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978-1-107-04036-6 - The Cambridge Companion to Modern American Poetry
Edited by Walter Kalaidjian
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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
MODERN AMERICAN POETRY

The Cambridge Companion to Modern American Poetry comprises original essays by nineteen distinguished scholars. It offers a critical overview of major and emerging American poets of the twentieth century in addition to critical accounts of the representative schools, movements, regional settings, archival resources, and critical reception that define modern American poetry. The *Companion* stretches the narrow term of “literary modernism,” which encompasses works published from approximately 1890 to 1945, to include a more capacious and usable account of American poetry’s evolution from the twentieth century to the present. The essays collected here seek to account for modern American verse against the contexts of broad political, social, and cultural fields and forces. This volume gathers together major voices that represent the best in contemporary critical approaches and methods.

Walter Kalaidjian is professor and chair of the department of English at Emory University. He is the author of *The Edge of Modernism: American Poetry and the Traumatic Past* and editor of *The Cambridge Companion to American Modernism*.

A complete list of books in the series is at the back of this book.

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WALTER KALAJDZIAN

Emory University



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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

BARTHOLOMEW BRINKMAN is Assistant Professor of English at Framingham State University, where he specializes in modern American poetry, print culture, cultural studies, and digital humanities. He is currently completing a book project on poetic modernism in the culture of mass print and coedits with Cary Nelson the Modern American Poetry Site.

EDWARD BRUNNER is Professor of English at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. His most recent study is *Cold War Poetry* (2001). He teaches courses in modern poetry, popular culture, and graphic novels.

STEPHEN BURT is Professor of English at Harvard and the author of several books of criticism and poetry, among them *The Forms of Youth: Twentieth-Century Poetry and Adolescence* (2013) and, with David Mikics, *The Art of the Sonnet* (2011).

MARIA DAMON is Professor and Chair of the Department of Humanities and Media Studies at the Pratt Institute of Art. She is the author of *The Dark End of the Street: Margins in American Vanguard Poetry* (1993) and *Postliterary America: From Bagel Shop Jazz to Micropoetries* (2011) and the coeditor, with Ira Livingston, of *Poetry and Cultural Studies: A Reader* (2009).

ANNE DAY DEWEY teaches American literature at Saint Louis University's Madrid campus. Her work on twentieth-century poetry includes *Beyond Maximus: The Construction of Public Voice in Black Mountain Poetry* (2007); *The Collected Poems of Denise Levertov*, coedited with Paul Lacey (2013); and *Among Friends: Engendering the Social Site of Poetry* (2013), essays on friendship, gender, and poetry coedited with Libbie Rifkin.

RACHEL BLAU DUPLESSIS is the author of the long poem *Drafts*, spanning 1986 to 2012 (2013). She has written six critical books (from Cambridge, Iowa, and Alabama University Presses), coedited several anthologies, and published numerous articles on gender and poetics. DuPlessis edited *The Selected Letters of George*

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Oppen (1990), coedited *The Objectivist Nexus* (1999), and has written extensively on objectivist poets. She is Professor Emerita at Temple University.

ALAN GOLDING teaches poetry and poetics at the University of Louisville. He is the author of *From Outlaw to Classic: Canons in American Poetry* (1995) and of numerous essays on modernist and contemporary poetry. His current projects include *Writing the New into History: Poetic Form and Social Formations in American Poetry*, under contract with the University of Alabama Press, and “*Isn’t the Avant-Garde Always Pedagogical*,” a book on experimental poetics and / as pedagogy.

KAPLAN HARRIS is Associate Professor of English at St. Bonaventure University. His recent work can be found in *American Literature*, *Contemporary Literature*, *Paideuma*, *Postmodern Culture*, *Sagetrieb*, and *Poetry* magazine, and he is finishing a book on poetry and activism in the wake of the New Left. He edited, with Rod Smith and Peter Baker, *The Selected Letters of Robert Creeley* (2014).

YUNTE HUANG is Professor of English at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He is the author of *Transpacific Displacement* (2003), *Transpacific Imaginations* (2008), and others. His most recent book, *Charlie Chan: The Untold Story of the Honorable Detective and His Rendezvous with American History* (2010), won the Edgar Award and was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award.

WALTER KALAJDZIAN is Professor and Chair of the English department of Emory University. He is the author of *Languages of Liberation: The Social Text in Contemporary American Poetry* (1989), *American Culture Between the Wars: Revisionary Modernism and Postmodern Critique* (1993), and *The Edge of Modernism: American Poetry and the Traumatic Past* (2005). In addition, he is the editor of *The Cambridge Companion to American Modernism* (2005).

EVAN KINDLEY is Visiting Assistant Professor at Claremont McKenna College. He is currently at work on a book manuscript entitled *Critics and Connoisseurs: Poet-Critics and the Administration of Modernism* and a critical biography of Hugh Kenner.

JANET MCADAMS won the American Book Award for her first poetry collection, *The Island of Lost Luggage* (2000). She is the author of a second collection, *Feral* (2007), and a novel, *Red Weather* (2012). She teaches at Kenyon College and, in 2005, founded the award-winning Earthworks Indigenous Poetry Series for Salt Publishing, UK.

CARY NELSON is Jubilee Professor of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and formerly served as president of the American Association of University Professors. His many authored and edited books

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include *Repression and Recovery: Modern American Poetry and the Politics of Cultural Memory, 1910–1945* (1989); *Manifesto of a Tenured Radical* (1997); *Revolutionary Memory: Recovering the Poetry of the American Left* (2001); and *No University Is an Island: Saving Academic Freedom* (2010).

JOHN TIMBERMAN NEWCOMB is Professor of English at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He has published three books on American poetry: *Wallace Stevens and Literary Canons* (1992), *Would Poetry Disappear? American Verse and the Crisis of Modernity* (2004), and *How Did Poetry Survive? The Making of Modern American Verse* (2012).

KIERAN QUINLAN is Professor of English at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. His books to date are *John Crowe Ransom's Secular Faith* (1989); *Walker Percy, the Last Catholic Novelist* (1996, 1998); and *Strange Kin: Ireland and the American South* (2005). He has just completed a study of Seamus Heaney and the decline of Irish Catholicism.

EVIE SHOCKLEY is Associate Professor of English at Rutgers University. She is the author of *Renegade Poetics: Black Aesthetics and Formal Innovation in African American Poetry* (2011), a critical study, as well as two books of poetry: *the new black* (2012), winner of the 2012 Hurston/Wright Legacy Award in Poetry, and *a half-red sea* (2006).

JAMES SMETHURST teaches Afro-American studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He is the author of *The New Red Negro: The Literary Left and African American Poetry, 1930–1946* (1999); *The Black Arts Movement: Literary Nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s* (2005); and *The African American Roots of Modernism* (2011). He coedited *Left of the Color Line* (2003), *Radicalism in the South since Reconstruction* (2010), and *SOS – Calling All Black People: A Black Arts Reader* (2014).

MICHAEL THURSTON is Professor of English and Director of the American Studies Program at Smith College. He teaches courses on twentieth-century poetry in English, modernism, American literature, and American studies and has published numerous essays and reviews and three books: *Making Something Happen: American Political Poetry between the World Wars* (2001), *The Underworld in Twentieth-Century Poetry: From Pound and Eliot to Heaney and Walcott* (2009), and *Reading Postwar British and Irish Poetry* (with Nigel Alderman) (2014).

ALAN WALD is the H. Chandler Davis Professor of English Literature and American Culture at the University of Michigan. He is the author of a trilogy from the University of North Carolina Press on the U.S. literary left in the mid-twentieth century: *Exiles from a Future Time* (2002), *Trinity of Passion* (2007), and *American Night* (2012).

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BARRETT WATTEN is Professor of English at Wayne State University and the author of *Frame: 1971–1990* (1997), *Bad History* (1998), and *Progress/Under Erasure* (2004). He edited the avant-garde journal *This* (1971–82) and co-edited *Poetics Journal* with Lyn Hejinian. His critical writing includes *Total Syntax* (1984); *The Constructivist Moment: From Material Text to Cultural Poetics* (2003), winner of the René Wellek Prize in 2004; and, forthcoming, *Questions of Poetics: Language Writing and Material Practice*.

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CHRONOLOGY

- 1909 Ezra Pound, *Personae*
- 1912 *Poetry* magazine founded
- 1913 The International Exhibition of Modern Art (The Armory Show)
- 1914 Ezra Pound, ed., *Des Imagistes*
Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons*
The Little Review founded
Outbreak of First World War
- 1915 Amy Lowell, ed. *Some Imagist Poets*
Others: A Magazine of the New Verse founded
Mina Loy, "Love Songs"
- 1916 H. D., *Sea Garden*
- 1917 T. S. Eliot, *Prufrock and Other Observations*
Mina Loy, "Songs to Joannes"
United States enters the First World War
Revolutions in Russia
Pulitzer Prize established
- 1918 Tristan Tzara, *Dada Manifesto*
End of First World War
- 1919 T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent"
Treaty of Versailles
League of Nations founded
Prohibition Act passed by the U.S. Congress
- 1920 T. S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood*
Ezra Pound, *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*

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- William Carlos Williams, *Kora in Hell: Improvisations*
The Dial reestablished as a literary magazine
 Nineteenth Amendment establishes women's suffrage in the United States
- 1921 *New York Dada* magazine founded
- 1922 T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* published in *The Criterion*, founded that year
 Claude McKay, *Harlem Shadows*
 James Weldon Johnson, ed., *The Book of American Negro Poetry*
- 1923 Mina Loy, *Lunar Baedeker*
 Wallace Stevens, *Harmonium*
 Jean Toomer, *Cane*
 William Carlos Williams, *Spring and All*
- 1924 Marianne Moore, *Observations*
 André Breton, *Manifesto of Surrealism*
- 1925 Alain Locke, ed., *The New Negro*
 Ezra Pound, *A Draft of XVI Cantos*
 Scopes trial
- 1926 Langston Hughes, *The Weary Blues*
Fire!! magazine founded
- 1928 Experimental television broadcasts begin in the United States
- 1929 Collapse of the New York stock market
 The Museum of Modern Art opens in New York City
- 1930 Hart Crane, *The Bridge*
 T. S. Eliot, *Ash Wednesday*
 William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*
 Ezra Pound, *A Draft of XXX Cantos*
- 1931 E. E. Cummings, *Viva*
Poetry magazine publishes issue on "Objectivist" verse, edited by Louis Zukofsky
- 1932 Sterling A. Brown, *Southern Road*
 T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays*
 Louis Zukofsky, ed., *An "Objectivist's" Anthology*

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- 1933 Adolf Hitler elected Chancellor of Germany
 Prohibition repealed in the United States
- 1934 George Oppen, *Of Being Numerous*
- 1935 Marianne Moore, *Selected Poems*
 Wallace Stevens, *Ideas of Order*
- 1936 The Spanish Civil War begins
- 1937 Wallace Stevens, *The Man with the Blue Guitar*
- 1938 Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, *Understanding Poetry*
 Ezra Pound, *Guide to Kulchur*
 Muriel Rukeyser, *The Book of the Dead*
- 1939 Second World War begins
- 1940 *View* magazine founded by Charles Henri Ford in New York City
- 1941 John Crowe Ransom, *The New Criticism*
 The United States enters the Second World War after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor
 First commercial television broadcast in the United States
- 1942 Wallace Stevens, *Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction*
- 1944 H. D., *The Walls Do Not Fall*
 T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*
- 1945 Gwendolyn Brooks, *A Street in Bronzeville*
 H. D., *Tribute to the Angels*
 Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; end of Second World War
 Formation of United Nations
 The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) becomes a permanent standing committee of the U.S. House of Representatives.
- 1946 Elizabeth Bishop, *North & South*
 H. D., *Flowering of the Rod*
 Lorine Niedecker, *New Goose*
 William Carlos Williams, *Paterson*, Book I (Books II–V published 1948, 1949, 1951, 1958)

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- W. H. Auden becomes a naturalized citizen of the United States
Ezra Pound declared insane and committed to St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, DC
- 1947 Robert Lowell, *Lord Weary's Castle*
HUAC holds special hearings into alleged communist influence in Hollywood and the entertainment industry, leading to the blacklisting of hundreds of artists by the Hollywood studios
- 1948 W. H. Auden, *The Age of Anxiety*
Ezra Pound, *The Pisan Cantos*
- 1949 Gwendolyn Brooks, *Annie Allen*
Charles Olson, "The Kingfishers"
- 1950 E. E. Cummings, *XAIPE: 71 Poems*
Charles Olson, "Projective Verse"
Wallace Stevens, *The Auroras of Autumn*
Korean War begins
In a speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, Senator Joseph McCarthy gains national prominence by claiming to have a list of the names of known communists working in the State Department
- 1951 Langston Hughes, *Montage of a Dream Deferred*
Marianne Moore, *Collected Poems*
Origin magazine founded
Charles Olson appointed rector of Black Mountain College
- 1952 Robert Creeley, *Le Fou*
Archibald MacLeish, *Collected Poems, 1917–1952*
W. S. Merwin, *A Mask for Janus*
- 1953 John Ashbery, *Turandot and Other Poems*
Kenneth Koch, *Poems*
Charles Olson, *In Cold Hell, In Thicket*
Theodore Roethke, *The Waking*
Melvin Tolson, *Libretto for the Republic of Liberia*
City Lights Bookstore founded in San Francisco
Korean War ends
- 1954 Anthony Hecht, *A Summoning of Stones*
Black Mountain Review founded

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- The U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* declares unconstitutional the racial segregation of public schools
- 1955 W. H. Auden, *The Shield of Achilles*
 Lawrence Ferlinghetti, *Pictures of the Gone World*
 Adrienne Rich, *The Diamond Cutters*
 The Six Gallery reading in San Francisco
- 1956 John Ashbery, *Some Trees*
 John Berryman, *Homage to Miss Bradstreet*
 Allen Ginsberg, *Howl and Other Poems*
 Denise Levertov, *Here and Now*
 Richard Wilbur, *Things of This World*
 Black Mountain College closes its doors
- 1957 Donald Hall, Robert Pack, and Louis Simpson, eds., *New Poets of England and America*
 Frank O'Hara, *Meditations in an Emergency*
 Wallace Stevens, *Opus Posthumous*
- 1958 Gregory Corso, *Bomb and Gasoline*
 Lawrence Ferlinghetti, *A Coney Island of the Mind*
Yugen magazine founded
- 1959 Ted Joans, *Funky Jazz Poems*
 Robert Lowell, *Life Studies*
 W. D. Snodgrass, *Heart's Needle*
 Gary Snyder, *Riptrap and Cold Mountain Poems*
 Louis Zukofsky, "A," 1-12
- 1960 Donald Allen, ed., *The New American Poetry 1945-1965*
 Robert Duncan, *The Opening of the Field*
 Charles Olson, *The Maximus Poems*
 Anne Sexton, *To Bedlam and Part Way Back*
 Gwendolyn Brooks, *The Bean Eaters*
- 1961 LeRoi Jones, *Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note*
The Floating Bear newsletter founded
- 1962 John Ashbery, *The Tennis Court Oath*
 Cid Corman, *Sun Rock Man*
 Robert Creeley, *For Love: Poems 1950-1960*
 Barbara Guest, *Poems: The Locations of Things, Archaics, The Open Skies*

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- Denise Levertov, *The Jacob's Ladder*
 William Carlos Williams, *Pictures from Brueghel and Other Poems*
 Second Vatican Council
- 1963 James Wright, *The Branch Will Not Break*
 The March on Washington; Martin Luther King, Jr., delivers his "I Have a Dream Speech" on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial
 President John F. Kennedy assassinated in Dallas, Texas
- 1964 Ted Berrigan, *The Sonnets*
 John Berryman, *77 Dream Songs*
 Robert Lowell, *For the Union Dead*
 Frank O'Hara, *Lunch Poems*
 Jack Spicer, *Language*
- 1965 A. R. Ammons, *Corson's Inlet and Tape for the Turn of the New Year*
 Charles Olson, *Proprioception*
 Sylvia Plath, *Ariel*
 Melvin Tolson, *Harlem Gallery*
 First U.S. combat troops arrive in Vietnam
- 1966 Amiri Baraka, *Black Art*
 James Merrill, *Nights and Days*
 Diane di Prima, *Poems for Freddie*
 Anne Sexton, *Live or Die*
- 1967 Robert Bly, *The Light Around the Body*
 Robert Creeley, *Words*
 Nikki Giovanni, *Black Feeling, Black Talk*
 Anthony Hecht, *The Hard Hours*
 Lenore Kandel, *Word Alchemy*
 W. S. Merwin, *The Lice*
 James Wright, *Shall We Gather at the River*
- 1968 Amiri Baraka and Larry Neal, eds., *Black Fire*
 Ed Dorn, *Gunslinger*
 Robert Duncan, *Bending the Bow*
 Audre Lorde, *The First Cities*
 Lorine Niedecker, *North Central*
 George Oppen, *Of Being Numerous*
 Mark Strand, *Reasons for Moving*

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- Martin Luther King, Jr., assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee
 Senator Robert F. Kennedy assassinated in Los Angeles, California
- 1969 John Berryman, *The Dream Songs*
 James Schuyler, *Freely Espousing*
 The Stone Wall Riots take place in New York City, launching the gay liberation movement in the United States
 NASA lands the first manned spacecraft on the moon
- 1970 Amiri Baraka, *It's Nation Time*
 Clark Coolidge, *Space*
 Audre Lorde, *Cables to Rage*
 Sonia Sanchez, *We a BaddDDD People*
 Tottel's newsletter founded
- 1971 Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era*
 Galway Kinnell, *The Book of Nightmares*
 W. S. Merwin, *The Carrier of Ladders*
This journal founded
- 1972 H. D., *Hermetic Definition*
 Allen Ginsberg, *The Fall of America: Poems of These States, 1965-1971*
- 1973 Frank Bidart, *Golden State*
 Robert Lowell, *The Dolphin*
 Muriel Rukeyser, *Breaking Open*
 Last U.S. combat troops withdraw from Vietnam
- 1974 A. R. Ammons, *Sphere: The Form of a Motion*
 Leslie Marmon Silko, *Laguna Woman*
 Gary Snyder, *Turtle Island*
 President Richard Nixon resigns following the Watergate scandal
- 1975 John Ashbery, *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*
 Denise Levertov, *Freeing the Dust*
 Kenneth Koch, *The Art of Love*
 Anne Waldman, *Fast Speaking Woman*
- 1976 James Merrill, *Divine Comedies*
- 1977 John Ashbery, *Houseboat Days*
 Jayne Cortez, *Mouth on Paper*

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- Apple Computers launches the Apple II, one of the first generation of mass-market personal computers
- 1978 Rae Armantrout, *Extremities*
Robert Grenier, *Sentences*
Lyn Hejinian, *Writing Is an Aid to Memory*
Audre Lorde, *The Black Unicorn*
Adrienne Rich, *The Dream of a Common Language*
L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E magazine founded
- 1979 Robert Hass, *Praise*
Steve McCafferey and bpNichol, *Sound Poetry: A Catalogue*
- 1980 James Schuyler, *The Morning of the Poem*
Louise Glück, *Descending Figure*
Lyn Hejinian, *My Life*
Sharon Olds, *Satan Says*
- 1981 Charles Bernstein, *Disfrutes*
Carolyn Forché, *The Country Between Us*
Sylvia Plath, *The Collected Poems*
Ron Silliman, *Tjanting*
- 1982 Jayne Cortez, *Firespitter*
Larry Eigner, *Water/Places/a Time*
Bernadette Mayer, *Midwinter Day*
James Merrill, *The Changing Light at Sandover*
Charles Wright, *The Southern Cross*
- 1983 Charles Bernstein, *Islets/Irritations*
Frank Bidart, *The Sacrifice*
Elizabeth Bishop, *Collected Poems 1927–1979*
Joy Harjo, *She Had Some Horses*
Mary Oliver, *American Primitive*
Gary Snyder, *Axe Handles*
- 1984 Bruce Andrews and Charles Bernstein, eds., *The L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Book*
John Ashbery, *A Wave*
Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge, *The Heat Bird*
Robert Duncan, *Ground Work: Before the War*
Yusef Komunyakaa, *Copacetic*
- 1985 Amy Clampitt, *What the Light Was Like*
Susan Howe, *My Emily Dickinson*

CHRONOLOGY

- Sonia Sanchez, *Home Girls and Handgrenades*
 Gjertrud Schnackenberg, *The Lamplit Answer*
- 1986 Philip Dacey and David Jauss, eds., *Strong Measures: Contemporary American Poetry in Traditional Forms*
 Rita Dove, *Thomas and Beulah*
- 1987 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*
 Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Tabula Rosa*
 Robert Duncan, *Ground Work II: In the Dark*
 Jorie Graham, *The End of Beauty*
 Ron Silliman, *The New Sentence*
- 1988 Ted Berrigan, *A Certain Slant of Sunlight*
 Michael Palmer, *Sun*
 Leslie Scalapino, *way*
- 1989 Ed Dorn, *Abhorrences*
 Robert Hass, *Human Wishes*
 Bernadette Mayer, *Sonnets*
 Fall of the Berlin Wall
- 1990 Frank Bidart, *In the Western Night: Collected Poems*
 Joy Harjo, *In Mad Love and War*
 Derek Walcott, *Omeros*
- 1991 John Ashbery, *Flow Chart*
 Billy Collins, *Questions About Angels*
 Adrienne Rich, *An Atlas of the Difficult World*
 Collapse of the USSR
 The Persian Gulf War
 The World Wide Web becomes publicly accessible
- 1992 Sherman Alexie, *The Business of Fancydancing*
 Charles Bernstein, *A Poetics*
 Louise Glück, *The Wild Iris*
 Thom Gunn, *The Man with the Night Sweats*
 Lyn Hejinian, *The Cell*
- 1994 Charles Bernstein, *Content's Dream*
- 1996 Mark Jarman and David Mason, eds., *Rebel Angels: 25 Poets of the New Formalism*
 Susan Howe, *Frame Structures*

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Frontmatter
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CHRONOLOGY

- | | |
|------|--|
| 1998 | Kevin Young, <i>Most Way Home</i> |
| 2001 | September 11th attacks on the United States; the United States invades Afghanistan |
| 2002 | Lyn Hejinian, <i>The Language of Inquiry</i> |
| 2003 | The Iraq War begins |
| 2007 | Natasha Trethewey, <i>Native Guard</i> |