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Review of Cather Studies Volume 1

Susan A. Hallgarth
Rutgers University

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BOOK REVIEWS

Cather Studies Volume I. Edited by Susan J. Rosowski. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990. Notes, index. xii + 189 pp. \$25.00.

Cather Studies is a new biennial series intended to display the quality and diversity of current scholarship on Cather. This first volume showcases papers presented at the Third National Seminar on Willa Cather (1987). Future volumes no doubt will continue to incorporate essays from these educational events and address, as they do, a broad audience. Contributors to this volume include teachers from all levels of the educational system (high school, junior college, four-year professional and liberal arts colleges, and state and research universities) and all parts of the United States (both coasts, the South, the Northeast, the Midwest, and the West) and Canada.

Many of the authors in *Volume I* are well-known to Cather students, having served as staff members for several of the national seminars, and their essays provide no surprises. Their topics range from biography to literary and cultural sources to thematic and structural analyses. James Woodress recounts his thinking behind the 1970 and 1987 biographies, and Mark J. Madigan, summarizing letters in the Dorothy Canfield Fisher collection at the University of Vermont (twenty-five of which were discovered in 1987), describes the 1899-1947 Cather-Fisher friendship and a 1905-21 rift that began over "The Profile" and ended with *One of Ours*. David Stouck discusses the influence on Cather by Russian writers, and John Murphy builds on earlier work by D. H. Stewart to show the influence of Dante's *Divine Comedy* on Cather's

post-World War I novels, particularly *My Mortal Enemy* and *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. David Harrell suggests that, in *The Professor's House*, Cather used facts from Richard Wetherhill's Mesa Verde account to dramatize a "private myth [of discovery] that had haunted her since childhood." Jean Schwind examines how Cather's juxtaposition of fine art with folk art more fully reveals her concept of art and the artist in such works as *The Song of the Lark*.

In the volume's longest essay, editor Susan J. Rosowski describes Cather's use of "gendered time" to subvert linear plot lines that are "emblematic of a traditional and often patriarchal social order" through symbols of "simultaneity" that create a "new and often female order." Ann W. Fisher-Wirth traces Edenic and Apocalyptic visions in Cather's work and suggests that *Death Comes for the Archbishop* reverses earlier "patterns of dispossession." John N. Swift uses narratological and psychoanalytical approaches to describe how Cather employed "temporal doubleness" and "vacillating rhythm" in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* so that, neither static nor atemporal, this saint's legend is actually a "dynamic struggle . . . that achieves resolution only with Latour's death." Finally, "Notes" by Ann Romines, Cynthia Briggs, and Richard Harris add to the variety of topics their discussions of Cather's solitary females, isolated places, and the influence of Turgenev to make characters "the heart of the creative process."

SUSAN A. HALLGARTH
Institute for Research on Women
Rutgers University