

observations and had little comparative data with which to work. His bird illustrations, however, were equal or superior to those done by his contemporaries. His botanical work did not fare as well. His plant illustrations lacked sufficient detail to meet the requirements of the Linnaean system of classification. In addition, the caliber of contemporary botanical work done in the colonies was far more advanced than its zoology.

Catesby's *Natural History* was for many years a major source of information for those interested in American plants and animals. Other late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century naturalists, including Linnaeus, Brisson, Buffon, and Kalm, cited and depended upon his work. Long considered the father of American ornithology, he is also regarded as a pioneering American ecologist.

Catesby married Elizabeth Rowland, a widow whom he had known for some years, in 1747. The couple had two children, the eldest of whom, a son, was eight years of age when Catesby died in London.

• Few if any of Catesby's papers are extant. Some of his manuscripts, and letters of those associated with him, particularly the five-volume *Dr. [William] Sherard's Philosophical Letters*, are in the Library of the Royal Society, London, and the Sloane collections at the British Museum. See also the *Richardson Correspondence, MS Radcliffe Trust*, at the Bodleian Library, Oxford University, and *The Sherardian Pinax*, at the Library of the Oxford Botanical Garden. Research notes on Catesby assembled for her study of early ornithologists, are in the Elsa G. Allen Papers, Cornell University. The principal biography is George F. Frick and Raymond P. Stearns, *Mark Catesby: The Colonial Audubon* (1961). See also Elsa G. Allen, "History of American Ornithology before Audubon," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* (1951); Robert Elman, *First in the Field* (1977); William H. Goetzmann, *New Lands, New Men: America and the Second Great Age of Discovery* (1986); Joseph Kastner, *A Species of Eternity* (1977); Raymond P. Stearns, *Science in the British Colonies of America* (1970); Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, eds., *The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1709-1712* (1941); and Henrietta McBurney, *Mark Catesby's Natural History of America: The Watercolours from the Royal Library, Windsor Castle* (1997).

KEIR B. STERLING

CATHER, Willa (7 Dec. 1873-24 April 1947), novelist and short-story writer, was born in Back Creek Valley (now Gore), Virginia, the daughter of Charles Cather, farmer, and Mary Virginia Boak. Cather's family moved to Nebraska in 1883. She later told an interviewer that after the mountains of Virginia the prairie made her feel that she had "come to the end of everything—it was a kind of erasure of personality. . . . I thought I would go under." But she did not, and for the first eighteen months of her life in Nebraska she lived on her grandfather's farm, surrounded by immigrant farm families whom she came to know and love and whom she eventually turned into memorable fictional characters. When her father moved the family to the prairie village of Red Cloud and opened an insur-

ance and real estate office, Cather began the next phase of her life. The town appears in six of her novels and a good many stories.

After high school Cather moved to Lincoln to spend a year prepping for college and entered the University of Nebraska in 1891. When her professor, unbeknownst to her, published one of her essays in the newspaper, she dropped plans for a scientific career and thenceforth considered herself a writer. "What youthful vanity can be unaffected by the sight of itself in print!" she later wrote.

Early in her junior year, she began writing drama criticism and a column for the *Nebraska State Journal*. She was largely self-supporting from then on. After graduating from the university in 1895 she continued her journalistic career in Lincoln and in 1896 was hired to edit a magazine in Pittsburgh. The next year she moved to the Pittsburgh *Leader*, where she worked as telegraph editor, drama and music critic, and book reviewer. About this time Cather met Isabelle McClung, the socially prominent daughter of a Pittsburgh judge. Isabelle became Cather's most ardent admirer, her lifelong best friend, and the person for whom, Cather said, she had written all her books. In 1900 Cather started teaching high school English in Pittsburgh. This job gave her summers to write and travel and resulted in her first book, *April Twilights* (1903), a collection of forgettable verse, and her first trip to Europe in 1902. Traveling with Isabelle McClung, she spent most of the summer in France. The visit, the first of five between 1902 and 1935, reinforced her lifelong love affair with France and French culture that had begun in college. Cather's first book of fiction, *The Troll Garden* (1905), was a collection of stories about art, music, and artists, two of which, "The Sculptor's Funeral" and "Paul's Case," have often been reprinted.

Cather completed her odyssey from farm to metropolis when S. S. McClure hired her to help edit his magazine in New York. Her permanent home then became New York City. She loved it for its cultural advantages but hated it for its noise and dirt; she left the city often to travel. From 1906 through 1911 she was a McClure's executive. McClure made her managing editor soon after she joined the staff. While she was on assignment for the magazine in Boston in 1908, she met Sarah Orne Jewett, who became a major influence. But editing a muckraking magazine was not what Cather wanted to do with her life. In 1912 she left McClure's and took a long trip to the Southwest, the first of many visits to this area. This journey had a major effect on her subsequent fiction. After this trip Cather and Edith Lewis, her friend and companion for thirty-nine years, moved into a Greenwich Village apartment on Bank Street where they lived until 1927. Lewis, who worked for magazines and in advertising, was a self-effacing assistant who made reservations, bought tickets, and packed trunks.

Cather's career as a novelist properly begins after this visit, but she had written a short novel, *Alexander's Bridge*, before leaving McClure's. Although she later

disparaged this story of a man torn between love for his Boston wife and a London actress, it is a competent work and contains a number of themes and situations that she later developed more powerfully.

After living in Pittsburgh and New York for seventeen years, Cather turned to Nebraska as a subject and her memories of her youth in the prairie state came flooding back. The result was *O Pioneers!* (1913). Cather always maintained that a writer's most important material was acquired before the age of fifteen. *O Pioneers!* is the story of Swedish immigrants who tame the wild land. The protagonist, Alexandra Bergson, is a strong, capable woman of mythic proportions. The novel evokes memorably the spirit of the pioneers, contrasting it with the materialism of the next generation—a theme that figures prominently in Cather's later fiction.

The Song of the Lark (1915), about the career of a famous singer, combined Cather's use of Nebraska in pioneer times, her recent discovery of the Southwest, and her consuming interest in music. The singer as child and adolescent is Cather herself growing up in Red Cloud; the adult singer is based on Olive Fremstad, then the leading Wagnerian soprano at the Metropolitan Opera.

Cather's *My Ántonia* (1918), which has become a modern classic, captures poignantly the life of Czech immigrants in Nebraska, most notably the title character, who in real life was Cather's close friend Anna Pavelka. It is a superb drama of memory. Antonia, a madonna of the wheat fields, is described as the mother of races.

My Ántonia was followed by a collection of stories, *Youth and the Bright Medusa* (1920), which contains four tales reprinted from *The Troll Garden* and several new ones dealing with the lives of singers. *One of Ours* (1922), which takes place during World War I, was inspired by the death of a cousin in France in 1918. In it, an idealistic Nebraska farm boy enlists in the army after an unhappy life on the farm and a failed marriage. He engages in the struggle against Germany and dies thinking he is helping save the world for democracy. The Nebraska scenes are vintage Cather, but the battle scenes had to be based on secondary sources, a method alien to Cather's best work. Writing it cost her four years of effort, and it received mixed reviews. Yet the novel won the Pulitzer Prize.

Cather described 1922, without explaining, as the year her world broke in two. Critics have seen this as a midlife crisis, caused perhaps by unfavorable criticism of *One of Ours*, her sudden financial success after years of struggle, dissatisfaction with the materialism and what she saw as the vulgarity of the 1920s, and simply approaching the age of fifty. Cather found refuge in the Episcopal church, and went on to write one of her best novels, *A Lost Lady* (1923), which critics acclaimed as a minor masterpiece. The lost lady of the novel, Marian Forrester, is based on Leila Garber, wife of Silas Garber, governor of Nebraska, and a woman Cather had greatly admired. This short novel illustrates a narrative principle Cather described in her

essay "The Novel Demeublé," where she argues for the elimination of excess furniture, a principle based on the elder Alexandre Dumas's remark that "to make a drama, a man needed one passion and four walls."

After *A Lost Lady*, Cather wrote what she called a middle-aged novel, *The Professor's House* (1925). Her protagonist is a historian who has just won an important prize for a book on the Spanish in North America. Yet he is strangely dissatisfied with his life, the victim, like his creator, of a midlife crisis. After nearly being asphyxiated at the end of the novel, the professor comes to terms with life as a diminished thing.

The Professor's House was followed by *My Mortal Enemy* (1926), a short, bitter novel that drained the last bit of gall that had accompanied Cather's midlife crisis. It is the story of Myra Driscoll, who elopes with the Protestant Oswald Henshawe and is consequently disinherited by her rich, bigoted Irish Catholic great uncle. Myra lives to regret marrying for love, and the story ends in defeat and death.

Cather's passion for the Southwest was most fully expressed in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927). She considered this book her best, as do many critics. It is an experimental modernist work, loosely episodic, with no conventional plot and laced with inset stories. Cather said she was trying to write a novel that was like a series of frescoes by Puvis de Chavannes depicting the life of Ste. Geneviève, which she had seen in Paris in 1902. She also drew on the way the lives of the saints were written in *The Golden Legend*, in which their martyrdoms are no more emphasized than the trivial events of their lives. The immediate inspiration for the book, however, was the biography of a priest who had been vicar to the first bishop (later archbishop) of New Mexico. The novel fictionalizes the lives of Jean Baptiste Lamy and Joseph Machebeuf, missionary priests from France, as they organize and minister to the new diocese of New Mexico after its annexation by the United States following the war with Mexico. Beautifully told in Cather's simple but eloquent style, it is one of the classics of modern American literature.

Soon after Cather finished this novel, her father died, her mother had a stroke, and she had to move from the Greenwich Village apartment she had lived in for fifteen years. Life seemed to be falling apart. Her salvation was the writing of *Shadows on the Rock* (1931), a novel laid in seventeenth-century Quebec. It is remarkable for its descriptions of Quebec at various times of the year and a fine example of writing in the style of impressionistic painting.

After her mother died in 1931, Cather returned to Red Cloud for a family reunion at Christmas but thereafter never returned to Nebraska. She lived in New York but summered on Grand Manan Island in the Bay of Fundy, where she built a cottage, and spent part of each autumn at the Shattuck Inn in Jaffrey, New Hampshire. A collection of three stories, *Obscure Destinies* (1932), was her final major work using the prairie setting for which she is famous. "Neighbour Rosicky" describes a Czech farmer and his family. It is

a kind of sequel to *My Ántonia*. "Old Mrs. Harris," the best of all her short stories, re-creates Cather's grandmother, Cather's mother, and Vicki (Cather herself), a teenager getting ready to go to college. "Two Friends" is a lesser tale, inspired by Cather's memory of listening to two Red Cloud businessmen talk in the evenings outside a store. After *Obscure Destinies* appeared, Cather and Lewis ended five years of camping out in the old Grosvenor Hotel and moved into a Park Avenue apartment, where Cather spent her final years.

Two more novels, *Lucy Gayheart* (1935) and *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* (1940), complete the Cather canon. The former, one of Cather's lesser works, is the story of a musician who goes to Chicago to study. *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, however, is one of Cather's best and the only one in which she used her native Virginia as a setting. It is laid in the village of her birth in the decade before the Civil War. The story involves the conflict between Sapphira's efforts to sell her servant Nancy and her husband's refusal to consent to the transaction. Sapphira and Henry Colbert are drawn from Cather's maternal great-grandparents, and the character of Mrs. Blake is a fictional portrait of Grandmother Boak. In the climax, Mrs. Blake helps Nancy escape to Canada. Plot, setting, and character are handled with exceptional skill in this novel, even though Cather was at the end of her career and her health was failing.

In all her works Cather carries out the principle she learned from Sarah Orne Jewett: "If [a writer] achieves anything enduring, it must be by giving himself absolutely to his material. And this gift of sympathy is his great gift."

In her old age Willa Cather wrote a friend that she had pretty well gotten out of life what she wanted. She had achieved recognition by the writers she most admired and had lived the kind of life she preferred. She had escaped the things she most violently did not want, such as too much money, noisy publicity, and the bother of meeting lots of people. She knew at the end that she was leaving behind a significant body of work, including twelve novels and fifty-eight stories. Politically active critics in the sociological 1930s charged her with writing escapist fiction, but in the years after World War II her stature grew steadily. She is generally regarded as one of the major American writers of the twentieth century.

After publishing *Sapphira*, Cather wrote only a few more stories and left unfinished a novel that was destroyed after her death by her longtime companion Edith Lewis. She died in New York and was buried in Jaffrey, New Hampshire.

Few writers have been so dedicated to their art as Cather. From the time she was in college, she maintained that an artist had to sacrifice everything for art. This in her case included matrimony and children, for though she had proposals during her Pittsburgh years, she remained single throughout her life. In recent years some critics have concluded that she was lesbian, and though it is true that her strongest emotional attachments (outside of her father and brothers) were to

women, all the evidence points to a celibate writer, married only to her art. Fanny Butcher wrote in her memoirs of Cather: "I never knew anyone who seemed to be more wrapped around by her work. . . . Once she said to me that nothing mattered to her but writing books, and living the kind of life that makes it possible to write them."

• Although Cather's will forbids the publication of her letters, there are significant collections of them at the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial, Red Cloud; the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln; the Newberry Library, Chicago; and the University of Virginia Library. A few manuscripts are available at the New York Public Library. Published works by Cather not mentioned above are Georgine Milmine's *The Life of Mary Baker G. Eddy* (1909), written for McClure's from an unpublished manuscript; the ghostwritten autobiography of S. S. McClure (1914); *April Twilights and Other Poems* (1923), a later collection of verse; *Not under Forty* (1936), a collection of essays; and *The Old Beauty and Others* (1948), three posthumously published stories.

The original authorized biography by E. K. Brown, *Willa Cather: A Critical Biography* (1953) has been superseded by James Woodress, *Willa Cather: A Literary Life* (1987). Important memoirs by friends are Edith Lewis, *Willa Cather Living* (1953), and Elizabeth Sergeant, *Willa Cather: A Memoir* (1953). Three good critical studies are David Stouck, *Willa Cather's Imagination* (1975); Susan Rosowski, *The Voyage Perilous: Willa Cather's Romanticism* (1986); and Hermione Lee, *Willa Cather: A Life Saved Up* (1989). Criticism is collected in John Murphy, ed., *Critical Essays on Willa Cather* (1983); and two useful reference works are Marilyn Arnold, *Willa Cather: A Reference Guide* (1986), and Joan Crane, *Willa Cather: A Bibliography* (1982). Sharon O'Brien, *Willa Cather: The Emerging Voice* (1987), which deals with the lesbian issue, is an important psychological biography of Cather's first forty years. The University of Nebraska Press makes available all the stories Cather did not collect herself and much of her journalism, interviews, and speeches: *Collected Short Fiction, 1892-1912*, ed. Virginia Faulkner (1970); *Uncle Valentine and Other Stories: Willa Cather's Uncollected Short Fiction, 1915-1929*, ed. Bernice Slote (1973); *The Kingdom of Art: Willa Cather's First Principles and Critical Statements, 1893-1896*, ed. Bernice Slote (1967); *The World and the Parish: Willa Cather's Articles and Reviews, 1893-1902*, ed. William Curtin (1970); and *Willa Cather in Person: Interviews, Speeches, and Letters*, ed. Brent Bohlke (1986).

JAMES WOODRESS

CATHERWOOD, Mary Hartwell (16 Dec. 1847-26 Dec. 1902), fiction writer, was born in Luray, Ohio, the daughter of Marcus Hartwell, a physician, and Phoebe Thompson. In the mid-1850s the Hartwells moved to Illinois, where in 1857 both parents died within a few months of each other. Mary and her siblings were returned to Ohio and raised by maternal relatives in Hebron, an apparently difficult time for Mary and one on which she later drew in her realistic stories.

At fourteen Mary began teaching and publishing verses in the Newark, Ohio, newspaper. With the help of Milton L. Wilson, editor of the *Newark North American*, she gained admission to the Granville Female Seminary in 1865 and completed a four-year program in only three years while supporting herself with her teaching. Catherwood earned the distinction of being