

Not Under Forty

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Willa Cather



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"What seems, at first, deceptively, a random gathering of essays, anecdotal and critical interspersed, finally reveals itself as a unified musing on the accusatory contrast between a great, dignified past and a huckstering, ugly present."--Notes and Queries
"Full of personal reflections, and of 'promptings not apparent to the casual reader,' and so all the more welcome. We have too little of such writing, off the record."--Yale Review. "In all of these essays, so familiar, so personal on the surface, Miss Cather's continuing stress upon what impresses her in really good literature is evident. It is the immense pains of learning to write, the long struggle to escape from the tyranny of mere words, from the shows and affectations of approximate renderings of reality into the calm assurance of truth, which seem to her the stairway to greatness."--H. S. Canby, Saturday Review of Literature. For Willa Cather, "the world broke in two in 1922 or thereabouts." The whole legacy of Western civilization stood on the far side of World War I, and in the spiritually impoverished present she looked back to that. To that she directed readers of these essays, declaring that anyone under forty years old would not be interested in them. But she was wrong: since its first publication in 1936, Not Under Forty has appealed to readers of all ages who share Cather's concern for excellence, for what endures, in literature and in life.

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