

UN/TETHERED

Cather on the Cusp of the 1920s
June 4–6, 2020 • Red Cloud, Nebraska

65th annual Willa Cather Spring Conference | National Willa Cather Center



For Cather and for the nation, the dawn of the 1920s was a tumultuous time, marked by new freedoms and new entanglements. The Great War had ended and women had won the right to vote, but 1919's Red Summer and Palmer Raids signalled lingering social discord. Into this unsettled world, Willa Cather brought out *Youth and the Bright Medusa*, her collection of short stories that marked her departure from Houghton Mifflin and launched her long and successful partnership with a new publisher, Alfred Knopf. In the stories of *Youth and the Bright Medusa*, Cather's artists move through a world that is by turns inspiring and enervating.

Un/Tethered explores the themes of *Youth and the Bright Medusa* and the tensions of this time through broad conference offerings, including a keynote lecture by *The New Yorker's* Alex Ross, Nebraska film and textile artist Michael Burton's innovative animation installation based on Cather's "A Gold Slipper," a day of insightful scholarly presentations, and a soon-to-be-announced Red Cloud Opera House performance you won't want to miss.

To mark this important anniversary, we are accepting proposals for papers related to the publication centenary of *Youth and the Bright Medusa*. Topics to be considered include:

- *Youth and the Bright Medusa's* publication history and that of its individual stories, including the collection's enigmatic title (and the changes in title and contents);
- Cather's fictional world of artists, her insiders and her outsiders, and the tensions between these communities;
- The notions of escape and return, rule and rebellion, and how these relate to Cather, her artists and their lives;
- *YBM's* historical moment: how does this collection relate to the late 1910s and 1920s and the momentous social and cultural changes of the time? To Cather's personal history? To today's social issues?
- Innovative examples of the teaching of Cather's work, particularly ideas of cross-curricular, digital, and participatory approaches;
- Examinations of place, absence, and exile as they relate to culture, art, and intellectualism—both in Cather's writing and our modern society.

Please send proposals for papers to the National Willa Cather Center's education specialist, Rachel Olsen, at rolsen@WillaCather.org, by February 1, 2020. Proposals should be 350-500 words. Be sure to include your academic affiliation with the proposal! Papers will be accepted by March 15, 2020. While there is no set word count, papers should be no longer than twenty minutes when read.

