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Review of *Willa Cather: A Bibliography* By Joan Crane

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Willa Cather: A Bibliography. By Joan Crane.
Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982.
Index. xxviii + 412 pp. \$35.00.

In *Willa Cather: A Bibliography*, Joan Crane has surpassed our fondest hopes for a bibliography that would establish and describe the Cather canon. This is a volume that will be invaluable to collectors and booksellers, textual critics, and literary scholars.

By following rigorous standards of analytical description, Crane provides the specialized information that booksellers, private persons, and librarians need to collect and preserve Cather's printed writing. Ordinarily, the needs of the collector, who focuses on physical characteristics, seem different from those of the literary scholar, who focuses on content. But this separation is neither so easy nor so clear for Cather, who was actively involved in the publication of her books. She participated in their design—in the selection of paper stock, color, type style; she made major decisions, such as choosing W. T. Benda as the illustrator for *My Ántonia* and working with him in the conception, execution, and printing of the illustrations; she oversaw more minor details, such as the placement of a note in *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*. Because Cather took such an active role in the publishing of her books, their physical characteristics have an authority relevant to interpretations of them.

Willa Cather: A Bibliography will be of interest to literary scholars in other ways, for Crane went beyond strict limitations of formal descriptive bibliography, writing, "it was my intention that the letter of the rule be observed, but, inevitably, I have strayed into proscribed bypaths. With no desire to give scandal to the orthodoxy of my profession, I wished nevertheless to express something beyond the mere accident of the books." It is fortunate for us that she did, for her descriptions and, especially, her discursive histories of publications provide rich research possibilities. Crane treats some "special enigmas" such as Cather's involvement in writing the Mary Baker Eddy biography, her authorship but not invention of the S. S.

McClure biography, the permutations in the plates of *A Lost Lady*, and the disordering of texts in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*.

Beyond providing descriptive information on individual editions, *Willa Cather: A Bibliography* establishes the Cather canon to date. Crane includes all separate publications, collections, poems, short fiction, articles, reviews, and essays in newspapers and periodicals; introductions, prefaces, and contributions to books; personal letters, statements, and quotations printed or reproduced; and works edited by Cather. In so doing, she demonstrates the wide range and sheer bulk of Cather's writing, and she draws attention to certain gaps in the scholarship. For example, she rightly includes a section on Cather's editing, an aspect of Cather's career that has received little attention, yet that includes work that was Cather's own in execution if not in invention. Finally, Crane lists all forms by which Cather's works have been presented: translations of novels and stories, foreign editions, large-type books, books for the blind, and adaptations on film and for theater.

Cather had a firm aesthetic sense of a book, and it is fitting that this book about her books should excel in this respect also. Designed by Richard Eckersley of the University of Nebraska Press, *Willa Cather: A Bibliography* was selected by the American Institute of Graphic Arts for its annual traveling exhibition of the best designed and produced books from American publishers in 1982.

In short, this is a superb volume. Cather studies are—and will be—the richer for it.

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