am 1743.1 (179), Houghton Library, Harvard Univ. Unless specified otherwise, archival citations are from the Houghton (collection names and/or call numbers provided).

16. Editors' note prefacing Jewett's "William's Wedding," *Atlantic Monthly*, 106 (July 1910), 33.

17. Production card for Sarah Orne Jewett Works, 7 vols., 1910, Houghton Mifflin Co. Production Cards, MS Am 1925.5.

18. Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 204–06. I duplicate, in some respects, Portales and Goheen, but with an emphasis on Cather's role and the recycling of plates. I also correct significant errors in Goheen concerning editions from 1919 to 1924 ("Editorial Misinterpretation," 29). For essential and accurate information, see Clara Carter Weber and Carl J. Weber, *A Bibliography of the Published Writings of Sarah Orne Jewett* (Waterville, Me: Colby College Press, 1949), pp. 18–19.

19. My research for this essay has taught me that volumes of Jewett's works are unstable textual objects. Although the texts of stories or chapters generally remain stable, stories and chapters appear, disappear, and reappear over time. I do not point to all of these changes, but "The Town Poor," published in the July 1890 *Atlantic* and collected in *Strangers and Wayfarers* (1890), was later appended to *Tales of New England*.

20. *Catalogue of the Authors Whose Works Are Published by Houghton Mifflin and Company* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1899), p. 160.

21. Sarah Orne Jewett to Horace Scudder, 18 March 1890, Houghton Mifflin Company Correspondence and Records, MS Am 1925 (962).

22. Letter books preserve pressed copies of outgoing manuscript letters (and occasional typescript carbons) through 1909 (MS Am 2030). However, 1910 falls into the gap between the end of the letter books and the interfiling of carbons with incoming letters. Furthermore, Annie Fields likely transacted business with Houghton Mifflin in person.

23. Willa Cather to Hugo Munsterberg, 14 March 1910, Boston Public Library.

24. Mary Rice Jewett to Annie Adams Fields, 2 May 1910, Sarah Orne Jewett Additional Correspondence, MS Am 1743.1 (179).

25. For a fuller discussion of the *Firs* manuscripts, see Melissa J. Homestead and Terry Heller, "'The Other One': An Unpublished Chapter of Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country*

of the Pointed Firs," *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists*, 2, ii (2014), 331–65. The page bearing Cather's note is in Sarah Orne Jewett Compositions and Other Papers, MS Am 1743.17 (12), Folder 4.

26. Chapters of *Firs* in setting copy bear marks such as receipt date stamps and printers' notations not present on Mary Jewett's fair copy. Mary and Sarah Jewett and Annie Fields could not type, but with access to a typewriter during her 1910 Boston visit Cather could have produced setting copy.

27. Sarah Orne Jewett to Willa Cather, 17 August 1908, in *Letters of Sarah Orne Jewett*, ed. Annie Fields (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), p. 234. Jewett, "The Gloucester Mother," *McClure's*, 31 (October 1908), 702.

28. See note 22.

29. Jewett to Scaife, 4 September 1919, Houghton Mifflin Co. Correspondence and Records, MS Am 1925 (961).

30. *The Queen's Twin and Other Stories* remained in print after 1919, suggesting that plates of "The Queen's Twin" were copied and amended rather than repurposed.

31. Jewett to Greenslet, 26 August 1923, MS Am 1925 (961).

32. Greenslet to Jewett, 27 August 1923, MS Am 1925 (961). Record of Book Sales, 1891–1907, and Records of Book Sales, 1907–1923, Houghton Mifflin Company Records, MS Am 2030 (32) and (33).

33. Greenslet to Cather, 14 February 1924, MS Am 1925 (341). His follow up letter to Mary Jewett, which gives a detailed accounting of the stock of Sarah Jewett's books, speaks to the "chastening" quality of the meeting. Greenslet to Jewett, 21 February 1924, MS Am 1925 (961).

34. For recent treatments of this transition, see Robert Thacker, "'As a Result of Many Solicitations': Ferris Greenslet, Houghton Mifflin, and Cather's Career," *Studies in the Novel*, 45 (Fall 2013), 369–86; and Richard Harris, "'Dear Alfred'/'Dear Miss Cather': Willa Cather and Alfred Knopf," *Studies in the Novel*, 45 (Fall 2013), 387–407.

35. Cather to Greenslet, 17 February [1924], in *Selected Letters*, p. 354.

36. Greenslet to Cather, 21 February 1924, MS Am 1925 (341).

37. Jewett to Greenslet, 5 March 1924, MS Am 1925 (961).

38. Cather to Greenslet, Thursday [13 March 1924], MS Am 1925 (341).

39. "Writers and Books," *Boston Evening Transcript*, 15 March 1924, book section, 6.

40. E[dwin] F[rancis] E[dgett], "Into the Path of Manhood," in *Willa Cather: The Contemporary Reviews*, ed. Margaret Anne O'Connor (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001), p. 125.

41. E[dwin] F[rancis] E[dgett], "A *Lost Lady*: Another Willa Cather Story of Mid-Western Scenes," *ibid.*, p. 184.

42. Eastman to Greenslet, 15 March 1924, MS Am 1925 (542).

43. Jewett to Greenslet, 16 March 1924, MS Am 1925 (961).

44. Rascoe, "Prairie Dawn and Willa Cather" and "Mrs. Wharton and Some Others," in *Willa Cather: The Contemporary Reviews*, pp. 122–24, 140.

45. Rascoe, "The *Lost Lady*," *ibid.*, p. 198.

46. Rascoe labeled his account of the luncheon "Tuesday, February 18" ("A Bookman's Day Book," *New York Tribune*, 24 February 1924, books section, 26). However, February 18 was a Monday (on the same page he correctly identifies Sunday as February 17). In C. Hartley Grattan's edited collection of Rascoe's columns, the error persists ("First Meeting with Willa Cather," in *A Bookman's Daybook* [New York: Liveright, 1929], pp. 206–08). In his reprinting, L. Brent Bohlke silently changed it to "Tuesday, February 19" (*Willa Cather in Person* [Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1985], p. 62). The original date, despite the misidentified day of the week, was likely correct. Following the book collection Bohlke also omits the concluding paragraph: "Beer said that after contact with some of the English profiteers he had begun to cherish the American Babbitts as men of culture, taste, sensibility and education in comparison, and Miss Cather said, 'Yes, the

second-rate Englishman is the most second-rate thing in the world.' She talked at length about Ellen Terry, for whom she has a great admiration as a personality, and about Ysaye and Paderewski, both of whom she says have the sort of vitality that nothing they do to themselves can prevent from resurging. She spoke of the mannequins at Longchamps with their expensive gowns, dirty necks, and price-tagged look of self-consciousness, about the six-day bicycle races in Paris, and about her Basque cook. Beer related to her an incident Mencken had told us about at Boyd's the other night. They have an excellent new negro cook at the Mencken house in Baltimore, and Mencken discovered that she was a college graduate, a very cultivated and well read young woman with excellent taste in music and other arts. She prepared to teach, but it seems that in Baltimore, at least in the negro schools, a color line is drawn by the negroes themselves; beyond a certain shade a teacher is considered too black to teach in the negro schools."

47. Willa Cather to Elsie Cather [16 September 1922] in *Selected Letters*, p. 324. She tells Elsie to read "the two [reviews] by Burton Rascoe" to Dr. Julius Tyndale.

48. Greenslet to Jewett, 20 March 1924, MS Am 1925 (961).

49. Greenslet to Cather, 20 March 1924, MS Am 1925 (341).

50. Cather to Greenslet, Sunday [25 March 1924], MS Am 1925 (341).

51. Cather to Greenslet, 15 April [1924], in *Selected Letters*, p. 357. On Bates' attending a Cather talk at Columbia, see Willa Cather to Mariel Gere, 21 August 1929, Nebraska State Historical Society. The concluding sentence of a Cather letter to Thomas Beer seems to refer to this episode: "I'm going to hold you to your promise about Miss Jewett, and I beg you not to forget to lunch at Voisin's Restaurant, 43rd & Park Avenue" (Cather to Beer, [March/April 1924?], Sterling Library, Yale Univ.). In Rascoe's first report of Cather's remarks at lunch, she says to Beer, "Young man, the next time I see you I want you to have been at Voisin's." This crossover between her private letter to Beer and Rascoe's published account lends credence to the latter. I found no letters or a retraction by Edgett in the *Transcript*. I have also found no account of Cather's lecture in the *Columbia Spectator* <spectatorarchive.library.columbia.edu> or in institutional records of lectures. Jocelyn K. Wilk, Interim Archivist, Columbia Univ. Archives, e-mail to the author, 25 June 2015.

52. Theodore Jewett Eastman to Ferris Greenslet, 26 March 1924, MS Am 1925 (542); Ferris Greenslet to Willa Cather, 31 March 1924, MS Am 1925 (341).

53. Eastman to Greenslet, [April 1924], MS Am 1925 (542).

54. Jewett to Greenslet, 2 April 1924, MS Am 1925 (961). Unfortunately, I have located no Cather letters to Mary Jewett from 1924 nor correspondence between Jewett and her nephew from the same period in the Jewett Family Papers (Historic New England, Boston) or elsewhere.

55. Greenslet to Cather, 4 April 1924, MS Am 1925 (341). He liked this analogy so much he also used it in a letter to Mary Jewett the same day. MS Am 1925 (961).

56. Cather to Greenslet, 15 April [1924], in *Selected Letters*, p. 357.

57. Burton Rascoe, "Contemporary Reminiscences: Willa Cather, Zoe Akins, Theodore Dreiser and Others," *Arts & Decoration*, 20 (April 1924), 28. In *We Were Interrupted* (New York: Doubleday, 1947), Rascoe changed the date to July 1924 and made other changes but none to Cather's remarks on Jewett ("Willa Cather," pp. 316-19). Deborah Carlin hypothesizes that Cather was responding here to the conflict with Mary Jewett over "Decoration Day" (discussed below) ("Cather's Jewett: Relationship, Influence, and Representation," in *Willa Cather and the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Anne L. Kaufman and Richard H. Millington [Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2015], p. 179). However, the luncheon occurred well before that later conflict.

58. Cather to Greenslet, 15 April [1924], in *Selected Letters*, p. 357.

59. See, e.g., Lindemann, *Willa Cather*, p. 95.

60. Cather to Greenslet, 26 April [1924], MS Am 1925 (341).

61. Greenslet to Cather, 28 April 1924, MS Am 1925 (341).

62. Cather to Greenslet, 29 April [1924], MS Am 1925 (341).
63. Jewett to Greenslet, 30 April 1924, MS Am 1925 (961).
64. Ibid and Jewett to Greenslet, 6 May 1924, MS Am 1925 (961).
65. Cather to Greenslet, 10 May [1924], in *Selected Letters*, p. 358.
66. Ibid.
67. Jewett to Greenslet, 4 May 1924, MS Am 1925 (961).
68. Cather to Greenslet, 15 April [1924], in *Selected Letters*, p. 357.
69. Willa Cather to Ferris Greenslet, 17 February 1925, in *Selected Letters*, p. 354.
70. Production card for *Best Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett*, Houghton Mifflin Co. Production Cards, MS Am 1925-5.
71. Ferris Greenslet to Willa Cather, 23 May 1924, MS Am 1925 (341).
72. Cather to Greenslet, 8 October [1924], MS Am 1925 (341).
73. Willa Cather to Ferris Greenslet, [11 October 1925], MS Am 1925 (341).
74. Production card for *Best Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett*. This chronology accounts for the existence of copies of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* featuring a 1924 copyright date, no imprint year on the title page, and the chapters in Cather's order rather than the 1919 order: Houghton Mifflin resupplied depleted stock by printing from the revised plates before the 1925 publication of *Best Stories* (the 1924 registration and issue, twenty-eight years after first publication, also served to renew the original copyright). The existence of copies of different versions of *Firs* with copyright dates but no title imprint dates has caused confusion, e.g. Deborah Carlin's erroneous surmise that the three Dunnet Landing tales, including "The Queen's Twin," were interpolated in 1910 (introduction, pp. 23-24).
75. Greenslet to Jewett, 24 January 1925, MS Am 1925 (961).
76. Jewett to Greenslet, 17 March 1925, MS Am 1925 (961).
77. Copy at the Houghton Library in the Amy Lowell collection inscribed: "To Miss Lowell with affection Theodore Jewett Eastman, Mar. 17, '25."
78. Greenslet to Cather, 17 February 1925, MS Am 1925 (341).
79. "Notable New Books," *Publishers' Weekly*, 14 March 1925, p. 897.
80. Le Galliene, "Old Stories for New Readers: Miss Willa Cather Selects Two Volumes from the Works of Sarah Orne Jewett," *New York Times Book Review*, 19 April 1925, p. 2. While other reviews find Jewett's regional vision more limited, they similarly rely on Cather's judgment (e.g., Gerald Hewes Carson, "New England Pastels," *Bookman*, 61 [July 1925], 594-95; "Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett," *Chicago Tribune*, 25 April 1925, p. 11; "The Best Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett," *Dial*, 79 [September 1925], 260). The *Christian Science Monitor* reprinted substantial excerpts from Cather's preface without further comment and the collected story "Aunt Cynthia Dallett" (22 April 1925, p. 9).
81. Advertisement for *The Best Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett*, *Boston Evening Transcript*, 21 March 1925, book section.
82. "Menace to Culture in Cinema and Radio Seen by Miss Cather," in Bohlke, *Willa Cather in Person*, pp. 154-55. Bohlke includes two other accounts, both of which feature some version of her remarks on Jewett. See also John N. Swift's recovery of Fritz Klees' interview, "Miss Cather Talks on Technique," from the student newspaper (*Willa Cather Newsletter & Review*, 54 [Summer 2010], 14-15).
83. Cather to Akins, 9 May 1925, Huntington Library.
84. Greenslet to Jewett, 5 April 1924, MS Am 1925 (961).
85. On the anonymous author's identity, see Donald M. Hensley, *Burton Rascoe* (Boston: Twayne, 1970), p. 87.
86. "The Literary Spotlight. XXVIII: Burton Rascoe," *Bookman*, 59 (April 1924), 152.
87. Rascoe, *A Bookman's Daybook*, p. vi.
88. Carlin, "Cather's Jewett," pp. 171, 177.
89. Cather, "Miss Jewett," *Not Under Forty* (New York: Knopf, 1936), p. 92.
90. Cather, preface, I, xix.