

DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR

By IVAN DOIG

OREGONIAN	September 8, 1987
SEATTLE TIMES	September 13, 1987
CHICAGO SUN-TIMES	September 13, 1987
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USA TODAY	October 23, 1987
SEATTLE TIMES	October 25, 1987
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BOSTON GLOBE	November 3, 1987
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SEATTLE TIMES	October 25, 1989
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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Ivan Doig proves it again: He is one of the finest writers working in the land

DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR.

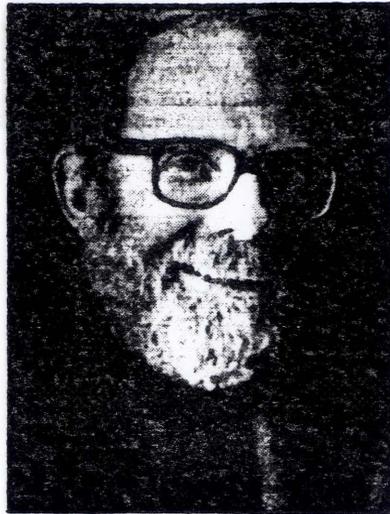
By Ivan Doig (Atheneum, \$18.95).

By PAUL PINTARICH
of The Oregonian staff

Though Ivan Doig has lived and worked in Seattle for the past several years, his heart lingers in northern Montana. There, beneath the eastern foothills of the Rocky Mountains where his father and grandmother kept sheep, Doig was raised through a remote and rural childhood remembered in his first book, "This House of Sky."

That book was a quiet masterpiece, a critical success that earned him a full page in Time magazine prior to the book's publication in 1978 (excellence that will never be a best seller, that sort of thing), as well as a nomination for the National Book Award.

The autobiography was followed by the haunting and less successful "Winter Brothers." Doig's personal search for the spirit of James Swann, writer and legendary denizen of historic Port Townsend, Wash.; after that came "The Sea Runners," his first novel, a histori-



IVAN DOIG
Never enough of Montana

cal novel about Russian Alaska that revealed Doig's commitment to a life near the sea.

"The winters," he explained. "I had enough of the Montana winters."

But not enough of Montana, for with the publication of the novel "English Creek" in 1984, Doig began

a trilogy, his epic history of the McCaskill family that actually begins with this second book, "Dancing at the Rascal Fair."

Doig uses the word "prequel" to describe this literary juxtapositioning and validates his intent by explaining that the trilogy will conclude in the present, his personal acknowledgment of Montana's centennial in 1989.

While "English Creek" is concerned with the decades abutting the region's dire Depression years, "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" begins in 1889, when boyhood friends Angus McCaskill and Rob Barclay emigrate from Scotland to seek land and new lives in America — in Montana where there is so much room that "you could put all of Scotland in the watch pocket of this place."

The two friends arrive in Doig country, settling among other Scots in a region called Two Medicine Country, but known more familiarly as "Scotch Heaven." Each takes a 160-acre homestead, and with the help of Barclay's uncle Lucas, a saloon keeper who has lost his hands in a mining accident, they build their homes and begin the rais-

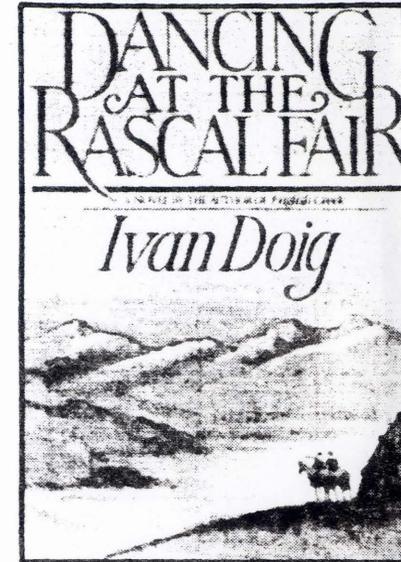
ing of sheep.

Doig has filled the balance of the novel with a comfortably human story of success and survival, love and how to understand it. And there is nature, of course, for Montana is determined by an often unforgiving climate — some winters are more appropriate to the herding of polar bears.

McCaskill and Barclay, as close as brothers, have different temperaments nevertheless. McCaskill is capable of teaching school, as he does for many years; Barclay is attuned to real estate and owns Scotch Heaven's first automobile.

Drama is created through McCaskill's longing for another woman, Anna Ramsay, who jilts him to marry a horse trader. Though he marries Barclay's sister Adair, brought over from Scotland, he carries a torch that ultimately fires the book's conclusion.

To reveal more would be to reveal too much, however. Doig's strength, as it is with most good writers, is in his characters. We begin caring about these people from the start, and that care keeps us interested as we share their sheep shearing, the



blizzards, the droughts, the fires; the romping dances in the school house, the plaguelike deaths from Spanish influenza; the lives that are lived so preciously day to day; lives understood so well by the author.

Yet it is Doig's greater strength that he knows the land so well. He is no James Michener swooping down

and then off, remaining a stranger, but a man who as a boy buried his mother in this same land, shared the struggles of his father and grandmother in the high summer ranges, and even now cares enough to return each year, where Montana receives him as a kind of literary hero.

In any Doig book, however, it is always the writing that is most important. Doig is adept at changing points of view, and he feels free to experiment with any style that enhances his story.

An example: "I still maintain that if the Atlantic hadn't been made of water I could have gone to America at a steady trot. But it seems to be the case that fear can sniff the bothering places in us. Mine had been in McCaskills for some eighty years now. The bones of the story are this. With me on this voyage, into the unquiet night, came the fact that I was the first McCaskill since my father's grandfather to go upon the sea."

Doig is from Montana, so can be called a Northwesterner — yet he is no regionalist. He is one of the finest writers working in the land.

Books

K 6 Sunday, September 13, 1987



In a sweeping saga, set in Montana, a writer tells of

From the dust jacket of "Dancing at the Rascal Fair"

The high life

■ "Dancing at the Rascal Fair"

by Ivan Doig
Atheneum, \$18.95

by Michael Dorris

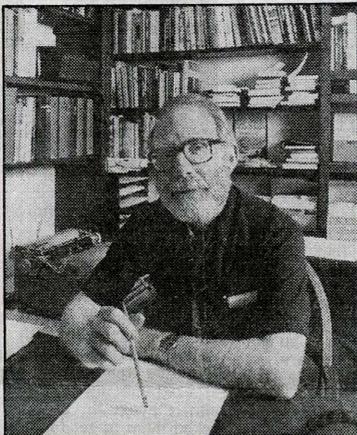
Ivan Doig's magnificent new novel is an answer to the prayer of anyone who has loved a distant country or experienced the full-hearted enthusiasm of youth — and who wants to return for the price of a book.

Part immigrant saga, part intelligent western, part sweeping romance, "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" further establishes its Seattle author in the front ranks of contemporary American writers. The novel traces the life of one Angus McCaskill, born in Nethermuir, Scotland, who crosses the Atlantic in steerage to arrive in Montana on the day of its statehood. He claims it, literally and spiritually, as his own.

The chronicle is constructed with the eye to detail and the unparalleled sense of place that characterize Doig's previous award-winning fiction and nonfiction. Virtually a "prequel" to his 1984 novel, "English Creek," it overflows with the precise yet magically evocative images of the northern Rockies that so distinguished his 1978 memoir, "This House of Sky."

But "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" is grounded in a compelling plot, archetypically familiar yet absolutely original. It is a story of the complexities of friendship and passion, of grief and exuberance, of endurance through fear and hardship. As its action passes from the late 19th century through the first two decades of the 20th, frontier history is illuminated through episodes that are, in turn, laugh-out-loud funny and agonizingly sad.

Doig's talent for describing nature is well known, but there are love scenes in this novel — from the ardor of youth to the tenderness of long-married discovery — that rival the splendor of any Montana vista. Listen to how Angus and his wife of many difficult years pass a snowbound evening in their cabin: "She came up into my arms, her head lightly against my shoulder, the soft sound of her humming matching itself to mine, and we began the first of our transits



Craig Fujii / Seattle Times

Ivan Doig's novel is constructed with an eye for detail and a keen sense of place.

around the room, quiet with each other except for the tune from our throats."

The culture of isolated settlement, populated with individuals who crash and melt against each other from season to season, has not been better presented. Men and women get along because they have no choice; they adore and despise as if they invented the emotions.

We first meet 19-year-old Angus and his friend Robert Burns (Rob) Barclay as they sail from the River Clyde in Scotland, armed with a guidebook and a smattering of skills. Bound for Helena, where Rob's Uncle Lucas claims to own the Great Maybe silver mine, they survive a memorably described ocean voyage and arrive in America brimming with confidence and camaraderie. Nothing seems beyond the reach of hard work and good will, no frustration more than temporary, the springboard to a new, better opportunity.

They are eager to adapt, to shed Old World preconceptions and prejudice, and the Two Medicine country where they settle is breathtakingly splendid, matching every

expectation: "We sat unspeaking for a while, in that supreme silence that makes the ears ring. Where the bevels of the valley met, the creek ran in ripples and rested in beaver ponds. A curlew made deft evasive flight across the slope below us as if revealing curlicues in the air. Everything fit everything else this day."

And in this place — "Scotch Heaven" as it comes to be called over the next 30 years — Angus and Rob marry and father children, dream and experience bitter disappointment, fight the weather and each other to a tenuous draw. They ride the crest of boom times, know the deprivations of economic disaster and most of all realize the pangs of disillusionment: in trust, in the boundaries of decency, in the future itself.

The other characters — Rob's determined sister, Adair; the indelible school teacher, Anna Ramsay; Angus' eventual son, Varrick; the shrewd Lucas and his lifelong Blackfeet "housekeeper," Nancy Buffalo Calf Speaks; the sanguine forest ranger, Stanley Meixell — are no less compelling.

With the varied community of Scottish shepherds and homesteaders, they constitute a self-enclosed world in which all the grand dramas are played and replayed on a landscape of limitless expanse but near-claustrophobic social interaction. It is a world in which secrets are not so much kept as respected, where time hones rather than heals, and where nothing is guaranteed beyond the next chinook.

As always, Doig writes with grace and eloquence; his prose is so subtle that only in the days after finishing "Dancing at the Rascal Fair," when we find ourselves framing our thoughts with the roll of a burrish brogue, do we realize the extraordinary skill involved in his creation. Through vocabulary, word order and pacing — yet without any distracting tricks of spelling or punctuation — he has managed to render the cadence, idiom and lilt of Lowland speech. We have heard these voices, been touched by these lives.

In this fine work of fiction, every word, every surprise, every resolution rings true.

■ Michael Dorris' novel, "A Yellow Raft in Blue Water," was published in May.

Doig's fine new epic of Montana

You are permitted to begin in the kind of delusion that your utensils of homestead-making at least are the straightforward ones—axe, hammer, adze, pick, shovel, pitchfork. But your true tools are other. The nearest names that can be put to them are hope, muscle and time."

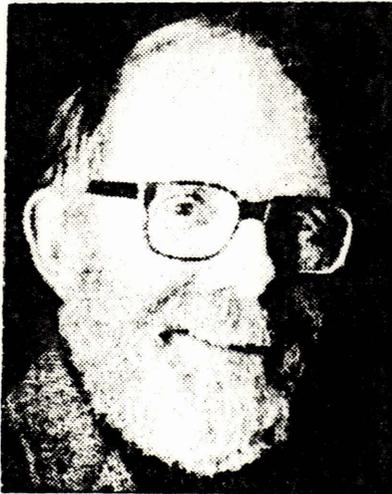
No truer words have been written about the American West than these in Ivan Doig's new novel, *Dancing at the Rascal Fair* (Atheneum, \$18.95). It's a tale of two Scottish immigrants, Angus McCaskill and Rob Barclay, who leave Glasgow in 1889 and fetch up in the Montana plains just east of what is now Glacier Park.

Side by side on adjoining homesteads for the next 30 years the two men deal with the trials and tribulations of sheep raising, schoolmastering, high-country snows, and droughts, loving a woman and losing her to another man, marriages of convenience, sheepmen vs. cattlemen and both vs. the fledgling U.S. Forest Service, and the great influenza epidemic of 1918-1919.

The press of endurance upon character is a theme as old as

Homer, and Doig freshens it with what Angus calls "the unexpected ferocities of family," which as time passes shapes the two Scots-Americans' lives as much as do wind, weather and work. Angus' relationship with Rob becomes as stormy as that with his wife Adair—Rob's sister—and its denouement is shocking and unexpected.

Doig's prose is so muscular and sculpted, so simple and purposeful, that I can think of only Edward Hoagland and Wallace Stegner as Doig's equals among living writers about the American West. Nobody has done better than Doig in contemplating the meaning of American Westernness than *This House of*



Ivan Doig

Sky, his classic meditation on Montana.

Dancing at the Rascal Fair, by the way, is the second of a projected trilogy about the McCaskills; the first, *English Creek* (1984) concerned the 14th summer of Angus' grandson, Jick, on the eve of World War II.



HENRY KISOR
Book Editor

and (AS)

Ivan Doig

His novels of the American West benefit as much from his painstaking research as they do from his poetic imagination

BY WENDY SMITH

For just under a decade, in five books resonant with the echoing spaces of the American West, Ivan Doig has examined the ways in which history and geography interact to shape individual and national character, demonstrating our membership in a "community of time" that links Americans to those who preceded us in the landscape, as well as a community of place that knits us together in a complex weave of familial and social obligations.

In *This House of Sky*, his sensitive memoir of growing up in Montana in the 1940s and '50s, and in *Winter Brothers*, an exploration of the Pacific Northwest coastline through the diaries of a man who first ventured there in the 1850s, Doig mingled past and present in discontinuous narrative that skipped around in time yet presented coherent, moving visions of human possibilities against two very different backdrops. He turned to fiction—but not away from the past—in *The Sea Runners*, which chronicled the escape of four men from a Russian prison in 19th century Alaska and their daring canoe journey down the Pacific coast.

Doig is delving deeper into his Montana roots in the McCaskill family trilogy on which he has been at work for the past six years. *English Creek* took up the family's story in the middle with the tale of 15-year-old Jick McCaskill's coming of age in the summer of 1939. His newest nov-

el, *Dancing at the Rascal Fair* (Fiction Forecasts, July 31), which Atheneum is launching with a 50,000 first printing, goes back to the beginning: the arrival of young Scotsman Angus McCaskill in Montana's Two Medicine Country in 1889, the year the territory became a state. Doig expects to complete the third volume—and carry the McCaskills into the present—in time for the statehood centennial in 1989.

Why has the American past laid such a hold on this writer's imagination? "I think it helps us to know what we are and where we are by knowing where we came from," he says. "Also, I grew up with people in Montana who had a great link to the past. They weren't educated enough in classroom terms to know factual history, but they had a lot of lore in their heads. And it was in the language, too, the sayings that showed up in my father's and grandmother's talk. Going back to Scotland three summers ago to research *Rascal Fair*, I found some of the turns of phrase originated there."

Doig came to the Seattle area, where he has lived for 21 years, to get a Ph.D in history, and his training is evident in the way he works. An energetic, friendly man of 48 whose glasses and gray-red beard give him a vaguely professorial air, he shows PW the file-card boxes filled with research material. "I'm a pretty literal person; I tend to imagine from facts. For example, 'Dancing at the Rascal Fair' is a traditional Scots tune—which I wrote one sleepless night. It comes from this very staunch, Scots, quasi-Marxist sociological book, *Social Class in Scotland, Past and Present*, where I read mention of the fact that when farmers and laborers met to bargain out the summer's wages it was called 'the rascal fair.' I like that phrase. I went to bed one night, not having a title for the book, and the next morning told Carol [his wife], 'I think it's going to be called *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*.' Then I bought a rhyming dictionary and worked

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Doig's uncommon ability to bring the past vividly to life stems in part from his attention to detail. "I would talk to people who had been homesteaders at the turn of the century and ask them, 'You were a school kid. How'd you get to school?' 'Well, we rode horses.' 'Okay, what'd you do with the horses?' Out of that would come bits of lore: in the sagebrush part of Montana, they'd probably hitch the horse to a bit of sagebrush; if they lived in the grassier part, the fathers would probably build a hitch rail for the school. The details of Angus's teaching came out of those sort of particulars." To help him visualize the towns he was writing about, Carol Doig took photographs of individual buildings all over Montana and Scotland. Doig arranged the slides on a light table, grouping the pictures together to get a sense of what a given street might have looked like in 1889 or 1919.

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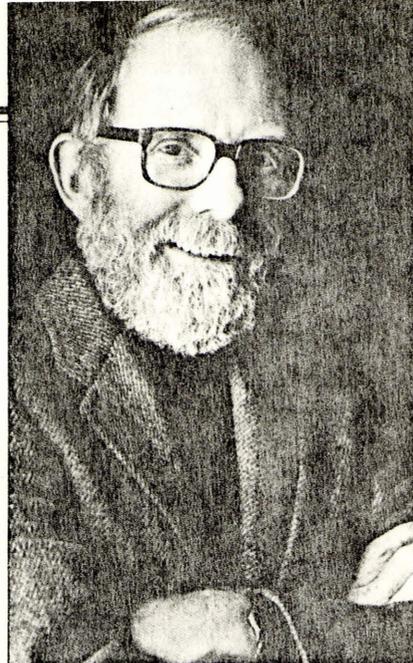
The West itself—Montana in par-

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ticular—is virtually another character in the McCaskill trilogy, and all of Doig's books display a deep attachment to the land and a profound sense of place. "Part of that was growing up in the 'great weathers' of Montana. The space is always around you in various configurations—whether it is the mountains or the plains or simply that almost endless sky—big, booming distances in the landscapes. . . . The echoes of those stay with a person. We moved to Seattle largely because of the geography: the mildness of the climate, the nearness of the water, the greenness. Place is important to me and I think to quite a number of Western writers. Richard Hugo, the great poet of Montana, has a line that always sounds to me like something he picked up in a Missoula bar: 'If you ain't noplace, you can't go nowhere.' To have a base, a plot of existence on the earth, to be familiar with its changes of the seasons, there's a kind of propulsive rhythm to that."

But the West Doig knows so intimately and writes about with such eloquence is *not* the West of legend. "I'm writing deliberately about sheepherding, because we've had too damn much cowboy West. I don't think that's what the West has been about, although we've got a guy in the White House who thinks so: too many movie sets will give you that idea. The West has been about families, schoolteachers, miners, fur trappers, town-builders, all kinds of people coming out here to try and make a living. I'm trying to write against the grain of what I call 'Wisterns,' after Owen Wister, the author of *The Virginian*. He went off from Philadelphia and Harvard and got in with some of the rich cattlemen of Wyoming. So far as he could tell, no one in the West ever had to do any work. In 'Wisterns' it's all card games and saving schoolmarms; nobody ever milks a cow or plants a spud. As best I can tell, there's got to be some kind of catering service out of Omaha that comes out and takes care of the whole damn West. It's nonsense, and I think it's harmful nonsense."

"So much of the West has been nurtured and can only be nurtured by Federal policy: the national forest, the Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management. It's an enormous, dry, fragile part of our country—what Wallace Stegner called 'a land of little rainfall and big consequences.' We've had a complex histo-



© Jim Bates

“It seems to me there’s a new kind of eloquence that is not just an eloquence of the West, but an eloquence of the edge of the world.”

ry of coming to terms with that; there's an ecologically, socially and culturally complex quilt out here from the Ohio River westward. To think that fixing it is just a matter of strapping on your chaps and sixgun is infantile nonsense. This almost tidal swash back and forth between beneficial consequences and harmful consequences interests me."

Doig's characters are always aware that actions have consequences, and the plots of his novels are often driven by the conflict between people's desires and their strong sense of responsibility. "My characters accept that in their lives they do have second thoughts, that part of what we carry around in the attic of our heads are our thoughts about the past. You feel your way along and do as much as you can, yet trying at some point to lead your own life. You're forever feeling your way along this line of equilibrium. Part of the consequence of being alive is that it's not always comfortable."

But Doig also tries to imbue his work with a sense of how many things in life are not within people's control. "My interest in history showed me that both time and the times you live in are going to change you, and I'm trying to write about that. You see in *English Creek* and *Rascal Fair* how much the two

world wars dropped into people's lives out of nowhere. I was trying to use actual historical realities. First the twin calamities of World War I and the flu epidemic of 1919—one out of every 100 Montanans died. Then the fact that one year you were a kid on a ranch in Montana who'd never been further away than the 90 miles to Helena, the next year you're in the Aleutians or the South Pacific, and the year after that maybe you're dead. I'm trying to deal in fiction with the issue of history dropping on us. Of course, we hope it doesn't drop on us in the big way—in the great words of *Riddley Walker*, a book I greatly admire—"The One Big One."

Russell Hoban is only one of the many authors whose work Doig has warmly praised during the conversation; his strong sense of identity as a Western writer doesn't preclude a larger feeling of kinship with world literature. "I've been very much aware of being a Westerner all my life, partly because of memories of the landscape, partly because of the way I was brought up in the West through the accident of being motherless after I was six. I have in some ways the best of both worlds: I'm halfway regarded as a Montana writer, and yet I live outside. The Humanities Council in Billings asked me to talk about looking at Montana from the outside. They have finally said, 'Okay, you're an outsider at last.'

"Montana has always had this big colonial question, part of the land question: Are we simply, can we ever be, more than an energy colony to be mined? So the West has a lot in common with writers from the old outposts of the British Empire, who are often very skeptical of government and very potent. Nadine Gordimer is one of the most potent writers extant in showing the awful naked skin under her society. Then there are books like *The Book of Ebenezer Le Page* and *Riddley Walker*, which push the language out into odd, eloquent corners of the world: the Isle of Guernsey, post-Holocaust England. I'm tending toward the idea, and I don't think it's at all original with me, that there are quite a bunch of us out here at our own centers of the universe, and they're not the metropolitan, polar centers. It seems to me that there's a new kind of eloquence that is not just an eloquence of the West, but an eloquence of the edge of the world." □



Ivan Doig delves deep into his Montana roots in the McCaskill trilogy.

Ivan Doig: Dancing to history's details

WRITERS AT WORK

By Wendy Smith

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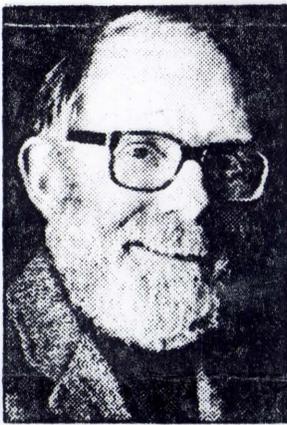
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Ivan Doig

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"I'm a pretty literal person; I tend to imagine from facts," he said. "For example, 'Dancing at the Rascal Fair' is a traditional Scots tune—which I wrote one sleepless night. It comes from this very staunch, Scots, quasi-

Marxist sociological book"—he pulls *Social Class in Scotland, Past and Present* down from a shelf—"where I read mention of the fact that when farmers and laborers met to bargain out the summer's wages, it was called 'the rascal fair.' I liked that phrase.

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CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 1987

Writers at work

Continued from Page 15

mately and writes about with such eloquence is *not* the West of legend. "I'm writing deliberately about shepherding, because I thought we'd had too damn much cowboy West. I'm trying to write against the grain of what I call 'Wisterns,' after Owen Wister, the author of *The Virginian*. He went off from Philadelphia and Harvard and got in with some of the rich cattlemen of Wyoming—so as far as he could tell, no one in the West ever had to do any work. In 'Wisterns' it's all card games and saving schoolmarms; nobody ever milks a cow or plants a spud. It's nonsense, and I think it's harmful nonsense.

"Because so much of the West has been nurtured and can only be nurtured by federal policy: the national forest, the park service, the bureau of land management. It's an enormous, dry, fragile part of our country—what Wallace Stegner called 'a land of little rainfall and big consequences.' We've had a complex, interesting history of coming to terms with that; there's an ecologically, socially and culturally complex guilt out here from the Ohio River westward. To think that fixing it is just a matter of strapping on your chaps and sixgun is infantile nonsense."

Doig tries to imbue his work with a sense of how many things in life are not within people's control. "My interest in history showed me that both time and the time you live in are going to change you, and I'm very much trying to write about that. You see in *English Creek* and *Rascal Fair* how much the two world wars dropped into people's lives out of nowhere. I was simply trying to use what were actual historical realities.

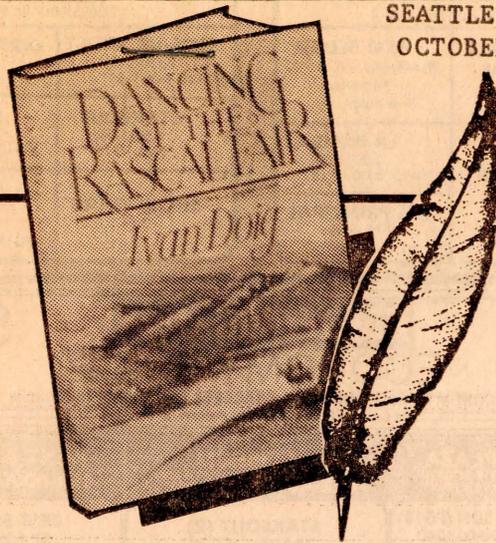
"First, the twin calamities of World War I and the flu epidemic of 1919—one out of every 100 Montanans died. Then the fact that one year you were a kid on a ranch in Montana who'd maybe never been further away than the 90 miles to Helena, the next year you're in the Aleutians or the South Pacific, and the year after that maybe you're dead. I'm trying to deal in fiction with the issue of history dropping on us. Of course, we hope it doesn't drop on us in the big way—in the great words of *Riddley Walker*, a book I greatly admire, 'The One Big One.'

"The more I began to read around and take a look at a world class of writers like Nadine Gordimer—I read *A Sport of Nature* earlier this spring and, my God, it's unbelievable; she makes the rest of us look like kids with crayons in our fists! But a lot of outsiders are really making their mark on literature, people from the outback, the back pockets of the world: Gordimer in South Africa; Thomas Keneally in Australia; Salman Rushdie, born in India; V.S. Naipaul, born in Trinidad. Some of them live in the so-called literary centers now, but they were formed elsewhere, and they're writing about that.

"Montana has always had this big colonial question, part of the land question: Are we simply an energy colony to be mined? The West has a lot in common with these writers from the old outposts of the British Empire. Then there are books such as *Riddley Walker* and *The Book of Ebenezer Le Page* that push the language out into odd, eloquent corners of the world: the Isle of Guernsey, post-Holocaust England. There are quite a bunch of us out here at our own centers of the universe, and they're not the metropolitan, polar centers.

"There's a new kind of eloquence that is not just an eloquence of the West, but an eloquence of the edge of the world."

SEATTLE P.I.
OCTOBER 1987



Meet Ivan Doig, in person, this week.

SEATTLE: Thursday, 3 - 4:30 PM
BELLEVUE: Saturday, 1:30 - 3:30 PM

Ivan Doig, whose books have won 13 literary awards, will be at our Main Store on the Ave Thursday, October 8, from 3 to 4:30 PM and at our new store in Bellevue Saturday, October 10, from 1:30 to 3:30 PM for book signing.

His new book, *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, set in the big sky country he knows so well, is the second book in a trilogy about the fictional McCaskill family.

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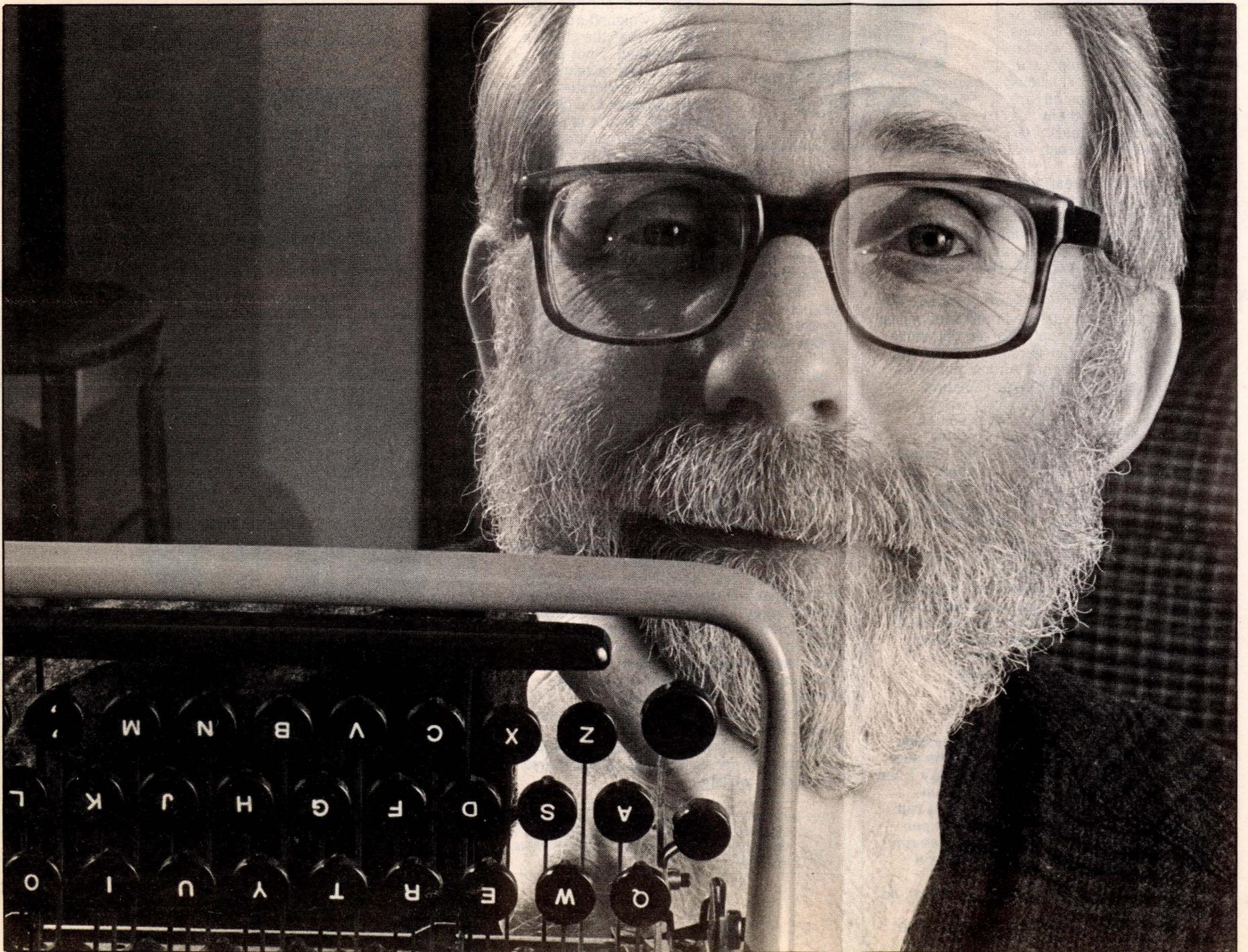
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Ivan Doig



Author Ivan Doig pounds out his fiction on a manual typewriter. The word processor he received as part of the 1985 National Endowment for the Arts grant sits under a dust cover in his Seattle office.

SEATTLE'S MONTANA WRITER

HIS LIFE IS NO 'OPEN BOOK'

WRITTEN BY BEN GROFF
PHOTOGRAPHED BY CRAIG FUJII

Ivan Doig may be the son of a cowboy, but he is not one to jump two-fisted into an interview. He'd rather be writing books.

Doig is telling me about the time he was invited to speak with a group of literature students who were reading his work. He was introduced, he says, as "the man behind the words." He gives me a flabbergasted stare, and the story seems to be over.

"So?" I prompt. "How did you respond?"

"I said 'Huh?'" He drops his mouth wide open in mock speechlessness, and with that, the story is over.

In fact, he does not believe that he is "behind the words," nor that he should be, nor that anyone should care. Doig is a businesslike man, and his business is to create books that are lovely, moving and true. If there is anything antithetical in that, it is lost on one of Seattle's finest fiction writers.

The man behind the words has a ready laugh and wary eyes, an open heart but a careful brain, and a face that is oddly uncertain between the two. The soul of a poet and the mind of a clerk — not an unusual combination for a writer. Whatever the mix, though, it has been a successful one for Ivan Doig.

The 48-year-old transplanted Montanan has carved a comfortable literary niche for himself, based on nationwide critical esteem and sales that are brisk, if persistently regional. But that may be changing, with a new Doig title in the bookstores this week. "Dancing At The Rascal Fair," his fifth book and third novel, seems targeted with greater commercial savvy in an effort to boost Doig's following in those populous reaches where the average reader may not know a buckrake from a bellwether. Even so, "Dancing" is all Doig, set in the northern Rocky Mountain country where the author grew up.

It is that land of his birth, that connectedness to a place where he no longer lives, that has inspired all of Doig's best writing. It is not easy to explore a man who has written beautifully about himself, and then stood aside from his work as if it were all the most ordinary stuff in the world. He can joke that "my life is an open book," but his eyes say something different. They say the books are on the shelf, have at 'em, leave your money in the till and feel free to draw your own conclusions.

The conclusions start in the southwest of Montana, in the high, dry Smith River Valley, in the little town of White Sulphur Springs, where an old lady lives who remembers a thing Ivan Doig cannot — a time when his mother was alive.

In 1943, when Ivan was 4, his father headed the haying crew on the Buckingham Ranch. "Charlie was very genial, very Scotch, very opinionated," recalls Theresa Buckingham, a lively septuagenarian. "You know, you can tell a guy by the way he wears his hat, and his was always cocked."

Charlie was a top hand, and Charlie loved Berneta. Small and frail, Ivan's mother "had a nice mind," in Buckingham's phrase. She also had asthma, so she darkened her little side-house on the Buckingham Ranch to keep it cool, and read to the children through the heat of the afternoon.

That would be the Buckinghams' girl, and Ivan. Even then he was quiet, and no quick study. "One day I was in the kitchen cooking, when he came up and told me did I know he could count? He went 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 with his thick little fingers, so slowly and laboriously, and my Susan was so much the quicker that I thought she must be the smarter. I sure had *him* figured wrong."

But time moved neither laboriously nor slowly, bringing them too soon to a night when the asthma killed his mother in a herder's cabin in the Bridger Range, with 6-year-old Ivan in the other bunk to hear the cessation of her breathing, to see a lantern suddenly lit, to chill to his father's tear-choked voice — and one day to remember.

And to write. In "This House Of Sky," published in 1978, Doig told the sequel to "the death on the summer mountain," looking back on the half-orphaned child he was without a trace of self-pity, but a hard-won joy in what he calls his "gift-passage into a grown-up world" — his life at the side of that job-hopping, beer-drinking, wise-cracking, and fiercely loving son of the sagebrush named Charlie Doig. He writes memorably of nowhere saloons and tough-luck homesteads, of small-time losers and smaller-time winners, of the cobbled-together "brink of a family" his father endured — and then something deeper, for the sake of his son.

After his mother died, "Ivan lived from pillar to post," Buckingham recalls, shifted constantly from house to house among a colorful assortment of town families in order to attend school in White Sulphur while his father hired out as a sheep hand in one corner or another of the Smith River Valley. The boy seems to have been welcomed by his guardians' own children on account of his vast personal library of comic books. "He was brought up on funny-books," says Buckingham; "Charlie got him all he wanted."

Doig refuses to acknowledge any reservoir of pain dammed up behind his memories

DOIG'S LATEST

Ivan Doig, excerpted from, "Dancing At The Rascal Fair." © 1987 Ivan Doig. Reprinted with the permission of Atheneum Publishers. \$18.95).

We came to the Two Medicine River in sunny mid-afternoon and were met by gusts of west wind that shimmered the strong new green of the cottonwood and aspen groves into the lighter tint of the leaves' bottom sides, so that tree after tree seemed to be trying to turn itself inside out. In the moving air as we and the sheep went down the high bluff, a crow lifted off straight up and lofted backwards, letting the gale loop him upward. I called to Varick my theory that maybe wind and not water had bored this colossal open tunnel the Two Medicine flowed through. And then we bedded the sheep, under the tall trees beside the river.

When morning came, I was sorry this was about to be over. All the green miles of May that we had come, the saddle hours in company with Varick, the hand-to-hand contest with the sheep to impel them across brimming Badger Creek, yesterday's sight of the Two Medicine and its buffalo cliffs like the edge of an older and more patient planet. Every minute of it I keenly would have lived over and over again. This I knew the tune of.

The sheep crossed the bridge of the Two Medicine in a series of hoofed stammers. Up the long slope from the river Varick and Davie and the dogs and I pushed them. When they were atop the brow of the first big ridge north of the river, we called ourselves off and simply stood to watch.

On the lovely grass that once fed the buffalo, the sheep spread themselves into a calm cloud-colored scatter and began to graze, that first day of June of 1914.

of those times, but Buckingham may have a clearer recollection.

"He was so lost," she says simply. "A lost little boy."

"I wasn't really aware of that," he claims. "What we were really aware of was getting by. Finding a place for Dad to work, a place for me to live. Quotidian realists." He laughs, the kind of laugh that is like a shrug of the shoulders.

A boxful of comic books; no mother, but a stack of fantasies — that, and a sense beyond remembering of having been read to by a sweet woman in a cool and darkened house.

You can't tell Ivan Doig is a writer by looking at him, any more than you can look at that gorgeous Montana countryside and tell that it kills people.

In his writing, the land and the language feed each other. He fashions a tough and knotty prose full of the language of unschooled, loose-tongued working people, folks who use their minds to feel with.

"My people were poor in money, rich in words," he says without noticeable pride.

He was the cream of Valier High School in the northern wheat country when he turned his back on Montana and went away to Northwestern University near Chicago. There he got his bachelor's degree and a master's in journalism, and he plied that trade in heartland Illinois for four years before returning west in 1966 — not home, but to Seattle and the University of Washington, where he sweated out a Ph.D. in American frontier history before turning full time to the rigors of free-lance writing.

It poses a bit of riddle why this wordsmith with Montana at the heart of him chose early on to keep it at arm's length. The answer begins in economics and ends in death and defeat. First came the revelation that he hated sheep, then the grateful awareness that he loved words, and finally acceptance of the sad fact that there were no jobs for a young writer in Montana.

But there is more to it than that. The West as a metaphor is all over Doig's writing: a heartless bigness and a going away, a cutting loose, a setting free — to what? "The most unfree souls go west, and shout of freedom," observed D.H. Lawrence, and Doig, born in the West, has long since put that home to the east of him.

There is only one reason why Americans have ever followed the setting sun — to leave the past behind. The unforgiving distances, the extremes of weather, the living always between a promise of success and the imminence of catastrophe, the hard foothills that after three-quarters of a century gave his Scottish immigrant family nothing more marketable than character — all seemed to culminate for Ivan Doig in the slow dying of his father, from emphysema, in the early '70s. He now goes back, but only to visit.

In Seattle, he lives a well-regulated life

with his wife, Carol, whom he met as a journalism student at Northwestern. Born and raised in New Jersey, an enthusiastic west-comer and relentlessly positive woman, she has taught journalism and communications at Shoreline Community College for the past 20 years. She and Ivan are similar in outlook and attitudes, vocal inflections, favorite quotes, and the contention that they have not had a serious quarrel in their entire married life.

No workaholics, the Doigs' weekday evenings are reserved for reading, and weekends for quiet socializing or the occasional jaunt to Whidbey Island or Dungeness Spit. Both are only children and have chosen to remain childless themselves, although Ivan's prose has lingered lovingly on the intricate bonds of family. "We are the family," he says reluctantly. "Carol and me."

Linda Bierds, a Seattle poet whose work has appeared in *New Yorker* magazine, assisted Ivan with the editing of "Dancing At The Rascal Fair," and rhapsodizes about his down-to-earth qualities.

"He is a warm and generous man," she insists, "who also, by the way, walks at a break-neck pace, very close to running, as if he is serious about where he's going."

Seriously is how he takes the writing of his colleagues, and he is known for aiding them whenever possible with their own research. "Usually I don't socialize much with other writers," Bierds confides.

"There can be such an aura of competition. But with Ivan, there's none of that."

Still, sometimes this earnestness comes across as a studied coolness. Ivan Doig the man is unswervably determined to be neither pretentious nor flippant about Ivan Doig the writer, so he answers questions in a hesitant, roundabout way. His wife says he's just a thoughtful person who ponders every question so hard that the answer gets lost in the circlings.

"Yes, he seems a naturally distant man," says Harold Simonson, professor of English at the University of Washington, "but this doesn't contradict the introspective tone of his writing. The point is integration. It's a reassurance that existing within the ordinary is the extraordinary, the mysterious, the beautiful."

Attempting to sum him up, I once said to Ivan, "You seem like a doggedly cheerful man. Is that true?"

His voice turned ever so slightly steely and, yes, contemptuous. "I think I'm dogged, and I'm cheerful, so I guess that adds up, yeah."

Then he softened, and circled back, trying, ever trying, to be helpful. "I think," he added, "that is probably Montana, in a sense."

Ivan Doig is stacking wood. It is almost summer, a drowsy day of Puget Sound mildness when no wind ruffles the leaves of a tree-lined North Seattle neighborhood, and you can almost hear the creek water trickling through the green crease of alder and vine maple that gives signature, with a

small brush-stroke of unobliterated topography, to the living-place of this self-described "suburban druid." Beguiling weather, yet Doig has a habitual eye on winter, and his expression beneath the baseball cap emblazoned "Doig Bros. Grain Co., White Sulphur, Mon.," is all November.

You know, you can tell a guy by the way he wears his hat, and this guy wears his way down low across the forehead, dead level.

As he stoops to the job, blue jeans and an old work shirt conceal what might be the awkward curves of an unhorsed cowboy, something lean, tense, and smaller-than-expected in the build. But from the neck up, he is a lumberjack with horn-rims.

The beard is the main thing, full-face and the color of hot coals ashing over. When his mouth is closed, he might as well have a faded bandanna cinched up tight below his nostrils like a drover in a dust-storm; when he talks, the beard splits crossways in the middle and words come out of it, broad, baritone, un-Western and unmusical in their herky-jerky flow, as different from his writing as any words could be.

He ushers me into his study and begins describing for me the realization of every writer's dream — critical acclaim for his first book, plus the sales figures to carry it along — in cautious language that seems unwilling even yet to risk breaking the bubble.

"This House Of Sky" was nominated for the prestigious National Book Award, and enabled him to do whatever he pleased for an encore. There followed "Winter Brothers," "The Sea Runners," and "English Creek," the first Montana novel. "Doig's is a remarkable achievement," notes the UW's Simonson. "In less than a decade, he has earned a reputation placing him atop Pacific Northwest's literary Mount Olympus."

But is it only the Northwest's literary heap he's entitled to? How does an author living in Seattle and writing about Montana or the Northwest coast make a splash in a continental nation whose literary nerve-center happens to be located in a few Manhattan high-rises?

"He's not well-know here at all, why should he be?" barks an assistant manager of Doubleday Books on Fifth Avenue in New York City. "Look at his subject matter" — rodeos? sheep shearing? Fourth of July picnics? — "What is there to make him known?"

"Every writer is a regional writer," soothes Tom Stewart, Doig's editor at Atheneum Books. "Joyce was a regional writer. Proust was a regional writer."

"Those of us whose books draw on a region," sighs Ivan Doig, "we hope we're writing about a bigger country: life!" Then the sudden laugh, the glint of light off the Coke-bottle glasses. "Of course, we all want to be regional writers, but to sell cosmically!"

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smoke Contains Carbon Monoxide.

He sells less than cosmically, to be sure. Until recently, he admits, his career was "entirely underwritten" by his wife's teaching. The aggressive marketing of "Dancing At The Rascal Fair" is a frank assault upon the best-seller lists, but it isn't easy for a writer who occupies uncertain middle ground between the fashionably high-brow auteurs and those facile fantasists who sell like toilet paper in the supermarkets.

He is a punctual creator, creature of work-habits deep in the pink-cheeked grain of this former sheep-herder, hayraker, journalist and historian. His books are meticulously researched, carefully calendared, and cushioned from the ebb and flow of inspiration, which he prefers to keep corraled in large gray file boxes on his shelf labeled "Dialogue" and "Montana Lingo." Deriding the romantic view of writing, he calls himself a craftsman, not an artist, and he is proud of it.

"I do like to think that if you work the craft as well as you can, it tends toward art — aspires, reaches toward art. But I don't need self-discovery, I'm already here." A burst of laughter to deflate that balloon. "No, writing is an act of discovering the possibilities of language."

It is tribute, then, to his craft, or art, whichever you choose, that his firmly managed books seem rather inspired.

"Why not?" he shrugs. "We're lots of things in life. We're bundles, not single reeds."

"But you're very methodical," I say.

"That's inspiration." He lifts his head in a chuckle and the light makes sudden mirrors of his horn-rims.

The poet John Berryman has written of every writer's yearning to be "back from wherever, with it said." Ivan Doig smiles wistfully and allows as how there's something even sweeter, which is to say it again.

To that end, every morning around sunrise, he seats himself at a typewriter and circles back. His next novel, projected for completion in 1990, carries the intoxicating title "Ride With Me, Mariah Montana." He worries over it like an engineer over an equation, but whatever is lost in all the circlings was lost somewhere back in the Smith River Valley and is found again in the words on the page and the books on the shelf, of which there is now a new one. And the next after that will be here in 1990, put your money on it, not in 1991.

In Seattle, Ivan Doig dreams his careful dreams in a room his mother would have enjoyed, because it is cool and shaded. His desk faces west.

BEN GROFF IS A SEATTLE-AREA FREE-LANCE WRITER.

P

Book World

Ivan Doig: The Old West And the New

DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR

By Ivan Doig
Atheneum. 403 pp. \$18.95

By Richard Critchfield

IVAN DOIG is a happy mixture of poet and historian. In just nine years he has produced five truly distinctive books set in Montana and the Pacific Northwest, three of them novels. All beautifully evoke the American westering experience and firmly establish Doig as one of our finest Western writers.

Look at his achievement: *This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind*, published in 1978 when he was 39, is a powerful memoir about his widowed, sheep-herding father, Charles Doig, son of Scottish immi-

Richard Critchfield is the author of "Those Days: An American Album" and "Villages." He is currently writing a book about Britain.

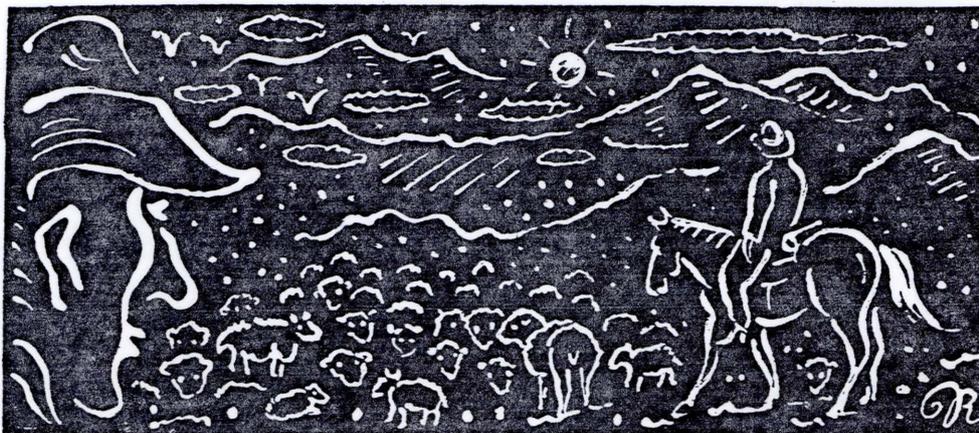


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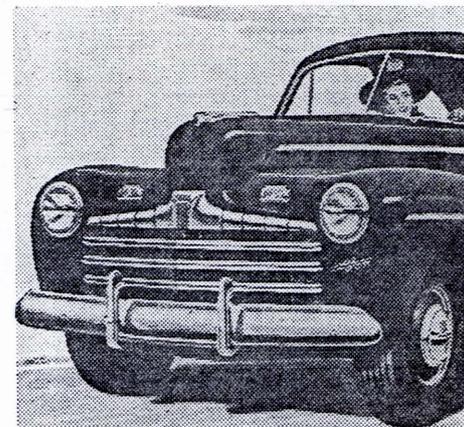
grants, who instills in his son a deep affinity for language, storytelling and the raw Montana landscape.

This strong sense of the land and a growing preoccupation with time are further developed in *Winter Brothers* (1980), interwoven observations by Doig and excerpts from the 1862-90 diaries of James G. Swan, an obscure artist and observer of coastal Indian life in the Pacific Northwest.

The imaginary retrieval of the past became central in *The Sea Runners* (1982), his first novel. Based on an actual event, it tells of the escape by four indentured Swedes from Russian America (1853 Alaska) to what is now Oregon in a stolen canoe; two die on the way. It is a little masterpiece of harrowing adventure.

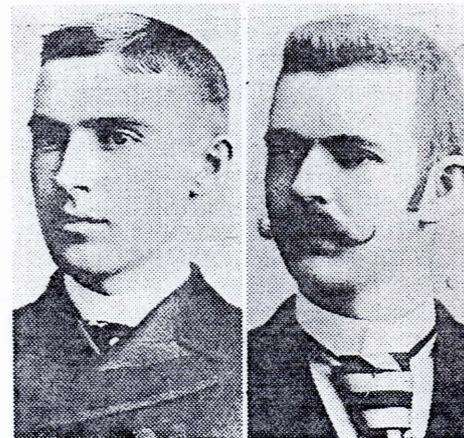
In *English Creek* (1984), the first novel in a projected trilogy, Doig introduces the fictional McCaskill family and their sprawling Two Medicine Country. This is the familiar geography of *This House of Sky*, though the town of Dupuyer, just below the Rocky Mountain Front, has now become Gros Ventre (the locals say "Grove-on"). It is summer in the 1930s and Jick McCaskill, the 14-year-old narrator, goes on a horseback trip with his forest ranger father, Varick. Some of the set pieces in this coming-of-age story, such as a Fourth of July rodeo and a forest fire, are terrific.

Dancing at the Rascal Fair is the trilogy's second volume. Another panorama of life in Two Medicine Country, it takes place much earlier, 1889-1919. —Continued on page 11



A 1946 FORD

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RICHARD W. SEARS (LEFT) AND ALVAH C. ROEBUCK

SEARS ROEBUCK 3

Dancing at the Rascal Fair

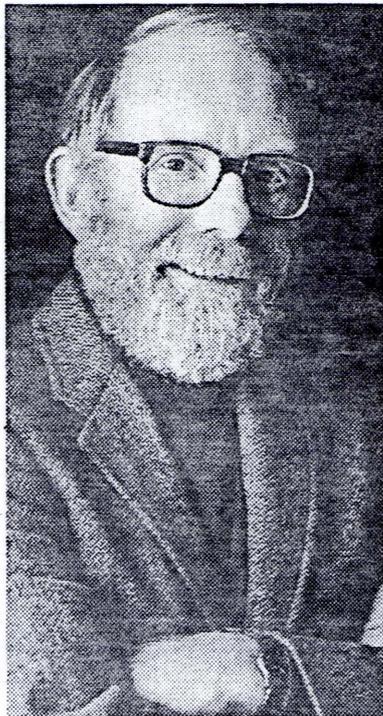
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and its dramatic thread is the friendship and eventual falling out of two Scotsmen, Rob Barclay and Angus McCaskill, Jick's grandfather. They venture from Glasgow by steerage, fellow villagers of Nethermuir, and homestead as neighbors in Montana, doing what they know, sheep-farming. At work out on the range, in the lambing shed and docking corral, over 30 years they prosper. Angus teaches in a one-room school and, thwarted in his love for Anna Ramsay, another teacher, he marries Rob's sister, Adair.

Time passes through them as they go from youth to middle age, and blizzards, the 1918 influenza epidemic and the raw, rugged land take their toll. The building of fences to divide the once-open rangeland into national forest spells the passing of these pioneer days.

The book is warm in feeling and rich in texture; I found that it packed more emotional punch once Varick, the McCaskills' only child, enters the story; there are strong overtones of Doig's own relationship with his father. Indeed, Charles Doig is quoted at the outset: "Scotchmen and coyotes was the only ones that could live in the Basin, and pretty damn soon the coyotes starved out." An attraction of Doig's books is how they all fit together; they expand our experience.

Doig does better to convey the quiet feel and detail of ordinary life than to crash cymbals in dramatic crescendo. As Chekhov said, the best writers are realistic and describe life as it is. Doig has said that he tries to "make the stuff up as realistically as I can." But to describe



Ivan Doig

BY JIM BATES

past life as it was is to lack the stimulus of immediate experience. How does he breathe so much life into it?

The secret of Ivan Doig's gift, I think, is his sense of surfaces and place and his ear for dialogue; his people come alive when they talk. And they talk all the time. All but one of his books is written in the first person.

In the earliest, 1889, passages of *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, his two Scots speak English strongly influenced by Biblical and Shakespearian cadences. By 1919, they sound a lot more like their fellow American sheep-herders and ranchers. Doig can enter the talk of Burns-quoting Scottish immigrants or grim Scandinavian escapees of a

century ago. Or the talk of modern cowboys at a rodeo. He changes his voice as he becomes for the time being one of them.

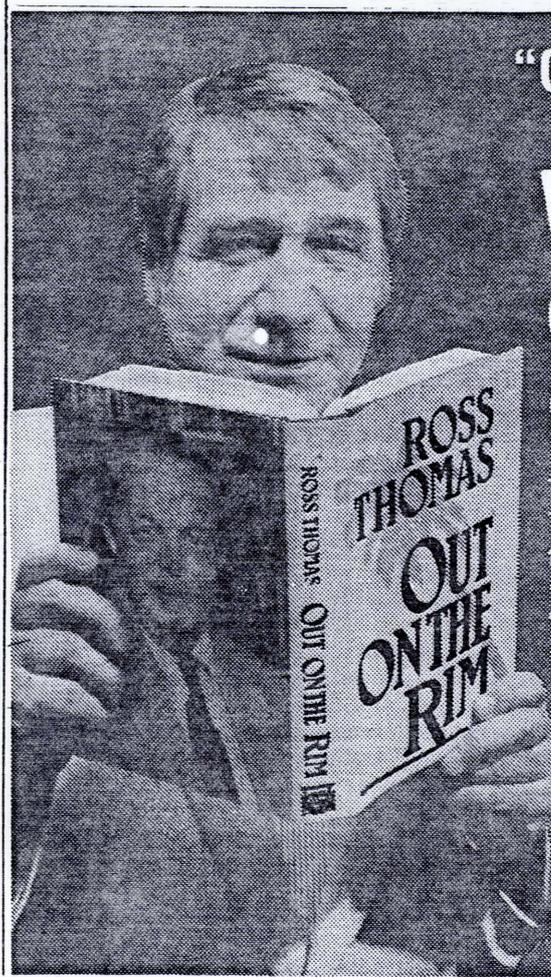
Here is Angus McCaskill, noting infant lambs are "a majority of legs, long and askew as the drone pipes of a limp bagpipe." The same narrator voices Doig's creed of realism: "It would be heartening to

think the world is growing less harsh, but the evidence doesn't often say so."

Nor is Doig's gift merely literary. Besides his intuitions and artistry there is the iron of purpose of an ex-ranch hand who has earned his PhD in history. An enormous researcher, Doig is one of those historians who goes from library to library forever on the scent of new documentation. He pours over faded records and newspapers, he reads, he hikes, he travels, he ex-

plores, and he talks to all the old people he can. Unusual among novelists, he provides an acknowledgments section at the back of each book, telling how he put it together and who helped him.

In Montana and the Pacific Northwest, this gifted poet-historian has enormous, vivid experience to draw upon as he sets out to rescue some more of our past from oblivion. Let us cheer him on, hoping the next nine years will be as productive as the last. ■



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The triumphs Duke of jazz



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By 1927, he was a fixture at Harlem's Cotton Club, as making the first of its remarkable records.

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it. From the middle '20s there was the feckless saxist Otto "Toby" Hardwick; or Sonny Greer, who practiced pool for two hours a day before he became Ellington's drummer ("the nearest thing I ever had to a brother," Duke said of him); or the short-lived, absolutely memorable trumpet man, Bubber Miley.

Comparable portraits follow of altoist Johnny Hodges, Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton and his growl trombone; Cootie Williams, who replaced Miley, and Harry Carney, still playing baritone sax in the band when Ellington died in 1974.

Collier takes us through the triumphant trip to Europe in 1933 and the beginning of Ellington's international fame.

In the early 1940s the group began to disperse, while its leader grew ever fonder of composing suites, tone poems and longer "symphonic" efforts. But for Collier, as for most who love Ellington's music, the works that matter most "are those hundreds of pieces in the three-minute form of which he was the master."

William H. Pritchard is at work on a biography of Randall Jarrell.

When Montana was the Great Maybe

Dancing at the Rascal Fair
By Ivan Doig
Atheneum
405 pp., \$18.95

By Carol Van Strum
Special for USA TODAY

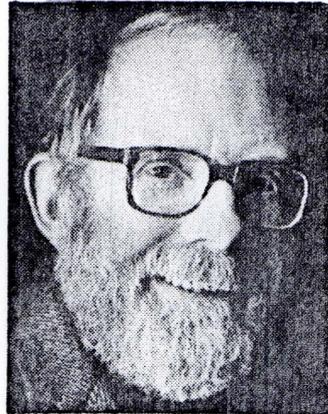
Two dead horses, separated by 30 years and half a world, frame the lives and landscape of Ivan Doig's new novel, the second of his Montana trilogy.

"Trouble never travels lone-some," remarks Jick McCaskill in *English Creek*, the first in the trilogy. *Rascal Fair* leaps a generation back to Jick's grandfather, Angus McCaskill, and his friend Rob, "stepping toward America past a drowned horse," on the quay at Greenock, Scotland, in 1889. Full of hope and unspoken mis-givings, the two young men gamely turn from the pinched old bit of earth called Scotland to brave first the seas and then three decades of trouble together as homesteaders in the northern Montana Rockies.

Dancing at the Rascal Fair, its title drawn from a bargain-festival song, is told by Angus in retrospect. What begins as a simple lament for his lost friend reels into a celebration of their tumultuous friendship and the vivid, shifting patterns of the lives it joined.

Cocky, irresistible Rob lures Angus to the New World with his glib tongue and visions of adventure and wealth in a silver mine called the Great Maybe. Rob's bridge to this vision is his Uncle Lucas, the maimed but indomitable survivor of a mine explosion, who becomes their guide to the wilderness and its often eccentric pio-neers.

Uncle Lucas tactfully extricates Rob and Angus from their romantic follies and repeated financial crises, shep-herding Angus through his loveless, oddly tender mar-riage to Rob's sister. Not even Uncle Lucas, however, can mend the resulting rift between Rob and Angus; in his anger, Rob turns Angus' own son against him. Even in death, Uncle Lucas never gives up trying to reconcile the two



By Jim Bates

DOIG: 'Rascal Fair' is the second in his Montana trilogy.

friends, bequeathing them joint ownership of the sheep that ultimately bring Rob to his death.

More powerful even than Uncle Lucas in shaping the two friends' destinies is the landscape and climate of northern Montana. Here, against the brutal beauty of the Rockies, turn-of-the-century homestead-ers flock, staking their fam-ilies' lives on a gamble with floods, drought, fires, blizzards, winter isolation and the suicidal whimsies of livestock.

The few who endure inevitably confront the productive limits of the land itself; resis-tance to those limits erupts in the community's dramatic re-sponse to the creation of a na-tional forest that ends unlim-ited grazing on public land.

"I don't know of anything you can just keep on using up and using up and using up, and not run out of," the unwelcome new Forest Service ranger tells his hostile audience. "And that's all the Forest Service is saying with this Two Medicine National Forest. You can use it, but not use it up." In moving the reluctant community to ac-cept the ranger's wisdom, An-gus unwittingly shapes the fu-ture for his son.

Such moments tolled the end of the American frontier. Doig's *Rascal Fair* captures the spirit of a people poised be-tween the buckboard and the Model-T, between the old and the new West.

Carol Van Strum is a writer in Tidewater, Ore.

SECTION L
 Sunday, October 25, 1987
 The Seattle Times
 Seattle Post-Intelligencer

Arts/Entertainment



Seattle artist George Tsutakawa's sumi sketch, "Lanezi Lake, B.C.," graces the jacket of "At the Field's End."

George Tsutakawa

SPEAKING VOLUMES

Book offers universal views of regional writers

by **Donn Fry**
 Times book editor

What can young writers learn from the authors in our midst? Nicholas O'Connell thinks he has found out.

"Basically, I learned how to plot my own path for my own career," says O'Connell, a 30-year-old Seattle writer. "And I learned that there are a lot of ways to go about being a writer."

O'Connell was discussing his first book, "At the Field's End," which has just been released by Seattle's Madrona Publishers. Subtitled "Interviews With Twenty Pacific Northwest Writers," it is a collection of conversations conducted by O'Connell between late 1984 and last fall.

The book brings together strikingly diverse literary types, from best-selling author Jean M. Auel of "Mammoth Hunters" fame to Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Carolyn Kizer; from short-story writer Raymond Carver, to historian Murray Morgan, to novelists Ivan Doig, Charles Johnson and Ernest K. Gann. It is not just a primer for would-be writers, however; rather, these artists offer views on a wide range of topics, although the subject of the

on writing, surfaces frequently.

O'Connell's approach also raises the thorny issue of "regionalism" — are these writers united by anything other than geographical accident? Is there really such a thing as "Northwest literature" or a "Northwest style"? Or are such classifications merely handy categories for critics and professors but limiting, denigrating barriers for writers?

"For a long time I was kind of a snob about local stuff," admits O'Connell, a Seattle native who was a French major at Amherst College in Massachusetts before returning to the University of Washington for a master's degree in creative writing. "But when I started reading Northwest literature, I found it very interesting and that many things that were personal concerns of mine were treated in this region."

In putting together "At the Field's End" — the title is a phrase from a poem by Theodore Roethke — O'Connell also feels he discovered the subject of his next book: a history of literature in the Pacific Northwest. In addition, he was left with a wealth of ideas for his own fiction.

The book began as an idea

for which O'Connell is a fiction editor. His aim was to include an interview with a Pacific Northwest writer in each issue; his model was the respected series in the international literary journal, the Paris Review.

"I thought that at some point we could do what the Paris Review does — collect the interviews and put them in a book," O'Connell recalls. The only problem was, the Seattle Review's twice-yearly publication schedule meant that it would be years before there were enough interviews to fill a book.

O'Connell readjusted his sights and called publisher Dan Levant at Madrona, a small press that frequently produces books with a Northwest angle. Levant liked the idea and gave him the go-ahead.

"In choosing authors, I wanted to get a lot of diversity," O'Connell says, "so I chose individuals from different genres, from different racial and cultural backgrounds, but at the same time I tried to get the most prominent representatives of a particular genre — I knew I had to get the Big Guns if I was going to get anyone interested."

Consequently, there are cer-

tains, science-fiction master Ursula Le Guin, novelist Tom Robbins, nature writer Barry Lopez — as well as lesser-known writers such as Seattle poet James Mitsui, novelist Marilynne Robinson and Oregon thriller writer Richard Hoyt. Because of their varied works and concerns, O'Connell soft-pedals the notion of a regional voice.

"Most art begins with particulars, and this is a distinctive region, so I was interested to see if the area had any effect on the literature," he explains. A "Northwest style" eluded him, although he did find some shared concerns: "The thing I think that does unify Northwest writers is a broad interest in the natural world, and in the human response to it — I wouldn't want to state it any less generally than that."

Others, however, see a distinct regional approach running through much contemporary writing, both prose and poetry, in the Pacific Northwest.

"It exists, very strongly, I think," says Nelson Bentley, a poet and longtime professor at the University of Washington. "Some will deny that there is

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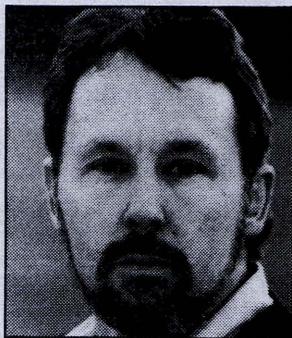
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Please see **WRITERS** on L 6



“A mind shaped in the Pacific Northwest is not like a mind shaped in the Sonoran Desert, or the Piedmont Country in the Carolinas. I think that people out here have a way of putting things together a little bit differently.”

— Barry Lopez



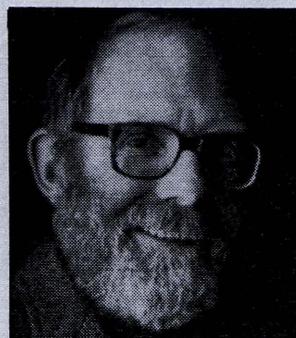
“Unlike some people, I don't think the world is necessarily going to hell in a handbasket. I think that the human race is a very young race, and I am hoping that we will have the sense to keep ourselves from the destruction that we are potentially capable of dealing to ourselves.”

— Jean M. Auel



“I've described my books as being cakes with files baked in them. I try to create something that's beautiful to look at and delicious to taste, and yet in the middle there's this hard, sharp instrument that you can use to saw through the bars and liberate yourself.”

— Tom Robbins



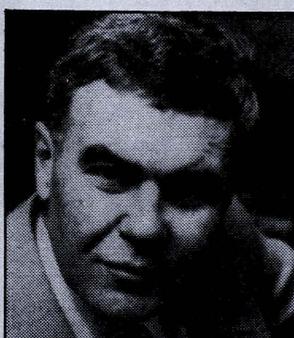
“I don't believe you have to be goosing the reader with outlandish surprises all the time. Life is vivid enough in itself. Everybody's got a story, everybody's got drama, good times and bad. I think it cheapens fiction by having artificial sweetener in the plot all the time.”

— Ivan Doig



“When President Reagan gets himself positioned under the right lights with the camera on him and recites one of his poems to the nation, they jump through hoops for it. They don't even know it's poetry; they think it's truth.”

— William Stafford



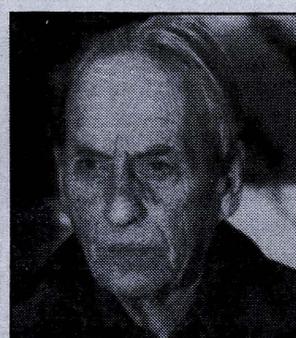
“There is a starting point in the real world for everything I've written. Stories just don't come out of thin air; they come from someplace, a wedding of imagination and reality, a little autobiography and a lot of imagination.”

— Raymond Carver



“Any real art that isn't just hack work, grinding things out of the Bologna machine, is going to come from places inside the writer that the writer didn't know about until he or she started writing.”

— Ursula K. Le Guin



“Wordsworth had this theory about 'spots of time' that seem almost divinely shaped. When I look back on my own life, it is a series of very disconnected spots of time. My stories are those spots of time.”

— Norman Maclean

“GLORIOUS”*

“Magnificent...

DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR further establishes its author in the front ranks of contemporary American writers.... It is grounded in a compelling plot... a story of the complexities of friendship and passion, of grief and exuberance, of endurance through fear and hardship... there are love scenes in this novel that rival the splendor of any Montana vista.... Every word, every surprise, every resolution rings true.”

—Seattle Times/Post Intelligencer

“Marvelously

crafted in the authentic voice of the region, alive with Ivan Doig’s subtle wit and unique poetry.”

—Louise Erdrich, author of *The Beet Queen*

“Dazzling...I find myself

filled with such high praise for this book that instead of relating paltry bits of it, I want to quote the whole glorious thing.”

—San Francisco Chronicle

“Doig’s prose is so muscular and sculpted,

so simple and purposeful, that I can think of only Edward Hoagland and Wallace Stegner as Doig’s equals among living writers about the American West.”

—Chicago Sun-Times

“Rich in historical incident...Doig captures a vital

chapter in the history of the West—the first homesteaders struggling to carve out lives for themselves from the beautiful but recalcitrant land.... Also on display is Doig’s remarkable ability to portray men and women against the elements.”

—Booklist

“Highly recommended.”

—Library Journal

“An energetic poem of a book.

Ivan Doig has taken two romantic traditions—unrequited love and the pastoral—and given them the gritty reality of homesteading, sheep marketing, and domestic compromise.... Bravo.”

—Janet Burroway, author of *Opening Nights*

“Moving, graceful...

a gripping saga, with a wonderfully rugged and evocative Montana.”

—Kirkus Reviews

“A kind of paean in prose to the Rockies,

and a dramatized historical record of the blood, sweat and tears that went into the homesteading of Montana.”

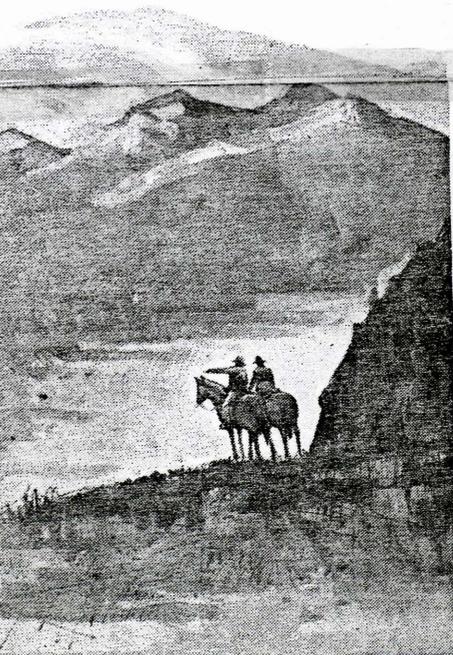
—Chicago Tribune

“Absorbing... memorable.”

—Publishers Weekly

Ivan Doig DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR

A NEW NOVEL BY THE AUTHOR OF *English Creek*



AT ALL BOOKSTORES



An imprint of Macmillan Publishing Company / 866 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022

Region's top writers share thoughts on their art

WRITERS

continued from L 1

such a thing as regionalism, but I think there is. The United States is such a big country that its literature develops regional characteristics — and I think that's a strong point. In the history of American literature, regionalism is one of its glories."

Bentley, who teaches a course on the poetry of the Pacific Northwest, attributes regional similarities in poetry to the continuing influence of Theodore Roethke, the poet who taught at the UW from 1947 until his death in 1963. Bentley believes poets such as Oregon's William Stafford and Seattle's David Wagoner, as well as former Northwesterners Carolyn Kizer and Gary Snyder — all of whom are interviewed in "At the Field's End" — share an appreciation of the natural world and a "sensuous attention to the music of language" that builds on the tradition of the Romantic poets of the 19th century.

Bentley's colleague in the UW English Department, Harold Simonson, echoes those views.

"I really argue for the existence of a Pacific Northwest literature," says Simonson, who teaches a course in fiction by North-

west writers. "It is expressed most obviously in certain themes indigenous to the Northwest: the landscape, the climate, economic affairs, the history of settlement and the ethnic clashes.

"I think the materials are here, and I think they are beginning to be celebrated — I think the Northwest as a literary region is beginning to have an identity. But a good regional writer has to make his reputation on more than just being identified with a particular geographical area."

A strong voice of disagreement comes from a Mississippi-born writer who now lives in the Northwest.

"I'm from an area that's long been saddled, to its detriment, with the notion of regionalism," says Richard Ford, the Missoula-based author of last year's fine novel, "The Sportswriter," and the current short-story collection, "Rock Springs." In a recent conversation in Seattle, Ford said the idea of regionalism "creates a climate of narrowness . . . when what all art would hope for is a wider frame of reference.

"I don't have any doubts about regionalism: The concept is the product of an idle mind."

Ford was even more impassioned in a piece last year about "Southern writing" in Harper's magazine: "Categorization (women's writing, gay writing, Illinois writing) inflicts upon art exactly

what art strives at its best never to inflict on itself: arbitrary and irrelevant limits, shelter from the widest consideration and judgment, exclusion from general excellence . . . William Faulkner, after all, was not a great Southern writer; he was a great writer who wrote about the South."

There is a sense of agreement in some of the writers represented in "At the Field's End." William Stafford, for example, essentially dismisses the notion of a Northwest identity, observing that, for him, the poetic urge doesn't depend on location.

"And so my attitude is this: where you live is not crucial, but how you *feel* about where you live is crucial," Stafford tells O'Connell. "Since I live in the Northwest, yes, I do write about the Northwest in the sense that place names get in my poems, but as for anything mystical, it hasn't registered on me . . . It's a pleasant thought, but the idea that the style is rooted to the landscape just sounds sort of quaint to me."

Other writers in the collection, however, see a clearer connection between the geography of the Pacific Northwest and their work.

Seattle novelist Ivan Doig, who draws upon his Montana background in novels such as "English Creek" and his new "Dancing at the Rascal Fair," sees himself as

"still trying to make a living out of the landscape."

"You can't be around that landscape without it being on your mind," Doig tells O'Connell. "Our lives turned on the weather, in combination with the landscape. This carries over into my writing."

A similar idea is expressed by La Conner novelist Tom Robbins in his lively, thoughtful interview: "I think there was a lot of rain in my heart before I moved here, so in a sense it was simply finding an external environment that ran parallel to my internal weather. And when I say it was raining in my heart, I don't mean that I was depressed, because I don't find rain the least bit depressing.

"It's romantic, basically, and I am essentially a romantic being."

Despite disagreements over its unifying principle, "At the Field's End" gives 20 of our region's best writers the chance to share their thoughts about their art. O'Connell also hopes it counters a kind of "reverse snobbery" he sometimes detects among readers in the Northwest.

"I wanted to dispel the notion that local people couldn't have written anything as important as someone in New York or elsewhere," he says. "These writers offer the counter view to the tendency to look to the East Coast for all our models and inspiration."

Doig novel gives a sense of place, and love

Ivan Doig bounces back with his new novel about turn-of-the-century Montana. *Dancing at the Rascal Fair* takes us back two generations in the McCaskill family. Readers of Doig's earlier *English Creek* (a book I liked much less than *Rascal Fair*) will recall that in that book we followed young Jick McCaskill during his 14th summer in the high mountain country where Doig himself grew up. In *Rascal Fair* we flash back to Jick's grandfather Angus, the first of the clan to come to America from Scotland.

Instead of one summer's leisurely boyhood preambulations, in the new book we live through 20 exciting, excruciating years. Angus McCaskill leaves his impoverished Scottish town, travels across the Atlantic and across North America to Montana, where he builds a new life raising sheep in the beautiful but harsh Big Sky country. The two very different McCaskill books have that one key ingredient in common: The Montana setting. Doig knows his own country and its weather and knows how to make us feel what they are like. I don't know that country at all; I've never been there. But through Doig's descriptions I feel I have.

Doig is in an honorable American tradition in picking a geographical place in which to build a series of historical novels. Among



Thomas
O'Connell

others, James Fenimore Cooper, William Faulkner, and Conrad Aiken have told multi-volume stories set in memorable places. Doig's Montana stories remind me most of Hervey Allen's series of novels about the first settlers in the southwestern Pennsylvania area. True, Allen's books were set much earlier in American history than Doig's and they centered on one key protagonist (with the wonderful name of Salathiel Albine) rather than on a family. But, like Doig, Allen captured the flavor of an actual place through changing times.

In Allen's case it was specifically the confluence of the Mongahela and Allegheny Rivers that forms the Ohio, during the earliest days of European colonization. He then traced the development of American civilization through decades of hard times. As with Doig's Montana, I identify with Allen's Pitts-

burgh and know its history in my bones. That's what a masterful series of historical novels can do.

Like so many 19th century ocean voyagers, as well as professional sailors, Angus McCaskill never learned how to swim. *Dancing at the Rascal Fair* might have ended differently if he had. Also Angus' terror in the ship's hold during his long voyage across the Atlantic would have been much less. It has always amazed me that so little attention was paid to teaching people how to swim previous to our own times. Think of all that ocean travel by sailors who drowned if they happened to fall overboard! Angus sees to it that his own son learns to swim, but even then he is unable to force himself to learn.

THE MOST affecting thing in *Rascal Fair* is, surprisingly enough, a romance. In Doig's previous books we haven't seen much of love affairs. *The House of Sky* and *Winter Brothers* were autobiographical and affairs of the heart were played down. Jick McCaskill in *English Creek* is too young to have a real romance. *The Sea Runners*, Doig's only other novel, is about four men; no women appear. So it is a delight to find Doig handling an achingly tender romance with such sensitivity. I don't want to spoil it for you, so suffice it to say I can't get it out of my mind: it haunts me.

In contrast to the romance, which is played up, Doig plays down the sheer drudgery of the life of his characters. They accept brutally difficult, unremitting work as part of life. Hard labor is simply omnipresent. Those who aren't strong enough to do the work leave for a marginally easier life elsewhere.

Some, like Angus' wife and his best friend, Rob Barclay, are beaten down by it. But Angus plugs along; he doesn't complain that life is mostly hard work literally from dawn to dusk every day of the week. His life goes on in spite of it, or, perhaps more accurately, it goes on at the interstices of the tough chores he must always get back to.

As I read of Angus' unremitting labors, I found myself thinking what an enormous debt his descendants, like young Jick in *English Creek*, owe to him. Oh! The guts and fortitude of all of those forbears who got on those boats to come to America and then with agonizing labor built new lives! I hereby thank my own counterparts of Angus McCaskill who came a bit earlier from Ireland's County Cork and County Tipperary. I hope you all get *The Journal-American* up there where you are now and can read my words of gratitude!

O'Connell teaches Spanish at Bellevue Community College.

Love in the Back 40

DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR

By Ivan Doig.
405 pp. New York:
Atheneum.
\$18.95.

By Lee K. Abbott

IN 1956, in the South Atlantic Quarterly, Eudora Welty published an essay which argued that place, that crossroads of time and character, was "one of the lesser angels that watch over the racing hand of fiction." Clearly, it is a conclusion that, in spirit, Ivan Doig has attended to scrupulously. In his third novel, "Dancing at the Rascal Fair," which brings to life the ancestors of the people he created for his popular "English Creek," little is more important to the lives we watch and the turn-of-the-century times we observe than that "angel" that is Montana — a place that "sets its own terms and tells you, do them or else."

This book relates the adventures of two 19-year-olds, Robert Burns Barclay and Angus Alexander McCaskill, who emigrate from Scotland in 1889 to the Two Medicine country, a fictional region along the Rocky Mountains near Dupuyer, "Eden's best neighborhood." They are, our narrator McCaskill informs us, "green as the cheese of the moon and trying our double damnedest not to show it."

Armed with the energy and the cheerful spirit of their seemingly permanent friendship, as well as with strong backs and Angus's inexhaustible supply of quotations from Robert Burns, our heroes confront a land nothing in their experience as a wheelwright and a wheelworks clerk has prepared them for: a "radical mood of terrain . . . the climb of the continent to its divide, higher, greater, more sudden than seemed possible; like a running leap of the land." It is a place of great hardship — from the coyotes, bears and wolves that threaten the sheep they raise, to a nature of drought, flood, blizzard, fire and disease. It is a place, Angus reminds us, where a pilgrim's true tools are not hammer, pick and shovel, but "hope, muscle and time."

• • •

Against this masterfully evoked backdrop, Mr. Doig addresses his real subject: love be-

tween friends, between the sexes, between the generations — "the intricate come and go that weaves us and those around us." Like the landscape itself, love is by turns breathtaking and daunting, irksome and joyful, a "part of life that did not care about human details, it existed on its own terms."

Mr. Doig is at his best when he turns from the lay of the land to that of the heart. Consider, for example, this moment when Angus, estranged from his son and from his pal, finds himself mourning the death of his true love while still married to a good woman whose love he cannot return: "Again my life was not under my own control, now that everyone I had tried to stretch myself toward had yanked away from me. I felt so alone on the homestead that if I had shouted, I would have made no echo. When I tried to occupy myself with tasks and chores, even time was askew. Hours refused to budge, yet days went to no good use."

Unhappily, however, for those not charmed by the transformation of history alone, this remains a story whose life, from its plot to its sentiment, is achingly familiar — a kind of back-40 "Big Valley," in which we discover the usual melodrama of suffering and triumph, fellowship and rivalry, loss and gain, a place in which "the pattern of ourselves" is sometimes arrived at by the clunky device of coincidence. It must also be noted that there are several developments — whom Angus's son Varick will marry, for instance — that, while a surprise to our narrator, are to us as predictable as snow in winter.

FUNDAMENTALLY, Mr. Doig is a writer we read less for anything new that he expresses than for his new and stylish expression; though it serves the conventional wisdom, his is a prose as tight as new thread and as special as hand-made candy. Here, for example, is Angus at 40: "But we never do dance ahead into time; every minute is a tune-step of ours to the past. Say it better, the future is our blindfold dance, and a dance unseen is the strangest dance of all, thousands of guesses at once." A head is "the attic atop our shoulders," a silence is "deep as a corner of eternity," and watching a fellow Scotsman on the dance floor is "like hearing a giggle out of God."

Though its hindsight is not insight, "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" races with real vigor and wit and passion — three other lesser angels Mr. Doig is blessed to have in his native Montana heaven. □

Lee K. Abbott, whose latest book is "Strangers in Paradise," a collection of stories, teaches English at Case Western Reserve University.

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tween friends, between the sexes, between the generations — "the intricate come and go that weaves us and those around us." Like the landscape itself, love is by turns breathtaking and daunting, irksome and joyful, a "part of life that did not care about human details, it existed on its own terms."

Mr. Doig is at his best when he turns from the lay of the land to that of the heart. Consider, for example, this moment when Angus, estranged from his son and from his pal, finds himself mourning the death of his true love while still married to a good woman whose love he cannot return: "Again my life was not under my own control, now that everyone I had tried to stretch myself toward had yanked away from me. I felt so alone on the homestead that if I had shouted, I would have made no echo. When I tried to occupy myself with tasks and chores, even time was askew. Hours refused to budge, yet days went to no good use."

Unhappily, however, for those not charmed by the transformation of history alone, this remains a story whose life, from its plot to its sentiment, is achingly familiar — a kind of back-40 "Big Valley," in which we discover the usual melodrama of suffering and triumph, fellowship and rivalry, loss and gain, a place in which "the pattern of ourselves" is sometimes arrived at by the clunky device of coincidence. It must also be noted that there are several developments — whom Angus's son Varick will marry, for instance — that, while a surprise to our narrator, are to us as predictable as snow in winter.

FUNDAMENTALLY, Mr. Doig is a writer we read less for anything new that he expresses than for his new and stylish expression; though it serves the conventional wisdom, his is a prose as tight as new thread and as special as hand-made candy. Here, for example, is Angus at 40: "But we never do dance ahead into time; every minute is a tune-step of ours to the past. Say it better, the future is our blindfold dance, and a dance unseen is the strangest dance of all, thousands of guesses at once." A head is "the attic atop our shoulders," a silence is "deep as a corner of eternity," and watching a fellow Scotsman on the dance floor is "like hearing a giggle out of God."

Though its hindsight is not insight, "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" races with real vigor and wit and passion — three other lesser angels Mr. Doig is blessed to have in his native Montana heaven. □

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"this is a book with good ideas."
New York Times

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A Montana rhapsody to mountain and man

DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR, by Ivan Doig. Atheneum. 403 pp. \$18.95.

By Mark Muro
Globe Staff

Richard Hugo — the poet — used to say certain writers own certain words: Nobody else can use them.

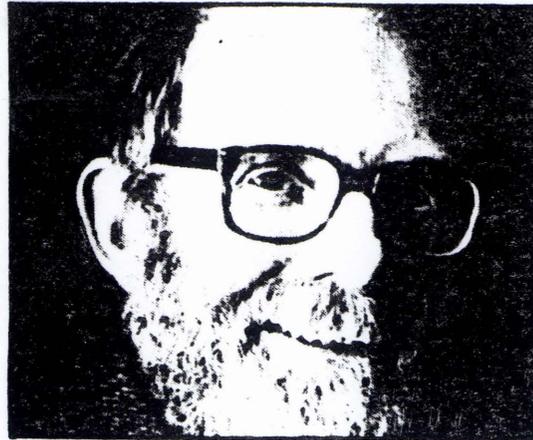
Well, the same goes for places. In the matter of high mountain Montana,

BOOK REVIEW

few would contest the ownership claim of Ivan Doig, who grew up around White Sulphur Springs, began his writing life with a powerful memoir called "This House of Sky," and in 1984 published "English Creek," a fine stretch of historical fiction concerning the harshness and beauty of the author's native Two Medicine country along the Rocky Mountain Front. Born there on a ranch, Doig learned the place the hard way, and when he wrote a hard authority came through. Downright in wisdom, poetic in slant and sometimes austere, Doig's books cast an unassuming but undeniable air of proprietorship. They'd gotten it down.

Now, with "Dancing at the Rascal Fair," Doig plants another marker. Once more, he returns to the cherished Two Medicine country of his growing-up years: again rises the same "sky-marching procession of mountains" that impended throughout the earlier works. Only this time, by backtracking some hundred years to the first peopling of his high corner of Montana by immigrants, this cautious, watchful author asserts unexpected new command over his sacred place. Already his hold there was supreme, yes, but in this big book, what sometimes seemed cold or reticent in Doig is warm, what sometimes felt knotty is smoothed. At the remove of a century, new immediacy promises new audiences.

Eventful and elemental, for instance, Doig's large plot this time stretches out generations to treat the progenitors of the characters in "English Creek," yet does so with a sensibility at once gritty and avid. The story begins in 1889, when two young Scotsmen, Rob Barclay and narrator Angus McCaskill, embark upon that archetypal movement of American history, the westerling wander of immigration. Ambitious for adventure, the men usher them-



IVAN DOIG . . . Born on a ranch.

selves though New York, "portal to confusion"; without ado, they railroad themselves west to Montana ("oceanic again in its own way"), bounce around some, figure they better get on with themselves. Soon, they've filed their homestead claims of 160 acres apiece, gotten started banging out livings on land in "the last of the North Fork Valley before foothills and mountains took command." There Angus and Rob run the sheep bands that will for 30 years provide them a hard living though "achievable yet hectic" years of herding and haying and lambing and shearing. Eventually, the men string fences, build reservoirs, teach school and go a-courting. Never do they get far from hardship; never are they inured to majesty. Angus, particularly, suffers yet dreams. After losing the love of his life, he marries Rob's sister, leading to conflict and then a bitter breach between the friends. A son, Varick, comes, along with further estrangement. Yet at the same time, Angus still finds himself ecstatic sometimes. "By the holy," he declaims, "I loved these people. This night I loved all the Scotch Heaven, the Two Medicine country, Montana, America, the sky over and the earth under." And with that, one understands that wide, appealing scope of this big book.

But other pleasures lift this prose, too.

For one, Doig's novel conveys with almost offhand assurance the jury-rigged, ragged

By backtracking some hundred years to the first peopling of his high corner of Montana by immigrants, this cautious, watchful author asserts unexpected new command over his sacred place.

where the forward edge of immigration, romantic adventure and hardscrabble entrepreneurialism banged out American existence. Like the town of Gros Ventre, which registers on young Angus "in a slow, woozy way, like a dream," history just happens here, no big deal. A stagecoach line, the hard years after the '93 crash, the gridding out of the Forest Service: These impinge with lovely inevitability. Further, in Doig's keen intuitions, such huge human events acquire startling freshness through the precision of the details: snippets from local newspapers, lists of epidemic victims ("Munson, Theodore, homesteader. Age 51.") These, further, surface in a book brimming with unexpected warmth. Where in past efforts Doig reserved his noblest prose for the topographies of meadow and valley, here exultation extends equally to mountain and man. In particular, Angus' unending, frustrated passion for Anna, a schoolteacher, inspires in Doig sentences nearly as intimate and loving as his naming and description of the moods of the land. As love happens, Angus can only murmur, "There was no eyes-closed mooniness: we were both watching this," just as he can only sit in silence before the prospect of Doig's inborn Montana, "that rough west brink of the world." It is, this, the kind of watchful exultancy that again and again drives this fine historical novel to a kind of spring-rhythm of devotion.

books

Master of Montana



PHOTOGRAPHER: JAY KOELZER

Ivan Doig couples a deep love of the language with an interest in history in his writings.

Meticulous Ivan Doig finds a home in his writing

By Margaret Carlin

HERE'S a tinge of ginger in his hair and beard, the legacy of ancestors who left Scotland in the 1890s for the great American West — Montana, to be exact.

Exactness in prose, diction and "everything else" is a matter of pride to Ivan Doig, 48, author of *Dancing at the Rascal Fair* and four other meticulously researched books about the western experience.

"I like my writing to have no errors," Doig says. "I like it to be precise."

Even the musical title of his critically acclaimed new novel is anchored in fact, natural for this methodical man with a doctorate in history.

"I was reading *Social Class in Scotland*, about how landowners and laborers would meet to work out farm wages every year at what they called the 'Rascal Fair.' Rascal Fair ... I just liked the sound of that, so I got a rhyming dictionary and made up *Dancing at the Rascal Fair* to the music of a traditional Scots tune."

Dancing at the Rascal Fair, the first in Doig's trilogy, opens in 1889 when Angus McCaskill arrives in what Doig calls Two Medicine Country of Montana and covers 30 years of pioneer life. The second, *English Creek* (1984), covers the '30s and '40s. The final volume, bringing the McCaskills up to the present, will come in 1989 to mark Montana's centennial. The tentative title is *Ride With Me, Maria Montana*.

"I wrote *English Creek* first because I knew how things were in the '30s and '40s, from listening to my father and grandmother talk. The circumstances of the Depression froze rural life. People were still haying with horses because they had to, gas

was so hard to get. Things pretty much stayed the way they always were, money was so tight."

Although Doig's literary reputation is firmly grounded in his love for the West, he discovered early on that it was hard for a writer to survive financially in cowboy country. So for 21 years, he and his wife Carol have lived in Seattle, where she teaches journalism at Shoreline Community College and he writes.

"But I've always used what I call my 'creative cupboard' — my childhood — for patterns of speech and details about the ranching way of life. When I was writing *Rascal Fair*, Carol and I spent time in small towns in Montana and in Scotland, too.

"Carol made photographs, which I'd line up as I was creating Gros Ventre (fictional name for Montana's Dupuyer Creek, "The country of his growing-up years"). I can tell you exactly how many feet it is to the pump we share with the neighbors, just what the streets and houses were like, how many sheep would be on a trail drive, what it's like to shear a sheep, details like that."

But a deep love of the language is as much responsible for Doig's trilogy as his interest in history. A tireless researcher, he keeps file cards of western lingo, and considers *The Dictionary of American Regional English* relaxing reading. He finds rich poetry in the speech of ordinary people, and harvests memories from as many older people as he can.

A few years ago, he spent time in Scotland, fine-tuning his knowledge of the Scottish turn of phrase in the library at the University of St. Andrews by "reading old diaries and folklore books, and immigrants' letters, too. I got a copy of the Scottish National Dictionary to study. I wanted

(readers) to recognize my characters as Scottish without having to decipher the dialect."

Doig writes his prose with a poet's eye and ear: "Montana's crystal mornings made it seem we'd been living in a bowl of milk all those years in Scotland ... the mountains were washed a lovely clean blue and gray in the first sunlight ... I heard the rush of the creek where the water bumped busily across a bed of rocks."

He describes the "white knuckles of the storm ocean" and describes sheep: "In theory, a band of sheep is a garden on legs. Every spring a crop of lambs, every summer a crop of wool."

A teacher talks about "my pupils, my minnow school of new Montana" and Doig describes Montana unforgettably. "There is so much of this country. People keep having to stretch themselves out of shape trying to cope with so much. Distance. Weather. The aloneness. All the work."

And the weather: "... across the mountains the sky looked bruised, resentfully promising storm ... clouds like long rolls of damp cotton were blotting out the summits of the mountains ..."

Four days a week, without fail, he settles himself at his old manual typewriter (his computer languishes in neglect), and turns out exactly 800 words a day. "Four pages, triple spaced. The fifth day I set aside for research and editing," he says, underlying his dedication to meticulous prose.

Doig has been a ranch hand, newspaperman and magazine editor, but it is as a writer that he has found his intellectual home.

"I like history, I like doing research, I like being my own boss."

Author's prose dances warmly

Dancing at the Rascal Fair
By Ivan Doig. Atheneum. 403
pages. \$18.95.

By Richard Critchfield

Ivan Doig is a happy mixture of poet and historian. In just nine years, he has produced five truly distinctive books set in Montana and the Pacific Northwest, three of them novels.

All beautifully evoke the American West, firmly establishing Doig as one of our finest western writers.

Look at his achievement: *This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind*, published in 1978 when he was 39, is a powerful memoir about his widowed, sheep-herding father, Charlie Doig. Doig, a son of Scottish immigrants, instills in his son a deep affinity for language, storytelling and the raw Montana landscape.

This strong sense of the land and a growing preoccupation with time are further developed in *Winter Brothers* (1980), interwoven observations by Doig and excerpts from the 1862-90 diaries of James G. Swan, an obscure artist and observer of coastal Indian life in the Pacific Northwest.

The imaginary retrieval of the past became central in *The Sea Runners* (1982), his first novel. Based on an event, it tells of the escape by four indentured Swedes from Russian America (1853 Alaska) to what is now Oregon. It is a little masterpiece of harrowing adventure.

In *English Creek* (1984), the first novel in his trilogy, Doig introduces the fictional McCaskill family and their sprawling Two Medicine Country of Montana. This is the familiar geography of *This House of Sky*, though the town of Dupuyer, just below the Rocky Mountain Front, now has become Gros Ventre (the locals say "Grove-on").

It is summer in the 1930s, and Jick McCaskill, the 14-year-old narrator, goes on a horseback trip with his forest ranger father, Varick. Some of the set pieces in this coming-of-age story, such as a Fourth of July rodeo and a forest fire, are terrific.

Dancing at the Rascal Fair is another panorama of life in Two Medicine Country, it takes place much earlier (1889-1919), and its dramatic thread is the friendship and eventual falling out of two Scotsmen, Rob Barclay and Angus McCaskill, Jick's grandfather.

They venture from Glasgow by steamer and homestead as sheepherding neighbors in Montana. Time passes through them as they go from youth to middle age, and taking their toll are blizzards, the 1918 influenza epidemic and the rugged land.

This book is warm in feeling and rich in texture. The secret of Doig's gift is his sense of place and his ear for dialogue. His people come alive when they talk, and they talk all the time.

In Montana and the Pacific Northwest, this gifted poet-historian has enormous experience to draw upon as he sets out to rescue more of our past from oblivion. Let us cheer him on.

Richard Critchfield is the author of *Those Days: An American Album* and *Villages*. He currently is writing a book about Britain. From the *Washington Post Book World*.

In the Right Place At the Right Time

Treats and surprises, among them inexplicable flying objects, the noble dog at its noblest and a big one that didn't get away.



AMAZEMENT UNDER THE MIDNIGHT SUN

By Hilma Wolitzer

Author of "Silver"

I am not often in exactly the right place at the right time, unless you consider it lucky to be near Cape Hatteras during a hurricane or on the subway when there's a derailment. But sometimes I believe that I have only myself to blame for certain travel mishaps. After all, I did pack a flashlight for Fairbanks during the summer solstice, and I didn't pack any mosquito repellent.

There I was, at midnight, at the welcoming party for the Midnight Sun Writers Conference, slightly punchy from the long trip and from all that eerie light. I swatted and scratched and thought, a sleep mask — that's what I should have packed — when someone who'd gone outside for a moment rushed back in, full of excitement. What now, I wondered — an earthquake, perhaps? — as I followed everyone out of the building.

And then I saw what all the fuss was about — the peak of Mount McKinley rising with imperial beauty from its usual veil of clouds.

We all exclaimed joyfully (as we should have) at this blessing of nature, at our own good fortune in witnessing it. It seemed to be an extravagant reparation for all the minor inconveniences of delayed flights, lost luggage and inclement weather. But wait! That wasn't all. A moment later a rainbow arced across that vast expanse of sky, and at the same time a brilliantly colored, hot-air balloon floated overhead! The whole thing had a mysterious, almost hallucinatory quality.

Later, at 3 or 4 in the morning, unable to sleep in my curtailless dorm room, with the light still shining mercilessly through the window, I experienced the usual loneliness and pleasure of being somewhere new and very far from home. I kept replaying that earlier, spectacular confluence of events, thinking that my luck (at least as far as traveling goes) had finally changed, and that probably no one would ever believe it had happened.

AT HOME WITH LASSIE AND HER ILK

By Ivan Doig

Author of "Dancing at the Rascal Fair"

They run daylong, the competitors from Edinburgh and Craigielands and Potburn and Mayshiels and threescore other Scottish map dots. Late and just now unlost — we nearly haven't come at all, what with the wee directions provided in the Edinburgh newspaper's notice of this event and then one of those travel-weary "Should we or shouldn't we?" colloquies about the uncertainties of aiming a rented car and our mortal selves down the left side of the road into the back lanes of the Pentland Hills — my wife, Carol, and I arrive as the entrant from Shoestanes Farm is gliding around the green course, a sleek speck in pursuit of four larger specks.

I stand stock still and watch. The silky movements of that trailing figure, splen-

(Continued on Page 20)

did in the grass; the canny doggedness as he scrupulously paces himself until, with a last flourish, he takes command of his charges.

"Lassiehund," the German tourist next to us explains to his small son as he points to the panting pride of Shoestanes Farm.

Well, yes and nein. The border collies in competition at the Edinburgh Open Sheep Dog Trials are smaller, about knee-high to a person, and distinctly less cinematic than Lassie in nose and mien. At least as brainy, though. Consider the trial they are expected to perform. When four sheep are released several hundred yards up the field, the dog whose turn it is sets off on a long, enveloping dash — a maneuver that, during the sheep drives into the Montana high country of my boyhood, we called "way 'round 'em, Shep!" Then, in response to signals from his distant handler and by dint of his own combination of shadowing and creeping and outfoxing, the dog must herd the mercurial quartet of sheep past or through a series of obstacles until ultimately finessing them into a tiny pen.

In miniature, then, a sheep dog trial replicates the timeless ritual perhaps first performed by Abel, that biblical keeper of sheep, with a first wise dog at his side: the seasonal movement of livestock to fresh pasture. "Transhumance" is the technical word for such a rhythmic journey of replenishment, from the Latin for "across" and "earth."



There in picture book countryside, where one kept expecting James Herriot to pop over a hill with a lamb in his arms, dog after dog had his day. And watching them intently perform their bred-in-

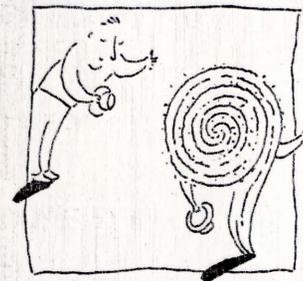
the-bone task, across the earth from the Montana sheep ranches of thirty years ago, I felt something surely akin to transhumance's rhythm of renewal. I believe the word for mine is "travel."

TREKKING IN SEARCH OF FIDDLEHEADS

By Arturo Vivante

Novelist and short-story writer

Last spring, in Vermont, having dinner at a friend's house, I was served a vegetable I'd never had before: fiddleheads — the young, unfurling fronds of a fern. I tried to compare them to things I knew — brussels sprouts, for instance. But the taste eluded me, and like anything elusive it intrigued me.



"There are plenty of them now," my friend said. "There are some even at the edge of my garden. Only, in a few days they'll be over. They are only good while they are tender and curled — well, you know, like a fiddle's head."

I liked the fiddleheads so much that some days later I went looking for them in the woods around the college where I teach. But I had waited too long. The fiddleheads had all unfurled — they weren't curls any longer, but just slightly arched ferns waving in the wind. "Too late," I said to myself. "I'll have to wait till next year. Next year I'll catch them."

About two weeks later, I had an urge to go for a drive. Where to go? I wanted to go somewhere new. I had explored all the villages within 50 miles of where I lived, and farther. On a shelf, a book of poems written by a friend and entitled "Riding to Greylock" caught my eye. Mount Greylock — not exactly from

(Continued on Page 42)

Voting is:

- putting a voter's pamphlet under your pillow
- impeaching Reagan
- using a ballot to endorse an issue or candidate

See pages 4-5 for Senate selections



Action Fashion

See page 7

"Intense" Volleyball

See page 7

Ebbtide

Shoreline
Community
College

November, 12 1987

Vol. 23, No. 3

Students must test for English classes

Audrey Wren

Students are required to take a free twenty-minute writing session prior to registering for winter quarter classes English 100, 101, or Humanities 90. The English faculty members will use the session to analyze the students' writing skills in order to determine which writing class is appropriate for them to take.

English instructor Diane Gould feels that placing students at their current level of education is vital to the educa-

tion process and "helps students make informed choices."

The twenty-minute session will be taking place in Nov. Session dates are 8 a.m. on Nov. 13, 8:30 a.m. Nov. 13, 11:30 a.m. Nov. 16, 12 noon Nov. 16, and 1 p.m. Nov. 18. All sessions will be held in the FOSS Building in room 2270. Sign ups for any one of these sessions can be made in room 2222 near the Humanities Division. If you have any questions, call Diane Gould at 546-4635 or Denzil Walters at 546-4741.



One half block from campus on Innis Arden Way, a Mitsubishi Gallant, traveling west-bound, failed to "negotiate a left-hand turn," according to Trish Berg, Supervisor for the 911 Center, King County Police. The car skidded on gravel and flipped onto the side of the road. The passenger was not wearing a seat belt, and was thrown from the car and crushed. The driver left the scene with minor injuries.

terests as a writer is in "the paces of time, how time treats us," and each book reflects a different approach he has taken. In "English Creek," during the summer before World War II, Doig "deliberately wanted to look at a compressed piece of time - one of those summers when we're growing up and it feels like everything possible in the world is happening." A different aspect of time is explored in "Dancing at the Rascal Fair," which spans the 30 year friendship of Rob Barclay and Angus McCaskill. "They go from being quite young men to middle-aged - and in some ways, prematurely aged - men in Montana, by their homestead lives." The last book in the trilogy will "probably cover from July 4, 1989 to Montana's centennial day of statehood in November 1989." Although the plot line will follow the characters in 1989, "within that will be flashbacks in Montana's history."

Writing at first "for the sheet of paper...to see how things look and sound on the page," Doig strives to be understandable. "Segments such as

cont. on pg. 2

New 18-credit class offers in-depth study

Audrey Wren

English, history, communications and humanities are integrated for the first time in an 18-credit course to be offered at Shoreline Community College winter quarter.

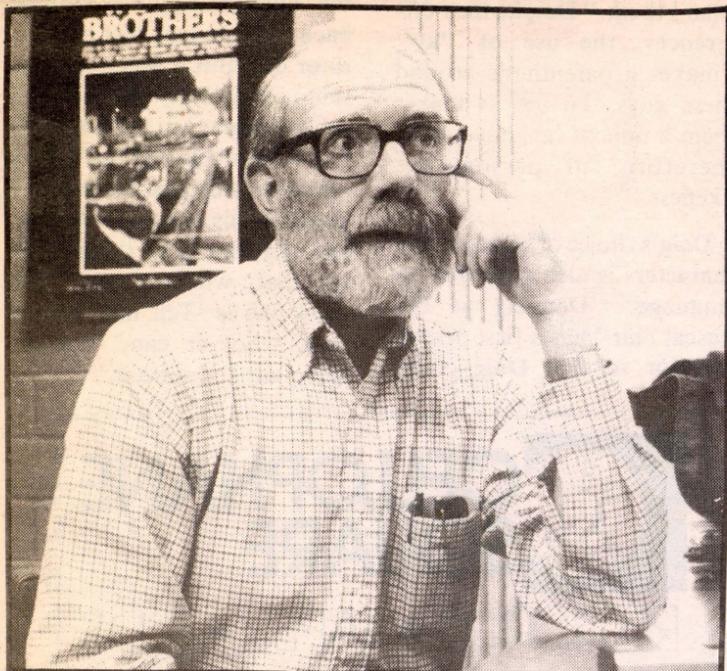
Diane Gould of the English Department, Lloyd Keith of the History Department, Jean Roden of the library, and Carol Doig of the Communications Department will be the instructors. English 102, History 285W, Communications 203W or 285W, and Humanities 299 are the classes, starting at 8 a.m. and ending at 12:30 p.m., Tuesday through Friday. Class size is limited to 60, and the only prerequisite is English 101.

Three of these classes meet the writing requirements for the University of Washington. "There will be more writing and more research done (in the integrated English class) than if you were just taking a regular English 102 class," commented Gould.

Doig stated that if students do not have mass media credits, they can earn these credits through the course. She also commented on the advantage of the integrated courses, that, "students learn better when they participate more, and the instructors can learn more, too. It gives everybody a chance to work more in depth and gives them a chance to work on projects they're interested in." Keith stated "we want to encourage quality writing in our classes." Roden, who is the first librarian at SCC to be involved in an integrated course, said the class will be an advantage because "it is a totally integrated course." The research seminar class taught by Rodin will give "expert help with in-depth research," said Doig.

Keith says he will use the history class to "contrast with in-

cont. on pg. 5



Ivan Doig visited the SCC bookstore to sign copies of his latest book, "Dancing at the Rascal Fair." Friends and students showed up to chat and get autographed copies.

Language dances in "Rascal Fair"

Stephanie Smith

Poetic prose set in austere Montana is one of Ivan Doig's talents, as his book "Dancing at Rascal Fair" is number one on the northwest's best seller list. His other works with a Montana setting include a memoir, "This House of Sky" (1978), and "English Creek"

(1984) which, along with "Dancing at the Rascal Fair," is part of a trilogy Doig plans to complete in 1989.

While at Shoreline Community College, Nov. 4, promoting "Dancing at the Rascal Fair," Doig talked about the larger themes in his writing.

One of Doig's primary in-

Computer network creates "real world"

Valerie Gardner

A new system to link computers in the drafting, engineering, and manufacturing departments is currently being researched. The system would simulate updated manufacturing standards in Shoreline Community College classrooms.

Computer Integrated Manufacturing (CIM) instructor Rex Hunter is developing a system that will allow the computers in the separate departments to "talk to each other." Hunt is currently gathering information for the implementation of the "networking" system.

The CIM program includes classes in Computer Aided

Design and Drafting (CADD), Computer Aided Engineering (CAE), Computer Aided Manufacturing (CAM), and Flexible Machining Cells (FMC). Networking would provide "an opportunity for manufacturing engineers" to integrate their experiences on the different machines, a need Hunter saw from three years of teaching CAM classes. "In every quarter, there were students asking about it (the integrated classes)," Hunter said.

During fall quarter, Hunter will design and develop the computer networking system. Winter quarter will be used for implementation and testing of the system, then spring quarter "it's up and running," said Don Schultz, Coordinator of Industrial Technology.



Rex Hunter, CIM instructor, is designing a system to link the computers in the Industrial Technology Department, providing a more "real life" environment for the students.

cont. from pg. 1

Author rewrites to make sense

putting up hay in 'English Creek' - I will have people who don't know a damn thing about putting up hay, read that, so that I'm sure they savvy it...I don't see any reason to write if you're going to be obscure...The main audience I'm trying for, of course, is simply people who enjoy language, who like to see the language dance on the page."

All this doesn't come effortlessly in the first draft. Meticulous rewriting and rereading is essential. "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" was "probably a sixth draft manuscript," said Doig. "Sometimes I'll read through the whole thing and just look at the verbs; sentence rhythms on another reading. Another reading, I might look at the

beginnings and endings of paragraphs, to make sure I'm not doing the same damn thing time after time."

Doig also examines the dialog("to see if it can be

it over to see if it makes sense," he added.

Doig carefully employs the language of his characters to reveal their personalities and relationships. Rob Barclay, in

**"I don't see any reason to write if you're going to be obscure."
—Ivan Doig, author of "Dancing at the Rascal Fair"**

shortened") and the pace of the story ("is it going fast enough, is it dull, am I telling people more than they want or not enough"). "And at some point, I have to remind myself to read

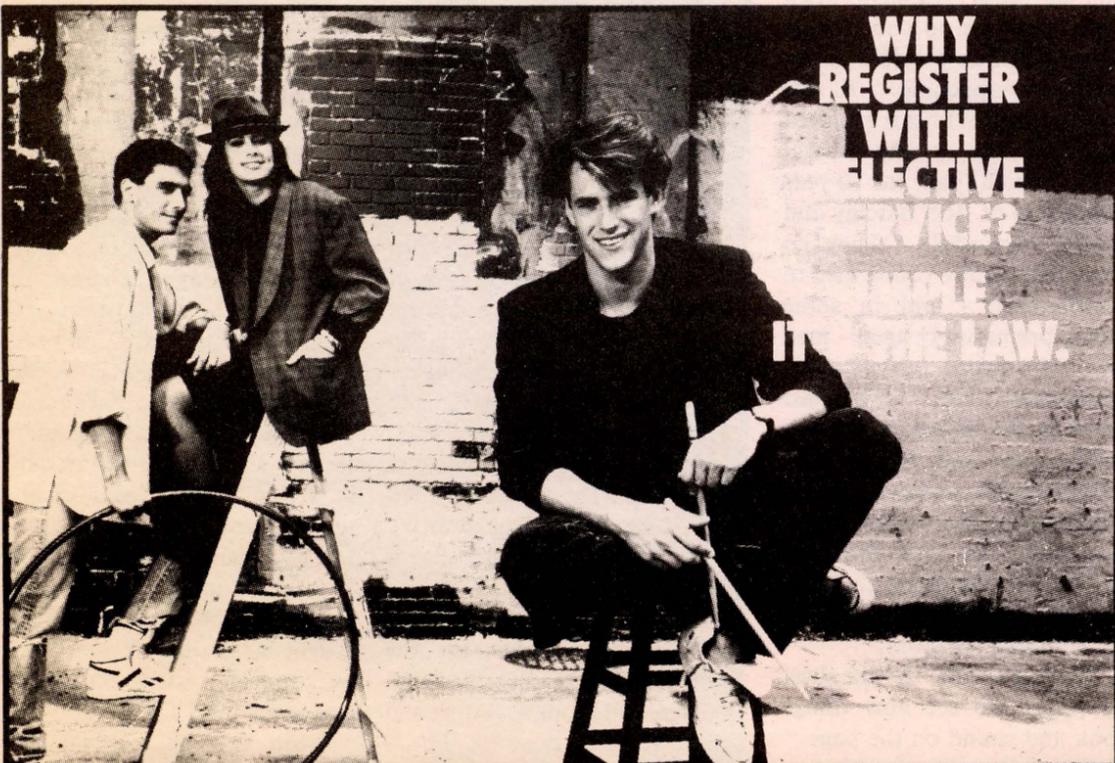
"Dancing at the Rascal Fair," is shown to be "kind of a smart mouth" by his habit of calling Angus McCaskill "McAngus." Doig describes two other characters in "Dancing at the

Rascal Fair," Lucas Barclay, saloon owner and Ninian Duff, homesteader and "Bible-belted Scots Calvinist," as being at opposite ends of social and religious spectrums, but alike in their "iron will determination." Doig has them both use the word "ay," but in entirely different ways. Lucas Barclay's usage is "kind of interrogative, at the end of a sentence: 'That's what you think, ay?'" Ninian Duff uses "ay" at the beginning of a sentence. His is more affirmative, saying: "Ay, that's what I think." Despite their differences, the use of "ay" "makes a parenthesis around these guys. To me, it makes them a unit of language, and, therefore, of personality, likeness."

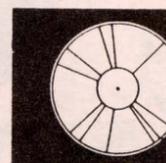
Doig's choice of narrator and characters is also governed by language. "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" has a first person narrator so that Doig could

"get at the Montana language, the slang," in addition to wanting the immediacy that using the first person provides. Other characters are chosen for "who can best convey the language and logically fit across the time span" in which Doig writes.

Consistency is part of what makes Doig's writing "dance." He had a closing line for "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" that he wanted to use "for the rhythms in that sentence, the feel of it. I thought it summed up alot of the questioning, the looking back over the past that my narrator did. But it was not a line that particularly fit in with other language in the book. So I wrote a mock children's story which my narrator reads to the pupils of his one-room school, and that line is in there: 'Tell me that, whoever can.' The final line is 'Tell me, tell me that, whoever can,' but the story has the refrain."



If you're a guy about to turn 18, you need to register with Selective Service at the post office. The reason is simple—federal law requires it. Registering is also simple. You just fill out a card. It only takes five minutes. Why make life difficult? Register with Selective Service. It's quick. It's easy. And it's the law.



CELLOPHANE SQUARE

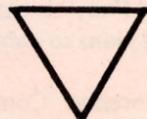
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Gay Men, Lesbians, and Friends Support Group forming.



We encourage gay men, lesbians, and their friends to contact the Women's Center for information on a newly-formed support group of students and off-campus people. Our focus is social, educational, and fun! Students, staff, faculty and off-campus interested parties should call 546-4601

IN THE NEWS

Northwest authors are all over the charts

■ **Dueling authors:** For the first time in memory, three Northwest authors have two books each on this week's regional best-seller list for literary paperbacks: Seattle's Ivan Doig, and James Welch and Richard Ford, both of Missoula. It doesn't stop there: Doig and Ford each have a title on the hardback fiction list.

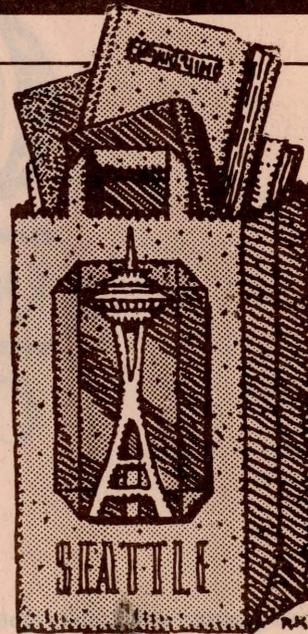
BEST SELLERS

Hardback Fiction

1. "Dancing at the Rascal Fair," Ivan Doig
2. "The Bonfire of the Vanities," Tom Wolfe
3. "Being a Green Mother," Piers Anthony
4. "The Black Unicorn," Terry Brooks
5. "Sarum," Edward Rutherfurd
6. "Kaleidoscope," Danielle Steel
7. "Beloved," Toni Morrison
8. "Rock Springs," Richard Ford
9. "Leaving Home," Garrison Keillor
10. "Lady," Anne McCaffrey

Hardback Nonfiction

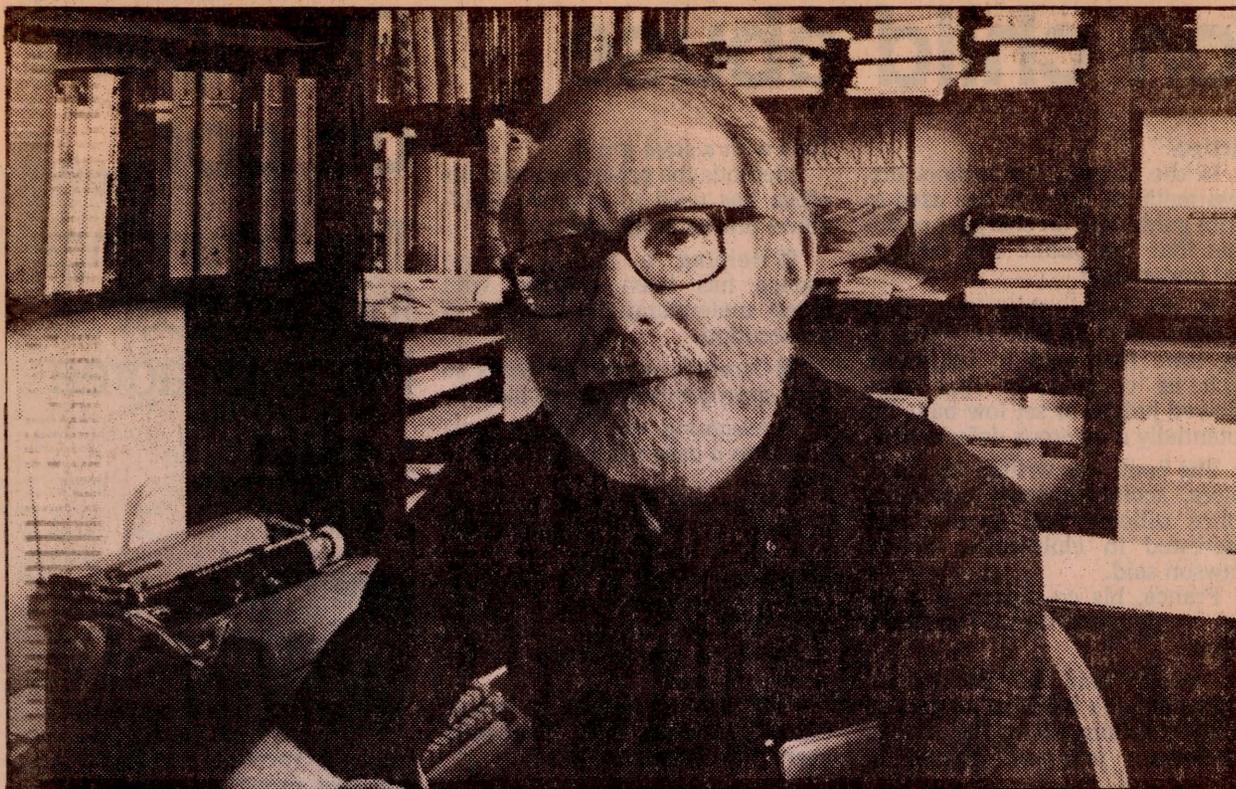
1. "Free to Be a Family," Marlo Thomas
2. "The Great Depression of 1990," Ravi Batra
3. "The New American Diet," William and Sonja Connor
4. "Man of the House," Tip O'Neill and William Novak
5. "Small Comforts," Tom Bodett
6. "Rubber Legs and White Tail-Hairs," Patrick F. McManus
7. "Chronicle of the 20th Century," ed. Clifton Daniel
8. "Linda Goodman's Star Signs," Linda Goodman
9. "Love, Medicine & Miracles," Bernie Siegel
10. "Not Without My Daughter," Betty Mahmoody



Literary Trade Paperbacks

1. "Fools Crow," James Welch
2. "English Creek," Ivan Doig
3. "Cold Sassy Tree," Olive Ann Burns
4. "This House of Sky," Ivan Doig
5. "The Sportwriter," Richard Ford
6. "The River Why," David James Duncan
7. "West With the Night," Beryl Markham
8. "The Death of Jim Loney," James Welch
9. "The Mists of Avalon," Marion Zimmer Bradley
10. "A Piece of My Heart," Richard Ford

■ Last week's best sellers in the Northwest, as reported by Pacific Pipeline Inc., a regional book distributor based in Kent.



Craig Fujii / Seattle Times file

Every morning at 7 a.m., Ivan Doig resumes writing in his Innis Arden home office.

Writer goes to great pains to portray the real Old West

The Old West – the *authentic* Old West, not the stereotyped one familiar from television and romanticized novels – is being kept alive in a quiet, wooded area of Innis Arden.

“In the typical Western, nobody ever milks a cow or plants a spud,” says Ivan Doig. “I try to tell how the West was really settled, by plain people who were farmers, ranchers, miners – ordinary people. People afflicted by deadly flash floods, excruciating droughts, blizzards and forest fires, who survived.”

Doig has five published books about the West to his credit, and a sixth on its way. His first, “This House of Sky,” published in 1978, tells of the harsh life in Montana, where he was born and grew up; of his family who, after nearly a century, never owned land but were always hired hands; and of hardships that forged character.

FACES OF SHORELINE



JUDY VAN DEEN
North Times columnist

lose its magic for him. The three books of a soon-to-be-finished trilogy – “English Creek” (1984), “Dancing at the Rascal Fair” (1987) and “Ride With Me, Meriah

the early days when a new book was published, he and Carol would put copies in the back of the car, take them to Montana and distribute them to bookstores all over the state. Today, he says, “I go to book signings, on national tours and have interviews on public radio and in newspapers.”

The movies have even shown some interest, with “The Sea Runners,” telling of four men’s escape from a Russian prison in 19th-century Alaska, under option. Doig considers that a phantom project until the option is picked up, though – and if it does go further, he plans to have nothing to do with script writing.

“I gave birth to the ‘child’ in the typewriter and sent it out to the world,” he says of his book. “Now I have to set it free to face other people’s visions.”

Of his own style of working,

SEATTLE TIMES
Sunday, November 5, 1989 L 7

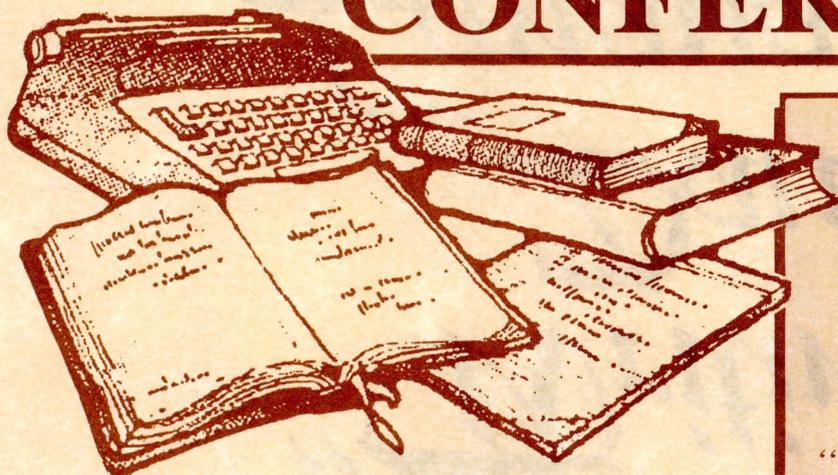
IN THE NEWS

**Ivan Doig receives
achievement award**

■ Seattle writer Ivan Doig is this year's recipient of the Distinguished Achievement Award from the Western Literature Association. Doig, whose next novel, "Mariah's Book," is due next fall, received the award at the recent WLA Conference in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

Famous flight jacket!

1988 AUBURN WRITERS CONFERENCE



OCTOBER 29:

A full day of poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction workshops led by three of the Northwest's best writers. Workshops will be followed by a panel discussion on the art of writing.

The Fiction Workshop will be led by the director and founder of The Literary Center, **Marilyn Stablein**. Ms. Stablein is the author of *THE CENSUS TAKER; TALES OF A TRAVELER IN INDIA AND NEPAL* (Madrona Publishers, 1985). Her work has also appeared in *The Mississippi Review*, *Willow Springs*, *Permafrost*, *The Seattle Times*, *Fessenden Review*, and *Crazyhorse*. She has taught at the University of Houston Department of English, Centrum, the Literary Center, and the University of Washington Extension.

The Poetry Workshop will be led by Pushcart Prize recipient, **Linda Bierds**. Her first book *FLIGHTS OF THE HARVEST-MARE*, was published by Ashata Press in 1985. Due this November is *THE STILLNESS, THE DANCING* from Henry Holt. Ms. Bierds' poetry has been in *The New Yorker*, *Massachusetts Review*, *New England Review*, *Field*, *The Hudson Review*, and *the Carolina Quarterly*. Linda Bierds holds a M.A. in Creative Writing from the University of Washington and she has participated in the Washington State Arts Commission's Poets in the Schools Program for several years.

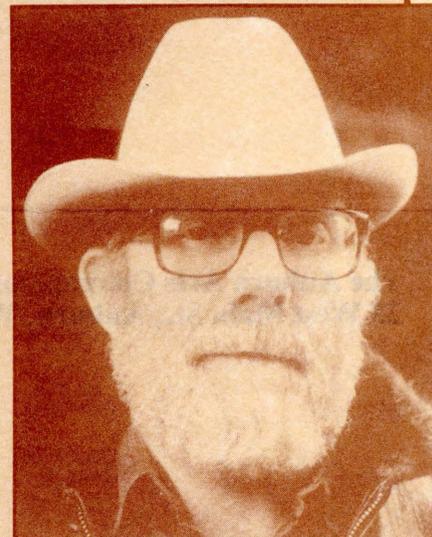
Tom Jay, a resident of Chimacum, will lead the Creative Non-Fiction Workshop. An inspiring writer, his work has appeared in many collections of essays including *WORKING THE WOODS*, *WORKING THE SEA* (Empty Bowl Press, 1986), and *RIVER DOGS* (Copper Canyon Press, 1976).

Registration Fee: \$20.00

Includes lunch. Workshops participants are limited, pre-registration is required.

WITH SPECIAL GUEST READING BY IVAN DOIG

"Writing is a dance of language — in the fictional trilogy that includes *DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR*, I'm trying to write books in the West's own prancing language."
... Ivan Doig, 1988



OCTOBER 28:

Northwest writer **IVAN DOIG** will read from his latest book *DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR*. In his writing, he captures the landscape and hum of the west. He has received 13 awards including two Pacific Northwest Booksellers Awards (*THE SEA RUNNERS*, 1982 and *WINTER BROTHERS*, 1980) and a nomination for the National Book Award in contemporary thought (*THIS HOUSE OF SKY*, 1978). In 1985, Ivan Doig won a National Endowment for the Arts Fiction Fellowship. A native of Montana, he has worked as a ranch hand, newspaperman, magazine editor and writer and now lives in Seattle.

7:30 p.m. Auburn Senior Center, 910 9th St. S.E., Auburn

Tickets: \$3.50 Available at the Auburn Public Library, Auburn Parks and Recreation Department, and The Book Rack or call 931-3043 for reservations.

Workshops will take place at the Auburn Public Library, 808 9th St. S.E.

SCHEDULE:

8:30- 9:30	Registration
9:30-12:00	Workshops
10:45-11:00	Coffee Break
12:00- 1:00	Lunch
1:15- 2:30	Wrap-up of morning sessions
2:30- 3:00	Break
3:00- 4:00	Authors Panel Discussion

NORTHWEST

THE NEW SAVORY WILD MUSHROOM

By Margaret McKenny and Daniel E. Stuntz. Revised and enlarged by Joseph F. Ammirati. A brand-new edition of the classic field guide that has been a favorite of mushroom hunters for twenty-five years. New full-color photographs for all of the 200 species described.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON PRESS
(paper) \$12.50

A STATE OF MIND: My Story

By J.Z. Knight. This is the true story of one of America's most celebrated spiritual leaders – most well known as the “channel” for Ramtha, a 35,000-year-old warrior spirit from Atlantis. An important and dramatic chronicle of a controversial New Age phenomenon.

WARNER BOOKS (hardcover) \$15.95

WEST COAST VICTORIANS: A Nineteenth-Century Legacy

By Kenneth Naverson. Over 100 charming, ageless homes throughout Washington, Oregon and California are explored here in breathtaking color. Learn all there is to know about the beautiful Victorian homes of the West.

BEAUTIFUL AMERICA (hardcover) \$34.95
(paper) \$26.95

SMALL SACRIFICES

By Ann Rule. One of our foremost true-crime writers has written this true story of passion and murder that deals with Oregon resident Diane Downs's “unthinkable” crime – and the unimagined depths of darkness concealed within a human being. It's a story we've all followed, but never before has it been presented in such compelling detail.

NEW AMERICAN LIBRARY
(hardcover) \$18.95

THE BOHEMIANS

Edited by Robert A. Bennett. A collection of over thirty fascinating tales of adventure first published in San Francisco's *Overland Monthly* when Bret Harte was its editor. Included are pieces by Noah Brooks, Mark Twain, Prentice Mulford and many others, plus biographical material on the authors.

PIONEER PRESS (paper) \$10.95

GREETINGS FROM OREGON

By Gideon Bosker and Jonathan Nicholas. View the changes in Oregon through this remarkable collection of 330 original postcards printed from 1880 through the 1930s. The rare and hand tinted postcards feature such events as a turn-of-the-century Pendleton Roundup and Portland Rose Parade. Full color throughout.

GRAPHIC ARTS CENTER PUBLISHING
(hardcover) \$24.95

DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR

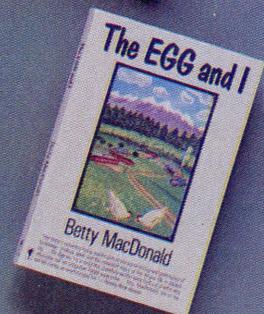
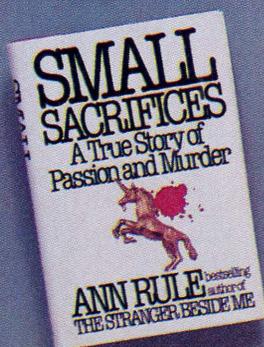
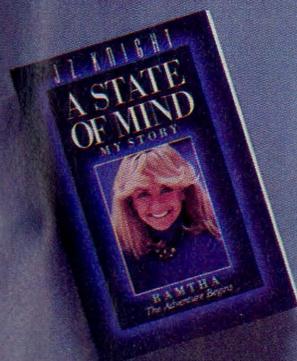
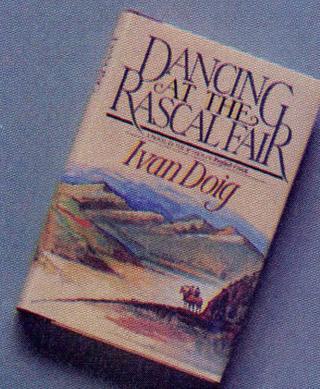
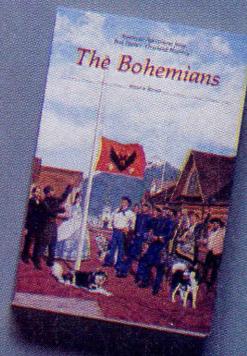
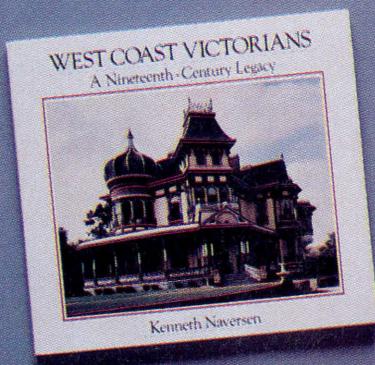
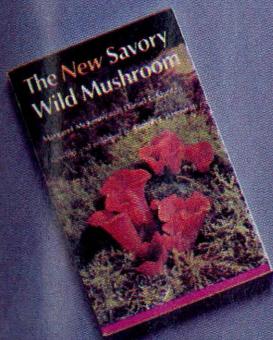
By Ivan Doig. From its opening on the quays of a Scottish port in 1889 to its close on a windswept Montana homestead three decades later, Ivan Doig's new novel is a passionate and authentic chronicle of the American experience. Doig, who lives in Seattle, is the author of *English Creek*.

ATHENEUM (hardcover) \$18.95

THE EGG AND I

By Betty MacDonald. Now a classic in American film and literature, this 1945 memoir tells the heartwarming story of Betty MacDonald, who blithely moved to a Washington chicken farm with her husband. Though unprepared for the rigors of life in the wild, they faced their frontier struggles with abounding good humor and an endearing resiliency.

HARPER & ROW (paper) \$8.95



Rocky Mountain Blues

DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR

by Ivan Doig

(Atheneum Publishers: \$18.95; 384 pp.)

Reviewed by Winifred Blevins

In his impressive new novel, "Dancing at the Rascal Fair," Ivan Doig stakes a claim to the mantle worn by Wallace Stegner for half a century, the reputation as our foremost recorder and interpreter of life in the historic high, dry American West. With "This House of Sky," "English Creek" and especially this book, he has earned it.

In "Rascal Fair," Doig returns to the mythical Two Medicine country of "English Creek," a creation based on the region of his own growing up, along the Rocky Mountain front in Montana. And the principal character here is Angus McCaskill, the grandfather of "English Creek's" Jick Mc-

Caskill.

Angus is the McCaskill who uproots the family tree from Scottish soil and replants it in Montana. In 1889 he crosses the Atlantic with friend Rob Barclay, a journey by boat that terrifies Angus. He journeys on westward, drawn by the siren song of free land. He claims a homestead and ekes out a living raising sheep.

Angus' life does not turn out to be the adventure the young Scot was romantically looking forward to, the rascal fair of the title, a carnival of traveling musicians and gay Highlanders, a time for dancing:

*Dancing at the rascal fair,
devils and angels all were there,
heel and toe, pair by pair,
dancing at the rascal fair.*

*Dancing at the rascal fair,
moon and star, fire and air,
choose your mate and make a pair,
dancing at the rascal fair.*

Homestead life proves to be hard—physically, economically, especially emotionally. Angus falls in love with a young woman—the depiction of his rapture is the great

charm of the novel—but she chooses another.

Angus proceeds. He raises his sheep. Marries a second-choice woman. Has one son. But he never stops longing for his first sweetheart, and that passion sours his life. It turns his lifelong friend Rob into an enemy. It keeps his wife at a distance. Most painfully, it turns his

son against him.

Doig makes these losses seem not exceptional but the human condition, and the way we cope with them the fabric of what we are. His greatest strength is exploring the coagulated feelings of human beings within the family. His characters are not the morality-play heroes of the genre Western, but

real people, tangled in their feelings, handicapped by their deficiencies, deeply decent, yearning for closeness, finding it only intermittently. Their melancholy dance of life is rendered with exquisite nuance.

Blevins is a writer and critic living in Jackson, Wyo.

in the book: The Trouble With Hamlets which confirms a popular provincial concept. The final few lines read: "and back in California, in response to one of his always brilliant and heart-warming letters, I reply, 'it was nice of you to tell me that I made an impression on mesdames X and Y, but, as you know, the only woman in Albion who could seriously interest me is the one that you are married to.'"

This 16 page booklet is entertaining and fun. However, I am not fond of the curvy Olde English type font on the cover which makes the title barely legible.

Penelope Reedy

DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR, by Ivan Doig. MacMillan, 1987. \$18.95.

Here it is! The book you've been waiting for! The prequel to Doig's ENGLISH CREEK, that boffo bonanza of mountain madness and homestead high jinks. And don't you just LOVE the title.!

Sometimes you wish they would hype good books in the same way that the latest Danielle Steele comes to the best seller lists. But instead we readers will have to tell each other: Read this one. This one is the beginning of the story of the McCaskill's in what is called the Two Medicine country of Montana. It begins on the docks of Greenock, Scotland, when the decision to emigrate has already been made by two young men ready to find new vistas for their ambitions and talents.

The whole period covered is 1889 to 1919, but it takes only forty pages to get from Scotland to Gros Ventre,

"Montana's Athens-to-be". So the story is mostly of the first wave of immigration and settlement in the sheep country of Montana. It is a time of making something out of "nothing." the nothing being abundant grass, water, and weather.

Our storyteller is Angus McCaskill. His cast includes:

Rob Barclay, Angus' friend on that Greenock dock. From a family of wheelwrights, Rob has "hands quick enough to shoe a unicorn". His ambition gets them to that dock and gets them into the sheep and more sheep business. His drive meets head on with the daily strife of the land, his family, and hard times, and shapes him into a different individual than the one who left Scotland.

Lucas Barclay, Rob's uncle, and the first member of the hometown circle to go in search of the promises America offered. He wound up in Gros Ventre, seeing all its possibilities, but maimed by his experiences in the Montana mines and thus limited in his own capabilities.

Adair Barclay McCaskill, Rob's sister, whom he brings to Montana after the death of their parents in the hope of marrying her off to his best friend. Her view of Montana is very different from the menfolk, saying simply, "There is so much of this country."

Anna Ramsey Reese, also a recent emigrant from the same part of Scotland, comes to Montana with her parents and puts her teaching abilities to the test in a one room school house. She is the passion and obsession of Angus' life, but she is a woman of independent mind and marries a Danish horse rancher.

Varick McCaskill, the son of Angus and Adair, who is the first generation Montanian, and a child

of two centuries, having been born in December of 1899.

Stanley Meixell, the first ranger of the Two Medicine National Forest, who begins to put limits on the limitless tracts of land, grass, and trees.

And an assortment of other minor characters, including the fascinating Hebner clan and others who continue into ENGLISH CREEK days.

Angus, our storyteller, is the other man on that Greenock dock. His background in Scotland is as a clerk and as a teaching apprentice, not exactly adequate training for settling new lands and tending thousands of "woolies". However, his background makes him the best candidate for schoolteacher, when their first couple of teachers, female, get married pretty quickly. That occupation is continued with very few breaks, as an additional source of income for his tight circumstances.

His style of telling includes snippets of Robert Burns, although the Burns is really Burns/Doig. It includes bits of old Scottish airs, like the "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" ditty. It includes observations like "Enduring him was like trying to carry fire in a basket". It includes a tendency to create adjectives at hat-dropping moments, sort of like that. And it includes flashbacks of dialogue.

But most importantly, the telling includes an ear for authentic speech and for authentic people. The real heroes of this period, who forged a country out of wilderness, were a variety of nationalities, occupations, and dispositions. They were people who survived blizzards,

droughts, the idiosyncrasies of dumb beasts, the trials of isolation, the trials of each other, the vagaries of the markets, the World War that took such a disproportionate number of Montana's young men, and the influenza that accompanied that war. This tends to be a primarily male picture of this life, but it was a primarily male population.

Since this is now number one of a projected trilogy about this area, we get a sense of continuity of a people and of a country, or at least a part of the country. This is definitely a novel of the West, although the pioneer experience, too, can be seen as a continuous process in our country. But the spaces are Western and the minds it helps shape seem to have a distinctive quality.

The only caveat for you readers: It is a book about life, so its action sequences are held together by periods of routine. But read it for a sense of that life, and you will be satisfied.

Gloria Gehrman, Moscow, Idaho
The Centennial Year, 1987

THE WORKS OF EDWARD ABBEY.

My first contact with Edward Abbey's name came to me through the rancher's grapevine as representing "them damned environmentalists" meaning he and his friends did nothing more than take delight in fouling up the honest working man's life and paycheck. Living within a ranching environment, I have been heavily influenced by this image of the "environmentalist" and in some cases have to agree that there are some folks out.

The Homesteading Scots Of Montana

DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR.
By Ivan Doig. Atheneum. 400
pages. \$18.95.

By RALPH H. JOHNSON

THIS poetic novel of homesteading in Montana between 1890 and 1920 is Ivan Doig's fifth book and his third novel. Like its predecessor "English Creek," the book has a setting different enough from Ohio as to be almost part of another planet, but midwesterners should get to know him better.

"Dancing At the Rascal Fair" is part of a planned trilogy about Scottish emigrants to America. The books are not in sequence. "English Creek" is the second book of the trilogy. The new novel deals with the first generation of the McCaskill clan. The third volume, the publication of which will coincide with the centennial of Montana statehood in 1989, takes the family to the present day.

Most frontier books, films, and TV shows deal with cowpunchers, Indians, horses, guns, massacres, and other savage acts of men, whether European or aboriginal. The reality, as one discovers by reading O. H. Rolvaag's "Giants In The Earth" or Doig's books was a great deal more prosaic and terrible than that — droughts, blizzards, locusts, heartbreaking work, failure, and sometimes, fortunately, success.

This story concerns two young Scots, Angus McCaskill, the narrator, and his friend, Rob Barclay. Leaving their opportunity-pinched homeland, they arrive in the frontier settlement of Gros Ventre, a sort of wide spot in the gulch.

There they locate Lucas Barclay, the elusive uncle they had been seeking to help them get a start in a new land. They find Lucas, all right. He has lost both hands in a mining accident, but has become a town booster and the successful proprietor of a saloon.

With Lucas' help the two friends go into sheep raising, staking their homestead claims on the north fork of English Creek in the Two Medicine country of northern Montana. The area becomes known as Scotch Heaven and, compared with the dry-land farms of later homesteaders, it is. Angus becomes a schoolteacher as well as a sheepman. No gun throwing in this novel, pardner, and no larger-than-life cattle barons either.

A star-crossed romance blights Angus' life. He falls in love with Anna Ramsay, the teacher in the school on the south fork of English Creek. She spurns him for a Danish-born horse trader — why, we are never quite sure. The despairing Angus marries Rob's sister, Adair. The strains of that marriage cause Rob's and Angus' friendship to cool. Eventually, Angus' inability to forget the first great love of his life ruptures the friendship.

THE vengeful Rob also sours Angus' relationship with his only child, a son named Varick. In a desperate effort to end the feud, Lucas bequeaths his sheep herd to the two estranged partners provided they work together for three years. They accept grudgingly, surviving droughts, blizzards, the 1919 out-



Ivan Doig

break of influenza, and farm depressions. Particularly gripping is the account of a blizzard-lashed trip to buy hay for their starving sheep.

Rob dies in a tragic accident, the feud unresolved. However, the McCaskill family is reunited physically and emotionally.

It is a good story, but the strength of the book lies at least partly in Doig's ability to weave a tapestry of westerners and their often unforgiving environments and, not least, his rhapsodic descriptions of his native Montana:

"Ahead was where the planet greated. To the west now, the entire horizon was a sky-marching procession of mountains . . . Mountains with snow summits, mountains with jagged blue-gray faces. Mountains that were freestanding and separate as blades from the hundred crags around them; mountains that went among other mountains as flat palisades of stone miles long, like guardian reefs amid wild waves. The Rocky Mountains, simply and rightly named. Their double magnitude here startled and stunned a person, at least this one — how deep into the sky their motionless tumult reached, how far these Rockies columned across the earth."

Doig, now living in Seattle, is a former newspaperman and editorial page colleague of this reviewer. His first book was an autobiographical memoir, "This House of Sky," published in 1978.

The author is an authentic chronicler of the West. His research is impeccable. His story-telling powers are considerable.

Some readers may not like his hand-carved narrative style. They may prefer writers less identified with one region of the country. Others may find his characters a bit too cut-and-dried. But his basic theme of man against nature runs to the taproot of American literature.

Generations raised on "Wagon Train" and "Bonanza" are not likely to recognize this version of the late 19th century and early 20th century western United States. Without pandering to the lowest common denominator of taste, Doig has written five books that should assure him his own niche in contemporary American culture.

Ralph Johnson is *The Blade* editorial director.

Doig makes his mark despite English exams

By Vance Horne

The Olympian

This article could be really boring. It's about how Ivan Doig, the fairly famous Northwest writer, will read in Olympia on Thursday as the first author in the 1987-1988 Poetry and Fiction Reading Series of South Puget Sound Community College.

But let's have a little fun here. First, let's note that the series is titled "Imaginary Gardens."

That is a part of a quote from poet Marianne Moore, who once said something about how poetry should be like "imaginary gardens with real toads in them."

East Coast writers always were saying stuff like that, stuff that showed up on English exams. Moore is very eastern, by the way.

Doig is very western. Western writers seldom have been sources for the killer questions on high school literature tests.

Yes, it's true that Annie Dillard, Frank Herbert, Tom Robbins and Doig are Northwest writers who've made East Coast reputations. There are plenty of other famous western authors, too, from Jack London to Ross McDonald.

But it's always Hawthorne, Faulkner and Wallace Stevens on the English tests. Is the West that bad or that untried?

Doig will read at noon at the college's student center, then at 7:30 p.m. at The Olympia Center at State Avenue and Columbia Street. While he's in town, he also will sign books from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. at the Fireside Bookstore, 116 E. Legion Way, Olympia.

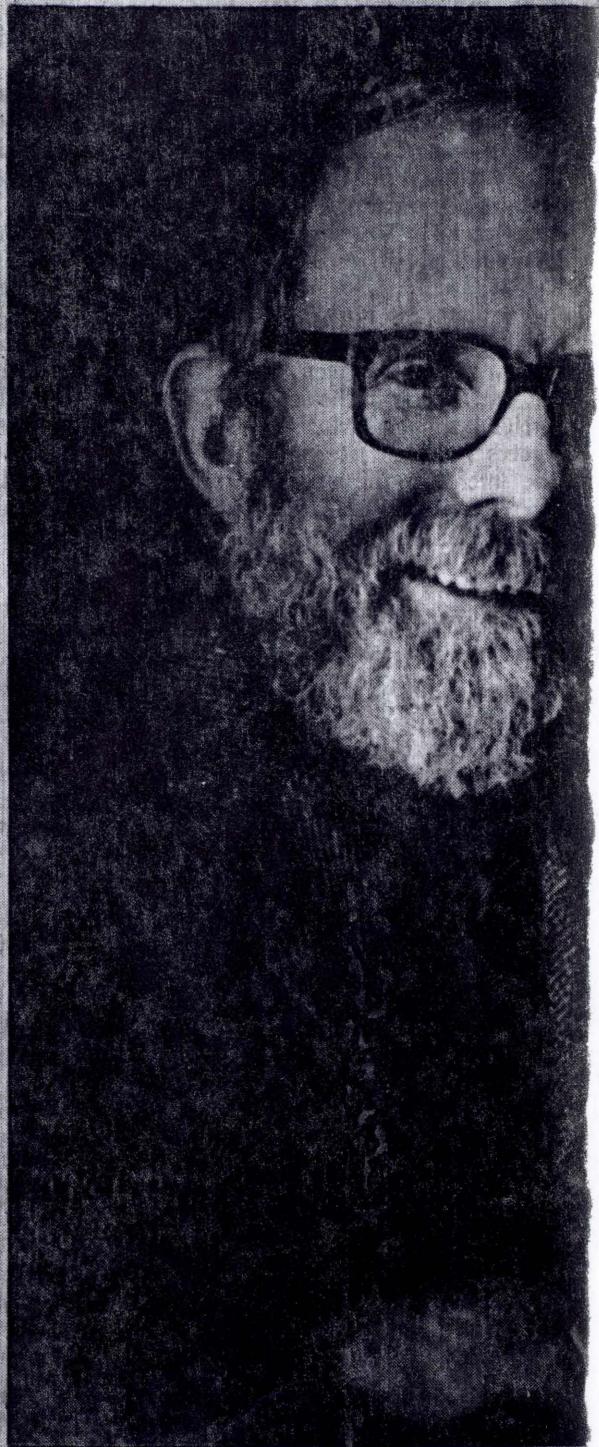
Other authors in the series:

- Seattle poet Sibyl James will read at 7:30 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 3, at The Olympia Center, then at noon Dec. 4 at the student center;
- Oregon poet Sharon Doubiago will read at noon, Thursday, Jan. 14, at the student center and at 7:30 p.m. the same day at The Olympia Center.

Readings are free at the student center and cost \$2 at The Olympia Center. Readings at both places are open to the public.

Doig's most recent book is "Dancing at the Rascal Fair." He is perhaps best known for his first book, "This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind."

It tells how his father raised him on sheep ranches and in small towns in Montana.



Ivan Doig will read from his writings when he at South Puget Sound Community College. 'Dancing at the Rascal Fair,' is on sale locally.

Doig's book celebrates tumultuous friendships of West's homesteaders

Dancing at the Rascal Fair. By Ivan Doig. Atheneum; 405 pages; \$18.95.

Two dead horses, separated by 30 years and half a world, frame the lives and landscape of Ivan Doig's new novel, the second of his Montana trilogy.

"Trouble never travels lonesome," remarks Jick McCaskill in "English Creek," the first in the trilogy.

"Rascal Fair" leaps a generation back to Jick's grandfather, Angus McCaskill, and his friend Rob, "stepping toward America past a drowned horse" on the quay at Greenock, Scotland, in 1889.

Full of hope and unspoken misgivings, the two young men gamely turn from the pinched old bit of earth called Scotland to brave first the seas and then three decades of trouble together as homesteaders in the northern Montana Rockies.

"Dancing at the Rascal Fair," its title drawn from a bargain-festival song, is told by Angus in retrospect. What begins as a simple lament for his lost friend reels quickly into a celebration of their tumultuous friendship and the vivid, shifting patterns of the lives it joined.

Cocky, irresistible Rob lures Angus to the New World with his glib tongue and visions of adventure and wealth somewhere over the horizon in a silver mine called the Great Maybe. Rob's bridge to this vision is his Uncle Lucas, the maimed but indomitable survivor of a mine explosion, who becomes their guide to the wilderness and its often eccentric pioneers, prodding them to their own destinies with gruff devotion.

Uncle Lucas tactfully extricates Rob and Angus from their own romantic follies and repeated financial crises, shep-

herding Angus through his loveless, oddly tender marriage to Rob's sister.

Not even Uncle Lucas, however, can mend the resulting rift between Rob and Angus; in his anger, Rob turns Angus' own son against him. Even in death, Uncle Lucas never gives up trying to reconcile the two friends, bequeathing them joint ownership of the sheep that ultimately bring Rob to his death.

More powerful even than Uncle Lucas in shaping the two friends' destinies is the landscape and climate of northern Montana. Here, against the brutal beauty of the Rockies, turn-of-the-century homesteaders flock and stake their families' lives on a gamble with floods, drought, fires, blizzards, winter isolation and the suicidal whimsies of livestock.

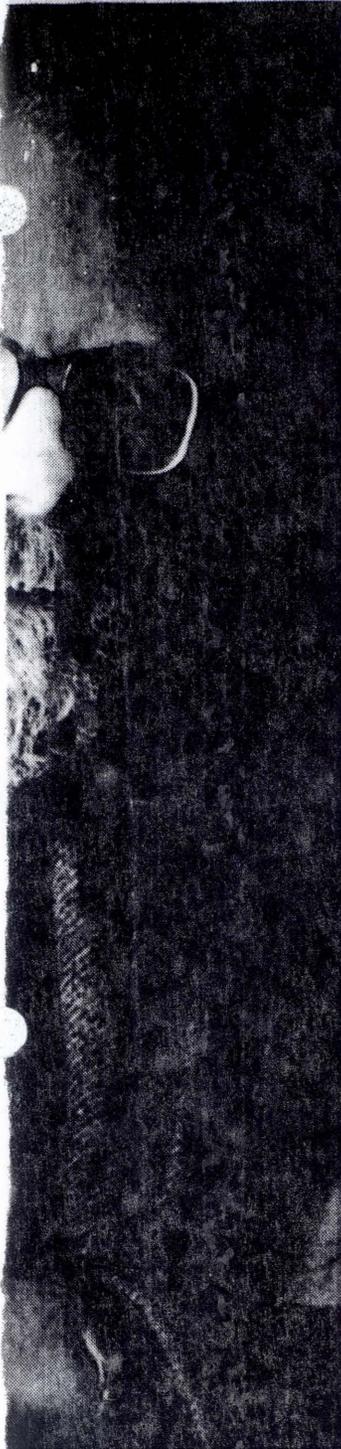
The few who endure inevitably confront the productive limits of the land itself; resistance to those limits erupts in the community's dramatic response to the creation of a national forest that ends unlimited grazing on public land.

"I don't know of anything you can just keep on using up and using up and using up, and not run out of," the unwelcome new Forest Service ranger tells his hostile audience. "And that's all the Forest Service is saying with this Two Medicine National Forest. You can use it, but not use it up."

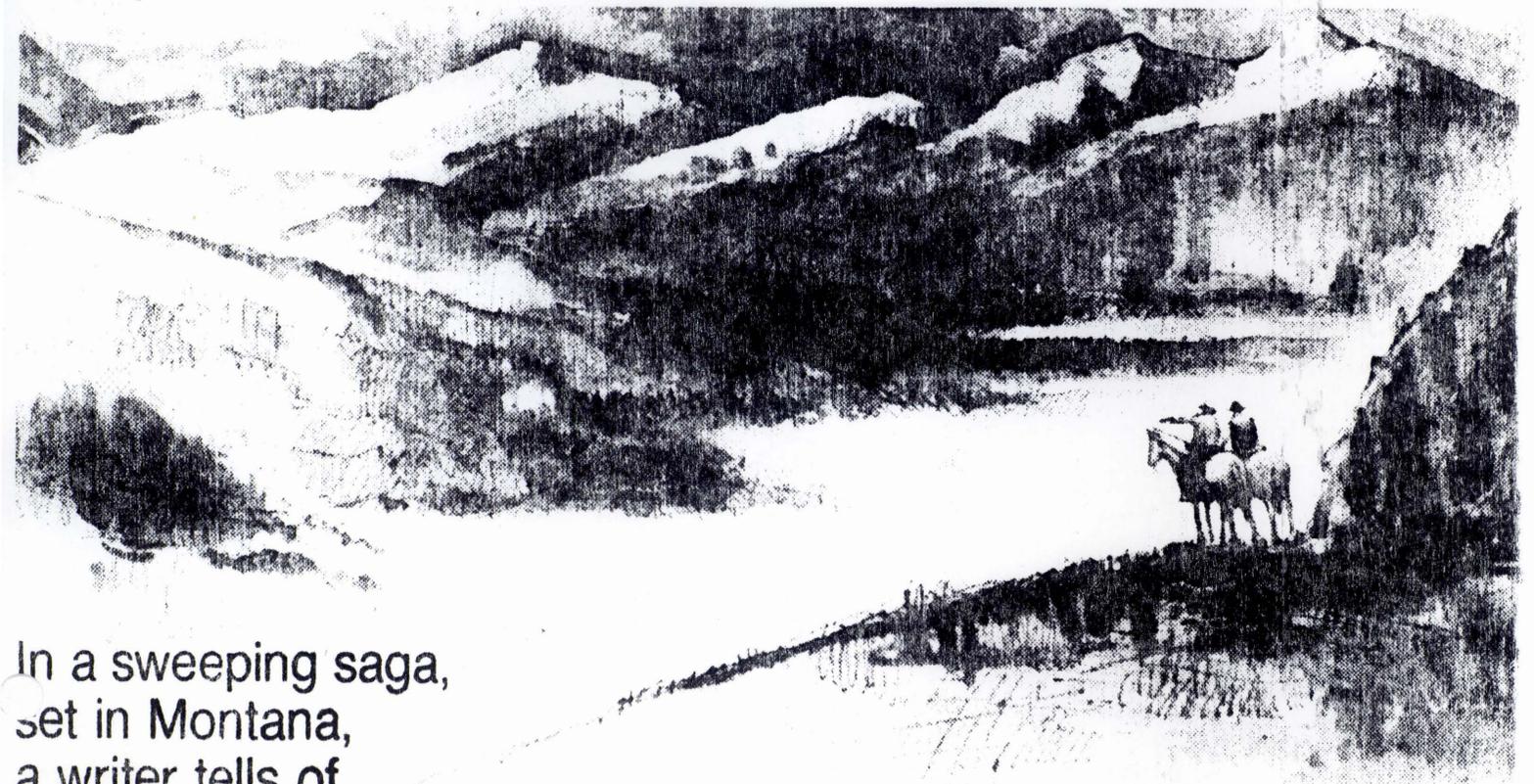
In moving the reluctant community to accept the ranger's wisdom, Angus unwittingly shapes the future for his son.

Such moments tolled the end of the American frontier. Doig's "Rascal Fair" captures the spirit of a people poised between the buckboard and the Model-T, between the old and the new West.

— Carol Van Strum
Gannett News Service



Jim Bates photo
men he appears in Olympia
college. His newest novel,
locally.



From the dust jacket of "Dancing at the Rascal"

In a sweeping saga, set in Montana, a writer tells of

The high life

■ "Dancing at the Rascal Fair"

by Ivan Doig
Atheneum, \$18.95

by Michael Dorris

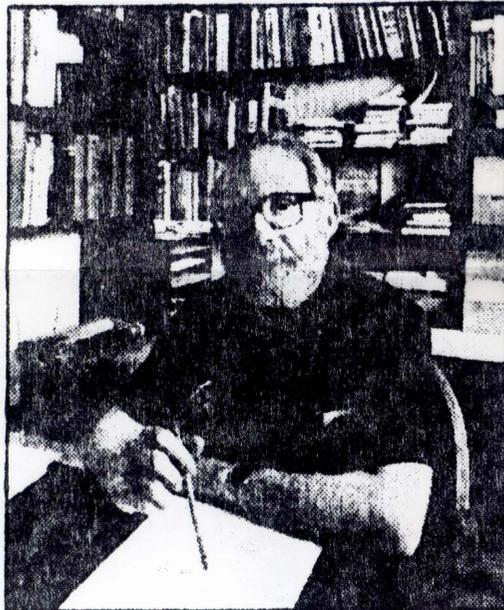
Ivan Doig's magnificent new novel is an answer to the prayer of anyone who has loved a distant country or experienced the full-hearted enthusiasm of youth — and who wants to return for the price of a book.

Part immigrant saga, part intelligent western, part sweeping romance, "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" further establishes its Scottish author in the front ranks of contemporary American writers. The novel traces the life of one Angus McCaskill, born in Nethermuir, Scotland, who crosses the Atlantic in steerage to arrive in Montana on the day of its statehood. He claims it, literally and spiritually, as his own.

The chronicle is constructed with the eye to detail and the unparalleled sense of place that characterize Doig's previous award-winning fiction and nonfiction. Virtually a "prequel" to his 1984 novel, "English Creek," it overflows with the precise yet magically evocative images of the northern Rockies that so distinguished his 1978 memoir, "This House of Sky."

But "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" is grounded in a compelling plot, archetypically familiar yet absolutely original. It is a story of the complexities of friendship and passion, of grief and exuberance, of endurance through fear and hardship. As its action passes from the late 19th century through the first two decades of the 20th, frontier history is illuminated through episodes that are, in turn, laugh-out-loud funny and agonizingly sad.

Doig's talent for describing nature is well known, but there are love scenes in this novel — from the ardor of youth to the tenderness of long-married discovery — that rival the splendor of any Montana vista. Listen to how Angus and his wife of many difficult years pass a snowbound evening in their cabin: "She came up into my arms, her head lightly against my shoulder, the soft sound of her humming matching itself to mine, and we began the first of our transits



Craig Fujii / Seattle Times

Ivan Doig's novel is constructed with an eye for detail and a keen sense of place.

around the room, quiet with each other except for the tune from our throats."

The culture of isolated settlement, populated with individuals who crash and melt against each other from season to season, has not been better presented. Men and women get along because they have no choice; they adore and despise as, if they invented the emotions.

We first meet 19-year-old Angus and his friend Robert Burns (Rob) Barclay as they sail from the River Clyde in Scotland, armed with a guidebook and a smattering of skills. Bound for Helena, where Rob's Uncle Lucas claims to own the Great Maybe silver mine, they survive a memorably described ocean voyage and arrive in America brimming with confidence and camaraderie. Nothing seems beyond the reach of hard work and good will, no frustration more than temporary, the springboard to a new, better opportunity.

They are eager to adapt, to shed Old World preconceptions and prejudice, and the Two Medicine country where they settle is breathtakingly splendid, matching every

expectation: "We sat unspeaking for a while, in that supreme silence that makes the ears ring. Where the bevels of the valley met, the creek ran in ripples and rested in beaver ponds. A curlew made deft evasive flight across the slope below us as if revealing curlicues in the air. Everything fit everything else this day."

And in this place — "Scotch Heaven" as it comes to be called over the next 30 years — Angus and Rob marry and father children, dream and experience bitter disappointment, fight the weather and each other to a tenuous draw. They ride the crest of boom times, know the deprivations of economic disaster and most of all realize the pangs of disillusionment: in trust, in the boundaries of decency, in the future itself.

The other characters — Rob's determined sister, Adair; the indelible school teacher, Anna Ramsay; Angus' eventual son, Varrick; the shrewd Lucas and his lifelong Blackfeet "housekeeper," Nancy Buffalo Calf Speaks; the sanguine forest ranger, Stanley Meixell — are no less compelling.

With the varied community of Scottish shepherds and homesteaders, they constitute a self-enclosed world in which all the grand dramas are played and replayed on a landscape of limitless expanse but near-claustrophobic social interaction. It is a world in which secrets are not so much kept as respected, where time hones rather than heals, and where nothing is guaranteed beyond the next chinook.

As always, Doig writes with grace and eloquence; his prose is so subtle that only in the days after finishing "Dancing at the Rascal Fair," when we find ourselves framing our thoughts with the roll of a burrish brogue, do we realize the extraordinary skill involved in his creation. Through vocabulary, word order and pacing — yet without any distracting tricks of spelling or punctuation — he has managed to render the cadence, idiom and lilt of Lowland speech. We have heard these voices, been touched by these lives.

In this fine work of fiction, every word, every surprise, every resolution rings true.

■ Michael Dorris' novel, "A Yellow Raft in Blue Water," was published in May.

RUBBER LEGS AND WHITE TAIL-HAIRS

Patrick F. McManus. Holt, \$14.95 ISBN 0-8070-7414-7

Fans of McManus (*The Grasshopper Trap*) will welcome these 27 little excursions into the life of the narrator "Pat," the author's alter ego. His humor is directed at fishermen, hunters, campers, gun-swappers, little boys and willful weather. All but the last two are recognizable. Deliberately "simple," the humor is always good-natured: the worst character is a prissy, visiting aunt—and she turns out to be a nice person in the end. The settings are all in the West, often in Pat's boyhood town of Delmore Blight, Idaho. Boyish pranks and adult foolishness get the most attention, with the usual cast of McManus characters: Retch Sweeney, Rancid Crabtree, wife Bun, et al. Among the best pieces are "Angler's Dictionary" ("*Best fishing time—Yesterday or last week. Worst fishing time—Now.*") and "Advanced Duck-Hunting Techniques" (see the Toilet Tissue ploy). It's good, clean, old-fashioned fun. (September 25)

IN THE SKIN OF A LION

Michael Ondaatje. Knopf, \$16.95 ISBN 0-394-56363-8

A spellbinding writer, Ondaatje exhibits a poet's sensibility and care for the precise, illuminating word. The author of *Coming Through Slaughter* and *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* again paints an impressionistic picture mixing real events and intersected fictional lives. We meet Patrick Lewis in his youth, living in the harsh but beautiful Canadian back country, with his father, a dynamiter of log jams. The action then segues to Toronto in the 1920s, where daredevil bridge builders, immigrants from many countries, are engaged in erecting an enormous span. A scene in which a young nun is swept off the unfinished bridge on a stormy night will make readers gasp; descriptions of the skill and agility of the bridge workers and the laborers who build a tunnel under Lake Ontario, going about their work in the yawning maw of danger, are also graphically stunning. When Patrick comes to Toronto, feeling himself an immigrant from the provinces, his life becomes entwined with those of actresses Clara Dickens and Alice Gull, with whom he experiences love, despair and, eventually, compulsion to commit a violent act. Ondaatje everywhere uses "a spell of language" to spin his brilliantly evoked tale. He writes, "The best art can order the chaotic tumble of events" and "the first sentence of every novel should be: 'Trust me, this will take time, but there is order here, very faint, very human.'" Both statements aptly describe this beautiful work. (September 28)

GOING TO THE DOGS

Russell McRae. Viking, \$15.95 ISBN 0-670-81774-X

Set in a depressed Canadian mining town, this modern-day coming-of-age novel convincingly chronicles a sensitive teenager's passage from alienation to rebellion and, finally, to hope. Shocked by the ugliness of his parents' emotional outbursts and revolted by his teachers' smug rigidity, 19-year-old Billy Mackenzie carves out a private refuge using drugs and alcohol. Attractive, popular and outwardly successful, both at school and on the playing field, disillusioned Billy is nevertheless deeply ambivalent about growing up in a world he deplors. But when he is stung by tragedy, Billy decides to take hold of his future, rallying with admirable verve to reject hypocrisy and heed his own compassionate, principled instincts. This sincere first novel by a high school English teacher—though occasionally burdened by repetitive and excessively cerebral prose—invests a traditional theme with new urgency. (September)

DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR

Ivan Doig. Atheneum, \$18.95 ISBN 0-689-11764-7

Montana's rugged Two Medicine country, memorably evoked in the author's nonfiction memoir *This House of Sky* and the novel *English Creek*, once again shapes personalities and destinies in his new work. In 1889, two young Scotsmen, Rob Barclay and Angus McCaskill (grandfather of the narrator of *English Creek*), arrive in Montana, where for 30 years they struggle to find personal happiness and wrest a living from this demanding land. After losing the woman he loves, Angus marries Rob's sister Adair; their difficult relationship creates conflict, and then a bitter breach, between the two men. But if the thorny individualism of Rob and Angus results in lives that are never easy, they are rich in incident and growth, beautifully described in Doig's strong, savory prose. America's frontier history comes vividly to life in this absorbing saga filled with memorable characters. *50,000 first printing; major ad/promo.* (September)

THE MELTING POT: And Other Subversive Stories

Lynne Sharon Schwartz. Harper & Row, \$16.95 ISBN 0-06-015814-X

This skillful collection reconfirms Schwartz's keen ear for dialogue and astute, multilayered portraiture of people and places. Schwartz (*Disturbances in the Field*, etc.), whose hallmark is realistic, recognizable characters, here explores the fluid tenuousness of identity. The lusty protagonist of "The Infidel," a suc-

cessful artist, believes he is a reverent worshipper of women but is, in fact, seeking affirmation of self through a succession of lovers. In the title story, the malleable Rita, an immigration lawyer, who "is used to reminding people of someone, and to being loved as a link to the true loved one," masquerades in the clothing of her lover's dead wife. In the affecting "The Sound of Velcro," a discontented yuppie longs for a simpler life and imagines what it would be like to be retarded like his brother. The narrator of "So You're Going to Have a New Body!," a graphic story that may repel some readers, undergoes a hysterectomy that triggers a sexual-identity crisis. Reality is jarred in "The Last Frontier" and "Killing the Bees." In the former, a homeless black family surreptitiously lives on the TV set of a black situation comedy; in the latter, a routine insect extermination at Ilse's comfortable American home summons up her father's long-ago death in a Nazi concentration camp. (September)

MYSTERIES

STRAY CAT

Don Matheson. Summit, \$16.95 ISBN 0-671-64112-3

Charlie Gamble is a "nopey" (as opposed to a yuppie). Once a highly paid computer salesman, he now lives aboard a sailboat moored in Boston Harbor, relying on a variety of odd jobs to keep him afloat. One of the oddest is his attempt to rescue a dishy but larcenous young woman, Rosy, from a psychopathic killer who holds her hostage while he burglarizes the homes of her former lovers. Rosy herself is not above stealing from the rich: she has often worked a lucrative scam to relieve her "marks" of sizable sums. One of them, seeking revenge, has hired a hood to put Rosy out of commission. Charlie has to elude the killer, find Rosy and snatch her from danger, all without knowing who is where with whom. Some very neat plotting pulls these disparate elements together into a suspenseful and satisfying tale. Like Travis McGee, whom he very much resembles, Charlie seems destined to voyage through a series of adventures wherein character as well as story are winningly conveyed. (August)

HAPPY ARE THOSE WHO THIRST FOR JUSTICE

Andrew W. Greeley. Mysterious Press, \$16.95 ISBN 0-89296-180-5

Greeley (*The Cardinal Sins*) does his best work yet in this multigenerational mystery with real puzzles and strong characters. Chicago matriarch and real-estate tycoon Violet Harrington Enright has dominated and large-