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Of Nazis, False-bottomed Suitcases, and Paperback Reprints: *Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof* (*Death Comes for the Archbishop*) in Germany, 1936–1952

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In *Willa Cather: A Bibliography*, Joan Crane provides an extremely intriguing entry for the first German-language edition of *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, entitled *Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof*. The first part of this bibliographical description is quite innocuous: “Translated by Sigismund von Radecki. Stuttgart, 1940.” Immediately after this, however, Crane states: “Note: This edition was burned by the Nazis, and the plates were destroyed. The translator carried carbon sheets of his translation into Switzerland concealed under the lining of 2 suitcases.” She then concludes the description by noting, “The edition that follows (E50) was subsequently published in Zurich” in 1940 and 1942 (Crane 327). A Cather novel run afoul of the Nazis? A daring, heroic escape to Switzerland by someone who wanted German-language readers to have access to the novel? These elements would more typically be found in a spy thriller than in a bibliography. Such a dramatic narrative not only makes for interesting reading but also almost certainly pleases those who love nothing more than to hear stories of how particular fictions were so powerful or threatening to the status quo that various authorities moved to prevent their publication or distribution (e.g., via libraries or classrooms). There is only one problem: almost none of what Crane wrote is accurate.

Nevertheless, the real story of how *Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof* was originally translated into and published in German is still quite fascinating. Its first appearance in Germany certainly gave no indication of any skulduggery or controversy: an English-language edition of *Death Comes for the Archbishop* was published by the German publishing firm of Bernhard Tauchnitz in 1927 without any difficulty, and it was widely available in Germany and throughout the world to those who could read English. After the Nazis came to power in 1933 and attempts were made to translate the novel into German a few years later, however, this novel’s story became much more complicated. Unknown to most Cather scholars, for instance, the first appearance of *Death Comes for the Archbishop* in German was as a 1936 serial in a Catholic magazine; this translation subsequently was reprinted in Switzerland as the edition Crane labels “E50” (without any

smuggling across national borders). And in the early 1950s, *Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof* became very popular among German-language readers and was consequently reprinted numerous times in hardcover before the Knopf firm significantly dampened the growing interest in Cather by denying one publisher’s request to produce a paperback edition. Documenting the history of *Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof*’s publication during this era and closely examining each textual version is very revealing. Not only does doing so fill a significant lacuna in our understanding of Cather’s growing international reputation during these years (no previous scholarship about these textual versions exists), but it also helps explain why Cather remains a lesser-known and not especially highly regarded writer among German readers today.

Before examining the particular circumstances surrounding the first publication of *Death Comes for the Archbishop* in German as a serial in 1936 and its second appearance as a book in 1940, it is helpful to know the rather volatile societal contexts in which it was translated, produced and read. Most significantly, these events took place during an era dominated by Nazism regime. By July 1932, the Nazi party had used widespread discontent with the economic depression in Germany to win a significant percentage of the vote in general parliamentary elections, making them the largest party in the Reichstag. Adolf Hitler was made Chancellor on 30 January 1933, and after the burning of the Reichstag building on February 27—blamed on Communists—Hitler was given special emergency powers to deal with any opposition that he deemed a threat to the German state.

From the beginning, a major part of the agenda of Hitler’s Nationalist German Socialist Worker’s Party was to control the production and dissemination of literary works, implicitly acknowledging their power to influence readers’ thinking and actions. In early 1933, the Reich issued a decree allowing for the “seizure by the police of any books that ‘tended to endanger public security and order,’” which led to a great many libraries and bookshops being raided (Evans 158). In 1934 alone, according to noted historian Richard Evans, “Four thousand one hundred different printed works were banned by a total of forty different



“censorship bodies” (159). During the years that followed, the Reich tightened its grasp over literary production and distribution, making it impossible for any author to have a work published in Germany without the approval of one of the various Nazi offices responsible for overseeing print production. In September 1933, Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels took control of “the activities of all persons involved in literary endeavor—writers, publishers, booksellers, librarians” (Boyer 270), and not long afterwards, Alfred Rosenberg, director of the Office for the Supervision of the Entire Cultural and Ideological Education and Training of the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National German Socialist Workers’ Party), was put in charge of book censorship; one of this office’s many responsibilities was

maintaining and enforcing the “schwarze Bücherliste” (“Blacklist of Books”) constantly updated (Boyer 270).

What finally caught the world’s—and undoubtedly Willa Cather’s—attention were the mass book burnings in 34 German university towns on 10 May 1933. Cather would have been well aware of these book burnings, since they were widely reported in newspapers and magazines she had access to. She was not, however, among those American authors who immediately condemned the book burnings; these included Sherwood Anderson, Faith Baldwin, Irwin S. Cobb, Sinclair Lewis, and Lewis Mumford (“Nazi Pile Books for Bonfires”). A wide range of books were targeted; the circular form letter sent to German librarians stated that they should contribute any book “that works subversively on family life, married life or love, or the ethics of our youth, or our future, or strikes at the roots of German thought, the German home and the driving forces in our people; any works of those who would subordinate the soul to the material” (as quoted in Boyer 269). Jewish writers were, of course, singled out. One of these was Cather’s beloved Heinrich Heine, whose work she knew well from a personal copy she had acquired (possibly as a gift) in the 1890s (now included in the Charles E. Cather Collection). Whether Cather knew it or not, it was Heine who had written prophetically in his 1821 play *Almansor*, “Dort, wo man Bücher verbrennt, verbrennt man am Ende auch Menschen” (“Where they burn books, they will in the end also burn people”). Nowhere among the lists of books known to have been burned by the Nazis in 1933, though, were works by Willa Cather.

As the 1930s progressed in Germany, Nazi control of literary production became more complete. From mid-1935 to the end of 1936 “the Gestapo and the Sicherheitsdienst (the Nazi Party espionage service) periodically purged forbidden volumes on the Index from secondhand bookstores and lending libraries throughout Germany” (Hill 23), a pattern that would be repeated time and again in the following years. Somehow, however, Cather’s works continued to be published, despite their potential for being suspect. One major strike against her was that she was an American author, and most of her works circulating in Germany (under the auspices of the Tauchnitz firm) had been published in English, which alone would have made the Nazis suspicious, because the reading of foreign literature in the original language implied its readers’ “cosmopolitanism” (Hill 26). Fortunately for Cather, though, her works were not perceived as “Modernist,” which to the Nazis was synonymous with “decadent”; any works that included “Modernist” elements such as overt intellectualism, tolerance of racial integration, relaxed morals, and so forth, or which endorsed political ideologies such as socialism or communism, would have been closely scrutinized and possibly banned by the authorities. The fact that Cather’s

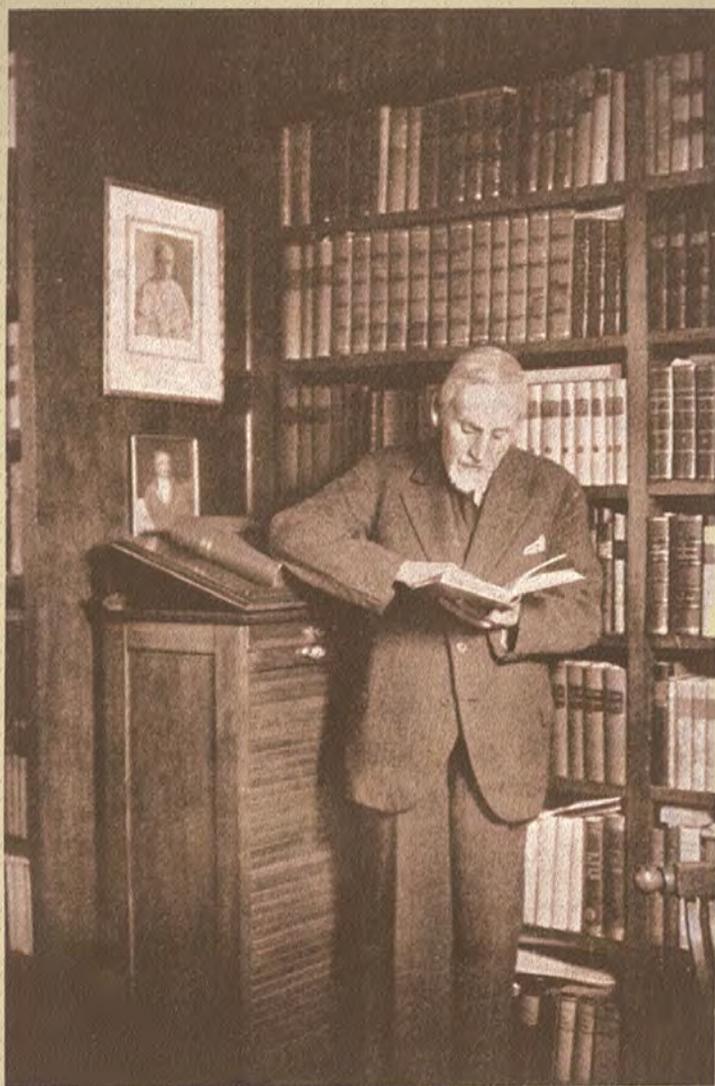
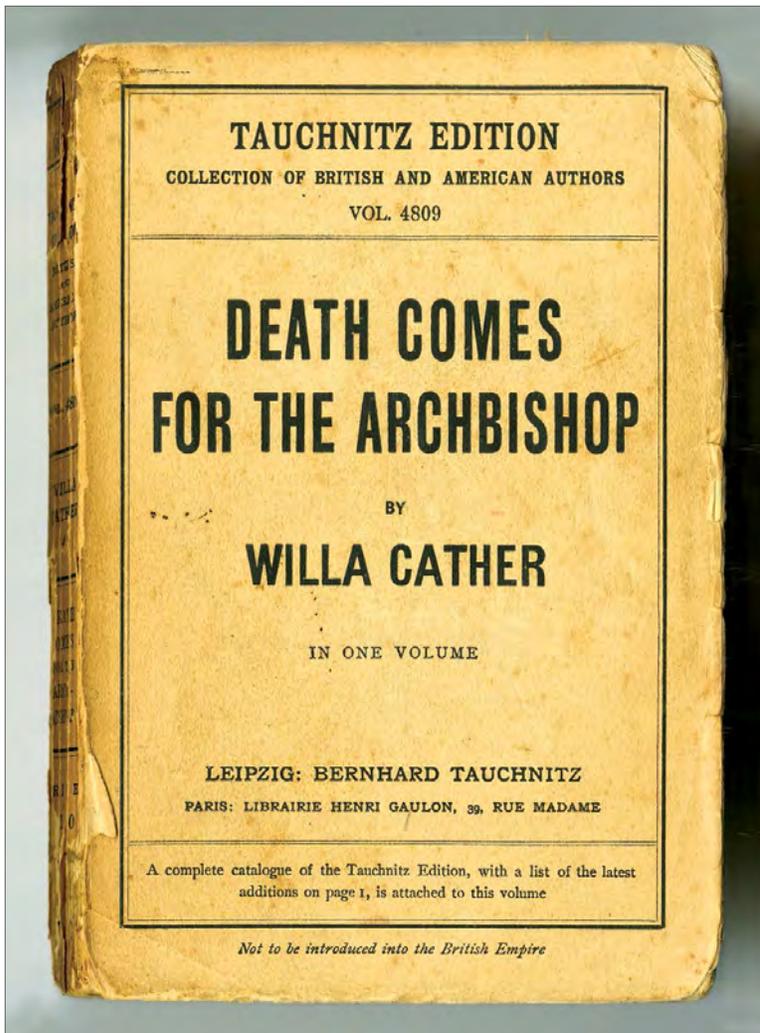


Photo: M. Dierlmayr • München/Sölln

Karl Muth

Karl Muth (1867–1944), founder and editor of *Hochland*





The Tauchnitz English-language edition of *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, published in 1927

books—both in English and in German—had not run afoul of the Nazis before 1936 strongly suggests that they did not deem her works “dangerous” in any of the ways noted above.

Indeed, by virtue of Cather’s having been awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1923 and the Tauchnitz edition of *Death Comes for the Archbishop* being published in 1927, she and this text were fairly well known in 1936, the year Cather and the German translation of it inadvertently became associated with a group of Germans actively involved in resisting the Nazis. In early 1935, Dr. George Shuster, an American scholar living in Germany—and, more importantly, from 1929-1937 the managing editor of the prominent American Catholic periodical *Commonweal* (“President George N. Shuster”)—made arrangements with Karl Muth, the editor of *Hochland*, a German Catholic periodical based in Munich, to publish a translated version of Cather’s *Death Comes for the Archbishop* as a serial (see Alfred A. Knopf, letter to Robert Murphy, 5 October 1945; and Knopf, letter to George Shuster, 5 July 1945, both Barbara Dobkin Collection). Knopf asked Cather for her permission, and on 13 March 1935,

Cather—well aware of the Nazis’ growing control over literary publication—approved the request: “Considering present conditions in Germany I should think a Catholic publisher was more likely to carry on than any other kind of publisher. The Catholic audience is well organized and knit together, and there doesn’t seem to be such organization of any other kind in Germany excepting the Nazi kind. Several years ago I said I didn’t want a Catholic house to publish the ARCHBISHOP in Germany, but times have changed and Germany has changed. The Catholic audience seems to me the only one there worth reaching” (Cather to Knopf, 13 March 1935, Barbara Dobkin Collection).

After receiving Cather’s approval, Knopf sent the firm’s authorization of such a publication, with three conditions: 1) that *Hochland* would not have to pay serial rights; 2) that in lieu of such payment, the translation should be sent to Knopf to use as it pleased after this serialization, possibly for a German book edition; and 3) that copies of the issues in which *Hochland* appeared should be sent to Knopf (letter, Knopf to Shuster, 5 July 1945; letter, Knopf to Robert Murphy, 5 October 1945, both Barbara Dobkin Collection). *Death Comes for the Archbishop* was duly translated into German in 1935–1936 by the prominent writer Sigismund von Radecki and published in the pages of *Hochland* in nine installments between January 1937 and September 1937. Neither von Radecki’s translation nor these issues of *Hochland*, though, were ever sent to Knopf.

To my knowledge, this serialization has hitherto not been seen, described, or commented on by any scholar. James Woodress does not mention it in *Willa Cather: A Literary Life*, the “Textual Essay” in the Scholarly Edition of *Death Comes for the Archbishop* does not include it, Crane does not list it under “Novels First Published in Periodicals” (252), and although the more recent compilation of German foreign-language translations on *The Willa Cather Archive* website does list the serial, this does not necessarily indicate a familiarity with the actual serialization, for it incorrectly reports eight installments rather than nine. It is tempting, as a Cather scholar, to focus only on the serialized text of the novel in *Hochland* and disregard the contexts in which it was published. Doing so would reveal that “Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof” was non-illustrated and printed on relatively small pages (five inches by eight inches) of low-quality paper in densely-packed Fraktur, a heavy, medieval-looking font that was commonly used in Germany until after the Second World War. In addition, certain aspects of this translation undoubtedly would have appealed to Cather. For one thing, it was carried out by a person well-suited to the task. Born in 1891, Sigismund von Radecki was fluent in Russian, German, and English. At the time he approached Cather’s work he was not only a well-published writer himself but also a recently converted Catholic (in 1931), which would have

likely made him a sensitive and knowledgeable reader of Cather's depictions of the faith. Second, in his translation von Radecki left original Spanish terms in the text and used explanatory footnotes to explain certain terms to readers, instead of simply substituting German translations for the Spanish originals. Cather's feelings about how best to present the Spanish words in the text were revealed in a letter she wrote to Alfred Knopf on 19 April 1938, in which she complained that Marguerite Yourcenar had not used any footnotes in her French translation of *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, and that she had told Cather she would not include any because, according to her, they "were very objectionable to a French audience, and in such bad taste that she could not use them." In this same letter Cather commended the Italian translator of *Death*, Alessandro Scalero, for putting the Spanish words in italics and including "very clear and enlightening footnotes on such words as 'trapper,' [and] 'gringo,' and very short footnotes telling clearly what a 'mesa' is, a 'hogan,' 'wampum,' etc." (Cather to Knopf, 19 April 1938, Barbara Dobkin Collection).

Von Radecki handled the Spanish words the same way Scalero did; one wonders, indeed, if he consulted Scalero's translation before doing his own. Because the text of "Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof" was printed in *Hochland* in Fraktur, however, it would have been impossible to italicize the lettering; instead, key Spanish terms were represented in Antiqua font (regular lettering) and accompanied by a superscript number that correlated to a footnote on that page. Most of these notes are relatively accurate. For instance, in one installment the Spanish word "calabozo" is explained simply as "Gefängnis," or "jail" (July 1936: 430); in a later issue, it is presented as "Gefängniszelle" or "jail cell" (April 1937: 389); a "mesa" is "ein steiler, riesiger Felsentisch," or "a steep, giant cliff-table" (August 1936: 514), and "Gringo" is defined as "ein Fremder aus den Vereinigten Staaten" ("a stranger, from the United States") (January 1937: 134), an explanation which, given the context of the word's use in the novel, is correct.

At the same time, though, von Radecki's notes are at times somewhat misleading, which should come as no surprise given he had never been to the United States and is not known to have been

familiar with American Indian cultures. One example of a slight mistake is seen when he explains that "Wampum" is "indianischer Muschelschmuck; auch als Geld benutzt" ("Indian shell ornaments, also used as money") (August 1936: 510). Lost in the translation here is that "wampum" could be used figuratively to embrace all Native American forms of "payment," not just seashells; German readers with even a modicum of knowledge about American geography could have been forgiven for being puzzled as to how such shells would have been found in landlocked New Mexico. Another misleading footnote is for "kiva," described as "die heilige Zeremonial-hütte der Pueblo-Indianer" ("the sacred ceremonial hut of the Pueblo Indians") (September 1936: 41). While a "kiva" is definitely a "sacred" and "ceremonial" place for the Pueblo

Indians, it is definitely not a "hut": it is a large circular space dug out of the ground, reflecting the beliefs of many Pueblo Indians that humans emerged from worlds beneath the earth rather than from the sky. The kiva symbolizes this place of emergence and is a place where worshipers can be closer to the spiritual world. Whether these footnotes were accurate or not, their overall effect was probably to reinforce in German readers' minds the idea that some of Cather's previous German translations had implied: that Cather's texts were valuable chiefly for what they taught readers about life in what to them was an "exotic" land.

Such bibliographic details as these are certainly important for the way they shed light on how the physical presentation of Cather's novel to a large, mostly Catholic audience in pre-war Germany (the reported circulation of *Hochland* in 1936 was 12,000

[Muth]) might have impacted readers' responses to it. However, these factors influenced readers' interactions with the novel less than did certain elements of the larger socio-historical frame surrounding Cather's serialized novel.

One of these elements was unknown to Cather and presumably Knopf: *Hochland* was not simply "a Catholic periodical," as it is described on *The Willa Cather Archive* website's bibliography of German translations; according to historian Derek Hastings, it "was by common acclaim the leading Catholic cultural forum in the German-speaking world" (389). Undoubtedly one effect of the publication of "Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof" in its pages



Sigismund von Radecki, writer and translator, in a 1946 passport photo



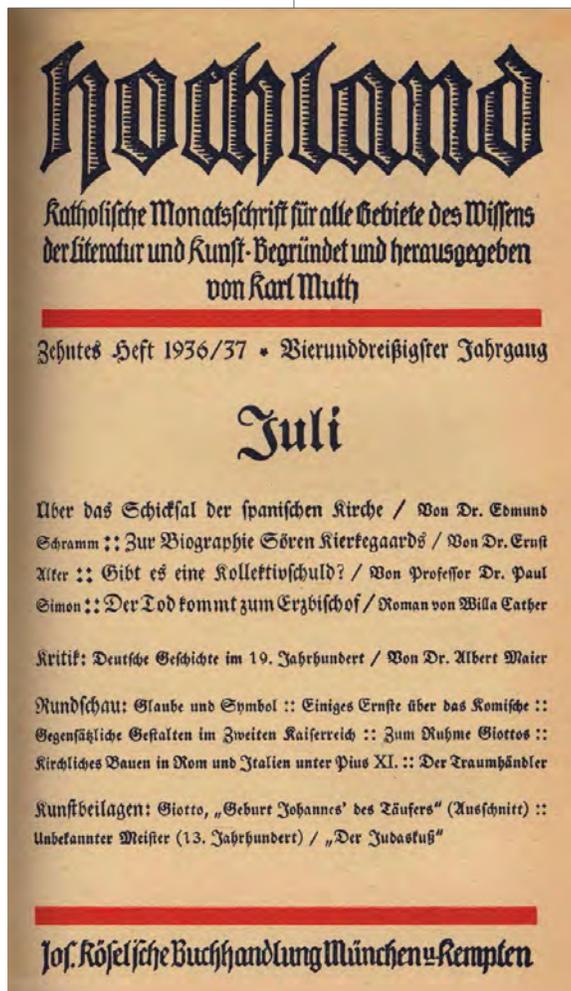
would have been to lead many German readers to the same mistaken conclusion that many Americans came to upon reading *Death Comes for the Archbishop*: that Cather was a Catholic writer (in fact she was raised Baptist and later confirmed in the Episcopal faith).

More important to consider when gauging how readers would have responded to this serialized novel is that *Hochland* was known to be strongly resistant to the Nazi regime. In general, *Hochland* functioned as a liberal counterbalance to the more conservative *Der Gral: katholische Monatschrift für Dichtung und Leben* (*The Grail: A Catholic Monthly for Literature and Life*), which from its beginning in 1906 to its end in 1937 advised German Catholics to focus on their faith and not be as concerned with modern politics (Farías 34), a stance the Nazis would have endorsed. In sharp contrast, Muth's *Hochland*, subtitled *Katholische Monatschrift für alle Gebiete des Wissens der Literatur und Kunst-Begründet und herausgegeben von Karl Muth* (*Catholic Monthly Magazine for All Areas of Knowledge, Literature, Arts, founded and published by Karl Muth*), professed its allegiance to a more "modern" and "liberal" Catholicism. Not only did *Hochland* advocate Catholic engagement with Germans of other faiths but also with modern politics, something the Nazis would not have welcomed. Its ecumenical, inclusive stance is reflected in the tables of contents of the issues in which Cather's novel was serialized; these contained a wide range of materials by authors of different denominations, including literary essays, religious treatises, artwork, and philosophical articles. The "*Hochland* Kreis" or "*Hochland* Circle" of contributors included a number of people known to be resistant to the regime; among these were political theorist Carl Schmitt and the liberal Catholic theologian Theodore Haecker. Another was the Norwegian novelist Sigrid Undset, who had converted to Catholicism in 1924 and won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1928; according to one source, "She had strongly criticised Hitler since the early 1930s, and from an early date her books were banned in Nazi Germany" ("Undset, Sigrid"). Shortly

after the Nazis invaded her native Norway in 1940 she fled to New York, where she quite coincidentally befriended Willa Cather (Harbison). *Hochland* editor Muth even knew Hans and Sophie Scholl, members of the "White Rose" movement that sought to bring down Hitler. Although Muth himself is not known to have ever been arrested, his place as editor was taken from 1939 to 1941 by Franz Joseph Schöningh, who was in charge when *Hochland* was closed down by the Nazis in June 1941.

The effect of all of these contextual factors on readers of "Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof" in *Hochland*, of course, must remain speculative, as no reactions to the serial itself are known to have been recorded. Yet one might hypothesize that since no texts published in Nazi Germany could openly express resistance to the ideologies or practices of the regime, and that readers of *Hochland* were thus practiced in reading closely for hints of subversiveness (Ackermann), readers of Cather's novel in its pages probably scrutinized the text very carefully for hints of "resistant" messages. One might imagine, then, that at least some *Hochland* readers would have seen "Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof" not only as a story about two priests' adherence to their faith in the face of extreme environmental pressures, but also as an inspirational conduct narrative for German Catholics who wished to resist those who sought to make them succumb to a world that they regarded as apostate.

The serialization of Cather's novel in *Hochland* and its possibly indirect involvement with the German Catholic resistance was unknown at the time to both Willa Cather and Alfred Knopf, although presumably George Shuster, who had arranged the serialization, knew very well what publication in *Hochland* would have signified. Knopf and Cather were enlightened about the publication history of *Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof* only much later, after the war. On 5 July 1945, Alfred Knopf wrote to George Shuster, and after recounting to him the terms of their previous arrangement with *Hochland*, stated, "I do not find in our records anything to indicate that *Hochland* ever went through with this deal or that they ever fulfilled their



The July 1937 Hochland, containing one of the installments of "Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof" / Roman von Willa Cather

obligation to send us a copy of their Germany version. Can you shed any light on this subject? If by chance they did serialize the novel, have you a copy of the translation? Or could you suggest where we could get a copy of it?" Shuster replied shortly thereafter, on 2 September 1945: "This translation actually appeared in the magazine. When, however, the publisher requested permission to issue the book Dr. Goebbels' [sic] office replied in the negative. No reason was given." He added, "Whether the translation does exist depends of course upon whether it has survived. On the other hand, there must be issues of the magazine containing the novel" (Shuster, letter to Knopf, Barbara Dobkin Collection).

While informing Knopf about "Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof" having in fact been translated into German approximately ten years earlier, Shuster also inadvertently deepened the mystery surrounding the novel when he reported that according to his sources, Propaganda Minister Goebbels' office had turned down *Hochland's* request to publish the novel in German as a book. Adding to the sense of intrigue was a piece of paper Willa Cather attached to a letter she had sent to editor Ferris Greenslet some six months earlier, on 31 January 1945. This list is headed, "European Editions of *Death Comes for the Archbishop*," and it states: "*Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof* (Burned in Germany) – Publisher: Scientia AG. – Zürich, Switzerland – (German translation was burned in the street by Nazi police, and plates destroyed. Meanwhile the translator had escaped into Switzerland, carrying with him carbon sheets of his translation under the lining of two suitcases. Two years later this translation into German was published in Zürich, and had a very large sale.)" (Cather, letter to Greenslet, 31 January 1945). Who provided this list to Cather, and where its author obtained the information contained in it, is unknown, although it presumably came from someone at the Knopf firm.

When Joan Crane many years later recounted this information in her bibliography of Cather's work, she slightly altered it (probably unintentionally) in ways that made the story even more dramatic. As noted earlier, according to Crane, it was no longer the "translation" that was "burned by the Nazis" but rather "This edition," implicitly an edition in volume form of *Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof* that Crane lists as having been printed by the Victoria Verlag of Stuttgart in 1940, what she labels "E49" (327). Crane then provides a bibliographical citation of the edition supposedly produced from von Radecki's smuggled translation, published by Scientia AG publishers in Zurich in 1940, which she calls "E50" (327).

Appealing as it might be to Cather scholars who wish to highlight the subversiveness of Cather's texts, upon closer investigation this story of copies of a book edition of *Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof* having been burned by the Nazis

(presumably in Stuttgart, where the Victoria Verlag supposedly was) and a translation subsequently being smuggled into Switzerland simply does not stand up. First of all, there was no "edition" of *Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof* published in Stuttgart by Victoria Verlag in 1940. Not only is there no listing for such a publication in the "GV" (*Gesamtverzeichnis des deutschsprachigen Schrifttums*, a listing of all books printed and published in Germany), or in the reference work *Handbuch der Weltliteratur* for 1950 (Eppelsheimer 226), but the Victoria Verlag did not even exist in 1940, being active only between the years 1949 and 1953. *WorldCat* does list seven copies of an edition of *Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof* published in Stuttgart by Victoria Verlag in 1940, but it is clear from my examination of one of these copies at the Bennett Martin Branch of the Lincoln, Nebraska, Public Library, that those cataloguers who have dated this edition "1940" are mistaken. These cataloguers were evidently misled by the "Copyright 1940 by Scientia AG. Zürich" notation on an interior page of what is in fact a 1952 Victoria Verlag reprint—one whose production is amply documented in the Knopf archives (Koshland). Significantly, too, the first reference work to record a Stuttgart publication of this novel was not the 1950 edition of *Handbuch der Weltliteratur*, which would have been the case had it been published in 1940, but rather the 1960 edition of the *Handbuch*: "Zürich 1940. 355 S.; Stuttg.² 1952; Einsiedeln 1957. 289 S." (the superscript "2" before the 1952 date signifies "second printing") (612).

Further evidence undermining this dramatic story is that before any book could be published in Germany during the Nazi era, the publisher was required to seek pre-approval from one of the many offices overseeing literary production, such as the Reichsschriftumskammer (Reich Chamber of Literature) or its associated Bund Reichsdeutscher Buchhändler (German Reich Book Trade Federation). If Propaganda Minister Goebbels' office had in fact turned down the request made by the editors of *Hochland* to publish "Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof" in volume form, it is simply inconceivable that the novel could have subsequently won from some other agency the approval necessary to have it published in Germany. It is also quite unlikely that, even if copies of the novel were somehow printed in Stuttgart in 1938, they were "burned." A great deal of research has been conducted on Nazi book burnings, and a thorough search of the available German resources by noted scholar Frank Usbeck of the University of Dresden indicates that although a few isolated book burnings took place in Germany 1938 when Austria was annexed, "The lists of burning towns do not include Stuttgart" (E-mail, 18 December 2012).

Even more evidence can be stacked against this tale. Dirk-Gerd Erpenbeck is an independent scholar in Germany and an



Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof Von Willa Cather

III.

Der Bischof chez lui

Es war am späten Nachmittag des Weihnachtstages, und der Bischof saß briefschreibend an seinem Tisch. Seit seiner Rückkehr nach Santa Fé war die Last seiner Amtskorrespondenz schwer gewesen; doch sollten die engbeschriebenen Blätter, über die er sich mit gedankenvollem Lächeln beugte, weder zu Monsignoris gehen, noch zu Erzbischöfen, noch zu Ordenshäufern — sondern nach Frankreich, in die Auvergne, in seine kleine Heimatstadt; in eine gewisse graue, winklige Straße, gepflastert mit Kieseln und überschattet von hohen Kastanien, an denen selbst am heutigen Tage noch ein paar braune Blätter hängen oder eines nach dem anderen fallen würde, um vom kalten, grünen Mauerefeu aufgefangen zu werden.

Erst vor neun Tagen war der Bischof von seinem langen Ritt hinein nach Mexiko zurückgekehrt. In Durango hatte ihm der alte merikanische Prälat nach einigem Zögern jene Dokumente eingehändigt, die sein Vikariat festlegten und bestätigten, und Pater Latour ritt die fünfzehnhundert Meilen nach Santa Fé zurück durch die sonnigen Tage des Frühwinters. Bei der Ankunft fand er Freundlichkeit statt Feindschaft seiner harren. Pater Vaillant hatte sich den Leuten bereits wert und teuer gemacht. Der merikanische Priester, der die Pro-Kathedrale versah, war mit Anstand zurückgetreten — er fuhr seine Familie in Altmeriko besuchen und nahm all seine Sachen mit. Pater Vaillant hatte von dem Pfarrhause Besitz ergriffen und es mit Hilfe von Zimmerleuten und den merikanischen Frauen der Gemeinde instandgesetzt. Die Yankee-Händler und der militärische Kommandant von Fort Marcy hatten freigebig Weisern an Bettstellen, Decken und vereinzelt Mobiliar gesandt.

Die bischöfliche Residenz war ein altes Lehmhaus, sehr reparaturbedürftig, doch mit Möglichkeiten von Komfort. Pater Latour hatte sich als Studierzimmer einen Raum am einen Ende des Flügels ausgesucht. Dort saß er jetzt, als dieser Weihnachtsnachmittag in den Abend verbämmerte. Es war ein langes Zimmer von angenehmen Ausmaßen. Die dicken Lehmwände waren auf der Innenseite von den geschickten Händen indianischer Frauen geglättet worden und hatten das Unregelmäßig-Trauliche aller Dinge, die gänzlich von Menschenhand gemacht sind. Sie waren von einer beruhigenden Dauerhaftigkeit und Dicke, diese Wände, gerundet an den Türschwelen und Fensterbänken, gerundet in weitem Schwingen um den Ekkamin. Das Innere war in des Bischofs Abwesenheit neu geweißt worden, und das Flackern des Feuers warf einen roßigen Schein auf die leichtgewellten Flächen, die niemals ganz glatt waren und niemals totweiß, denn die Mötlichkeit des Leumes darunter gab der Kaltstünche einen warmen Ton. Die Zimmerdecke bestand aus schweren Fuderstämmen und war belegt mit gleichgroßen rohgeschälten Epenstämmen, die dicht beieinander lagen wie die Rippen des Korbstoffes. Der erdgefärbte Fußboden war mit dicken Indianerdecken belegt; zwei Decken, sehr alt und

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schön in Muster und Farbe, hatte man als Tapeten an die Wände gehängt. Auf beiden Seiten des Kamins waren gestufte Nischen in die Wände eingelassen. In der einen, der schmalen und rundgewölbten, stand des Bischofs Kreuzst. Die andere war viereckig mit einer geschmückten, rostartigen Tür, und darin lagen ein paar seltene und schöne Bücher. Der Rest der Bibliothek des Bischofs stand auf offenen Widerbrettern am einen Ende des Zimmers.

Die Möbel des Hauses hatte Pater Vaillant von dem abreisenden merikanischen Priester erworben. Sie waren schwer und ein wenig plump, doch nicht unansehnlich. All das Holz zu Tischen und Bettstellen war mit der Art oder dem kleinen Handbeil aus Baumstämmen gewonnen worden. Selbst die dicken Planken, auf denen die theologischen Bücher des Bischofs ruhten, hatte man mit der Art ausgehauen. Es gab zu der Zeit keine einzige Drechselbank oder Sägemühle im ganzen nördlichen Neumeriko. Die einheimischen Tischler schnitten sich Stuhllehnen und Tischbeine und fügten sie mit Holzstiften zusammen statt mit Eisennägeln. An Stelle von Kommoden mit Schubladen wurden Holzkästen verwendet, und manchmal trugen sie schönes Schnitzwerk oder waren bedeckt mit verziertem Leder. Der Tisch, an dem der Bischof arbeitend saß, war importiert, ein Walnuß-Sekretär amerikanischer Arbeit (den einer der Offiziere des Forts auf Pater Vaillants Anregung hergeschickt hatte). Seine silbernen Leuchter hatte er vor langer Zeit aus Frankreich herübergebracht. Sie waren ihm von einer geliebten Tante zu seiner Priesterweihe geschenkt worden.

Des jungen Bischofs Feder flog übers Papier und hinterließ als Spur eine feine, vollendete französische Handschrift in violetter Tinte.

Mein neues Studierzimmer, lieber Bruder, ist gerade da ich eben schreibe, erfüllt vom Wohlgeruch der brennenden Föhrenscheite in meinem Kamin. (Wir gebrauchen diese Art Föhrenholz lediglich als Brennmaterial, und es ist sehr aromatisch, wiewohl zart. Zu unseren geringsten Beschäftigungen haben wir einen ewigen Duft von Weibrauch um uns schweben.) Ich wünschte, daß Du und meine liebe Schwester diesen Schauplatz von Bequemlichkeit und Frieden sehen könntest. Ihr müßt wissen, daß wir Missionare den ganzen Tag über einen Grad und einen breitkrempigen Hut tragen und wie amerikanische Kaufleute ausschauen. Welch eine Freude, nach Hause zu kommen und die alte Coutane anzuziehen! Ich fühle mich dann mehr als Priester (so lange am Tage muß ich „business man“ sein!) und, aus gewissen Gründen, mehr als Franzose. Den ganzen Tag bin ich ein Amerikaner in Sprache und Denken — jawohl, und im Herzen ebenfalls. Die Freundlichkeit der amerikanischen Händler und besonders der Offiziere des Forts gebietet mir mehr als eine bloß oberflächliche Loyalität. Ich möchte den Offizieren in ihrer Aufgabe hier helfen. Ich kann sie mehr unterstützen, als sie ahnen. Die Kirche kann mehr tun als das Fort, um diese armen Merikaner zu „guten Amerikanern“ zu machen. Und es ist gut für das Volk; es gibt sonst keinen Weg, auf dem sie ihre Lage verbessern könnten.

Aber heute ist nicht der Tag, Dir von meinen Pflichten oder Plänen

The opening pages of Book One, Chapter 3, in the original Hochland publication

authority on the life and career of the translator in question, Sigismund von Radecki. He has told me that von Radecki knew the owner of the Scientia AG publishing firm in Zürich, Frau Annie Gallus, from their time together in Berlin, previous to Gallus's having established this firm in Zürich in 1937. Yet he also points out that von Radecki did not travel to Switzerland between 1936 (the date of his translation of *Death Comes for the Archbishop*) and 1940, the date when *Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof* was published in Zürich (E-mail, 6 September 2013). Thus, by no stretch of the imagination can it be said that “the translator had escaped into Switzerland” in 1938 or that he had carried “with him carbon sheets of his translation “under the lining of two suitcases,” as the note attached to Cather's 1945 letter contended. Von Radecki did eventually move to Switzerland in 1946, but by this time it could not be described as an “escape.”

In all likelihood, in the late 1930s von Radecki used a much more mundane method to send his translation to Zürich. Because Germany and Switzerland were not at war with each other, there was regular postal service between the two countries, and presumably

private express services were also still in operation. The border to Switzerland was sealed relatively tightly to Germans wishing to flee the country, but mail was allowed to pass through with relative ease.

Of course, some might still argue that although von Radecki was able to send his translation of Cather's novel to Switzerland by mail or express service, this doesn't mean the Nazis hadn't disapproved of it or even burned it. Yet this scenario—essentially that von Radecki, having somehow known of Nazi opposition to the novel, went ahead and sent it to Switzerland for publication—is highly unlikely, and thus such an argument is quite weak. First, while mail and express services did exist between the two countries, it was widely known that the Nazis were closely watching what was sent through it. If von Radecki had had reason to worry about the Nazis intercepting his translation and this causing him to be punished, he would not have risked sending his translation through the mail. Second, if von Radecki had recently experienced the Nazis burning a copy of his translation (either as loose sheets or as copies of *Hochland*) or destroying plates of a book he had translated, he would not have been foolish enough



to send another copy of the translation into Switzerland with the intention of having it published there. After all, he himself lived in Germany and anticipated continuing to live there for a long time. If he had known the Nazis disapproved of his translation (and by extension, Cather's novel), he would have had to have a death wish to let the words "Übersetzt von Sigismund von Radecki" ("Translated by Sigismund von Radecki") be printed on the copyright page of a German language volume that would undoubtedly have been intended for circulation in Germany as well as in Austria and the German-speaking section of Switzerland. Such a blatantly obvious act of resistance would surely have cost him his life. I would propose that the very fact of this translation making its way to Switzerland through normal channels, and von Radecki's willingness to publicly acknowledge his role as translator, strongly indicates that neither he nor the Nazis viewed *Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof* as a potentially "subversive" text.

Having said this, I will acknowledge that one part of this whole dramatic story might still be true: it is entirely possible that some office of the Nazi regime denied the application to publish *Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof* around 1938. This should not, however, be misconstrued as being due to the subversiveness of Cather's text per se. Instead, what most likely would have accounted for such a decision was the fact that it had been published in *Hochland*, which as noted earlier was a periodical deeply suspect in the eyes of the Nazis. It is possible that editor Muth purposely used Cather's novel to encourage resistance among *Hochland*'s readers or thumb his nose at the Nazi authorities, but Cather herself would not have wanted her novel about two obscure French priests in New Mexico in the nineteenth century to find itself in the midst of a very serious contemporary political conflict in Nazi Germany. After all, as she wrote to Ferris Greenslet in January 1945, "I very much dislike being the subject of controversy" (Cather, 31 January 1945).

How, then, one might ask, did a German-language edition of *Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof* come to be published by Scientia AG of Zürich in 1940, if the translation was not "smuggled" into Switzerland? In fact, the arrangements for this publication were quite straightforward. An agreement between Scientia AG and Alfred A. Knopf publishing dated 12 March 1940 granted "the right to sell that book in the German language in an original edition at stated royalties" (Koshland). What Knopf didn't know, judging from later manuscript letters, was that this edition would use the very translation from *Hochland* that his firm was supposed to have received for free in return for the serialization rights. Clearly von Radecki had contracted to supply his friend Frau Gallus, at Scientia AG, with copies of his translation in one form or another. Whether von Radecki knew that in doing so he had broken Knopf's agreement with *Hochland*, or whether he kept

this a secret from Gallus is not known. Alfred A. Knopf realized only much later what had transpired. Until the end of the Second World War, he did not know that *Hochland* had gone through with the serialization; he learned this only in a letter from George Shuster dated 2 October 1945 (Barbara Dobkin Collection). And while he then initiated a search for copies of the magazine's serialization of Cather's novel, there is no record he ever saw any of them. As for the Swiss edition of the novel, published in 1940, in one letter to Parker Buhrman, United States Political Adviser for Germany (Munich) on 6 December 1945, Knopf stated, "I confirm that we did contract with Scientia A.G. of Zurich for a German translation of this novel early in 1940, but your letter is the first indication we have had that Scientia ever went through with the book's production. We have never seen it and it is good news that you are going to send us a copy of it. Scientia contracted to deliver to us two copies of each edition they published so perhaps you could persuade them to send along a second copy which we could deliver to the author" (Barbara Dobkin Collection).

Whether copies of this edition were subsequently sent to Knopf and "deliver[ed] to the author" is unknown. What can be said, though, is that a great deal of effort was expended on the production of this edition. It includes all of the explanatory footnotes that von Radecki had included in his translation for *Hochland* and dispenses with the Fraktur typeface, making it much easier to read. To help the reader, too, this edition includes a very detailed Inhaltsverzeichnis (table of contents) after "Prolog in Rom" ("Prologue in Rome") that goes beyond the simple way in which the American edition divides the novel into nine "books." Here, the table of contents guides the German reader by also providing the short titles which in the American edition are provided at the beginning of each chapter, i.e., "Der hölzerene Papagei" ("The Wooden Parrot").

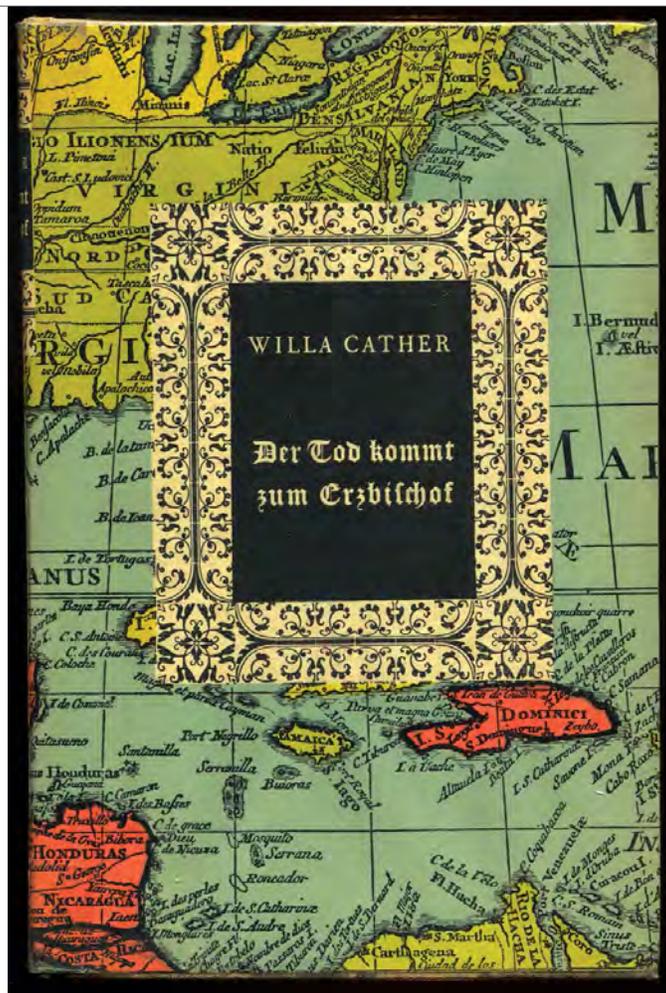
The only place in this edition where one sees Fraktur, interestingly enough, is on the dust jacket, for the title *Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof*. This dustjacket is in fact a very interesting component of the edition, with "WILLA CATHER / Der Tod kommt / zum Erzbischof" on the front in white letters in a black box, which is itself encased in a patterned border; all of this is superimposed on an old, multi-colored Spanish map of the New World. The overall effect created is an expectation that this is an historical novel about exploration and adventure, not a modern, artistic experiment in fiction. This attitude is reinforced by the text on the inside flap of this dust jacket. Intended for, and circulated among, Swiss, German, and Austrian readers, it encourages again the attitude that Cather's works should be regarded as a type of "tour" of an exotic land, in this case "die unvergleichliche Hochebene Mexikos" ("the unparalleled high plain of Mexico"). Striking another popular note among Germans



(and German-speaking Swiss and Austrians), the dustjacket copy implies that the novel is chiefly about Father Latour's attempts to bring Christianity to the Indians, the latter a subject of fascination then as now for both Swiss and Germans; the priests' work among the much less exotic "lapsed" Spanish inhabitants of this region was downplayed. For all such readers interested in "Indianer," the book "bietet die Gewähr, dass uns auch wirklich das arteilene Wesen der Menschen eines überaus eigenartigen Landes vermittelt wird" ("guarantees that the native essence of the people of an exceedingly unique land will be imparted to us [readers]"). Yet the writer of the dustjacket copy also acknowledges that Latour "ihm hier eine uralte Tradition gegenübertritt, eine Erfahrung, die keine Sprache ihm übersetzen kann" ("is confronted by an ancient tradition and experience

that no language can translate for him"), and essentially that such conversion is impossible. Thus, the Indians in the novel are described as remaining mysterious and resistant to the ways of white Westerners—exactly the type of "exoticism" that would have appealed to the target audience.

This dustjacket would have confirmed and supported for German readers an understanding of *Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof* as not only a "Catholic" novel but also a narrative about an exotic place filled with exotic people, a perception that had been established much earlier by two German commentators in 1930. Dr. Albert Eichler summed up the novel as one that "führt die Erdenlaufbahn des eindringlich geschilderten tapferen Missionärs von Neu-Mexiko fast bis zur Heiligkeit empor, Hand in Hand mit geschichtlichen, sagenmässigen und landschaftlichen Episoden aus dem bald paradisischen, bald höllischen äussersten Südwesten" ("follows the earthly course of the intensely described courageous missionary of New Mexico almost up to his elevation to bishop, hand-in-hand with historical, legendary, and geographic episodes from a Southwest that is alternately paradisaical and hellish") (8). Another emphasized how, just as in *The Professor's House*, Tom Outland "hatte die Kultur der verschwundenen Indianerstämme



The Scientia AG Swiss edition, published in 1940

in New Mexico erforscht" ("had explored the culture of the vanished Indian tribes of New Mexico") (Bruns 67), so "In diese Welt führt uns auch 'Death Comes for the Archbishop'" ("This world is found, too, in 'Death Comes for the Archbishop'") (Bruns 67). This reviewer concluded, "Hier hat Willa Cather's Kunst der Prosa ihr bestes gegeben" ("Here Willa Cather's prose art is at its best") (Bruns 67).

After the end of the Second World War, the popularity of *Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof* among German readers continued to grow. In fact, in 1951 Scientia AG of Zürich, with Knopf's permission, sold German language publishing rights to their translation by Sigismund von Radecki not only to the Victoria Verlag of Stuttgart for reprinting, but also to a German book club based in Hamburg called the "Freunde der

Weltliteratur Lesergemeinschaft G.m.b.H." ("Friends of World Literature Book Club, Inc.") for a "Sonderausgabe" ("Special Edition") of 2,000 copies (Koshland).

These two German editions of *Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof* of 1952 are almost identical to one another. Their only differences are their title and copyright pages, their cover materials and design, and the lower quality paper of the book club special edition. One similarity is their shared "Schutzumschlag" ("Dust jacket"), designed by a man named Rolf Wagner, that has a quite modern appearance, with a red band across the top third, then a black band in the middle, and a brown band covering the bottom third. The lettering, all in white, is superimposed over each section: "WILLA CATHER" over the red, "DER TOD KOMMT ZUM ERZBISCHOF" over the black, and "ROMAN" ("novel") over the brown. Both, too, have the same text on the inside flap of the dustjacket; some highlights include the statements that "Humor durchwaltet selbsts eine so groteskschauerliche Erzählung wie die Geschichte vom Bruder Baltazar und schafft die liebenswert komische Donna [sic] Isabella" ("a striking humor presides throughout such a grotesque, eerie story such as that of Brother Baltazar, and creates the loveable,

odd, Donna Isabella”); that Latour and Vaillant engage in “Pionierarbeit” (“pioneering work”); and that the novel “besitzt schon als Fabel eindringliche Tiefe und ist zugleich erfüllt von jener epischen Kraft, die alsbald zwischen Leser und Darstellung geheimnisvoll starken Kontakt bewirkt” (“though a fable, possesses a striking depth and is simultaneously filled with that epic strength that almost at once brings about between reader and work a strong and mystical contact”). Furthermore, these editions’ texts are printed from the exact same plates as the 1940 Scientia AG edition, with the same detailed table of contents.

Clearly, Scientia AG publishers recognized that there was a sizeable market for *Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof* in German-speaking countries. Two reprints were not, it saw, enough to satisfy the market. This led the firm to apply to Knopf in January 1952 for “permission to arrange for a German edition [by another publisher] of 20,000 copies, paper bound” (Koshland). It was here, though, that the Knopf firm drew the line. William A. Koshland, writing on the firm’s behalf, firmly declined this request for a third German-language reprinting, telling Scientia AG, “I’m afraid we will have to withhold this permission and insist that you do so as well. Miss Cather was very much opposed to having her work appear in cheaper reprint editions and we feel morally bound to abide by her express wishes in this” (Koshland). This refusal to allow a paper-bound edition of 20,000 copies of *Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof*

(and presumably of any other of her translated texts), combined with the collapse of the Tauchnitz firm that had been publishing Cather’s works in inexpensive paperback format since the 1920s, would unfortunately serve for a long time to come to impede what appeared to have been a growing interest in Cather’s works.

Today in Germany it is relatively easy to locate and read a paperbound copy of *Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof* or most any other Cather novel. Nonetheless, as one commentator stated in 2009, “Willa Cather ist bei uns immer noch viel zu wenig bekannt” (“Willa Cather is still very little known in Germany”) (Lueken). Furthermore, on those occasions when her works are discussed, they are analyzed in such a way as to cast Cather as a

regional writer who affords her readers relatively straightforward depictions of the American West of years gone by rather than as a Modernist writer whose fictions challenge readers and deal with larger, more universal issues. Long forgotten are the ways in which *Der Tod kommt zum Erzbischof* was involved with resistance to the Nazis and how publishers clamored to publish it both during and after the Second World War. It is hoped that this account of the novel’s history will encourage greater appreciation of how Cather’s work about two French priests toiling in nineteenth-century New

Mexico was not at all a historical novel divorced from contemporary culture; rather, it raised issues of importance to a very wide range of people in the mid-twentieth century. Furthermore, this history highlights, once again, how categorizing Cather as solely a “regionalist” author does not do her justice.

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The 1952 Friends of World Literature reprint



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