

CFP: Two panel sponsored by the Cather Foundation, “Unsettled Landscapes: Willa Cather and Others” and “Willa Cather and Other American Women Writers: Genealogy, Friendship, Intertextuality, Competition” at SSAWW 2021 (Deadline 1.22.2021)

Unsettled Landscapes: Willa Cather and Others

Willa Cather’s landscapes and places feature prominently and memorably in her work, as well as in the imaginations of her readers. Her novels and stories range across time and space, from New York City and the Southwest, to the Great Plains and Quebec. While many of Cather’s works are historical, she writes her landscapes and settings vividly and with presence, with readers commonly remarking that her places almost feel like characters. In “Landscape as a Provocation: Reflections on Moving Mountains,” feminist geographer Doreen Massey argues that “both space and landscape could be imagined as provisionally intertwined simultaneities of ongoing, unfinished, stories.” Massey critiques our tendency to view landscapes as a part of history and places as fixed and stable, and instead proposes viewing them as unsettled, evolving, adaptable, and possessing agency. This shifts our reading of landscapes away from the human-centered view and instead exposes how intertwined and interconnected the human and nonhuman truly are. If we read the landscapes and places in the texts of Cather and other American women writers through this lens, what new narratives emerge about these written landscapes and about the places that inspired them?

Please submit as e-mail attachments a proposal of 250-300 words and a brief bio (50-60 words) to mhomestead@unl.edu

Willa Cather and Other American Women Writers: Genealogy, Friendship, Competition, Intertextuality,

In public, Cather tended to hold herself apart from both her female predecessors and her contemporaries, positioning herself as the exceptional woman writer. For this panel, we invite new inquiries into the Cather’s connections to other American women writers. What might it mean to put her in a genealogical relationship with the nineteenth-century popular novelists she sometimes scoffed at? Now that Cather’s letters are being published and can be quoted, what new interpretations might be advanced about her known friendships with figures such as Sarah Orne Jewett, Zoe Akins, Zona Gale, and Dorothy Canfield Fisher? Who was her competition in the literary market, and how might her sense of competition with her contemporaries have shaped her fiction? What intertextual relations might be traced with later women writers engaging her legacy?

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