

**SEARCHING FOR A NEW STORY TO INHABIT:
LARRY WATSON'S *MONTANA 1948* AND THE DILEMMA
OF THE POSTMODERN AMERICAN WEST**

by
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In his 1987 collection of essays entitled *Owning It All*, William Kittredge noted that "in the American West we are struggling to revise our dominant mythology, and to find anew story to inhabit."¹ More recently Kittredge has elaborated on this theme in a new collection of essays, *Who Owns The West?* "Stories," he writes "are places to live, inside the imagination. We know a lot of them, and we're in trouble when we don't know which one is ours. Or when the one we inhabit doesn't work anymore, and we stick with it anyway.... We are like detectives, each trying to make sense and define what we take to be the right life. ... If we ignore the changing world, and stick to some story too long we are likely to find ourselves in a great wreck. It's happening all over the West, right now, as so many of our neighbors attempt to live out rules derived from old models of society that simply reconfirm their prejudices."²

Kittredge's concept of *inhabited stories* blends the real and the imagined in an insightful way. The West, more than any other place in America, has long been dominated by the imagination. Western history was imagined both before and after it was actually made. Western settlers initially dreamed their own versions of success, creating images in their minds, before setting out to new western homes. After arriving, most settlers found their dreams unattainable. But rather than give up on their dreams, most adapted old dreams to new realities, or adopted new dreams altogether. Years later, looking back on their experiences in the West, these settlers often valued their histories of creating western landscapes by drawing on the language of the hopeful expectations they had created in their minds.

The mix of the real and the imagined is common to all societies, who reconstruct their pasts with the needs of contemporary culture in mind. Cultural historian Michael Kammen has noted that "memory is, by definition, a term

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which directs our attention not to the past but to the past-present relation." Such mixing of past and present and the real and the imagined has its dangers, especially when used by a particular political or social regime to achieve the illusion of consensus and to bolster its own claims to authority. However, traditions based on both the real and the imagined past can provide the basis for social cohesion. Perhaps the strength of the mythic view of the old West rested on both of these aspects of tradition. On the one hand it silenced minority ethnic voices that held little political or social power in the developing West. Yet it also provided a basis for consensus among its white majority, a population in the late nineteenth century that was desperately in need of cohesion after the brutal nightmare of a civil war while at the same time seeking to understand the social implications of a new industrial order.³

During the last few decades the West has been re-imagined by historians, novelists, and essayists, who have found the traditions of the Old West poorly suited to the postmodern world. Both in history and literature, many writers have cast aside the language and mindset of the traditional Western story and have begun to look upon the landscape anew. Yet, as Kittredge points out, these acts of *re-visioning* the West are not separate movements, but a dialectic that seeks to discover not only a regional history or a regional voice, but a regional identity. "What we need in our West," he writes, "is another kind of story, in which we can see ourselves for what we mostly are, decent people striving to form and continually reform a just society in which we can find some continuity, taking care in the midst of useful and significant lives."⁴

Larry Watson, in *Montana 1948*,⁵ explores this post-modern re-envisioning of the West in an elegantly fashioned narrative both about the West and about western story-creating itself. While on the surface Watson's novel chronicles the struggles of a Montana family torn between old and new western ways and values, the tension of the novel comes from the narrative's struggle to define a landscape caught between the imagined and the real; the past and the present; and the national and the local. Watson's novel creates a narrative that is faithful to the new stories of the regional western writers, parallels the new histories of New West historians, and furthers the continuing discussion of a new national myth of the West.

I.

The divergence in storymaking regarding the West began in earnest in the 1960s. Before this time the dominant story of the West was one of an agrarian people coming into a western wilderness and working to transform it into a garden of civilization. Though this mythic story always had its detractors, the basic plot was agreed to by both those who settled in the West and those who watched them from afar. To both, the story was heroic; and if the story ignored logic and facts, it nevertheless encouraged apparently impossible achievements. Yet during the Cold War this story began to unravel to both audiences. Historian John Hellmann has shown that many Americans' faith in the frontier myth was shattered by the debacle in Vietnam. Touted by American leadership as a test of American history and ideals, Vietnam was originally envisioned as a simple frontier landscape. Yet this vision quickly began embroiled in a tangle of complexity, at first destroying the simplicity of the frontier myth, and eventually leaving Americans to ponder the divinity of their errand into the wilderness. As the sixties progressed, box-office westerns became anti-westerns, suggesting both Americans' loss of faith, and their traditional and continued use of the West as a landscape on which to enact their national morality plays.⁶

This national loss of faith in the story of the West, however, paralleled a separate loss of faith by those who actually lived in the West. During World War II, the West underwent a dramatic transformation. Newcomers flooded the region, disrupting isolated, provincial worlds. World War II and the Cold War not only forced a new global awareness of the West, but also fostered a period of self-reflection. During a period of heightened sensitivity to issues of race, ethnicity, and gender, the self-assured racial stereotypes of the Old West were at best anachronistic. Regional writers—both of literature and history—found more validity in diversity than in consensus. The simple story of the West was simple because it conveyed only one narrow viewpoint; a story that encompassed the many experiences that made up the West would necessarily be more complex.⁷

For regional novelists and writers, this postmodern West took on a character that was at odds with the traditional story of western pioneer progress. Regional western writers, such as Ivan Doig, William Kittredge, Theresa Jordan, and Mary Clearman Blew, have written compelling personal memoirs.

They seek to understand their sense of western identity by exploring their often dysfunctional family heritages.⁸ Historian Elliott West has recently outlined the characteristics of this movement. "[T]hese writers break with the early heroism of the traditional western novel," he writes. "There is little about promise but much about costs."⁹ After noting that most "western literature" was created outside the West and imposed upon it, West has noted that regional writers who are telling stories far different from those espoused by their settler ancestors have begun to emerge. Though these writers vary by region, style, and even genre, they "come up with similar lessons"—lessons rooted in a particular place, where endurance and accommodation are prized, where "life outside of family is a contradiction in terms," and where people "must pay both dues and attention. The context is an instinctive sense of boundaries," West writes, "and a wary affection for beautiful places that sometimes will turn around and slap you silly."¹⁰

For western historians, as well, the traditions of the past no longer fit. Many of this generation, such as Donald Worster or Patricia Nelson Limerick, grew up in western settings that were hardly mythic. "I am from Banning, California," Limerick has noted,

a town on the edge of the desert, 80 miles southeast of Los Angeles. ...Banning was, from its aridity to its mountain setting, a world apart from Portage, Wisconsin, the hometown of Frederick Jackson Turner. ... after a spell of wondering why I had to grow up in a town that seemed so far from the main course of American history, I ended up taking Banning seriously. Take Banning seriously, and you find yourself immediately in the role of rebel against the standing models of western history. Tailored to fit Portage, Wisconsin, Turner's frontier theory simply won't fit Banning, regardless of how you trim and stitch, tighten and loosen. Western American historians with backgrounds like my own had the choice of accepting the standard Turner-derived interpretations of the field and discarding our own personal experiences or trusting our experiences and discarding the old theories. It is a tribute to the power of tradition that so many western historians submitted to the first option so long and chose theory over experience.¹¹

As historians who had also lived through the national traumas of the 1960s and 1970s, the New West school began to ask disturbing questions about the fundamental assumptions of western stories.¹²

Almost overnight the mythic symbolism of the West—the simple story that embodied the soul of the American character—became complex, morally bankrupt, and finally irrelevant. A new generation of western writers has struggled to understand the modern West. The New West school, however, has been unable to formulate a widely-accepted new paradigm for the West. On the surface this appears to be because the Old West myth has been unwilling to ride quietly away into the sunset. Yet perhaps more significantly, the problem has come not from the particular details of any story of the West, so much as it has come from the ambiguous nature of Western stories themselves. Michael Kammen has noted that the study of traditions in their cultural context may help identify a region's sense of identity. But he has also noted that such a study can "clarify the acceptable grounds of social change. To be successful, for example, a reformer ordinarily must propose modes of change that seem consistent with a society's values."¹³ ... "Regional rivalries and variations in the sectional sense of history are extremely significant. National traditions, moreover, are not merely an amalgam of local ones. Rather, communities may partially appropriate the form but not necessarily the content of national historical rituals."¹⁴ The audience of the classic western expects to learn the daily details of life in the West as well as a morality tale on American citizenship. And in the postmodern West, these stories have divided and followed different trails. The regional trail is one rooted in a moral place; the historic tale pits place against morality; the national tale is rootless in morality. Local tales stress family functionality, morality, and sacrifice; historic tales stress dysfunctional morality; national tales sacrifice stressed, dysfunctional families. If the messages, icons, and morals of the postmodern West are ambiguous, it accurately reflects the ambiguity of a region's search for a new identity, for a new story to inhabit.

II.

The tension and interplay of these various but related attempts to re-envision the West lie at the heart of Larry Watson's novel, *Montana 1948*. With the opening lines, Watson provides not a single story, but a montage of different, apparently disconnected images

so rapid and tumbled together that any chronological sequence seems wrong. Imagine instead a movie screen divided into boxes and panels, each with its own scene, so that one moment can occur simultaneously with another, so no action has to fly off in time, so nothing happens before or after, only during. That's the way these images coexist in my memory, like the Sioux picture calendars in which the whole year's events are painted on the same buffalo hide, or like a tapestry with every scene woven into the same cloth, every moment on the same flat plain...(12)

Not only does Watson give the reader a sense of the disorientation of the postmodern West—images tumbled together—but he also refers to the three traditional forms of western story telling: national (movies), local/ethnic (the buffalo hide calendar), and historical (tapestry, bring to mind the Bayeux Tapestry). Can a single voice emerge from this confusion of story telling? Watson makes the case firmly, by telling this multivoiced story from the first person perspective. "A story that is now only mine to tell... [N]o one knew...these people better. And no none loved them more."(12) A single voice is possible, but its claim to authority is based on knowledge and love, not political or social power. Appropriately, this new voice of the West belongs to a child, or more accurately, a grown man recalling a childhood rite of passage. He is the grandson of the Old Mythic West, the son of a New West mother, raised by a Sioux housekeeper, and brought to manhood by the troubled investigation of his lawyer turned lawman father.

Montana 1948 is clearly not a traditional western novel. Its hero is a sheriff who carries no gun and was rejected by the Army in World War II. The villain is a respected doctor and war hero, who has been brought up by a tough father of the Old West. When the villain is jailed and a gang of toughs try to spring him, law and order are upheld not by a macho hero, but by a woman, a child, and an elderly man. On this level, Watson makes it very clear that his story is not told in the Old West tradition.

Yet the novel's recreation of traditional icons and symbols disturbs not only those who would read the story as a traditional western, but also those who would seek a clearly etched vision of the New West. Watson's novel blends not only the symbolism of the old and the new but also symbols of the local and the national in a manner that initially leaves the reader lost in an ambiguous landscape. Traditional symbols and icons in the novel are superimposed with

both New West meanings and local versus national meanings. Such double meanings begin with the title itself. *Montana 1948* is ambiguous. Nationally, Montana conjures up romantic images of big skies, snowy mountains, and western adventurers. Yet Watson recasts this image in local significance. "For those of you who automatically think of Montana and snow-capped mountains in the same synapse," his narrator informs the reader, "let me disabuse you. Mercer County is plains, flat as a tabletop."(15-16)

In the case of the year, 1948, the reverse is true. From a national perspective, the year carried no romance, or even any meaning. It is apparently one of several indistinguishable years shortly after World War II. Locally, however, the date is far from insignificant, and to its narrator carried associations: "1948 still felt like a new, blessedly peaceful era. The exuberance of the war's end had faded but the relief had not. The mundane, workaday world was a gift that had not outworn its shine."(16)

Again and again Watson recreates the ambiguity of the postmodern West by superimposing local meanings on national stereotypes. For example:

"the Knife River...it's hard to imagine a duller body of water."(23)

"by and large being sheriff of Mercer County did not require great strength or courage."(17)

"The impression is probably forming of my mother as an urban woman disposed by background to be suspicious of wild and rough Montana. Not so. She grew up on a farm in eastern North Dakota..."(24)

"My grandparents' house was built of logs, but it was no cabin; in fact there was nothing simple or unassuming about it."(68)

The main protagonist is Wes Hayden, the narrator's father, and sheriff of Mercer County. The image of a western sheriff that comes to mind is of John Wayne—yet Watson immediately makes it clear that Wes walks with a permanent limp, does not carry a gun, and does not even wear his badge. And should the image of Wes begin to drift toward the self-effacing Gary Cooper-type, Watson points out that Wes did not wear the badge because it was heavy, its pin thick, and it could have torn his shirts.(19)

One of the recurring themes of the novel is the need to cast off all stereotypes and understandings of the West. "My father shook his head," the narrator tells us. "'They're not going to make it into the twentieth century [says Wes] until they give up their superstitions and old ways.'"(42) The irony is that,

though Wes is referring to Native Americans, it is he himself who will have to give up his superstitions and old ways.

Casting off preconceptions, however, is not enough, for in the bewildering landscape of *Montana 1948* it is rarely clear what is stereotype and what is reality. The only solution is to ask questions, to examine carefully both symbols and their meanings, "facts" and personal as well as social motives. It is a theme repeatedly encountered in the book, where not only the major characters spend the majority of the book investigating what is real and what is merely imagined, but even the narrator, recalling the tale for us years later, questions his own memories, understandings, and motives:

"My hands were damp from gripping Marie's shoulders. Was the sweat mine or hers?"(33)

"Should she be in the hospital?" asked my father.

Frank rephrased the question as if my father somehow said it wrong. 'Should she be? That depends. Would she stay there? Or would she sneak out? Would she go home?...' (43)

"Did you hear me Gail? Some of this I'd just as soon you didn't hear."

Was he being gallant—sparing his wife from hearing the particulars of his brother's alleged crimes? Or was he protecting his brother and keeping the number of witnesses to the accounts of his crimes to a minimum?"(63)

"I wasn't sure which prospect was more unsettling: that she wouldn't tell me anything and would scold me for prying, or that she would reveal everything and I would have to hear that story coming from my mother's lips."(64)

"...I couldn't bear to look at her. How could she act normal, I wondered, when she was married to Uncle Frank? How could she not *know*?"(77)

"The gun was unloaded, of course, but I wondered at that moment what might happen if it weren't. And my first question wasn't, could I pull the trigger; it was, could I, from that distance, with that weapon, under those conditions—the wind, the slope of the hill—hit my target. Only after I decided, probably not—an unfamiliar gun, its small caliber, my poor markmanship—did I wonder what might happen if I killed my uncle. Would everyone's

problems be solved? Would my father be relieved? Could I get away with it?"(84)

This cold examination of western symbols and assumptions is painful and contentious. And Watson does spare his characters (or his readers) from this terrible ordeal. For Watson's characters, the questioning begins when Marie Little Soldier, the Hayden's Sioux Indian housekeeper, reluctantly discloses to Sheriff Hayden's wife, Gail, a disturbing allegation: Frank Hayden, Wes's brother, a prominent doctor and war hero, has been molesting Indian women during physical examinations.

At first Wes refuses to believe the accusation; to do so would be to turn all of the comfortable cultural landmarks of his world upside down. Frank is a war hero, is respectable, and is family, much as the Old West was heroic, a reputation-maker, and a part of our cultural origin. The accuser is an Indian woman. Wes points out that she tells lies, that doctors are supposed to help patients, and that Indian patients may misinterpret medical procedures. Wes's shock echoes that of many at the collapse of the traditional western story. Frontiersmen brought civilization to the West and the Indian, even though Indians on reservations and boarding schools may not have understood the philanthropists' aims and procedures.

As the narrator, Wes's twelve-year-old son David points out, "The shock of hearing this about Uncle Frank was doubled because my mother was saying these words. Rape. Breasts. Penis."(47-48) So too were many readers shocked at the language the New Western historians and regional writers used in describing their vision of the frontier. America, they said, was not a Virgin Land, but a Widowed Land. The continent was raped, settlers were genocidal. Western families were not little houses on the prairies, but dysfunctional family remnants, brutalized by isolation. The tone of many of these histories and memoirs was graphic; it was not something Americans wanted to hear.

At the onset Wes could perhaps have ended the investigation, simply by ignoring the report. In anguish he asks his wife, "Why are you telling me this?...Why? Are you telling me this because I'm Frank's brother? Because I'm your husband? Because I'm Marie's employer?" He paused. "Or because I'm the sheriff?" To which Gail responds: "I'm telling you. Why? What part of you doesn't want to hear it?"(48) And then later that night, Gail asks her husband:

"Just one thing, Wes, You never said you didn't believe it. Why

is that? Why?" She waited for an answer.... But he didn't say a word....That was when it came to me. Unele Frank was my father's brother, and my father knew him as well as any man or woman. And my father knew he was guilty.(54)

When the New Western historians, novelists, and essayists began writing and publishing their attacks on the traditional image of the Old West, they too could have ignored the evidence, or been ignored by their colleagues, by the publishers, and by the popular press. Who were they writing to? To themselves? To their academic colleagues? To the American people? To the world at large? And why did they get such coverage? Perhaps it was that after the debacles of the Cold War, Vietnam, and Watergate, we were already disillusioned with our shining western hero, and we knew he was guilty of the brutal crimes with which he was being charged.

Through Wes's investigation, Watson promotes the importance of asking questions about long-held assumptions. Repeatedly, dialogue in the text—even the narration itself—is presented as inquiry, and in nearly every case, these inquiries meet resistance, often active and threatening. Though the process of discovery is often disturbing, it is the hallmark of the New West historiography. Donald Worster has written that "the single most important distinguishing characteristic of the New Western History is its determination not to offer cover for the powers that be—not to become subservient, by silence or consent, to them."¹⁵ Likewise, the authors of western memoirs have determined to tell their stories with all the warts, stories often riddled with brutality, divorce, and isolation.

Watson began his novel by teaching the reader to examine closely traditional symbols in the western landscape. Now, nearly a third of the way into the book, Wes must painfully investigate not only his brother's past, but also the fundamental assumptions upon which he has based his understanding of the world. Wes Hayden's investigation of Marie Little Soldier's accusation parallels the investigations of the new Western historians. In this investigation he is, as Watson's narrator puts it, "a man who tried to turn two ways at once—toward my grandfather...and toward my mother."(21) Grandpa Hayden is the embodiment of everything rugged and dominating about the Old West. He lives in a huge log mansion, a place that "looks like every Easterner's idea of a dude ranch."(68) It is full of wood, brass, guns, and animal trophies. Grandpa Hayden lives the myth of the Old West in all its rough splendor. And

it is clear that he knows at least something of Frank's behavior. "You know Frank's always been partial to red meat.... I wouldn't be surprised if there wasn't some young ones out on the reservation who looked a lot like your brother." (72) When Wes arrests Frank, Grandpa Hayden, who had himself been the sheriff in Bentrock for most of his life demands that Wes release Frank. As Grandpa has told his deputy before, being a peace officer "means knowing when to look and when to look away." (93) And when Wes refuses to release Frank, Grandpa Hayden organizes a gang of hired men to break Frank free.

Grandpa Hayden's vulgar character certainly makes it easier for the reader to condemn the Old West and all that it stands for. Yet Watson will not let the reader off that easily. Grandpa and Frank are family, and despite the mounting evidence Wes finds it difficult to arrest Frank, and ultimately confines him to his basement rather than the public jail house. Wes is trapped, counterbalanced not only between old and new morals, but also between family and outsiders.

The tension of the postmodern West is captured in Wes's dilemma. Western regional writers would remind us that westerners must rely on family. But in the postmodern West, the family appears rooted in an anachronistic and immoral past. It cannot be embraced; it cannot be ignored. The legacy of the western past, Limerick would remind us, is a legacy of conquest that is still very much alive. This dilemma has trapped not only Wes, but also western historians who, despite their investigations, have a "ferocious western pride."¹⁶ And for many regional writers, memoirs reveal personal sojourns outside the West, and the difficult but necessary return to the places they left behind.

The irony of this dilemma is that both Old West and New West advocates are firmly rooted in their reliance on tradition. Old West proponents defend the status quo by asserting their version of what they see as traditional; New West adherents seek to establish a new order by identifying elements of the past that they also identify as traditional. This kind of dualism—the use of the past as tradition both to resist and promote social change—has been identified by Kammen as common in the creation of American tradition.¹⁷ Yet, at least for the last few decades, this debate between opposing social and political factions has made little headway in actually creating a new western identity, a new story to inhabit. It has been the inability of western writers to move beyond this confrontation which has in many ways characterized the postmodern West.

III.

Wes Hayden, however, is forced to move forward by Grandpa Hayden's counterpart: Wes's wife, Gail. From the beginning, Gail tries to get Wes out from under Grandpa's shadow. In response to Grandpa Hayden's materialistic display of frontier bravado in his log mansion, Gail perceives the spiritual bankruptcy of Grandpa's frontier triumph. "My mother," David tells us, "who disliked ostentation of any sort, was especially offended by the house's log construction—usually symbolic of simplicity and humility." (68) It is Gail who confronts Wes with Marie Little Soldier's allegations; it is she who pushes Wes to continue to pursue the investigation; and ultimately it is she who stands up to Grandpa's gang.

Yet in the end, the most damning bit of evidence comes from the narrator himself, David, Wes's son. For it is David who sees Frank sneak out of the house after killing Marie Little Soldier. Ultimately, this is the real contest of the novel—the struggle for David's soul. David is the future; David ultimately will have to live in the West of his Grandpa or his mother, of the old or the new, of the national myth or the local reality.

The world David will inherit, will live in and pass on to this children, will be a world in which incidents like this will be decided locally in obscurity. It is this messy mix of personal lives and public actions, of local and national myths and realities, Watson and the New West historians suggest, that must ultimately be the foundation for new western narratives. Watson, western, regional writers, and the New West historians believe that the West still has an important part to play in the continuing struggle to understand who we are as a people. The postmodern West, in countless daily, personal ways, will either continue to conduct itself according to the dominant symbols of the Old West, or it will begin to create a new identity based on open investigation into both local and national stories, separating one from another, enduring and accommodating both within a world based on family.

Watson, however, knows that this path is not yet followed by many, and indeed the interpretations of the New West writers have not always been welcomed eagerly. In the end of Watson's novel, Frank's suicide means that he will never be tried; the town of Bentrock is free to ignore his immoral past, and to dwell instead upon his heroic achievements. Wes and his family are ostracized and eventually forced to leave Montana.

Ultimately the significance of new western stories is uncertain. David,

later a high school history teacher, knows the difference between local and national stories, but is unable to resolve the differences between them. "I find history endlessly amusing," he tells us, "knowing, as I do, that the record of any human community might omit stories of sexual abuse, murder, suicide.... For my students [though] I keep a straight face and pretend that the text tells the truth, whole and unembellished." Wes Hayden, too, lives out his life in the tension between separate local stories and national myths. When his daughter-in-law later asks about the events of 1948, of a personal story that seems so full of the "Wild West," Wes "slammed his hand down on the table so hard the plates and silverware jumped. 'Don't blame Montana!' he said. 'Don't ever blame Montana!'"(175)

The conclusion of *Montana 1948* is disturbing in part because it is left unresolved, uncertain, messy. Each party—the Haydens, the townspeople of Bentrock, the Sioux—leaves with its own moral, its own interpretation of the justice of what happened. Yet, in this the novel more accurately reflects the ambiguity of the postmodern West than many other western stories. In his discussion of the contemporary West, William Kittredge writes what might be the best moral of Watson's short novel:

If we're every going to quit reliving that story in Montana and the West, we have to talk things out, searching for accord, however difficult and long-winded the undertaking. We need to recognize that adversarial, winner-take-all, showdown political decision-making is a way we defeat ourselves. Our future starts when we begin honoring the dreams of our enemies while staying true to our own.¹⁸

Kittredge's commentary and Watson's novel suggest that the solution to the dilemma of the postmodern West may be found, not in the creation of a new story to inhabit, but at a more basic level, in the approach to western story-making itself. It will lie in stories that feature a search for both meaning and substance, imagination and reality, old and new, regional and global, public and private. It is in this role of the Searcher that so many of the themes of the western experience can be best understood. For, while it will remain forever rooted in the simple story of a frontier past, the postmodern West can only make sense in the intricate interaction of a complex and ambiguous symbolic landscape. Ultimately, our new western stories will demand that we seek,

understand, and give credit to this complexity. "We need to inhabit stories," Kittredge reminds us, "that encourage us to pay close attention, we need stories that will encourage us toward acts of the imagination that in turn will drive us to the arts of empathy, for each other and the world. We need stories that will encourage us to understand that we are part of everything..."¹⁹

NOTES

1. William Kittredge, *Owning It All* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Graywolf Press, 1987), 64.
2. William Kittredge, *Who Owns the West?* (San Francisco: Mercury House, 1996), 158-159.
3. Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 3-5.
4. Kittredge, *Who Owns the West?*, 75.
5. Larry Watson, *Montana 1948* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1993). Further references to this work will appear parenthetically in the text.
6. John Hellman, *American Myth and the Legacy of Vietnam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986). See also John H. Lenihan, *Showdown: Confronting Modern America in the Western Film* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980); Tom Englehardt, *The End of Victory Culture: Cold War America and the Disillusioning of a Generation* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).
7. Richard Etulain, *Re-Imagining the Modern American West: A Century of Fiction, History, and Art* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1996), 140-141.
8. See Ivan Doig, *This House of Sky* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978) and *Heart Earth* (New York: Atheneum, 1993); William Kittredge, *Hole in the Sky* (New York: Knopf, 1992); Theresa Jordan, *Riding the White Horse Home* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993); Mary Clearman Blew, *All But the Waltz* (New York: Penguin, 1991), and *Balsamroot* (New York: Penguin, 1994).
9. Elliott West, "A Longer, Grimmer, but More Interesting Story," in Limerick, *Trails*, 110.
10. Elliott West, *The Way to the West* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 154-155.
11. Patricia Nelson Limerick, Clyde A. Milner II, and Charles E. Rankin, ed., *Trails Toward a New Western History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991), 81-82.
12. For the development of the New West history, see Limerick, *Trails*; William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin, *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1992); Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1987).
13. Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 7.

14. *Ibid.*, 14.
15. Donald Worster, "Beyond the Agrarian Myth," in Limerick, *Trails*, 22.
16. The quote comes from Yale historian Howard Lamar, interviewed by the *New York Times* and quoted in Limerick, *Trails*, 69.
17. Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 10.
18. Kittredge, *Who Owns the West?*, 141-142.
19. *Ibid.*, 164.