

THE GODS IN EXILE: A STUDY OF THEMES AND SOURCES IN  
WILLA CATHER'S THE TROLL GARDEN AND MY MORTAL ENEMY

by

Barbara Wild

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APPROVAL

Name: Barbara Mary Wild

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Examining Committee: Chairperson: Professor Paul Delany

*Paul Delany*

David Stouck  
Senior Supervisor

Peter Buitenhuis

Andrea Lebowitz

Jane Rule  
External Examiner  
Novelist and Literary Critic

Date Approved: Nov 17 1950

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*The Gods in Exile: A Study of Themes and*  
*Sources in Willa Cather's *The Troll Garden**  
*and *My Mortal Enemy**

Author:

(signature)

BARBARA MARY WILD

(name)

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(date)

## ABSTRACT

The Troll Garden and My Mortal Enemy make a small but distinct group within the Cather canon. A fundamental theme in both books is the quest for human greatness and its inevitable frustrations. Unlike so many Cather fictions in which the protagonists attain heroic stature, these stories describe a world where greatness is withheld and the emphasis falls on the search rather than on its completion. For the characters, this is also a world of contradictions, where their visionary needs seem always to conflict with the realities of their lives. Cather's view of the human condition is both ironic and tragic, yet the characters achieve a certain nobility in the process of their search for greatness.

These issues are given definition and substance in both books by Cather's extensive use of literary sources. The Introduction to this thesis gives a brief description of the books and their themes. Part One examines The Troll Garden stories in the light of two sources, "The Forest Children," a short piece of prose by Charles Kingsley, and "Goblin Market," a poem by Christina Rossetti. Part Two carries on the study of these same sources by looking at their significance to My Mortal Enemy, and considers a third source, an essay by Heinrich Heine, titled "The Gods in Exile."

This investigation of sources uncovers some of the complexity that lies behind the seemingly simple prose of Willa Cather, and helps us to interpret with increased understanding her themes of greatness and duality. The Heine allusions, in fact, direct us to a whole structure of mythological thought which, in turn, reveals the novella's central character as an Olympian figure in exile.

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## INTRODUCTION

Two books by Willa Cather, of the same approximate length and published twenty-one years apart make unusual companion-pieces. The Troll Garden (1905)<sup>1</sup> is a collection of seven short stories, all of which were written in the period 1902-1904, when the author was around thirty years old and employed as a high school teacher in Pittsburgh. The other book, the novella My Mortal Enemy (1926),<sup>2</sup> is the work of a much older and experienced writer; by 1926 Willa Cather had been an independent, professional novelist for fourteen years. Although in a very real sense all of Cather's writings are of a piece, her books are usually grouped and discussed according to some obvious similarities. There are the prairie fictions (O Pioneers!, My Ántonia, One of Ours, A Lost Lady and Obscure Destinies), the stories about artists (The Song of the Lark, Youth and the Bright Medusa, Lucy Gayheart), the tragedies of middle-age (Alexander's Bridge, The Professor's House), and the historical novels (Death Comes for the Archbishop, Shadows on the Rock, and Sapphira and the Slave Girl). The Troll Garden and My Mortal Enemy have affinities with these books, yet their central preoccupations set them apart. As a writer, Willa Cather was in the habit of taking new experiences and working with them in the light of former concerns. What I shall try to show in this thesis is that The Troll Garden and My Mortal Enemy share the same thematic concerns and primary sources, and that despite their distance in time, genre, and subject matter, they constitute within the Cather canon a little grouping of their own.

A fundamental theme in both works is the quest for human greatness and its inevitable frustrations. The subject of greatness was an obsessive one with Cather and informs all her writing: for example, Alexandra (in O Pioneers!) and Ántonia achieve heroic stature as pioneer women making a new land; Thea Kronborg in The Song of the Lark becomes a world famous opera singer; and the Archbishop builds the great cathedral of the American Southwest. In The Troll Garden stories and in My Mortal Enemy, however, the achievement of visible greatness is denied the protagonists, and the focus falls on the search rather than on its completion. In these stories, Cather turns away from her romantic vision of conquest to an ironic view of the human condition where the impulse towards greatness is compromised by such human failings as pretension, self-delusion, and by the cultural poverty of a young, materialistic country.

But what especially marks these stories is the world of contradiction which the characters are obliged to inhabit. These are people whose visionary needs conflict with the realities of their lives and who, as a result, remain largely unfulfilled. In all of these narratives, Cather is exploring the idea of opposites in tension. Two of the stories look at duality as represented by pairs of characters. The other six examine contradiction as it pertains to the individual personality, or what might be termed the divided self. The dual self occurs by reason of certain human needs and desires that come into conflict with one another. In some instances the need is for emotional fulfillment as against that of the imagination; in another, a passion for art is pitted against the fear of poverty; and in yet another, the



opposition lies between the need for love and the exercise of a potential for leadership within society. The reader is given to see not only the division of self that afflicts certain individuals, but also how these divisions serve to fool people, leaving them perplexed and disillusioned. Cather's view of life is tragic, but in these tales the characters attain a certain nobility in their search for greatness.

Willa Cather's preoccupation with the idea of greatness probably grew out of her work as a critic. In this capacity early in her writing career, she had the job of separating good art from bad. Much of this work can be seen in The Kingdom of Art: Willa Cather's First Principles and Statements, 1893-1896,<sup>3</sup> which contains some of her earliest published writing. In her attempts to understand greatness in art, Cather developed a "hierarchy of talent, achievement, and values--a system of degrees that assumes the possibility of greatness."<sup>4</sup> She never in any way schematized these ideas herself, but Bernice Slote, who has worked through all Cather's known material pertaining to this subject, has suggested a certain pattern in Cather's thinking. According to Slote's summary, excellence is distinguished by two features: first passion, or feeling, which Cather also called the life principle; and second, an easy relation with elemental things, such as birth, death, silence, the sea, and so on. At the level of mediocrity Cather placed such qualities as languor, cleverness, and excessive charm. These traits fall short of excellence as Cather defines it, because lethargy, cleverness, and charm all exclude the passion and simplicity which she saw as fundamental to greatness. A portion of Slote's description of these levels of performance

is worth quoting at length. Willa Cather, she says,

believed that poetry and art must come from the elements nearest to that first fire--physical things, action, emotion (grammar and mathematics will not do it). She stressed the excitement of animal courage . . . With her physical, passionate sense of the basis of life, she understandably saw purely mental qualities of art as secondary . . . She discounted Wilde's skill with epigrams . . . for wit would not save a play with stick figures, and Wilde's characters had no body or passion at all, she said. Cleverness, language for its own sake, conversation, problem-solving, and argument-- these are not so good as character. Character in action is what the life principle implies.<sup>5</sup>

The lowest level of performance is the commonplace, "not the common, which may be universal and therefore important, but the flat deadliness of things without individuality or significance."<sup>6</sup> Characters or places that uphold conformity to a norm at the expense of individual expression represent this third category.

When Willa Cather came to writing fiction, these ideas about human performance, about the potential for greatness, became touchstones in her creation of characters. In one of her early stories, "A Resurrection" (1897), there is a revealing passage in which greatness is attributed to a character, Marjorie Pierson, who, as it happens, has no artistic bent. Because the author is not as skilled as she will become, she tells, rather than shows what she is about.

She was one of those women one sometimes sees, designed by nature in her more artistic moments, especially fashioned for all the fullness of life; for large

experiences and the great world where a commanding personality is felt and valued, but condemned by circumstances to poverty, obscurity and all manner of pettiness. There are plenty of such women, who were made to ride in carriages and wear jewels and grace first nights at the opera, who, through some unaccountable blunder of stage management in this little comédie humaine have the wrong parts assigned them, and cook for farm hands, or teach a country school . . . women who were made to rule, but who are doomed to serve . . . The world is full of waste of this sort.<sup>7</sup>

The passage discloses a candid interest in greatness, as well as the author's tendency to invoke opposites. Indeed, this paragraph, with its statement of blighted potential, curiously foreshadows the stories that are to come in The Troll Garden and in My Mortal Enemy.

The seven tales of The Troll Garden seem, at first glance, quite disparate, with settings in London, New York, Boston, Pittsburgh, as well as the American desert, the Nebraska frontier, and a small Kansas town. They all take place around the turn of this century, however, and in each story, one or more characters is prompted to depart from some norm and to seek something "higher." Also, dualities of many sorts abound, especially that of the divided self. In "Flavia and Her Artists," Flavia wants to be thought of as clever, and to this end she fills her house with people she regards as "artists." But cleverness is not a mark of greatness, in Cather's view, and Flavia's gathering of so-called great people becomes, for the reader, a conglomeration of double-faced characters. True greatness beckons two men in "The Sculptor's Funeral," but opposition comes from their place of origin, both family and community, which resists the flowering of local genius. Caroline Noble, in

"The Garden Lodge," who, contrary to appearances, is a very passionate individual, is torn by her two-fold need for a normal life and the pursuit of art. For Cather, these were irreconcilable goals and the next three stories, "A Death in the Desert," "The Marriage of (Phaedra,)" and "A Wagner Matinée," present somewhat similar conflicts, in which various attempts to combine love and artistic ambition result in acute suffering. In the final story, "Paul's Case," the protagonist is a young man of Calvinist background who has a natural love for beauty and pleasure. He solves his dilemma for a while by ignoring the reality of the forces that oppose his desires, and, as one might expect, the story ends on a tragic note.

Twenty-one years of steady writing and the publishing of several short stories and seven novels followed The Troll Garden. Willa Cather's eighth novel, My Mortal Enemy, is really a novella, filling scarcely over one hundred pages in its final, finely-worked form. Yet it seemed to the author to merit separate publication, which Alfred Knopf agreed to, thus setting the story apart from others of similar length that came out in collections.

My Mortal Enemy is a story of a great woman who was made both for love and for "a place in the world" (p. 75). Myra Driscoll comes from a well-to-do home in the little town of Parthia, Illinois, and falls in love with Oswald Henshawe, who is somehow a less-promising individual. Myra's uncle violently opposes the match and disinherits his niece when the lovers elope. Because of these circumstances under which Myra seeks fulfillment in love, the other side of her dual nature remains forever blocked in its outward, worldly,

expression. In *Nellie Birdseye*, Willa Cather has created a narrator for the story who fails to see all this very clearly, and whose account of Myra is accordingly ambiguous and somewhat misleading.

The tale begins with the Henshawes' one and only return visit to Parthia, where Nellie, at age fifteen, meets them for the first time. Somehow, the Henshawes do not measure up to Nellie's expectations. A visit to New York by Nellie and her aunt, Lydia, follows a few weeks later. The Henshawes live in an attractive apartment on Madison Square and here Willa Cather gives a delightful picture of New York as it was at the beginning of this century. A small New Year's Eve party takes place, at which the Henshawes entertain several well-known artists. At the end of the evening when most of the people have gone, the lights are dimmed and one of the remaining guests sings the Casta Diva aria from the opera, Norma. The scene leaves Nellie with a strong sense of some "hidden richness" in Myra (p. 48), a suggestion of her potential greatness. Another highlight of the New York visit is a small conspiracy which takes place between Lydia and Oswald. At his request, Lydia pretends to have come by a pair of cuff-buttons through an old friend, when in fact they have been given to Oswald by a woman. In front of Myra, Lydia makes a "present" of them to Oswald, but the deception is soon discovered and Myra is furious. The scene, which evokes such disillusionment in the narrator, suggests that limitations and weaknesses have appeared in the relationship between Oswald and Myra.

The second half of the novella takes place on the west coast of the United States ten years later. By chance, Nellie and the Henshawes are living in the same shabby apartment-hotel. Nellie has a teaching job in a college of questionable merit; Oswald, a "humble position, poorly paid" (p. 69). Myra is very ill. Their one and only friend now, Nellie spends time with the Henshawes during the last few months of Myra's life. The action of this part of the story lies in the interchanges among the three characters. Nellie reads poetry to Myra, and takes her for drives to a favorite cliff overlooking the sea. We find that Myra, who broke with the church when she married, has renewed her religious affiliation. Inconsiderate people living upstairs keep Myra in distress with their noise. As outspoken as ever, she shows both anguish and bitterness in these weeks, the climax of which is her whispered question: "Why must I die like this, alone with my mortal enemy?" (p. 95). At the end, with the assistance of a taxi-driver, she escapes the wretched apartment to die alone on the cliff overlooking the sea. This dramatic close to her life suggests again her potential for greatness.

In both the collection and the novella the themes of greatness and duality are tightly interwoven, yet, for the purpose of discussion, I propose to separate them and deal with them in turn, through the different sources that inform them. The textures of The Troll Garden and My Mortal Enemy are layered and intricate, and a certain amount of taking apart is essential to make study of the individual threads manageable. This method may seem, at times, to diminish the artistic wholeness of the stories. Occasionally, in the analysis that follows, a complete statement concerning some passage or

event is delayed, because the discussion has not yet advanced to the source that can provide a final illumination. Nevertheless, the drawbacks of this approach gradually disappear as the argument proceeds.

This study of Willa Cather's sources and their work in The Troll Garden and My Mortal Enemy begins with the earlier book. There, the greatness theme is examined first in conjunction with a parable by Charles Kingsley. The rest of Part One explores the use of a second source, Christina Rossetti's poem, "Goblin Market," and the theme of doubleness. My Mortal Enemy is the centre of attention in Part Two. There, a third major influence is considered. This is an essay by Heinrich Heine that encompasses the two chief themes, a prose piece describing a world in which the rejection of greatness is carried out, paradoxically, in order to honour greatness.

## REFERENCES - INTRODUCTION

1. First published by McClure, Phillips & Co., New York. Later incorporated with emendations into Willa Cather's Collected Short Fiction, 1892-1912, edited by Virginia Faulkner, with an introduction by Mildred R. Bennett (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), pp. 147-261. Hereafter cited as CSF. Page numbers will be given in the text.

2. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York. Also Vintage Books (New York: Random House, 1961). All references are to this text. Page numbers will be given in the text.

3. Selected and edited with two introductory essays by Bernice Slote (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966); hereafter cited as KA. These essays provide essential background to the journalistic material, as well as discussing and summarizing Cather's first principles of art as they developed in her newspaper columns. My debt to Bernice Slote's "The Kingdom of Art," pp. 31-112, can hardly be measured. Much of what follows in this paper is in some way a corollary to that essay.

4. Slote, KA, p. 51.

5. KA, p. 47.

6. Slote, KA, p. 51.

7. CSF, p. 426.



## PART ONE

A brief, four-page parable by Charles Kingsley that constitutes an introduction to a lecture, "The Forest Children,"<sup>1</sup> is an important item among Willa Cather's sources. This little narrative is Kingsley's vision of the nature of the struggle between Rome and her barbarian enemies, those who overthrew the capital of the once mighty empire. In the parable, Rome is represented as an enchanted garden whose inhabitants are trolls, evil creatures who, nevertheless, have power to create things beautiful and rare. Another race, that of the ingenuous and primitive forest children, lives contentedly in the wilderness outside the walls of the garden. Eventually, these children, who are by nature adventurous, become bored with their forest world and begin to covet the trolls' fairy palace and their cunningly-made possessions. After many vain assaults upon the walled garden, the children at length seize it for themselves. But they lack the craftiness of the trolls, who bewitch and madden their attackers, setting them against one another in an "unnatural fight," until they almost totally destroy themselves.

"How important this idea [Kingsley's parable] was to the young Willa Cather we could not know," Sloté comments, "until reading her first pieces, we find numerous variations of the theme . . ."<sup>2</sup> Insofar as The Troll Garden is concerned, two aspects of Kingsley's story seem to have had special significance for Cather. A quote from the parable appears on the title page:

A fairy palace, with a fairy garden; . . . inside the trolls dwell, . . . working at their magic forges, making and making always things rare and strange.

In this passage, the palace represents the vision of perfection, that is, anything sought as a life's goal. To one person, the vision means a life dedicated to art; to another, love and marriage; to yet another, mastery on a high scale of some job or profession. The fairy palace means different things to different people, but always it comes to a person with the power of an obsession, as the vision of greatness for that person. Kingsley's fairytale further declares the extreme danger of trying to possess the vision, and this, too, Cather affirms. So many things can go wrong once a person has begun to "worship" the vision, that she can find enough material for seven short stories in simply exploring that issue. Kingsley's myth of the vision of perfection with its inevitable dangers is a pattern of events that had profound meaning for Cather.<sup>3</sup>

She also derives a complex of images from Kingsley that has to do with the forest children's nature. Here is his description of these creatures:

children in frankness, and purity, and affectionateness, and tenderness of conscience, and devout awe of the unseen; and children too in fancy, and silliness, and ignorance, and love of excitement and adventure, and the mere sport of overflowing animal health. They play unharmed among the forest beasts, and conquer them in their play . . .<sup>4</sup>

In this list Kingsley details qualities of character that Cather viewed as essential to the attainment of human greatness, qualities that are, as she felt, the raw ingredients of true achievement. The forest child is impulsive (which Cather translates into "passionate"), childlike (possessing a fine simplicity), adventurous, frank, laughter-loving, and finally, has a lively sense for the mystical. One can see how these features, particularly the passionate and mystical categories, predispose a person to seek visions of greatness. A further point about these "children" is that they represent the barbarian in Kingsley's fall-of-Rome fable. Influenced, no doubt, by Romantic thought, Cather was inclined to admire what she perceived as the archetypal primitive, the "noble savage." She took, Slotte says, "a kind of delight in the barbarian,"<sup>5</sup> in their fierceness and, on occasion, in their cruelty. Hence from Kingsley's parable Cather inherits not only a powerful myth about the human tendency to pursue visions of perfection, but also a portrait of what incipient greatness looks like in human character. Its image is linked for Cather with that of the primitive, and for convenience, the terms "primitive," "forest child," and "barbarian" are used interchangeably throughout the remainder of this paper of persons who possess to a significant degree qualities of the Kingsley "barbarian."

While the forest children proved important to Cather when she came to create her characters, she did not take hold of the trolls' image in the same way. The trolls have meaning in her fiction only as a part of the fairy palace, that is, as part of the enticing but dangerous vision of perfection.

Cather does not translate the evil trolls into people in her stories. In her regard for the barbarian, Cather shows a certain belief in original greatness--not original goodness, as the Eden myth suggests. She also believed that human greatness could be harmed, and that one of the ways this happened was through the over-refining influence of a decadent civilization. Kingsley in his story sets the conflict between the forest children and the trolls. But Cather locates her conflict between forest child before and forest child after entry into the garden, between the potential for human greatness and human greatness frustrated or damaged. It is worth noting that the damaged person in Cather's stories is frequently quite attractive, while the one who has managed to remain intact, whether or not s/he has managed to achieve the heart's desire, may well jar the reader. Cather is often hard on the character she favours. She is very involved with those who, in one way or another, honour greatness, and these characters function as a singularly creative force in her fiction.

The Troll Garden deals in a wide assortment of the marks of human greatness and of their negations. These latter are important. A quality that runs counter to any one of the distinguishing marks of greatness is a sign of disorder in the created universe of these stories. The first tale, "Flavia and Her Artists," revolves around issues of shallowness and pretense. As a parent, Flavia engages with her young children in a studied way, reading to them "every morning in the most picturesque part of the garden . . . [seeing herself as] the mother of the Gracchi" (p. 163).

Her desire to be known as clever, the pretentiousness of some of the guests, and everyone's masquerade of enjoyment in a house "turned into a hotel" which is "shunned like a lazaretto," combine to create an air of make-believe (p. 164). M. Roux, whose frustration with the situation erupts in a brutally frank statement to the press about Flavia, has some of the marks of the barbarian. Arthur, Flavia's husband, is more endearing in his manner than Roux, but he is an enigma. His infatuation for his wife is a point in his favour; he is capable of passion. But there is a sense of failure in the story that centres mostly in Arthur, and which is signified by his "sleepy and apathetic" eyes (p. 155). Unlike Flavia, he is bright enough and sensitive enough to perceive falsity in others. He refers to the guests as "the faciles," and sees Imogen as "girt about with illusions" (pp. 161, 172). But he does not observe the falsity in Flavia nor in himself.

That he is protective of his wife, insulting guests into leaving in order to keep her from seeing what Roux has said, one can admire--almost. After all, love is blind. But can he possibly not be aware of the condescension and contempt his wife has for him, that she sees him as having no "aesthetic sense whatever . . . absolutely nil [sic], stone deaf and stark blind . . . I have spent my life," Flavia says, "apologizing for him and struggling to conceal it . . ." (p. 169). What kind of person is Arthur that he is content to sacrifice himself for this? In a short scene where Arthur and Flavia come close to being frank with each other, he goes

to sleep in his chair. The act is symbolic of his attitude generally, and however difficult it may be to pinpoint the nature of his failure, failed or damaged greatness is felt in him.

Sand City, in "The Sculptor's Funeral," is a depressing little Kansas town where the people esteem what they call the "practical" values of ruthless money-making (p. 181). Against this, Cather sets the genius of the recently-deceased artist, Harvey Merrick, and that of the non-artist, Jim Laird, both of whom had started out wanting for themselves something beyond monetary success. In a fit of frustrated anger, not unlike that of M. Roux in the previous story, Laird pays tribute to Merrick, who never allowed himself to be held back by others' narrowness of vision. But it is Laird himself who commands the reader's sympathy. If Merrick could be called a primitive who gained access to the fairy treasure, unscathed, for "whatever he touched, he revealed its holiest secret" (p. 180), Laird embodies an authentic barbarian too, not only in appearance--he is Barbarossa with his "astonishing cataract of red beard" (p. 173)--but in spirit. He speaks the truth to people who do not want to hear it. In him, the sculptor's pupil recognizes "what he had been heartsick at not finding before--the feeling, the understanding, that must exist in someone, even here" (p. 178). Laird's failure to follow his own career in a way that he himself could respect has made him into an angry man and an alcoholic. Like Arthur in "Flavia and Her Artists," there is failed greatness in Laird. But unlike Arthur, Laird knows his own failure and is angry

both with himself and with the society that helped in his defeat. This anger, for all its ugliness, is a more creative response, in Cather's view, than the turning of a blind eye to trouble, and, contrary to appearances, indicates that the life principle is alive and strong in Laird.

The point on which "The Garden Lodge" turns, in relation to the Kingsley source, is the mystical sense: "the part of one that sets up an idol and the part of one that bows down and worships it" (p. 190). Fearful of her own susceptibility for worship, Caroline Noble, at age thirty, has set aside a promising career in music and married for security rather than love. A crisis occurs as a result of a month-long visit from a Metropolitan Opera star, whose singing Caroline daily accompanies on the piano. Two weeks after his departure, in order to make room for a summer house, Caroline's husband suggests the dismantling of the garden lodge, a kind of studio where she has recently spent many hours of intensive musical effort with the now-departed guest. The lodge in some way represents for Caroline all her suppressed yearnings, both as an artist and as a sexual being, and the idea of destroying it puts her at a critical turning point. After several hours of struggle, she manages to subdue her visionary impulses, and the next day advises her husband to proceed with his demolition plans for the lodge. The picture given of Caroline's background, of the family who harbored "poetic ideals" amid "sordid realities" of

"indolence and poverty" (p. 189), has none of the appeal of the "happy, useful, well-ordered life" Caroline has chosen (p. 195). Yet the struggle she undergoes following the singer's visit shows that the denial of her own visionary nature has left to her an existence that is "not even real" (p. 195). At the end, Caroline's quiet laugh and light setting-aside of "sentiment," as she calls it (p. 197), have the echo of self-betrayal in them, and the Caroline of the first page of the story reappears, the damaged forest child, who wanted a dependable "barrier . . . between her and that world of visions and quagmires and failure" (p. 190).

Caroline never allows herself to worship, either at the shrine of love or of art, a striking contrast to Katharine in "A Death in the Desert" who does both. The latter, who is dying of tuberculosis in the Wyoming desert, has lived for her art and for love of Adriance Hilgarde, a musician of some note. This man is so accustomed to adulation that he has never known or, perhaps, cared to know, of Katharine's infatuation. Though she suffers the pangs of unrequited love and now, in her illness, physical exile from high culture, there is no feeling that she has wasted herself or denied her own nature. She has the air of a Roman goddess, "imperatrix," that corroborates her status as a Teuton become Roman,<sup>6</sup> in the best sense (p. 205). She is the rare forest child who has survived the troll garden experience. Yet there is defeat too, in her hopeless love and early death. Adriance does not enter the story, but he is felt from first to last through her and through Everett, his younger



brother who bears a remarkable likeness to him.

Everett comes into Katharine's life by chance during her last weeks, and the story takes place around his daily visits to her until her death. Though he is musical, he is not a true artist. Still, he participates in greatness in his own way. Unknown to Katharine, he has loved her since he was young, and he does not draw back from the sad task of waiting out her death with her. As for Adriance, there is a suggestion that, in spite of his dedication to art, he somehow falls short of his potential, that the making of "things rare and strange" has gone to his head. His failure lies in the region of superficiality and charm. He does not engage with people as people, but as reflectors of his own brilliance. Katharine describes him:

He has a genuine fondness for everyone who is not stupid or gloomy, or old or preternaturally ugly . . . I shared with the rest: shared the smiles and the gallantries and the droll little sermons. It was quite like a Sunday-school picnic; we wore our best clothes and a smile and took our turns (p. 215).

"The Marriage of Phaedra" takes place in London, and tells of two people brought together in an ill-matched marriage. The deceased painter, Treffinger, is one of Cather's great people, according to the Kingsley-Cather paradigm, for he had qualities such as "freshness and spontaneity . . . frank brutality . . . religious mysticism," and, at one time, a great passion for the Lady Ellen (p. 225). Now his widow, she is

one of those characters who is meant to reflect the damage done by too much social refinement. Her "repose" (p. 228) and placidness are extreme, and suggest the absence of passion altogether. Frankness, her husband's biographer discovers, is not possible with her (p. 228), and she seems lacking in understanding of either the artist or his work, a feature she shares with her sister, Lady Mary. The patrician Ellen, it seems, even thought to reform Treffinger when she first married him, that is, to help him acquire a social refinement equivalent to her own. Of course, in Cather's estimate, nothing would have destroyed his greatness more effectively.

The story is the piecing together of details of the artist's life by another painter, McMaster, who gets most of his important information from James, Treffinger's servant. At the time of his death, the artist left unfinished a painting entitled "The Marriage of Phaedra" which McMaster regards as a masterpiece. This painting constitutes a kind of "play within the play." It, along with the many preliminary studies, is a representation of Treffinger's courtship and marriage. The "plot" of his painting is Greek myth, the story of Phaedra and her infatuation for her new husband's son, Hippolytus; but Treffinger's characterization is based on medieval legend--for him a primary source as Kingsley was for Cather. The sexes are reversed in the picture: Hippolytus represents Lady Ellen and Phaedra, Treffinger. In medieval terms, "a very Christian knight" plays the part of Ellen, and "a daughter of heathenesse"(sic), "Blanche of Castile" plays Treffinger (p. 225). Cather's reference to "heathenesse" and "a

very Christian knight" suggests she is working in Chaucer's "Prologue" to The Canterbury Tales, specifically with the knight. The opposition between the two medieval figures is stated thus: the religious zeal of the knight, veteran of many campaigns against the infidel, vis-à-vis the "daughter of heathenesse," Blanche, a ruler who strongly opposed her troops going off on the crusades. In the portrait, the full-blooded pagan, Blanche, looks with love at a creature who, by the final painting, has been critically damaged: "deflowered of something of its serene unconsciousness" (p. 225), and who is, therefore, no longer a fit lover for her. The painting is a miniature of the story.

"A Wagner Matinée" is a story about Georgiana, a woman who gives up a flourishing career in music to follow her new husband to the Nebraska plains. The story takes place thirty years later when she returns briefly to Boston, where she is taken under the protection of her nephew, Clark. He is genuinely fond of his aunt, who had looked after him as a boy, but even he is a bit shaken by her appearance now. Her body is much misshapen from years of hard work; her clothes do not fit. Worst of all, she seems to be in a dazed state, "semi-somnambulant" (p. 237) Clark calls it, and one is reminded of Arthur with his sleepy eyes and of Lady Ellen's "repose." Clark had intended to give his aunt "a little pleasure" by taking her to a Wagner matinée, but she seems so intimidated by the city and so absent to the here and now that he begins to grow "doubtful about her enjoyment" of such an event (p. 237).

The music does its work, however. Under its influence, the slumbering artist in Georgiana begins to rouse, and a buried metaphor likens her to the orchestra, both having power to quicken and create. Parallels are inferred between Georgiana as "the granite Rameses" watching, and "the clean profiles of the musicians;" between her "linen duster" and the linen worn by the members of the orchestra; her "black stuff dress" and "the dull black of their coats;" "skin . . . as yellow as a Mongolian's" and the "patches of yellow light" on the instruments; and there is also the beloved aunt's "misshapen figure" (with particular mention of her abdomen) and "the beloved shapes of the instruments" with emphasis on their "bellies" (pp. 236, 238-239). As the tale unfolds, it turns out that Georgiana's strange appearance cloaks one more of Cather's great people, whose looks in no way betray her exceptional stature as a person. At the end of the *matinée*, Georgiana sits while the members of the orchestra leave and, to carry the metaphor through, it is as if she were watching the departure of her own creative self. After all the players have gone, both the stage and the life Georgiana is left with remain "empty as a winter cornfield" (p. 241). It is a strong statement by Cather about the ultimate destructiveness of a sacrifice like Georgiana's.

~~X~~The last of The Troll Garden stories is "Paul's Case," which takes place in both Pittsburgh and New York. Paul is one of those awkward teen-aged boys who cannot make himself fit the dreary image, as it seems to

him, demanded by home and school. He finds temporary release in a job as usher at Carnegie Hall, and by frequenting the actors' dressing room of one of the local stock companies. But complaints from the school principal cause Paul's father to forbid him these pleasures, and finally, to take him out of school and put him to work. The first chance he gets, Paul steals a large sum of money from the company, and goes to New York where he checks in at the Waldorf Hotel. There, he not only feels at home but fits well into the luxurious surroundings. This respite lasts only a few days. His theft is discovered, and rather than return to what seems to him the unbearable circumstances of his Pittsburgh life, he kills himself by jumping in front of a train.

"Paul's Case" uses the troll garden myth to advantage, not only as a pattern of events, but in its images, such as the picture of Paul, standing in the rain late at night, gazing up at the Schenley Hotel with its "orange glow" windows, and going, in his imagination, inside, into "an exotic, a tropical world of shiny, glistening surfaces and basking ease" (p. 247). In this story, the fairy palace assumes an identity different from those of the preceding tales. For Paul, greatness consists in beauty and pleasure, anything that delights the senses.

Another important motif that pervades the story is the world of the stage. Paul often behaves as though he were being observed by an audience, and the narration itself tends to slip into imagery of the stage. When he

reads in the papers that his theft has been discovered and that his father is coming to New York to look for him, he has "the old feeling that the orchestra had suddenly stopped, the sinking sensation that the play was over" (p. 258). Cather has overlaid troll garden imagery with that of the stage, and it makes an effective combination in that both imageries represent "a world apart"<sup>7</sup>--which is where Paul longs to be. The stage also stands for art which, for all its beauty and perfection, is not real life. Paul's dilemma is that he can find self-esteem only in that world apart. "In the real world, he is a nobody, a failure." Consequently, he acts the dandy, acts the part of what he most admires, and one has to give him credit for the manner in which he carries his role through to the end of the "play." Like a true actor, when everything in his personal life is falling to pieces, "he would show himself that he was game, he would finish the thing splendidly" (p. 259).

Analysis of Paul for Kingsleyan greatness does not contribute much towards our understanding of him. On the other hand, there is a strong feeling that he has suffered damage of some sort, and to this the Kingsley model can speak. Frankness is essential to the human greatness that Cather proposes in these stories, and Paul is prone to lying. Unlike Flavia in the first story, he is aware of his deceptions, though not fully, and dislikes practising them. There is a compulsiveness in Paul's lying that, paradoxically, almost seems to come out of a need to know himself as real. In the hotel in New York, he feels that his surroundings

explain him and that at last, he no longer needs to lie. But the elegant backdrop reflects his dreams, his fairy palace, not the realities of his Pittsburgh life. In New York, he no longer needs to lie, verbally, because the manner in which he is living proclaims the lie for him. Yet, for Willa Cather, dreams are an important part of a person. Paul at the Waldorf is not entirely counterfeit.

Cather does not condone Paul's lying, but the story suggests that there is more than dishonesty responsible for his unhappy life. He is strange in ways that his dabblings with falsity do not explain. His eyes have a "hysterical brilliancy," his smile is "haunted," and when asleep, his face looks "white, blue-veined . . . drawn and wrinkled like an old man's" (pp. 243-244). The narrator may be speaking for the author as well as Paul's teachers when he says: "There was something about the boy which none of them understood" (p. 244). Paul is probably homosexual, a fact that would tend to alienate him from society and, no doubt, put him into the habit of lying, in the first place. Does homosexuality, in itself, undermine greatness--that is to say, is it a manifestation of the damaged forest child? Cather seems unprepared to say. Early in the story, one of his teachers suggests that Paul may have been injured by a severe illness which his mother suffered around the time of his birth--still another reason proffered for Paul's inability to survive.

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In the final analysis, one senses that the author herself does not completely understand her character--nor does she need to. She knows him, and that is what matters. The Kingsley prototype seems not to have been broad enough to encompass Paul, and therefore he lives outside of it, as it were, even though in the mythology of the story, he is the naive forest child, standing, entranced, outside the walls of the garden.

The Troll Garden has two epigraphs, the Kingsley quotation on the title page, and opposite, a verse from Christina Rossetti's poem, "Goblin Market:"

We must not look at Goblin men,  
We must not buy their fruits;  
Who knows upon what soil they fed  
Their hungry thirsty roots?

Cather admired Christina Rossetti and especially "Goblin Market," her "one perfect poem . . . vivid enough to delight a child, profound enough to charm a sage."<sup>8</sup> In some five hundred short, richly-sensual lines, the poem tells of goblins that peddle their wares, succulent fruits of every description. When the two sisters, Lizzie and Laura, fetch water from the brook, they hear the goblins urging them to buy. Despite Lizzie's cautioning, Laura gazes upon the forbidden sight of the market. Her curiosity leads her to make a bargain with the little men: she gives them a lock of hair and, in return, is permitted to gorge herself on the fruit. Afterwards, she stumbles home, and at first appears to resume a normal life. But her appetite for the fruit has taken charge, and when, on the



following evening she looks for the goblins, despair overtakes her when she realizes that she can no longer hear their cries--although Lizzie can. In the absence of gratification for her one passion, Laura's young body begins to waste, her hair to turn grey. Finally, when the end seems not far off, Lizzie, in spite of obvious danger to herself, undertakes to get fruit for her sister. She goes to the goblins and gives them her penny; she will not eat, however, asking only for fruit to carry away in her apron. Enraged, the goblins attack her, battering her with fruit in an attempt to make her eat. Lizzie will not open her lips, and when their fury is spent, she rushes home to Laura, bidding her suck and kiss the juices off her body. The fruit, so much desired by Laura, tastes like wormwood this time, and she falls into a deathlike trance. Early next day, she wakes "as from a dream," her youth and innocence restored, her bondage to the magic fruit ended.

No doubt "Goblin Market" appealed to Willa Cather for a variety of reasons, but at this point our concern is with those elements that are relevant to The Troll Garden. The most obvious of these is the familiar story of seduction and betrayal, similar in some respects (though very different in others) to the troll garden myth. It is partly for their statement of enticement and danger that Cather cited excerpts from both the Rossetti and Kingsley sources at the front of The Troll Garden. A second feature important to both the early collection and the novella is the idea of "contrasting double selves (one sister tastes and the other one saves),"<sup>9</sup> the pull between desire and discretion. It is one of many dualities that Cather explored over the years.<sup>10</sup> There is in all her works, Slotte comments,

"an instinctive pairing of the major dualities with conflicts within conflicts . . . it was not simply a matter of style; she thought this way, in doubleness and contrast."<sup>11</sup> In The Troll Garden, Cather is particularly concerned with the idea of two selves in opposition, the double self. This theme is played with variations throughout the stories of the collection.

A strong component of "Flavia and Her Artists" is a quality of unconscious duplicity that pervades human relationships. There is always tension between what people are in this story, and how they are perceived. Thus Imogen, who is still half in love with the fairy-tale Arthur of her childhood, assigns him heroic, even Christlike virtues: "He has bared his back to the tormentor" (p. 171). Jimmy, on the other hand, who views him with more detachment, has a different image of Arthur: "Caius Marius among the ruins of Carthage," a man of futile endeavours (p. 172). Some of Flavia's guests are presented as pretentious, foolish people; yet Flavia sees them as among the great ones of the world. Indeed, that is the work of the story: to take the reader among people who do not know where true greatness lies and who grasp at much lesser things. Confusion spreads as a result of conflicting selves that adhere to the characters, and duality multiplies into a Tower of Babel situation, which Jimmy predicts when she says: "Chaos has already begun in the servants' quarters. There are six different languages spoken there now" (p. 164).

While duality occurs by way of differing perceptions in "Flavia and Her Artists," in "The Sculptor's Funeral" there are two characters who have

in common their hometown and, at one time, their goals: to be "great men" (p. 184). Though one is an artist and one a lawyer, and the first gains wide recognition of his genius while the lawyer remains, in his own eyes, a small-town "shyster" (p. 184), as it turns out their differing from each other is not as great as their mutual alienation from their fellow townsmen. This becomes evident when Laird delivers his angry speech, which is a kind of funeral oration. One guesses that Laird has no real hope of changing anyone's mind about Merrick. He speaks out of personal necessity, and his words reveal his own integrity as much as that of his friend. Duality in this story does not cause disintegration, but issues in the kind of enigma that intrigued Willa Cather: one man so finely tuned as to seem, in the eyes of "normal" people, deficient in manly spirit; the other exhibiting the weakness of the addict and so violent a nature that he appears too insensitive to merit regard. Yet, the two men are brothers under the skin, a double manifestation of primitive greatness. That quality is the connection the thoughtful observer, Steavens, ponders: "He could not help wondering what link there could have been between the porcelain vessel [Harvey Merrick] and so sooty a lump of potter's clay [Laird]" (p. 178).

"The Garden Lodge" involves a third type of doubleness, an ambivalence that shows itself entirely within the protagonist. Caroline has two selves: cool-headed, practical "Lizzie" and visionary, high-spirited "Laura." But Lizzie, in this instance, is afraid of Laura. To

let oneself be carried away by feeling leads to idol-worship, in Caroline's mind. This idea pertains to Cather's view of the artist's predicament, for to her, art is like religion in the quality of dedication it demands from its believers.<sup>12</sup> In this story, Caroline chooses "life" above art, and Cather explores that choice, which turns out to be inadequate.

"A Death in the Desert" picks up and works again with the types of dualities in the first two stories. Like "Flavia and Her Artists," the desert tale has to do with indulging in wished-for perceptions. There is also a dual manifestation of greatness in the two brothers, one an artist, one not, similar to the pairing of the two men in "The Sculptor's Funeral." The fact of the two look-alike brothers--and the resemblance appears to go in one direction only--does not result in a bond of sympathy, such as exists between Laird and Merrick. Instead, each of the brothers in his own, individual expertise has the effect of showing up the other's weak point. Adriance's success as an artist reveals Everett's mediocrity as a musician, while the latter's largeness of spirit exposes the shallowness of his charming elder brother.

A curious twist occurs in this fourth and middle story. What is a real duality is continually denied. The characters, even those who are close to the brothers (like their mother and Katharine), indulge themselves by imagining Everett to be Adriance, thus trivializing Everett's existence. Towards this, his own annihilation, Everett shows a bland courtesy, even though Cather has depicted him as a passionate individual. What does he

really feel, one wonders. The story is silent on this point, by which Cather seems to suggest that something is very amiss with Everett, that he may either hate himself or hate his brother. The game of pretending Everett is Adriance and the younger Hilgarde's consenting to it, as it seems, indicate it is Everett's death in the desert as well as Katharine's that we witness in this story.

Also in a disturbing vein, "The Marriage of Phaedra" plays with doubleness. First, there is a pairing between Treffinger and his man, James. The artist's biographer, McMaster, finds in James a unique combination. He has no pretensions to artistic judgement while, on the other hand, he has known the artist intimately in the context of the studio, where Treffinger was most himself. For these reasons, James is the one who provides the most accurate picture of his master for the biographer. It is appropriate that James wears the great man's cast-off clothes, and, that they are too big for him. He reflects his former employer as the portrait reflects the story itself.

In addition, "The Marriage of Phaedra" suggests a doubleness that betrays in the conflicting images Treffinger either received or conceived (or both) of the Lady Ellen, over the period spanning their courtship and marriage. On this duality the story rests. It is the source of the artist's unhappiness, the impetus to his final masterpiece, and the cause of his death.

M. Beck  
TAMMVA

The conflict in Georgiana's life in "A Wagner Matinée" lies in the opposition between art and love, for her, mutually exclusive professions.<sup>13</sup> Cather expresses this duality in two ways, first, by juxtaposing the environments into which each of these passions has led her heroine. The brief letter Georgiana's sympathetic kinsman, Clark, receives at the beginning is enough to open "before my feet a gulf of recollection so wide and deep [that] . . . I felt suddenly a stranger" in the familiar surroundings of the Boston study (p. 235). This first separation in Clark's mind initiates a story of disturbing contrasts. Cather repeatedly crowds the grim world of frontier life up against the excitement and grandeur and beauty of the Boston concert hall. A second manifestation of the same cleavage between art and love is represented by the various compositions performed at the Wagner matinée. The musical program as a whole dramatizes for Georgiana the "battle of the two motives" that have animated her life (p. 239), and we recognize the reality of her dilemma by her deeply felt response to these pieces. "The Pilgrim's Chorus" is indicative of a sacred calling: for Georgiana, a life given to music. The Venusberg theme stands for the "impetuous pursuit of physical love:"<sup>14</sup> Georgiana's marriage at the age of thirty to an "idle and shiftless" villager of twenty-one (p. 236). "The Prize Song" from Die Meistersinger announces the triumph of love (over an artistic career, in Georgiana's case), and the last part of the matinée features four numbers from the epic saga, The Ring, ending with "Seigfried's Funeral March." This composition celebrates the death of a hero who was

killed by treachery, and I believe it is not stretching Cather's imaginative intent to take that theme of grandeur and tragedy as belonging also to Georgiana. The Wagner *matinée*, like the portrait in "The Marriage of Phaedra," is a replica of the story surrounding it.

In "Paul's Case," the contradictory urgings that Paul experiences are those of artifice and reality, but unlike Caroline and Georgiana, he is not drawn towards both but only one of the polarities of his life. It is the world around him that would push him in the direction of the other. His one desire is to live permanently in the infinitely expandable atmosphere of artifice, of that which is created for effect. He perceives the alternative course, that is, real life, as drabness, monotony, entrapment--in short, as death to his spirit. This being so, he really has little choice. The direction of his life seems suicidal from the start. According to all three of these double-self stories, duality within the person predetermines some measure of suicide. Caroline opts for what is "not even real" (p. 195); Georgiana's genius is wasted in the wretched circumstances of her frontier existence; and Paul commits physical suicide. The idea of the ambivalent self must have haunted Willa Cather, because several years later she creates another tragically divided person in her story of Myra Henshawe.

## REFERENCES - PART ONE

1. See The Roman and the Teuton, A Series of Lectures delivered before the University of Cambridge, with a Preface by Professor F. Max Müller (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1877), pp. 1-16.
2. KA, p. 93.
3. The same myth occurs with variations in other of Cather's sources, such as Rossetti's poem, "Goblin Market," and Keats' Endymion. These are discussed later in this paper.
4. Kingsley, p. 2.
5. KA, p. 94.
6. Speaking of Willa Cather's "delight in the barbarian," Slote says: "If she also believed in Rome, it was the Rome which was strong and powerful and creative" (KA, p. 94).
7. For comments by Bernice Slote regarding Cather's use of the stage image as that of "a world apart" in Alexander's Bridge, see KA, p. 100.
8. Journal, January 13, 1895; see KA, p. 349.
9. Slote, KA, p. 95.
10. See, for example, Slote, KA, pp. 69-71; 80-81. See also a recent article by Ann Mosely, "The Dual Nature of Art in The Song of the Lark," Western American Literature, (May '79), pp. 19-32.
11. KA, p. 80. This paper is concerned with duality primarily as a theme but the idea of doubleness pervades all Cather's work as technique--the implications of which would constitute a topic for study in themselves.



12. Cather writes: "In the kingdom of art there is no God, but one God, and his service is so exacting that there are few men born of women who are strong enough to take the vows." Journal, March 1, 1896. See KA, p. 417.

13. Feminist criticism would note that Georgiana's dilemma is peculiarly female. It is because of the power which men hold over women in her society that Georgiana's marriage issues in the sacrifice of her art.

14. Richard Giannone, Music in Willa Cather's Fiction (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1968), p. 43.

## PART TWO

Almost immediately on the first page of My Mortal Enemy one meets again the troll garden notion of the reckless pursuit of an ideal. Myra's elopement with Oswald, her grasping of love, is just such an event, and it sets the stage for all that comes after. The mythology of the parable is, therefore, significant to the novella, not only in the initial note struck, but in the variations that follow. However, the mythology is much entangled in this book with material from other of Cather's sources. Accordingly, we shall not take up the troll garden myth-pattern directly. A better approach is to leave it aside for now, and deal with it later in conjunction with the other sources.

On the other hand, the Kingsley image of the barbarian can readily be singled out for examination. John Driscoll, for example, who is Myra's uncle, exhibits many attributes of the primitive. He has had little schooling for he was "so unlettered that he made a poor showing with a pen," and his burning of treasury notes on which he had spoiled his signature seems like the act of a child, that is, a forest child (p. 13). That "he would help a friend, no matter what it cost him, and over and over again . . . risked ruining himself to crush an enemy" shows passion and daring (p. 81); and that he was frank, Myra bears witness: "He gave me fair warning, and then he kept his word. I knew he would . . ." (p. 81). Humour and earthiness are apparent in his fondness for "naughty rhymes . . . the kind bad boys write

on fences" (p. 80). Finally, he was a religious man, not a Father Latour,<sup>1</sup> it is true (he could not be, he was uneducated), but a staunch Catholic, in his own way. His funeral with its colorful pageantry is the crowning mark of Driscoll's barbarian status. The ceremony is described in richly pagan terms:<sup>2</sup>

The high altar blazed with hundreds of candles, the choir was entirely filled by the masses of flowers. The bishop was there, and a flock of priests in gorgeous vestments. When the pall-bearers arrived, Driscoll did not come to the church; the church went to him. The bishop and clergy went down the nave and met that great black coffin at the door, preceded by the cross and boys swinging cloudy censers, followed by the choir chanting to the organ. They surrounded, they received, they seemed to assimilate into the body of the church, the body of old John Driscoll. They bore it up to the high altar on a river of colour and incense and organ-tone; they claimed it and enclosed it (p. 18).

Though Nellie is not a Catholic, she finds Driscoll's funeral curiously satisfying. Myra, on the other hand, does not need the trappings of greatness to know what manner of person he was: "My uncle was a very unusual man," she tells Nellie. Neither she nor the book condemns Driscoll for his savage ways. One hears the unmistakable voice of the author in Myra's statement: "Yes, he had violent prejudices, but that's rather good to remember in these days when so few people have any real passions, either of love or hate" (pp. 80-81).

There is a special kinship between Myra and her great-uncle. "As we grow old," she says, "we become more and more the stuff our forbears put into us. I can feel his savagery strengthen in me . . . the nature our strain of blood carries is inside there, waiting, like our skeleton" (p. 82). Like Driscoll, Myra is a barbarian, though her nature has been tempered by the advantages of civilization. Passion leads her into a runaway marriage but also gives her, as Oswald says, many "generous friendships" (p. 76). "Her chief extravagance," Nellie remembers, "was in caring for so many people and in caring for them so much" (p. 43). When Myra feels her trust has been betrayed, her anger is terrifying to Nellie. And again, it is Myra's capacity for high feeling that makes her suffer on behalf of her friend, Anne Aylward, who is dying, and for herself in the closing months of her life.

Straight speaking on Myra's part accounts for several of the uncomfortable moments in Nellie's tale: the painful confrontation between Myra and Lydia over the cuff-buttons (p. 54), and again, between Myra and Oswald in the matter of the key (pp. 49-50). She does not hesitate to violate the norms of polite talk when it comes to saying what she sees as true: "We've destroyed each other. I should have stayed with my uncle . . . We were never really happy" (p. 75). If she was reckless when she threw away a fortune and married Oswald, she was also daring, a quality she never loses, as we see in the manner of her death. As for her sense of humour, Myra's laughter is a symbol of her presence. Three times Nellie hears her laugh before she sees her (pp. 26, 49, 53), and over and over, Myra's

appearance is accompanied by her laughter which is, as Nellie says, real "mirth, not hysteria" (p. 10).

An affinity between Myra and the physical world appears in her fondness for wearing furs.<sup>3</sup> She is "swathed in furs" when she meets Nellie and her aunt in New York (p. 20). And on three further occasions, Nellie refers to Myra's furs: on the train (p. 53), at "Gloucester's Cliff" (p. 72), and when she disappears at the end (p. 99). Oswald, too, affirms the link between Myra and primitive, animal forces when he says to Nellie: "I'd rather have been clawed by her, as she used to say, than petted by any other woman I've ever known" (p. 104). As for Myra's mystical side, she may seem to have rejected this aspect of her nature when she married Oswald and broke with the church. However, her superstitions about opals as harbingers of bad luck, her willingness to have her fortune told, and, most of all, her receptivity to the arts witness to a lively mystical sense. One is not surprised to see her return to religion in later life.

In addition to these marks of excellence, as Cather conceived it, she bestows on Myra other, more conventional signs of greatness. An allusion to her hair "done high on her head, à la Pompadour" creates a whiff of exquisitely-dressed hauteur coupled with political and sexual prowess (p. 6). The moon, and Diana, goddess of the moon, are a shadowy presence in the first part of Myra's story, while in Part Two, four of the kings of olden times are summoned: Solomon, in Myra's suggestion that the portrait of Nellie's grandfather be cut in two (p. 65),<sup>4</sup> John, Richard II, and King Lear.

These last three monarchs lost their kingdoms, but they knew and declared their rightful, royal inheritance. Another symbol of greatness from the ancient world is the colour purple, which is frequently associated with Myra: the amethyst necklace; the garnet feather in her hat; English violets, violet buildings and the violet sky of Madison Square; the plum-colored curtains and chairs "like ripe purple fruit" (p. 26); and Myra's "Chinese dressing gown," her "brilliant wrappings" when she holds court, as it were, in her illness--not purple, but a pagan brilliance and mixture of colour suitable to a barbarian queen (pp. 61, 65).

According to the Kingsley-Cather pattern for human greatness, John Driscoll and his niece possess the qualities of great primitives. The elder of the two is the "ancestor." He echoes Myra's nature in the drama, in sharper, cruder, tones. Through him, Cather bestows a consciousness of lineage, a pride of being on Myra. She, of course, is in the forefront. It is her story, but her background augurs excellence.

A cursory glance at the other characters is in order at this point. One of the things that Nellie emphasizes about Oswald is his lethargic manner, his "half-moon eyes," "limp, drooping moustache," and the "courage and force which slept" (pp. 52, 8). He also possesses a certain quality of charm in his dealings with Lydia, Nellie, and the young reporter (in Part Two). Ewan Gray is rather like Oswald. He is a "lamb,"<sup>5</sup> "the sort of boy that women pick up and run off into the jungle with" (p. 23), which suggests both meekness and great charm. In spite of the fact that Gray is supposed

to be madly in love, both Nellie's remark about his "cool, deliberate fastidiousness" and Myra's "Oh, the deliberation of him! If I could only make him hurry once," suggest a rather passionless nature (pp. 28, 22). The remaining characters, Lydia and Nellie, are each twice described by Myra as "clever" or an equivalent word (pp. 7, 36 [twice], 61). Whether their cleverness is the kind that compromises greatness remains to be seen. According to the Kingsley schema of primitive greatness and, depending on the extent to which the author is invoking it, the reader may have reason to expect a "flawed performance" from four of the six main characters.

My Mortal Enemy consists simply of two sections, Parts One and Two, evenly balanced in size and importance. The structure echoes the content, which is a story about a twofold greatness. Myra Henshawe is deeply divided within herself. She was made for love and also for "success and a place in the world" (p. 75). For some people, these are not contradictory impulses. But for many others, they are--as Willa Cather knew very well. She was aware of how "the personal self might endanger the artist" and, in this regard, that "marriage was one hazard."<sup>6</sup> "A Wagner Matinée," in which Georgiana the musician is destroyed by Georgiana the lover, exemplifies this split. For Myra, likewise, though not an artist, it is the erotic self that thwarts the other and its powers of expression. The question is: what, in Myra's case, is the precise nature of that other self?

She herself puts it this way, as she contemplates her marriage:

I should have stayed with my uncle. It was money I needed . . . We [Myra and Oswald] were never really happy. I am a greedy, selfish worldly woman; I wanted success and a place in the world (p. 75).

"Greedy" and "selfish" are harsh words. They speak of Myra's desire, the strength of that other self's need for expression. "Worldly" reiterates the phrase "success and a place in the world," and here is where Myra's vocation is to be found. We catch a glimpse of what this means in concrete terms in the New York section of the story, where Myra lives in the gracious surroundings of the Madison Square apartment and maintains a lively contact with her gifted friends. Myra's self-definition (above) lacks a sympathy that the author feels for her protagonist, and that somehow comes through in the strong, bold strokes by which she delineates her heroine. In this regard, the early story, "A Resurrection," with its explicit statement about a certain strain of women that Cather had observed, provides a more feeling view of such a person as Myra, one that is felt in the novella but which is not spelled out. Here again is part of the passage from the 1897 story:

She was one of those women one sometimes sees . . . especially fashioned for all the fullness of life; for large experiences and the great world where a commanding personality is felt and valued . . . made to ride in carriages and wear jewels and grace first nights at the opera . . . women who were made to rule . . .<sup>7</sup>



But to live this kind of life requires money, as Myra points out. And by a "hideous injustice," to use her own words (p. 65), when Myra married for love, she doomed herself to being always and increasingly short of money. This is due, first, to her uncle's act of revenge and, second, to Oswald's inability to earn.<sup>8</sup> Myra's duality, then, is defined in terms of love (and marriage) or remaining in her own milieu and staying single. In other words, the alternatives are love or chastity--clearly contradictory options.

The notion of forbidden love and divine retribution is suggestive of the gods and religious myth, a familiar presence in Cather's fiction. In Myra's story, the gods and their escapades serve the writer's purposes particularly well, since myths provide a ready embodiment of destinies like those of love and chastity. Several illustrious figures turn up on the pages of this slim novel, such as Diana, Hyperion, and others, but initially, the story directs attention to Venus, the goddess of love. Through allusions, she is associated with Myra.

Nellie's first impression of "Mrs. Myra," which she acquired as a child by listening to family talk, is that of a Juliet who sacrificed everything for love of her Romeo. This is an early Myra who became legendary through her elopement, "when Love went out the gates," as Nellie says, "and gave the dare to Fate" (p. 17). Myra's laugh that so often announces her arrival is a reminder of Homer's Venus, "laughter-loving Dame."<sup>9</sup> Another emblem of Venus is the dove. Nellie says: "When she was peaceable she was

like a dove with its wings folded" (p. 35). This is a side of Myra that somehow gets lost in the telling of the story, but it is Nellie herself who points it out. Myra has a tendency to engage in matchmaking. This, in conjunction with her "inexplicably mischievous hands," suggests the capricious work of Aphrodite's son, Cupid (p. 63).

But the Venus side of Myra is no sooner established than she begins to change, and to show another identity. By far, the greater number of allusions associate Myra with the goddess of chastity, in her many forms. For the tension of the novel exists in revealing Myra's thwarted side. The allusions are myriad and complex. As one of Diana's followers, Myra is a creature intended for a life of unwedded brilliance and influence, and Oswald, accordingly, like Endymion in Keats' poem, welcomes whatever might be the consequences of loving her. In the myth, Endymion may not possess the goddess, and rather than experience loss of her, he chooses to stay young and sleep forever. Thus Nellie speaks of Oswald's "half-moon eyes," his "courage and force which slept," and his strange pose during the singing of "Casta Diva," hymn to the moon: ". . . standing like a statue, or a sentinel," conveying "indestructible constancy . . . almost indestructible youth" (pp. 52, 103). The picture Nellie conjures closely resembles Keats' image of Endymion:

But in the self-same fixed trance he kept,  
Like one who on the earth had never slept.  
Aye, even as dead-still as a marble man,  
Frozen in that old tale Arabian.<sup>10</sup>

At the literal level, Oswald lives in the past, haunted by his original vision of Molly Driscoll. Nellie, indeed, falls under the Diana-enchantment of Madison Square, but it is Oswald who is properly "moon-struck" in this tale (p. 26).

In the Keats poem, Roman "Diana" is the moon goddess, chaste huntress, beautiful beyond human imagining. But in another version of the myth, her name is Selene, the moon, and daughter of the Titan sun god, Hyperion. Both forms of the myth are present in the pairing of Oswald and Myra. One guesses that legends of the Titans, a once mighty race of giant gods that was conquered and ultimately destroyed, appealed strongly to Willa Cather. In My Mortal Enemy, their story offered a ready metaphor for her character, John Driscoll, whose unusual qualities had become rare in the time setting of the novella. He is, on one level, Hyperion, one of the last of the Titans, and "father" of the moon goddess, Selene, who took the mortal, Endymion, for her lover. As in Myra, so in her uncle, mythic beings converge, for he is also Apollo, the Olympian sun god, who daily traverses the sky with his celestial steeds. Driscoll "kept fast horses" (p. 12) and, like Apollo, divine patron of music, supported and encouraged the local town band. Hyperion's daughter was said to have had an early affair with the goat-footed Pan, in token of which he had given her a beautiful fleece. A reminder of this gift is captured in Nellie's description of Myra's hair: ". . . there were curious, zigzag, curly streaks of glistening white in it, which made it look like the fleece of a Persian goat or some

animal that bore silky fur" (p. 6).

The Titan myth further enriches the novella in the relation between Myra and her uncle. If we bear in mind that at one level she is the sun god's "daughter," the significance of certain remarks and events takes a sharper focus. When, early in the story, Myra uses the expression "salute the morn" (p. 21), she quotes from the first line of the Christmas carol, "Christians Awake"<sup>11</sup>--appropriately, since the day happens to be Christmas Eve. But her words which seem, at the time, simply a manner of speaking, are not just that. As Selene, Myra has special reason for saluting the morning. Perhaps Ewan Gray who is with her and included in her remark-- "we planned to salute the morn together"--has special reason, too. Could he be Apollo's one-time lover, Hyacinthus, for later he wears a sprig of that flower in his coat? As for Myra, her use of the word "salute" reflects what will later become more apparent: a kind of courtesy, even awe that she feels towards the coming of day, that is, of the sun. She thinks of dawn as a "forgiving time," that moment when the sun god returns to a delinquent world that no longer has any use for the old gods, and to a daughter that has disappointed him:

"I'd love to see this place at dawn," Myra said suddenly. "That is always such a forgiving time. When that first cold, bright streak comes over the water, it's as if all our sins were pardoned; as if the sky leaned over the earth and kissed it and gave it absolution. You know how the great sinners always came home to die in some religious house, and the abbot or the abbess went out and received them with a kiss?" (p. 73).

Thus when Myra feels that death is close, she returns "home." She goes to the cliff overlooking the sea and awaits the sun's "first cold, bright streak," the leaning of the sky over the earth which signifies to her, her adoptive father's kiss of absolution. This final release is the moment to which the narrative builds. It is the denouement of the conflict Myra unwittingly entered when she eloped--significantly the deed was done at night, in the absence of the sun. Nellie suggests a spell has been cast and names a fairy tale in which a kiss from a particular person is the freeing agent: "I thought of the [Driscoll] place as being under a spell, like the Sleeping Beauty's palace; it had been in a trance, or lain in its flowers like a beautiful corpse, ever since that winter night . . . " (p. 17). Note the reversal of cause and effect: in the fairy tale, it is the arrival of love in the form of a kiss from the prince that breaks the spell, whereas in Myra's story, it is the yielding to love in the first place that induces the spell.

At this point it will be obvious that there is a discrepancy between the two versions of the Endymion story. According to Keats' rendering, the moon goddess was Diana who remained forever chaste, whereas Selene was said to have had many children by her lover. This was not a problem to Cather because her application of myth to fiction generally entailed a loose affiliation. Myra is, after all, herself, not Venus or Diana, though she is meant to waken echoes of these and other legendary beings.

In addition to Selene and Diana, the moon, "one of the most deeply affective and complex" of Cather's symbols,<sup>12</sup> appears in this novella as Tanith, chief goddess of the once proud city of Carthage, and another mythic figure that fired the writer's imagination. Salammbô, a novel by Flaubert, was almost certainly Willa Cather's source for this representative of the lunar divinity.<sup>13</sup> The novel, first published in 1862, brings vividly to life the city of Carthage in the time of the great general, Hamilcar. A tale of incessant wars between Carthage and her mercenaries, renegades hired by her to fight Rome, Salammbô is a spectacle of passionate undertakings, atrocities committed, and sufferings endured, all told with extraordinary authorial detachment. In its day, the book drew a very mixed reaction as, apparently, it continues to do.<sup>14</sup> Willa Cather liked it best of Flaubert's writings, partly, one would think, for his "handling [of] oriental colour,"<sup>15</sup> a feature of that writer's skill, as well as for his "peculiar integrity of language and vision," as she wrote on another occasion, "that coldness which, in him, is somehow noble."<sup>16</sup> One thing that must have stirred her admiration is the French master's genius for creating intensely vivid and memorable tableaux--a facility that Willa Cather herself possessed--and there are grounds for the conjecture that one such episode stayed with her throughout her life: his picture in Chapter Three of the young virgin, Salammbô, invoking the goddess, Tanith.<sup>17</sup> In a highly evocative scene that takes place under a crescent moon on a terrace of the palace at Carthage, Salammbô hails the goddess:

. . . mistress of the gloomy sea and of the azure shores, O Queen of the watery world, all hail! . . .  
 When thou appearest, quietness is spread abroad . . .  
 Thou art white, gentle, luminous, immaculate,  
 helping, purifying, serene!  
 But thou art a terrible mistress! . . . thine eyes  
 devour the stones of buildings, and the apes are  
 ever ill each time thou growest young again.

Whither goest thou? Why dost thou change thy  
 forms continually? Now, slender and curved thou  
 glidest through space like a mastless galley; and then  
 . . . Shining and round, thou dost graze the mountain-  
 tops like the wheel of a chariot.<sup>18</sup>

The whole chapter has to be read in order to fully appreciate Tanith, but one can see in these few lines certain of her attributes, which also inform the character of Myra Henshawe.

Specifically, Tanith stands for three things in Myra's story. First, she reinforces the chastity theme. Like Diana, she can be terrible in the fierce demands she makes of her followers.<sup>19</sup> In the mythology of the story, it is she who provokes in Myra a sense of disquiet over the various love matches that she encounters. Ultimately, Tanith claims her own, winning the struggle against Venus and her influence, as Myra moves further and further away from being able to affirm the event of her marriage. Second, Tanith is august, sublime, a majestic presence of divine femininity, and as such she enhances the aura of greatness surrounding Myra. Tanith, "Queen of the watery world," presides over the Casta Diva scene. It is she whom the music invokes,<sup>20</sup> the aria "which begins so like the quivering of moonbeams on the water" (p. 47); she in whose presence true human greatness, in the person of Madame

Modjeska, can calmly sit; and she who calls forth in Myra the "hidden richness" (p. 48). The third factor Tanith brings to the story is her changeableness, fluctuations between fierceness and gentleness, between the images of destroyer and helper. As Salammbô points out in her invocation, the moon is constantly changing in form, and Myra, too, undergoes dramatic changes. Her laugh can be a welcome sound at one time, and frightening at another (p. 10). Nellie goes on to say that for Myra to let herself "think harm of anyone she loved seemed to change her nature, even her features" (my emphasis), (p. 54). Thus the author sets one duality within another. Myra's capacity for change between tenderness and fierceness is set within the larger duality of her twofold allegiance to love and to having a place in the world.

In all, there are five explicit references to the moon, four of which occur during the visit of Nellie and her aunt to New York. The first happens in association with Nellie's initial look at the great city:

The boat was pulling out and I was straining my eyes to catch, through the fine, reluctant snow, my first glimpse of the city we were approaching. We passed the Wilhelm der Grosse coming up the river under tug, her sides covered with ice after a stormy crossing, a flock of seagulls in her wake. The snow blurred everything a little, and the buildings on the Battery all ran together--looked like an enormous fortress with a thousand windows. From the mass, the dull gold dome of the World building emerged like a ruddy autumn moon at twilight (pp. 22-23).



This passage which reflects Willa Cather's own remembered first impression of New York<sup>21</sup> establishes a visionary backdrop for Myra's story. The snow acts as a kind of veil that allows a world other than that of New York to intrude, just as later in the novel Helena Modjeska, by her presence, brings into the Henshawe apartment "another race and another period" (p. 45). Through the blurring snow, Nellie sees "an enormous fortress with a thousand windows." The image is of some great stronghold of antiquity, steeled against an enemy, and the essence of the image is fierceness. The reference to the ship, including its name,<sup>22</sup> suggests the completion of an heroic voyage, reiterating the greatness motif: while the dome "moon" evokes visions of a huge, red, hemispheric moon and primitive, sacrificial rites. Here, for a moment, "the remote and cruel past" that Flaubert was able to construct so grandly, as Cather says,<sup>23</sup> surfaces in New York. With it come the ghosts of questing heroes and the visitation of something as elemental as a big, harvest moon. The fact that Nellie imagines it almost as soon as she steps onto Myra's territory, as it were, reflects the power of Myra's person. And the self that is being affirmed in this first allusion to the moon is Tanith, strong, magnificent, barbarian.

The next moon episode takes place on the following page, when Nellie is left to enjoy Madison Square while Myra and Lydia go shopping. What Nellie finds there on that snowy afternoon represents all that she loves in Myra. It is Myra gentled. The trees and the shrubbery are "well-groomed and sociable," the Saint Gaudens' Diana "stepped out freely and

fearlessly," and the fountain was "like something taking deep, happy breaths . . . the sound was musical, seemed to come from the throat of spring." Nellie sums up her experience: "Here, I felt, winter brought no desolation; it was tamed, like a polar bear led on a leash by a beautiful lady" (pp. 24-25). The moon's gaze has changed from that of Tanith to a benign and gracious Diana. Yet the polar bear metaphor reminds us that Myra has not lost her passionate self. We are merely seeing the other side of her.

It is a measure of the author's craft in this passage that she at no point says there is a moon visible overhead. Even so, the entire section is immersed in lunar presence:<sup>24</sup> the statue of the goddess, the grove of trees and the fountain--both features of Diana's shrine--, and the colours of moonlight, white on black, pale blue shadows, and a violet sky. Only Myra's comment to Nellie at the end implies there might be an actual moon: "You're fair moon-struck, Nellie!" (p. 26). The same kind of understatement is evident in the first moon passage discussed. As far as we know, there is no moon to be seen in that setting either. Yet Nellie discerns a moon-shape through the blurring snow. It seems that the moon goddess is very much at large in New York City, one of those "inexplicable presence[s]" that Willa Cather was so skilled at creating.<sup>25</sup> Thus in the space of a few pages the goddess appears first in the aspect of ancient and savage grandeur, and then in that of idyllic happiness.

In the third moon passage, that celestial body actually materializes.

As we walked home she slipped her arm through mine, and we fell a little behind the other two. "See the moon coming out, Nellie--behind the tower. It wakens the guilt in me. No playing with love; and I'd sworn a great oath never to meddle again. You send a handsome fellow like Ewan Gray to a fine girl like Esther, and it's Christmas eve, and they rise above us and the white world around us, and there isn't anybody, not a tramp on the park benches, that wouldn't wish them well--and very likely hell will come of it!" (p. 31).

Here Myra identifies one of the dilemmas of the book: the fact that in spite of the irresistible power of love it so often seems to founder. At the story's centre are Oswald and Myra, the focal example of love that disappoints and frustrates and which, therefore, is "forbidden." Others are ranged around them: Oswald's mother, a "girl of good family" who married a "poor and impractical" man (p. 13); Ewan Gray and Esther; and the son of Myra's friend who commits suicide "because of some sordid love affair" (p. 86). A sense of guilt comes over Myra under the influence of this third moon presence, that seems to be a blend of Tanith and Diana. This time the goddess comes in clarity and visibility, but she is also fierce in that she requires of those who belong to her absolute chastity.

Each of the three moon passages examined enlarges the author's portrait of Myra. The Casta Diva scene marks the fourth moon episode and it is the culmination of the previous three. It takes place after the Henshawes'

New Year's Eve party, late when all but a few guests have gone home. A small group gathers to hear the impromptu singing of an aria from Bellini's opera, Norma.<sup>26</sup> It is a hymn to the chaste goddess of the moon. During this invocation, the room is flooded with moonlight while the actress, Modjeska, a statuesque figure, sits by the window. She is a friend of Myra and the embodiment of human greatness fulfilled. One could say Modjeska is one of the Immortals, a Titan. When she is present, greatness of the past is also powerfully present, not only former times of human achievement, but also the days of the gods in their ascendancy. Even young Nellie is struck by the majesty of the woman and of this scene which she motivates.

In fact, Modjeska is a kind of double for Myra, something after the fashion of James in "The Marriage of Phaedra," who reflects faithfully who his master was. The great actress does not reflect Myra, however. Rather she matches her, suggests greatness in Myra by touching her with her own. Myra's genius has not assumed visible expression as Modjeska's has; it is hidden. Accordingly, there is much emphasis on dark and light, sensory duplications of the concealments and revelations that are taking place. Further, in order to effect the idea of disclosure, Cather uses the Romantic mid-point, the place between two extremes at which one may perceive the essence of reality. She uses this device not only here, but in the first two moon scenes as well. It is through the mid-point of light and dark that Nellie experiences another world, first through the blurring snow, the "fortress" and the "dull gold dome;" later she experiences the enchantment of

the square through the "grey air" (p. 25) of a December afternoon in lightly falling snow. Madame Modjeska seems almost to exist at this critical point.

. . . she sat by the fire in a high-backed chair, her head resting lightly on her hand, her beautiful face half in shadow (p. 46).

She sat by the window, half-draped in her cloak, the moonlight falling across her knees . . . (p. 47).

In this scene, Myra is in shadow. Even her face is hidden: she sits "crouching . . . her head in both hands" (pp. 47-48). Myra belongs in the shadow, in keeping with the hiddenness of her powers.

Nellie and her aunt are invisible to the reader at this point, for Nellie tells nothing of their whereabouts. Oswald stands behind Modjeska's chair "like a statue," transfixed by the events of the moment. As Endymion, he becomes a "marble man," as he listens to the invocation of the goddess. As Oswald Henshawe, he is simply spellbound by forces he does not understand. As for Myra, she is wholly absorbed in the moment. Whatever the characters are experiencing is of the nature of mystery. In terms of the novella's mythology, the spell is cast by "the fierce and splendid goddess of cosmic motion and changing forms, the mother goddess Tanith robed with a mantle of purple and gold."<sup>27</sup>

In the context of that scene, the self in Myra that was made for greatness in the world (as opposed to her vocation as a lover) is felt. It is her moment of validation as a person of exceptional powers. She says

she is "worldly;" it is in the prelude to the Casta Diva scene that we find what meaning Cather can give that word. Nellie is speaking of Modjeska's hands:

How well I remember those long, beautifully modelled hands, with so much humanity in them. They were worldly, indeed, but fashioned for a nobler worldliness than ours; hands to hold a sceptre, or a chalice--or, by courtesy, a sword (p. 46).

Here, "worldly" refers to a quality that one recognizes in leaders of distinguished ability in human affairs, leaders such as a great queen, or an abbess, or, perhaps, a Joan of Arc. This is the kind of worldliness for which Myra was destined, though we see her only as a matronly figure, struggling in the meshes of a marriage that has trapped her husband as well as herself. For this reason, allusions to a greater destiny seem laughable. Yet all three areas of leadership that Nellie associates with Modjeska's hands are elsewhere mentioned as being appropriate for Myra:

A strong cable of grey-black hair was wound on the top of her head, which, as she once remarked, "was no head for a woman at all, but would have graced one of the wickedest of the Roman emperors" (p. 63).

"She's a most unusual woman, Mrs. Henshawe . . . I wonder whether some of the saints of the early Church weren't a good deal like her" (p. 93).

"Ah, but she isn't people! She's Myra Driscoll, and there was never anybody else like her. She can't endure, but she has enough desperate courage for a regiment" (p. 76).

After the New Year's Eve party, the moon's presence is no longer felt, and ten years later Myra tells Nellie that she and Oswald are suffering a "temporary eclipse" (p. 62). This darkening of the moon signifies the most troubled period of Myra's life.

But unhappiness does not simply spell defeat in Myra's story. We have seen that there is a potential for greatness in her, as in many of the characters in The Troll Garden, that corresponds closely to the Kingsley proposition about human endeavour. "Goblin Market" and its theme of the double quest, along with the problems that this raises, is also a vital part of the novella's statement. To continue the analysis, however, and to see where Cather takes these features in My Mortal Enemy, it is necessary to look at another literary item that became a major source for Cather's work.

In an 1896 Journal article,<sup>28</sup> Willa Cather refers to an essay entitled "The Gods in Exile" by the German poet, Heinrich Heine.<sup>29</sup> It is a small but important item in the Cather schema of sources. In it, Heine deals with greatness as represented by the old Greek gods. He suggests there is a postscript to the known, existing myths, an epilogue that has never been told. It has to do with the "victory of Christianity over heathenism."<sup>30</sup> According to Heine, as the Christian religion finally took root in the ancient world, it propagated an attitude towards life that was "dismal, meagre and over-spiritual."<sup>31</sup> It set itself against the old Greek religion, and proclaimed the pagan gods demons and devils. The early Christian fathers

were unable to recognize anything of worth in these ancient deities, or to appreciate the "Hellenic joyousness and love of beauty and of fresh pleasure in life" for which they stood.<sup>31</sup> In their iconoclastic zeal, the Christians destroyed not only much of the art which Greek religion had produced, but what was worse, Heine thinks, they dulled people's capacity for belief altogether. In his preface to the essay he says:

Yes, creeds are fleeting and traditions too; they are vanishing like burnt out tapers, not only in enlightened lands, but in the most midnight places in the world, where not long ago the most startling superstitions were in bloom. The missionaries who wander over these cold regions now complain of the incredulity of their inhabitants. In the report of a Danish clergyman of his journey in the North of Greenland, the writer tells us that he asked of an old man what was the present state of belief among them. To which the good man replied, "Once we believed in the moon, but now we believe in it no longer."<sup>32</sup>

The essay itself contains several little stories, "legends" which Heine claims to have picked up here and there, about the unhappy gods in the days of their diminished glory. He tells of Apollo and what befell him; of Bacchus, Mercury, of Jupiter himself, and others. Each of these legends has the same set of basic ingredients, more or less: (1) A pagan god, perceived by ignorant people as demonic rather than divine, is driven into exile; (2) He manages to survive, usually in miserable circumstances, in some remote or unlikely part of the world, and he achieves this by disguising himself, sometimes as the opposite of what he is. But, as Heine says, "the very contrast betrays the identity;"<sup>33</sup> (3) Always there



is some lingering sign or token by which the informed and discerning person might be able to pierce the disguise. To be recognized, however, is dangerous to the god, as he is in a world that is essentially hostile to greatness, that is, a world of lost belief. For Heine, greatness draws rejection upon itself, not because it wants to but because of the times, because of the introduction into the world of a narrow religious outlook that excludes everything but itself.

Willa Cather's story, "A Resurrection," shows an attempt that predates The Troll Garden stories to relate this particular piece of Heine's prose to her fiction. Setting is all-important in this tale. Brownville, on the Missouri River in southeastern Nebraska, is a real town. It was a boomtown while trade came up the river, until the building of the railroad changed the course of its history. In the time setting of the story, the town is defunct. There are two main characters, in their thirties, who were, at one time, in love. The man, Martin, who runs a ferryboat, meets the "misfortune of his life" (p. 432) when he marries a pretty but foolish young girl who accidentally drowns, after presenting her husband with a baby. The other main character, Marjorie, teaches school, and though jilted in a seemingly cruel fashion by Martin, raises the child for him. "A Resurrection" takes place when the child is five years old. Having lived down "the memory of his disgrace" (pp. 433-434), Martin finally asks Marjorie to marry him. At first she thinks she is too old for love, but Martin soon persuades her otherwise. In the end, they plan to leave

Brownville, and go down the river to St. Louis, where together they both can build anew.

"A Resurrection" is not a strong story, but it is of special interest to this study of the greatness theme. There can be no doubt that the author had Heine in mind when she wrote this, for she mentions him by name (p. 429). The idea of a former greatness that has departed is centered, in this story, predominantly in the town itself. In a sense, Brownville was once inhabited by the gods, that is, by a people of unusual personal and cultural prowess. But by the time the story takes place, greatness has vanished except in the persons of Martin Dempster and Marjorie Pierson. The story goes on at some length about Martin and his close kinship with the river. He is a river "gypsy" (p. 432), like one of the ancient people of the Nile. The river has a special aura of mythic proportions. It gives life and takes it; it is an elemental feature in the Brownville landscape. Martin is "great" by virtue of being a river man and knowing it. If one looks for mythical equivalents, he is Charon, the taciturn boatman of the Styx. Although he possesses none of Charon's grimness, he does have a direct and basic knowledge of life, not through books but through his ability to engage with the river world. He transports Marjorie to a new life. First, by becoming her lover, he resurrects the passion in her that she had thought dead. And second, he literally takes her via the river to a new life.

Marjorie, too, participates in greatness. There is that passage in which Cather elaborates on women like Marjorie (p. 426), and describes a potential for greatness very like Myra Henshawe's. In addition, Marjorie comes from "one of the best families of the old days" (p. 426). She also combines in herself both Christian and pagan elements, a feature that, in light of the Heine essay, would tend to validate her exceptional worth. She reminds Martin of "the Holy woman who is always painted with lilies" (p. 429), and she is literally a virgin with a boy-child. On the other hand, she wears a red gown, and the thing that is brought to life in her is passion, a "riotous, aching current come throbbing . . . wakening a thousand undreamed-of possibilities of pleasure and pain" (p. 438).

Heine's idea of lost belief is carried by a town populace that condemns Martin for his behaviour, and gossips about Marjorie for hers. Mrs. Skimmons is a peripheral character who appears briefly at the outset. She is, appropriately, a member of the church, and she voices the general lack of regard and disapproval that Martin and Marjorie put up with. At the end, they leave their "exile" and, unlike the tendency of the Heine fables, the story has a happy ending.<sup>34</sup>

As Willa Cather's skill in fiction-writing increased, the more simplified and subtle her narratives became. The type of explicit comment like the one about great women in "A Resurrection" she learned to avoid. By the time she was writing The Troll Garden stories, her use of source material was becoming more natural, though even there, in places, it is

awkward. "A Death in the Desert," for example, mentions Heine's essay, "Florentine Nights", by name (p. 211), and elements from both it and "The Gods in Exile" are evident in the story. In spite of surface appearances, however, the desert tale carries little of either theme or feeling that characterizes the second of these sources. In both "The Sculptor's Funeral" and "Paul's Case," there are small-minded people who, in the name of a rigid, unimaginative religion or system of ethics, oppose any motion towards individuality--a necessary premise for human greatness--that occurs in their midst. In "Paul's Case," when Paul appears before the high school faculty, the teachers fall "upon him without mercy, his English teacher leading the pack" (p. 244). The narrator calls this behaviour "the grewsome game of intemperate reproach" and compares the situation to that of "a miserable street cat set at bay by a ring of tormentors" (p. 245). In light of Heine's comments, the two pictures over Paul's bed that sum up the ethos of his environment, represent not only a stern moral outlook, but one specifically anti-pleasure and anti-pagan. For Paul clearly has something of the pagan in him, in his quest for pleasure and beauty--though he mistakes the trappings for the real thing. And dismay, like that of Heine for his lost gods, can be felt in the story's lament over Paul's very real state of exile.

In "The Sculptor's Funeral," the "grewsome game of intemperate reproach" takes place around the bier of the dead "god." When his friend, Laird, can no longer stand the situation, he says to the accusers:

"You pretend to have some sort of respect for me; and yet you'll stand up and throw mud at Harvey Merrick, whose soul you couldn't dirty and whose hands you couldn't tie. Oh, you're a discriminating lot of Christians!" (p. 184).

Sand City, the setting for this story, probably derives its name from the New Testament parable about the house built on sand.<sup>35</sup> It is situated on the "borderland between ruffianism and civilization" (p. 184) and constitutes as brutal a place of exile for the town's exceptional sons as any that Cather created. There is no suggestion of the two men being in any sense "in disguise," but the idea of lost belief is strong. Laird pronounces his fellow townsmen "disappointed strugglers in a bitter, dead little Western town . . ." (p. 185). A Heine quality of lamentation for unsung greatness characterizes both Laird's speech and the tone of the story itself.

Heine's outlook is a strong presence in "A Wagner Matinée" also, in which Georgiana experiences the pioneer world as exile. There are times in Willa Cather's writing when a character may touch greatness through nature, through being willing to be open to ancient, basic features of the universe. Martin Dempster in "A Resurrection" is an example of someone who achieves this, in relation to the river. But old civilizations and old cultures may also be a preserve for greatness, in Cather's view. Greatness is humanity's natural inheritance from primitive times, handed down through the many and varied civilizations of the past. A new land, where people have no knowledge of older cultures, nor any sense of need for such

knowledge, may foster attitudes inimical to greatness--simply by virtue of lost belief. If one does not know something exists, one does not recognize it when one meets it. A gift for music, like Georgiana's, atrophies in an environment that ignores the existence of fine music. During intermission at the *matinée*, she reminisces about the time a young man turned up at the Nebraska farm, who could sing the "Prize Song." It's a sad little tale she tells, in which a "divine melody" materializes briefly in the frontier wasteland, then peters out (p. 241). Georgiana finds some solace for her trials in the church, but the story, in line with Heine's comments about Christianity, does not sanction this as an excuse for the waste of genius. "She was a pious women," Clark says, "she had the consolations of religion and, to her at least, her martyrdom was not wholly sordid" (p. 237). Georgiana has no mythic prototype, but certainly, she is greatness in disguise. A more unlikely casing for a woman of distinction could hardly be imagined than the wretched, grotesque figure Clark describes. At the conclusion to "The Gods in Exile" Heine says: "we . . . are shocked at the sight of fallen grandeur, and devote to it the deepest pity of our hearts."<sup>36</sup> This is precisely the note Clark sounds in his brief, poignant account of his aunt's visit to Boston and of the *matinée*. More than any of the other stories in this collection, "A Wagner *Matinée*" betrays the influence of Heine's version of the twilight of the gods.

My Mortal Enemy catches the feeling as well as many of the details of Heine's essay, but chiefly it is present in the related ideas of lost divinity and lost belief. Myra and her uncle, as we have seen, carry

within them the strain of greatness: both the barbarian marks of a primitive wholeness and those of divinity as bestowed by myth. In this book, Cather asks: What happens to such greatness in early twentieth-century American society? Willa Cather believes, with Heine, that all too often this world has no use for greatness. In a sense, My Mortal Enemy is Cather's invention of her own legend-epilogue for a goddess--who may or may not be Selene. Her name is unimportant. That she is associated with the moon, which has long been a symbol for feminine divinity, is enough to designate her as one of the Immortals. Cather sets her "goddess" down in New York City at the beginning of this century, and appoints Nellie Birdseye her storyteller, who, appropriately, does not realize "who" her subject is. In Heine's legends, what makes the gods "lost" is the fact that no one believes such beings exist. Belief, then, is central to the story, and it becomes an issue most obviously in relation to religion and art. Yet Myra is not an artist. She is a "nobody" who comes from Parthia, Illinois, a fact Nellie is not likely to forget.

In the mythology of the story, Myra and her uncle are Titans, and though she does not at first realize it, Myra's problems begin when she falls in love with Oswald. He is a "free-thinker," that is, a person who accepts no external religious authority. He is, therefore, according to Heine-Cather legendry, a man of lost belief.<sup>37</sup> In this context, John Driscoll's antipathy to Oswald and his Protestant father is not an arbitrary thing, nor simply the hatred of Irish Catholic for Irish Protestant.

As one of the old "gods," Driscoll knows that, above everyone else, it is the skeptic<sup>38</sup> who is his (and Myra's) most dangerous enemy. Notwithstanding, she breaks with her uncle and with the Catholic church, and, in a civil ceremony, marries Oswald. She cannot live without belief, however, not without denying both self and her immortal inheritance. She who is born to greatness can hardly deny the existence of greatness. And so, with Myra's marriage to Oswald, the idea of lost divinity begins to take shape.

When Nellie meets the Henshawes, the "goddess" has surrounded herself, as much as circumstances permit, with her peers, others who are in some way great people. These are artists of various fields. The "moneyed" (p. 39) folk, with whom Myra associates in order to help Oswald in business, are not her kind: "their solemnity was too much for her sense of humour," Nellie explains (p. 40). But with actors, musicians, and literary folk she is "always at her best," because she admires them (p. 38). Myra's attitude towards art reflects that of the author, which is one that sees a close connection between art and religion. Besides the fact that artists are Myra's preferred company, she twice expresses her reverence for artistic worth. The first occasion is her selection of the finest holly bush she can find, "easily the queen of its companions," to brighten Madame Modjeska's Christmas in a hotel (p. 30). The second time Myra pays tribute to greatness is after Modjeska's death, when she arranges, through Nellie, to have a mass said for "that noble artist, that beautiful and gracious woman," as Myra says (p. 86).



Oswald, as befits a man of lost belief, opposes this behaviour. To him, it is a waste of money. When Myra picks out the holly tree, he shrugs and says, "It's naturally the most extravagant" (p. 30). Ten years later, when Myra gives Nellie a gold coin for the mass, we find Myra has made a habit of putting aside money for "unearthly purposes," but this, unknown to Oswald because "he wouldn't understand" (p. 86).

The term of Myra's real exile begins in Part Two. Nellie's description here of the Henshawes' predicament has all the earmarks of one of Heine's legends: "I had known that the Henshawes had come on evil days, and were wandering about among the cities of the Pacific coast" (p. 60). The western setting is a place so new as to have no knowledge of the old, in such a hurry to spread itself further as to have no depths for reflection or memory. The setting constitutes a peculiar emptiness, like that of the frontier in "A Wagner Matinée."

. . . a sprawling overgrown Western city which was in the throes of rapid development--it ran about the shore, stumbling all over itself and finally tumbled untidily into the sea . . . I found lodgings in an apartment-hotel, wretchedly built and already falling to pieces, although it was new (pp. 57-58).

Here is a world that has no eye for greatness. The "goddess" and her consort are in a society of non-believers, typified by the people upstairs who "trample" on Myra with their brutal noise. In this, the last year of her life, Myra is ill, poor, and severed from friends. In her need, she turns to all she has left of her Olympian world: art, communion with

elemental things, and religion. Books from the library, Nellie's willingness to read to her, and Myra's memory in which much poetry is stored, supply her with art. The smell of the sea, coming "in on the night wind" (p. 65), the daily ritual of taking trouble to "get her tea nicely" in her silver teapot and "glossy English" china, and the occasional drive along the coast with an hour spent sitting in her favorite lofty perch overlooking the sea: these are the simple ways by which Myra gives her spirit nourishment. And finally, there is religion, and long talks with the young priest, Father Fay, who has "a fresh face and pleasant eyes" (p. 93).

For Myra, having a mass said for her friend amounts to an affirmation that greatness exists, an affirmation made in a time and place of utter barrenness: "It is a solace to me," she says, "to know that tomorrow a mass will be said here in heathendom for the spirit of that noble artist . . ." (p. 86). By "heathendom" Myra means the place of unbelieving people, where there is no "wonder at greatness, beauty, and the mystery of things."<sup>39</sup> It is significant that the idea of having a mass said in order to propitiate a stern, moralistic god is quite absent from the portrait we are given of Myra. Her religion is not a withdrawal into mutterings of prayers and telling of beads, like the asceticism of Heine's Christians. Myra recites poetry, not prayers, for the simple reason that the two are not all that different in Willa Cather's mind. As in Marjorie Pierson in "A Resurrection," Christian and pagan elements combine in Myra. She is open now to all forms of greatness. Many of what one could broadly term "pagan

elements" cling to Myra: her association with the moon; the wearing of fur; her worldliness; her passionate nature; her laughter; and even something as small as having her fortune told by "a wise woman" (p. 62).

On the other hand, she has a way of evoking the Judao-Christian tradition, especially in the latter part of the story. Words fall from her lips that come almost, but not quite, directly from the Bible.

"Now wasn't it clever of you to find us, Nellie?  
And we so safely hidden--in earth, like a pair  
of old foxes!" (pp. 61-62).

Speaking of his own sense of alienation in the world, Jesus says:

The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air  
have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to  
lay his head.<sup>40</sup>

It is the people upstairs, however, who provoke most of Myra's remarks about animals, like the one about the "stalled ox" which rings with the sonority of an Old Testament proverb.<sup>41</sup> "They tramp up there all day long like cattle. The stalled ox would have trod softer" she says (p. 67). Of Mrs. Poindexter, the woman who rents the apartment upstairs, Myra tells Nellie:

"She'd turn a deaf ear to you. You know the Bible says the wicked are deaf like the adder. And, Nellie, she has the wrinkled, white throat of an adder, that woman, and the hard eyes of one" (p. 74).

Another New Testament image is diffused throughout the several references to "tramping" and "trampling" of the people upstairs. "Such pigs," Myra says of them (p. 68). The corresponding Biblical passage is:

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.<sup>42</sup>

Myra's phrase, "My hour has come" (p. 98), is used many times by Jesus, with variations.<sup>43</sup> The picture Cather creates of Myra's death: her back against a tree, her head "fallen forward" (p. 101), suggests the crucifixion. Yet what could be more primitive than to die sitting upon the earth, propped up against a tree, and facing the dawn across the sea? With Myra's crucifix which she had in her hands, we are brought full circle and back to the theme of opposites held in tension; of pagan and Christian, the ivory Christ on an ebony cross, like the snow on the twigs in Madison Square: "a line of white upon a line of black" (p. 25). Myra sees in the crucifix the image of a god rejected by his people. She has a natural affinity with such a god: "Give it me," she says to Nellie, of the crucifix, "It means nothing to people who haven't suffered" (p. 92).

We know that Myra suffers and not only from physical disease, but from the realization that the sanction to love Oswald and to be loved by him is not enough to satisfy for a lifetime a person of her gifts. Oswald, too, embodies contradiction. He is a paradoxical mix of the

romantic and the skeptic, both of which attitudes, one could say, exist by reason of limited vision. He is Endymion in love with the moon. In concrete terms, he idealizes the girl he married as well as their marriage. Again, according to myth, a mortal who loves an immortal being logically believes in divinity. Yet, in keeping with the legend-pattern that Heine creates, Oswald is a free-thinker and scoffs at the existence of a supernatural dimension, which is to say, at the existence of gods. We have discussed how Oswald expresses lack of belief towards religion and art: that Myra left the church to marry him; and that he does not understand her spending of money on gestures of tribute. But how is Oswald's lost belief expressed towards his wife?

It is easy enough to see how it must have worked the other way, how Myra's strength must have undermined Oswald. She admits she has not been good for him. Their marriage, she says, has been "the ruin of us both," and later: "Perhaps I can't forgive him for the harm I did him" (pp. 75, 88). Oswald is gentle and considerate. He has charm and a certain helplessness that both Lydia and Nellie find appealing. His helplessness before Myra, however, spells disaster. His lack of nerve means that he fails to validate her in the fullness of who she is. He cannot face her hard declarations. When she disappears just before her death, he says to Father Day: "It is one of her delusions that I separated her from the Church," and afterwards, "Of course, she was absolutely unreasonable when she was jealous. Her suspicions were sometimes--almost fantastic" (my emphasis),

(pp. 99, 104). The words Oswald chooses make it clear that he does not trust Myra's judgement--in short, that he does not believe her. His doubting attitude is apparent on several occasions, usually in conjunction with either Myra's anger or her anguish. It is as though Endymion is enchanted by the moon in its early phase only, the new moon, the gentle Diana of snowy Madison Square, in brief, the young Myra.<sup>44</sup>

The full moon (the mature Myra) and the dark of the moon (Park Two, her exile) reveal a woman he cannot meet, least of all when she is angry or unhappy. Then his response is either to gloss over the reality of her situation or to deny it. After the argument Nellie witnesses between the Henshawes, Oswald tells her that "Myra isn't half so furious with me as she pretends" (p. 51). He is trying to comfort the young girl--and perhaps, himself--which accounts for his playing down of the seriousness of the situation. But why "pretends"? Why not the more natural word, "seems"? "Pretends" shows Oswald's way of responding to circumstances of stress: to deny them. Nellie records a similar event taking place ten years later when Myra laments the waste that has resulted from their marriage. "We've thrown our lives away," she says, and Oswald replies: "Come, Myra, don't talk so before Nellie. You don't mean it" (my emphasis) (p. 75). His half-moon eyes are expressive of his faulty vision: he survives by ignoring difficulties. "Never mind, Myra. I'll get you away from it yet. I'll manage," he says when Myra is upset by the noise overhead (p. 75). He speaks kindly but his words are those of a dreamer.

When Nellie first encounters Oswald in their westcoast lodgings, he tells her about Myra's illness and says: ". . . but we must not speak of that nor seem to know it" (my emphasis) (p. 60). Yet Myra speaks plainly enough about her illness. It is Oswald who cannot face it, which is understandable. Cather always provides room for Oswald to be excused. His weakness is so utterly human. And so often his silence seems simply a matter of good taste. After the unhappy scene where Nellie urges Myra to be kinder to Oswald, (a scene he must have known about since Nellie subsequently stays away from Myra at her request), Nellie says: "For days after that episode I did not see Mrs. Henshawe at all. I saw Oswald at dinner in the restaurant every night, and he reported her condition to me as if nothing had happened" (my emphasis) (p. 90).

While Oswald's silence on serious matters may seem both understandable and in good taste, the fact that it is habitual strongly suggests a method of dodging unpleasantness and of refusing to come to grips with what is real. The silence of respect is one thing. But the silence that comes either from skepticism or from ignoring has a curiously diminishing effect on the person toward whom it is directed. Recurrent failure to give credibility to someone cannot be restricted to specific instances; it is bound to be felt in a general way. Even a god treated thus may become "lost," as Heine says, for want of belief. Oswald's attitudes towards Myra both hold her fast in that he loves "the wild, lovely creature" that she was

(p. 104), and alienate her in that he ignores and so rejects the woman that she becomes. The statement "Once we believed in the moon, but now we believe in it no longer," sums up in a sentence the paradox of Oswald's character.

According to Heine, "the unfortunate gods were compelled to take to ignominious flight, and hid themselves in all disguises among us here on earth."<sup>45</sup> There is in My Mortal Enemy a disguise motif. It occurs four times and is simply this: the idea that Myra is, in reality, a poor, Irish peasant woman. She is, of course, of Irish blood. It is natural that she should occasionally assume the stereotype of her own background, for different reasons, but mostly because the Irish brogue lives in her head, along with the memories of childhood and youth.

The first time the motif is sounded, Myra actually words the idea that she is not what she seems. It happens at the close of the afternoon Nellie spends in Madison Square. Myra says:

"Oh, hear the penny whistle! They always find me out." She stopped a thin lad with a cap and yarn comforter but no overcoat, who was playing The Irish Washerwoman on a little pipe, and rummaged in her bag for a coin (p. 26).

This little episode lends a fine touch to the story. It brings in again the idea of poverty, first introduced by Myra's uncle when he said: "It's better to be a stray dog in this world than a man without money . . ." (p. 15). Also, Myra turns the incident into an occasion of mock-tribute



being paid to her, which she acknowledges with a coin. The idea of paying homage to the gods is part of her ethos. And Myra loves a joke, especially when it involves irony.

We are into Part Two before we encounter Myra in this guise again. "We've had a fine afternoon, and Biddy forgetting her ails," she says, at the end of a happy hour or two spent reading poetry with Nellie. A few pages on: "All old Irish women hide away a bit of money," she says, as she shows Nellie her little hoard of gold coins (p. 85). These flashes of Myra-as-Biddy, along with the penny whistle episode convey feelings of good-naturedness and mirth. Myra has a horror of people being "solemn" and the Irish veneer is a way of poking fun at herself.

But it is also a way of expressing anger. When Nellie suggests that Myra is too hard on Oswald, she gets upset but attempts to explain how she feels. However, the younger woman does not comprehend the emotions with which Myra is struggling, and, as a result, presses Oswald's case again. It is all too much for Myra. On top of everything else she has to bear, here is Nellie, adding condemnation. Reluctant, perhaps, to show her true strength, the "goddess" assumes her mask of Irish peasantry:

"Will you be pleased to take your things and go, Mrs. Casey?" . . . She mockingly bowed her tyrant's head. "It's owing to me infirmities, dear Mrs. Casey, that I'll not be able to go as far as me door wid ye" (p. 89).

There are further indications that Myra belongs to another world. In one of his legends about the gods, Heine relates how Bacchus and two of his attendants survive by pretending to be monks. Once a year, however, they go to a Bacchanalian feast, travelling by means of a boat which they rent from a poor ferryman. Being ignorant, he does not suspect their identity. What he does notice is the icy touch from their fingers when they pay him. It creates a "frosty shudder" that runs "through all his limbs."<sup>46</sup> In the novella, the goddess leaves a similar token: the amethyst necklace, which Oswald gives Nellie after Myra's death. "I have still," says Nellie, at the conclusion to her tale, "the string of amethysts, but they are unlucky. If I take them out of their box and wear them, I feel all evening a chill over my heart" (p. 104).

In another of Heine's stories, a ship is driven by storms to a remote northern island where the crew finds a hut with an old man living in it. He is, in fact, Jupiter himself, although the sailors do not realize this till later. He asks those who are Greek among the crew to give him news of his homeland; in particular, he wants to know about a "certain great temple . . . the most beautiful building in all Greece." One young man finally identifies the building which, he says, is now in ruins. The sailor's native village is situated there, and he himself used to tend swine among the temple ruins. His father, the young man says, told him that these were

the remains of an ancient temple in which a heathen god of evil fame had dwelt . . . [whom the people held in such] reverence that they often sacrificed to him hundreds of oxen at once. The hollowed marble block into which the blood of the victims ran . . . was that very stone trough in which he fed his pigs.

Jupiter becomes exceedingly distressed to hear all this, and Heine concludes:

. . . there are many people who would take spiteful pleasure in such a spectacle [that is, of Jupiter's grief]. Such folk are possibly the descendants of the unfortunate oxen who were slaughtered in hecatombs on the altars of Jupiter. Rejoice, ye children of cattle, for the blood of your ancestors, the sacrifice unto superstition is avenged!<sup>47</sup>

There can be little doubt that the people upstairs in Part Two of My Mortal Enemy are the "children of cattle" from Heine's legend, for they indeed seem to take "spiteful pleasure" in Myra's discomfort.

"Couldn't you ask them to walk more quietly?" I suggested.  
He smiled and shook his head. "We have, but it seems to make them worse. They are that kind of people" (p. 67).

Cather uses language that conveys the idea of being walked on, that is, language that suggests the opposite of respect. Note the following:

page 66      heavy tramping overhead  
                 their stupid, messy existence thrust upon me

- page 67    no sensibilities . . . a race without consonants  
and without delicacy  
They tramp up there all day like cattle  
gabbling and running about  
beating my brains into a jelly
- page 68    such pigs
- page 71    tramp like cattle  
their brutal thumping
- page 74    noise overhead broke out--tramp, tramp, bang!  
those coarse creatures  
despised and trampled upon
- page 75    my brains beaten out by hoodlums

The author spends a good many of the relatively few words she allows herself for this story on the people upstairs. They are important, for they represent rampant "lost belief." Menace is even in their name, Poindexter, which comes from the French and means "at the sign of the right fist." The people upstairs personify Heine's image for enmity to the gods: "children of cattle." They typify the most trying of Myra's afflictions, that she feels alone in her greatness, surrounded by people who are alien to all that she is. That later, in her delirium, she imagines Oswald responsible for the noise confirms that he, too, is in some real sense "enemy" to her. One guesses that Willa Cather derived amused pleasure in picturing the Poindexters as Heine's unfortunate cattle while, at the same time, setting one more mark of identity on her heroine.

The belittling of Myra by mortals also takes place in the narrating of the story by a somewhat naive young girl. Richard Giannone points out the significance of Nellie's name, "Birdseye," which "should be taken to suggest indiscriminating flatness of vision rather than comprehensiveness."<sup>48</sup> Nellie's vision is limited. How this is so Cather touches on briefly and, again, somewhat playfully. Towards the end of her New York visit, Nellie arrives at the Henshawe apartment to find Oswald and Myra in the midst of heated argument. They are quarrelling over a key and, to be precise, over what lock it fits. The implication is that the key belongs to a lock in the door of one of Oswald's women friends. At this point, Nellie knocks on the door, to make them aware of her presence, and Myra says: "Here is Nellie Birdseye, rapping at the gates" (p. 50). Myra's line is evocative of "Wee Willie Winkie" in both rhythm and thought. Willie's name also suggests inaccurate vision, and he is associated with locks: "rapping at the window, crying through the lock." And, to carry the analogy one step further, Willie, like Nellie, is a guardian of proper behaviour: "Are the children in their beds for now it's eight o'clock?" Nellie, too, before her tale is over, will reprove Myra for what Nellie deems inappropriate behaviour. Surely Willa Cather conceived the name "Nellie Birdseye" with a smile.

The narrator's name is suitable to Nellie's part in the story, conveying both a certain limitation of sight (that is, insight) and also ordinariness. Cather, as we know, chose her names carefully. In a story

that has to do with the twilight of the gods, a "Nellie Birdseye," by her very name, is not of the order of the great ones. She is, rather, one of the little ones, bird-size, who, in a sense, more or less unobserved, tells what she saw.

It is through her aunt, Lydia, that Nellie comes to know Myra. We are told very little about Lydia. Nellie says she was a favorite with her aunt, but there is no sense given that the feeling was reciprocal. Lydia appears in two contexts in the story, both of them involving intrigue. When Myra and Oswald were young and in love, and John Driscoll had forbidden young Henshawe the house, Lydia encouraged the romance in the role of a go-between. She also helped in the execution of the elopement.

The cuff-button episode is the only other place in which we see Lydia. The prelude to this is a brief moment when Oswald reminds Lydia of the favour she did in helping him win Myra, and when, at the same time, we see him being very charming towards Lydia and the warmth of her response.

"Lydia--" he sat down by my aunt and put his hand on hers--"I'd never feel sure that I did my own courting, if it weren't that I was a long way off at the time . . ."

She put her hand over his lips. "Hush! I hate old women who egg on courtships" (p. 29).

The next morning on the way to church, Oswald takes Lydia and Nellie each by an arm and says to Lydia: "I want you to give me a Christmas

present." Lydia's answer is one of embarrassed pleasure: "'Why, Oswald,' she stammered" (p. 33). Lydia enjoys Oswald's attentions; she is partial to him.

Oswald asks a favour of Lydia, that she give him the cuff-buttons as if from her. But his request requires the deceiving of Myra, who is Lydia's friend. Without taking into consideration the propriety of the suggestion, Lydia's first thought is to say the trick won't work: "'I'm not clever enough to fool Myra" (p. 33). But Lydia likes Oswald and she wants to please him. Later she arrives at a rationale for carrying out the plan:

"I really think he ought to have them, if he wants them. Everything is always for Myra. He never gets anything for himself. And all the admiration is for her; why shouldn't he have a little? He has been devoted to a fault. It isn't good for any woman to be humoured and pampered as he has humoured her. And she's often most unreasonable with him--most unreasonable!" (pp. 34-35).

Lydia's reasoning is focussed entirely on Oswald and Myra, on his and her behaviour, and whether each deserves punishment or reward. She sees herself as a dispenser of justice. When her perjury is discovered, Lydia becomes angry and suggests, paradoxically, that Myra's anger is inappropriate: "'I'm sick of Myra's dramatics," she declares (p. 54).

Though we do not see much of her, Lydia is one of the prime agents in the novel for reducing Myra to size. Nellie observes, hears, and tells what Lydia thinks of Myra, and Nellie's report does its work, which is to

show how greatness may be perceived by its lesser contemporaries. Lydia's role is not unlike that of the men in Sand City, who cannot see Merrick for what he is but only for what he is not. The difference is that the sculptor has Laird to speak for him. Myra has only herself. Near the beginning of the book, when Nellie tells that she and her aunt are to spend Christmas in New York with the Henshawes, Myra makes a remark that identifies what Lydia's part in the ensuing drama will be:

We were to stay at the old Fifth Avenue Hotel, which, as Myra said, was only a stone's throw from their apartment, "if at any time a body was to feel disposed to throw one, Liddy!" (p. 19).

Stoning is an ancient method of getting rid of unwanted people. Along with the "growsome game of intemperate reproach" in "Paul's Case" and the standing up and throwing of mud in "The Sculptor's Funeral," Lydia's role in My Mortal Enemy, albeit more civilized, is another manifestation of the killing off of the old gods.

When Willa Cather was writing My Mortal Enemy, she had to decide where her narrator would stand. The type of legend Heine tells in "The Gods in Exile" has within it the framework of war. The issue at stake is nothing less than the annihilation of one race of beings by another, the murder of the old pagan gods by the zealots of an exclusive Christianity. In undertaking to tell her own story of a goddess in exile, Cather was faced with the problem of where to put her narrator: on the side of the gods or



on that of their enemy? If compromise solutions to this dilemma exist--and one supposes they do--the author seems to have rejected them. Nellie is on the side of the enemy.

That she is, however, is not obvious. In spite of her painful, first encounter with Myra, recalled vividly in Chapter One, Nellie comes to love Myra, in her way, by the end of the story. One tends to think of love as necessarily including acceptance, but this is not so, a paradox with which this book is much concerned. Nellie manages to convey a fair measure of appreciation for Myra, yet at the same time, there is something cold in Nellie's disposition toward her. This coldness is responsible, in part, for the disturbing effect My Mortal Enemy almost invariably has on its reader, a coldness which Nellie manages to project onto Myra. A clever example of this is Nellie's remark near the end about the "chill over my heart" from the amethyst necklace. Nellie suggests coldness by association with a cold person, a very different idea from the Heine "chill" that tells us we have touched another world.

Nellie's detached manner of reporting Lydia's venomous attacks on Myra is another sign that the narrator "can be warmed only by reflected heat," as Cather says of the Lady Ellen in "The Marriage of Phaedra" (p. 224). There is one character who consistently produces a warm response in Nellie, however, and that is Oswald. Nellie reacts to him and to his masculine charm in much the same way as Lydia, so that when it comes to

seeing someone as special, Nellie is not even aware of Myra. From the start, Nellie points to Oswald as the real "god" of the story. He meets Nellie's expectations of the hero: "Mr. Henshawe was less perplexing than his wife, and he looked more as I had expected him to look . . . something about him that suggested personal bravery, magnanimity, and a fine, generous way of doing things" (p. 8). On two different occasions when the reader might be tempted to identify with Myra, Nellie performs a sleight of hand that deflects our sympathy. She finishes the chapter in which the cuff-button deception is carried out by saying that Oswald seems to feel guilty, and how "I thought him properly served then, but often since I have wondered at his gentle heart" (p. 37). With "his gentle heart" ringing in our ears, rather than "I thought him properly served," we turn the page to read about Myra's energetic martialling of Nellie during the New York holiday, to pay calls that "would certainly improve my manners and my English" (p. 38). Having de-fused the probability of anti-Oswald feelings in the reader, Nellie follows with a statement of veiled resentment toward Myra. It is much later in the tale and in a context quite removed from the Lydia-Oswald conspiracy, that we learn, in incidental fashion, Oswald wears the topaz cufflinks for the rest of his life (p. 78). It seems his remorse is short-lived.

The scene in which Nellie happens on the Henshawes' quarrel is another that might perhaps arouse in the reader some fellow-feeling for Myra.

After all, though she is "jealous" and "unreasonable," we know that Oswald has given her some cause. This scene also reveals Nellie's partisanship. She is quite won over to Oswald; emotionally, she is his ally. He is the "god" who was made for finer things:

I felt that his life had not suited him; that he possessed some kind of courage and force which slept, which in another sort of world might have asserted themselves brilliantly. I thought he ought to have been a soldier or an explorer (p. 52).

In a profound sense, Nellie is not up to Myra; she is not her equal. Myra's strength is an affront to Nellie. The only right and wrong that Nellie is aware of in this affair is that Myra, by challenging Oswald and showing her anger with him, has spoiled the idyllic picture Nellie cherishes of the Henshawes as a couple.

This delightful room had seemed to me a place where light-heartedness and charming manners lived . . . And now everything was in ruins (p. 51).

Oswald, true to form, soothes Nellie in the loss of her illusions--after all, he has his own illusions.

Oswald tried to make it up to me . . .  
he made me drink a glass of sherry . . .  
(p. 52).

The scene comes to an end with Nellie ignoring the actual issue over which Myra and Oswald have been fighting, including a fresh lie by Oswald, and disliking Myra for spoiling things.

We went to the theatre, but I remember very little of the performance except a dull heartache, and a conviction that I should never like Mrs. Myra so well again (p. 52).

There are two stories being told in My Mortal Enemy: one by Nellie and the other by the author. Nellie's tale outlines the sad case of Myra Henshawe, a woman driven by her own "violent nature" and by "insane ambition" (pp. 96, 41). She is greatly overrated, mostly by herself, and is selfishly hard on Oswald, her husband. He, on the other hand, is an example of latent heroism, long-suffering, patient, and gentle. The author, unlike Nellie, is concerned with what amounts to tragedy. For the author, it is the passionate Myra who was meant to assert herself brilliantly, and who is consistently underrated by those around her. She knows her own worth, however, and must live in the knowledge that she is penniless and tied for life to a man who is inadequate for her. In Oswald, Cather has created a damaged forest child, too refined to be effective at anything, a man who has lost both his nerve and his belief.

The question arises as to why Willa Cather created her narrator in such a way as to deflect the shine of greatness off Myra and onto Oswald. The reason lies partly in the gods-in-exile theme with which Cather was

working. To have the storyteller miss the point, so to speak, and fail to recognize greatness for what it is in her own narrative makes Myra's exile more complete. In doing this, there is a danger that Nellie's blindness will prevent the reader from seeing where greatness lies. One guesses, however, that Myra's greatness is generally felt by the reader, even if it is not seen. Further, given who Nellie is, to have her convey her fascination with Myra through a veil of disapproval paradoxically validates Myra's real stature. Were Nellie like Clark of "A Wagner Matinée," who is sympathetic and appreciative of his subject, My Mortal Enemy would be a different story--sad, but not as disturbing as the one Cather has written. And Willa Cather, who manifestly feels so strongly about Myra, wants this tale of tethered greatness to perplex and disturb her readers. A postcard with the legend, "A Birdseye View of . . .," invariably reduces the landscape. That is what Nellie's vision does to Myra: it takes greatness and makes it small. Nellie's distance from Myra distances the reader. Myra therefore has to speak for herself, as it were, has to come across in her majestic wholeness, alone.

The Heine element gives special meaning to the line Myra speaks, from which the title is taken: "Why must I die like this, alone with my mortal enemy?" (p. 95). "Enemy" can be plural as well as singular, and "mortal" can mean "deadly" as well as "limited by death." In this passage, Myra uses "enemy" in the plural, to mean Oswald in particular

and everyone around her in general, including Nellie and the people upstairs. "Mortal" cuts two ways: Myra's bondage within her marriage is to the death; and, in the mythology of the novel, Oswald, Nellie, and the others are mortal, different from Myra who is an Immortal.

Nellie idealizes Oswald. She also feels protective towards him and she is scandalized by these words from the dying woman, by the fact that Myra would call Oswald her "enemy." Unconsciously, however, Nellie has already identified Myra as "enemy." In Heine's legends, the rationale developed by the Christians for ridding themselves of the gods is to say they are of the devil. Similarly, Nellie associates Myra's anger with a snake (pp. 54, 89), an image linked in Christian lore with the devil. The conclusions Nellie draws after the Henshawes' quarrel are more explicit:

Everything about me seemed evil. When kindness has left people . . . we drop from security into something malevolent and bottomless . . . I remember very little . . . except . . . that I should never like Mrs. Myra so well again (pp. 51-52).

Nellie suggests that evil emanates from Myra, but the feeling of malevolence actually comes from Nellie. When Myra whispers that question, Nellie looks at Oswald "in affright," expecting to see him "shudder" (p. 95). Yet he does not. Where does the horror come from if not from Nellie? When Myra behaves in ways which Nellie cannot understand and of which she does not approve, she rejects Myra by categorizing her as evil, exactly according to the Heine model.

As for Oswald being Myra's "enemy," he is a living reminder to her of her own folly. In a Journal article<sup>49</sup> on Christina Rossetti, Willa Cather comments on the lines from "Goblin Market" that tell of Laura's second tasting of the magic fruit: "Her lips began to scorch,/ That juice was wormwood to her tongue." Cather says: "Never has the purchase of pleasure, its loss in its own taking, the loathsomeness of our own folly in those we love, been put more quaintly or directly." It was an important theme for Willa Cather. When Oswald lifts his wife or does things for her, she says: "It's bitter enough that I should have to take service from you--you whom I have loved so well" (p. 92). To Nellie, Myra explains that "people can be lovers and enemies at the same time," and that "perhaps I can't forgive him for the harm I did him" (p. 88). But these things are beyond Nellie's comprehension. It is as though the world around Myra in those last months, Nellie with her admonitions, Oswald with his dreams, and the Poindexters with their noise, all conspire to drown out Myra's attempts to speak of what is real. In that one whispered line, however, "Why must I die like this, alone with my mortal enemy," and to Nellie's consternation, Myra says the truth clearly and finally. Though Nellie does not understand those words, she recognizes their feeling which is, she says, of a "confession of the soul," a "judgement," or "strange complaint" (pp. 105, 95). Myra's words tell who she is: a goddess in disguise, a very exceptional woman. They tell also what has befallen her in this world; and they are her own lament, like that of Jupiter before the sailors, for fallen greatness.

Since Myra has no profession, artistic or otherwise, how does the reader assess desire and fulfillment in her? It's true in "The Garden Lodge" and "A Wagner Matinee," and it is still true twenty years later in My Mortal Enemy, that the issue that holds the most interest for Willa Cather is what a character does with who s/he is. To go against one's nature is the worst kind of foolishness, in Cather's estimate. Myra does that, unwittingly. When she marries Oswald, she satisfies one part of her nature but binds the other.

Myra's life's work is the manner in which she lives out this contradiction. Once having realized her mistake, she does not seek solutions like that of Caroline who represses her desire, or Georgiana, part of whom seems to die. On the contrary, Myra is concerned to understand her original nature and to survive without further betrayal of self. The suicide theme which appears two or three times has to do with this early self-betrayal. Her situation of "exile," of her real self never being seen by those around her, makes the goal she has set herself a singularly difficult undertaking.

Is My Mortal Enemy a statement of despair, then? I believe not. It is a story of turmoil and suffering, but defeat is not its ultimate message. For one thing, Myra implies in her words, "seeking is finding" (p. 94), that, at least at one level, the desire to live in accordance with who she is has been reward in itself. This idea, long present in



certain areas of religious thought,<sup>50</sup> comes close to the one Cather was fond of quoting: "Le but n'est rien; le chemin, c'est tout."<sup>51</sup> Besides all this, we know that in the mythology of the novel, Myra has a sense of going to meet her uncle at the end, and of receiving his forgiveness. Furthermore, there are other unmistakable Cather signals of hope: Myra dies in the month of June and facing the dawn.<sup>52</sup> Eudora Welty's comment seems nowhere more applicable than to Myra's story. The ultimate concern in Willa Cather's novels, says Welty, is with

the desire in one heart and soul to claim what is  
its own, to achieve its measure of greatness . . .  
and most of the time, and at its highest moments,  
the desire is its own drive, its own gratification.<sup>53</sup>

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1. Latour is the protagonist in Willa Cather's Death Comes For the Archbishop.

2. "Pagan" in the sense of offering pleasure to the senses, and also of achieving this through the extravagant use of symbols (that is, flowers, processions, music, colorful attire, incense) originally employed by paganism and later adopted by the church. For further comment on this point, see Note 37 below.

3. For a discussion of Cather's use of this image in her portrayal of Thea in The Song of the Lark, see Slote, KA, p. 88.

4. See I Kings 3: 16-28.

5. Ewan, a popular Welsh name, one of whose meanings is "lamb."

6. Slote, KA, p. 70.

7. CSF, p. 426.

8. Again, feminist criticism would point to the power of men over women in Myra's society and describe her dilemma as distinctly female. The old idea that a woman's fulfillment can be found only in love is roundly challenged in My Mortal Enemy. A comparison of the novella with Cather's early story, "A Resurrection," shows how much her ideas on the subject changed between 1897 and 1926.

9. "A Hymne to Venus," l.110.

10. Book I, ll.403-406. I am indebted to Paul Comeau for suggesting Endymion when I was researching a mythic prototype for Oswald's sleepy nature.

11. "Christians, awake, salute the happy morn,/Whereon the Saviour of the world was born;" John Byrom, 1750.

12. Slote, KA, p. 97.

13. For a discussion of Cather's use of the moon as symbol, including the Salammbô source, see Slote, KA, pp. 97-103.

14. "Salammbô was always the most disputed of Flaubert's works, and even today there are conflicting opinions about it;" The Greatness of Flaubert, Maurice Nadeau (New York: Library Press, 1972), p. 159.

15. Courier, September 28, 1895. See KA, p. 138.

16. "A Chance Meeting," Not Under Forty (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1936), p. 25.

17. In "A Chance Meeting," p. 23, Cather tells how her encounter with Flaubert's niece at Aix-les-Bains evokes the Chapter Three scene of Salammbô.

18. Salammbô, from The Complete Works of Gustave Flaubert, with a critical introduction by Ferdinand Brunetiere and a Biographical Preface by Robert Arnot, (New York and London: M. Walter Dunne, 1904), Vol. III, pp. 53-55.

19. In Flaubert's novel, Salammbô is one of the priestesses of Tanith, and when the sacred veil belonging to the goddess is stolen by the mercenaries, Salammbô is pressed into retrieving it. In the process, she is ravished by Matho, the man who committed the original sacrilege of abducting the veil. Later, he suffers a horrible death at the hands of the Carthaginians, and Salammbô also dies, but suddenly, inexplicably--presumably in accord with the will of Tanith. The reason given for her death is that she had "touched the veil of Tanith," but there is an implied suggestion that her death was in some way related to her loss of sexual purity.

20. The libretto of the opera Norma, from which the aria is taken, offers no identification of the "chaste goddess" to whom the music is addressed, except to make it clear that she is associated with the moon and that she has power to bestow peace. This information obtained by phone, Sept., '79, from Professor Joel Kaplan, English Department, University of British Columbia.

21. See James Woodress, Willa Cather: Her Life and Art (New York: Pegasus, 1970), p. 214.

22. The full name was "Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse."

23. "A Chance Meeting," p. 22.

24. "Willa Cather would like our minds to receive what she is showing us not as its description--however beautiful--but as the thing described, the living thing itself. To this end she may eliminate its picture, the better to make us see something really there." Eudora Welty, The Art of Willa Cather, p. 4.

25. "The Novel Démeublé," Willa Cather On Writing, p. 41.

26. The opera's theme duplicates, to some extent, the theme of the novel, Salammbô. Norma, like Salammbô, is priestess to the moon goddess. As such, she is pledged to virginity, but has broken her vow and, like Salammbô, through a man who is enemy to her own people.

27. Slote, KA, p. 103.

28. See KA, p. 394.

29. From The Sword and the Flame, Selections from Heinrich Heine's Prose; edited with an introduction by Alfred Werner; based on the translation by Charles Godfrey Leland (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1960).

30. Heine, p. 546.

31. Heine, p. 547.

32. Heine, p. 541.

33. Heine, p. 575.

34. Fifteen years later in "The Bohemian Girl" a similar borrowing from Heine occurs. See Slote, KA, pp. 101-102. The mythic personalities of the characters are more developed in this story than in "A Resurrection," and they have a strong sense of themselves as different from their neighbours. Again, rather than being driven into exile, they escape from it.

35. See Matthew 7:24-27.

36. Heine, p. 584.

37. In his essay, Heine names Christianity itself as responsible for loss of belief, but Cather changes this to suit the purpose of her story. She relates Protestantism and free-thought to lost belief and Catholicism to belief. The implication is that Catholicism is more akin to the spirit of the pagan gods than Protestantism--a position with which the reader may or may not agree.

38. "Skeptic" is given as a synonym for "free-thinker" in the Funk & Wagnall Dictionary.

39. Slote, KA, p. 34.

40. Matthew 8:20.

41. Proverbs 15:17: "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith."

42. Matthew 7:6.

43. See, for example, John 2:4; 13:1; 17:1; and Mark 14:41.

44. There is a consistency in the way Willa Cather has her Diana-characters described by their lovers. In "The Bohemian Girl," Nils says of Clara: ". . . a wild bird . . . you used to be just like that, a slender, eager thing with a wild delight inside you. That is how I remembered you" (CSF, p. 36). Oswald says of Myra: "She was a wild, lovely creature, Nellie. I wish you could have seen her then" (My Mortal Enemy, p. 104).

45. Heine, p. 565.

46. Heine, p. 567.

47. Heine, pp. 580-584.

48. Music in Willa Cather's Fiction, p. 172.

49. January 13, 1895; see KA, p. 349.

50. Chiefly in the writings of those in the mystic tradition. See for example, Julian of Norwich in Showings: "And this vision taught me to understand that the soul's constant search pleases God greatly. For it cannot do more than seek, suffer and trust" (Chapter X). See also Tolstoy, in "Introduction to Amiel's Journal:" "I think that those who with their whole heart and with suffering . . . seek God, are already serving Him." Note also Henry van Dyke, a contemporary of Cather's, who was both writer and a minister of a New York church, with whose work she may well have been acquainted. Here is a quote from the preface to his book, The Other Wise Man (1924):

But have you ever heard the story of the Other Wise Man, who also saw the star in its rising, and set out to follow it, yet did not arrive with his brethren in the presence of the young child Jesus? Of the great desire of this fourth pilgrim, and how it was denied, yet accomplished in the denial; of his many wanderings and the probations of his soul; of the long way of his seeking, and the strange way of his finding, the One whom he sought . . .

It is a curious coincidence that the Other Wise Man also comes from a place called "Parthia." Last, though not least, are the words of Christ: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

51. According to Cather, the quote is from Michelet, though no one as yet has been able to find it. Cather mentions the saying in "Joseph and His Brothers," Not Under Forty, p. 99; and also in her short story, "Old Mrs. Harris," p. 158.

52. In the Journal, January 26, 1896, in an article on the author, James Lane Allen, Cather says:

For the rest, Mr. Allen's story is a study in environment, an idyl of a southern summer. It could not have happened in winter, it could not have happened in town. In the country June is a stirring appeal to return to nature. Strange things happen in a country summer . . . Nature comes out renewed from her tipsy slumber . . . like the reckless old pagan that she is . . . We are all pagans in the summer time. Bacchus will never lack followers while there is spring nor while there is June will the daughters of the sea foam be forgotten (KA, p. 331).

Excerpts from another article (not reproduced in full) are given by Slote, KA, p. 95. From the Journal, October 19, 1902, note Cather's implication in connection with the rising sun. Speaking of a dying civilization, she says: "One knows that this people face toward the setting, not the rising sun."

53. The Art of Willa Cather, p. 15.

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