

trast, the catamite is commonly perceived as the passive partner of the sodomite or pederast.

See also *Ingle*; *Minions and Favorites*.

### CATHER, WILLA (1873–1947)

American novelist, short story writer, poet, and editor. Cather was born to a cultivated country family in Virginia. When she was nine the family moved to Red Cloud, Nebraska, where the ruggedness of the frontier still persisted. Arriving at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln in 1890 dressed as William Cather, her opposite-sex twin, Willa soon learned to tone down her image. Still she stood out as a brilliant eccentric. A large, ungainly girl, she was too outspoken and socially unsure of herself to adjust comfortably. She also had a habit of developing crushes on women: classmates, faculty wives, and acquaintances. The intensity of her feeling repelled its objects, and Willa would sulk. Nonetheless, her writing skills matured and she joined a Lincoln newspaper as a reviewer. In her art reviews she praised the beauty of female sitters in portraits. Later, her device of male narrators in her novels allowed her to set forth the varied charms of female characters at length.

Cather did not long remain in Nebraska. She got a better job in Pittsburgh, where she met Isabelle McClung, the beautiful sixteen-year-old daughter of a judge. Swept off her feet, Willa committed herself without reservation. In return Isabelle granted affection but not passion. Although Isabelle married in 1916, her close connection with Willa lasted for forty years.

In the meantime Cather had been sending out her short stories to New York magazines, usually with little success. In 1903, however, she met Sam McClure, the aggressive editor of *McClure's Magazine*. Summoning her to New York, he said that he would print anything she cared to sub-

mit. In 1905 he brought out her first volume of short stories, *The Troll Garden*. In turn Cather moved to New York to work for McClure as an editor. She spent six years with him, acquiring a wide variety of writing skills, while her conviction that she should write out of her experience grew. Her new friend, the New England writer Sarah Orne Jewett, urged her to leave the magazine, which she finally did in 1912. Cather settled into a Greenwich Village apartment with her companion Edith Lewis, who was a copyeditor at the magazine. Together they created an orderly life that allowed Cather to produce her masterpieces. One of her greatest pleasures was music, which meant more to her creative life than the conversation of New York intellectuals. As World War I ended, she had already written *O Pioneers!*, *The Song of the Lark*, and her best-known novel, *My Ántonia*. Successful from the first, the books allowed her to travel to the Southwest and to Europe. For forty years Lewis was her indispensable friend, companion, and secretary. To outsiders their relationship was a typical Boston marriage, an arrangement that suited two professional women. It is uncertain whether there was any genital aspect. Cather's heart was still pledged to Isabelle McClung.

Her novels tell little of sex and marriage. *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927) is the story of a French missionary priest in New Mexico, and *My Ántonia* (1918) depicts the world of immigrant settlers in Nebraska's open spaces. In each the beauty and strength of the land is central. Cather is rightly regarded as a quintessentially American writer. But she was sophisticated as well, and her novels bear comparison with the best that England and Europe could offer at the time. She did not choose to become an open lesbian, though it was always women that she loved, their support that made her work possible. Unfortunately, she decided to destroy her letters to Isabelle McClung, but there survives a revealing series to

Louise Pound, a dashing friend from her college days.

Drawing on a personal alchemy, she transmuted her feelings into the strong characters of her novels. As she put it: "Whatever is felt upon the page without being specifically named there—that, one might say, is created. It is the inexplicable presence of the thing not named, of the overtone divined by the ear but not heard by it, the verbal mood, the emotional aura of the fact or the thing or the deed, that gives high quality to the novel or the drama, as well as to poetry itself." Whether intentionally or not, the expression "thing not named" evokes an old tradition of homosexual love as unnameable. But Cather's triumph is that her need to veil her inner emotional life did not condemn her to silence, but inspired her great writing.

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### CATHOLIC CHURCH

See Christianity; Clergy, Gay; Monasticism; Papacy.

### CATULLUS, GAIUS VALERIUS (87-54)

Latin poet. Born at Verona, he spent most of his life in Rome, but kept a villa near his birthplace at Sirmio on Lake Garda. Often considered the best Republican poet, he imitated Sappho as well as other archaic, classical, and Hellenistic models, upon which he often improved, and which he combined with native Latin traditions to create stunning, original pieces. He wrote poems, 250 of which survive, of happiness and bitter disappointment. Some are addressed to his high-born, married, then widowed mistress Clodia, the sister of Cicero's antagonist,

10 years his senior, whom he addressed as Lesbia (though with no insinuation of what we now call lesbianism), and who was unfaithful to him with other men. Homophobic Christian and modern schoolmasters have, however, greatly exaggerated the importance of the poems to Lesbia, which amount to no more than an eighth of the Catullan corpus.

Besides a wide variety of other verses, in some of which he criticized Caesar and Pompey, many of Catullus' poems were pederastic, addressed to his apparently aristocratic beloved Juventius. He was unusual among Romans in preferring an aristocratic boy to a slave but made clear that most others preferred *concupini*, that is, male slaves with whom they slept. Sophisticated and fastidious, he set the standard for the Augustan poets of love Ovid, Horace, Vergil, and Propertius. In the Silver Age even Martial acknowledged his debt to Catullus' epigrams. Like those poets, and most specifically Tibullus, he showed little inhibition and equal attraction to boys and women, but also shared the traditional attitude that the active, full-grown male partner degraded the passive one, and that the threat to penetrate another male symbolized one's superior virility and power. On the other hand, the accusation of having been raped by another male has a largely negative force; Catullus poses as victim in order to insult the excessively Priapic male.

In Latin erotic poetry, as in its Greek sources after the fifth century, the boys have no family, no career, and no identity other than as athletes and slaves, with the sole exception of Juventius. Like most of the Hellenistic poets, their Roman imitators often sang of boys who demanded gifts or were even outright prostitutes. The older, still beardless boy was considered superior to younger ones, so that eighteen was preferred to thirteen. Even in his wildest flights of imagination or rancor no Latin or Greek poet ever advised his listener to enjoy another adult male sexually. So Catullus' homoerotic poetry is