

WLA 2025

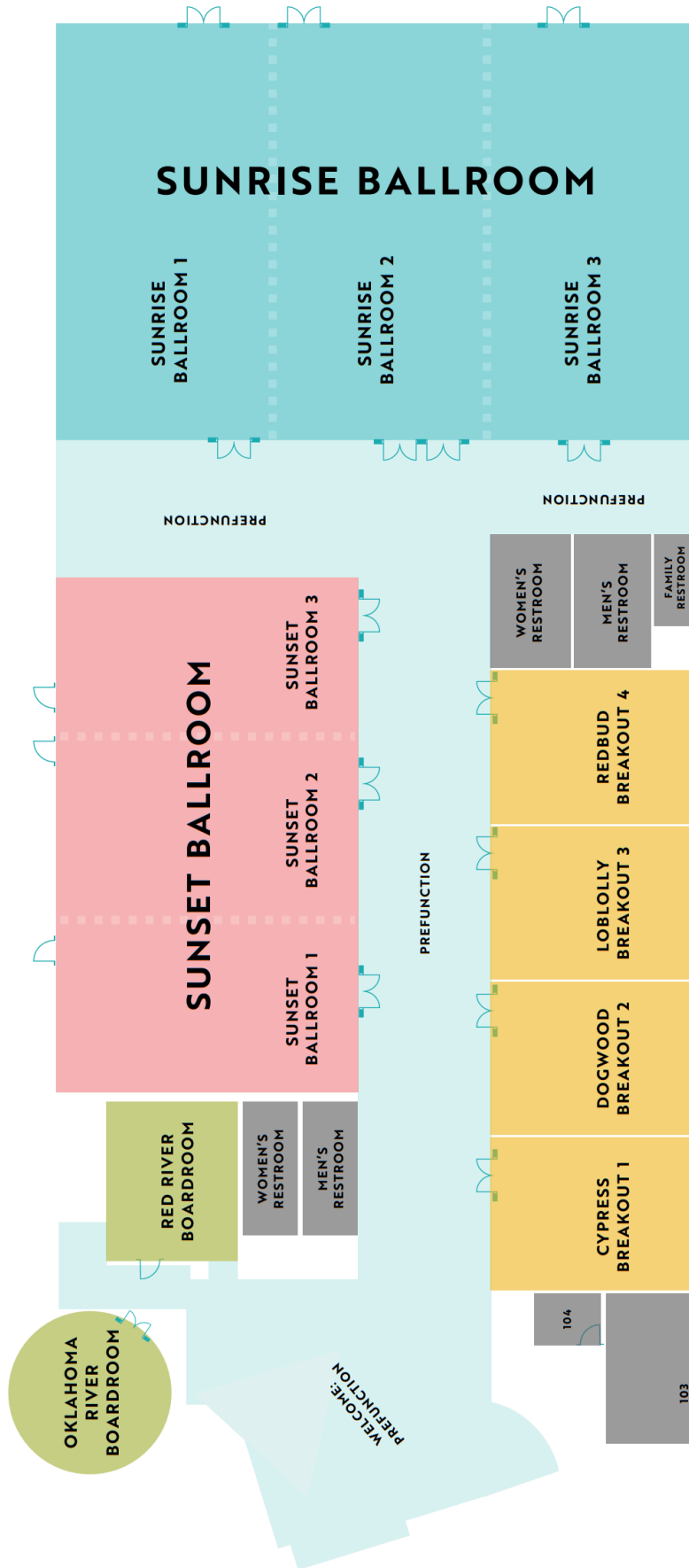


Words of Fire

**Honoring
the Multicultural
Western Narrative**

**Oklahoma City, OK
September 21-24, 2025**

Hotel Layout



President's Welcome Message

Welcome to the 59th annual Western Literature Association (WLA) Conference, hosted here in the great state of Oklahoma. As WLA's 2025 president, I am honored to welcome you to our 60th anniversary! Over the years WLA has been a site of reflection, change, and forward progress, and this year is no different. As I look across the program, I see newer and seasoned scholars who have truly answered the conference call of honoring the multicultural western narrative. A wide range of topics will be covered from engagement with Indigenous narratives, the legacies of writers like Morrison and Erdrich, war stories, regional fictions, spotlights on poetry, fiction, and memoir, themes of monstrosity, and much more in between.

As WLA celebrates and remembers six decades, this year's program also looks to the future. There are discussions on the state of the field, conversations about the current environment, and a spotlight on education. Notably, a large percentage of graduate students are registered; there is a panel of undergraduate students who will consider what it means to teach "the west" and multicultural literature; the K-12 panel has returned with established local high school teachers presenting lesson plans and strategies; and several student attendees are enrolled in a special topics honors course at the University of Oklahoma that is based on the WLA 2025 conference theme.

There are also thought-provoking plenaries and roundtables on exhuming buried histories; writing place and identity in the west; cultural appropriation; a conversation with the DAA recipient Quraysh Ali Lansana; and a public evening event with award-winning playwright and performer Arigon Starr (Kickapoo). A few international members who were unable to travel this year are presenting virtually and have been deemed "VIPs" (virtual international presenters). And make sure you frequent the vendor and book exhibitor room with local artists, a digital magazine, and university presses.

It has been a great pleasure to serve as your WLA president this year. Many thanks to all who have checked in with me, listened to my ideas, assisted with all the administrative tasks, and generously donated to the cause. I hope you enjoy time spent learning, presenting, and catching up with others. Oh, and have lots of fun. There are waterslides, after all.

Kalenda Eaton, Ph.D.
2025 WLA President
University of Oklahoma



Kalenda Eaton
WLA President



The 39 Tribal Nations of Oklahoma





CELEBRATION 60TH ANNIVERSARY

**Compiled by Audrey Goodman, Executive Secretary and WLA Co-President 2022,
Santa Fe, New Mexico**

To mark the 60th anniversary of the Western Literature Association, I asked some longtime members and former presidents for their reflections on how the organization has sustained its mission, its strong sense of community, its intellectual and creative energies, and its relevance through six decades. Here are selections from their responses:

To say that the Western Literature Association has been bedrock to my professional life doesn't even approximate. On a plane taking me to the Park City meeting in 1978—when I was still in graduate school—I found myself seated next to Susan J. Rosowski. At that meeting too I was on a panel with John J. Murphy; each became a lifelong friend and, not coincidentally, my Cather career was launched through those associations. For me, WLA has always been like that, year after year: connections made, interests discovered (or rediscovered), texts and knowledge debated and shared. A “place” where friendships deepen and where life happens—every year. The West of the imagination. Where serious work is done but great fun is also always had. Both joyfully. At sixty WLA is still now very much what it has always been: eclectic and caring, friendly and interested, evolving with the field, always committed. Bedrock.

Bob Thacker, WLA President 1998, Banff, Alberta

I like it that when the history of the Western Literature Association is written, it will be a story of writing. In this organization we seem less likely to divide into critics and writers, scholars and writers, academics and writers. Here we have writers and writers.

Laurie Ricou, WLA President 2014, Victoria, British Columbia,
and 1995, Vancouver, British Columbia

Reflecting on the sixtieth anniversary of the Western Literature Association puts me in mind of WLA at fifty. Susan Bernardin and I collaborated on a special issue for *Western American Literature* which set our sights for the fiftieth anniversary on the future as much as surveyed the past. Organized through genealogies, keywords, and methodologies, the entries showed where the organization had grown and needed to grow. If a keyword characterized our hopes, it was “relationality.” Ten years later, WLA is sixty, and its profile of research principles is more relational than ever. In the authoritarian political times we are living through, relationality challenges separations between an “us” and a “them”. The fact that WLA keeps meeting, that under duress we keep doing

our work and reaching for one another, are causes for hope. In 2025, we stay the course of our emergent relationalities, tend them. We can thank WLA President Kalenda Eaton for bringing us together in Oklahoma City at the Okana Resort in the Chickasaw Nation.

Krista Comer, WLA President 2003, Houston, Texas

The WLA has long been where the West becomes even larger and more interesting; it has been my intellectual home and sustaining community for the past three decades. I owe much of my professional growth and no small amount of personal joy to its generations of dedicated members.

Bill Handley, WLA President 2005, Los Angeles, California

The WLA at 60 can be proud of itself for all sorts of different reasons—the nurturing of grad students, the number of women presidents, the spawning of ASLE, the success of Western American Literature, the quality of the scholarship at our annual conferences, and the quality of the post-Awards Banquet dancing. OK, this last might be notable more for its enthusiasm than its quality, but still. I believe one thing the WLA can be unequivocally proud of is the ways it has worked to engage with the movement of history in the world outside of academia through the last half century plus in conference papers, articles, and passionate hallway discussions. And it's been an exhilarating and terrifying half century. In 1966, the first WLA conference was held in Salt Lake City, and the first African American cabinet member was appointed by President Lyndon Johnson. In 1976, transgender tennis star Renee Richards was banned from the US Open, and E.L. Doctorow's *Ragtime* won the National Book Critics Circle Award. In 1986, the US Space Shuttle Challenger exploded shortly after liftoff, and Spike Lee's *She's Gotta Have It* was released. In 1996, the FBI finally found the Unabomber, Theodore Kaczynski, in a cabin in Montana, and George R.R. Martin published *A Game of Thrones*. In 2006, construction of the Global Seed Vault in Spitsbergen, Norway, began, and the new social media platform *Twitter* was launched. In 2016, quarterback Colin Kaepernick remained seated during the playing of the National Anthem at an NFL pre-season game, and the National Museum of African American History and Culture opened on the Mall in Washington with a ceremony led by the first African American President who rang a bell from an African American Baptist church founded in 1776. I cannot even begin to imagine what sorts of events might be included in this list in 2026, but I remain hopeful the WLA will face history head on, however challenging, exhilarating, or terrifying it may be, and help all of us to engage with the world as it unfolds before us.

Sara Spurgeon, WLA President 2012, Lubbock, Texas

Little did I know when I was flying from Atlanta, Georgia to Banff, Alberta in 1998 for my first Western American Literature conference that I would have the chance to talk about the importance of humor in Native fiction on a trail ride, encounter a moose in the mountains, and join such a smart, creative, diverse, and supportive community. It's been a pleasure for me to learn from and explore so many places with WLA friends each year since then. May the WLA continue to adapt, bring in new members, and thrive in the face of the challenges ahead.

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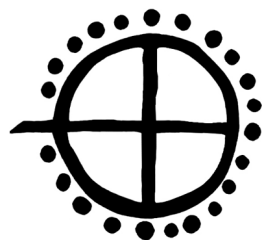
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We are also grateful to our exhibitors and advertisers for their support.

Thank you to those who made donations during registration. And thank you to everybody for being here in Oklahoma City for the 2025 WLA Conference.

Special recognition goes to José Aranda, Sabine Barcatta, Emily Burns, Michael Johnson, Emily Lutenski, and Brian Twenter.



Western Literature Association

59th Western Literature Association Conference

Words of Fire: Honoring the Multicultural Western Narrative

HIGHLIGHT

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TUESDAY OVERVIEW

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SUNDAY

- 1:00PM – 4:00PM **WLA Executive Council Meeting (Oklahoma River Boardroom)**
1:00PM – 6:00PM **Registration (Welcome Pre-Function)**
6:30PM – 8:30PM **Opening Reception (Sunrise Ballroom 1&2)**



6:30PM OPENING RECEPTION (with cash bar and hors d'oeuvres)

Welcome Remarks from the University of Oklahoma

Location: Sunrise Ballroom 1&2

Host: Kalenda Eaton, University of Oklahoma

Dr. Kalenda Eaton (2025 WLA President)

Kalenda Eaton, Ph.D. is a Professor in the Clara Luper Department of African & African American Studies at the University of Oklahoma. She is a humanities scholar whose research focuses on African American western regional studies; intersections of Black literary studies and cultural history; and women's studies. She received graduate degrees from The Ohio State University and an undergraduate degree from Dillard University.



Kalenda Eaton

Dr. Robin Zape-tah-hol-ah Starr Minthorn (Kiowa)



**Robin Zape-tah-hol-ah
Starr Minthorn**

Robin Zape-tah-hol-ah Minthorn, Ph.D., is an enrolled citizen of the Kiowa tribe of Oklahoma and a descendant of the Umatilla, Nez Perce, Apache, and Assiniboine Nations. She is Professor and Department Chair in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Department, at the University of Oklahoma. She received her bachelor's and two master's degrees from the University of Oklahoma and her doctoral degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from Oklahoma State University.

Her research interests include Indigenous leadership, Native American college students, and Historically Native American Fraternities and Sororities. Dr. Minthorn is also the co-editor of *Indigenous Leadership in Higher Education* (Routledge); *Reclaiming Indigenous Research in*

Higher Education, and *Indigenous Motherhood in the Academy* (Rutgers University Press); and *Unsettling Settler Colonial Education: The Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model* (Teachers College Press). She is a co-founder for Gamma Delta Pi, (GDP) Inc. American Indian Sisterhood and Oklahoma Native American Students in Higher Education (ONASHE). Dr. Minthorn is the first Indigenous president-elect of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE).

Dr. Laura Harjo (Mvskoke)

Laura Harjo is a Mvskoke scholar, an Associate Professor teaching Indigenous Planning, Community Development, and Indigenous Feminisms, and Chair of the Department of Native American Studies at the University of Oklahoma. She earned her Ph.D. at the University of Southern California in Geography, while also tracking through the American Studies and Ethnicity doctoral program, and her scholarly inquiry is at the intersection of geography and critical ethnic studies with “community” as an analytic focus.

Harjo’s research and teaching centers on three areas: imbuing complexity to Indigenous space, and place; missing and murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives and anti-violence; and community-based knowledge production. She is the author of *Spiral to the Stars: Mvskoke Tools of Futurity* (University of Arizona Press, 2019), which employs Mvskoke epistemologies, and Indigenous feminisms to grapple with a community praxis of futurity. She has served as a civil rights research fellow with the Advancement Project in Washington, DC. There she worked in an attorney/researcher partnership with civil rights expert Donita Judge, Esq. and researched and spatially analyzed civil rights issues in Florida, Texas, and New Orleans related to voter protection, inclusive community development, and the prison industrial complex-school to prison pipeline. She currently serves on the board of directors for the Indian Land Tenure Foundation.



Laura Harjo

Dr. Sarah Ellisxw



Sarah Ellis

Sarah Ellis is the Vice Provost for Faculty and a Professor of Music Theory at the University of Oklahoma. As Vice Provost she is responsible for the aspects of Academic Affairs that impact faculty including overseeing the annual evaluation and tenure and promotion processes, managing chair and director development initiatives, and contributing to faculty hiring policy and practice. In addition, she is the Provost’s office Liaison to Chairs, Directors, and Associate Deans as well as the Faculty Senate. As a researcher, her interests have centered on the creation of meaning within musical works. Much of her work has focused on understanding the hermeneutics of Dmitri Shostakovich’s repertoire through his manipulation of post-Beethovenian semiotic space. Her book, *Composing the Modern Subject: Four String Quartets by Dmitri Shostakovich*, focusses on his Sixth through Ninth Quartets. In addition, she has published articles on the hermeneutic ramifications of the use of pre-existing music in Classic Hollywood films.



M1—MONDAY 8:00AM–9:15AM

M1A—Space, Movement, Meaning

Location: Cypress

Session Chair: Jillian Moore, College of Western Idaho

Speed Limits, Splintering, Spaghetti Junctions: Reading the Interstate Highway System in American Literature

Surabhi Balachander, Oregon State University

How Freeway Dedication Ceremonies Narrativized Westward Expansion

Lauren White, University of Southern California

When Words Fail, Feet Speak: How Discourse Physically and Spiritually Moves in *House Made of Dawn* and *Spirit Run*

Katelen Marie Cowger, University of Oklahoma

M1B—Indigenous Media

Location: Dogwood

Session Chair: Chadwick Allen, University of Washington

Sandra Osawa and the Origins of Indigenous Women's Media in the 1970s

Joanna Hearne, University of Oklahoma

Plains Ledger Art, Settler-Colonial Book Networks, and Post-Traumatic Growth

Jerome Tharaud, Brandeis University

Investing in Futurity: Cara Romero, Citlali Fabián and Contemporary Indigenous Photographers

Michelle Raheja, University of California, Riverside

M1C—Indigenous Lives through Print Culture

Location: Loblolly

Session Chair: Kirby Brown, University of Oregon

Beyond Aesthetics: Indigenous Artists and Rhetorical Practices

Timothy Petete, University of California-Riverside

An "As-Told" Story: Education and Hegemony in *Me and Mine: The Life Story of Helen Sekaquaptewa*

Anran Hou, University of Arizona

M1—MONDAY 8:00AM–9:15AM

M1D—Patchwork Storytelling in Louise Erdrich's Fiction

Location: Redbud

Session Chair: Kristen Brown, Northern State University

You Don't Play Fetch: Danger and Domesticity in Louise Erdrich's *The Round House*

Alex Harmon, Montana State University

***Love Medicine:* Louise Erdrich's Erotics of Belonging**

Jordan Kay Savage, University of Essex

Intersecting Faiths: Exploring the Tensions and Hybridity of Chippewa Tradition and Catholicism in Louise Erdrich's *The Round House*

Ify Ndukuba, Idaho State University

M1E—Confronting the Unbidden

Location: Sunset Ballroom 1

Session Chair: Jeffrey Chisum, University of Southern California

"The hideous food revived them": Cannibalism, "Savagery," and the Meaning of Western Horror

Jeffrey Chisum, University of Southern California

Indigenous Monstrosity and Environmental Justice through Horror and Speculative Fiction

Aniqa Jahangeer, Idaho State University

Look Here, Cowboy: Reckoning with Spectacle in *Nope* (2022)

Tatiana Rosillo, University of Oklahoma

M1F—Landwise Sites of Meaning

Location: Sunset Ballroom 2

Session Chair: TBA

The Rhetoric of Massacre

John Pugh, University of Colorado

Site Fidelity as to Querencia

Shelli Rottschafer, Western Colorado University

M1—MONDAY 8:00AM–9:15AM

M1G—Archives of Resistance and Activism

Location: Sunset Ballroom 3

Session Chair: Russell Cobb, University of Alberta

Fictional Archives in LeAnne Howe's *Miko Kings*

Laura M. Furlan, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Mari Sandoz's Homestead Historiography and Settler Activism

Dominic Dongilli, Smithsonian Libraries & Archives

Homemade Quilts, Cultural Tapestries: Storytelling as Resistance in *The Night Watchman*

Carolyn Elise Starr, University of Southern California

M2—MONDAY 9:30AM–10:45AM

M2B—Forwarding Indigenous Sovereignty

Location: Dogwood

Session Chair: Brian J Twenter, University of Central Oklahoma

Native Cowpokes: Mourning Dove's Rhetorically Sovereign Rewrite of the Western

Morgen Cloud, University of Oklahoma

Glacier National Park, the Blackfeet Reservation, and the Border in *The Buffalo Hunter Hunter*

Patrick Vincent, University of California, Riverside

Repeating Histories in Lauren Redniss' *Oak Flat: A Fight for Sacred Land in the American West*

Corrina Cherise Richards, University of Oklahoma

COVID-19 ETIQUETTE:

As Covid-19 is still an issue, please be mindful of the fact that we are sharing indoor spaces with hundreds of people during the conference. If you have or develop any symptoms of illness, please consider wearing a mask for the protection of others.

M2—MONDAY 9:30AM–10:45AM

M2C—Narratives of Japanese America

Location: Loblolly

Session Chair: Surabhi Balachander, Oregon State University

Citizen 13660 and the Diseased State

Sung Park, Georgia State University

Recipient of the J. Golden Taylor Award

Japanese American Pioneers: Community and Family in Monica Sone's Nisei Daughter

Ryan Tan Wander, Valdosta State University

M2D—Children and Youth into View

Location: Redbud

Session Chair: Cathryn Halverson, Linköping University

Freedom by Land, Water, and Horse: Reimagining the Black Western Frontier in Jewell

Parker Rhodes' *Will's Race for Home*

DaQuon Wilson, Rice University

Abjection, Survivance, and Stories in Richard Van Camp's The Lesser Blessed

Scott Andrews, California State University, Northridge

The Power of Indigenous Childhood in Joy Harjo's Work

Mandy Suhr-Sytsma, Emory University

M2E—Asian Pacific Migrations

Location: Sunset Ballroom 1

Session Chair: Lawrence Coates, Bowling Green State University

Tales of the Folk, Femininity, and the Foreign Gaze in Trese

Stephie Piñero, University of Central Oklahoma

Roots and Resistance: Displacement and Filipino Identity in America Is in the Heart

Christie Setiawan Rusdi, Georgia State University

Beyond Fantasy: War, Identity, and Decolonization in Howl's Moving Castle

Alexandra Sweis, University of Kansas

M2—MONDAY 9:30AM–10:45AM

M2G—The Northwest Writ Large

Location: Sunset Ballroom 3

Session Chair: Anthony Gomez, University of Oklahoma

Bringing the Scattered Samish People Home

Kate Louthain, Rice University

“Stone upon Stone”: Joan Naviyuk Kane and the Poetics of Place and Belonging

Susan Kollin, Montana State University

Public Lands Abolition: Imperial Infrastructures, Indigenous Fugitivity, and the Liberational Imperative of Land Back

Madison Fowler, University of Oregon

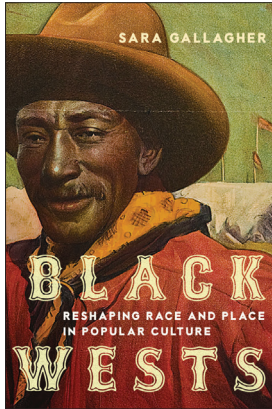
Recommendations for gluten-free restaurants:

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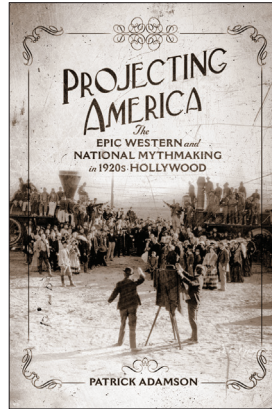
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Restaurant Recommendations

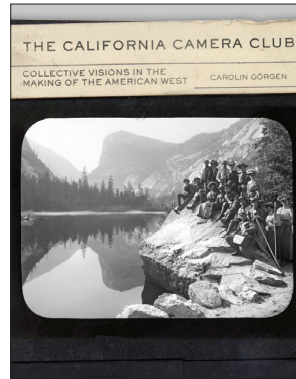




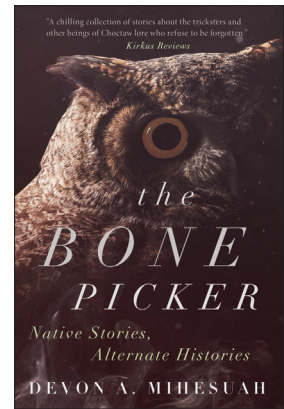
Black Wests
*Reshaping Race and Place
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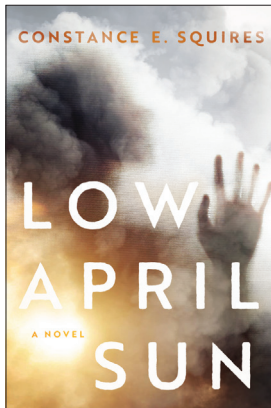
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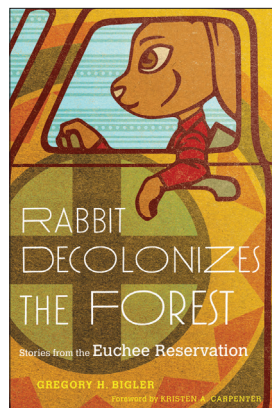
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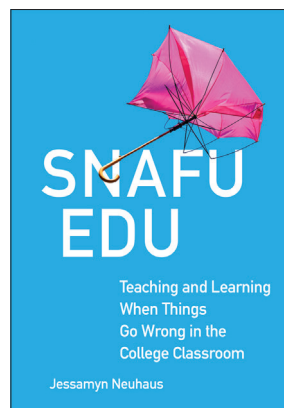
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*Native Stories,
 Alternate Histories*
 By Devon A. Mihesuah
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 9780806194677



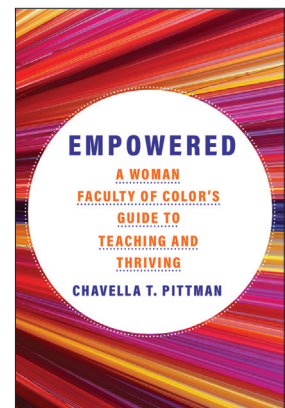
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Plenary—MONDAY 11:00AM–12:15PM

Plenary—Interview with Quraysh Lansana and Ken Hada

Location: Sunrise Ballroom 1



Quraysh Ali Lansana

Quraysh Ali Lansana is author of over twenty books in poetry, nonfiction and children's literature. Lansana is a Visiting Associate Professor of English/Creative Writing at the University of Tulsa and an alumnus of the Tulsa Artist Fellowship. He was formerly a Lecturer in Africana Studies at Oklahoma State University-Tulsa where he also served as Director of the Center for Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation. Lansana is Executive Producer of KOSU/NPR's Focus: Black Oklahoma monthly radio program, which is a recipient of a 2022 duPont-Columbia Award, a 2022 NAACP Image Award, a 2022 Oklahoma Society of Professional Journalists Award and was a Peabody Award nominee. Lansana is also the recipient of a 2022 Emmy Award, a 2022 Oklahoma Association of Broadcasters Award and a 2022 National Educational Telecommunications Association Public Media Award for his roles as host and consultant for the OETA (PBS) documentary film "Tulsa Race Massacre: 100 Years Later." Lansana is a three-time International Regional Magazine Award-winning Contributing Editor for Oklahoma Today magazine. A former faculty member of both the Writing Program of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and the Drama Division of The Juilliard School, Lansana served as Director of the Gwendolyn Brooks Center for Black Literature and Creative Writing

at Chicago State University from 2002-2012 and was Associate Professor of English/Creative Writing there until 2014. His most recent books include *Killing the Negative: A Conversation in Art & Verse* (with Joel Daniel Phillips), *Opal's Greenwood Oasis, the skin of dreams: new and collected poems, 1995-2018*, *The Whiskey of Our Discontent: Gwendolyn Brooks as Conscience & Change Agent* and *The BreakBeat Poets: New American Poetry in the Age of Hip Hop*. Forthcoming titles include a children's biography of *Ralph Ellison*, a memoir on the last decade of his mentor, Miss Gwendolyn Brooks, and a series of books on *the Black Rodeo*. Lansana's work appears in *Best American Poetry 2019*. He is a founding member of Tri-City Collective and serves on the Board of Directors of the Philbrook Museum of Art, Oklahoma Humanities and the Tulsa Press Club. Lansana is a Curatorial Scholar for The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art and a Curatorial Board Co-Chair for the Ragdale Foundation. He is a Cave Canem Fellow and a member of the first cohort of the Culture of Health Leadership for Racial Healing Fellowship.

Plenary—MONDAY 11:00AM–12:15PM

Ken Hada is a poet and professor at East Central University in Ada, Oklahoma where he has directed the annual Scissortail Creative Writing Festival for 20 years. Ken is the author of twelve collections of poetry, including his latest: *Visions for the Night* and *Come Before Winter* (Turning Plow Press, 2025, 2023). His previous collection, *Contour Feathers* (TPP, 2021), received the Oklahoma Book Award. Other works of his have been awarded by The Western Writers of America, The National Western Heritage Museum, South Central Modern Language Association and The Oklahoma Center for the Book. His work has been featured on “The Writer’s Almanac” and various additional media outlets. In addition to his poetry, Ken remains active in scholarship, writing and publishing regularly on regional writing, literary ecology and multicultural literatures. The “Ken Hada Collection” is to be held at the Western History Collection Library at the University of Oklahoma.



Ken Hada



HONORS COLLEGE
The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA

Lunch—MONDAY 12:15PM–1:45PM

General lunch break is on your own from 12:15 to 1:45.

Grad Student Luncheon, 12:15 to 1:30

Location: Oklahoma River Boardroom

This event requires a ticket.

M5—MONDAY 1:45PM–3:00PM

M5A—Healing, Ceremony, Text

Location: Cypress

Session Chair: Mel Anderson, Idaho State University

“Untraditional Intimacies:” *Re-Pairing* American Narratives of Racialization and Settler Colonialism in Ocean Vuong’s *On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous* (2019)

Crista Diane Fiala, University of Connecticut

Recipient of the Dorys Crow Grover Award

Can Ceremony Be Violent? Rituals, Oppression, and Resistance in *Ceremony* and *Farewell My Concubine*

Anran Hou, University of Arizona

“Lay Down Your Sword and Shield”: Maternal Witness and Cleansing as the Foundation for Healing in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* and Louise Erdrich’s *Four Souls*

Mel Anderson, Idaho State University

M5B—Toni Morrison’s Legacies: Space & Place

Location: Sunset Ballroom 2

Session Chair: Kalenda Eaton, University of Oklahoma

Afro-Gothic Afterlives: Liberatory Monstrosity in Toni Morrison’s *Paradise* and Ryan Coogler’s *Sinners*

Avery Armstrong, University of New Mexico

Black Feminist Poetics: Decolonial Cartographies of the Poetic West

Victoria Danielle Richards, Rice University

M5—MONDAY 1:45PM–3:00PM

“Tell Old Pharaoh, Let My People Go”: Critical Fabulation of *Magic City* and *Paradise*

Amanda Stevens, Idaho State University

Double Oppression: Black Patriarchy and the Quest for Black Women’s Paradise in Toni Morrison’s *Paradise*

Mahnaz Poorshahidi, Idaho State University

M5C—Cowboy Calling

Location: Loblolly

Session Chair: Michael K Johnson, University of Maine–Farmington

Cowboys, from Dusty Paladins to Sunblasted Revenants: or, The Reluctant and Tragic Heroes of the Wild West

Tim Michael Boekemier, Pittsburg State University

A Feel for the Glory of Another Kind of Life: HolyWhiteMountain, Wink, and De-Cowboying American Masculinity in Montana

Jenn Alandy Trahan, Stanford

M5D—Public Lands and Energy

Location: Redbud

Session Chair: Lars Erik Larson, University of Portland

The Atomic Frontier, Indigenous Sacrifice, and Necropolitical Southwest

Christopher Scott Boggs, Montana State University

“Maybe we’re all clouds in one form or another”: Indigenous Literary Atmospheres of Southern California

Meagan Meylor, California State University, Northridge

Infrastructural Cynicism: Ambrose Bierce, Hydraulic Mining, and Electrifying the American West

Anthony Gomez, University of Oklahoma

M5E—Indigenous Futures

Location: Sunset Ballroom 1

Session Chair: Alex Hunt, West Texas A&M University

Sasquatch, Indigenous Cosmology, and the Multi-scalar Temporalities of Grief

Josh Beckelhimer, University of Southern California

Indigenous History as (R)Evolution: Virgil Ortiz’s Art and LeAnne Howe’s *Shell Shaker*

Paula Anca Farca, Colorado School of Mines

M5—MONDAY 1:45PM–3:00PM

(Re)claiming Lakhóta Masculinity in Frances Washburn's *An Endangered Species* (2024)
Peter Bayers, Fairfield University

M5F—Violence, Power, and Healing

Location: Dogwood

Session Chair: Jennifer Dawes, University of Arkansas at Little Rock

John Joseph Mathews and Fred Grove: An Osage Literary Lineage

Michael Snyder, Oklahoma State University-Oklahoma City

Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* and the Origins of the Neo-Western

Daniel Thater, University of Tulsa

Spectral Encounters in the Archives: Recovering the Voices of Sadie James and Minnie Atkins

Russell Cobb, University of Alberta

M5G—Archival Truth Telling

Location: Sunset Ballroom 3

Session Chair: Surabhi Balachander, Oregon State University

"We Are America's Story": Indigenous Makers and Modern Archives

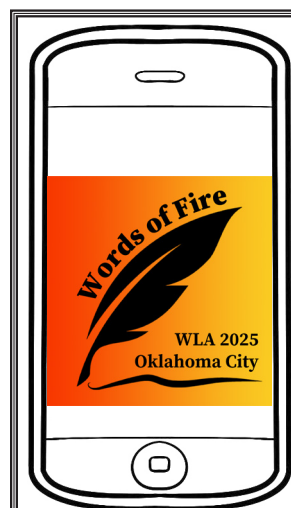
Jillian Moore, College of Western Idaho

Suburban Students Confront the History of "Indian" Boarding Schools: Visiting the Traveling Heard Museum Exhibit "Away from Home" with Undergraduate Classes

Donovan Gwinner, Aurora University

Seeing Past The Veil: The Political Economy of the Boarding School System

Fairooz Saiyara & Joshua Sanchez, University of New Mexico



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M6—MONDAY 3:15PM–4:30PM

M6A—Literary Interventions

Location: Cypress

Session Chair: Audrey Goodman, Georgia State University

“He Could be the Next Christopher Columbus:” Native Humor, the Apocalypse, and our own National Trauma

Meredith Harvey, Aurora University

From Caricature to Character: The Role of Lavinia in *Who Would Have Thought It?*

Sarah Elizabeth Gravina, University of New Mexico

African American Women’s Archives, Memoir, and Place

Cathryn Halverson, Linköping University

M6B—Then, Now, Tomorrow

Location: Dogwood

Session Chair: Alex Harmon, Montana State University

Set, Setting, Settler Colonialism: Psychoactive Substances and Ceremony in Tommy Orange’s *Wandering Stars*

Ryan Hediger, Kent State University

“The Land Moves with You Like Memory”: Urbanity in *There There* and *Grand Avenue*

Steven Brent Sexton, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

M6D—Indigenous Poetics

Location: Redbud

Session Chair: James Cox, University of Texas at Austin

“Sa Sippokni Hoke” Nurturing the Representation of the Grandmother Identity in Winnie Lewis Gravitt’s “Sippokni Sia”

Haleigh Brianna Bacon, University of North Texas

“The fire kept burning”: Joy Harjo’s Illumination of the Metaphoric Mind

Kristen Brown, Northern State University

Layli Long Soldier and the Evolving Dialogic in *Whereas*

Stephen Margavio, Auburn University

M6—MONDAY 3:15PM–4:30PM

M6E—On Brown Fragility

Location: Sunset Ballroom 1

Session Chair: Jesse Alemán, University of New Mexico

Who or What Will Lead Our People?

José Aranda, Rice University

Brown Fragility and Identity Politics

Priscilla Ybarra, University of North Texas

Settler Grammars: Anti-Indian Rhetorics Shaping Indigenous Migrants

Lourdes Alberto, California State University Los Angeles

White Fragility as a Social Contagion

Krista Comer, Rice University

M6F—Dust!

Location: Loblolly

Session Chair: Emily J. Rau, University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Dusty Desire: Reading Resilience and Longing in Women’s Writing from Texas and Oklahoma

Caroline Straty Kraft, University of Texas at Austin

Dust, Divinity, and Dual Narrative: Reimagining Earth in John McCarty’s “A Tribute to Our Sandstorms”

Sadie Belle Ray, West Texas A&M University

M6G—Storytelling through Material Culture

Location: Sunset Ballroom 3

Session Chair: Nicolas Witschi, Western Michigan University

Postmark

Rachel Heise Bolten, Stanford University

Unsettling Colonial Objectifs in Karen Russell’s *The Antidote*: Uncanny Photography on the Nebraska Plains

Matt Burkhardt, Case Western Reserve University

Literature and Social Protest Paraphernalia: The Farmworker Movement’s “Grapes of Wrath” Button Pin

Isabella Rose Kashubin, Missouri State University

M7—MONDAY 4:45PM–6:00PM

M 7A: Written Ecologies

Location: Cypress

Session Chair: Lawrence Coates, Bowling Green State University

The Uncanny Expanse: The Dark Sublime of the Great Plains as Ecogothic Defiance of US Expansion, 1827-1849

Jimmy Bryan, Lamar University

Ursula Le Guin and Gaia Theory: Sci-Fi Westerns, Gender, and Ecological Thought in the 1970s

Alex Hunt, West Texas A&M University

Kathleen Winsor's Maligned Wests

Maria T. Kane, Washington University in St. Louis

M 7B: Contrasting Western Migrations

Location: Dogwood

Session Chair: Ryan Atticus Doherty, Centenary College of Louisiana

Mythic Shepherders: Racial Capital & Basque Immigration to the Southwest

Anne Carrica, University of New Mexico

Sensibly Preserved: U.S. Sensibilities in Louis A. Allen's *Time before Morning*

Noelle Buffo, University of Oklahoma

Voice(s) Crying Out from the Wilderness: The American Desert in French & Yiddish

Ryan Atticus Doherty, Centenary College of Louisiana

M 7C: Flora Matters

Location: Loblolly

Session Chair: Jonathan Radocay, University of Washington

Dwelling at the End of Time: Towards an Apocalyptic Environmentalism in Anna Tsing's *The Mushroom at the End of the World*

Dylan Couch, University of Wisconsin - Madison

Rejecting the Floral Feminine by Identifying with Western Landscapes: Erdrich's *Fleur Pillager* as a Transfigured Mother Nature

Averi Fier, Northern Michigan University

Plants, Animals, and the Section Line: Human and Non-Human Relations on Allotment Land in Oklahoma Native Literatures

Jonathan Radocay, University of Washington

M7—MONDAY 4:45PM–6:00PM

M 7D: Readings: Poetry I, sponsored by the Mark Allen Everett Poetry Series

Location: Redbud

Session Chair: David E. Meischen, Dos Gatos Press

El Árbol del Tule, or variations on creation, and Other Poems

Isaac Salazar, Rice University

Recipient of the Creative Writing Award

Rowdy Yates Country: Landscapes Real and Imagined in Poetry and Fiction

David Meischen, Dos Gatos Press

Common Prayers

Ky George, writer

M 7E: Sites of Commemoration

Location: Sunset Ballroom 1

Session Chair: Zachary Hernandez, Texas A&M International University

Dateline Waco: the Branch Davidian Massacre, Magnolia Empire, and Local Tourism

Jennifer Dawes, University of Arkansas at Little Rock

What Remains: Extinction, Climate, and Memory at Waco Mammoth National Monument

Chaney Hill, Rice University

M 7F: Contours of 21st Century Western Film

Location: Sunset Ballroom 2

Session Chair: Rose Lewis, West Texas A&M University, CSAW

A Land of Wolves: The Sicario films, 'Bad Hombres', and Post-Millennial Politics

Rose Lewis, West Texas A&M University, CSAW

Predator to Prey: A Critical Analysis of Indigenous Representation in the Predator Franchise

Kodi Mackenzie, WTAMU and Center for the Study of the American West

Queer Pharm-ecologies: Analyzing Euphoria's Contemporary Suburb

Annie Culver, Schreiner University

Expectations of a Hunter: Queered Warriorhood in Prey (2022)

Jacob Quintin, University of Oklahoma

M7—MONDAY 4:45PM–6:00PM

M 7G: Readings: Poetry II, sponsored by the Mark Allen Everett Poetry Series

Location: Sunset Ballroom 3

Session Chair: Ken Hada, East Central University

Turn Out the Lights: Poems from Busted Oklahoma

Joey Brown, Retired

The Natural Self: A Poetry Reading

Ken Hada, East Central University

Katabasis: Selected Poems

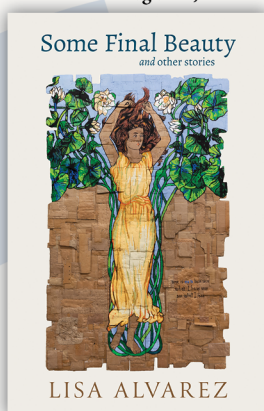
Paul Juhasz, Seminole State College

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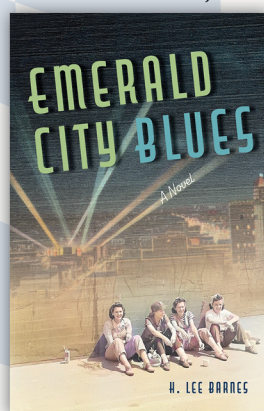
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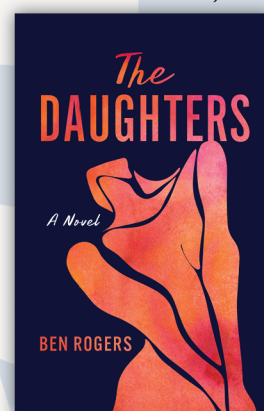
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M8 Event—MONDAY 6:15PM–7:30PM

M 8 Public Event—Oklahoma Home Grounds: Songs, Stories, & Graphic Conversations with Arigon Starr

Location: Sunrise Ballroom 1&2

Session Chairs: Susan Bernardin, Oregon State University
and Chadwick Allen, University of Washington



Arigon Starr

Arigon Starr is an enrolled member of the Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma and a musician, actor, playwright and renowned comic book writer/artist. She began her artistic journey as an award-winning singer-songwriter, releasing four music CDs and touring the US, UK and Australia. Her work with Native Voices at the Autry in Los Angeles includes her one-woman musical “The Red Road” and the radio comedy “Super Indian.” Following the footsteps of her hero August Wilson, she is crafting a century cycle with plays highlighting stories from each decade of the 20th century. She transformed her “Super Indian” radio scripts into a multi-volume graphic novel series. Arigon is also the illustrator for the award-winning Kokila/Penguin/Random House children’s book “Contenders: Two Native Americans, One World Series.” She was featured in the PBS series “Native America,” Season 2. In 2024, WLA member Susan Bernardin wrote a chapter on Arigon’s comic work for the Eisner nominated “Inks: The Journal of the Comics Studies Society.” Starr is a member of SAG-AFTRA and Actors’ Equity and is based in Los Angeles, CA.

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The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA

MONDAY 7:30PM–whenever

Graduate Student Social

Location: The R&J Lounge and Supper Club

320 NW 10th Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73103 (3 miles from the conference hotel)

Get to know your fellow students and enjoy the city!

Who We Are

The Center for the Study of the American West has a mission of promoting scholarship on the American West both as a region culturally unique and as a product of broad historical forces. CSAW is housed in the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum, the largest history museum in Texas.

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What We Do

Founding in 2016, CSAW has established itself as an organization seeking to promote the American West both on the local scene and in terms of the larger scholarly field. In this endeavor, CSAW focuses on development of interdisciplinary scholarship through research, education, and public outreach and remains dedicated to cultivating a critical vision of region and place in a globalized era.

How to Get Involved

BOOK AWARD

The Bonney MacDonald Book Award recognizes a book that demonstrates excellent scholarly or creative insight concerning the North American West. Books from any discipline, genre, or publisher are eligible. The 2025 winner will be announced later this year. Books published in 2025 can be submitted for consideration for the 2026 award cycle.

RESEARCH SUPPORT

CSAW offers Research Grants in Western American Studies to scholars who would benefit from the use special collections at the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum archives and other regional research institutions. Grants up to \$2,000 are available depending on the applicant's research topic and need.

CURRICULUM

CSAW student interns gain on-the-job experience, are exposed to the American West and to interdisciplinary studies, and assist with research and public outreach. WTAMU students from all disciplines are welcome to apply. Both the History and English B.A. and M.A. programs at WTAMU offer emphasis in Western American Studies.

FORGOTTEN FRONTERA

The Forgotten Frontera project aims to recognize and document the history of Mexican American and Tejano history in the Southern Great Plains region, where these people made a significant contribution not adequately recognized in the region's written histories.

FORGOTTEN
FRONTERA

Western American Literature: Leading the Way for 60 Years!



**J. Golden Taylor,
1966–1974**

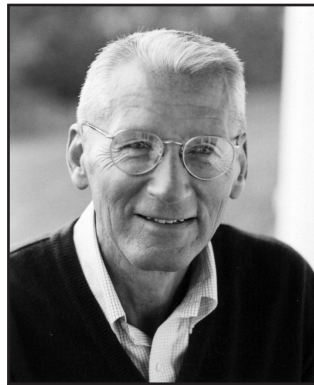
the writings of Willa among others. Their the literature of the established US can-

Wylder wrote in the fourth issue of the journal: “The main purpose of *Western American Literature* is to provide a scholarly journal for the publication of articles which treat Western literature with seriousness. Other scholarly journals are often too interested in the great names of Eastern literature, both past and present, to consider Western writers.” Over the decades, the work of WLA and WAL scholars has demonstrated the significance, even centrality, of western writers, artists, and filmmakers in the cultural production of the United States.



**Tom Lynch
2013–2020**

This year we celebrate the 60th Anniversary of *Western American Literature*! In our office at Northern Michigan University a full run of the journal sits on our shelves, from the very first issue published in Spring 1966 to our most recent Summer 2025 issue. What an incredible record of our field – both its growth (sometimes slow, sometimes exponential) and its consistency.



**Thomas J. Lyon
1974–1997**

Early issues are filled with the words of scholars whose names have been affixed to WLA awards, including J. Golden Taylor, Don D. Walker, Delbert Wylder, and Thomas J. Lyon. In these issues, scholars focused on the figure of the Mountain Man, and Cather, Hamlin Garland, and Frank Norris, work was a call to action, an insistence that American West had a place alongside the on of predominantly Eastern writers. As



**Melody Graulich
1997–2013**

As we move through the years and decades since, the journal’s emphasis has shifted from demanding a place at the table to questioning what we mean by the West; the who, what, where, and when of the US West continue to be challenged and expanded. We see this developing archive reflected in recent issues in which our writers grapple with a diversity of texts: from the Beach Boys to the Congolese film *Saloum*, from marketing documents at the Oregon Health and Science University to necro-settler colonialism and the Alamo.

The inclusion of new voices has developed alongside fresh approaches to familiar texts and topics. Our most recent issue is a case in point. Titled “Resettling Willa Cather’s West,” the Summer 2025

WAL is a Special Issue edited by Book Review editor Emily Rau. The essays it contains consider the work of Cather (who was first written about in the very first issue of *WAL* by Maynard Fox) from new and developing perspectives, pushing forward the fields of Cather Studies and western American literature. As Rau writes in her introduction, “[The] essays in *Resettling Willa Cather’s West* give voice to some silences in Cather scholarship, reckon with Cather’s erasure of Indigenous peoples in the Great Plains, and explore her embeddedness in and moments of resistance to the settler colonial project.”

The variety of scholarship published in *WAL* along with the incredible diversity of books reviewed underscore the vitality and relevance of our field. For 60 years *WAL* has served as both a reflection and a driver of our field, and we have come a long way from the early days of staking a claim to the worthiness of western American literature. As we move into a future made increasingly uncertain through ongoing colonialism, emboldened racism, worsening climate change, and troubling political instability, our work will be more urgent than ever.

In the very first issue of *WAL*, editor J. Golden Taylor wrote, “Since our journal can be only as good as your scholarship, we invite you to produce.” To his invitation I would add: the field is yours to shape, where will you take us next?



Amy Hamilton
current editor

~Amy Hamilton, *WAL* Editor



Please use the hashtag #westernlit2025 and share some images on Instagram!

Follow @westernlit-association !



TUESDAY 7:00AM–8:00AM

Breakfast for Presidents ONLY

Location: Jack Rabbit Restaurant

T1—TUESDAY 8:00AM–9:15AM

T1A—War, Civil and Otherwise

Location: Cypress

Session Chair: Sylvan Goldberg, Colorado College

Paradise: An Iraqi Man's Life and War in Arizona

Hugh Martin, Air Force Academy

Silverland Excerpt

Matt Gallagher, independent scholar

Spontaneous Generation

Sylvan Goldberg, Colorado College

T1B—Afterthoughts in Western Film

Location: Dogwood

Session Chair: James Mayo, Jackson State Community College

Accepting Forbidden Love: How *Lone Star* Pushes Boundaries beyond Reality

Laura Irvine, Texas State University

"A Dangerous Woman to Have Around:" Alma Brown in Martin Ritt's *Hud*

James Mayo, Jackson State Community College

Prolepsis in the Late Italian Western

Richard Parker, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile

SMU **Clements Center
for Southwest Studies**

T1—TUESDAY 8:00AM–9:15AM

T1C—Words of Love, Words of Strength

Location: Loblolly

Session Chair: Sarah Jane Kerwin, Oberlin College

Durational Uncertainty in Certain Women

Sarah Jane Kerwin, Oberlin College

Fancy Dance, Little Chief, and the Love of an Aunt

Steve Pelletier, University of Arizona

T1D—Afterstories of Mexican American Women

Location: Redbud

Session Chair: Ramon Guerra, University of Nebraska Omaha

Comiendo lumbre = Eating Fire: Gina Valdés and the Poetics of Maize

Melina Vizcaíno-Alemán, University of New Mexico

Mexican Saint in the American West: Transnational Holiness and Power in Luis Alberto Urrea's 'Santa Teresa' Novels

Ramon Guerra, University of Nebraska Omaha

Legends of Hospitality in Ana Bégue de Packman's 1938 Californian Cookbook

Elizabeth Martinez, University of Texas at Austin

T1F—Virtual Realities and Regional Sensibilities

Location: Sunset Ballroom 2

Session Chair: Laura M. Furlan, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Madness, Myth, & Misogyny: The Wind by Dorothy Scarborough

Jaydn {Louise} Jeffries, West Texas A&M University

From Cultural Commodification to Liberation: Sovereignty in Riding the Trail of Tears

Winona Regina Doubrava, Texas Tech University

Replacement at the Museum: Native Americans in the Exhibition of Idaho History

Kimberly Marshall, University of Oklahoma

T1—TUESDAY 8:00AM–9:15AM

T1G—Readings: Short Fiction & Memoir

Location: Sunset Ballroom 3

Session Chair: Aristotle Christopher Johns, University of Utah

Fire Season

Lawrence Coates, Bowling Green State University

90¢ at Ludlow

Aristotle Johns, University of Utah

Short Story — The Final Abundances

Sung Park, Georgia State University

Excerpt from ONCE: A Memoir of Family, History, and Place, creative non-fiction

Sara Spurgeon, Texas Tech University

T2—TUESDAY 9:30AM–10:45AM

T2A—Roundtable—Graduate Student Professional Development 1: Anatomy of a Professional CV and Dossier

Location: Cypress

Session Chair: Rob E King, Texas Tech University

- Panelists:**
- Joanna Hearne, University of Oklahoma
 - Nicolas Witschi, Western Michigan University
 - Amanda Zink, Idaho State University

T2B—The Dead Don't Die in the West

Location: Dogwood

Session Chair: Kirby Brown, University of Oregon

Anti-Colonial Visions of Vampirism in Octavia Butler's *Fledgling*

Maddie Lacy, Rice University

Many Faces, Many Places, One Monster: Vampire Westerns as Community Threat Narratives

Benjamin David Pascoe, West Texas A&M University

T2—TUESDAY 9:30AM–10:45AM

T2C—Alternative Westerns

Location: Loblolly

Session Chair: Paul Williams, Idaho State University

Space Oddity: the Migrant Future of Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*

Lars Erik Larson, University of Portland

The Recurrent Frontier: Alternate History and Conflict Transformation

Paul Williams, Western Colorado University

Echoes of Antiquity: The Influence of Greek Mythology on late 19th and early 20th Century

Western American Women Writers: Part 2, Willa Cather

Megan Riley McGilchrist, The American School in London

T2E—Ralph Ellison as Western Writer (MELUS)

Location: Sunset Ballroom 1

Session Chair: Tracy Floreani, MELUS

The Epic, Ethnic West: Ellison at the Movies and in The Territory

Tracy Floreani, MELUS, independent scholar

“A Black Tie with an Almost Imperceptible Pattern of Red”: The Native American Dimension of Ellison's Post-*Invisible Man* Fiction

Benji de la Piedra, Independent Scholar (Washington, DC)

Death, Trains, and Boyhood: “Boy on a Train”

Keith Elddon Byerman, Indiana State University

T2F—Monster Mash: Monsters in Contemporary Indigenous Ecohorror (ASAIL)

Location: Sunset Ballroom 2

Session Chair: Aries Farrington, University of New Hampshire

A Kaleidoscope of Monsters: The Living, Dead, and Undead in Andrea L. Rogers *Man Made Monsters*

Yingwen Yu, Texas Christian University

Unstable Identities: Bloodsucking Entities and Settler Colonialism in *Elatsoe* by Darcie Little Badger

Alyssa Froemel, East Carolina University

T2—TUESDAY 9:30AM–10:45AM

Haunting Presence/Present: Parasitic Monsters and Settler Colonial Extractions in Jessica Johns' *Bad Cree*

Aries Farrington, University of New Hampshire

Haunted Yet Holy Land: A. A. Carr's *Eye Killers* and the Indigenous Gothic

Grace Humphreys, University of Arizona

T2G—Lightning Talks // Nebraska's Hell-Bent for Leather: Sex and Sexuality in the Weird Western

Location: Sunset Ballroom 3

Session Chair: Michael K Johnson, University of Maine-Farmington

The Daddy with No Name: The Kinky Cowboy Aesthetics of *The Mandalorian*

Jennessa Hester, Texas Tech University

'Touch your wound, dear': *Eye Killers* and the Vampire of Manifest Destiny

Miriam Brown Spiers, Kennesaw State University

Kink, Camp, and Queer Masculinity in *The Wild Wild West*

Sara Spurgeon, Texas Tech University

Qweirding the West and Re-forming the Nation

Anne {Mai Yee} Jansen, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

Sex and Sexuality in the Weird Western: An Introduction

Michael K Johnson, University of Maine-Farmington

World
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YOUR PASSPORT
TO GREAT READING

T3 Plenary—TUESDAY 11:00AM–12:15PM

T3—Plenary: Sanora Babb, and the Importance of Telling the Stories about Women Who Have Been Forgotten to Understand the Past, the Present, and the Future

Location: Sunrise Ballroom 1

Presenter: Iris Jamahl Dunkle

Iris Jamahl Dunkle is a poet, biographer, and scholar whose work challenges the male-centric narratives of the American West's recorded history and amplifies the often-overlooked voices of women. Her new book, *Riding Like the Wind: The Life of Sanora Babb* (University of California Press, 2024), is a *USA Today* bestseller, receiving national acclaim for its poignant exploration of Babb's life and her fraught relationship with the literary history of the Dust Bowl. PBS producer Ken Burns describes the biography as "heartbreaking and heroic," bestselling author Kristin Hannah calls it "long overdue," and U.S. Poet Laureate Robert Hass lauds Dunkle as a "brilliant and vivid storyteller." The book has been featured in *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, *Washington Post*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *The Millions*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Alta*, and many more. An excerpt describing how "Steinbeck mined her research for *The Grapes of Wrath*. Then her own Dust Bowl novel was squashed" appeared in *Salon* and sparked dialogue about Babb's unacknowledged contributions to literary history. Dunkle earned her MFA in poetry from New York University and her PhD in American Literature from Case Western Reserve University. Her previous books include the biography *Charmian Kittredge London: Trailblazer, Author, Adventurer* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2020) and four poetry collections, including her latest, *West : Fire : Archive*, published by The Center for Literary Publishing. Dunkle curates [Finding Lost Voices](#), a weekly blog dedicated to resurrecting the voices of women who have been marginalized or forgotten.



Iris Jamahl Dunkle



Lunch—TUESDAY 12:15PM–1:45PM

Location: Wherever You Like

Lunch on your own.

T5—TUESDAY 1:45PM–3:00PM

T5A—(Re)Placing the Plains

Location: Cypress

Session Chair: Timothy G. Bradford, University of Oklahoma

Collaborative Memory and Layered Land in Karen Russell's *The Antidote*

Emily J. Rau, University of Nebraska–Lincoln

“The Silence of These Plains”: The Ecocentrism of Stephen Crane's Western Perspective

Darcy Lewis, Missouri State University

T5B—Writing Western Love(s): Romance, Family, and Other Affinities in Literature (PAMLA)

Location: Dogwood

Session Chair: Anne (Mai Yee) Jansen, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

Spurs and Other Kinks: Re-Mythologizing the Cowboy in Asian American Neo-Western Romance

Anne {Mai Yee} Jansen, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

Better Than Sex Cake

Joshua T. Anderson, Walsh County Three Rivers Soil Conservation District

Lonesome Creatures: Cowboys and Their Mothers

Austen Camille, independent

Writing in the Glitch: Between Code, Kin, and the Archive

Nat Leduc, University of Toronto

T5C—The Elemental West: Words of Earth, Wind, Fire, and Water

Location: Loblolly

Session Chair: Amy T. Hamilton, Northern Michigan University

Weird Western Wildfire: Fire as Affective, Material, and Wild

Jennifer Ladino, University of Idaho

Collecting Desert Rocks: Earth as Care, Desire, and Love

Jada Ach, Arizona State University

Whispers in the Grass: Wind as Memory, Presence, and Resistance

Amy T. Hamilton, Northern Michigan University

Internal Liquidities: Water and Scarcity in the West

Dominique Vargas, The University of Texas at San Antonio

T5—TUESDAY 1:45PM–3:00PM

T5D—Ethics, Identity, and the Steinbeckian West (The International Steinbeck Society)

Location: Redbud

Session Chair: Samantha Covais, Binghamton University

In Search of Duende on Cannery Row in 2025 (89 Seconds to Midnight)

Nicole Henares, Independent Scholar

Steinbeck, Spatiality, and the American Dream

Samantha Covais, Binghamton University

“The Weakest Must Be Defended”: Re-Reading *Of Mice and Men* through Catholic Bioethics

Jeffrey Yeager, Bluefield State University

T5E—Southwestern Hauntologies

Location: Sunset Ballroom 1

Session Chair: Jesse Alemán, University of New Mexico

From Cather to Cannibals: The Southwest’s “Peculiar Horror” in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*

Jesse Alemán, University of New Mexico

Arboreal Extermination and Reclamation in the Writings of Webb, Dobie, and Paredes

Diana Noreen Rivera, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Monstrous Motherhood and the Haunting Modernity of “Doña Rita’s Rivals”

Erin Murrah-Mandril, UT Arlington

The Missing Mother: Horror and Transformation in *Woman of Light*

Leigh Johnson, Middle Tennessee State University

T5F—Rethinking Migration and Representation in the Multiethnic West (MELUS)

Location: Sunset Ballroom 2

Session Chair: Tracy Floreani, MELUS

Emerging into the Upperworld: Migration as Enlightenment and Resistance in American Indigenous Mythologies

Kimberly Teaman Carroll, California State University Northridge

Cecilio García-Camarillo and Editorial Praxis in Chicanx Publications

Jose Fernandez, University of Iowa

T5—TUESDAY 1:45PM–3:00PM

The Wretched West: Latinx Horror and the Death-Worlds of the Borderlands

Luis Alberto Cortes, Texas A&M University - Kingsville

Honoring Memory and Loss: Exploring Mother-Daughter Relationship in Maxine Hong Kingston's "The Making of More Americans" and *The Woman Warrior*

Swati Gilotra, University of Georgia

T5G—Roundtable: Contemporary Writing in the West

Location: Sunset Ballroom 3

Session Chair: Ken Hada, East Central University

To Care as an Act of Resistance

Ky George, poet

Deep Interiors: Intersections of Identity and Landscape

David Meischen, Dos Gatos Press

Labelling the Essence of Experience

Paul Juhasz, Seminole State College

Writing Working Class Landscapes in Oil Country

Joey Brown, Retired

Ken Hada is a poet and professor at East Central University in Ada, Oklahoma, where he has directed the annual Scissortail Creative Writing Festival for 20 years. Ken is the author of twelve collections of poetry, including his latest: *Visions for the Night*

and *Come Before Winter* (Turning Plow Press, 2025, 2023). His previous collection, *Contour Feathers*

(TPP, 2021), received the Oklahoma Book Award. Other works of his have been awarded by The Western Writers of America, The National Western Heritage Museum, South Central Modern Language Association and The Oklahoma Center for the Book. His work has been featured on "The Writer's Almanac" and various additional media outlets. In addition to his poetry, Ken remains active in scholarship, writing and publishing regularly on regional writing, literary ecology and multicultural literatures. The "Ken Hada Collection" is to be held at the Western History Collection Library at the University of Oklahoma.

Ky George is a writer and educator living in Gallup, New Mexico. A graduate of Oklahoma City University's Red Earth MFA program, Ky explores the relationships between the land, her



Ken Hada



Ky George

people, and whatever else is out there in the great beyond through poetry, essay, and fiction. They have previously been published in *Behind the Rain*, *The Red Mesa Review*, *Lesbians are Miracles*, and *Insurrection* from Gnashing Teeth Press; their debut chapbook, *Common Prayers*, is forthcoming as a part of the Fierce Mosaics project from The Leaves Poetry Press.



David Meischen

David Meischen is the author of *Nopalito, Texas: Stories* (University of New Mexico Press, 2024) and *Caliche Road Poems* (Lamar University Literary Press, 2024). *Anyone's Son*, from 3: A Taos Press, won Best First Book of Poetry from the Texas Institute of Letters in 2020. A Pushcart honoree, with a personal essay in *Pushcart Prize XLII*, David is cofounder and Managing Editor of Dos Gatos Press. He lives in Albuquerque, NM with his husband—also his co-publisher and co-editor—Scott Wiggerman.

Paul Juhasz is a two-time Pushcart nominated author of five books: *Fulfillment: Diary of a Warehouse Picker*, a mock journal chronicling his seven-month term as a picker at an Amazon Fulfillment

Center; *As If Place Matters*, a collection of short fiction; and three collections of poetry: *Ronin: Mostly Prose Poems*, a finalist for the 2022 Oklahoma Book Award, *The Inner Life of Comics*, and *The Fires of Heraclitus*, a finalists for the 2025 Oklahoma Book Award. He served as curator and coordinator of the Woody Guthrie Poets from 2020–2024 and currently lives in Oklahoma City.



Paul Juhasz



Joey Brown

Joey Brown is a poet and a fiction writer. She has authored two poetry collections: *The Feral Love Poems* (Hungry Buzzard Press) and *Oklahomaography* (Mongrel Empire Press). Her poems and prose have appeared in *The Red Earth Review*, *Plainsong*, *Concho River Review*, *The Langdon Review of the Arts in Texas*, *Tulsa Review*, *Oklahoma Review*, *The San Pedro River Review*, and other journals. Her poetry has been selected for several anthologies including *Southern Voices: 50 Contemporary Poets* (Lamar University Literary Press, 2024). She's an adjunct professor of Professional/Technical Writing at Missouri Southern State University, in the program she founded and directed for 24 years. Her current work-in-progress, a poetry collection titled *Turn Out the Lights: Poems from Busted Oklahoma*, is her attempt to tell the story of the oil-busted Oklahoma landscape of her childhood.



T6—TUESDAY 3:15PM–4:30PM

T6A—Literary Oklahoma: Our Stories and Our Literary History

Location: Cypress

Session Chair: Rachel Heise Bolten, Stanford University

As Dry Bones in a Dry Land: Dust Bowl Okies and Faith
Rilla Askew, University of Oklahoma

Josie Craig Berry, a pre-1940 Black Literary Icon
Jeanetta Calhoun Mish, Independent Scholar

108 in the Shade: Durant, OK as a Hotbed of Poetry in the Early 20th Century
Cullen Whisenhunt, Eastern Oklahoma State College

T6B—Words of Resilience (in person and international virtual presentations)

Location: Dogwood

Session Chair: Jada Ach, Arizona State University

The “New” Frontier of Contemporary Western Cli-Fi
Kristin J. Jacobson, Stockton University

No Way West: Noir, Abjection, and Racial Confinement in Chester Himes’ *If He Hollers Let Him Go*
Sara Gallagher, Durham College

Georg Heinrich Loskiel (1740–1814) Crossing the Borders
Mara Grudule, University of Latvia

T6C—Teaching Teachers: Undergraduate Indigenous Literatures

Location: Loblolly

Session Chair: Brian J Twenter, University of Central Oklahoma

There’s More to Hunger Stories: Lois-Ann Yamanaka’s *Blu’s Hanging*
Bailey Council, University of Central Oklahoma

Importance of Scenery and Landscape in Katherine Vermette’s *A Girl Called Echo*
Ashlyn Clark, University of Central Oklahoma

A Living History in Brandon Hobson’s *The Storyteller*
Erin Dobson-Keahbone, University of Central Oklahoma

T6—TUESDAY 3:15PM–4:30PM

T6D—Graduate Student Professional Development 2: Anatomy of a Dissertation

Location: Redbud

Session Chair: Maria T. Kane, Washington University in St. Louis

Presenters: Peter Bayers, Fairfield University
Jennifer Ladino, University of Idaho
Ryan Tan Wander, Valdosta State University

T6E— Law, Language, and Relations

Location: Sunset Ballroom 1

Session Chair: Zachary Hernandez, Texas A&M International University

Eastern Law, Western Order: Three Types of Attorneys in Western Novels and Film
Brian Smith, Northeastern State University

“English Was Simpler”: An Examination of the American Idiom at Play in East Asian Speculative Fiction

Luke Madison Fredette, University of Science and the Arts of Oklahoma

Towards a Decolonial Literature: Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead* as a Relationally Living System

Alisha Jean-Margaret Dukelow, University of Southern California

T6F—Whose West? Colonial, Decolonial, and Transnational Intersections in the West

Location: Sunset Ballroom 2

Session Chair: Channette Romero, University of Georgia

L’Héroïne du Texas: Indigenous Presence in an Early Texas Novel
Theresa Gaul, Texas Christian University

BTS, Barbie, and the Global Cowboy
Bowen Du, University of California, Davis

Sounding Back: Sonic Sovereignty in Navajo Westerns
Channette Romero, University of Georgia

Transit and Trauma: Border Trouble in Twentieth-Century Mexican Comics
Christopher Conway, The University of Texas at Arlington

T6—TUESDAY 3:15PM–4:30PM

T6G—Pleasure as Praxis: Decolonial Joy as Resistance in BIPOC Storytelling

Location: Sunset Ballroom 3

Session Chair: Vanessa Ramirez, University of North Texas

Aesthetic Abundance in Embodying Queer Latinx Ecologies

Moe Gámez, University of Oregon

Recipient of the Louis Owens Award

“And you consider that history?”: Decolonial Joy in Graciela Limón’s *Song of the Hummingbird*

Vanessa Ramirez, University of North Texas

Chicana Futurisms in Olivia Evey Chapa’s Manuscript *Divided I Fall*

Elizabeth Martinez, University of Texas at Austin

Speculative Borderlands and the Insurgency of Time: World-Traveling in Rudolfo Anaya’s ChupaCabra Trilogy

Isaac Salazar, Rice University

Recipient of the Dorys Crow Grover Award



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T7 Plenary—TUESDAY 4:45PM–6:00PM

T7—Plenary—Who Gets to Be Indian? Difficult Conversations about Native American Identity

Location: Sunset Ballroom 2

Session Chair: Krista Comer, Rice University

Discussion with Dina Gilio-Whitaker, California State University, San Marcos

Follow-up: Kirby Brown, University of Oregon

Respondent: Susan Bernardin, Oregon State University, Corvallis



Dina Gilio-Whitaker

Dina Gilio-Whitaker (Colville Confederated Tribes) is a renowned Native American studies scholar and journalist, especially on the topics of environmental justice, Indigenous knowledge, and identity. She is lecturer faculty in American Indian Studies and Program Director of the California Indian Culture and Sovereignty Center at California State University San Marcos. Her most recent book is the award-winning *As Long As Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice, from Colonization to Standing Rock* released in 2019 and her forthcoming book *Who Gets to be Indian: Ethnic Fraud and Other Difficult Conversations about Native American Identity* is scheduled for release in fall 2025 from Beacon Press.



VISIT
NORMAN

TUESDAY 6:45PM–10:00PM

Awards Banquet & Dance

Location: Sunrise Ballroom 1&2

Entertainment:



2025 WLA Award Recipients

Distinguished Achievement Award

For an influential scholar or creative writer in western American literature

Quraysh Ali Lansana

Susan J. Rosowski Award

For outstanding teaching and creative mentoring in Western American Literary Studies

José F. Aranda Jr., Rice University

Thomas J. Lyon Book Award

For most outstanding book published last year in western American literary or cultural studies

Stephen Tatum, University of Utah

for *Unhomely Wests: Essays from A to Z* (University of Nebraska Press)

Don D. Walker Prize

For best essay or book chapter published in western American literary and cultural studies in 2024

Eve Eure, University of California - San Diego

for “Intergenerational Testimonials and the Politics of Black Cherokee Belonging,” published in *American Literature* 96.4

WLA/Charles Redd Center K-12 Teaching Award

For best instructional plan for a K-12 unit on western literature

Kylie Nicole Jennings, Southmoore High School

for *In Cold Blood: Analyzing the Impact and Ethicality of the True Crime Genre*

Creative Writing Award

For best creative writing submission to the conference

Isaac Salazar, Rice University

for “El Arbol del Tule, or variations on creation”

J. Golden Taylor Award

For best essay presented at the conference by a graduate student

Sung Park, Georgia State University

for “*Citizen 13660 and the Diseased State*”

Dorys Crow Grover Awards

For outstanding papers presented at the conference by graduate students who contribute to our critical understandings of region, place, and space in western American literatures

Crista Diane Fiala, University of Connecticut

for “Untraditional Intimacies:” Re-Pairing American Narratives of Racialization and Settler Colonialism in Ocean Vuong’s *On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous* (2019)”

&

Isaac Salazar, Rice University

for “Speculative Borderlands and the Insurgency of Time: World-Traveling in Rudolfo Anaya’s ChupaCabra Trilogy”

Louis Owens Awards

For graduate student presenters contributing exceptional scholarship and expanding diversity in the association

Moe Gámez, University of Oregon

for “Aesthetic Abundance in Embodying Queer Latinx Ecologies”

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OUR AWARD RECIPIENTS!

TRANSITION ALERT



Sabine Barcatta

My heartfelt thank you to all WLAers who have been so wonderful to work with over the past 28 years! The Western American Literature office was my home for the first half of that time. Thank you, Melody Graulich, for believing I could be a managing editor. We had some good times. Apologies to the WAL fellows, who had to sit through hours of tedious cross-reading, but I enjoyed those immensely. Some of you still come to the conference and will help carry the WLA into its next decade. Though sad to lose the journal to Nebraska, it was a pleasure to transition to general WLA support in 2013 with Bill Handley as Executive Secretary at the time. (I said I would do it if he gave me a fancy title ;-)

As Director of Operations, I got to better know executive secretaries, treasurers, presidents, council members, and many of the volunteers needed to chair awards over the years.

The WLA's 60th anniversary seems like the perfect time for me to retire and enjoy a new chapter in my life. I'm glad to go; I cannot tell a lie. And I couldn't be happier for the organization to have Amanda take it from here. To all of you my very best wishes. Auf Wiedersehen. Goodbye.

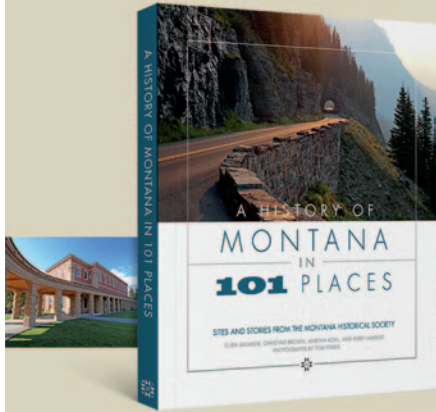
I'm excited to serve the WLA in the role of Director of Operations, though I'm a little daunted by the size of shoes I have to fill! Sabine has been the backbone of this association for decades, and my initial goal is to keep things running as smoothly and efficiently as she always has. In time, I'm also hoping to help grow the WLA and broaden our sphere of influence in the academy and beyond. Partnering with non-academic institutions and making our work visible and accessible to the general public, while making space in our conversations for the public to contribute, is one way we can sustain our programming in terms of both funding and messaging. I hope to chat with many of you this week about your hopes and dreams for the WLA!



Amanda Zink

NEW from Montana Historical Society Press

A History of Montana in 101 Places: Sites and Stories from the Montana Historical Society



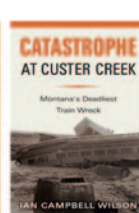
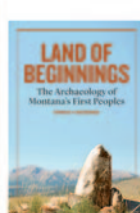
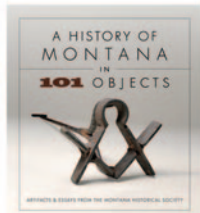
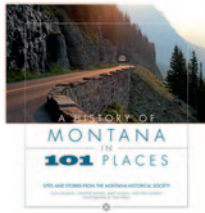
A History of Montana in 101 Places outlines how community organizations, everyday folks, and local, state, and federal governments have made and remade the Last Best Place. **101 Places** features diverse locations that embody major cultural, economic, and political developments in the history of the state. Battlefields and government buildings appear alongside homes, schools, and taverns. Indigenous cultural sites share space with farms and mines as these places come together to tell Montana's story.



304 pages • 253 photographs • \$29.99 softcover, ISBN 978-0-9721522-0-4 • \$49.99 hardcover, ISBN 978-1-7370960-9-2

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WEDNESDAY 8:00AM–1:00PM

Book & Vendor Exhibit

Location: Sunrise Ballroom 3

WEDNESDAY 8:15AM–9:30AM

WAL Editorial Board Meeting

Location: Sunrise Ballroom 1

For board members only.

W1—WEDNESDAY 8:45AM–10:00AM

K-12 Teachers on Teaching: Literature and History

Location: Cypress

Session Chair: Megan Riley McGilchrist, The American School in London

In Cold Blood: Analyzing the Impact and Ethicality of the True Crime Genre

Kylie Nicole Jennings, Southmoore High School

Recipient of the WLA/Charles Redd Center K-12 Teaching Award

From Pages to Place: Teaching the Great Depression with Federal Writers' Guides and Picture Books

Dalton Savage, National Council for History Education

WEDNESDAY 10:15AM–12:00PM

General Membership Meeting

Location: Sunrise Ballroom 1

All WLA Members are encouraged to attend.

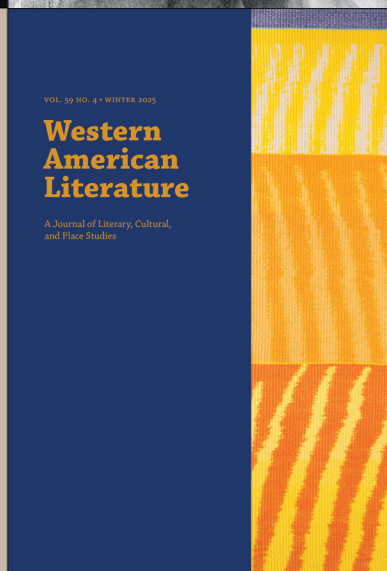
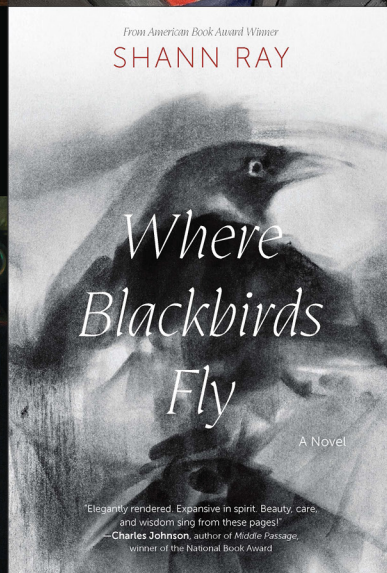
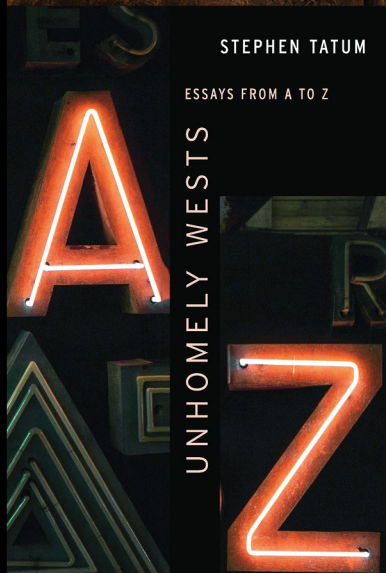
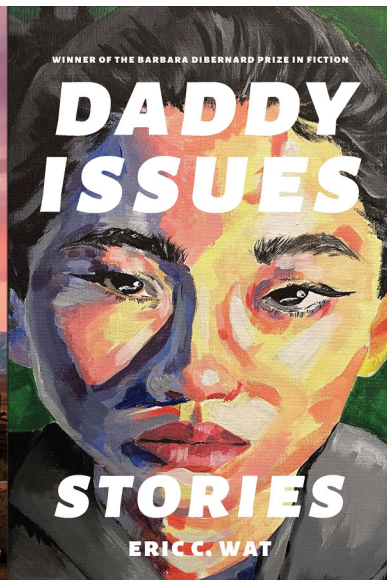
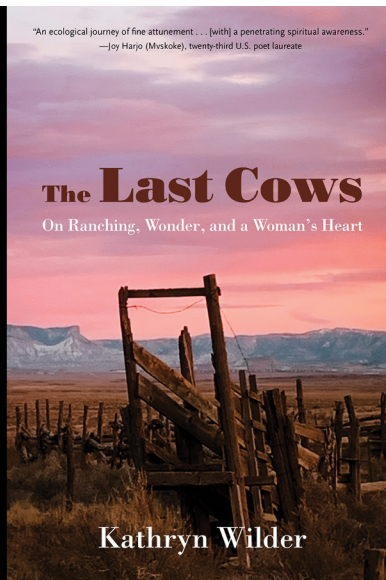
To nominate a WLA member for the Executive Council: Find out if your nominee is willing to serve. Nominations will be taken at the Business Meeting. Self-nominations are accepted. Council members must be WLA members and must attend the next three WLA meetings, including the Executive Council meeting. All nominees are advised to attend the Saturday morning Business Meeting, although voting will take place online after the conference.



Executive Council

Kalenda Eaton	President	University of Oklahoma
Kirby Brown	President Elect	University of Oregon
José Aranda Jr.	Vice President	Rice University
Billy J. Stratton	Past President	University of Denver
Audrey Goodman	Exec. Secretary	Georgia State University
Krista Comer	Treasurer	Rice University, Emerita
Amy Hamilton	Editor, <i>WAL</i>	Northern Michigan University
Susan Bernardin	2025	Oregon State University
James Cox	2025	University of Texas at Austin
Celina Osuna	2025	University of Texas at El Paso
Dominique Vargas	2025	California Lutheran University
Maria Kane	2025	Grad rep, Washington University in St. Louis
Rachel Heise Bolten	2026	Stanford University
Kristen Brown	2026	Northern State University
Bernadette V. Russo	2026	Mount St. Vincent University, Halifax, Canada
Brian J Twenter	2026	University of Central Oklahoma
Rob E. King	2026	Grad rep, Texas Tech University
Zachary Hernandez	2027	Texas A&M International Univ.
Emily Rau	2027	University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Ryan Wander	2027	Valdosta State University
Amanda Zink	2027	Idaho State University

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WLA Annual Conference Sites + Presidents

Year	Location	President/s
1966	Salt Lake City, Utah	C. L. Sonnichsen
1967	Albuquerque, New Mexico	Delbert E. Wylder
1968	Colorado Springs, Colorado	Jim L. Fife
1969	Provo, Utah	Morton L. Ross
1970	Sun Valley, Idaho	Don D. Walker
1971	Red Cloud, Nebraska	John R. Milton
1972	Jackson Hole, Wyoming	Thomas J. Lyon
1973	Austin, Texas	Max Westbrook
1974	Sonoma, California	John S. Bullen
1975	Durango, Colorado	Maynard Fox
1976	Bellingham, Washington	L. L. Lee
1977	Sioux Falls, South Dakota	Arthur R. Huseboe
1978	Park City, Utah	Mary Washington
1979	Albuquerque, New Mexico	Richard Etulain
1980	St. Louis, Missouri	Bernice Slote/Helen Stauffer
1981	Boise, Idaho	James H. Maguire
1982	Denver, Colorado	Martin Bucco
1983	St. Paul, Minnesota	George Day
1984	Reno, Nevada	Ann Ronald
1985	Fort Worth, Texas	Gerald Haslam
1986	Durango, Colorado	Tom Pilkington
1987	Lincoln, Nebraska	Susan J. Rosowski
1988	Eugene, Oregon	Glen Love
1989	Coeur D'Alene, Idaho	Barbara Meldrum
1990	Denton, Texas	Lawrence Clayton
1991	Estes Park, Colorado	James C. Work
1992	Reno, Nevada	Joseph Flora
1993	Wichita, Kansas	Diane Quantic
1994	Salt Lake City, Utah	Stephen Tatum
1995	Vancouver, BC	Laurie Ricou
1996	Lincoln, Nebraska	Susanne K. George
1997	Albuquerque, New Mexico	Gary Scharnhorst
1998	Banff, Alberta	Robert Thacker
1999	Sacramento, California	Michael Kowalewski
2000	Norman, Oklahoma	Robert Murray Davis
2001	Omaha, Nebraska	Susan Naramore Maher
2002	Tucson, Arizona	Judy Nolte Temple
2003	Houston, Texas	Krista Comer
2004	Big Sky, Montana	Susan Kollin

Year	Location	President/s
2005	Los Angeles, California	William R. Handley
2006	Boise, Idaho	Tara Penry
2007	Tacoma, Washington	Ann Putnam
2008	Boulder, Colorado	Karen Ramirez & Nicolas Witschi
2009	Spearfish, South Dakota	David Cremean
2010	Prescott Resort, Arizona	Gioia Woods
2011	Missoula, Montana	Nancy Cook & Bonney MacDonald
2012	Lubbock, Texas	Sara Spurgeon
2013	Berkeley, California	Richard Hutson
2014	Victoria, Canada	Anne L. Kaufman & Laurie Ricou
2015	Reno, Nevada	Susan Bernardin & David Fenimore
2016	Big Sky, Montana	Linda Karell
2017	Minneapolis, Minnesota	Florence Amamoto & Susan Maher
2018	St. Louis, Missouri	Michael Johnson & Emily Lutenski
2019	Estes Park, Colorado	SueEllen Campbell & Alex Hunt
2020	Virtual Environment	Kerry Fine & Rebecca Lush
2021/22	Santa Fe, New Mexico	Audrey Goodman & Lisa Tatonetti
2023	Fort Hall, Idaho	Jennifer Ladino & Amanda Zink
2024	Tucson, Arizona	Billy J. Stratton
2025	Oklahoma City, Oklahoma	Kalenda Eaton



A Peek into the Future

2026	Eugene, Oregon	Kirby Brown
2027	Houston, Texas	José Aranda Jr.



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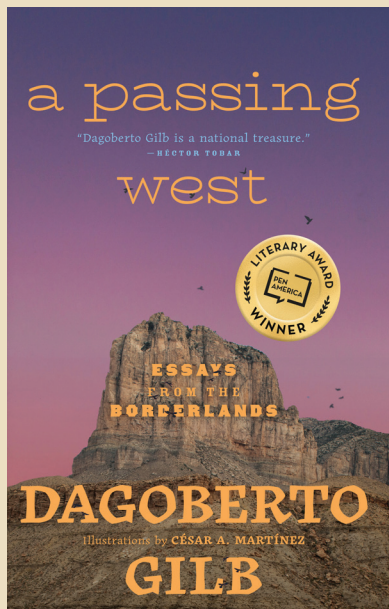
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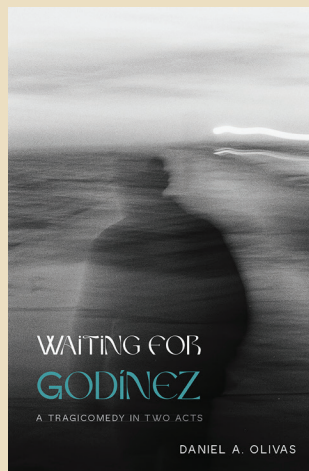


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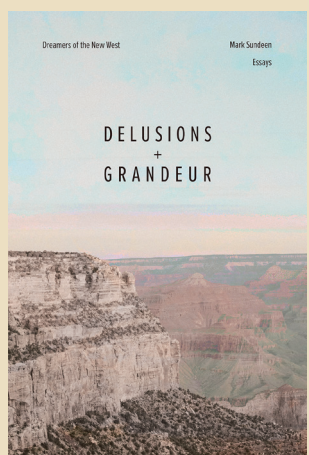
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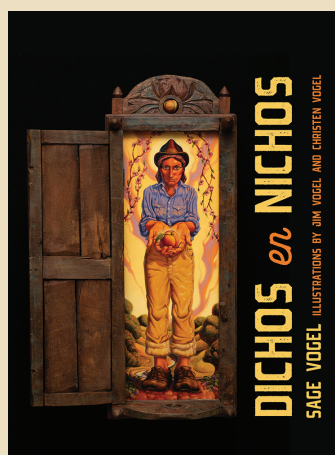
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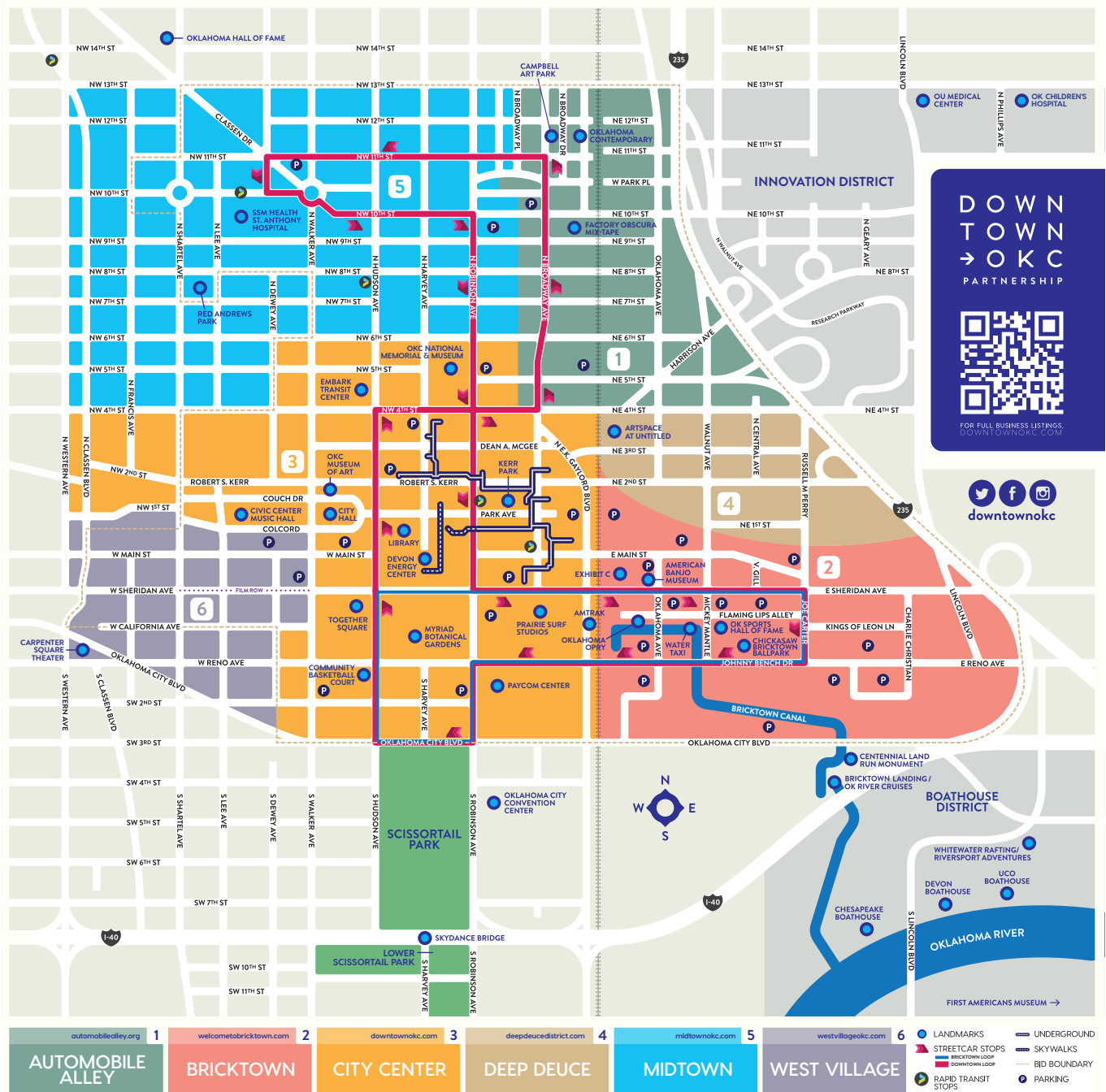


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THIS ~~IS~~ KALAPUYAN LAND

Relationality & Reciprocity in Kalapuya Ilihi



Western Literature Association | August 26–29, 2026 | Eugene, Oregon

The 2026 Western Literature Association Conference will take place **August 26–29, 2026**, at The Graduate-Hilton Hotel in **Eugene, Oregon**.

Nestled along the banks of the Willamut River in the central Willamette Valley, the city now known as Eugene has long been a gathering space for Kalapuya and other Indigenous peoples and a home to a diverse ecology of oak savannahs, camas fields, wapato habitats, salmon fisheries, managed forests, and more than human relations. With the opening of the Oregon Trail in the 1830s to our present moment, the valley and its peoples have experienced dramatic social, cultural, economic, and ecological change, much of it captured in the multiple expressive forms of the peoples and communities who now call Kalapuya ilihi home. Though much of this history is inflected with conflict, violence, and dispossession, these lands and waters also have been centers of Indigenous resistance and resurgence, environmental activism and stewardship, union and worker organizing, countercultural politics, LGBTQ activism, and anti-racist and anti-fascist resistance.

Reflecting these complexities, WLA 2026 welcomes proposals for papers, panels, roundtables, lightning rounds, and other formats on any aspect of literary and cultural productions of the “American West” (broadly conceived and complicated), with particular interest in the following topics:

- Indigenous literary and cultural productions, ecological knowledge, philosophies of kinship and responsibility; and theories of land, water, and interrelationality
- Black, Asian, and Latinx histories of presence and influence
- Travel, mobility, and exchange across and between Oceania and the PNW
- Hmong, Basque, and Central and South American Indigenous communities/literatures
- LGBTQ community building, activism, and creative practice in Eugene and the PNW
- Black, Indigenous, and Women-of-Color feminisms and literatures
- Environmental policy/activism, resource (co)management, and national parks and public lands
- Memorialization, commemoration, and archival practice
- Possibilities and limitations of genre, media, and literary/aesthetic form
- Panels, roundtables, or lightning rounds on recently published anthologies, edited collections, or other collective projects

As we consider our current moment of intensifying political conflict, Kalapuya ilihi offers a rich site to think collectively about the many pasts, presents, and, most crucially, future(s) that bring us together as guests and potential relatives on what was, is, and always will be Kalapuyan lands. For more information, consult the conference website or contact **2026 WLA President Kirby Brown** at wlaconference2026@westernlit.org. Skoden! Sdoodisden!