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# Studies in Fulfillment: A Consideration of Integrity and Compromise in the Novels of Willa Cather

Donald McNichols

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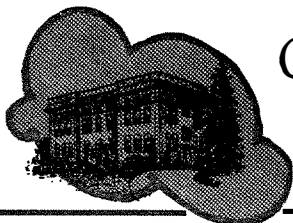
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# George Fox College JOURNAL

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## Studies in Fulfillment

*A Consideration of Integrity and Compromise  
in the Novels of Willa Cather*

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### THE 1955 FACULTY LECTURE

BY DONALD MCNICHOLS

DEAN OF THE COLLEGE AND CHAIRMAN, DIVISION  
OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

#### I. INTRODUCTION

The novelists reflect and help form our constantly changing social patterns. To this group of writers we owe a debt for the development of a literary form which comes closer to life than any other type of writing. Yet if one is asked to define the novel he can only call attention to the history of the novel itself. It is curious that no adequate definition has been given to this form of writing that mirrors the great breadth and depth of human nature.

For the sake of convenience, book sellers label many books as novels even though their contents betray the honored tradition of a story so conceived and executed by brilliant observation that it faithfully portrays human life. "Fiction" is a term implying something false; it is also extremely broad, too broad to be used as a synonym for "novel".

A common distinction between a short story and novel is that the former deals with the problems of a single situation, while the novel is concerned with a chain of circumstances. Distinctions can easily grow into battles; however, Clara

Reeve, in 1875, handed down a concept of the novel in her contrast between romance and novel by stating, "The novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the times in which it was written. The romance, in lofty and elevated language, describes what never happened nor is likely to happen."<sup>1</sup>

Miss Willa Cather belongs to that tradition of story tellers who sought to present life as it was lived. She chose her portraits from among the sturdy, pioneer stock who tamed the bleak plains country along the Republican and Platte Rivers of south central Nebraska. Occasionally, as will be noted, her setting changes to eastern Colorado, the high mesas of New Mexico, Quebec, Illinois, and the cities of the East; principally she is following the implications of the frontier, and thus pursues her subjects to note their behavior.

She belongs with such novelists as H. L. Mencken, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Sinclair Lewis, and Sherwood Anderson, whom Mr. Maxwell Geismer calls *The Last of the Provincials*. She belongs with them perhaps only because together they represent "the start of all those singular spiritual pilgrimages those exotic voyages of malaise which were the matrix of our literature in the late nineteen-twenties."<sup>2</sup> For her historical motif she chose the vanishing frontier, the collapse of its spiritual inclinations, and "the final conquest of the American town."<sup>3</sup> Thus she moved from expectancy to disillusionment; from "character to chaos"; from reward to disinheritance.

Miss Cather's curious turn of mind was first occupied with disillusionment during her days of writing short stories for McClures. Gingerly she considered the artist in *Alexan-*

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<sup>1</sup>Cited by Edward Wagenknecht, *Cavalcade of the English Novel*, (New York; Henry Holt and Company, 1943), p. XX.

<sup>2</sup>Maxwell Geismer, *The Last of the Provincials* (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1949), x.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. Cit.

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#### Acknowledgments:

To Edward Wagenknecht for the title.

Permission to quote copyrighted materials is acknowledged to publishers as follows: Alfred A. Knopf Inc.—**One of Ours, A Lost Lady**, by Willa Cather—**Willa Cather, A Critical Biography**, by E. K. Brown and completed by Leon Edel; Houghton Mifflin Company—**O Pioneers, The Song of the Lark, My Antonia**, by Willa Cather—**The Last of the Provincials**, by Maxwell Geismar.

*der's Bridge*, her first novel, and set the tone for the emotional dualism of inevitable pain and implicit ecstasy of life which was to follow. This might be thought of as her period of censure, followed by her period of return, a return to her childhood scenes certainly, but more faithfully to her ideals. The heroines of this period were drawn with such austerity that one might say of each, "Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart." In these novels she followed the creative impulse born within the pioneer spirit which lifted these ladies to fulfillment. Her picture of the disfranchised, those who were defeated, began with the decay of this heroic spirit.

Philosophically she appears to move from a position of optimism to futility, yet this essay purposes to demonstrate that throughout her pioneer studies Willa Cather unfalteringly presented honesty, faithfulness to ones inner consciousness, as a requisite for achieving life's purposes and satisfactions.

We now turn to observe this living out of integrity and the tragedy of compromise as unobtrusive themes in the major Cather novels.

## II. STUDIES IN FULFILLMENT

It is highly doubtful if Miss Cather saw all in one scope from the beginning of her career, for she was frequently contradictory; although, all of her most significant novels are directly concerned with the problem of human fulfillment. Her works do not attain formal intellectuality, that is she nowhere advances a proposition other than in an occasional preface; however, she became painfully aware of the high cost of fulfillment—which she like Pearl Buck understood as the "complete functioning of all the energies and capabilities with which one is born."<sup>4</sup> These can only be stirred through complete honesty.

Her writing career follows the characteristic American pattern of rebellion and return, censure and surrender.<sup>5</sup> In her short stories of which "A Wagner Matinee", "Paul's Case", "The Sculptor's Funeral", and "A Death in the Desert" are

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<sup>4</sup>Pearl Buck, "American Medieval Women", *Great English and American Essays* (New York: Rinehart and Company, 1950), p. 253.

<sup>5</sup>H. S. Commanger, "Traditionalism in American Literature," *Nineteenth Century*, 146:311-26, November, 1949.

typical, she castigated the small town spirit as a blighting influence. The central personality in each suffered frustration and defeat, crushed by the community.

In the first period of her career as novelist she returned in subject matter to the hinterland, and using the savage elements of a pioneer community as a backdrop developed her strongest and most convincing characters.

*O Pioneers* (1913), *The Song of the Lark* (1915), and *My Antonia* (1918) comprise her studies of the pioneer who attained fulfillment. As evidenced by her introductory statements, she consciously avoided the novel of plot to chronicle the lives of chosen personalities. Through the lives of Alexandra Bergson, Thea Kronberg, and Antonia, Miss Cather wrote on her most persistent themes: the pioneer, the artist, and the immigrant.

“(Alexandra in *O Pioneers*) had no real youth, no religious elation, no romance, no personality of a definable kind.”<sup>6</sup> She lived in an austere heroism. At twelve she helped her father in his judgment about the farm. In her early twenties, when her father died, she assumed full responsibility for managing the farm. The farm represented her father’s efforts and she stubbornly resisted all attempts to give it up despite the capriciousness of drouth and economic peril. Her brothers Lou and Oscar, stupid and routine loving, resented her strict management, unable to see that they were profiting from her judgments. Yet she looked beyond criticism and incurred misunderstanding to be true to her best judgments, continuing to develop the land even after the younger brothers moved on farms of their own. Alexandra’s struggle mirrors the spirit of the pioneer who brings a wild land into subjection.

The poetic power of the book is in the austerity and strength of Alexandra in unison with “the wild land”. The looseness of its style aids in conveying a fuller feeling of the large roomy land and the large nature of Alexandra. *O Pioneers* is exclusively of country people living on the “Divide” near Red Cloud; in contrast, *The Song of the Lark* is of the town. Seldom is the country permitted even a momentary en-

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<sup>6</sup>Leon Edel, *Willa Cather, A Critical Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), p. 175.

trance. In it she resumed her interest in artists. Through Thea Kronberg she traced the rise of an artist, her decline, and then her restoration to operatic greatness through the soothing effects of the clean, high expanse of New Mexico. Thea's source of conflict was in the destructive force of Philistinism, and to gain the full force of this influence Miss Cather placed her exclusively in town. Not only did she live in town, she was a minister's daughter where she could be fully exposed to the disapproval of the neighbors, "The fear of the tongue, that terror of little towns."

She modestly sensed her own talent; her taste for the genuine produced resentment within her father, her brothers and sisters and among some of the townspeople. These emotions ran a full tide during her first summer at home from study in Chicago.

In *My Antonia* Miss Cather mixed the town and the country with appreciation for the Nebraska of her girlhood. She traced the Bohemian immigrant girl, Antonia, from her girlhood in an unkept sod house, to middle life on a farm surrounded by a family of happy children. Antonia's girlhood struggle was to become "American", in language, attitudes, and interests, moving against family restraints. In late adolescence she moved into town to work as a "hired girl" and escape the farm. Here she could dance, mix with young men every evening, and adopt "town" clothes. Everything within her cried out for life—which she finally discovered in the satisfaction of her own family. She narrowly escaped disaster, yet through her own honesty she was forceful enough to find her rightful place in life. She was meant for the farm and it was her inability to cope with neither the city nor the small town that threatened her and indeed would have destroyed a less forthright person.

The first question to be raised is, did Alexandra, Thea, and Antonia find fulfillment? Louis Kronenberger wrote affirmatively:

**O Pioneers, The Song of the Lark, My Antonia** are stories, set in a fresh and open world, of women enroute to their destinies. They may be sidetracked . . . but they eventually arrive, eventually to fulfill themselves.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Louis Kronenberger, "Willa Cather," *The Bookman*, LXXIV: 135, October, 1931.

Percy H. Boynton argues the opposite point of view by pointing out that her three women of heroic possibilities fell short for two reasons: (1) Being a Nebraska-Virginian Miss Cather knew only of the immigrant through sympathetic observation. She idealized them into creative personalities and when sympathy and observation fell into conflict, sympathy triumphed. (2) She lacked the hardihood to submit to her material—scrupulous realism.<sup>8</sup>

There is very little doubt but that Willa Cather believed these three heroines experienced triumph. She wrote of Alexandra in *O Pioneers*:

Yes, she told herself, it had been worth while; both Emil and the country had become what she had hoped. Out of her father's children there was one who was fit to cope with the world, who had not been tied to the plow, and who had a personality apart from the soil. And that she reflected, was what she had worked for. She felt well satisfied with her works.<sup>9</sup>

Alexandra succeeded in attainment in terms of her community standards. She set about training "the American land for the needs of the future"; she prospered materially, but undoubtedly she suffered partial defeat much in the same manner as did Miss Cather.

The terms of Alexandra's fulfillment are more convincing than that of Antonia, the buoyant Bohemian girl, although Miss Cather's defense of Antonia is more vigorous. Because Antonia wanted to live, she became suspect within her village. Later she was abandoned unmarried in Denver by the former railway clerk with whom she believed she was eloping, and forced for lack of money to return to the farm home and await the birth of her child. Later she married a young Bohemian of cultural background and temperament who turned farmer much against his will for whom she reared twelve children. Yet after being away for twenty-five years, her neighbor Jim Burden, through whose eyes the story is told came to visit her and related:

As I confronted her, the changes grew less apparent to me, her identity stronger. She was there in the full vigor of her personality, battered but not diminished. looking at me.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Percy H. Boynton, *America in Contemporary Fiction*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940), p. 157.

<sup>9</sup>Cather, *O Pioneers*, p. 213.

<sup>10</sup>Cather, *My Antonia*, pp. 331-332.

In *The Song of the Lark* Miss Cather championed the poetic temper and life of realization against practicality. In it she looked upon the pioneer and the artist as one; both seek to create. This is not a unique theme to this novel for it is clearly stated earlier in *O Pioneers*:

The Bergson boys, certainly, would have been happier with their Uncle Otto, in the bakery shop in Chicago. Like most of their neighbors, they were meant to follow in paths already marked out for them, but not to break trails in a new country . . . a pioneer should have imagination, should be able to enjoy the idea of things more than the things themselves.<sup>11</sup>

Thea did not give herself to the soil like Alexandra and Antonia. Her talent was her singing voice and she possessed the indomitable courage to succeed as an artist. Miss Cather introduced this novel by stating:

The story set out to tell of an artist's awakening and struggle; her floundering escape from a smug, domestic, self-satisfied provincial world of utter ignorance . . . What I cared about, and still care about was the girl's escape; the play of blind chance, the way in which common place occurrences fell together to liberate her from commonness. She seemed wholly at the mercy of accident; but to persons of her vitality and honesty, fortunate accidents will always happen.<sup>12</sup>

Thea's problem is plainly the conflict of the superior person against an unworthy society. But circumstances opened enabling her to experience triumph.

The second question to be raised in connection with these novels of fulfillment is, did Miss Cather present a formula through which an individual can expect to be fulfilled? Louis Kronenberger<sup>13</sup> points out that these three works are held together both by subject matter and by a single-toned philosophy of life. This view can be further heightened by calling attention to the fact that in all three novels the point of highest dramatic conflict, the sharpest emotional scenes, and the episodes in which the heroines win their greatest admiration from a reader occur as each defends her integrity. In moving toward success they met with substitutes offered by their families and friends, but if any of them had accepted substitutes, if they had betrayed their best judgments and talents to

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<sup>11</sup>Cather, *O Pioneers*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>12</sup>Cather, *Song of the Lark*, p. vii.

<sup>13</sup> Louis Kronenberger, "Willa Cather", *Bookman*, LXXIV, 1931, p. 135.



please their families, if they had sacrificed personal integrity even to avoid strained family relations they would have met with defeat; this Miss Cather makes plain. This emphasis alone does not constitute a formula; however, it does outline a quality of life requisite for the complete functioning of one's capabilities. She does not argue the point, but she demonstrates its effect upon character. These heroines are drawn to emphasize the desparity between what is and what seems, but Miss Cather nowhere abandons her art of describing what is and what was to assume the role of preacher and declare what ought to be.

### III. CAUSES OF FRUSTRATION AND DEFEAT

The novels of frustration and defeat, those which follow *The Song of the Lark*, provide even more convincing evidence that integrity, *i.e.* adherence to ideals, faithfulness to one's self, honesty, is a strong tenet in her thinking. This attitude is unmistakable throughout the overtones and implications of her pessimism. These novels differ from the preceding ones in two notable respects: (1) they lack the compelling spirit of the pioneer group, and only occasionally arise to the clear and forceful level of her former confidence and power; however, this group supplements her earlier novels by presenting her most penetrating attitude. (2) Miss Cather wrote of the second generation. Except for an occasional artist who had inherited the creative spirit of the father, her picture shows this generation settling into neighborhoods of self-satisfaction, smugness, ignorance, and hostility to all whose aims and values failed to correlate with their strict conventionality.

This period opens with *One of Ours* (1922), written slowly over a three-year period. She begins it in New York in 1919, and completed it following a trip to France in 1922. Like *The Song of the Lark* it opened on the Western plains. Both Claude Wheeler (its principal character) and Thea Kronberg developed among the cross currents of alliances and enmities and ended far away. An epilogue was used in each work to demonstrate "what the development meant to someone who remained in the original setting."<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Edel, *op. cit.* p. 217.

The world in which Claude grew up needed to be a dull world; what Willa Cather wished to show was how a boy who had an exceptional nature, but no exceptional gift or strength of will, was undergoing a slow strangulation of intellect and feeling until the war provided an escape from Nebraska.<sup>15</sup>

The external forces hostile to Claude's nature are represented by his brother Bayliss whose sole interest was in making money and making life intolerable for one with other objectives, and his younger brother Ralph's pre-occupation with the machine—both represented traits in the generation that followed the pioneers. ("The glorification of money getting and the cult of the machine.")<sup>16</sup>

These attitudes do not actively harm Claude, but he nevertheless is harmed. He saw those about him so confident of these miserable values that he finally asked himself the most dangerous question that one with exceptional ability can ask himself, "Am I mistaken, weak, queer?"

Plainly Miss Cather pointed out that it was necessary to go away to grow, for the pioneer day with its vision, its eagerness and encouragement was dying. Thus he found his escape in the army, at war, and in France. His new found exhilaration in France was hardly more than an opportunity to be youthful, an experience which had been denied: it was not fulfillment.

Claude Wheeler was used to point out the frustrating effects of the small community upon one who desired more from life than security or money—conventional standards. As in the fulfillment novels which give significant attention to utter honesty, the danger of compromise also occupies a prominent role in *One of Ours*. When Claude was returning to college the narrative states:

He is not so much afraid of loneliness as he is of accepting cheap substitutes; of making excuses for a teacher who will flatter him, of waking up some morning to find himself admiring a girl merely because she is accessible. He has a dread of easy compromises, and he is terribly afraid of being fooled.<sup>17</sup>

Claude's tragedy is that he awoke too late to the value of integrity. In France he realized:

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<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 218.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 221.

<sup>17</sup>Cather, *One of Ours*, p. 34.

Ideals were not archaic things, beautiful and important; they were the real source of power among men. As long as that was true, and now he knew it was true—he had come all this way to find out . . . He would give his adventure for no man's.<sup>18</sup>

In *A Lost Lady* (1923), Miss Cather again chose the setting of her childhood, "along the Burlington", and Sweet Water is Red Cloud. Its period is the transition from the pioneer to the second generation, yet Mrs. Forrester could not have found fulfillment regardless of her era. Her lovely home filled with fine silver, glassware, china, and art served to awe the Sweet Water citizens who had always lived on the prairies. Her behavior spoke of culture to most, but it became apparent to Niel Herbert that she was actually common and cheap. Although surrounded with quality and the security of her husband's investments, his integrity and devotion, she was accessible to the crude farm hands.

She became a lost lady, Miss Cather plainly points out because:

she was not willing to immolate herself, like the widow of all these great men, and die with the pioneer period to which she belonged; that she preferred life on any terms.<sup>19</sup>

This was an "end to the road-making West", "the visions those men had seen in the air and followed" had faded; the young men had become selfishly ambitious and Mrs. Forrester adapted the new attitude, casting herself adrift from the moorings of the past:

All those years he (Niel) had thought it was Mrs. Forrester who made that house so different from any other. But ever since the Captain's death it was a house where old friends, like his uncle, were betrayed and cast off, where common fellows behaved after their kind and knew a common woman when they saw her.<sup>20</sup>

Plainly she could not experience fulfillment because "she preferred life on any terms".

*The Professor's House* (1925), the narrative of a Midwestern history professor's withdrawal from professional, social, and family relationships is symbolic of Miss Cather's own life. St. Peter's suffering through human relationships,

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 240.

<sup>19</sup>Cather, *A Lost Lady*, p. 169.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

his emotional despair and spiritual defeat is as clear in its step by step path to isolation as is "Tom Outland's Story". The digression from the St. Peter household to the cliff dwellings of New Mexico high up on the rock and removed from the world of people might appear as an intrusion within the context, but :

the Parable of the Mesa is at once the climax of Willa Cather's search for a sort of transcendent splendor in life and the most extreme point of her own withdrawal from all domestic and social relationships.<sup>21</sup>

*The Lost Lady* closes with a rhetorical question, by asking if the young generation will be fooled into thinking to live easily is to live happily. As Commanger points out, *The Professor's House* answers the question in the negative. Here the Catheresque rejection is of the new generation,<sup>22</sup> which had abandoned the heroic spirit.

In *My Mortal Enemy* (1926), Myra Driscoll had been reared by a great-uncle, John Driscoll, whose fortune enabled them to live in "The big stone house, set in its ten-acre park of trees surrounded by a high, wrought-iron fence . . . the finest property in Parthia, Illinois."<sup>23</sup> She met and married Oswald Henshawe for which she was cut off without a penny from the estate. Pretension began to take root as she sought to compensate for the difference in financial level between her former life and that required of an office worker's wife. Living in New York brought her in constant contact with the wealthy and this combined with financial reverses pointed out her growing helplessness; ill health reduced her to complete dependence upon Oswald for physical care. Thus her chosen path led her slowly and ironically to an existence which she abhorred, simply because she could not rise to the level of forthrightness to meet life on the terms which she had imposed upon herself. The story of her life is of a destructive human relationship.

Paradoxically the climax of the theme of Myra's religious conversion occurs at the precise point of climax in her self-destruction, thus the element of compromise occurs during an act of consecration. As Myra's life narrowed in her last losing fight with illness and she saw herself as her own mortal

<sup>21</sup>Geismar, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

<sup>22</sup>Kronenberger, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

<sup>23</sup>Cather, *My Mortal Enemy*, p. 18.

enemy she confessed, "I was always a grasping worldly woman; I was never satisfied . . ."24 But the coldness of her tone is more suggestive of lamentation than repentance; thus, she refused utter honesty with herself even in these solemn hours while deciding to accept the Sacrament and be united to the (Catholic) church.

This frame of reference is less applicable to *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927), *Shadows on the Rock* (1931), and the Tom Outland episode from *The Professor's House*. One can hardly consider these novels satisfactorily, apart from their central psychological image—the rock, a Sanctuary. Young Outland had discovered the great towering flat-topped rock to which the Cliff Dwellers had retreated for safety—a physical sanctuary. The mesa at Acoma is clearly identified as the rock, for Jacinto, the Bishop's guide, points it out to the Bishop and he realized:

these Indians, born in fear and dying by violence for generations, had at last taken this leap from the earth and on that rock had found the hope of all suffering and tormented creatures—safety. They came down to the plain to hunt and to grow their crops, but there was always a place to go back to.<sup>25</sup>

*Shadows on the Rock* is confusing. If it has significance beyond being a children's story, a fairy tale of the church in the New World with its pictures of Saints and Martyrs, it must be in the rock of Quebec. Each center within the narrative suggests isolation whether it is the neat home of the apothecary Auclair or the ornamental universe of the Ursuline Sisters.

This ascetism, the retreat from all passion and achievement when contrasted with the adventure of her early novels demonstrates the psychological extremes within Cather's works. Here she excluded the deeper sense of good and evil which accounts for much of her earlier accomplishment. One can only inquire, do these attempts to escape the actual world of struggle for her represent the only world where complete integrity is possible? If so, she is guilty of contradiction as well as ignoring her original interest in watching an individual make his way against obstacles to realize fulfillment. When thus interpreted this group of novels reveals Miss Cather in her lowest point of faith in the individual's ability

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24Ibid., p. 104.

25Cather, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, p. 98.

to cope with his world. If the theory of integrity is valid as applied to the other novels it provides them with a single unifying element. The absence of the integrity motif here tends to give it credence; it would be out of place, for where there is no struggle, integrity is of slight notice.

If the chief personalities in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Shadows on the Rock* had been fulfilled, the symbolism might be interpreted to indicate that integrity is possible only in a sanctuary away from struggle and fear of defeat. But these are not fulfillment novels; therefore, it seems probable that her preoccupation here with religious ceremony points more toward her concept of Salvation than to a way for self-realization and fulfillment.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

It is difficult to account satisfactorily for Willa Cather's contradictions, her apparent vacillations between pessimism and optimism, and her weakening and less resolute heroines. Did she regard man hopefully? Did Miss Cather intend for us to believe that Myra Driscoll and *Lucy Gayheart* (1935) represent all that life has to offer? A final answer is not possible, but a tentative suggestion is that she was writing of how she felt toward the times in which she lived. For her, like T. S. Eliot, the times were a wasteland, but unlike Eliot's earlier works she wove into her novels a feeling that two ways were open for people like Myra and Lucy. The spirit of the fathers—aspiration and honest toil—always lurks at the elbow waiting to be tried. Only her characters who lacked complexity found fulfillment, and these as they were placed in the heroic past. If none except the rarely, creative person with vision can be fulfilled there is little hope for the majority. This is pessimism and it can be and is deduced from her novels.

A more optimistic attitude can also be seen in her works. She wrote of the pioneer with an enthusiasm and warmth born of admiration. Regardless of the novel, when she touched upon the pioneer period and spirit or the "wild country" undergoing civilization, she filled each passage with nostalgia. In these she is a Romanticist who flees into the past to find a better world, but *perhaps* she used these strong personalities

purposefully. There can be little doubt but that she looked upon the contemporary world with distrust, as an age that was ruinous to man's spiritual development. For her, some people were like Bayliss Wheeler, only the acquisition of money provided a motif for living; others were like the Professor's wife, they must keep pace with society and be shaped by a common mould; still others were like Mrs. Forrester, they chose the cheap even though quality was extended to them. Following *The Professor's House* she despaired of finding any value in contemporary life.<sup>26</sup>

If a tentative thesis is warranted in this sharp departure from conventional interpretations, Miss Cather looked for the glint of steel in character and personality—honesty. Her characters who maintained scrupulous honesty with no deviation from the path of self-realization found fulfillment. Alexandra's honesty consisted in remaining true to her best judgments for running the farm, and this was difficult. Antonia was endowed with a zest for life; it almost destroyed her before she learned its control, yet she never surrendered it and this zest for life gave her the fulfillment of an enviable family. Thea Kronberg's flawless taste for the genuine in music and her constant refusal to substitute it for the sentimental, even though in her father's church, brought her triumph.

Willa Cather thereby proclaimed the prairie with its simplicity and the rough pioneer life as an environment in which honesty is encouraged. But she feared the crystallization of society because it made relentless demands for conformity. Conformity produced sterility; it stifled the functioning of the individual's energies and capabilities, thus was defeating. She saw the artists as capable of maintaining individuality, of being true to themselves, of paying the high price of intellectual and aesthetic honesty required for fulfillment. The artist, the one who rises above is *The Song of the Lark*. As Miss Cather grew older her books reflect a greater fear of life, yet hope was still held out for the one who is willing to pay "the uttermost farthing."

The End

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<sup>26</sup>Commanger, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

## The Faculty Lectures

At the recommendation of the Faculty Seminar Studies committee, the faculty of George Fox College, with the approval of the administration, established this annual lecture as a part of the college program. The purpose is to provide one faculty member each year with an opportunity for research which will contribute to the intellectual enrichment of students, faculty, townspeople, and of those within the college community of interest. The lectureship reflects a recognition of the competence of the chosen professor within his area of specialization.

From nominations submitted by the staff through the Faculty Seminar Studies committee, final choice of the lecturer is made by the president of the college. This year President Milo Ross selected Donald McNichols. Mr. McNichols has A.B. degrees from Los Angeles Pacific College and the University of Southern California, with the M.A. from the latter school received in 1950. His graduate research during 1949-50 in Huntington Library, San Marino, California, was in the field of 17th century English literature affecting the development of Quaker ideology. He is a contributor to educational and professional magazines.



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## CALENDAR

May 29—3:00 p. m., Newberg Friends Church, Baccalaureate and Presidential Installation Service, Milo Ross, President of the College, speaker.

May 30-June 1—Final Examinations.

June 2—8:00 p. m., Senior Class Night.

3—10:00 a. m., Wood-Mar Hall Auditorium, 63rd Commencement, Dr. John E. Riley, President of Northwest Nazarene College, speaker.

3—7:00 p. m., Annual Alumni Banquet "An Oriental Evening", Paul Shen, Formosa, speaker; The Four Flats, musical entertainment.

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