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Review of *One of Ours* By Willa Cather

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One of Ours. By Willa Cather. Historical essay and explanatory notes by Richard C. Harris. Textual essay and editing by Frederick M. Link with Kari A. Ronning. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006. xii + 866 pp. Photographs, notes. \$75.00.

Published in 1922, *One of Ours* proved to be pivotal in Willa Cather's career. Although she had already penned four novels and gained increasing critical acclaim, *One of Ours* won Cather the Pulitzer Prize, elevating her to the highest rank of twentieth-century American authors.

One of Ours is sometimes referred to as a "war story," but Cather's intent was to portray a young man from the Plains who came to France in World War I and found himself. This character, Claude Wheeler, was based on Cather's cousin, G. P. Cather, who was killed in France in May 1918. Richard Harris traces Cather's route to writing the novel, including new information about G. P. Cather now available through recently acquired letters, adding depth to our knowledge of the Cather family as well as clarifying elements of fiction developed in the novel.

This scholarly edition builds on previous research and opens new areas of concentration regarding the Cather family, Cather's use of Webster County and Lincoln as backdrops to the novel's action—particularly in the first

three segments that take place in Nebraska—and Cather's sources throughout the novel.

As a reader, I always find it a joy to discover the story behind a story, which is one purpose of a scholarly edition. Be advised that this volume is not solely for Cather scholars. Those gripped by the history of Nebraska or World War I will appreciate the information shedding light on the novel's historical context. Cather readers on all levels will find great value in the way she has crafted Claude Wheeler's story, complemented by Harris's inclusion of a fine selection of photographs. Anyone who values the novel genre will be fascinated by the intricacies of how an author constructs a book.

Lest one be cautious in approaching this volume because of its size, be assured that it is expertly done and well worth the time spent perusing Richard Harris's essays, supported by the superb editing of Fred Link and Kari Ronning.

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