

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO

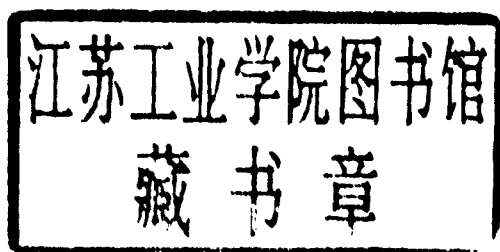


WILLA CATHER

Edited by Marilee Lindemann

THE CAMBRIDGE
COMPANION TO
WILLA CATHER

EDITED BY
MARILEE LINDEMANN



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521527934

© Cambridge University Press 2005

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2005

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data
The Cambridge companion to Willa Cather / edited by Marilee Lindemann.
p. cm. – (Cambridge companions to literature)
Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-521-82110-X – ISBN 0-521-52793-7 (pbk.)

1. Cather, Willa, 1873–1947 – Criticism and interpretation – Handbooks, manuals, etc.
 2. Women and literature – United States – History – 20th century – Handbooks, manuals, etc.
- I. Title; Companion to Willa Cather. II. Lindemann, Marilee. III. Series.

PS3505.A87Z59155 2004
813'.52 – dc22 2004051820

ISBN-13 978-0-521-82110-0 hardback
ISBN-10 0-521-82110-X hardback
ISBN-13 978-0-521-52793-4 paperback
ISBN-10 0-521-52793-7 paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this book, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

ILLUSTRATIONS

- 1 Fifth Avenue signs, from Burton J. Hendrick, "The Great Jewish Invasion," *McClure's Magazine*, 28 (January 1907), pp. 307-21 (316). 69
- 2 Potash and Perlmutter, from Willa Cather, "New Types of Character Acting: The Character Actor Displaces the Star," *McClure's Magazine* (February 1914), pp. 41-51 (46-7). 71
- 3 An East-Side Jew, from Burton J. Hendrick, "The Great Jewish Invasion," *McClure's Magazine*, 28 (January 1907), 307-21 (309). 81

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

JONATHAN GOLDBERG is Sir William Osler Professor of English at The Johns Hopkins University. He is the author of *Willa Cather and Others* (2001) as well as of a number of books on early modernity and sexuality, including *Sodometries* (1992) and *Desiring Women Writing* (1997). He is the editor of *Queering the Renaissance* (1994) and *Reclaiming Sodom* (1994). His most recent book is *Tempest in the Caribbean* (2003).

ANNE E. GOLDMAN is associate professor of English at Sonoma State University. She is the author of *Take My Word: Autobiographical Innovations of Ethnic American Working Women* (1996) and *Continental Divides: Revisioning American Literature* (2000). She is co-editor of a volume of critical essays, *Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton: Critical and Pedagogical Perspectives*, forthcoming from the University of Nebraska Press. Her current project considers Jewish American cultural studies from 1990 to the present.

MARILEE LINDEMANN is associate professor of English and director of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies at the University of Maryland. She is the author of *Willa Cather: Queering America* (1999) and of numerous essays on American women writers and queer literary history. She has also edited *Alexander's Bridge* (1997) and *O Pioneers!* (1999) for Oxford University Press.

MARK J. MADIGAN is associate professor of English at Nazareth College of Rochester and has published widely on Cather, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, and other American writers. He is the editor of *Keeping Fires Night and Day: Selected Letters of Dorothy Canfield Fisher* (1993), as well as of Fisher's *The Bedquilt and Other Stories* (1997) and *Seasoned Timber* (1996). He is the volume editor of *Youth and the Bright Medusa*, forthcoming in the Willa Cather Scholarly Edition. He was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, in 2004.

LISA MARCUS is associate professor of English and chair of Women's Studies at Pacific Lutheran University. She has an essay on Cather in *Willa Cather's Southern Connections* (2000); an essay on Pauline Hopkins in *Speaking the Other Self: American Women Writers* (1997); and numerous essays on feminism and feminist studies in *The Women's Review of Books*. She is completing a book, *Tricky Magic: Slavery and Female Fictions of America*.

RICHARD MILLINGTON is professor of English at Smith College. He is the author of *Practicing Romance: Narrative Form and Cultural Engagement in Hawthorne's Fiction* (1992), and of essays on Hawthorne and Willa Cather. He co-edited *Hitchcock's America* (1999), which includes his essay on *North by Northwest*, and edited *The Cambridge Companion to Nathaniel Hawthorne* (2004).

SHARON O'BRIEN is John Hope Caldwell Professor of American Cultures at Dickinson College. She is the author of *Willa Cather: The Emerging Voice* (1987), *Willa Cather* (1994), and many essays on Cather, biography and autobiography, feminist theory, and depression. She also edited *New Essays on My Ántonia* (1998) and the three-volume Library of America edition of Cather (1992). Her most recent book is *The Family Silver: A Memoir of Depression and Inheritance* (2004).

GUY J. REYNOLDS is a professor of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He is the author of *Willa Cather in Context: Progress, Race, Empire* (1996) and *Twentieth-Century American Women's Fiction* (1999), as well as of a number of articles on American literature.

ANN ROMINES is professor of English and director of graduate studies at George Washington University. She is the author of numerous essays on Cather and other American women writers and of two books: *The Home Plot: Women, Writing and Domestic Ritual* (1992) and *Constructing the Little House: Gender, Culture, and Laura Ingalls Wilder* (1997). She is editor of *Willa Cather's Southern Connections: New Essays on Cather and the South* (2000) and of the forthcoming Nebraska Scholarly Edition of *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*.

SUSAN J. ROSOWSKI was University Professor and Adele Hall Distinguished Professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She was the author of *Birthing a Nation: Gender, Creativity, and the Significance of the West in American Literature* (1999) and *The Voyage Perilous: Willa Cather's Romanticism* (1986). She was also general editor of the Nebraska Scholarly Edition of Willa Cather and editor in chief of *Cather Studies*.

LEONA SEVICK earned her doctorate in English at the University of Maryland, where she wrote a dissertation on Cather and antimodernism. She has published articles on Cather and is currently at work on a book on Cather and the Arts and Crafts movement. She teaches world literature at McDaniel College.

JANIS P. STOUT is professor of English emerita at Texas A&M University. Her most recent books are *Katherine Anne Porter: A Sense of the Times* (1995), *Through the Window, Out the Door: Women's Narratives of Departure* (1998), *Willa Cather: The Writer and Her World* (2000), and *A Calendar of the Letters of Willa Cather* (2002).

JOHN N. SWIFT is professor of English and Comparative Literary Studies at Occidental College in Los Angeles. A past president of the Willa Cather Foundation, he has written numerous articles on Cather and other modern writers and is co-editor of *Willa Cather and the American Southwest* (2002).

JOSEPH R. URGO is professor and chair of English at The University of Mississippi. He is the author of *Willa Cather and the Myth of American Migration* (1995) and, most recently, *In the Age of Distraction* (2000). He also edited the Broadview Press edition of *My Ántonia* (2003).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“Willa was just plain Billy to all of us,” remarked one of Willa Cather’s classmates in the prep program at the University of Nebraska in the early 1890s in commenting on how the mannishly dressed, intelligent, and highly unconventional young woman from Red Cloud was received by her peers. (The comment is reprinted in James Shively’s *Writings from Willa Cather’s Campus Years* [Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1950], p. 122.) This book is for all the students, teachers, fans, and admirers of “just plain Billy,” who know well that there is nothing simple about her “plainness” and much to enjoy in the limpid prose of one of the finest stylists the United States has yet produced.

I am grateful to my friend and colleague Robert S. Levine for cajoling me into taking on this project and to Ray Ryan of Cambridge University Press for seeing to it that I got it done. Jennifer Landon was an intrepid research and technology assistant whose work on the chronology saved me from pulling out my hair. Her help was invaluable. My thanks and admiration to the volume’s contributors, who produced excellent work in a timely way and made this a book that will be worth reading for years to come. I note with sorrow that one contributor, Susan J. Rosowski, did not live to see her fine essay on Cather’s comic spirit into print, as she succumbed to cancer while the book was in production. Sue was one of the best friends that Billy and many a Cather scholar ever had. Her years of extraordinary dedication to Cather studies and the community that surrounds it helped to create the varied audiences for this book, and so I am pleased to offer it in her memory.

Finally, Martha Nell Smith is the best friend and more that *this* friend of Billy ever had. I embrace you, darling, as Latour embraced Vaillant, “for the past – for the future.”

CHRONOLOGY OF WILLA CATHER'S LIFE

1873

December 7 Willa Cather is born in Back Creek Valley, near Winchester, Virginia in the home of her maternal grandmother, Rachel Boak. Named after a deceased aunt, she is the eldest child of Charles and Mary Virginia (Jennie) Cather. Nicknamed "Willie" by her family, she will rename herself "Willa."

Brothers and sisters: Roscoe (b. 1877), Douglass (b. 1880), Jessica (b. 1881), James (b. 1886), Elsie (b. 1890), and John (Jack) (b. 1892).

1874

Fall Willa's parents move the family to Willow Shade, home of her paternal grandparents, William and Caroline Cather. Willow Shade is located between Back Creek Valley and Winchester.

1877

William and Caroline Cather move to Nebraska, joining a son and daughter-in-law who are already farming there.

1883

February Willow Shade sold after the sheep barn burns down.
April Charles and Jennie Cather move the family, including Grandmother Boak, to Catherton Precinct, Webster County, Nebraska.

Fall Willa attends the New Virginia country school.

1884

Willa's family moves to Red Cloud, after her father decides to give up farming and open a real-estate and loan office.

1886

Cather cuts her hair short, takes to wearing boys' clothes, and calls herself "William Cather." She will sustain this public stance of radical gender nonconformity through to 1892.

1890

- June* Gives the commencement speech, "Superstition vs. Investigation," at her high-school graduation in Red Cloud.
- September* Enrolls in the Latin School (University Prep) in Lincoln, Nebraska.

1891

- March 1* *Nebraska State Journal* publishes Cather's essay on Carlyle, which was submitted by her teacher, Ebenezer Hunt, without her knowledge.
- September* Enters the University of Nebraska. Begins relationship with Louise Pound, a student three years ahead of her in school who was a brilliant student and an accomplished athlete.
- November* *Nebraska State Journal* publishes Cather's essay on Hamlet.

1892

- May* First fiction published. "Peter," a story submitted by Professor Herbert Bates, is published in *The Mahogany Tree*.
- June* Poem, "Shakespeare: A Freshman Theme," published in the University of Nebraska student newspaper, *The Hesperian*. In a passionate letter to Louise Pound, she declares that it is unfair that "feminine friendship" should be regarded as unnatural.
- Fall* Becomes the literary editor of *The Hesperian*.

1893

- Becomes a regular contributor to the *Nebraska State Journal*; reviews plays and writes a Sunday column.

1894

- Publishes a satirical piece about Pound's brother Roscoe in *The Hesperian*, ruining her relationship with Louise and the entire Pound family.

1895

- June* Graduates from the University of Nebraska. Works for the Lincoln *Courier*.

1896

- Publishes stories in *Overland Monthly* and *Nebraska Literary Magazine*.

- June* Moves to Pittsburgh, PA, to edit *Home Monthly*.

- October* Contributes drama criticism to the *Pittsburgh Leader*.

1897

- January–* Contributes column to the *Nebraska State Journal*. Still
June edits *Home Monthly*. Returns to Red Cloud in June.
July *Home Monthly* sold.
September Returns to Pittsburgh with job on the *Pittsburgh Leader*.
 Works on the telegraph desk and writes play and book
 reviews. Sends “Passing Show” column to the *Lincoln*
Courier. Continues to write “Helen Delay” book column for
 the *Home Monthly*.

1898

- February* Spends a week in New York, has lunch with Modjeska; may
 have contributed a review or reviews to the *New York Sun*.
May Visits her cousin, Howard Gore, in Washington, DC.

1899

Meets Isabelle McClung, daughter of a prominent Pittsburgh
 judge, Samuel McClung, and wife Fannie. Cather and
 McClung form an intense, life-long friendship based in part
 on their mutual interests in the arts. Cather would later claim
 that Isabelle was the one person for whom all her books had
 been written.

1900

- Fall* Resigns from *Pittsburgh Leader*.
 Moves to Washington, DC. Secures a part-time job editing
 translations.
November– Article about Nevin appears in the *Ladies Home*
December *Journal*. Writes a Washington column which appears in the
Nebraska State Journal and *Index of Pittsburgh Life* until
 March, 1901.

1901

- March* Returns to Pittsburgh and moves into the McClung residence
 on Murray Hill Avenue. Teaches Latin and English at the
 Central High School.
June Story, “El Dorado,” appears in *New England Magazine*.

1902

- April* Last contribution to the *Lincoln Courier*.
June– Goes abroad with Isabelle McClung. “The Professor’s
September Commencement” appears in *New England Magazine*.
 Weekly columns about her trip appear in the *Nebraska*
State Journal. Articles also appear in the *Pittsburgh*
Gazette.

1903

January

"A Death in the Desert" appears in *Scribners*.

April

Publishes a book of verse, *April Twilights*.

May

Meets S. S. McClure, editor and publisher of *McClure's Magazine*, in New York City; he expresses great enthusiasm for her work.

Summer

Vacations in Nebraska, where she meets Lincoln native, Edith Lewis.

1904-5

Teaches at Allegheny High School and freelances. Publishes a collection of short stories, *The Troll Garden*, in May, 1905. Visits Edith Lewis in New York both years.

1906

June

Ends teaching career and moves to New York. Joins *McClure's* editorial staff. Lives in Greenwich Village.

1907

Temporarily moves to Boston to research the life of Mary Baker Eddy for *McClure's*. Three stories appear in *McClure's*, one in *Century*.

1908

March

Meets Sarah Orne Jewett, accomplished author of regionalist short fiction, and Annie Adams Fields, widow of Boston publisher James T. Fields. Jewett is a crucial source of professional advice as Cather wrestles with the dilemma of how to develop as a writer of fiction while earning a living as a journalist.

April-May

Promoted to managing editor of *McClure's*. Goes abroad with Isabelle McClung.

December

"On the Gull's Road" appears in *McClure's*. Moves into a Greenwich Village apartment with Edith Lewis.

1909

Saddened by death of Sarah Orne Jewett. Assumes full editorial responsibility for *McClure's* when S. S. McClure travels in Europe.

1910

Travels to London for *McClure's*. Begins work on *Alexander's Bridge*.

1911

S. S. McClure dismissed from magazine. Cather finishes *Alexander's Bridge*. On leave from *McClure's*, Cather and Isabelle McClung rent house in Cherry Valley, NY, for fall.

1912

Winter/spring *Alexander's Bridge* serialized in *McClure's* under the title *Alexander's Masquerade*. *Alexander's Bridge* published by Houghton Mifflin in April. "Behind the Singer Tower" appears in *Collier's*. On leave from *McClure's*, Cather visits her brother in Arizona and travels extensively in the Southwest. The trip fired her imagination and helped her to make a permanent break from the magazine, though she would collaborate with McClure over the next year on his autobiography.

August "The Bohemian Girl" appears in *McClure's*.

1913

O Pioneers! published by Houghton Mifflin. Cather moves to an apartment at 5 Bank Street with Edith Lewis. *My Autobiography* by S. S. McClure serialized in *McClure's*, beginning in October. "Three American Singers" published in *McClure's* in December. Wagnerian soprano Olive Fremstad is featured in the article and will enter into Cather's depiction of a singer in *The Song of the Lark*.

1914

Writes articles for *McClure's*. Begins *The Song of the Lark*.

1915

Summer

Visits Mesa Verde with Edith Lewis, a trip that would later inspire the "Tom Outland's Story" section of *The Professor's House*.

Fall

The Song of the Lark published by Houghton Mifflin. Judge McClung dies; Isabelle McClung announces she is to be married to Jan Hambourg.

1916

Travels to New Mexico with Edith Lewis. Begins *My Ántonia*.

1917

Receives honorary degree from the University of Nebraska.

1918

My Ántonia is published by Houghton Mifflin in September. Visits Red Cloud, reads cousin G. P. Cather's letters home from the front, and then starts work on her novel of World War I, *One of Ours*.

1920

Travels to Europe with Edith Lewis. Publishes *Youth and the Bright Medusa* with new publisher, Alfred A. Knopf.

- 1921 Spends April–July with Isabelle and Jan Hambourg in Toronto. Visits Red Cloud. Finishes *One of Ours*. Begins *A Lost Lady*. Has tonsils removed, hemorrhages and is very ill. Sanatorium stay in Wernersville, PA.
- 1922
Summer Teaches at Bread Loaf School in Middlebury, VT. Visits Grand Manan Island in the Bay of Fundy. Knopf publishes *One of Ours*.
- December Joins Episcopal Church when visiting parents in Red Cloud for their fiftieth wedding anniversary.
- 1923 Spends six months in Europe with Hambourgs. *A Lost Lady* serialized in *Century* magazine April–June. Knopf publishes *A Lost Lady*. Warner Brothers buys film rights. Begins *The Professor's House*. Awarded the Pulitzer Prize for fiction for *One of Ours*.
- 1924 Finishes *The Professor's House*. Edits two-volume edition of Sarah Orne Jewett's fiction for Houghton Mifflin. Meets novelist D. H. Lawrence in New York.
- 1925 Serializes *The Professor's House* in *Collier's* magazine June–August. Visits Red Cloud and Southwest. Begins work on *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. Knopf publishes *The Professor's House*. Film version of *A Lost Lady* released.
- 1926 Knopf publishes *My Mortal Enemy*. Cather purchases land on Grand Manan, and she and Lewis have a cottage built there.
- 1927 *Death Comes for the Archbishop* serialized in *Forum* magazine January–June. Knopf publishes *Death Comes for the Archbishop* in September. Moves with Lewis to Grosvenor Hotel after Bank Street apartment is torn down.
- 1928
March Father dies. Cather stays in Red Cloud for a month. Mother moves with brother Douglass to southern California.
- Spring/Summer Visits Quebec and spends two months at Grand Manan. Begins work on *Shadows on the Rock*.

CHRONOLOGY OF WILLA CATHER'S LIFE

- 1929 Receives honorary degree from Yale. Visits mother in Long Beach, CA.
- 1930 Visits mother in sanatorium in Pasadena. Visits France. Finishes *Shadows on the Rock*. Receives the gold medal of the American Academy of Arts and Letters for *Death Comes for the Archbishop*.
- 1931 Receives honorary degree from Princeton. Mother dies. Knopf publishes *Shadows on the Rock*. Cather family reunion in Red Cloud in December (Cather's last trip to Nebraska).
- 1932 Publishes a collection of short stories, *Obscure Destinies*. Moves to 570 Park Avenue with Edith Lewis. Begins working on *Lucy Gayheart*.
- 1933 Receives the Prix Femina Américain for *Shadows on the Rock*. Receives an honorary degree from Smith College.
- 1935 Visits Isabelle Hambourg, who returns to US for medical reasons. Knopf publishes *Lucy Gayheart*.
- 1936 Knopf publishes *Not Under Forty*, a collection of essays.
- 1937 Begins work on *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* and oversees preparation of the Autograph Edition of her collected works, which Houghton Mifflin publishes in twelve volumes in 1937–8.
- 1938 Brother Douglass dies. Isabelle Hambourg dies in Sorrento.
- 1940 Knopf publishes *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*.
- 1944 Receives Gold Medal of the National Institute of Arts and Letters.
- 1945 Brother Roscoe dies.
- 1947 Dies on April 24 of a cerebral hemorrhage at her apartment in New York. Buried in Jaffrey, New Hampshire.
- 1948 Collection of short stories, *The Old Beauty and Others*, published by Knopf.

CONTENTS

<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>Notes on contributors</i>	x
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xiii
<i>Chronology of Willa Cather's life</i>	xiv
 Introduction	 I
MARILEE LINDEMANN	
 Part I: Contexts and critical issues	 17
 1 Willa Cather as progressive: politics and the writer	 19
GUY J. REYNOLDS	
 2 The Cather thesis: the American empire of migration	 35
JOSEPH R. URGO	
 3 Willa Cather's American modernism	 51
RICHARD H. MILLINGTON	
 4 Willa Cather and the geography of Jewishness	 66
LISA MARCUS	
 5 Willa Cather and sexuality	 86
JONATHAN GOLDBERG	
 6 Willa Cather and the performing arts	 101
JANIS P. STOUT	
 7 Willa Cather and the comic sense of self	 116
SUSAN J. ROSOWSKI	

CONTENTS

8	Cather and the short story MARK J. MADIGAN	131
9	Willa Cather in the country of the ill SHARON O'BRIEN	146
	Part II: Studies of major works	157
10	Rereading <i>My Ántonia</i> ANNE E. GOLDMAN	159
11	Fictions of possession in <i>The Professor's House</i> JOHN N. SWIFT	175
12	Catholic expansionism and the politics of depression in <i>Death Comes for the Archbishop</i> LEONA SEVICK	191
13	Willa Cather and "the old story": <i>Sapphira and the Slave Girl</i> ANN ROMINES	205
	<i>Selected bibliography</i>	222
	<i>Index</i>	228