Book Club Questions for The Cutter’s Wife

1. How does grief shape Ella’s decisions after Connor dies?
2. Inez starts working in a male-dominated profession without benefit of a mentor or guidance from her father. What has changed, if anything, in nearly 100 years for women in male-dominated careers?
3. The Comstock Act passed in the US, made it illegal to provide advertising, information or distribution of birth control. The novel takes place a year before Margaret Sanger opens up her first birth control clinic so women have limited ways to control pregnancy and the women and children are portrayed bearing the burdens of poverty. We learn Ella’s mother provided herbal abortions. How do these factors influence Ella’s life circumstances, her business and philosophy?
4. The book features several women-owned businesses (Ella’s baby placement, Martine’s Millinery and illegal absinthe ring, and even Lettie fences stolen goods and writes correspondences for the men at Bucket of Blood). In that era, was it better to try to run a struggling business or should they have gone to work in a factory job?
5. Lettie, Martine, and Ella, to some extent, are all criminals. What is the line between right and wrong and the law when it comes to self-preservation?
6. What was the attraction of Richard Gale to Ella?
7. If Ella and Connor had a child together, how might have things turned out differently?
8. Discuss how the various female relationships, those that are both positive and negative.

Ella and Beata, Lettie and Ella, Ella and Martine, Inez and Louise, Inez and Ella. How do they change over the course of the novel?

1. How are the men portrayed in the novel? Connor? Richard Gale? David Gabrielli?
2. Reader predictions: Will Inez have a successful marriage to David?
3. Cast the movie. What actors will play Ella, Beata, Connor, Lettie, Inez and David?