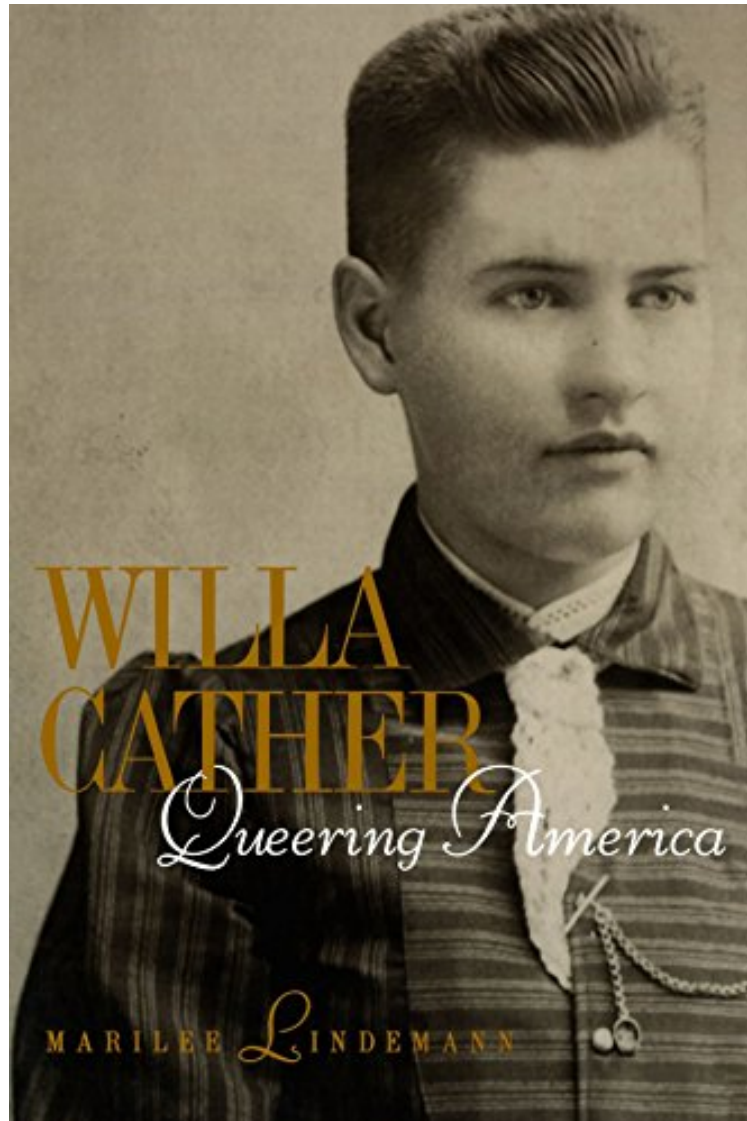


Willa Cather: Queering America

Marilee Lindemann

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Marilee Lindemann : Willa Cather: Queering America before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Willa Cather: Queering America:

12 of 15 people found the following review helpful. Daring and ProvocativeBy A CustomerLindemann's deft analysis of Cather and her "queer" sensibilities is a refreshing change of pace from the boring, disconnected aesthetic-based criticism that has dominated Cather studies for some time now. Written in a delightfully engaging prose style, *Willa Cather: Queering America* provides us with insight into the next phase of Cather scholarship that dares to situate the

author within the sexual-political environment of the early twentieth century. A must for queer and gay and lesbian Americanists, as well as anyone interested in American literary history and the traditions that frame such a field.16 of 23 people found the following review helpful. Not for the uninitiatedBy A CustomerI am currently taking an undergraduate course on Cather, and I hoped that this book would provide some insight into a side of her not covered in the course. However, I found the book full of jargon which rendered it incomprehensible to me. Perhaps if you are already initiated into the world of "queer studies" you will find it interesting, but I don't recommend it for a casual reader.

Although it has been proven posthumously by scholars that Willa Cather had lesbian relationships, she did not openly celebrate lesbian desire, and even today is sometimes described as homophobic and misogynistic. What, then, can a reassessment of this contentious first lady of American letters add to an understanding of the gay identities that have emerged in America over the past century? As Marilee Lindemann shows in this study of the novelist's life and work, Cather's sexual coming-of-age occurred at a time when a cultural transition was recasting love between women as sexual deviance rather than romantic friendship. At the same time, the very identity of "America" was characterized by great instability as the United States emerged as a modern industrial nation and imperial power. Indeed, both terms, "queer" and "America," achieved fresh ideological potency at the turn of the century. *Willa Cather: Queering America* is an enlightening unpacking of Cather's writings, from her controversial love letters of the 1890s--in which "queer" is employed to denote sexual deviance--to her epic novels, short stories, and critical writings. Lindemann points to the "queer" qualities of Cather's fiction--rebellion against traditional fictional form, with sometimes unlikable characters, lack of emphasis on heroic action, and lack of engagement in the drama of heterosexual desire.

"*Willa Cather: Queering America* is a wonderful and worthwhile book precisely because it gives the reader a glimpse of another, much less concretized, vision of America." --Gina Rucavado, *Windy City Times*"...Marilee Lindemann offers the fullest account currently available of gender and sexuality in the work of the early-twentieth-century novelist Willa Cather....Throughout her analyses, Lindemann deftly combines close reading with more theoretical methodologies to offer new light on familiar problems in Cather's three most famous novels. She also suggests the importance of works that are often undervalued or even overlooked. Whether reviewing the much-examined question of Eurocentrism in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* or exploring the new topic of anti-bohemianism in *O Pioneers!*, Lindemann adds significantly to our appreciation of those individual works and, more generally, to our understanding of the ways in which difference can be represented in fiction....Written in lively, engaging prose, this swift-moving account is of course essential reading for Cather scholars. In its attempt to review and rethink the best queer theory of the past decade, it will be illuminating as well for all students of twentieth-century American literature and all theorists interested in questions of minority representation." --David Van Leer, University of California - Davis, *Journal of American History*"A wonderful book - intelligent, engaged, lively, and witty. It makes a very significant contribution to lesbian/gay/queer studies and should be obligatory reading for anyone interested in the history and construction of the field of American literature." --Robert K. Martin author of *The Homosexual Tradition in American Poetry*"Lindemann offers a refreshing and critically informed approach to Cather's work. The perspective she brings is fresh, inventive, and intellectually curious. *Willa Cather: Queering America* is the very best book on Cather that I have read in the last ten years, and a vital and timely contribution to queer studies in general." --Deborah Carlin author of *Cather, Canon, and the Politics of Reading*"Lindemann's elegantly written, witty, and absorbing study presents a flesh-and-blood Cather whose canvas is America, painted with a queer brush. . . . [She] brings history to queer theory, and queer theory to life in a remarkable book that should be required reading not just for scholars interested in Cather, the turn-of-the-century U.S., or queer theory but also for anyone interested in an example of what scholarship and theory at their best can do." --Priscilla Wald author of *Constituting Americans: Cultural Anxiety and Narrative Form*About the AuthorMarilee Lindemann is assistant professor of English at the University of Maryland. She has edited recent editions of Cather's *Alexander's Bridge* and *O Pioneers!* and has written articles in collections including *Modern American Women Writers* and *The Gay and Lesbian Literary Heritage*.