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The Song of the Lark. By WILLA CATHER. Ed. by ANN MOSELEY and KARI A. RONNING. (Willa Cather Scholarly Edition) Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. 2012. xi+925 pp. £50. ISBN 978-0-8032-1402-6.

This scholarly edition of the American writer Willa Cather's novel *The Song of the Lark* is a beautifully presented and carefully assembled volume. Offering the 1915 edition of *The Song of the Lark*, the book also contains a wealth of biographical information and contextual material of interest to students and scholars of Cather's life and work. The Willa Cather Scholarly Edition series has been overseen by Guy J. Reynolds and the late Susan J. Rosowski, who, in their foreword to the volume, emphasize the importance of adhering to Cather's stated preferences in relation to the presentation of the text.

The Song of the Lark tells the story of a female artist, tracing the evolving artistic sensibility and development of its protagonist, Thea Kronborg, from country girl to renowned singer. The essays and commentaries included provide historical, cultural, and literary background to Cather's work. The novel itself is followed by two main sections, the first entitled 'Historical Apparatus', the second 'Textual Apparatus'. This structural division of material provides a helpful overview of the contents, which makes the information easily accessible and user-friendly for readers and scholars engaging in research activity.

Ann Moseley's meticulous 'Historical Essay' traces the myriad influences from Cather's world and surroundings on *The Song of the Lark*, and discusses the novel's publication and reception. Moseley also examines the influence of Henri Bergson in relation to Cather's representation of self and the artist's perception. The 'Illustrations' section presents a visual dimension to the volume, in the form of an illustrative series of photographs of people, places, and images, for instance of a

promotional leaflet for *The Song of the Lark*. These illustrations offer stimulating visual representations and provide an added dimension to Cather's work, thereby allowing scholars a unique insight into the writer's preoccupations and her contemporary culture. The 'Explanatory Notes' to the novel, which form part of the 'Historical Apparatus' section, present a variety of detailed and carefully assembled contextual information for the reader to peruse.

In the 'Textual Apparatus' section, Kari A. Ronning's 'Textual Essay' is of particular interest to scholars conducting research into the historical and creative dimensions of Cather's publishing. Ronning explains the reasoning behind using the 1915 first edition as the source for the present University of Nebraska Press edition. The essay throws light on the novel's editing and printing history, and the extent of Cather's own involvement in decision-making processes. The 'Emendations' and 'Notes on Emendations' included in the 'Textual Apparatus' section will also be of interest to readers and scholars wishing to explore the editorial processes behind Cather's fiction.

Cather's own preface to the 1932 edition of *The Song of the Lark* offers the writer's reflective assessment of the issues faced by her female artist figure, and the consequences of pursuing her art. In this novel Cather presents a compelling narrative of female artistic accomplishment. As evidenced by the absorbing material in this edition, Cather's portrayal of the female artist in *The Song of the Lark* is as pertinent today as it has ever been. The edition will have a broad appeal for undergraduate and postgraduate students, but also contains material which will be useful to advanced researchers. This volume and the Scholarly Edition series overall reflect a sustained interest in Cather's life and writing, and the enduring fascination that they hold.