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978-1-107-09537-3 - The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the American West

Edited by Steven Frye

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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
THE LITERATURE OF THE AMERICAN WEST

This *Companion* provides a comprehensive introduction to one of the most vibrant and expansive traditions in world literature. The American West occupies a unique place in the global imagination, and the literature it produced transcends the category of “region” in theme and form. Written by prominent international scholars, the essays cover a diverse group of key texts and authors, including major figures in the Native American, Hispanic, Asian American, and African American movements. Treatments range from environmental and ecopoetic to transnational and transcultural, reflecting the richness of the field. This volume places the literature in deep historical context and features a chronology and bibliography for further reading. It will be an essential guide for students of literature of the American West and of American literature generally.

STEVEN FRYE is a professor of English at California State University, Bakersfield. He is president of the Cormac McCarthy Society, editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Cormac McCarthy*, and author of *Understanding Cormac McCarthy* and *Understanding Larry McMurtry*.

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

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STEVEN FRYE is a professor of English at California State University, Bakersfield and president of the Cormac McCarthy Society. He is the author of *Historiography and Narrative Design in the American Romance: A Study of Four Authors*, *Understanding Cormac McCarthy*, and *Understanding Larry McMurtry*. He is the editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Cormac McCarthy*, *Critical Insights: The Poetry of Edgar Allan Poe*, and *Critical Insights: The Tales of Edgar Allan Poe*. He is also the author of numerous articles on Cormac McCarthy, Herman Melville, and other writers in the American Romance tradition.

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be published in 2016. He is also the editor of *Intertextual and Interdisciplinary Approaches to Cormac McCarthy*, to which he contributed the introduction and an essay titled “Versions of the *Seeleroman*: Cormac McCarthy and Leslie Silko.” He teaches the MA module, “Literatures of the American Southwest,” as well as modules on identity, drama, and performance. A coauthored piece “Letting the Dead Come Out to Dance: An Embodied and Spatial Approach to Teaching Early Modern Drama” appears in *Performing Early Modern Drama Today*, from Cambridge University Press. His other principal research interest is interdisciplinary and collaborative pedagogy – he is the lead author of *Open-Space Learning: A Transdisciplinary Pedagogy*.

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RAFAEL PÉREZ-TORRES is a professor of English at University of California, Los Angeles. He has published numerous articles on Chicano/a literature and culture, postmodernism, multiculturalism, and contemporary American literature in *Cultural Critique*, *American Literary History*, *Genre*, *Aztlán*, and *American Literature*, as well as in numerous edited collections. He served as co-curator for the art exhibit “Just Another Poster? Chicano Graphic Arts in California,” and he sits on several editorial boards. He is the author of three books: *Mestizaje: Critical*

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Uses of Race in Chicano Culture; To Alcatraz, Death Row, and Back: Memories of an East L.A. Outlaw written with Ernest B. López; and *Movements in Chicano Poetry: Against Myths, Against Margins*. His current work addresses the role of modernity and modernization in the shaping of Chicano culture.

ROBERT THACKER is Charles A. Dana Professor of Canadian Studies and English at St. Lawrence University. Among his publications are *The Great Prairie Fact and Literary Imagination* and *Alice Munro: Writing Her Lives*; four coedited critical volumes, two on comparing the Canada-U.S. Wests and two on Willa Cather. He is now at work on another volume of *Cather Studies* and a collection of essays on Munro by various hands. Forthcoming in 2016 is Thacker's *Reading Alice Munro, 1973–2013*, a selection of his essays on the 2013 Nobel Laureate.

GIOIA WOODS is an associate professor of humanities and President's Distinguished Teaching Fellow in Northern Arizona University's Department of Comparative Cultural Studies. She is the author of the Western Writer's Series monograph *Gary Paul Nabhan* and the coeditor of *Western Subjects: Autobiographical Writing in the North American West*. She was president of the Western Literature Association in 2010 and continues research and publishing in Western American literature and culture, and ecological criticism. Her current project is a cultural biography of City Lights Bookstore and Press.

DANIEL WORDEN is an associate professor of English at the University of New Mexico. He is the author of *Masculine Style: The American West and Literary Modernism*, which received the Thomas J. Lyon Book Award in Western American Literary and Cultural Studies. He is also the coeditor of *Oil Culture* and the editor of *The Comics of Joe Sacco: Journalism in a Visual World*.

CHRONOLOGY

AD 500	Anasazi (ancestral Pueblo) culture widespread in Four Corners area. Approximately five hundred specialized small tribes are living in California.
500–1400	Hohokam culture brings large areas in southern Arizona under irrigation.
950+	Mesa Verde cliff dwellings constructed.
950–1300	Chaco culture emerges in New Mexico; includes 125 planned towns.
1000	Pueblo and Hopi villages active in their present locations.
ca. 1150	Oraibi (Arizona) established.
1220–1400	Navahos arrive in the Southwest from the north.
1276–1299	Severe drought in the Southwest.
1528	Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca shipwrecked on Gulf Coast; begins eight-year journey to Mexico.
1540	Francisco Vázquez de Coronado begins an exploration from Arizona; over the next two years, travels as far northeast as Kansas. One of his officers, Don Garcia Lopez de Cardenas, takes a trip with twelve other men and sees the Grand Canyon. They are the first Europeans to do so.
1598	Juan de Oñate colonizes northern Mexico.
1609–1610	Santa Fe founded; “Palace of the Governors” built.
1680	Pueblo Indians revolt and drive the Spanish from New Mexico.

CHRONOLOGY

1692	Don Diego de Vargas reconquers New Mexico.
1769	Father Junípero Serra founds mission at San Diego; in the next thirteen years, he establishes nine of the twenty-one Franciscan missions in California.
1774–1776	Juan Batista de Anza leads colonizing parties from Mexico to the San Francisco Bay area.
1776	Fathers Dominguez and Escalante travel much of Colorado and Utah.
1783	Treaty of Paris concludes Revolutionary War, sets United States at Mississippi River.
1803	Thomas Jefferson buys Louisiana Territory from France, doubling the size of the United States.
1804–1806	Lewis and Clark cross the Louisiana Territory and go on to the mouth of the Columbia River; they return with information about the West. Their <i>Journals</i> become an American classic.
1805–1807	Zebulon Pike explores Colorado and New Mexico.
1810–1812	J. J. Astor sends a party overland to the Pacific to gain control of the Western fur market. The expedition fails in its main purpose. Returning, “Astorian” Robert Stuart crosses through South Pass in Wyoming, documented in <i>On the Oregon Trail: Robert Stuart’s Journey of Discovery</i> .
1819	Naturalist Thomas Nuttall makes a solo journey up the Arkansas River drainage onto the plains; describes the trip in <i>A Journal of Travels into the Arkansas Territory, During the Year 1819</i> .
1821	Mexico gains independence; assumes control of the Southwest.
1824	Jedediah Smith, Jim Bridger, and other trappers cross South Pass, enter Great Basin, and discover the Great Salt Lake. Mountain-man era begins.
1826–1827	Jedediah Smith accomplishes immense explorations through Great Basin, California, and Oregon. Records these trips in his journal, <i>The Southwest Expedition of Jedediah S. Smith: His Personal Account of the Journey to California, 1826–1827</i> .

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- 1832 Washington Irving tours a portion of Oklahoma; describes journey in *A Tour on the Prairies* (1835). Capt. Benjamin Bonneville, on leave from the U.S. Army, begins three years' stay in the West as a mountain man; keeps a detailed journal used by Washington Irving for *The Adventures of Capt. Bonneville U.S.A* (1837). Painter George Catlin tours the West. In *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians* (1841), suggests a huge "nation's park," covering much of the High Plains, in which Indians and wildlife would be left undisturbed.
- 1834 Mountain man Joe Walker leads a group across Great Basin to California; he sees Yosemite Valley, the first Euro-American to do so.
- 1835 Washington Irving meets J. J. Astor; working from Astor's documents, writes *Astoria* (1836).
- 1836 Washington Irving meets Capt. Benjamin Bonneville, buys his journal, and writes *The Adventures of Capt. Bonneville U.S.A.* (1837), the first account of the Western fur trade.
- 1839 John K. Townsend, *Narrative of a Journey across the Rocky Mountains, to the Columbia River, and a Visit to the Sandwich Islands, Chili, & c.*
- 1841 Last mountain-man rendezvous.
- 1842–1844 John Charles Fremont surveys the West for the government; writes *Report of the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1842, and to Oregon and North California in the Years 1843–44* (1845).
- 1845 Journalist John L. O'Sullivan coins the phrase "Manifest Destiny."
- 1846 Francis Parkman takes post-college tour into eastern Wyoming; writes *The Oregon Trail* (1849).
Thousands of immigrants travel the Oregon and California Trails; Donner Party becomes trapped by Sierra Nevada snows.
- 1846–1848 Mexican-American War. Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo transfers control of the Southwest to the United States.

CHRONOLOGY

1847	Mormons cross from Nebraska to Salt Lake City.
1848–1849	Discovery of gold at Sutter’s Mill on the American River inspires fortune hunters and others to enter California.
1850	California becomes a state.
1852	Approximately one hundred thousand prospectors and miners are at work in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada.
1853	Gadsden Purchase sets border with Mexico along its present lines.
1854	John Rollin Ridge, <i>The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta, the Celebrated California Bandit</i> , the first novel published by a Native American (Cherokee).
1857	Mountain Meadows Massacre in southwest Utah; Mormon settlers, with Piute accomplices, kill somewhere between 90 and 115 members of a wagon train bound for California.
1858–1860	Gold rushes in Nevada, Colorado, and Idaho add to the Western population. San Francisco becomes the West’s first literary center.
1860	House of Beadle and Adams, New York, begins publication of popular fiction with frontier and Western themes.
1861	Telegraph connects Eastern and Western United States
1862	Homestead Act precipitates Western settlement.
1864	The “Colorado Volunteers” destroy a village of Cheyenne Indians at Sand Creek. President Lincoln sets aside Yosemite Valley as a protected reserve. Majority of Navaho tribe is captured in Arizona and taken to New Mexico, where they are held until 1868.
1867	Appointment of General Philip Sheridan as commander of the Department of the Missouri signals increased militarization of U.S. policy toward Western Indians.
1868	Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer leads the 7th Cavalry in massacre of a Cheyenne village on the Washita River in Oklahoma.

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The *Overland Monthly* begins publication in San Francisco, under editorship of Bret Harte.

1869 “Golden Spike” driven at Promontory, Utah, completing the transcontinental railroad.

John Muir’s first summer in the Sierra Nevada.

John Wesley Powell and party descend the Green and Colorado Rivers, make the last “discoveries” of a mountain range (the Henry Mountains) and river (the Escalante) in the continental United States.

1872 Clarence King, *Mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada*.

Mark Twain, *Roughing It*.

Yellowstone National Park created; world’s first reserve of its kind.

1874 Barbed wire patented; “open range” days numbered.

George A. Custer, *My Life on the Plains*.

John Wesley Powell, *The Exploration of the Colorado River and Its Tributaries*.

1876 George A. Custer leads 7th Cavalry into disaster near Little Bighorn River, Montana.

1881 Helen Hunt Jackson, *A Century of Dishonor*, exposé of Indian policy.

1882 Clarence Dutton, *Tertiary History of the Grand Cañon District*.

1883 Sarah Winnemucca (Northern Piute), *Life among the Piutes*.

1884 Last significant shipment of buffalo hides from the Plains.

1887 Five hundred forty-one buffalo remain alive in the United States; of these, an estimated eighty-five are living in the wild.

1890 Ghost Dance takes place, followed by the massacre of Indian village at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, conducted by the 7th Cavalry; 102 Lakota men, 44 women, and 18 children are killed.

Yosemite National Park is created, as suggested by John Muir.

U.S. Census Bureau declares frontier closed.

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- Mormon leader Wilford Woodruff issues manifesto against polygamy; in succeeding decades, Mormon society becomes increasingly “mainstream.”
- 1891 Hamlin Garland, *Main-Travelled Roads*.
President Harrison creates Forest Reserves.
- 1893 Frederick Jackson Turner promulgates “frontier thesis.”
- 1894 John Muir, *The Mountains of California*.
- 1897 Klondike Gold Rush
- 1899 Frank Norris, *McTeague*.
- 1900 First motor vehicle reaches south rim of the Grand Canyon.
- 1902 Owen Wister, *The Virginian*.
Newlands Act establishes Bureau of Reclamation, inaugurating era of large, federally sponsored water projects that will affect much of the West.
- 1903 Mary Austin, *The Land of Little Rain*.
Jack London, *The Call of the Wild*.
- 1904–1907 Reuben G. Thwaites, ed., *Early Western Travels*, a thirty-two-volume set of narratives by explorers and early travelers.
- 1905 Los Angeles voters approve bonds for an aqueduct that will supply the city by taking the Owens River, 250 miles north.
- 1906 Much of San Francisco destroyed by earthquake and fire.
- 1911 Enos Mills, *The Spell of the Rockies*.
- 1912 Zane Grey, *Riders of the Purple Sage*
John Muir, *The Yosemite*.
- 1913 Congress authorizes reservoir in Hetch Hetchy, within Yosemite National Park.
Willa Cather, *O Pioneers!*
- 1915 Rocky Mountain National Park established.
Taos Society of Artists founded.
- 1916 National Park Service created.

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- Jeanette Rankin of Montana becomes the first woman elected to Congress.
- Federal Aid Highway Act authorizes government road subsidies; federal highway building will have a major effect on the West.
- 1918 Willa Cather, *My Antonia*.
- 1920 Sinclair Lewis, *Main Street*.
- 1922 Willa Cather, *One of Ours* (Pulitzer Prize, 1923).
- Colorado River Compact apportions that stream's flow among Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, Nevada, Arizona, and California; clarifies federal government's role in Western natural resource development.
- 1923–1924 Teapot Dome oil scandal.
- 1924 Mary Austin, *The Land of Journeys' Ending*.
- 1925 Willa Cather, *The Professor's House*.
Dorothy Scarborough, *The Wind*.
Robinson Jeffers, *Rian Stallion, Tamar, and Other Poems*.
- 1927 Ole Rølvaag, *Giants in the Earth*.
Mourning Dove [Okanogan], *Co-ge-we-a*, the first novel by an Indian woman.
Harvey Fergusson, *Wolf Song*.
- 1929 Oliver LaFarge, *Laughing Boy*.
- 1930s Depression era enlarges federal presence in the West. In per capita assistance received through the New Deal, fourteen Western states lead the nation. Farm support and work relief programs contribute significantly to Western sustenance.
- 1931 Vardis Fisher, *Dark Bridwell*.
- 1932 Mary Austin, *Earth Horizon*.
Black Elk, *Black Elk Speaks*.
Bernard DeVoto, *Mark Twain's America*.
Vardis Fisher, *In Tragic Life*.
- 1933 *The Lone Ranger* debuts on station WXYZ, Detroit.

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- 1934 Thomas Hornsby Ferril, *Westering*.
Taylor Grazing Act sets aside public domain for federal management, not for sale to the public.
- 1935 H. L. Davis, *Honey in the Horn*.
Frank Waters, *The Wild Earth's Nobility*.
- 1936 D'Arcy McNickle [Cree/Irish], *The Surrounded*.
Boulder Dam completed, largest federal project to date.
- 1937 John Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men*.
- 1939 John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*.
Vardis Fisher, *Children of God*.
Franklin Walker, *San Francisco Literary Frontier*.
Nathanael West, *The Day of the Locust*.
- 1940 Walter Van Tilburg Clark, *The Ox-Bow Incident*.
- 1941 Entrance of United States into World War II. By 1943, the federal government has become the largest single employer in the West.
Maurine Whipple, *The Giant Joshua*.
- 1942 One hundred ten thousand Americans of Japanese descent are removed from the West Coast and placed in camps.
Frank Waters, *The Man Who Killed the Deer*.
- 1943 Wallace Stegner, *The Big Rock Candy Mountain*.
- 1943–1945 Atomic bombs are developed in a secret project at Los Alamos, New Mexico.
- 1944 Adolph Murie, *The Wolves of Mount McKinley*.
- 1945 Walter Van Tilburg Clark, *The City of Trembling Leaves*.
- 1947 A. B. Guthrie Jr., *The Big Sky*.
Bernard DeVoto, *Across the Wide Missouri*.
- 1949 Jack Schaefer, *Shane*.
A. B. Guthrie Jr., *The Way West*.
Walter Van Tilburg Clark, *The Track of the Cat*.
- 1950s Military presence in the West and defense industries leads to increasing dependence of the area on Cold War spending.

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- 1950 Frank Waters, *Masked Gods*.
Harvey Fergusson, *Grant of Kingdom*.
- 1952 Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Frontier*.
- 1954 Frederick Manfred, *Lord Grizzly*.
Joseph Wood Krutch, *The Voice of the Desert*.
- 1955 Poetry reading at the Six Gallery in San Francisco inaugurates the “Beat Generation.”
- 1956 Wright Morris, *The Field of Vision*.
- 1957 John Okada, *No-No Boy*.
- 1958 First ascent of Yosemite’s El Capitan.
- 1960s–1990s Flourishing electronics and aerospace industries, along with growing Pacific trade, solidify the West’s economic strength.
- 1960 John Graves, *Goodbye to a River*.
Vardis Fisher, *Orphans in Gethsemane*.
- 1962 John Steinbeck wins Nobel Prize for Literature.
California becomes the most populous state.
William Stafford, *Traveling through the Dark*.
Theodora Kroeber, *Ishi in Two Worlds*.
César Chávez organizes National Farm Workers Organization.
- 1963 Frank Waters, *Book of the Hopi*.
- 1965 Luis Valdez organizes El Teatro Campesino in support of César Chávez and the California farm workers.
Vardis Fisher, *Mountain Man*.
- 1966 Frank Waters, *The Woman at Otowi Crossing*.
Theodore Roethke, *The Collected Poems of Theodore Roethke*.
Larry McMurtry, *The Last Picture Show*.
- 1967 Gary Snyder, *The Black Country*.
- 1968 Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*.
Leslie Fiedler, *The Return of the Vanishing American*.

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CHRONOLOGY

- N. Scott Momaday, *House Made of Dawn*.
 Larry McMurtry, *In a Narrow Grave*.
- 1969 Gary Snyder, *Earth House Hold*.
 Wallace Stegner, *The Sound of Mountain Water*.
 N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*.
 Indians occupy Alcatraz in protest against federal policies.
- 1970 John G. Cawelti, *The Six-Gun Mystique*.
- 1971 Wallace Stegner, *Angle of Repose*.
 Frank Waters, *Pike's Peak*.
- 1972 Rudolfo Anaya, *Bless Me, Ultima*.
- 1974 Gary Snyder, *Turtle Island*.
 John Nichols, *The Milagro Beanfield War*.
 James Welch, *Winter in the Blood*.
 Ann Zwinger, *Run, River, Run*.
- 1975 Edward Abbey, *The Monkey Wrench Gang*.
- 1976 Wallace Stegner, *The Spectator Bird*.
 David Wagoner, *Collected Poems*.
 Norman Maclean, *A River Runs Through It*.
- 1977 William Stafford, *Stories That Could Be True: New and Collected Poems*.
 Gary Soto, *The Elements of San Joaquin*.
 Leslie Silko, *Ceremony*.
 Howard Lamar, ed., *Reader's Encyclopedia of the American West*.
 Frederick Manfred, *Green Earth*.
 Richard Hugo, *31 Letters and 13 Dreams*.
- 1978 Luis Valdez, *Zoot Suit*.
 Barry Lopez, *Of Wolves and Men*.
- 1979 Wallace Stegner, *Recapitulation*.
- 1980 Sam Shepherd, *True West*.
- 1981 Frank Waters, *Mountain Dialogues*.

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- John Okadu, *No-No Boy*
- 1983 Gerard Haslam, *Hawk Flights: Visions of the West*.
Raymond Carver, *Cathedral*.
- 1984 Louise Erdrich, *Love Medicine*.
Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*.
- 1985 Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian*.
Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West*.
Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert*.
Ursula LaGuin, *Always Coming Home*.
Larry McMurtry, *Lonesome Dove*.
Gretel Ehrlich, *The Solace of Open Spaces*
- 1986 James Welch, *Fools Crow*.
Barry Lopez, *Arctic Dreams*.
Louis L'Amour, *Last of the Breed*.
- 1987 Patricia Nelson Limerick, *Legacy of Conquest*.
Western Literature Association, *A Literary History of the American West*.
William Kittredge, *Owning It All*.
Charles Bowden, *Frog Mountain Blues*.
Vera Norwood and Janice Monk, *The Desert Is No Lady*.
- 1989 John Haines, *The Stars, the Snow, the Fire*.
Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*.
Richard Nelson, *The Island Within*.
Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*.
- 1990 William DeBuys, *River of Traps*.
Gary Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild*.
Linda Hogan, *Mean Spirit*.
James Welch, *The Indian Lawyer*.
Gerald Haslam, *The Other California: The Great Central Valley in Life and Letters*.
Douglas Peacock, *Grizzly Years*.

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- 1991 Terry Tempest Williams, *Refuge*.
Rick Bass, *Winter*.
Leslie Silko, *Almanac of the Dead*.
Charles Bowden, *Desierto*.
- 1992 First captivity-bred California condors are released into the wild.
James Galvin, *The Meadow*.
William Kittredge, *Hole in the Sky*.
Rick Bass, *The Ninemile Wolves*.
Jane Tompkins, *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerners*.
Wallace Stegner, *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs: Living and Writing in the West*.
Cormac McCarthy *All the Pretty Horses*.
- 1993 Linda Hogan, *The Book of Medicines*.
C. L. Rawlins, *Sky's Witness*.
- 1994 Cormac McCarthy, *The Crossing*.
Gerald Haslam, *Condor Dreams*.
James Welch, *Killing Custer*.
- 1995 Wolves are reestablished in Yellowstone National Park.
Ann Zwinger, *Downcanyon: A Naturalist Explores the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon*.
Linda Hogan, *Dwellings: Reflections on the Natural World*.
Rick Bass, *In the Loyal Mountains*.
Maria Helena Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*.
- 1996 Gary Snyder, *Mountains and Rivers Without End*.
Jack Turner, *The Abstract Wild*.
Rick Bass, *The Book of Yaak*.
- 1997 Rick Bass, *The Sky, the Stars, the Wilderness*.
Nora Okja Keller, *Comfort Woman*.
- 1998 Cormac McCarthy, *Cities of the Plain*.
Western Literature Association, *Updating the American West*.

CHRONOLOGY

2001	Terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon initiate the post-9/11 era. United States invades Afghanistan in search of Osama Bin Laden and to displace the Taliban.
2003	United States invades Iraq to displace Saddam Hussain. Dao Strom, <i>Grass Roof, Tin Roof</i> .
2007	Maria Helena Viramontes, <i>Their Dogs Came With Them</i> .
2012	Record drought begins in the western United States, primarily California.

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