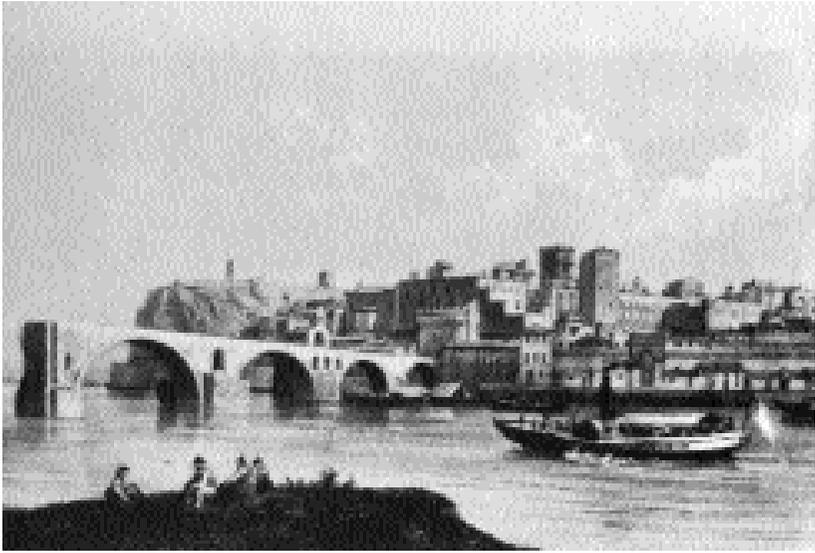


Avignon, Mesa Verde, and Cather's *The Professor's House**

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The fascination for Southwestern mesas in Archbishop Jean Latour's recognition of their resemblance to Gothic cathedrals in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927) can be traced to the architecture and topography Willa Cather herself appreciated during her visit to Europe in 1902, ten years before her introduction to the American Southwest (99). In Paris the "white gleam of Sacre-Coeur" on Montmartre reminded her of "the city of St. John's vision or the Heavenly City that Bunyan saw across the river" (*W&P* 924). Anticipating Latour's visit to Acoma (and her own introduction to Quebec City), Cather would discover on Avignon's Doms Rock, beetling above the Rhone, a twelfth-century Romanesque cathedral, the Palace of the Popes (who resided there from 1309-77), and a garden offering sunset views of the distant Alps to the east. The fourteenth-century palace, as Edith Lewis reports, "stirred [Cather] as no building in the world had ever done" (190). Avignon's rock had been

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Avignon

the locale of human settlement since the Neolithic Era, and had developed into a flourishing port by the fifth century B. C.

In 1912 Cather first visited the mesa country. Using as her base Winslow, Arizona, she explored cliff dwelling in Walnut Canyon, visited Mexican communities and remote missions, and heard Spanish and Indian legends from Winslow's priest. She now had "a new Spanish world to think of—and eventually write of" (83), recalls Elizabeth Sergeant of this first Southwestern encounter. The "grandiose and historical scale" of this world forecast "some great spiritual event" to Cather, "something . . . that had nothing to do with the appalling mediocrity and vulgarity of [contemporary American] industrial civilization" (81–82). Not surprisingly, she compared the Southwest to France, the country that offered her similar reprieve from the claustrophobic aspects of American (especially Nebraskan) life. She wrote Sergeant that the Albuquerque area resembled "the country between Marseilles and Nice but [was] more luminous. Even finer than the Rhone Valley. . . . She described Indian villages set around Spanish Mission churches" (81). Visiting the cliff dwellings, Cather was "deeply . . . stirred" by contact with an "age-old but . . . intensely near and akin civilization" (Lewis 81).

This first visit to the Southwest resulted, according to Sergeant, in Cather's sudden "control of inner creative forces." Somehow, "the vast solitude of the Southwest, its bald magnificence, brilliant light and physical impact, too, had the effect of toning up [Cather's] spirit, and made available a path in which a new artistic method could evolve from familiar Nebraska subject matter" (85). The result was *O Pioneers!* (1913) and Cather's discovery of herself as an artist. The aesthetic epiphany she herself experienced in the Southwestern canyons, Cather bequeathed to Thea Kronborg in *The Song of the Lark* (1915) and later tapped for Tom Outland's first night alone on the mesa in *The Professor's House* (1925). But memories of France (especially of Avignon) remained with Cather to satisfy other than aesthetic yearnings, for the canyons also had challenged her to "measur[e herself] with that ancient image, Death, which so easily overpowered a white man in this environment" (Sergeant 123). These memories were of a comfortable and

contained world that offered sanctuary from the consuming (if inspiring) alien world of the Southwest, which had become her setting, in part, because Europe was inaccessible during World War I. Writing to Sergeant in France after returning from the Southwest, Cather “mourn[ed] that she was not . . . drinking a *petit verre* in the Place de la Republique” and recalled “the little willows of Avignon resting their elbows in the flooded Rhone. Her most splendid memory was of the Rocher des Doms and its Virgin [on the cathedral], golden above the great river” (96). When she revisited New Mexico in 1914, during the writing of *The Song of the Lark*, Cather was “in restless, hopeful mood,” according to Sergeant, but “the war cut into her joyous travels, even in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains” (127); with France and all European values threatened, she returned to Pittsburgh.

The concerns of the Southwestern section of *The Song of the Lark* are revealing as a prologue to those of the Mesa Verde section of *The Professor's House*. Exhausted from her work routine in Chicago, Thea seeks out a room of her own in the wind-swept, dead city, from which she has access (via an ancient water trail) to a stream and a bathing pool, and from which she can contemplate a half-ruined watch tower the Indians used to entice eagles. The vanished inhabitants of the ruins symbolize for Thea her own misgivings as an artist; these people were timid, their lives sad, monotonous, like the swallows that never rose above the canyon rim. However, the eagle that dips into the canyon and then rises beyond its rim, “steeped in light . . . like a golden bird” (269), Thea relates to her own future success, which will enable the poor Indians whose pottery lies shattered along the stream to soar beyond the rim with her: “O eagle of eagles! Endeavor, achievement, desire, glorious striving of human art!” (269). If glorious, the achievement is, indeed, quite human and quite secular; it also privileges European art (in this case musical) beyond anything achieved by the cliff dwellers, making that art a religion.

A few years later, during the postwar malaise, when a now successful Cather returned to France, the arrogance of this view of art had been tempered by deep, more traditional responses to religion. *My Ántonia* (1918), in its own way an expression of war-related malaise, had

intervened, as had Cather's week-long visit in 1915 to Mesa Verde, when she spent a day at Cliff Palace ruin (Tom Outland's city in the novel) and a night stranded in Soda Canyon. Lewis refers to the hours spent waiting in the moonlight as "the most rewarding of our whole trip to the Mesa Verde" (97) and affirms them "the real genesis" of "Tom Outland's Story" (99). What subsequently occurred inside Cather while she was reacquainting herself with France for the French section of *One of Ours* (1922) might be suggested through the protagonist of that novel, Claude Wheeler. Claude considers the American West as his first opportunity to rise, like Thea's eagle, beyond the restraining walls of materialistic Nebraska life, but then he rejects the West: "The statue of Kit Carson on horseback, down in the [Denver] Square, pointed Westward; but there was no West, in that sense [of freedom], any more. . . . Here the sky was like a lid shut down over the world" (100). But much later, when Claude finds himself among a few worshipping women in Rouen's church of St. Ouen, looks up at the rose window, and listens to the great bell, "[t]he revelations of the glass and the bell . . . were superlatives toward which his mind had always been groping" (276-77). The liberating experience is set in an abbey church rather than an Anasazi city and represents movement from Nebraska to France as well as Cather's development from provincial to world writer.

Extended visits to France framed some kind of revelation for Cather that must be considered in evaluating *The Professor's House* and its Western story, the Mesa Verde story. In 1920, her five-month stay in France focused on Medieval Paris and Provence, although presumably she was gathering material for a World War I-era novel. In 1923 she returned to France, again for several months, and at Aix-les-Bains, according to Edith Lewis, conceived *The Professor's House*: "She did not work there, but it was perhaps in the peace and beauty of the Savoie countryside that the idea of [the novel] took shape" (133). Between these visits, on 27 December 1922, the year in which she claimed the world broke in two and she herself "slid back into yesterday's seven thousand years" (NUF "Prefatory Note"), Cather was confirmed with her parents in Red Cloud's Episcopal Church. Subsequently, in *The Professor's House* she

combined French and Southwestern settings to relieve the Midwestern locale of her main plot, subdued the romantic aestheticism inspiring *The Song of the Lark*, and used the mesa and its canyons as a place for anguish as well as epiphany. I am suggesting here that the problems of the protagonists in *The Professor's House* reflect crises that Cather herself had experienced and resolved between these two Anasazi-inspired novels, crises at once broadly cultural as well as personally spiritual.

THE PROFESSOR'S PROBLEMS

There are two complementary problem clusters in *The Professor's House*, one an imbalance between Godfrey St. Peter's roles as husband/father and professor/scholar (a failure in equilibrium between his "marriages" to his wife and his work), and the other—historical and cultural as well as social—involving what Henry Adams began examining at the Paris Exposition of 1900 as the opposed forces of the dynamo and the Virgin.

In her letter on the novel's form, Cather cited the combining in certain Dutch paintings of interior and window scenes, a juxtaposition more generally evident between foreground and background in "Dutch" traditions, as in works of the elder Brueghel, in which such divisions are managed diagonally with foreground details clustered within the lower angle while in the upper the eye is directed to mountain peaks or open seas on the horizon. In *The Professor's House* such equilibrium is really a matter of memory, for the foreground story of the novel is buried beneath a stuffy domesticity shucked only temporarily, when the professor recalls Tom's mesa adventure, "the fresh air that blew off the Blue Mesa" (OW 31–32). This lost equilibrium becomes evident in several places in the first book, "The Family," especially at the conclusion of the professor's long reminiscence of Tom (occasioned by son-in-law Scott McGregor's doubts about Tom's reality):

[T]hose first years, before Outland had done anything remarkable, were really the best of all. [St. Peter] liked to remember the charming groups of three he was always coming upon [Tom and St.

Peter's daughters, Rosamond and Kathleen]. . . Oh, there had been fine times in this old house then. (107)

Additional evidence of what has been lost includes the mixture of Augusta's patterns and the professor's notes in the box-couch and the comparison between the Bayeux Tapestry and the professor's best writing, when "he was conscious of pretty little girls in fresh dresses" in the house below and interwove with "personal memories" the exploits of his Spanish adventurers (84–85).

Juggling roles as husband/father and teacher/scholar (alternating them—cheating on one to serve another) had challenged St. Peter rather than posed a problem. Seeking the bachelor haven of the French garden and enjoying an epiphany off the coast of Spain without his wife represented his survival as a scholar; hardly blameworthy, such experiences helped maintain a creative balance between the absorbing domesticity of family living and the expansive historical vistas of scholarly exploration. The upsetting of this arrangement began after St. Peter perceived that his student Tom Outland was remarkable enough to be taken up to his study and replace his wife as his companion; "then Mrs. St. Peter withdrew her favour" (151). The destructive process continued as the professor's daughters graduated from innocent play with Tom to competition for his favor. When the novel begins, Louie Marsellus is in Tom's skin and Mexican blanket as Rosamond's husband, Kitty has married on the rebound, and the scene of domestic bliss (the old house) yawns emptily beneath the professor's study. Lillian St. Peter makes an important point when warning her husband about the faulty gas heater in his study above the now empty house: "It was very different when the house below was heated" (80).

Thus the professor himself has occasioned the loss of that balance between proximity and distance—between glass doorknobs, electric dinner buzzers, and painted Spanish bedroom sets on one hand (mere clutter where domestic life has failed), and sunrise breaking over sculptured peaks and impassable mountains in Outland's country on the other—those vistas Cather appreciated in the Dutch paintings she saw in Paris. The loss has led to creative sterility. Few readers question just what Godfrey St. Peter does during all those hours (including Christmas Day!) he spends alone in his uncomfortable study.

He seems forever sitting down to papers which, in the first chapter, he looks "musingly at" (10) until Augusta intrudes, and on Christmas morning he gets engrossed in papers until lunch, when he pushes them aside to eat and reminisce about the convent girl to whom he offered dahlias during his student days in Paris. His confession to old Applehoff the landlord reveals St. Peter's actual activity: "I'm renting our house," he admits, "to have room to think" (41). Nor is this thinking toward the writing of histories; it is a futile effort to sustain a lost personal past, and the single project that might be classified as scholarly, the editing for publication of Tom's Blue Mesa diary, is merely an attempt to resurrect Tom.

As the professor retreats, because he can no longer control his family as he had before his wife withdrew and his daughters were adults, he is punished and exploited by that family. He is asked to help Kitty select her furs and Rosie her furniture; he vainly tries to revive the loving relationship his daughters once shared, vainly tries to keep his sons-in-law from damaging each other, vainly tries to instill in Rosamond a sense of responsibility for the Cranes and Augusta, and vainly tries to bridge the separation developing between himself and wife Lillian. The earlier and best years he wants restored through these efforts cannot be, and recognition of that reality comes when he questions why one "couldn't . . . keep" "one's lovely children" in a house "full of pretty fancies and generous impulses," answering this with yet another question: "Was there no way but Medea's, he wondered?" (107). Thus, the fresh air that Cather and her professor associate with Tom's mesa is effectively choked off by the domestic problems Cather stuffs into the first book; compounding this, the professor's golden days of tracing the exploits of conquistadors have won him a prize and are gone.

Despite desperate efforts to keep them from disappearing, the distant peaks and seas associated with Outland have become increasingly difficult to remember. When son-in-law Scott McGregor reveals that his classmate "Tom isn't very real to me any more. Sometimes I think he was just a—a glittering idea," St. Peter is "rather troubled" and begins "recalling as clearly and definitely as he could every incident of that . . . spring day . . . he first saw Tom Outland" (94-95). At the conclusion of the conversation St. Peter later has with Professor

Crane about patent money, the collapse of romance (the obliteration of those liberating upper diagonals and window scenes) is summarized in a passage at once recalling and reversing St. Peter's private epiphany in a boat off the coast of Spain:

everything around [St. Peter] seemed insupportable, as the boat on which he is imprisoned seems to a sea-sick man. Yet it was possible that the little world, on its voyage among the stars, might become like that; a boat on which one could travel no longer, from which one could no longer look up and confront those bright rings or revolution. (131)

This inevitable obliteration terrifies the professor as he stubbornly attempts to cling to his vision, and as his domestic haven transforms into the hell he resists accepting as his reality.

The effort of denying reality is the crux of the final book and what Cather referred to in her note on the novel to Robert Frost: "This is really a story of 'letting go with the heart' but most reviewers seem to consider it an attempt to popularize a system of philosophy" (Sergeant 215). The phrase "letting go with the heart" is from "Wild Grapes" in Frost's *New Hampshire* collection (1924), published the year before *The Professor's House*. In it, a female persona recalls being suspended in the air when picking grapes from a vine growing on a birch. She compares letting go with the hands to letting go with the heart and mind; she confesses never yet having to let go with the mind and hopes never to have to let go with the heart. But Professor St. Peter must learn this painful process; it is demanded by time, age, living: he can continue to live with his family but the relationship must be altered, and Tom Outland must recede into the past where he belongs. However, there is another meaning to "letting go with the heart," and that has to do with the novel's second problem cluster I referred to earlier as historical and cultural as well as social. It too requires the professor's resignation to inevitable change as well as commitment to values he merely praises in lip service.

The change St. Peter has resisted is the same that startles Henry Adams in *The Education* (1907, 1918) during his visit to the Paris Exposition of

1900. The dynamo becomes for Adams the symbol of emerging industrial and technological society; and juxtaposing the cross and the steam-engine as world forces, he is intrigued with their process of production, respectively, of great cathedrals and dizzying generator wheels. Thus, two kingdoms of force begin to divide history for him: that of the woman, a sexual force represented ultimately in the Virgin Mary; that of the dynamo, propelling humanity toward atomic and nuclear discovery. In Cather's novel, a historian like Adams reluctantly confronts the realities of contemporary science: the Outland vacuum, the Outland engine revolutionizing aviation. These realities have changed his life; commercialized, they have corrupted his family as well as his university, turning it into a business school.

Adams's dual kingdoms of force clarify the professor's classroom comments on science as sterile, as stripping humanity of rich pleasure and diminishing human value: "I don't myself think much of science as a phase of human development," he begins. "It has given us a lot of ingenious toys; they take our attention away from the real problems. . . . As long as every man and woman who crowded into the cathedrals . . . was a principal in a gorgeous drama with God . . . life was a rich thing" (54-55). As jealousy over Tom's legacy grows into hatred between St. Peter's daughters, it becomes obvious that science's ingenious toys create debilitating problems, and the discord between the realms of force hinted at in his classroom comments becomes dramatically evident to the professor:

[A]s the Angelus was ringing, two faces at once rose in the shadows . . . : the handsome face of his older daughter . . . with cruel upper lip and scornful half-closed eyes . . . ; and Kathleen, her square little chin set so fiercely, her white cheeks actually becoming green under her swollen eyes. . . . A sharp pain clutched his heart. Was it for this the light in Outland's laboratory used to burn so far into the night! (74)

Here the laboratory and the Virgin polarize, become kingdoms of force which for Adams "had nothing in common but attraction" (1070), and the former invades the latter, corrupting the very women who should represent it.

Like Adams, St. Peter is naive about the Virgin's force, a condition Adams identifies as the bankruptcy of his Yankee breeding, which equated woman and sex with sin and dismissed the Virgin as superstition. The professor is similarly bankrupt; at Christmas, he asks Augusta if certain phrases from the Virgin's litany are in the "Magnificat," and then betrays astounding ignorance of the canticle, surprised that it is attributed to the Virgin in Luke's Gospel. The kind of study Adams undertakes at sixty-two to overcome the deficiencies in his education might be in store for Cather's professor: "one stumbled," confesses Adams, "as stupidly [into the vast forests of scholastic science—from Zeno, through Thomas Aquinas, to Montaigne, Descartes, Pascal] as though one were still a German student of 1860" (1075). Perhaps the professor had already commenced such exploration (which might explain his questions for Augusta), although it is still in its pagan infancy.

To the extent that the Virgin's force in *The Professor's House* is represented in "reliable, methodical . . . devout" sewing-woman Augusta, who drags him from his gas-filled study (16), Professor St. Peter is saved by the Virgin as he is overwhelmed by the dynamo. The change in him, so briefly sketched by Cather, is not merely a letting go with the heart as release; it is release for the purpose of loving universally (in the sense of charity) rather than privately. Godfrey St. Peter has been an emotionally niggardly and self-protective individual. The "drawing-back that he feels in the region of his diaphragm" when Louie Marsellus offers a summer in France characterizes St. Peter's response to the Crane problem (139), to the feuding of his daughters, to his wife's involvement with her sons-in-law, etc. He admires "reserve about one's deepest feelings," he tells Lillian when complaining about Louie's florid style (36), the kind of reserve Tom Outland exhibited in burying the truth about his treatment of Roddy Blake for so long (155). Indeed, Tom is admired for lack of public spirit by St. Peter right before the stove fails: "He couldn't see Tom building 'Outland,' or becoming a public-spirited citizen" (236). The denial of all such "realities" leads to the professor's "falling out of all domestic and social relations, out of his place in the human family" (250).

However, several pages after this impasse, a distinction is made that separates the two kinds of letting go with the heart: "He didn't . . . feel any obligations toward his family. . . . there was still Augusta, however; a world full of Augustas, with whom one was outward bound" (257).

Tom's Blue Mesa functions negatively and positively in the limited resolution of the professor's story. It provides a reprieve from the novel's claustrophobic atmosphere but is qualified by diverting the professor from the consequences of his own solipsism. Also, it lacks significance culturally, is merely a pre-Christian anticipation of the force that saves Professor St. Peter. The mesa intrigues and tempts Tom like the Old Testament God; it blazes like fire and speaks in thunder (171-72). The ruined city within it is approached solemnly like a holy city "looking down into the canyon with the calmness of eternity" (180). Tom's cliff city gives evidence of the integration of force and symbol Adams attributes to the Virgin, but it is a dead city with a mummy goddess, an unredeemed Eve. Its living water, trickling from the rock "like liquid crystal [throwing] off the sunlight like a diamond" (187), seems deficient in the restorative powers found, say, in the ruined Euro-American settlement in Frost's "Directive," where the stream by the cedar relates to Christian baptism and offers to modern humanity "whole[ness] again beyond confusion." The mesa's limitation is also evident in Tom's temptation to preserve his discovery of the city from Blake as well as in the epiphany he eventually experiences at the cost of banishing his best friend and stifling the "ache in my arms to reach out and detain him" (223).

But the nature of Tom's epiphany is significant in its development from the earlier epiphany of Thea Kronborg in *The Song of the Lark*. Where hers is aesthetic, Tom's is something else: "something had happened in me that made it possible for me to co-ordinate and simplify, and that process . . . brought with it great happiness. It was possession. . . . For me the mesa was no longer an adventure, but a religious emotion" (226-27). During his "possession" Tom graduates from the Southwestern past to the European and then fuses them:

I got the better of the Spanish grammar and read the twelve books of the *Aeneid*. . . . When I look into the *Aeneid* now, I can always see two pictures: the one on the page, and another behind that: . . . little clustered houses . . . , a rude tower . . . [,] a dark grotto, in its depths a crystal spring. (227–28)

However, Tom's accomplishments are constantly tempered by the memory of his rejection of Blake: "I used to be frightened at my own heartlessness. . . . But the older I grow, the more I understand what it was I did that night on the mesa. Anyone who requites faith and friendship as I did, will have to pay for it" (228–29).

Cather has moved from aesthetic to moral and religious concerns, and from proto-New Age to Judeo-Christian spirituality. Her alternatives to the mesa are suggested in the novel's final book, where Godfrey St. Peter contemplates a summer trip and juxtaposes "the sculptured peaks and impassable mountain passes" of "Outland's country" and "Notre Dame, in Paris, . . . standing there like the Rock of Ages, with the frail generations breaking about its base" (246).

CATHER'S LAST HOLY CITY

When Cather returned to Anasazi history in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* it was as a pretext for thoughts about God and Christianity. Riding past the Enchanted Mesa on his way to Acoma, Father Latour reflects on concepts of the rock as "the utmost expression of human need" and as "the highest comparison of loyalty. . . . Christ Himself had used . . . for the disciple [the original St. Peter] to whom he gave the keys of His Church" (103). The only ancient cliff-dwellings in this Southwestern novel are those in Canyon de Chelly, believed by the Navajos to be the abodes of their gods, "inaccessible white houses set in caverns in the face of the cliffs" (310). The description is sandwiched between those of mission churches: "the old warlike church of Acoma, with its two stone towers [, glaunt, grim, grey . . . more like a fortress than a place of worship" (106); and the completed cathedral, as contemplated by dying Archbishop Latour—"good Midi Romanesque of the plainest. . . how it

sounded the note of the South! . . . the Cathedral lay against the pine-splashed slopes as against a curtain" (283–84). The cultural straddling and inchoate religious musings in *The Professor's House* have been replaced by traditional orthodoxy.

Such orthodoxy increases in Cather's next novel, *Shadows on the Rock* (1931). When Cather accidentally discovered Quebec in 1928, she was inspired by a Frenchness (at the time, perhaps, more medieval than twentieth-century) essentially defined by religion, and in choosing the Counter-Reformation world of the seventeenth-century colony as her setting she could mix French culture and Catholic belief in such a way that the former becomes the expression of the latter. The well-ordered universe of saints and martyrs illuminated by heavenly light and resembling a fresco (78) is duplicated sacramentally in the household order "[w]ithout [which]," Madame Auclair tells her daughter, "our lives would be disgusting, like those of the poor savages. At home, in France," she continues, "we have learned to do all these things in the best way, and we are conscientious and that is why we are called the most civilized people in Europe and other nations envy us" (20). The "mountain rock" of Quebec, "cunningly built over with churches, convents, fortifications, gardens, following the natural irregularities of the headland on which they stood" resembles "nothing so much as one of those little artificial mountains . . . made in the churches [in France] to present the scene of the Nativity" (4). If Quebec is a new Bethlehem it is more emphatically the New Jerusalem, "gleaming above the river [St. Lawrence] like an altar with many candles, or like a holy city in an old legend, shriven, sinless, washed in gold" (137). The comparison to an altar conflates the Second Coming and the doctrine of Transubstantiation, the changing of Eucharistic bread and wine into the physical presence of Jesus; the description also compresses several biblical passages and makes rock-set Quebec the transfigured church. In an early typescript, Cather borrowed from Psalm 19:5 to describe the sun as the "bridegroom issuing from his chamber," or the Lord emerging from his heavenly tabernacle to light the world, and used Matthew 13:43 (depicting the children of heaven shining at judgment like the sun) to compare the colonial community

to "the righteous in their Heavenly father's house." The entire passage owes to the transfigured city in Revelation 21, that of the bride as the tabernacle of the Lord generating its own light and descending to the righteous as their dwelling.

The genesis of Cather's holy city can be found in her 1902 travel sketches, where, uncannily in anticipation of Quebec, she describes "the fine old city of the popes," Avignon:

At the north end of the town there rises an enormous facade of smooth rock three hundred feet above the Rhone. This sheer precipice, accessible from the river side only by winding stone stairways, is crowned by the great palace of the popes. The palace is a huge, rambling Gothic pile, flanked by six square Italian towers, with a beautiful little cathedral in front. The palace faces toward the town, and behind it, overhanging the Rhone, are the popes' gardens. (*W & P* 936-37)

In 1934, three years after the publication of *Shadows*, Cather returned to Avignon and decided to make it the locale of a story set during the exile of the popes, when the Roman Church was actually French. Edith Lewis provided an account of the proposed plot, involving two boys, Pierre and Andre, mutilated for thievery and blasphemy, respectively. The misery of their plight was to be heightened against the splendor of the papal court, and the central scene involve an elderly blind priest comforting the blasphemer. A major theme was to be an analysis of the betrayal of the sacred in the sinner, and the priest would succeed in transforming Andre's disability into a challenge involving Pierre (*Kates* 482-84). As to style, Lewis claimed that it was to be "completely *déméuble*" and the length of a long *nouvelle* (490), that is, like *My Mortal Enemy* (1926).

Avignon thus serves as a frame for forty-five years of fiction writing rising from and returning to medieval European culture. Seen from this perspective, Tom's city, "looking down into the canyon with the calmness of eternity" (180), and Thea Kronborg's eagle, rising from the dwelling-peppered canyon as the embodiment of "[e]ndeavor, achievement, desire, glorious striving of human art!" (269), are mere flashes in

the pan. Much more representative of the whole of Cather than this second passage is the sentiment found in Isaiah 40:30-31:

Even the youth shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint.

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