"Both Bitter and Sweet": Cather, Literature, and the Great War

61st annual Willa Cather Spring Conference
June 2-4, 2016 | Red Cloud, Nebraska

"'This war has taught us all how little the made things matter. Only the feeling matters.'

Exactly so; hadn't he been trying to say this ever since he was born? Hadn't he always known it, and hadn't it made life both bitter and sweet for him?"

~ One of Ours

Images: Battlefield map courtesy National Archive; G.P. Cather photo courtesy Sayra Cather Wagner collection of the Willa Cather Foundation; dust jackets from the Willa Cather Foundation; Angus MacDonall illustration courtesy the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Collection of the Nebraska State Historical Society.
CALL FOR PAPERS
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The years 2014–2018 mark the centennial of the First World War and represent a time to re-examine Cather’s writing of that period, particularly her 1922 novel *One of Ours*, which won the Pulitzer Prize. Scholars are invited to submit proposals on Cather and World War I in particular, or related topics that broaden and extend our understanding of Cather’s work both about and during the war years. Subjects of interest include, but are not limited to:

• the critical and popular reception of *One of Ours*, the novel’s stance on the war, and comparisons between Cather’s novel to other depictions of the Great War
• questions of gender, including women’s participation in World War I and women’s writing about war, including those by Cather’s friends Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant and Dorothy Canfield Fisher
• Cather’s Pulitzer Prize and its meaning to her life and career
• Cather’s attitude toward and reflections on war, explored through her novels written during WWI – *The Song of the Lark* and *My Ántonia* — and through her letters, her essays “Roll Call on the Prairies” and “The Education You Have to Fight For,” and her short stories of the period
• Cather’s love of France and European culture
• biographical exploration of G.P. Cather (the cousin on whom Claude Wheeler was loosely based), the idea of heroic masculinity, and civilian responses to the war
• popular culture of the World War I period, including music, trench art, fashion, and film
• poetry and literature of WWI vis-à-vis central issues in Cather’s war writing
• memorials and representations of WWI in both high and popular culture
• WWI as setting, both as physical landscape and as the intersection of cultures, competing historical perspectives, and artistic responses

Conference directors Julie Olin-Ammentorp and Max Despain invite proposals on the above or related topics by **February 1, 2016**. Please email proposals to WCF education director Tracy Tucker, along with a short resumé or vita (ttucker@willacather.org).

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