THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO POSTMODERN AMERICAN FICTION

Few previous periods in the history of American literature could rival the richness of the postmodern era – the diversity of its authors, the complexity of its ideas and visions, and the multiplicity of its subjects and forms. This volume offers an authoritative, comprehensive, and accessible guide to the American fiction of this remarkable period. It traces the development of postmodern American fiction over the past half century and explores its key aesthetic, cultural, and political contexts. It examines its principal styles and genres, from the early experiments with metafiction to the most recent developments, such as the graphic novel and digital fiction, and offers concise, compelling readings of many of its major works. An indispensable resource for students, scholars, and the general reader, the Companion both highlights the extraordinary achievements of postmodern American fiction and provides illuminating critical frameworks for understanding it.

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CHRONOLOGY

1960
John F. Kennedy elected president
Black students hold sit-in at Woolworth lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina
Birth control pill becomes available for use as a contraceptive
Laser invented
John Barth, *The Sot-Weed Factor*

1961
Construction of the Berlin Wall
Freedom Rides organized by CORE
Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin first man in space
William S. Burroughs, *The Soft Machine*
Joseph Heller, *Catch-22*

1962
Cuban Missile Crisis
Telstar, the first telecommunications satellite
John Glenn first American astronaut to orbit the Earth
James Baldwin, *Another Country*
Jorge Luis Borges, *Ficciones* (English translation)
William S. Burroughs, *The Ticket That Exploded*
Philip K. Dick, *The Man in the High Castle*
Ken Kesey, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*
Vladimir Nabokov, *Pale Fire*

1963
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech
President John F. Kennedy assassinated
Lyndon B. Johnson becomes president
James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*
Thomas Pynchon, *V.*
Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*
chronology

1964
Lyndon B. Johnson elected president
Civil Rights Act
President Johnson declares War on Poverty
Donald Barthelme, *Come Back, Dr. Caligari*
William S. Burroughs, *Nova Express*
Hubert Selby Jr., *Last Exit to Brooklyn*
Susan Sontag, “Against Interpretation”

1965
Malcolm X assassinated
Civil Rights March from Selma to Montgomery led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood*

1966
China’s Cultural Revolution begins
Black Panthers founded by Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton
National Organization of Women (NOW) founded
Julio Cortázar, *Hopscotch* (English translation)
William H. Gass, *Omensetter’s Luck*
Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*
Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*
Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*

1967
Six-Day War
Summer of Love
Donald Barthelme, *Snow White*
Richard Brautigan, *Trout Fishing in America*
Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*
Susan Sontag, *Death Kit*
John Barth, “The Literature of Exhaustion”
Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author”

1968
Richard Nixon elected president
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Senator Robert Kennedy assassinated
Prague Spring
May 1968 protests in France
John Barth, *Lost in the Funhouse*
Donald Barthelme, *Unspeakable Practices, Unnatural Acts*
Richard Brautigan, *In Watermelon Sugar*
Robert Coover, *The Universal Baseball Association*
**Chronology**

William H. Gass, *In the Heart of the Heart of the Country*
William H. Gass, *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife*
Michael Herr, *Dispatches*
Norman Mailer, *The Armies of the Night*
Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*

1969

United States lands men on the moon
Creation of the ARPANET, forerunner of the Internet
Robert Coover, *Pricksongs and Descants: Fictions*
Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*
Ishmael Reed, *Yellow Back Radio Broke-Down*
Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five*

1970

United States invades Cambodia
Kent State Massacre of antiwar protesters
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) founded
Donald Barthelme, *City Life*
Joan Didion, *Play It As It Lays*
Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*

1971

Pentagon Papers scandal
Invention of the microchip
E. L. Doctorow, *The Book of Daniel*
John Gardner, *Grendel*
Hunter S. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*

1972

Richard Nixon re-elected president
Nixon goes to China
Equal Rights Amendment approved by Congress
John Barth, *Chimera*
John Gardner, *The Sunlight Dialogues*
Ishmael Reed, *Mumbo Jumbo*
Gene Wolfe, *The Fifth Head of Cerberus*

1973

Skylab launched
*Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision
Kathy Acker, *The Childlike Life of the Black Tarantula by the Black Tarantula*
Toni Morrison, *Sula*
Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow*
Kurt Vonnegut, *Breakfast of Champions*

1974

Richard Nixon resigns; Gerald Ford becomes president
**CHRONOLOGY**

1975  
Vietnam War ends  
Bill Gates and Paul Allen found Microsoft  
Samuel R. Delany, *Dhalgren*  
E. L. Doctorow, *Ragtime*  
William Gaddis, *JR*  
Gayl Jones, *Corregidora*  
Joanna Russ, *The Female Man*

1976  
Jimmy Carter elected president  
Mao Zedong dies; China’s Cultural Revolution ends  
Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak found Apple  
Maxine Hong Kingston, *Woman Warrior*  
Marge Piercy, *Woman on the Edge of Time*  
Manuel Puig, *Kiss of the Spider Woman*  
Ishmael Reed, *Flight to Canada*  
Tom Robbins, *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*

1977  
Voyager spacecraft launched  
Robert Coover, *The Public Burning*  
Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon*  
Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*

1978  
First test-tube baby born  
Israel and Egypt sign Camp David Peace Accords  
Gerald Vizenor, *Darkness in Saint Louis Bearheart*

1979  
Margaret Thatcher becomes prime minister of the United Kingdom  
Three Mile Island nuclear plant accident  
John Barth, *LETTERS*  
Norman Mailer, *The Executioner’s Song*  
V. S. Naipaul, *A Bend in the River*  
Philip Roth, *The Ghost Writer*  
Gilbert Sorrentino, *Mulligan Stew*  
Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*

1980  
Ronald Reagan elected president  
Toni Cade Bambara, *The Salt Eaters*  
Maxine Hong Kingston, *China Men*  
Marilynne Robinson, *Housekeeping*  
Adrienne Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence”
**Chronology**

1981
First Space Shuttle flight
IBM introduces personal computer
President of Egypt Anwar Sadat assassinated
Sandra Day O’Connor becomes first woman Supreme Court justice
Donald Barthelme, *Sixty Stories*
Philip K. Dick, *VALIS*
Salman Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*
Alexander Theroux, *D’Arconville’s Cat*
Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*

1982
Kathy Acker, *Great Expectations*
Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictee*
Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*
Ntozake Shange, *Sassafrass, Cypress & Indigo*
Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*

1983
Thomas Bernhard, *The Loser*
Samuel R. Delany, *Return to Neveryón*
Katherine Dunn, *Geek Love*
Wendy Law-Yone, *The Coffin Tree*
Paule Marshall, *Praisesong for the Widow*
Steve Meretzky, *Planetfall*
Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*

1984
HIV identified as the cause of AIDS
Ronald Reagan re-elected president
Octavia Butler, *Dawn* (Part 1 of the *Xenogenesis* trilogy)
Joan Didion, *Democracy*
Louise Erdrich, *Love Medicine*
William Gibson, *Neuromancer*

1985
Mikhail Gorbachev becomes premier of the Soviet Union
DNA fingerprinting
Paul Auster, *City of Glass*
Don DeLillo, *White Noise*
Gloria Naylor, *Linden Hills*
Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto”

1986
US Space Shuttle *Challenger* explodes
Nuclear reactor accident at Chernobyl
Iran–Contra scandal
Kathy Acker, *Don Quixote, which was a dream*
Art Spiegelman, *Maus*
CHRONOLOGY

1987
Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev sign Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
US stock market crash
Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*
Jay Cantor, *Krazy Kat*
Robert Coover, *A Night at the Movies, or, You Must Remember This*
Michael Joyce, *afternoon, a story* (hypertext)
Maxine Hong Kingston, *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book*
Toni Morrison, *Beloved*
Cynthia Ozick, *The Messiah of Stockholm*
William T. Vollmann, *You Bright and Risen Angels*
David Foster Wallace, *The Broom of the System*
Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*

1988
George H. W. Bush elected president
Perestroika begins
Harvard patents genetically altered mouse
Kathy Acker, *In the Realm of the Senseless*
Octavia Butler, *Adulthood Rites* (Part 2 of the *Xenogenesis* trilogy)
Don DeLillo, *Libra*
Gloria Naylor, *Mama Day*
Cynthia Ozick, *The Shawl*
Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*

1989
Berlin Wall falls; collapse of Soviet bloc in Europe
Tiananmen Square Massacre
US government bails out savings-and-loan banks
Octavia Butler, *Imago* (Part 3 of the *Xenogenesis* trilogy)
Rikki Ducornet, *Fountains of Neptune*
Oscar Hijuelos, *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love*
Bharati Mukherjee, *Jasmine*
William T. Vollmann, *The Rainbow Stories*

1990
Reunification of West and East Germany
Creation of the World Wide Web
Hubble Space Telescope launched
Iraq invades Kuwait; Gulf War begins
Lynda Barry, *Come Over, Come Over*
Jessica Hagedorn, *Dogeaters*
Charles Johnson, *Middle Passage*
Valerie Martin, *Mary Reilly*
Tim O’Brien, *The Things They Carried*
Thomas Pynchon, *Vineland*
Kim Stanley Robinson, *A Short, Sharp Shock*
Karen Tei Yamashita, *Through the Arc of the Rainforest*
Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*

1991
Dissolution of the Soviet Union
Gulf War ends
Julia Alvarez, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*
Sandra Cisneros, *Woman Hollering Creek*
Douglas Coupland, *Generation X*
Bret Easton Ellis, *American Psycho*
Stuart Moulthrop, *Victory Garden*
Leslie Marmon Silko, *Almanac of the Dead*
Jane Smiley, *A Thousand Acres*
Art Spiegelman, *Maus II*
Gerald Vizenor, *Feral Lasers*
Gerald Vizenor, *Landfill Meditations: Crossblood Stories*
Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*
Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*

1992
Maastricht Treaty creates the European Union
Bill Clinton elected president
Bosnian Wars begin
Cristina García, *Dreaming in Cuban*
Neal Stephenson, *Snow Crash*
Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*

1993
Oslo Accords signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)
Ana Castillo, *So Far from God*
Philip Roth, *Operation Shylock*
Tei Yamashita, *Brazil-Maru*

1994
South Africa ends apartheid; Nelson Mandela elected president
North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) goes into effect
Netscape introduced
chronology

Edwidge Danticat, Breath, Eyes, Memory
Gerald Vizenor, Manifest Manners
George Landow, Hyper/Text/Theory

1995
World Trade Organization (WTO) established
Oklahoma City bombing
Dayton Accords end Bosnian War
Marie Cardinal, The Words to Say It
Rikki Ducornet, Phosphor in Dreamland
William H. Gass, The Tunnel
Shelley Jackson, Patchwork Girl
Chang-Rae Lee, Native Speaker
Richard Powers, Galatea 2.2

1996
Bill Clinton re-elected president
Dolly the sheep cloned
Margaret Atwood, Alias Grace
Percival Everett, Watershed
David Foster Wallace, Infinite Jest

1997
Don DeLillo, Underworld
Nora Okja Keller, Comfort Woman
Toni Morrison, Paradise
Thomas Pynchon, Mason & Dixon
Philip Roth, American Pastoral
Gerald Vizenor, Hotline Healers

1998
International Space Station launched
Google founded
Adam Cadre, Photopia
Michael Cunningham, The Hours

1999
Rikki Ducornet, The Fan-Maker’s Inquisition
Viktor Pelevin, Generation P
Colson Whitehead, The Intuitionist

2000
George W. Bush elected president
Vladimir Putin elected president of Russia
Michael Chabon, The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay
Mark Z. Danielewski, House of Leaves
Mario Vargas Llosa, The Feast of the Goat
Nick Montfort, Ad Verbum
Judd Morrissey, The Jew’s Daughter

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CHRONOLOGY

Philip Roth, *The Human Stain*
Emily Short, *Galatea*
Franco Moretti, “Conjectures on World Literature”

2001
Al-Qaeda attacks United States on September 11
Afghan War begins
Wikipedia launched
Apple introduces iPod
Percival Everett, *Erasure*
Jonathan Franzen, *The Corrections*

2002
Euro enters circulation
Lydia Davis, *Samuel Johnson Is Indignant*
Kelley Eskridge, *Solitaire*
Jeffrey Eugenides, *Middlesex*
Aleksandar Hemon, *Nowhere Man*

2003
Human Genome Project completed
United States and allies invade Iraq
Don DeLillo, *Cosmopolis*

2004
NATO and EU expand to include most of the former Eastern Bloc
Web 2.0
Facebook introduced
Mars Rover explores planet surface
George W. Bush re-elected president
Sarah Shun-Lien Bynum, *Madeleine Is Sleeping*
Rikki Ducornet, *Gazelle*
Kate Pullinger, Stefan Schemat, and babel, *The Breathing Wall*
Philip Roth, *The Plot Against America*
Art Spiegelman, *In the Shadow of No Towers*

2005
Angela Merkel becomes first woman chancellor of Germany
YouTube launched
Kyoto Protocol to reduce greenhouse gas emissions commences
Hurricane Katrina floods New Orleans

2006
Twitter launched
Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*
Dave Eggers, *What is the what*
CHRONOLOGY

Jonathan Safran Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*
Shelley Jackson, *Half Life*
Kate Pullinger, Chris Joseph, and Andy Campbell, *Inanimate Alice* begins
Thomas Pynchon, *Against the Day*
Gary Shteyngart, *Absurdistan*

2007
Global economic crisis
Apple introduces the iPhone
Michael Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union*
Junot Díaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*
Helena María Viramontes, *Their Dogs Came with Them*

2008
Barack Obama elected president
Nicholson Baker, *Human Smoke: The Beginnings of World War II, the End of Civilization*
Matt Richtel, *Twiller*

2009
Dave Eggers, *Zeitoun*
Tao Lin, *Shoplifting from American Apparel*
Thomas Pynchon, *Inherent Vice*
*Tale of Tales, The Path*

2010
European sovereign debt crisis
Arab Spring
Jennifer Egan, *A Visit from the Goon Squad*
Jonathan Franzen, *Freedom*
Ben Marcus, *The Flame Alphabet*

2011
Iraq War ends
David Foster Wallace, *The Pale King*

2012
Higgs boson discovered
Barack Obama re-elected president
Chris Ware, *Building Stories*

2013
Edward Snowden releases documents proving mass surveillance by National Security Agency (NSA)
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Americanah*
Jonathan Franzen, *The Kraus Project: Essays by Karl Kraus*
Thomas Pynchon, *Bleeding Edge*

2014
Chang-Rae Lee, *On Such a Full Sea*
Jeff Vandermeer, *Southern Reach* trilogy