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MARRIAGE AND FRIENDSHIP IN MY *ÁNTONIA*

DAVID STOUCK

Three events or circumstances in Willa Cather's life seem directly related to the writing of *My Ántonia*. In 1916, the year the novel was begun, Isabelle McClung married, and the great friendship of Cather's life was profoundly altered. Second, by 1916 Cather was in her forty-third year and had written five books; she was no longer enjoying youth and first success but entering middle age, with its attendant disillusionments and disaffections. Third, she spent much of that year at home in Red Cloud, Nebraska, where she visited many of the people and places of her childhood. I think these circumstances—her sense of personal loss, her growing awareness of life's brevity, and her rediscovery of old friendships and memories—combined to kindle in her imagination *My Ántonia*, the novel most often considered her masterpiece.

These circumstances were not simple or

straightforward. Isabelle McClung's marriage disturbed Cather deeply; its impact, most critics agree, can be felt in *The Professor's House*, a novel written and published nine years later.¹ Isabelle McClung was the beautiful daughter of a wealthy Pittsburgh judge, and the two women apparently met backstage at a theatre sometime in the 1898–99 season when Cather was working on the *Pittsburgh Daily Leader*. An intimate friendship developed, and Isabelle, who preferred the company of artists to fashionable society, invited Cather to live at the McClung mansion. According to friends, Isabelle was an exceptionally frank and generous person; to the novelist she was a deeply loved, rare, and perfect human being. In a letter to Zoë Akins after Isabelle's death, Cather says she believed Isabelle was the one person for whom her books were written.² In 1906 Cather left Pittsburgh to join the staff of *McClure's Magazine* in New York, but for the next ten years she frequently returned for holidays with Isabelle and periods of work in the special room set aside for her in the McClung home. Thus the end of what seemed her most permanent and emotionally satisfying relationship had a profound effect on Cather. It left her for a long time emotionally without a rudder.

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Elizabeth Sergeant tells us about her loss of spirit—how bleak and vacant she appeared, how her natural exuberance seemed to have drained away.³ In her fiction she turned from strong, creative protagonists such as Bartley Alexander, Alexandra Bergson, and Thea Kronborg to characters whose lives are failures—Jim Burden, Claude Wheeler, and eventually Godfrey St. Peter of *The Professor's House*, Cather's powerful portrait of a man in middle life who finds at the heart of his existence a terrible, unnamed sense of betrayal.

The change in her relationship with Isabelle McClung came at a time when Cather was assessing the direction and significance of her life. Not only did Isabelle marry in 1916, but so did Olive Fremstad, the opera singer Cather admired as a female artist who was wholly dedicated to her art. As James Woodress has pointed out, Cather never seems to have considered marriage seriously for herself, although she was not without opportunities.⁴ She apparently enjoyed several dates during her first year in Pittsburgh, and according to a letter that she wrote to Mariel Gere, one young doctor proposed to her. Her need for emotional relationships with women, however, seems to have been stronger; there is a suggestion in her letters that she once experienced strong feelings for Dorothy Canfield.⁵ That need for an intimate friendship with a woman was fulfilled in the relationship with Isabelle McClung.

The only evidence we have that Cather felt something like a strong sexual attraction toward a man is in her description of a Mexican named Julio whom she met while visiting her brother Douglass in Arizona. She writes in a letter to Elizabeth Sergeant that her head has been turned by the relationship, and that, like so many American women visiting Italy, she too has become infatuated with a man with a Latin background. The relationship, which included traveling through the Painted Desert and attending a Mexican ball, left her unsettled for months. It seemed to pose for her a choice between primitive passion and civilization. She probably never seriously doubted where her choice lay; she could nonetheless easily under-

stand how Mabel Dodge would marry Tony Luhan, an Indian.⁶ Still, as Woodress has phrased it, the one great romance of Cather's life was Isabelle McClung, so that when the latter married, we can assume that the author's life seemed terribly empty for a time.⁷ In her forties, unmarried, without children, and without the love of Isabelle to give her a sense of purpose, she probably felt like Jim Burden, who is similarly childless and disillusioned, and lives very much to himself.

Like Jim, Cather traveled back to her home in Nebraska. In 1916 she spent several months in Red Cloud while her mother was ill, assumed domestic responsibilities for the family, and visited many old friends. She also began *My Ántonia* there, according to Edith Lewis.⁸ What probably concerned her more than anything else was how her friends had fared in their life commitments: how their farms or businesses prospered, how they were bringing about changes in the country, and particularly how they fared in their personal relationships—whether they married successfully or not, whether they had families. She was probably also interested to see what endured in old friendships with people such as the Miners, the Lambrechts, and of course Annie Sadilek Pavelka. Certainly this is true of Jim Burden when he returns to Black Hawk: he wants to learn what has happened to his friends over the years and he puts the value of old friendships to the test. I think that one of the important subtexts in *My Ántonia* revolves around the theme of marriage and friendship and that Cather was consciously assessing the kinds of human relationships that we choose. Jim Burden's life parallels one of the great periods in American history—the settlement of the West—and Jim himself, as he crisscrosses the country as a lawyer for one of the railways, takes great pleasure in watching the country develop; but when compared to *O Pioneers!*, *My Ántonia* is less a novel about the growth and conditions of the country than of the recalling of one's youth, a taking stock of life. It is not so much a celebration of pioneer life as an elegy to its passing. It is also a personal lament for youth

as glimpsed from the perspective of middle age; hence the mournful text *Optima dies . . . prima fugit*.

In her fiction Cather makes some trenchant observations on marriage and on the nature of friendships. In *O Pioneers!* she suggests through her heroine Alexandra that only when friends marry is the union likely to be secure and lasting. In *The Professor's House*, a novel that focuses relentlessly on the competing pull of marriage versus friendship, the protagonist seemingly negates the value of all human relationships when he reflects despairingly to himself: "the heart of another is a dark forest, always, no matter how close it has been to one's own."⁹ The same idea is approached more tentatively in *My Ántonia* when Jim wonders "whether the life that was right for one was ever right for two."¹⁰ But at the same time *My Ántonia* is a novel about a deep and lasting friendship, Jim's and Ántonia's, and a marriage, the Cuzaks', that are both creative and fulfilling.¹¹

I think Cather was particularly interested in *My Ántonia* with the creative union of opposite forces, something like Blake's idea of marriage as a dialogue between passion and reason. Ántonia's relationships with her husband and with Jim work well because her ardor and strength are matched by their gentle and reflective natures. The pairing of opposites is also characteristic of successful relationships between members of the same sex in Cather's fiction. There are several failed or at least inadequate relationships in *My Ántonia*, but a few work well, and Cather focuses on the creative balance they achieve.

There are friendships in *My Ántonia* where individuals become dependent on each other on a permanent basis. Jake Marpole, the mountain boy from Virginia, and Otto Fuchs, the farm hand originally from Austria, work together on the Burden farm, and when the Burdens move to town, Jake and Otto set off together to find work in a silver mine. The two men cut opposite figures in Jim's mind. When he first meets Otto, with his scars and macho cowboy costume, he pictures him as a desperado

just "stepped out of the pages of 'Jesse James'" (p. 6). Jake, on the other hand, is an innocent country boy—illiterate and trusting, "an easy prey to sharpers" (p. 144). Also, Jake is impulsive; it is he who hits Ántonia's brother Ambrosch and has to pay a fine. Jake and Otto are pictured as content in each other's company; they work together amicably and depend on each other for companionship. Possibly they will spend the rest of their days together, but Cather makes us feel that their lives are incomplete, a little sad. Jake, because of his temper and gullible nature, will always need the protection of someone like Otto. Otto, despite his skills, "steady" ways, and fondness for children, has become, we are told, "one of those drifting, case-hardened labourers who never marry or have children of their own" (p. 84). When Jim writes to them in care of the silver mine, his letter is returned "unclaimed"; they will always be itinerants.

There is a parallel to the relationship of Jake and Otto in the lifelong friendship of Lena Lingard and Tiny Soderball, the two "hired girls" from Black Hawk who choose not to marry but to pursue careers in the larger world. Lena and Tiny are among the most eligible young women in town—they cut handsome figures as they entertain the traveling salesmen at the Boys' Home Hotel. Jim's erotic fantasies focus on the sensual Lena, and in Lincoln he almost gives up his studies for her. But Lena has resolved not to marry. When Frances Harling teases her about a young Swede, Lena replies: "I don't want to marry Nick, or any other man. . . . I've seen a good deal of married life, and I don't care for it. I want to be so I can help my mother and the children at home, and not have to ask lief of anybody'" (p. 162). A few years later, when Jim spends time with Lena in Lincoln, she repeats the vow she has made to herself: "I don't want a husband. Men are all right for friends, but as soon as you marry they turn into cranky old fathers, even the wild ones'" (p. 291). For Lena, home life signifies a place "where there [are] always too many children, a cross man and work piling up around a sick woman." Lena becomes a

successful dressmaker, first in Lincoln, then in San Francisco.

Tiny, the liveliest and perhaps the prettiest of the hired girls, also chooses life on her own rather than marriage and a family. When she leaves Black Hawk she goes out to Seattle, where she sets up a sailor's lodging-house. When gold is discovered in the Klondike, Tiny sets up a hotel there for miners. Her great passion is for money, and when a Swede she has nursed leaves her his claim, she is able to invest her money, develop the claim, and go to San Francisco with a fortune. Eventually she persuades Lena to come to the West Coast. Like Jake and Otto, they look after each other: Tiny audits Lena's accounts and invests her money, while Lena keeps Tiny well dressed. They live in comfort and style, and yet their way of life is subtly discredited. This is not because they have chosen careers over marriage or because the friendship of two women is intrinsically less valuable than the heterosexual marriage relationship. Rather it is because their lives have no purpose or vision larger than meeting their immediate personal needs. Tiny admits to Jim that her spirit of adventure is gone, "that nothing interested her much now but making money" (p. 301). Jim observes that she is "like someone in whom the faculty of becoming interested is worn out" (p. 302). The contrast with *Ántonia's* pride in her farm and family diminishes Tiny's success and Lena's stylish complacency.

The conditions of the West often created situations where men would live together, or "batch it." Men who came west in advance of their families and young men eager to prove up their claims before marrying would share domestic arrangements. In *My Ántonia*, Anton Jelinek, the amiable Bohemian friend of the Shimerdas, batches with Jan Bouska. The easy domestic nature of their friendship is suggested: Jan, we are told, has made a fine wolfskin coat for Anton from the coyotes Anton has shot and skinned. The implication, however, is that when both men are settled in the new country they will separate and establish families. This is not the case with the two Russians, Pavel and Peter,

whose friendship is steeped in shame and guilt and represents an escape from reality. They live with the terrible memory of the wedding in the Ukraine when they threw the bride to the wolves to save their own lives. Like the relationships between Jake and Otto and between Lena and Tiny, the friendship of Pavel and Peter seems to be founded on contrasting natures. They are the exact opposite, physically and temperamentally: Pavel is tall and thin and has a wild, irritable nature, whereas Peter is short and fat, with a sunny disposition. They live together like a married couple: Pavel works as a hired hand while Peter "keeps house." Cather is fascinated by their domestic arrangements and shows us Peter doing the laundry, caring for the animals, and tending the garden, tasks traditionally undertaken by women. Peter's concern for Pavel's health is such that he keeps a milk cow and makes his own butter. Jim is impressed by the comfort of the Russians' house; besides the kitchen and storeroom there is a living room "with a wide double bed built against the wall, properly made up with blue gingham sheets and pillows" (p. 36). But despite this the two friends are not happy. When Jim and *Ántonia* visit, Peter becomes melancholy and explains that if he had been able to stay at home in Russia, perhaps by this time he would have a pretty daughter to cook and keep house for him. Something dark and perverse in the friendship is suggested when Pavel is on his death bed and his eyes follow poor Peter about the room with a contemptuous, unfriendly expression, as if he "despised him for being so simple and docile" (p. 54). With Pavel's death, Peter is left completely alone.

What is missing in all these friendships is a shared purpose for living together, whether it be children, work, religion, or art. Cather measures the success or failure of heterosexual marriages in a similar fashion. Jim's failed marriage creates an emotional framework around the whole narrative. We learn in the "Introduction" that he and his wife live almost separate lives. She is a handsome, energetic woman who is irritated by her husband's quiet tastes. They

do not have children; instead Mrs. Burden plays patroness to "a group of young poets and painters of advanced ideas and mediocre ability."¹² The incompatibility and emptiness of his marriage make Jim particularly sensitive to the relationships established by others. Marriages that succeed invariably consist of men and women of contrasting, complementary natures who share a project or purpose for living as well as sexual partnership.

In *Black Hawk* there are two marriages, the Gardners' and the Harlings', that puzzle Jim but appear to work well. The Gardners run the Boys's Home, a successful hotel for traveling salesmen. Molly Gardner and her husband are a study in contrasts. Tall, dark, severe, with a cold, uncommunicative manner, she is also the best-dressed woman in town, owns diamonds, and drives the best horse and trap. She runs the business and looks after everything while her husband works at the desk and welcomes incoming travelers. Johnnie Gardner, popular and easygoing, enjoys sharing a drink with his guests, but he is no manager. Although intimidated by his wife, he is nonetheless deeply in love with her. He views her as a wonderful woman without whom he would "hardly be more than a clerk in some other man's hotel" (p. 191). In relation to their work and each other the Gardners appear to be fulfilled.

The Harlings, another couple with a strong, positive marriage, find fulfillment in both a large family and a successful business. Theirs is a more traditional relationship in which the man dominates. Although Mrs. Harling appears a powerful woman to the children, she is deferential and obedient to her autocratic husband. Jim is puzzled by this and does not enjoy the presence of Mr. Harling, but there is no suggestion that Mrs. Harling is oppressed by the marriage. She defers to all her husband's little whims, and he in turn talks over his business with her in what is very much an equal partnership in the business of living.

There are also marriages in the novel that are negative, some of which have tragic consequences. The most dramatic event in Jim's narrative is the suicide of *Ántonia's* father. In

The Shimerdas' marriage, the couple's contrasting natures do not complement each other but result in victimization. Mrs. Shimerda is a sly, ambitious, hectoring woman who has bullied her quiet, genteel husband into emigrating to America, where she feels her children will have better opportunities. Mr. Shimerda cannot adapt to the harsh life of the frontier, and overwhelmed by nostalgia for Bohemia, he takes his life during a January snowstorm. This nostalgia, as interpreted by *Ántonia*, focuses on his love for an old school friend who played the trombone. *Ántonia* likes to think that her father's spirit has gone back to the place where he and his friend enjoyed so much together. The Shimerdas' marriage is a union not only of incompatible individuals but of social unequals. Mrs. Shimerda had originally been a servant girl in the house of Mr. Shimerda's mother, and after the marriage *Ántonia's* grandmother never admitted the woman to her house again.

There is a demonic version of marriage in *My Ántonia* in the sinister, yet comic, portrait of Wick Cutter and his wife. In several respects they have contrasting and complementary natures: Cutter is slight and fastidious about his appearance, while his wife is described as a raw-boned giant with iron-gray hair and a flushed face. While she is formal in manner and morally strict, Cutter is notoriously licentious, an inveterate gambler, and dissolute with women. Much of the thrill, however, in his escapades is derived from outraging his wife. We are told that he "depended upon the excitement he could arouse in her hysterical nature. . . . The reckoning with his wife at the end of an escape was something he counted on—like the last powerful liqueur after a long dinner" (p. 253). In one sense the Cutters are well suited to each other: as Jim observes, "Cutter lived in a state of perpetual warfare with his wife, and yet, apparently, they never thought of separating" (p. 210). At the same time there is a terrible sense of waste to their lives and the final culminating episode is truly grisly.

The Cutters' childless union is an inversion of marriage and all its creative potential. Their interests, hobbies, and manner of living are

entirely self-centered, empty of any larger purpose or function. To make himself more rakishly attractive to women, Cutter exercises, takes mud baths, and is said to brush his yellow whiskers every night. His hobby is horse racing, and on Sunday mornings he can be seen at the fairgrounds instead of in church. Mrs. Cutter's hobby is painting china—"even her wash bowls and pitchers and her husband's shaving mug, were covered with violets and lilies" (p. 212). Their house, with its scroll work and fussy white fence, hidden behind thick evergreens, is a symbol of the dark, ornately perverse, and purposeless nature of their lives. Cutter's murder of his wife so that her relations will not inherit their property is the final chapter to an exciting but mutually destructive union.

Cather's purpose in *My Ántonia*, however, is not to examine sordid and tragic lives, but to celebrate a marriage and a friendship, both of which are creative and fulfilling. Her novel belongs to the pastoral mode, and if we consider its pastoral literary dimensions we can perhaps more readily see the imaginative legitimacy of the novel's optimistic conclusion. Jim's memoir follows the pastoral tradition in which the writer is concerned with exploring his private life (the realm of love and friendship) rather than the material circumstances that determine his status as a public figure.

Pastorals fall into two categories—those of happiness and those of innocence.¹³ The former, which might be designated pastorals of experience, celebrate erotic love. That motif emerges in the sections "The Hired Girls" and "Lena Lingard," where Jim's awakening sexuality is focused in his relationship to the immigrant girls. The erotic dalliance between Jim and the girls picnicking along the river where they gather elderblow is the very essence of pastoral. It is here that Lena refers again to her vow not to marry: in this *locus amoenus* she rejects not love and erotic pleasure but the labor and responsibilities she feels are concomitant with marriage. Lena is for a time cast as a shepherdess, watching the livestock out in the fields. Even her courtship by Ole Benson

has its literary archetype in the figure of the misshapen swain unrequited in love.

Pastorals of happiness celebrate friendship in lyrical terms as a state of communion or grace, but they embrace the disappointments of erotic love as well. In its most characteristic form the pastoral of happiness or experience is an elegy to something lost, a song of solitude in the manner of Milton's "Il Penseroso." The skull in the grass in Renaissance pastoral paintings says "I too was in Arcadia," reminding the happy shepherds and shepherdesses of their mortal condition. Jim is in love with a beauty and youth that are no longer his own. He is middle-aged, but he resists becoming *l'homme moyen sensuel*; he yearns instead for an innocence and happiness that he eventually recovers on Ántonia's farm. As writer he "sings" away his sorrow; Book V of his narrative becomes a pastoral of innocence that celebrates domestic life and views the human condition from the point of view of family. The marriage of Anton and Ántonia Cuzak is of a domestic rather than erotic character. Like the tale of Baucis and Philemon in pastoral mythology, it is a story of married love and hospitality. The celebration of the Cuzaks' marriage is thus within the tradition of pastoral art.

Theirs is a creative partnership of two people who are physically and temperamentally opposite. Ántonia's country-girl robustness is in striking contrast to her city-bred husband, a slight, "crumpled little man," not a man of much force. Though he is a jaunty fellow he likes to take life easy and enjoy civilized pleasures; it is his wife's ardor that drives them on until they have a farm of their own. Ántonia admits to Jim, "'We'd never have got through [the first years] if I hadn't been so strong'" (p. 343). Jim observes: "clearly, she was the impulse, and he the corrective" (p. 358). Jim is "curious to know what their relations had become—or remained," and finds the pair to his delight "on terms of easy friendliness, touched with humour." The Cuzaks are not unlike another happily married, perhaps idealized couple in the novel—Jim's grandparents. Indeed, many of the details of Jim's visit to

Ántonia's farm are reminiscent of his first days at his grandparents' farm.

Perhaps the finest measure of the success of the Cuzak union lies in Jim's recognition that Cuzak himself was never destined to be a farmer. Temperamentally he belonged to the gay social life of the city; yet Ántonia held him there and made him happy in one of the loneliest spots on earth. Jim wonders whether the life that was right for one was ever right for two, but the relationship of the Cuzaks refutes his skeptical reflection. "We always get along fine, her and me, like at first," Cuzak assures his new friend, adding that the children don't make trouble between them, as sometimes happens in a marriage. Jim recognizes that the children are what give purpose and pleasure to their union. Children are Ántonia's special mission, and Cuzak has much fun from the company of his boys. To say, as critics have often done, that Cather views marriage negatively is to pass over the evidence in what is perhaps her finest piece of writing.

But the theme of friendship is equally as important as marriage in this book—it is registered in the title. Jim and Ántonia are also contrasting and complementary in their natures; although we do not know anything significant about Jim's physical character, he and Ántonia are obviously quite different in temperament.¹⁴ In contrast to Ántonia, whose impulsive nature leads to a pregnancy out of wedlock, Jim is cautious and deliberate—for example, he is able to leave Lena Lingard to go to Harvard although he is strongly attracted to her sexually. What fires and sustains the friendship between Jim and Ántonia is their creative treasuring of the past. For Ántonia, certainly, the past is not an escape from the dangers and complexities of the present but a source of values and wisdom. After she has been deserted by Larry Donovan and returns to the family farm, Ántonia explains to Jim that she carries forward in her heart the good things of the past, that her father is still with her, and that she knows and understands him better as she grows older. She says she will continue to love

Jim that way. When he returns to visit her twenty years later, he finds that their friendship is indeed still alive, that it has not become another one of the illusions of his life. Ántonia has been faithful to the past and made it continuous with the present, naming her children after family and old friends and creating for her children, through stories, an almost legendary history of their country and of her youth and friendships. Jim seizes on something similar; his friendship with Ántonia gives a unity and significance to his life that nothing else has bestowed before. It provides permanent landmarks, and he is able to say at the close that he had a "sense of coming home to [himself] and of having found out what a little circle man's experience is." When he says that he and Ántonia possessed together "the precious, the incommunicable past," he is not lamenting something lost, but celebrating a transcendent moment of reunion that promises to sustain him henceforth. In light of this personal need for understanding and direction, his friendship with Ántonia is truly creative.

Willa Cather was not a philosophical novelist; she did not use the novel for didactic purposes or as a vehicle for a new system of thought. Rather, storytelling provided her with an opportunity to give shape and definition to her powerful emotions and to record her observations on life. She wrote in a descriptive-reflective manner that permitted her to ponder aloud on the universal dilemmas of the human condition. Cather, who did not marry and who lost her closest friend, thought deeply on matters of friendship and marriage. She returned almost obsessively to them in her fiction.¹⁵ Except in *A Lost Lady*, these themes constitute the central tension in her dark middle period (*One of Ours*, *The Professor's House*, *My Mortal Enemy*); the book that resolves many of these conflicts, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, is a celebration of friendship in its finest possible form. But nowhere is her concern deeper than in *My Ántonia*, the novel she dedicated to two friends, Carrie and Irene Miner, "in memory of affections old and true."

NOTES

1. Leon Edel was the first critic to relate *The Professor's House* to events in Cather's life. See his *The Paradox of Success* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1960), passim. Subsequently James Woodress confirmed the autobiographical parallels in his *Willa Cather: Her Life and Art* (New York: Pegasus, 1970), pp. 207-12.

2. Cather to Zoë Akins, May 20, 1939, Zoë Akins Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif.

3. Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, *Willa Cather: A Memoir* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), p. 140.

4. Woodress, *Cather*, pp. 85-86.

5. See Cather's letters to Dorothy Canfield in the Dorothy Canfield Fisher Collection, Guy Bailey Memorial Library, University of Vermont, Burlington, Vt.

6. See Cather's letters to Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, especially May 21, 1912, Elizabeth Sergeant Collection, J. Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, N.Y.

7. Woodress, *Cather*, p. 86.

8. Edith Lewis, *Willa Cather Living* (New York: Knopf, 1953), p. 102.

9. Willa Cather, *The Professor's House* (New York: Knopf, 1925), p. 95.

10. Willa Cather, *My Ántonia* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, Sentry, 1961). All subsequent references in the text are to this edition.

11. Blanche Gelfant has made the compelling

argument that in Cather's novels male-female relationships are inadequately developed. Although Gelfant's point is valid, it does not concern relationships that work well. See her "The Forgotten Reaping-Hook: Sex in *My Ántonia*," *American Literature* 43 (March 1971): 60-82.

12. In the first edition of *My Ántonia* Cather drew a fuller picture of Jim Burden's wife than in the later edition. She tells us there that Genevieve Burden was involved in the woman suffrage movement, produced one of her own plays, and was arrested for picketing during a strike by garment makers. But in contrast to Jim, who loves his railway and the West with a great passion, Mrs. Burden's enthusiasms are superficial and fleeting. We are told that this restless, headstrong woman, who was an heiress, married Jim when he was on the rebound after having been jilted by her cousin. See Cather's introduction to *My Ántonia* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1918), pp. ix-xiv.

13. Renato Poggioli, "The Oaken Flute," *Harvard Library Bulletin* 11 (May 1957): 147-84.

14. In her introduction to the original edition of *My Ántonia*, Cather specified that, in contrast to Ántonia, Jim is fair, with sandy hair and quick-changing blue eyes, and is perpetually youthful in appearance.

15. See the suggestive essay by Barbara Wild, "'The Thing not Named' in *The Professor's House*," *Western American Literature* 12 (February 1978): 263-74.