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## Willa Cather, Sarah Orne Jewett, and the Historiography of Lesbian Sexuality

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## 1 Willa Cather, Sarah Orne Jewett, and the Historiography of Lesbian Sexuality

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MELISSA J. HOMESTEAD

In late November of 1908 Sarah Orne Jewett wrote a much-quoted letter to Willa Cather, in which she responded to Cather's story "The Gull's Road," just published in the December 1908 issue of *McClure's* magazine:

[W]ith what deep happiness and recognition I have read the "McClure" story,—night before last I found it with surprise and delight. It made me feel very near to the writer's young and loving heart. You have drawn your two figures of the wife and her husband with unerring touches and wonderful tenderness for her. It makes me the more sure that you are far on your road toward a fine and long story of very high class. The lover is as well done as he could be when a woman writes in the man's character,—it must always, I believe, be something of a masquerade. I think it is safer to write about him as you did about the others, and not try to be he! And you could almost have done it as yourself—a woman could love her in that same protecting way—a woman

could even care enough to wish to take her away from such a life, by some means or other. But oh, how close—how tender—how true the feeling is! (*Letters* 246–47).

In *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* Lilian Faderman cites this letter and Jewett and Cather's friendship to illuminate a great divide in the history of lesbian sexuality between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Jewett's novel *Deephaven* and her short story "Martha's Lady" have romantic attachments between women at their center, and Jewett lived openly in a publicly acknowledged "Boston marriage" with Annie Adams Fields. In contrast, Faderman writes, "There is absolutely no suggestion of same-sex love in Cather's fiction. Perhaps," she further hypothesizes, Cather "felt the need to be more reticent about love between women . . . because she bore a burden of guilt for what came to be labeled perversion" in the last decade of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth (201). Referring to Jewett's advice that Cather write from a woman's point of view about the love of a woman for another woman, Faderman suggests, "The letter must have made Cather blush—but Jewett probably would not have known what she was blushing about" (202).<sup>1</sup>

Since the publication of *Surpassing the Love of Men* in 1981 and Sharon O'Brien's biography *Willa Cather: The Emerging Voice* in 1987, Cather's fiction has been subjected to scores of queer readings. These readings are, in many respects, premised on a very different understanding of gender, sexuality, and identity than Faderman and O'Brien deploy in their biographical identifications of Cather as a lesbian. Nevertheless, these queer readings rest upon a biographical foundation, and in particular upon an understanding of Cather as secretive, private, and afflicted with shame. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, in an influential reading of *The Professor's House* that inspired many critics to produce their own queer readings of the novel, proclaims that

its structure and its focus on bonds between men register “the shadows of the brutal suppressions by which a lesbian love did not in Willa Cather’s time and culture become freely visible as itself” (69). Building on Sedgwick’s reading, Christopher Nealon maintains that characters in Cather’s fiction create “affect genealogies” “linking the lonely dreamers who populate her fiction *within* their privacy” (“Affect-Genealogy” 10); he links this fictional dynamic to Cather herself, “who also knew the pathos of secrecy” (11).<sup>2</sup> In *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* Heather Love places Cather’s fiction in a tradition of other “dark, ambivalent texts [that] register their authors’ painful negotiation of the coming of modern homosexuality” with their emphasis on “feelings such as nostalgia, regret, shame, despair, *ressentiment*, passivity, escapism, self-hatred, withdrawal, bitterness, defeatism, and loneliness. These feelings are,” Love argues, “tied to the experience of social exclusion and the historical ‘impossibility’ of same-sex desire” (40).<sup>3</sup>

Love also suggests that “critics have tended to overstate the absolute nature of [the] historical break” between Cather and Jewett (92). She bridges this gap by reconfiguring Jewett, focusing on the failures of friendship and community in Jewett’s fiction and on the lonely spinster as central to her lesbian aesthetic.<sup>4</sup> I propose to bridge the gap by another route, by reconfiguring Cather through a return to and revision of biography. Many queer readings of Cather’s fiction are based, either explicitly or implicitly, on Sharon O’Brien’s recovery of Cather’s experiences of gender and sexuality in the late 1880s in Red Cloud, Nebraska, and in the early 1890s in Lincoln, Nebraska. Love, for example, vaguely telegraphs this biographical ground for interpretation when she characterizes Cather as “associated . . . with the anxieties of sexual definition at the turn of the century in her taking of a male persona, in her excoriation of [Oscar] Wilde after his trial, and in her at times virulent misogyny” (*Feeling Backward* 92). Cather’s “male persona” did not long survive her move from Red Cloud to Lincoln to attend the

University of Nebraska, and her “virulent misogyny” and “excoriation” of Wilde in the wake of his trial for homosexuality are found in her journalism of the 1890s. While resting on this foundation of early biography, queer readings often (although not exclusively) focus on Cather’s later fiction; following Sedgwick’s powerful example, they most often focus on *The Professor’s House*, producing ever more refined readings of the dynamics of desire and identification in Cather’s novel featuring what Sedgwick calls a “gorgeous homosocial romance of two men” at its center (68). Queer readings also often incorporate into their analytical frame Cather’s melancholic, backward-looking essays “148 Charles Street” and “Miss Jewett” as published in *Not Under Forty* (1936).

O’Brien’s biography follows Cather only until 1915, but queer readings of Cather’s fiction leave behind its culmination, in which O’Brien argues that Cather’s encounters with Fields and Jewett in 1908 gave Cather evidence “that love and work might coexist, a hopeful sign to Cather who was developing her relationship with Edith Lewis at this time” (342). In this essay, then, I reread and reframe evidence contemporaneous with Cather’s encounters with Jewett to disrupt notions of Cather’s “now-notorious sexual privacy” (as Scott Herring refers to it in yet another reading of the *Professor’s House* [“Catherian Friendship” 68]) that undergird queer readings of her fiction. Cather’s supposed efforts to recall and destroy her letters to protect her privacy have become a commonplace of Cather biography and criticism, including queer readings. In *Willa Cather: Queering America*, for example, Marilee Lindemann characterizes Cather in her late life as targeting her letters in a “search-and-destroy mission” because “she sought frantically to protect her privacy and her public (asexual) image” (5). It is beyond the scope of this essay to provide broader evidence overturning claims about Cather-as-letter-burner. However, by closely examining the Cather-Jewett correspondence and considering how twentieth- and twenty-first-century literary historians have come to know

it, I complicate commonly held assumptions about Cather's desire to hide or destroy evidence of her same-sex attachments.

As I demonstrate, Cather did not (contra Faderman) "blush" when she received Jewett's letter of advice. She did not follow Jewett's advice by writing fiction that represented romantic love between women (nor, for that matter, did she immediately follow Jewett's advice to leave *McClure's* magazine to devote herself to writing fiction full time, waiting three years to do so).<sup>5</sup> However, this aesthetic choice is not evidence of how Cather lived her life, either in 1908 or in the subsequent thirty-nine years (shared, notably, with Edith Lewis). The remainder of this essay seeks to recover the visibility of Lewis and Cather's partnership for those thirty-nine years, first focusing most intensively on three sets of evidence from its beginning in 1908—Jewett's letters to Cather, Cather's letters to Jewett, and Cather's Christmas present to Edith Lewis—and then surveying the evidence preserved in letters from subsequent years.

First, why is it that Jewett's letters to Cather from 1908 are so widely quoted (the other widely quoted one being about why Cather should leave *McClure's*)? Because they were published in 1911 in *The Letters of Sarah Orne Jewett*, edited by Annie Fields. Notably, this publication occurred not just during Cather's lifetime but before even the publication of her first novel. Jewett's will, signed in 1897 and probated in the fall of 1909, gave Mary Rice Jewett (her sister) and Fields joint authority over her "unprinted papers and unpublished manuscripts," further specifying that she gave them sole authority over publication of manuscript materials, including "any of my letters whoever [*sic*] hands may be . . . they being well aware of what would please me in this regard or what I should dislike" (Jewett, "Excerpts"). As Jewett's will assumes and common sense dictates, Fields could only publish letters from Jewett to persons other than Fields herself if those persons granted Fields access to them.<sup>6</sup> Cather herself could not have published the Jewett letters in her possession without permission from Jewett's literary

estate: the copyright in an unpublished letter resides in the author or in the author's heirs or assigns, not in the recipient. Conversely, however, Fields could not publish them without Cather's cooperation and consent.

The three letters from Jewett to Cather published in *Life and Letters* were clearly not the only ones Cather had in her possession. Many times in her critical writings and in interviews Cather refers to advice from Jewett contained in letters, including in the famous opening of her preface to *The Best Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett*, later revised and published as "Miss Jewett" in *Not Under Forty*: "In reading over a package of letters from Sarah Orne Jewett, I find this observation: '*The thing that teases the mind over and over for years, and at last gets itself put down on paper—whether little or great, it belongs to Literature*'" (ix). These oft-quoted words of wisdom do not appear, however, in any of the three letters to Cather published in 1911.

After 1911 Cather was asked more than once to grant access to additional Jewett letters in her possession. In 1927, when a young F. O. Matthiessen wrote her asking for information and letters for his planned biocritical study of Jewett, she told him to contact Mary Jewett, Theodore Jewett Eastman (Sarah and Mary's nephew), and Houghton Mifflin editor Ferris Greenslet for information. She further advised, "Such of my letters from Miss Jewett as I would care to make public are already printed in Mrs. Fields' collection of Miss Jewett's letters." In 1941, when Carl J. Weber, librarian at Colby College, wrote an aging Cather to ask her to deposit her Jewett letters at Colby, Cather conceded that she might, in the future, "feel the time has come for depositing Miss Jewett's letters" in a library and that she would, at that time, "consider [Colby's] friendly offer of hospitality." She also made it clear that she had more letters than were included in Fields's edited volume and explained how the three came to be published: "Miss Jewett's letters written to me, are the very personal letters of a dear friend and have great value for me. The only letters which I thought had any special interest for

the public, I allowed Mrs. James T. Fields to use in her volume of Miss Jewett's letters, published by Houghton Mifflin in 1911. I allowed her to use these letters because she convinced me that they offered very good advice to all young writers."

There is no epistolary trail from 1909, 1910, or 1911, substantiating her account here of negotiations with Fields over which letters she would allow to be published. However, Cather made yearly week-long visits to Fields in Boston, including a visit in spring 1911, just as Fields was completing her preparation of the volume, and the transaction could have easily taken place in person.<sup>7</sup>

After *The Letters of Sarah Orne Jewett* appeared, Annie Fields seems to have returned most of the letters to their owners (i.e., their original recipients), and many, including the three to Cather, cannot, as of the writing of this essay, be located in manuscript. Furthermore, scholars comparing those that are extant in libraries in manuscript (many of them Jewett's letters to Fields) with the print volume have discovered that Fields exercised a heavy editorial hand, omitting portions of many letters. Indeed, much has been made of M. A. DeWolfe Howe's advice to Fields that she eliminate from Jewett's letters to her many of their nicknames for one another because "all sorts of people" might "read[] them wrong" (Howe 84). Fields followed his advice.<sup>8</sup> It is thus entirely possible, even likely, that Fields (of her own accord or at Cather's suggestion) edited out portions of Jewett's letters to Cather. Notably, because Jewett's manuscript letters to Cather are currently not known to exist, scholars today have access to them only as print artifacts produced in 1911. Although Lillian Faderman imagines Jewett and Cather on opposite sides of a great divide in 1908, three years later, in 1911, neither Cather nor Fields found anything to blush about in Jewett's three letters to Cather. Instead they collaborated in making them public.

Cather's side of this correspondence from 1908—and the fact that it exists more than a century later—is equally illuminating. Cather's letters are not entirely about her struggles to balance



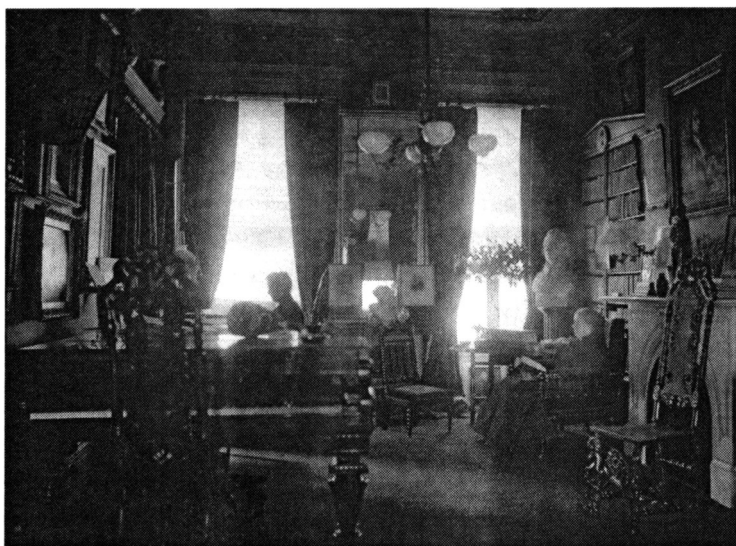


Fig. 1.1. Sarah Orne Jewett (*left*) and Annie Adams Fields (*right*). A slightly different version of this photograph, with Fields on the left and Jewett on the right, was published in M. A. DeWolfe Howe's *Memories of a Hostess* (1922). Courtesy of Historic New England.

magazine work with fiction writing. Instead one of them also comments on the beginning of her domestic partnership with Edith Lewis. In a long letter dated 24 October 1908 Cather expresses pleasure that Fields and Jewett were enjoying a novel by their friend Mrs. Humphry Ward in serialization in *McClure's*; consoles them for the loss of Charles Eliot Norton (a retired Harvard professor and father of their friend Sara Norton); praises a package sent by Jewett containing a volume of Annie Fields's poetry, *The Singing Shepherd* (1895); describes the positive response to the publication of Jewett's poem "The Gloucester Mother" in *McClure's*; alerts Jewett to the imminent publication of "The Gull's Road" in *McClure's*; and sends her a manuscript of an unpublished story declined by *McClure's* and *Scribner's* (most likely "The Enchanted Bluff"). Right in the middle of this

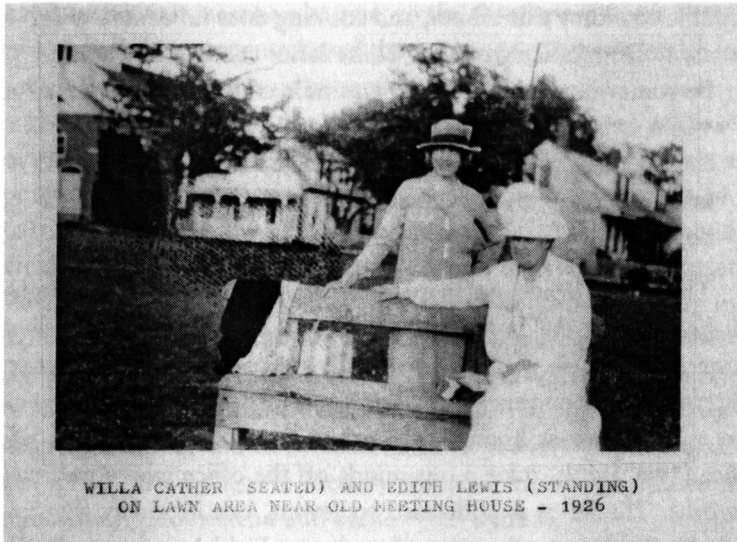


Fig. 1.2. Edith Lewis (*left*) and Willa Cather (*right*) in Jaffrey, New Hampshire, 1926. Photograph by Mrs. Josiah Wheelwright, from Theodore Jones, "Willa Cather in the Northeast (A Pictorial Biography) 1917-1947." UNB Masters Thesis, 1968. Archives and Special Collections, Harriet Irving Library, University of New Brunswick.

densely packed letter Cather describes the success of her new living arrangements with Lewis, shifting intricately back and forth between their shared domestic and professional lives (Lewis was also on the editorial staff of *McClure's* in 1908).<sup>9</sup>

Miss Lewis and I are enjoying our apartment more every day, although we lead no dreary, idle lives in it. Mrs. Fields, I know, will exclaim when you tell her that so far we have largely fended for ourselves and have managed to get our own breakfast and luncheon and, about three days a week, our dinner. We dine at the Brevoort on other nights and have a maid come in to clean two days a week. There are good reasons why we should each of us practise reason-

able economy this winter, and cooking does take one's mind away from office troubles. These latter cares will, we hope, be somewhat lighter after the middle of November. Meanwhile, we shall have a pretty thorny path to tread until then. The sales for October were 10,000 more copies than last October, and November has started well. (*Selected Letters* 116)

This letter draws an inescapable parallel between the established Jewett-Fields ménage and Cather's newly established one with Lewis. Cather repeatedly drops into the collective first-person pronoun "we," placing herself and Lewis together as a unit both at home ("we" cook) and at the *McClure's* office ("we" cook to keep our minds off the office where we both work). The letter is addressed to Jewett, but in a way that includes Fields as well—just as Jewett sent Fields's poetry to Cather, Cather expects Jewett to report to Fields about her economical apartment living with Lewis in New York (so different from 148 Charles Street, a large townhouse with multiple servants).

If Cather was obsessively protecting her privacy by hiding or obscuring her attachments to women, how to account for the existence of what appears to be a nearly complete manuscript archive of Cather's letters to Jewett in 1908, including this letter? Of course, Cather's letters to Jewett would have been in Jewett's hands, not Cather's. After Jewett's death in 1909 Jewett's papers were in the care of either Annie Fields or Mary Rice Jewett until Fields's death in 1915, when any papers in Fields's hands passed into Mary's until her death in 1930. After that they were very briefly in the possession of Theodore Jewett Eastman, who died in 1931 and bequeathed his Sarah Orne Jewett materials to Harvard University. Harvard accepted the literary manuscripts but declined the letters in this group, which were transferred to the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (now Historic New England). A second group of letters and papers, including letters both from and to Jewett, made

its way, through means unknown, to the Goodspeed Book Shop, from which Harvard purchased them in 1966. Cather's letters to Jewett were in this second group.<sup>10</sup>

If Cather had wanted to take these letters back for the purpose of destroying them and keeping them out of a library, where the public could access them, she had ample opportunity to do so, particularly during the years between Jewett's death in 1909 and Fields's in 1915. Cather clearly had access to Jewett's papers at least once between 1909 and 1931, as evidenced by a note in her hand on a page from the voluminous *Country of the Pointed Firs* manuscripts (which have been at Harvard since 1931): "Probably used in a discarded ending. W.S.C." This note suggests that one of the three custodians of Jewett's papers asked Cather to review them to identify materials that might warrant publication (Homestead and Heller 362–63n18).

Annie Fields as a custodian would not have fetishized letters to Jewett or resisted attempts to recall them. Even though Fields was the editor of several volumes of published letters (not just Jewett's, which was her last such effort), she felt no compunction about destroying manuscript letters. She left a series of contradictory and complex instructions to M. A. DeWolfe Howe as her executor, including instructions to destroy letters after Howe had used them to produce a book.<sup>11</sup> There is also evidence that during their lifetimes she and Jewett destroyed, as a matter of course, many of their letters and notes to one another (Roman, *Annie Adams Fields* 163). Cather herself assisted Fields with the destruction of letters to Fields from Louisa May Alcott, her distant cousin. In her account of the incident in a 2 March 1938 letter to Henry Seidel Canby, Cather places it "[s]everal years before [Fields] died" (i.e., precisely in the period between 1909 and 1915). Cather explains that Fields asked her "to destroy a great number of more-or-less family letters, which she did not wish to leave among her drawers-full of correspondence," including letters from Alcott.<sup>12</sup> She recounted this anecdote to Canby because he had published a skeptical review of a Freudian book about

Alcott, which argued that the sight of the “‘naked bodies’ of the men [Alcott] nursed in her [Civil War] hospital experience left” a “wound” in her psyche from which she never recovered. Cather explains to Canby that “I wish now that those letters to Mrs. Fields had not been destroyed” because they would have refuted these claims (*Selected Letters* 545). In the context of such an interaction with Fields, Cather might have easily taken possession of her own letters to Jewett or could have asked Fields to destroy them, but she apparently did not. Cather did not know Mary Jewett well during Sarah’s lifetime, but they became friends after Sarah’s death, with Cather making visits to South Berwick (*Selected Letters* 545).<sup>13</sup> Thus, after Fields’s death Cather also could have asked Mary Jewett to return or destroy her letters, but there is no evidence she did.

It would seem, then, that Cather made no attempt to recall or destroy the evidence of her relationship with Edith Lewis contained in her letters to Jewett, any more than she attempted to hide the relationship in the ensuing thirty-nine years. Cather’s will did instruct Lewis as her executor to refuse permission to publish or quote from her letters, but, again, Cather’s letters to Jewett were not specifically targeted, nor is there evidence that Lewis attempted to locate or destroy them. Unfortunately, the currently known archive of correspondence between Cather and Lewis is exceedingly sparse—two postcards (dated 1912 and 1923) and a 1936 letter from Cather to Lewis and no Lewis-to-Cather items. The situation is thus very different from that of the Jewett-Fields correspondence. As Judith Roman observes, “If the intention of all concerned” in the editing, destruction, and mutilation of their correspondence “was to keep the intimate nature of [their] relation from the public, the effort was a failure” because the edited, published letters still “present a vivid picture of their great love for each other” (*Annie Adams Fields* 163). To fill in the gap in the archive documenting Cather and Lewis’s relationship, I propose two other sets of evidence: first, Cather’s Christmas present to Lewis in 1908 and, second, letters to and

from Cather and Lewis from the 1910s through the 1940s that make their relationship visible.

Cather's Christmas present to Lewis, a battered copy of Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Mate of the Daylight and Friends Ashore*, inscribed "Edith Lewis, Christmas 1908, W.S.C.," can be read as a kind of letter. Cather and Lewis established a tradition of exchanging books at Christmas very soon after they first met in 1903. In December 1904, for example, Lewis, then living and working in New York City, gave Cather a copy of Henry James's recently published novel *The Golden Bowl* as a gift; in 1905 Cather, still teaching in Pittsburgh, sent Lewis Israel Zangwill's *Children of the Ghetto* at Christmas time; and in 1907, when Cather had moved into her own studio in the building in which Lewis had lived since 1903, she gave her a 1901 Roycrofters fine press edition of *Poems by Edgar A. Poe*.<sup>14</sup> Having relocated to New York in 1906, by late 1908 Cather delighted in New York's bookstores, including the pleasure of having more spending money because she had recently begun sharing an apartment with Lewis. At about the same time Cather would have been shopping for *The Mate of the Daylight* for Lewis, she wrote to her sister Jessica Cather Auld about the pleasures of buying children's books as presents for her niece and nephew (Jessica's children) because "one book shop here in New York had sense enough to import a lot of children's books from England, and they make all the chromo Maxfield Parrish books in this country just look foolish." Cather had, at the time she wrote this letter, already sent along the books for her nephew Tommy (William Thomas), but she reported that she would send the books for niece Mary Virginia "as soon as I have finished reading them myself and as soon as Miss Lewis (the girl who is in partnership-housekeeping in a flat with me) is through reading them. They are like the family Teddy Bear used to be; we each contrive to get the other to go on an errand so that we may grab these books."

For an avid reader familiar with the quirks of New York's bookstores, *The Mate of the Daylight*, first published in 1883,

was a very peculiar choice for a gift in 1908. Indeed, Cather gave Lewis the 1897 eleventh edition of the volume—she must have scoured used bookstores to find a copy of this particular Jewett volume. Understanding the full significance of Cather's very particular choice of *The Mate of the Daylight* as a gift to Lewis requires placing the book in Jewett's biographical trajectory.<sup>15</sup> In late 1881, after Annie Fields's husband, publisher James T. Fields, died, Jewett began living with Fields in her townhouse at 148 Charles Street in Boston and in her summer "cottage," Thunderbolt Hill, in Manchester, Massachusetts, north of Boston, for part of every year; she continued to live with her mother and her sister Mary in the Jewett family house in South Berwick, Maine, the rest of the year. The stories in *The Mate of the Daylight*, with the exception of two first published in the volume, appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1882 and 1883. They were, then, the first stories Jewett wrote and published after beginning her relationship with Fields, and the volume of collected stories was similarly the first published after 1881. Furthermore Jewett dedicated *The Mate of the Daylight* to Annie Fields (the printed inscription reads "To A. F."), and it is the only book in Jewett's corpus dedicated to Fields.

The best story in the volume is "Tom's Husband" (first published in the *Atlantic* in February 1882), a story of gender role reversal in marriage that comments playfully and obliquely on the beginning of Jewett and Fields's partnership. In "Tom's Husband" Mary and Tom Wilson, married relatively late in life, find themselves uncomfortable with conventional gender roles in marriage. Tom has lived on his family's money rather than engaging in business, and he becomes "very old-womanish" in his devotion to managing the domestic affairs of his house (214). In the opinion of Mary's father "it had been a mistake that she was a girl instead of a boy. Such executive ability as hers is often wasted in the more contracted sphere of women and is apt to be more a disadvantage than a help. She was too independent and self-reliant for a wife; it would seem at first thought

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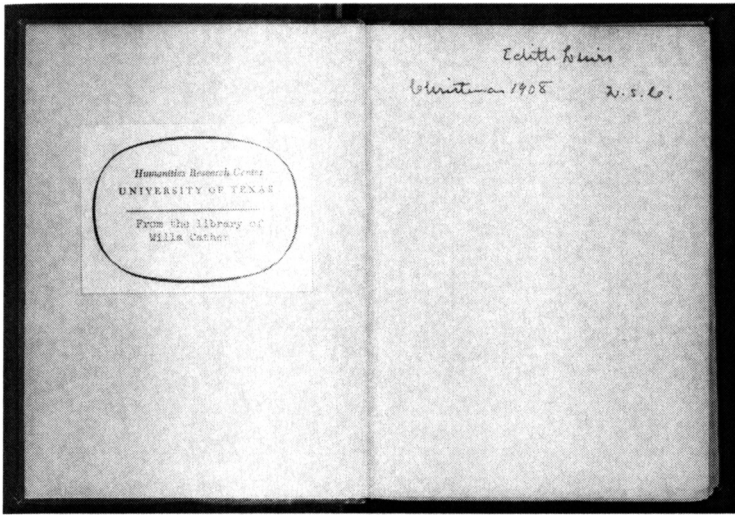


Fig. 1.3. Willa Cather's inscription to Edith Lewis in a copy of Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Mate of the Daylight and Friends Ashore*. Courtesy of the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

that she needed a wife herself more than she needed a husband" (213–14). After a period during which Tom and Mary both stay within the gendered bounds of propriety, Mary revives the shuttered business of the Wilson family mill, while Tom takes charge of the household (which means, essentially, managing the household servants). All goes smoothly until their two long-serving and well-trained servants are lost, the younger to marriage and the older to death. At this point Tom's duties managing the household suddenly become onerous, and the story devolves into a wry parody of tales of the domestic woes of middle-class nineteenth-century wifehood. Crucially, Tom, not Mary, is the woeful "wife," ignored by his "husband," Mary—thus the story's title "Tom's Husband." Mary is tired and preoccupied with the stresses of her business affairs, and she commits such sins as bringing guests home for dinner without warning Tom. "He



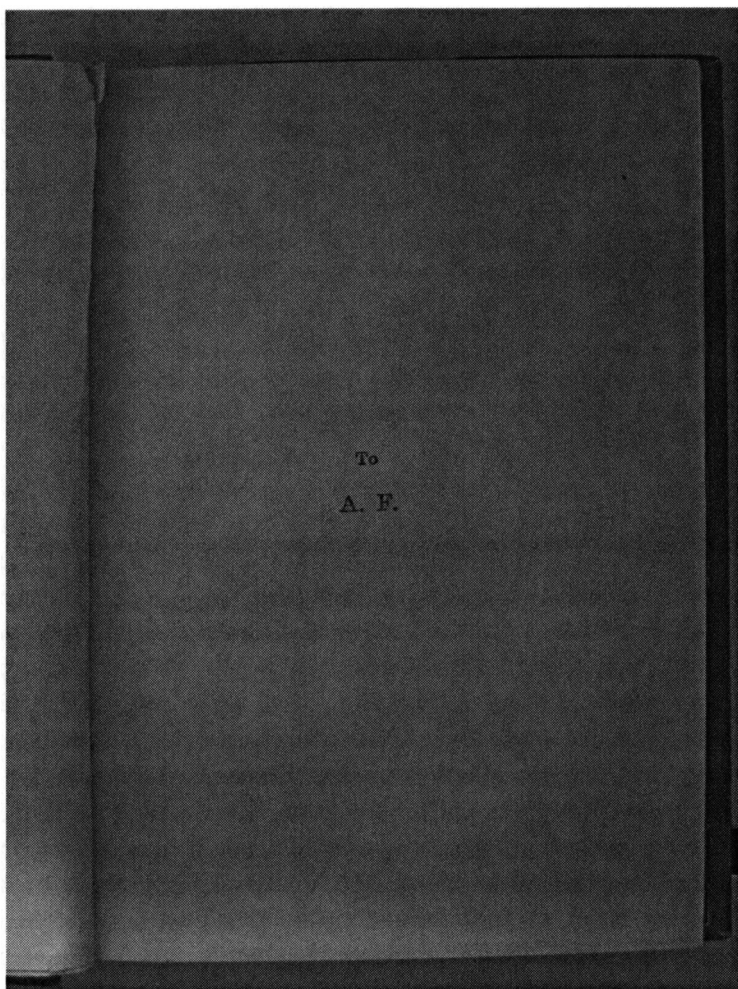


Fig. 1.4. Sarah Orne Jewett's printed dedication of *The Mate of the Daylight and Friends Ashore* to Annie Fields. Photograph by the author.

seemed to himself to have merged his life in his wife's," Tom reflects:

[H]e lost his interest in things out side the house and grounds; he felt himself fast growing rusty and behind the times, and to have somehow missed a good deal in life; he had a suspicion that he was a failure. One day the thought rushed over him that his had been almost exactly the experience of most women, and he wondered if it really was any more disappointing and ignominious to him than it was to women themselves. "Some of them may be contented with it," he said to himself, soberly. "People think women are designed for such careers by nature, but I don't know why I ever made such a fool of myself." (232)

The story ends abruptly, with Tom and Mary leaving for a long vacation after realizing their experiment in reconfiguring marriage has caused as many problems as it solved. As Judith Roman observes, in the story "Jewett makes it clear that role *reversal* is not in itself a solution to the role problem. In a successful relationship, both partners must refuse to be limited to *any* single role, whether conventional or not." Interpreted this way, the "story can be loosely read as a description of the Jewett-Fields relationship," which succeeded for both women personally and professionally because of its "complete reciprocity and their ability to create for themselves a form of marriage in which all roles were interchangeable and neither partner was limited by the relationship" ("Closer Look" 128, 127).<sup>16</sup>

Annie Fields had been a wife (if not a mother) before forming her Boston marriage with Jewett. As Judith Fryer observes, "Fields' first 'marriage' was quite another story," in which "James T. Fields' dominance was taken for granted to the extent" that Annie's work as a "prolific writer and editor" was rendered nearly invisible (617). Jewett, on the other hand, before she began her relationship with Fields, is reputed to have answered a question from John Greenleaf Whittier about wheth-

er she “was . . . ever in love” with a blush and a laughing explanation that presages words used to describe Mary in “Tom’s Husband”: “[S]he had more need of a wife than a husband” (Forbes, “Sarah Orne Jewett”).<sup>17</sup> When Jewett and Fields established their “union” in 1881, however, neither woman became a wife *or* a husband. They formed a deep, lasting, and intimate bond, but they also maintained their own lives and careers (in addition to writing and editing, Fields was active in charity and reform work). Their partnership, while domestic for a portion of every year, was open and flexible enough to allow them to spend months apart (thus the archive of letters between them).

When Willa Cather gave Edith Lewis a copy of *The Mate of the Daylight*, she communicated very precisely to Lewis her hopes for the future of their newly established partnership. At the time both Lewis and Cather were members of the editorial staff of *McClure’s* magazine, sharing the “office troubles” of their careers and the domestic work of cooking meals together in their apartment in order to economize with an eye to the future. Cather, of course, eventually left the “executive” labors of the editorial office for full-time novel writing. Lewis, however, stayed at *McClure’s*, then was managing editor of *Every Week* magazine from 1915 to 1918, and finally was an advertising writer at the J. Walter Thompson Co. from 1919 through the rest of her working life. And they continued to make a home together long after the economic imperatives of the winter of 1908–9 became moot.

Although Lewis has sometimes been characterized as a self-effacing domestic drudge, she more closely resembled Mary Wilson in “Tom’s Husband” than Tom. In her answers to the Thompson Co. job application form she filled out in late 1918, she clearly presented herself to her future employers as a businesswoman. In the section about her educational qualifications, when asked what “subjects” most “interested” her, she tacked “House-keeping and Children” on to “Literature, Music, [and] Art,” but this is the only trace of feminine domesticity. Asked, “Have you

initiative?" she answered, "Yes; my chief work for three years has been to originate new ideas, policies, departments, etc." Asked if she possessed the quality of perseverance, she answered, "I cannot remember ever having abandoned anything I set out to do"; energy, "I have often supplied the driving power for a whole office-ful of people"; confidence, "difficulties attract me." Asked, "What is your ambition?" she answered, "To be the head of a large, successful working organization," and, "How seriously do you take your work?" "I give the best of my mind and strength to it" (Personnel File).

Inscribing *The Mate of the Daylight* to Lewis, Cather doubled Jewett's dedication to Fields, telling Lewis that she was to her as Fields was to Jewett. Lewis accepted the invitation, and their partnership lasted even longer than Jewett and Fields's, which was cut short by Jewett's early death. For the next thirty-nine years Cather and Lewis's relationship was open and visible to their biological families, their professional colleagues, and their circles of friends and acquaintances (including, of course, in its early years, Jewett and Fields). Even though the extant correspondence between them is sparse, Lewis is far from invisible in Cather's letters to family, friends, and acquaintances—this is particularly true of several groups of letters that have been acquired by or donated to libraries since the publication of Janis Stout's *Willa Cather: The Writer and Her World* (2000), the most recent scholarly biography of Cather. The same is true of the smaller number of letters in libraries to and from Lewis dated from before Cather's death.<sup>18</sup>

One might expect a need for concealment to apply most strongly on the professional front, but two examples (chosen from among many) contradict such an assumption. In a letter to Ferris Greenslet at Houghton Mifflin about promotional materials related to the imminent publication of *The Song of the Lark*, Cather drops in personal news about her recent southwestern travels and how "constant climbing and horseback riding" caused her to gain "six pounds which are a great grief to me,

while Miss Lewis lost a few that she could ill afford to spare!" (13 September 1915, *Selected Letters* 208). On her part Edith Lewis, writing to S. S. McClure to solicit a contribution to *Every Week* magazine in 1916, let him know that "Miss Cather writes that she will be back the last part of November."

Lewis and Cather had their own friendships apart from one another, but they also shared friends. One of Lewis and Cather's richest shared friendships was with the painters Achsah Barlow-Brewster and Earl Brewster. (Barlow-Brewster and Edith Lewis were roommates at Smith College.) As David Porter observes, Cather's letters to the Brewsters are characterized by "the profusion of first person plurals" as Cather refers to herself collectively with Lewis as "we" (101). The same is true of the few extant letters from Lewis to them. In 1934, when the Brewsters sent a copy of their "beautiful book" about their friend the late D. H. Lawrence to both Cather and Lewis, Lewis reported she had "been reading it with such pleasure" that "Willa has not had a chance at it yet." Although they competed for access to a book sent to the two of them, Lewis also reported sadly that "[o]ur life, Willa's and mine, has been overshadowed" by an injury to Cather's wrist.

The Brewsters' letters to Lewis, which have recently surfaced, testify to the extent that this husband and wife came to honor and respect Lewis's relationship with Cather and to treat them as a couple. In 1925, thanking Lewis and Cather in a jointly addressed letter for a copy of *The Best Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett* with Cather's preface, Earl Brewster closes his letter, "With many good wishes and love from us all three [including their daughter, Harwood] to you both." Lewis and Cather jointly visited the Brewsters in France in 1930, and Achsah opens a 1931 New Year's letter to Lewis, "May this new year be full of blessings for you and Willa." Later the same year Earl begins a letter to Lewis by recounting, "I dream of you and Willa nearly every night: and they are pleasant dreams of our traveling together, which must foretell a happy meeting."

It was through the Brewsters, via D. H. Lawrence, that Cather and Lewis were introduced into Mabel Dodge Luhan's circle in Taos, New Mexico. Luhan became a shared friend after Cather and Lewis traveled together to the Southwest in 1925, and this correspondence is similarly characterized by a "profusion of first person plurals." In 1927 Cather wrote to Luhan about her life as thoroughly entwined with Lewis's. She begins with a complaint that "[w]e have planned to be in Rome at this date, Miss Lewis and I [as part of a trip to Italy to visit the Brewsters], and are in—New Hampshire!" (17 September [1927]). This change of plans resulted, she explains, because Cather's visit to family in Red Cloud was unexpectedly prolonged by her father's heart trouble, then the packing up of their Bank Street apartment (lost to subway construction) delayed them further, and, finally, "Edith's mother had a stroke in Springfield [Massachusetts]" (where she was visiting her son Harold and his family). Vacationing in New Hampshire allowed Lewis "to be somewhere near her mother" and a "dead tired" Cather to avoid the trauma of "embark[ing] for Italy alone." Two years later Luhan was able to find the still-apartmentless couple by sending a letter to Lewis in care of her employer. "Thank Heaven the J. Walter Thompson Co. is so well known!" Lewis writes, allowing Luhan's letter to reach her, "and both Willa and I were awfully glad to hear from you" (November? 1929). Lewis's letter is full of news of both their lives, together and apart, and closes with "lots of love from us both," a sentiment that reappears across letters to and from all three. "Edith and I both send much love to you and many good wishes," Cather writes to Luhan in 1936 (18 December), and "I hope you are well & Edith too—Love, Mabel" in 1941 (n.d.).

Lewis and Cather constructed substitute family networks with some of their mutual friends (the Brewsters taught their daughter, Harwood, to call them "Aunt Willa" and "Aunt Edith," for example), but their relationship with each other did not alienate them from their families of birth.<sup>19</sup> On occasion they vacationed

with each other's families—Lewis and Cather traveled in California and the Southwest with her brother Roscoe and his family, and Cather's nieces (Roscoe's twin daughters and her sister Jessica Cather Auld's daughter Mary Virginia) visited them on Grand Manan Island, as did Lewis's sister Ruth Putnam Lewis, accompanied by sister-in-law Alice Lewis and her daughters (Ruth and Edith's nieces).<sup>20</sup> Cather reported to her mother, Mary Virginia Cather, that their southwestern trip in 1926 with Roscoe's family "worked out splendidly" and that "Edith liked the twins about as much as I do. She thought they were splendid company." The only downside to the trip was that it ended, with "Edith [going] back to New York the day before Roscoe's party left," leaving Cather "plenty lonesome," staying on in Sante Fe by herself (28 June 1926). Of the same trip Lewis wrote to Roscoe Cather that she would "always remember our ride to Española as one of the loveliest trips I ever took. Tell the twins to be sure to send me their pictures, and not to forget that we are all going to learn Spanish." Cather and Lewis's attachment to the twins grew as the girls themselves grew. When Elizabeth became engaged in 1938, Cather wrote to her brother that "Edith and I have jointly bought" some Victorian silver plate as a wedding present for her (12 March? 1938).

Members of Lewis's family appear offhandedly as characters in Cather's letters to her family. Thus in 1920, writing from Paris, Cather complains to her mother that she "hadn't heard a word from home" (meaning from family in Nebraska) for two months, but "Edith's mother sent me a splendid notice about my new book [*Youth and the Bright Medusa*] from the New York Times" (24 October [1920]). In a 1934 letter trying to lure her sister Elsie Cather to vacation on Grand Manan, Cather offhandedly remarks, "Edith's sister brought her car last year." Due to geographic and generational divides, members of Cather's and Lewis's biological families seemingly had little contact with the other woman's family members, but letters provide glimpses of occasional contact. In a 12 June 1933 letter to Elsie about

a dual-purpose visit to Smith College by Cather and Lewis—at commencement Virginia Cather, Roscoe's oldest daughter, received her bachelor's degree, and Willa Cather received an honorary doctorate—Willa Cather explains that Elsie's most recent letter "reached me via Virginia—she came over to Mt. Holyoke [College, where Cather and Lewis were staying] to drive with us the night we got there, came over in Mary Lewis's car" (*Selected Letters* 486). Cather felt no need to explain to Elsie that Mary Delia Lewis, a professor of English at Smith College, was Edith Lewis's cousin and that she knew Virginia well enough to entrust her with her car. Indeed, Elsie, who transferred to Smith College from the University of Nebraska in 1909 and graduated with the class of 1912, likely knew Mary Lewis herself.<sup>21</sup>

In recently discovered letters Edith Lewis's mother, Lillie Gould Lewis, refers routinely to her daughter's ménage with the woman she always refers to formally and deferentially as "Miss Cather." Lillie Lewis focuses in particular on the challenges her daughter and Cather faced finding and keeping good servants to maintain their apartment at 5 Bank Street and the necessity of domestic help in light of her daughter's demanding days at the office. When Edith Lewis visited her family in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1917, she returned to 5 Bank Street with potholders made by her elderly Aunt Belle (her father's sister). "I'm glad Miss Cather is better," Lillie Lewis writes, and "that Josephine [Bourda, Cather and Lewis's maid] likes the holders. I will continue to send them occasionally, as Aunt Belle sends them" (30 October 1917). In 1919, after Edith Lewis had begun her new position at the J. Walter Thompson Co., Lillie Lewis wrote that she was "awfully glad you had the three days rest & feel a little rested & relieved that you have gotten the month of Aug[ust] & that Miss Cather will go with you on a vacation. I felt very distressed," she continues, at Edith's earlier report that she might not take a vacation until she got "a good grasp upon [her] job" (9 July 1919). Two years later Lillie responded enthusiastically to Edith's report that Willa Cather had met with Josephine Bour-



da, who had left their employ: "I hoped as I read of Miss Cather's meeting Josephine, that she might be coming back to you. I think you need a maid so much" (24 April 1921).

Edith Lewis was particularly close to her sister Ruth, who moved to New York City in the early 1920s to teach physical education, living and teaching in Brooklyn, and in the mid-1920s an aging and ailing Lillie Lewis moved in with Ruth. "It was awfully nice of you to ask us over Thurs[day] & I long to come see the apartment which I know is lovely," Lillie wrote Edith in 1924. Although she professed that she was not up to the subway stairs and crowds, she continues, "I would love to be alone in it all one day, & just see the things & pick up the books & glance through them & once in a while lie down quietly" (26 October 1924). Cather and Lewis grappled with the final illnesses and deaths of their parents under uncannily similar circumstances, with Lewis's father starting the intertwined chain of deaths. Henry Lewis went to the Fresno, California, vicinity in 1923 for an extended visit with his daughter Helen, who had just had her second daughter. In 1924 he apparently suffered a stroke, and he died in California in 1926.<sup>22</sup> In the spring of 1928 Willa Cather arrived in Red Cloud just hours after her own father's death from a heart attack. In April she wrote to her brother Roscoe from Red Cloud that "Edith's poor mother is still dying" of the stroke that had caused them to abandon their trip to Italy the year before; "it is surely," she continues, "a long hard way" (12? March 1928). At the time she wrote Roscoe, she did not know that her own mother's stroke while visiting her older brother, Douglass, in California in the fall of 1928 was imminent and that Mary Virginia Cather's way would be even longer and harder than Lillie Gould Lewis's, with her death not coming until 1931.

Even though Cather entwined her life with Lewis's as much as Jewett did with Fields's, in the realm of art Cather made crucially different choices. Responding to Jewett's letter of ad-

vice about leaving *McClure's*, Cather writes, "I have been reading again this evening 'Martha's Lady.' I do think it is almost the saddest and loveliest of stories. It humbles and desolates me every time I read it" (19 December 1908, *Selected Letters* 120). Cather reported that reading this Jewett story, about a serving maid's lifelong love of the "lady" she serves and from whom she is separated for decades after her lady marries, served as a sort of substitute for talking to Jewett face-to-face about her struggles with her career; however, Cather never wrote a story like it. Certainly, her choice not to do so was consequential. Furthermore, Cather and Lewis lived in a different historical era from Fields and Jewett, one in which love between women was labeled as deviant and pathological and in which lesbians could be subjected to discrimination and brutal repression—some of Cather's letters from the 1890s show her struggling to come to terms with this emerging historical reality. Nevertheless, it is a mistake to read, in circular fashion, the absence of literary representations of romantic love between women in Cather's fiction back onto Cather's life as evidence that she was afflicted with shame and lived a secret life in the closet. To understand how she experienced her sexuality in the early twentieth century, we need to read other evidence documenting Cather's life as she lived it from 1908 through 1947, openly in a deep and abiding partnership with Edith Lewis. Recovering their relationship, a seemingly impossible survival of the nineteenth-century institution of Boston marriage into the twentieth century, can enrich and complicate the historiography of lesbian sexuality, as well as suggest new queer approaches to interpreting her fiction.

## NOTES

1. Questions of definitions and labels in relation to sexuality and the consequences of such labels for the interpretation of Jewett's fiction are nearly as contentious as they are in Cather studies. In the late 1970s Josephine Donovan labeled the Jewett-Fields relationship as lesbian and

even suggested that its beginning predated the death of Fields's husband ("Unpublished Love Poems"). Judith Roman first implicitly endorsed this identification of the relationship as "essentially lesbian in nature" ("Closer Look" 119) but later qualified this judgment, suggesting that the label "lesbian" was too fixed or narrow to describe their relationship (*Annie Adams Fields* 109). Rita Gollin resolutely avoids the word "lesbian" in her biography of Fields, except in a footnote in which she excoriates others for suggesting that "lesbian" is an appropriate label for the Fields-Jewett relationship or that it might have included a sexual component (349n11). Jewett biographer Paula Blanchard recognizes that all of Jewett's romantic emotional attachments were to women and yet insists on the asexual, celibate nature of these relationships, including that with Fields. In contrast Sarah Sherman characterizes the relationship as romantic and passionate but still suggests that the "unself-conscious quality" of the relationship makes a sexual component unlikely (74). Glenda Hobbs resolutely confines her reading of "Martha's Lady" to the category of "pure and passionate friendship," while Judith Fetterley claims *Deephaven* as "a lesbian text." Kate McCullough reads the relationship between the narrator and Mrs. Todd in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* as Jewett's "coded representation of a Boston marriage" at the moment of the Boston marriage's decline (16) (in a similar vein, see Rohy on "The Queen's Twin"). McCullough also analyzes at length "the virulent heteronormative tunnel vision" of many interpretations of the Jewett-Fields relationship (24) but nevertheless refuses to label Jewett or the relationship "lesbian" on the grounds that "the identity category it denotes—at once eroticized and pathologized—did not exist" early enough for Jewett to adopt it (285n22). In an analysis incorporating Jewett's advice to Cather, Marjorie Pryse is less resistant to identifying Jewett and her texts as lesbian but nevertheless reads her as resisting the categorizing imperative of modernist sexuality in "Martha's Lady" by emphasizing the intersection of class with sexuality. Despite these disagreements critics do agree that Jewett and Fields's relationship was publicly visible and that neither woman showed any self-consciousness or embarrassment about it, while critics assume the opposite of Cather, that she hid her love for women and felt shame or embarrassment.

2. In revising his essay for book publication, Nealon omitted this claim, writing that he did not "want to read Cather's fiction as merely a symptom of the closet" ("Feeling and Affiliation" 68). I agree with

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Nealon's revision, but he leaves undisturbed the implication that Cather *was* closeted.

3. For other queer readings of Cather in the past two decades see Abraham, Goldberg, Hackett, Haralson, Herring ("Willa Cather's Experiment"), Lindemann, and Rohy. Grouping these readings together, I necessarily flatten out distinctions between critics who sometimes disagree with one another—Goldberg, for example, spends much space criticizing Lindemann. Nevertheless, their projects are recognizably part of a critical genealogy descending from Sedgwick and, to a lesser extent, from Judith Butler, another founding figure of queer theory who published a reading of Cather's fiction. (Anders is a telling exception, taking a gay studies, as opposed to queer theory, approach.) Indeed, Sedgwick's essay made a chapter on Cather nearly an obligatory gesture in a monograph presenting queer readings of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century fiction. These critics also might disagree with my characterization (see below) of their projects as depending on biography (Lindemann's project is the most biographical, as it uses Cather's letters, rather than secondary citations to them in biographies, as a source). Hackett, for example, claims that queer critics "stay clear of biographical readings" of Cather, avoiding the "masquerade model" of earlier lesbian and gay readings of Cather (125, 127). Hackett nevertheless refers to O'Brien's biographical recovery, suggests that "most scholars have [since] taken Cather's lesbianism as a given" (124), and then builds her argument on Judith Butler's claim that "'substitution is a condition for [the] sexuality' figured in Cather's texts" because of "the 'historically specific consequence of a prohibition'" on Cather directly naming lesbian sexuality (127). Such an argument, then, still rests on O'Brien's biographical identification of Cather as a lesbian, or else why would such a "prohibition" on naming lesbianism apply to Cather's literary productions in particular? That is, even though queer readings of texts do not require a biographical identification of the text's author as lesbian or gay, Cather entered this queer canon because of biography.

4. Love focuses on the former in *Feeling Backward* and on the latter in "Gyn/Apolgy."

5. For an interesting interpretation of what Cather gained, rather than lost, by remaining in the magazine world, and, conversely, what Jewett found attractive about Cather's magazine work despite her advice for Cather to leave it, see Garvey. Indeed, the chronology of Cather's cooperation in the publication of Jewett's letters recovered below

suggests that Cather released the letters to Fields simultaneously with her belated decision to take Jewett's advice.

6. If Jewett had kept copies of her outgoing correspondence—drafts, copies, or, if she had typed, carbon copies—Fields would not have needed cooperation from recipients, but there is no evidence Jewett kept copies.

7. See Cather to Louise Imogene Guiney reporting that she had just spent “a whole week with our dear lady on Charles Street” (25 May 1911, *Selected Letters* 137). According to Houghton Mifflin's production records the firm ordered typesetting on 29 March 1911, printing commenced on 6 June 1911, proofs were sent to Fields on 12 July 1911, and publication occurred on 7 October 1911. Although Cather's visit came late in this chronology (between the start of typesetting and the beginning of printing), the three letters to her come at the close of the volume and thus easily could have been added late.

8. On the editing of the letters see Roman (*Annie Adams Fields*) and Frost. Howe's letter to Fields as quoted in a book by his daughter, Helen Howe, is widely cited in scholarship (including Faderman) as evidence of changes in attitudes toward love between women in the early twentieth century. However, it is not at all clear from the portion of the letter quoted that his reservations have to do with sexuality. Furthermore, his daughter's book was published in 1965, and the framing of the incident may have as much to do with mid- as with early twentieth-century attitudes.

9. For documentation of Lewis's career trajectory see Homestead, “Edith Lewis as Editor.”

10. See the Houghton Library finding aid for “Sarah Orne Jewett Additional Correspondence,” MS AM 1743. Thanks to Leslie A. Morris, curator of modern books and manuscripts at the Houghton, for further information on this history. It is not clear how Goodspeed's Books Shop acquired the substantial collection of letters, however.

11. For example, Fields left a note asking Howe to destroy “letters written by Scottish author John Brown” because his “mental powers were failing when he wrote them,” and “numerous” other “unofficial addenda she made on little slips of paper,” to say nothing of instructions to Howe in letters before her death (Roman, *Annie Adams Fields* 47, 164, 165)

12. Judith Roman suggests that Fields and Alcott were tied together by family obligation but “were never friends” (*Annie Adams Fields*

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44)—perhaps the letters Cather helped destroy documented a real friendship.

13. On Cather's visits to and friendship with Mary Jewett see letters from Cather to Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant (23 June 1914, *Selected Letters* 192–93), Elizabeth Moorhead Vermocken, Zoe Akins, and Edward Wagenknecht.

14. In an all-too-characteristic move the Harry Ransom Center, which owns the first three of these inscribed volumes, typed "From the Library of Willa Cather" into the bookplates, even though the volumes come from what is clearly "the Library of Willa Cather and Edith Lewis." The HRC acquired the "library"—including *The Mate of the Daylight*, *The Golden Bowl*, and *Children of the Ghetto*—from Seven Gables Bookshop on Long Island ("Memorandum of Transfer"), which had them on consignment from Lewis's sister, Helen Lewis Morgan, to whom Lewis bequeathed all non-Cather books in her possession (Last Will and Testament). How the Roycrofters Poe volume was separated from this collection is not documented.

15. I rely here on Donovan (*Sarah Orne Jewett*), Blanchard, and Heller.

16. In their letters to one another Fields and Jewett used multiple playful nicknames. Roman speculates that the "T" in "T. L." (one of Fields's signatures) stands for "Tom" and thus gestures explicitly to "Tom's Husband" ("Closer Look" 134n29).

17. This anecdote is often quoted from Matthiessen (72), who mentions Esther Forbes's article as a source in a concluding note but does not provide formal documentation for individual quotations. Mary Jewett is clearly the source of the anecdote, as Houghton Mifflin sent Forbes to Maine to interview her as part of its promotional campaign for the Cather-edited *Best Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett* (see Forbes to Jewett). Apparently, Mary felt no embarrassment in 1925 reporting that her sister desired a female partner rather than heterosexual marriage. See Travis Foster for a subtle analysis of how Matthiessen complexly worked through his ambivalence about his own homosexuality by writing his book about Jewett, in which female homosexuality is public and uncomplicated.

18. My focus here is on the social and familial, but Lewis's work as Cather's editor (see *Homestead*, "Willa Cather") also speaks to the intimacy of their relationship.

19. Lillie Gould Lewis's letters to Edith Lewis (parts of which are discussed below) provide ample evidence contradicting the myth that Edith

was alienated from her family. Indeed, other parts of these letters make clear that the heterosexual marriages of two of her children, Helen and Harold, in the early 1920s to spouses of whom Lillie disapproved caused dissension. Ruth and Edith, however, seem to have maintained good relations with both their mother and their siblings throughout.

20. Precisely which Lewis women visited Grand Manan in 1933 is somewhat conjectural. See Willa Cather's letter to Elsie Cather (discussed below) referring to "Edith Lewis's sister" (which would seem, necessarily, to be Ruth Lewis rather than Helen Lewis Morgan, who seems to have lived in the West in the 1930s); and an envelope dated summer 1933, addressed by Harold Lewis to his daughters Ruth and Helen at an address in Nova Scotia, a destination that might logically be part of a trip to Grand Manan.

21. On the family history connecting Edith Lewis and Mary Lewis, see Homestead and Kaufman. See also Elsie Cather's transcript and Mary Delia Lewis's faculty file—Elsie Cather did not take any courses with Mary Lewis, but Lewis was present and on the faculty during all of the years that Elsie studied at Smith.

22. In late 1924 Henry Lewis wrote several letters to Edith Lewis that are nearly gibberish, suggesting a stroke.

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