

Big Sky guy

Writer Ivan Doig mines Montana for his evocative historic novels

BY JOHN BARRON
STAFF REPORTER

The novelist Ivan Doig didn't mind the Montana jokes at all.

You'd think a guy who had spent his entire career writing gorgeous and evocative stories set in the territory—including his new novel one, which hit stores as the jokes started—might have taken offense. After all, his beloved home state had become an easy national punchline thanks to the Freeman and the discovery there of the alleged Unabomber.

But Doig offers a surprising take on the matter (after providing disclaimers that the huge state is a whole time zone unto itself and that those events were entirely coincidental): "For a lot of us who are around Montana and know and like the place, this has been a sort of useful corrective to the idea that Montana is the hot place to live . . . the Riviera of the Rocky Mountains."

He's referring, of course, to the stream of "ranching" celebrities, especially from the entertainment industry, who have "colonized" the state over the past decade.

Doig, a Northwestern University alum, imagines with some relish "the poignant possible scene of people like Ted Turner and Whoopi Goldberg and Jeff Bridges having to wonder whether their stablehands are members of the Montana militia."

The nouveau Montanans' vision of the place is far removed from that found in Doig's grand, beautifully written, historic novels, which include *English Creek* and *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, and in his inspiring childhood memoir, the National Book Award nomi-

"Until this erupted," Doig says, "I spent a lot of my time being called back to Montana to give speeches. And I was forever warning Montanans to not let the place turn into Georgian England where the rich folks own the big places and the commoners get to stand around and look colorful and do the chores."

Though he probably won't be hired by the Montana state tourism board, Doig's Montana is the real thing.

His new novel, *Bucking the Sun* (Simon & Schuster, \$23), depicts a glorious country that is also hard, temperamental and untamed.

Set during the early and mid 1930s, the novel's unlikely central event is the building of the Fort Peck Dam.

The giant earthen attempt to stop the Missouri River was one of the great "make work" projects of the Roosevelt administration. It offered jobs for 10,000 in the northeast part of the sparsely populated state and attracted an equal number of camp followers.

Doig, 57, vividly recreates the panorama of the boomtown. And into this sort of *Grapes of Wrath* for the employed, he deposits the Duffs, a large clan of headstrong types whose irascible spouses are more than their equals.

To stir the stew the novelist provides an opening "flash-forward" scene in which two of the Duffs are found naked and drowned in the front of a pick-up truck at the dam site. The couple is married, a lawyer explains . . . "only not to each other."

Doig, who received both his undergrad and graduate degrees in journalism from Northwestern, was in town recently for his first real visit since he and his wife Cer-

their bags and left Evanston to head back West in the mid 1960s.

He explained the genesis of the book in a deserted hotel lobby.

"I kept hearing about Fort Peck while researching other novels," Doig says, stroking a thick reddish beard, just going gray. There's not a centimeter of skin visible on the lower half of his face. "Fort Peck kept coming up in the stories. It occurred to me that this was a tremendous launch in life for so many people. It's part of the Montana family album. And I grew up knowing that the Fort Peck Dam—in the Margaret Bourke-White photo—was on the cover of the first Life magazine, the Internet of its time."

To research the new book, Doig, who has lived in Seattle for the past couple of decades, says he turned to old copies of *Engineering News Record* and interviewed a slew of veteran dam builders.

"And the Army Corps of Engineers had people documenting Fort Peck up, down and sideways, more than I could look at," he says with a weary laugh.

Doig relied on his wife's advice when he feared his descriptions of

arcane.

"She kept me on the straight and narrow. I learned enough about dams to eventually know what to leave out."

He succeeds.

By the end of the book, the dam itself has become a character—in

become the main character in Doig's body of work.

"It's not Montana per se," he explains. "Rather it's the region authors are so often drawn to—childhood. It's the region where I grew up, what's been long remembered between my ears. The history of the American West has also always interested me as a big readable page. It's not been as populated as much by some of the other main currents of American history."

With the death of Wallace Stegner in 1993, Doig now has to be considered the premier writer of the American West.

And yet he's not sure that people have learned to appreciate or even correctly define the West. He thinks the myth of the six-shooter still prevails.

"In the American West we're closer to the writers out of the old colonial experience," says Doig, not only re-

ferring to geography but also to outsider status. "We have the most in common with the writers of Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and so on. I've taken to talking about a group of writing I see as edge of the world writing . . . writing not taking place in the old usu-

and Paris."

Doig's dedication in *Bucking the Sun* says it all: "To novelists who deliver the eloquence of the edge of the world rather than stammer from the psychiatrist's bin." He includes Roddy Doyle (Ireland), Nadine Gordimer (South Africa) and Thomas Keneally (Australia) in that bunch.

At the same time, however, Doig longs for the day when the West will be truly seen as part of the rest of the country.

"A lot of us writing about the West," he says, "tend to look at what we see as the West as an expression of American community . . . as opposed to the myth of American individuality."

"From our backgrounds and research we know that the lone cowboy didn't play that much of a role in the big historical context of the West. We are also interested in the male schoolmarm, the woman homesteader, about the people who moved from, say, Minnesota and tried to create a community."

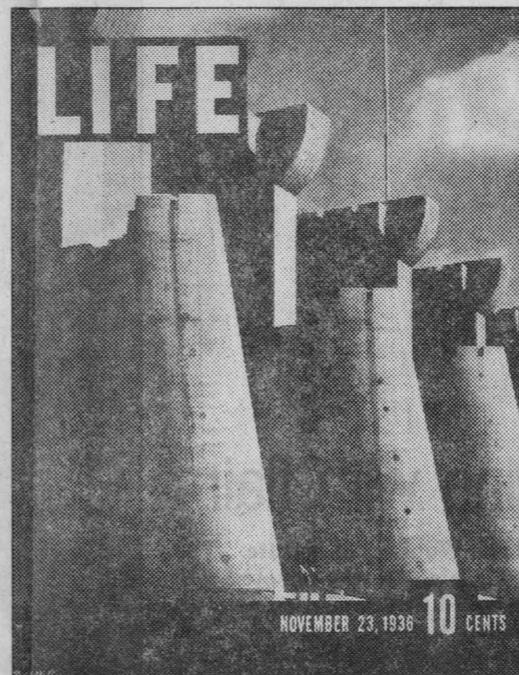
"We're trying to write a literary connective tissue to make readers aware that the country is connected beneath the airplanes—beneath that is a helluvalot of history . . . and places where lots of people have their starts."

Doig stops, pondering the absurdity of all these distinctions.

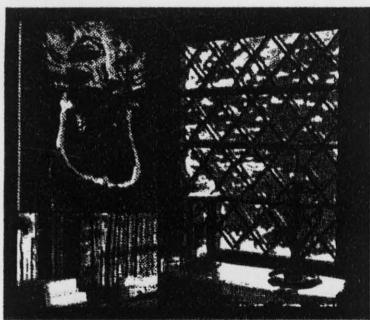
"Everything was the West at one



Montana's Fort Peck Dam is the centerpiece of Ivan Doig's latest novel. He's shown here at the dam's spillway during research for the book.



The Fort Peck Dam became part of America's iconography when it appeared on the cover of the first issue of Life magazine.



THE HOME FORUM

'... With nine-tenths of the ink of this century now expended, modern American fiction, in terms of originality and staying power still adds up to 'Faulkner and the rest of us.'

— Ivan Doig, novelist

The following is an excerpt from a talk about writing given this fall by novelist Ivan Doig at the annual conference of the Western History Association in Sparks, Nevada. Mr. Doig's latest book, "Ride With Me, Mariah Montana," is reviewed on Page 13.

CALICO-COATED, small-bodied, with delicate legs and pink faces in which their mismatched eyes rolled wild and subdued, they huddled, gaudy, motionless and alert, wild as deer, deadly as rattlesnakes, quiet as doves.

Those are the best horses — so far — in American writing: William Faulkner's herd of mustangs brought in from Texas for sale, there in the corral at Frenchman's Bend, while the Mississippi farmers who have spent all their lives slogging behind slow mules are standing looking longingly at these quick, vivid apparitions from the West — the "Spotted Horses" of Faulkner's glorious story by that name. There they stand forever — wild, subdued/motionless, alert/adjectival, hyphenated, similed as a three-pound thesaurus — in that extravagant sentence, which kicks over some rule of writing at about every third word, yet in which the language itself is telling us, those horses were all these things at once! God-almighty, You should have seen those horses!

If novelists do have an advantage in getting at anybody's souls — equine or human — I believe it's there in the million-element experiment called language. The process is far from automatic — a writer can't simply lens in on the people of Reno or Provo or Choteau like a frontier photographer and become an instantaneous soul stealer; the money isn't that easy, I regret to report — because the alchemy of language carries with it the high probability of fizzle. Faulkner's own townspeople, after all, were being plenty clever with the language when they took a look at their squirely local author, concluded there was only a letter or two of difference between that and squirrely, and dubbed him Count No Account. But the Mississippians' characterization of him has fizzled away, while his of them burns on and on.

Faulkner and the rest of us in the cottage industry called fiction writing can be accused of having fashioned ourselves a job where we claim to be trying to tell some truth by making things up. (Not so incidentally, with nine-tenths of the ink of this century now expended, modern American fiction, in terms of originality and staying power still adds up to "Faulkner and the rest of us.") I know I wouldn't have spent the past decade concocting novels if I didn't think there are real fidelities in the writing of fiction.

[Now] ... A brief interlude of

philosophy, a little piped-in ditty from the literary keyboard which you as writers of history can decide to hum along with or not.

It's the story told about Vladimir Nabokov when he was teaching his course on the novel, at Cornell University.

You in the profession of analyzing eras might be interested to know that back there in the Eisenhower years, that course of Nabokov's was nicknamed "dirty lit" — Anna Karenina! Madame Bovary!

Nabokov evidently was the Cyrillic equivalent of a ring-tailed

wonder in the classroom, one minute confiding to the class in heavy Russian accent, "By the way, Joyce made only one error in English usage in 'Ulysses,' the use of the word 'supine' when it should have been 'prone,'" and the next moment handing back, with evidently genuine horror, the test papers on which half the class blithely discussed somebody's "epidramatic" style when Nabokov all semester had actually been saying "epigrammatic."

And so comes the day when the author of "Lolita" and "Pale Fire" and "Speak," "Memory" and other books, peers over the rims of his glasses and cries out his summary of the writing life: You must write with "the passion of the scientist and the precision of the artist."

Pausing as if he hasn't heard himself quite right, Nabokov says in a baffled tone: "But wait — have I made a mistake? Don't I mean 'the passion of the artist and the precision of the scientist?'"

Then like the verbal acrobat he was, he gleefully completes his act: "No! I mean, you must write with the passion of the scientist and the precision of the artist."

That Nabokovian somersault back and forth through vice-versa was, typically, at once elfin and deadly serious. Passionate investigation may not seem the most likely motive for a person to write fiction. Passionate expression of yourself, writing at the intellectual equivalent of going downtown and getting yourself an artist's license, sure, you bet — that's practically epidemic among people wanting to be writers, who, to judge from the megabucks mini-books that publishers were pushing at the American Booksellers convention in Las Vegas this year, range from Donald

Trump to Attila the Hun. The express-yourself-or-else epidemic aside, though, the prevailing literary climate in this country the past couple of decades has not exactly been a mad pash eyeballing of the American body civic.

There was a phase of our leading lights in fiction trying out self-conscious mannerisms, which tended to produce plots about a writer about what he was writing about. That hermetically experi-

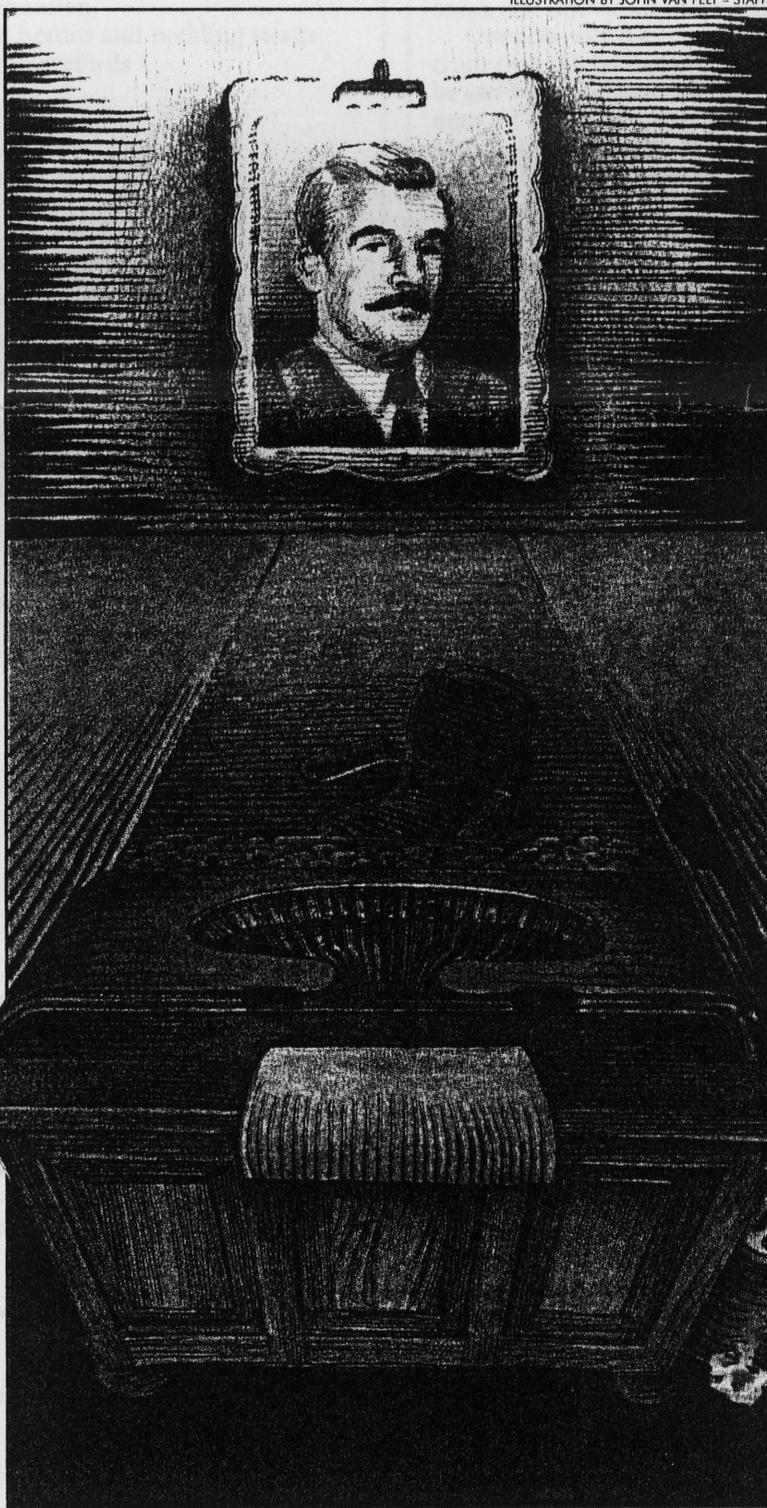


ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN VAN PELT — STAFF

mental fiction, without connection to the workaday world, I think ended up nearsightedly eating its own tail.

Maybe it was in reaction to that cleverness-for-its-own-sake that minimalist fiction then came slouching in – but in terms of investigating, say, roots of social class, this fiction that yawned condescension toward people who have to shop at K-Mart instead of Banana Republic was at least as unpassionate on the page as the English Department mannerists had been.

A thoughtful literary watchman, Charles Newman, a couple of years ago said of the minimalist trend: "One cannot help seeing much contemporary fiction as a literary slide show, holding in common a purposive lack of scale and depth, an altogether predictable coloration and a transparency of surface, encoded by a narration that advertises in advance that it will not sustain itself, a voice-over esthetically and ethically neutral."

THE cultural implications of slide-show writing are not particularly promising. As Newman points out, "This is hardly skepticism of a tolerant pluralism. [Instead] it has all the characteristics of overload of a culture that places so many modalities at the consumer's disposal that none of them can have a decisive value."

Faulkner's work exemplified the passion, sometimes runaway, that fiction can have for the world around it; Nabokov was exhorting us to keep at it with the quenchless glee of the scientists who sent a wisp of steel thistle-down – called Voyager – sailing through the universe and saw the face of Neptune; Charles Newman maps out the cultural flat earth that awaits when nothing counts.

My own view is probably more prosaic, simply that novels are ways of telling stories we haven't figured out any other way to tell yet; that if a writer invests enough of himself, it is possible to create fiction with character as well as characters; and that if he's going to take the trouble at all to fill white space with the alphabet of imagination, he sadly limits himself by trying to stay "esthetically and ethically neutral." Typing ain't writing.

Ivan Doig

Second Green Along the Shannon

(For Karen)

After May has exhausted her palette of fuchsias, asphodels, bell heather, and violets – and August has run the gamut of gorse golds and greens – After October has bleached the bracken and wild barley, and blackened the scattered boot-trodden leaves –

Sometimes there is a sudden profusion of buds, a second unwarranted un hoped-for green that seems to hold winter at arm's length for a few more warm wet days.

We should have been home. We should have been waking early, working hard, banking paychecks, attending to children, obligations and the perennial past-due of that mortgaged portion of our lives.

But we were here instead – three thousand miles astray on the sloping banks of the Shannon, curious like the crook-necked herons and nodding swans, mingling with mud-splotched Herefords and sop-wooled sheep, drunk on the potent elixir of leisure together, easy in the immeasurable luxury of you and me.

A persistent Irish mist, as we meandered through castle walls and fragments of an abbey, to finally spread out macs and nestle down in the long wet grass. Soda bread and Cheddar cheese, chocolate, tea biscuits, and a wee dram of mystery – lolling like a pair of seventeens with no responsibility beyond affection and open eyes, unfathomably quiet as the clouds arched down on the Shannonside, earth and sky like two hands cupped on a secret – with you and I, twice-blessed and second green, safe between.

Steven Ratiner

Where Might You Be Going Sound?

Where might you be going, sound? Maybe to sleep inside the buds maybe there beyond the stars maybe in a beautiful game of the fairies. My dear mother has been waiting for a week down by the fountain to hear a sweet word from you. Where might you be going, sound? On whatever side I've sighed, The west winds just froze you up. The east winds have scattered you down towards the sunset. Sound, wandering mouth, All my strength lies in a flower.

George Bajenaru

Translated from Romanian by Catalina Bajenaru

Driving With Love

THE driver of the car in front of us suddenly slowed down and, without signaling, turned left. We came to a quick stop. There was no accident, but it had been close. Both drivers had been wrong—one for being thoughtless, the other for driving too fast. And at such times we may gratefully sigh, "Thanks, God, for taking care of us once again."

The book of Psalms tells us, "The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works." We experience God's tender mercies more fully, however, and feel His constantly protecting presence when we obey him.

Nearly everyone wants to avoid accidents, and if we've been frightened—especially by our own carelessness—we may resolve to drive with more intelligence, with more love toward those on the road. We can see that persistently ignoring either the rules of good driving or the deeper requirements of brotherly love isn't obedience to God. But our resolutions to do better are not easily maintained, especially when we're in a hurry, caught in frustrating traffic, or irritated by someone's driving. That's when an understanding of what it means to come into accord with God can be such a help to us. When we're one with God, we can neither be the cause nor the victim of an accident.

Oneness with God is a scientific truth that can be demonstrated. To be one with God does not mean that man is God; rather it shows that we are being governed by God. Through Christian Science we learn that God is divine Principle, Love—the infinite, intelligent, divine Mind that governs its entire creation, including man.

When we base our reasoning on the spiritual reality, on God's unchanging perfection and goodness, we realize that a perfect God could only create a perfect man. Our own true identity and the identity of everyone must be as perfect as God. Perfect man is incapable of expressing the thoughtlessness and impatience that cause accidents, because man is the idea of divine Love. And because God is Spirit, His creation, man, is spiritual, composed solely of spiritual qualities such as life and immortality. Therefore man's true substance is indestructible.

These are provable facts of God and man that we can come into accord with by consistently striving to express the truth of man's identity as divine Love's idea. Then we find that, instead of being angry with others, we see them in a clearer light—not through the unreliable physical senses but through the light of God's love. This truer seeing, or loving, is the Christ at work in our lives—the same Christ, Truth, that protected Christ Jesus from the harmful actions of others.

As we see others in a kinder way, invariably we find ourselves being kinder. We begin to give up a personal sense of ego that wants to assert itself or be first. Our lives become an opportunity to express that spiritual tenderness for mankind which is a true blessing for everyone—on highways or wherever we are.

In the long run, isn't this desire to be more allied with God the blessing the world needs to solve all its problems of human interaction? And the basic brotherhood we have with one another as God's children can become evident through prayer.

In *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, Mary Baker Eddy, who discovered and founded Christian Science, writes, "What we most need is the prayer of fervent desire for growth in grace, expressed in patience, meekness, love, and good deeds." Such deep prayer to demonstrate the patience, courtesy, and selflessness that come from God is the beginning of a very good driver—one who drives with love, and so protects himself and his fellow travelers.

The Christian Science Monitor's Daily Religious Article

One weekly magazine that feeds the world's deepest hunger.

Discover the rewards of a spiritual outlook.

26 weeks of the Sentinel for just \$25.00.

Bill me (N. America & U.K. only).

Payment enclosed.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

ZIP _____

PH48L

Mail to: Christian Science Sentinel, P.O. Box 11342, Des Moines, IA, U.S.A. 50340-1342



LIFE

THE IDAHO STATESMAN • SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1998

Books



Courtesy Carol Doig
Ivan Doig at the Fort Peck Dam Spillway.

AT HOME IN THE WEST

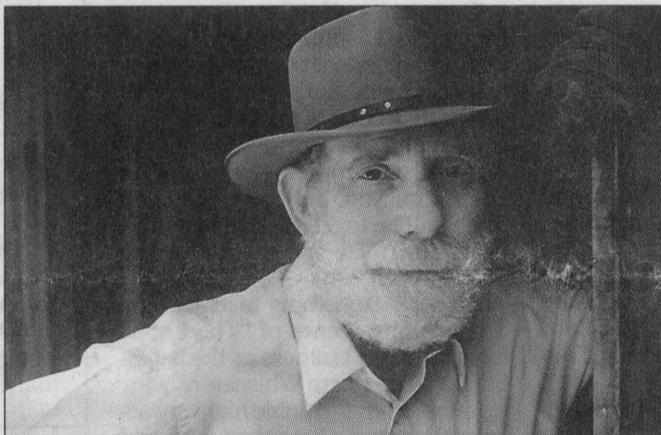
Writer Ivan Doig portrays reality of Western life

By Marianne Flagg
The Idaho Statesman

The Western hero in Ivan Doig's books doesn't saddle up and ride into town with his gun and hat slung low, dirt clinging to him in just the right cinematic amount.

He is a man or woman digging a living from a harsh terrain, trying to find or keep a family. Doig's West is bound by family and community, not by loners.

"I see it as terribly harmful, the Louis L'Amour/John Wayne myth, going with the strength of your arm or the quickness of your gun. It's b.s.," Doig said in his breezily blunt way. "There were a hel-



lupa lot more homesteaders than gunfighters."

One of the most respected writers of the West, or any other region, Doig will speak in Boise on Sept. 25 about the sources of his ideas and inspiration. His appearance is part of an evening celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Idaho Humanities Council.

Born 59 years ago in Mon-

tana, Doig has lived in Seattle for more than 30 years. Despite his self-imposed exile from the land of his youth, Doig's rich writing will forever link him with the Big Sky state.

His fiction and non-fiction trace changes in the ranching life. But characters lie at their heart.

An excerpt from "This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind" by Ivan Doig

In these earliest months at the ranch, my grandmother and my father gingerly began to put together something like a family life for us. The two of them being who they were, that life of course came at the elbow of hard work and had to pant as best it could to keep up.

The one time of truce I could always count on was summer dusk. After her dawn-to-supper day of cooking and house chores and his as-long day of haying and handling the crew, Grandma would go with Dad to the hayfield and help him repair machinery for the morning — shave a drawknife along fresh pine poles to make teeth for the buck-rake, plop beside the stacker arm to grip a wrench onto a bolthead for him, anything that needed doing on the downed equipment, all of it done with a certain declared calm between them."

See Writer / 8E

WRITER

From IE

"He's recognized life in the West as lived by real people, which means community," said Washington scholar Elizabeth Simpson, who wrote a book about Doig, "Earthlight, Wordfire" (1992, University of Idaho Press). "In all of his books, family is the character, and people develop in relationship to other family members."

In his 1978 debut, "This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind," Doig recalls with novelistic touches growing up in a sheep ranching family with his father Charlie Doig and his always-cooking grandmother Bessie Ringer. The memoir is braced by the deaths of his parents. As it opens, Doig's mother Berneta has died on the morning of his sixth birthday. It ends with the slow suffocation of his father in 1971 from emphysema.

"When I went to write my first book, I would sit for hours at a time and deliberately try to bring back through word association something of what that childhood was like," Doig recalled from his Seattle home. "I would try to visualize what lambing time was like, what the chronology of a day was."

Accolades abound

"This House of Sky" was nominated for the National Book Award. Doig later won a Distinguished Achievement Award from the Western Literature Association. In literary circles, he is equally admired for his trilogy of Montana novels about Scottish immigrants: "English Creek," "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" and "Ride with Me, Mariah Montana."

"It was a deliberate commitment of a decade, in essence, to do that trilogy. I had wanted to do a book about homesteads because my dad was born in Montana in 1901," he said. "I grew up around people being on the homesteads. By the time I was growing up in the '40s, '50s and '60s, those homesteads had emptied out."

Author to speak

Ivan Doig will speak about the writing life at a 7:30 p.m. dinner Friday, Sept. 25, at the Boise Centre on The Grove. The event is a benefit celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Idaho Humanities Council.

The evening begins at 6:30 with no-host cocktails and Scottish and Irish music by the More's Creek String Band.

Tickets cost \$35. For \$75, benefactors also can attend an earlier reception for Doig in a private home.

For reservations, call the Humanities Council at 345-5346.

His own muscles ache from learning. In his early 20s, he baled hay. He remembers the advent of machines to do the baling — and do it less well than human hands.

"I could see that was a real turn. Oddly enough, it's quite a craft to building bale stacks," Doig said. "It's something like masonry or fine brick work with giant materials."

In the community of Western writers, Doig is a realist rather than a romantic. He pays attention to details — the color of trains, the pummeling howl of wind, the silences between people.

"Doig is the successor to Wallace Stegner. Both Stegner and Doig are neo-realists whose work does debunk the myths of the West," said James H. Maguire, Ph.D., professor of English at Boise State University. "He builds his fiction from the facts. Not only does he have long years of personal experience in the West, but he does extensive research."

Doig developed his research skills as a journalist in Illinois. He earned bachelor's and master's degrees in journalism at Northwestern Universi-

ty before launching into work as an editorial writer in Decatur, Ill.

"Out of journalism comes a reverence of getting things down in a notebook, a lot of respect for a good lead, and a kind of a hunger to talk to people," Doig said. "I found fiction, it's fair to say, liberating — being able to make up characters, while trying to stay true to the fidelities of history."

Lured by the prospect of steady money teaching college, Doig and his wife, Carol, a journalist, moved to Seattle in 1966. He pumped out freelance articles while earning a doctorate in history.

But he changed his mind about teaching. "I was not cut out for it. I never have worked comfortably within an organization," he said.

Writing as a way of life

Methodical in his writing practice, Doig turns out at least 400 words a day. He keeps files on research and a novel's development.

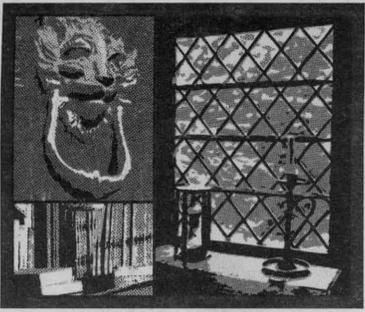
"I don't necessarily write my way consecutively through a book. If I'm stumped, I will see what I can come up with that may go elsewhere in the book. I'll write some weather. A book about the West damn well should have some weather in it. It can lead to plot developments."

Weather and some internal buffeting will play roles in his new book, "Mountain Time," scheduled to come out in May 1999. It's set in Seattle and in Montana.

Doig divulges that the book is about baby boomers who strain at their lifestyles and are tested by nature.

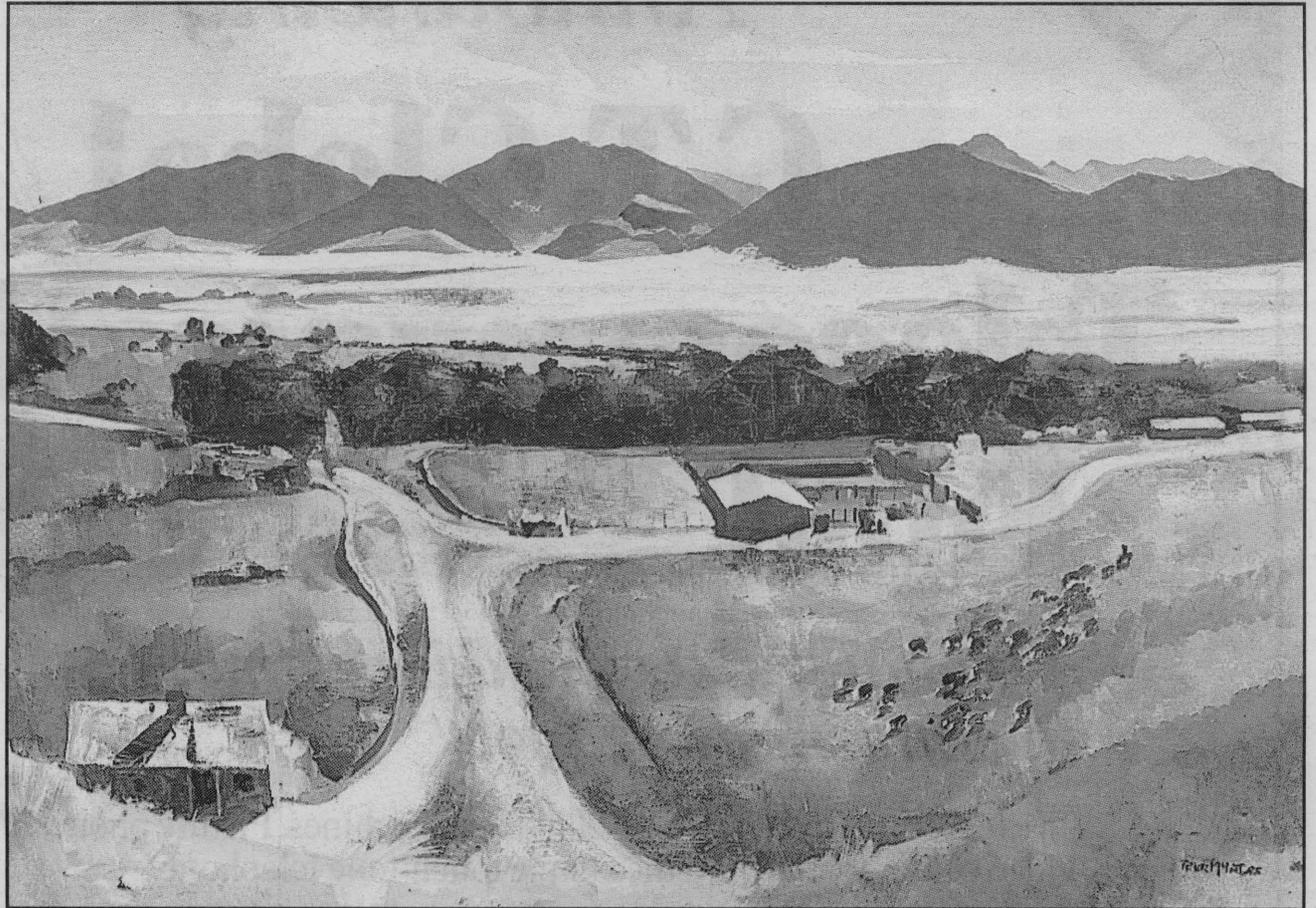
Although the West is a key character, Doig says his work could be set anywhere. He is no more constrained by his choice of place than William Faulkner was by a county in Mississippi or James Joyce by a city in Ireland.

"I do sometimes try to head critics off on the notion of the sense of place," he said. "We're not sitting out here writing travelogues. I don't deliberately set out to be a Western writer. I'm trying to write about that larger country — life."



THE HOME FORUM®

'LONGHORN RANCH,
MADISON VALLEY,
ENNIS, MONTANA (1971):
Oil on canvas,
23 3/8 by 33 1/2 in.,
by Peter McIntyre.



ARCHER M. HUNTINGTON ART GALLERY, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN/GIFT OF C.R. SMITH, 1976/PHOTOGRAPH BY GEORGE HOLMES

Fiction From the 'Big Sky' Country

TOWARD the end of "Ride with Me, Mariah Montana," the third in Ivan Doig's 100-year trilogy about the McCaskill family, there's a 30-second scene in which a character jumps out of a Winnebago fueling up at a gas station, runs over to the sign for "Air & Water," and grease-pencils the other two ancient Greek elements "Earth & Fire." It's a wonderful bit of whimsy, an example of what novelist Doig calls the "crocodile factor" designed to "come right up off the page and get you." And it's just one of the things that makes him one of the most readable and productive authors from that vast expanse of real estate west of the 100th meridian today generating some of the very best American writers.

To read Doig's fiction, to hear him speak wisdom and wit to a gathering of historians in Sparks, Nevada, and to discuss his craft over a meal or two, is to learn of a man with a passion for language, for the minutiae of life and historical accuracy, and especially for "the lingo" of his characters — "the tongues that express their lives."

Doig's career as a writer took off a dozen years ago with "This House of Sky," reminiscences about his early life in Montana. Since then he has produced five more highly acclaimed books, including the Two Medicine trilogy (named for the river near where much of it takes place).

On Ivan Doig's sixth birthday,

when he was living with his parents in a sheep-herding camp on the front range of the Rocky Mountains (where his grandfather had come from Scotland), his father woke him to say the boy's mother had died that night. For the next few years, father and son bounced around western towns and ranches before settling down with Doig's maternal grandmother as homemaker.

By the time he was 16 and spending most of his summers on the back of a horse tending sheep in the high country, Doig knew he wanted to be a writer and that he had to get out of Montana — beautiful as it was — to succeed. He won a full scholarship to Northwestern University, worked on a newspaper in downstate Illinois, then did magazine editing back in Chicago, where he also picked up a master's degree before heading back out West. At the University of Washington in Seattle, he earned a PhD in history (he says graduate school cured him of any desire to teach) then spent an enjoyable but lean decade as a freelance magazine writer while his wife Carol earned most of the family income teaching at a community college.

Like the fictional character who com-

pleted the gas-station list of elements in "Mariah Montana," Doig found journalistic writing too limiting. But his training as a historian and newspaperman left him with the strong need to fill his fiction with accurate details from real life, including the spoken word — the earth of daily human affairs and the fire of speech.

In researching the 1889 trans-Atlantic trip of 19-year-olds Angus McCaskill and Rob Barclay for "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" (the first book, chronologically, in the trilogy), Ivan and Carol went to Glasgow (to the very pier from

which his grandfather, Peter Doig, had departed), pored over emigrant letters at the University of St. Andrews, and looked up steamship blueprints and investigative reports on the conditions poor travelers endured in steerage.

Later, he dug back into Depression-era Works Progress Administration writers' files in Montana to learn how Anaconda Copper smelters, cattle ranchers, and sheep ranchers talked in the early part of the century. The sound of the spoken word is very important to him — "the shimmer behind the plot" feeding the "delicious hunger of the ear." He was careful to have the two Scotsmen gradually lose their burr over the 30 years of "Rascal Fair."

When he wanted to include scenes about fighting fires, he had four forest rangers check his manuscript for details. He photocopied old Forest Service cookbooks so he would know what it was like to cook for 75 men in the woods.

"I'm always looking for details," he says. "The details are what the skeins of life germinate out of." He loves to repeat Vladimir Nabokov's instruction to students at Cornell University that they

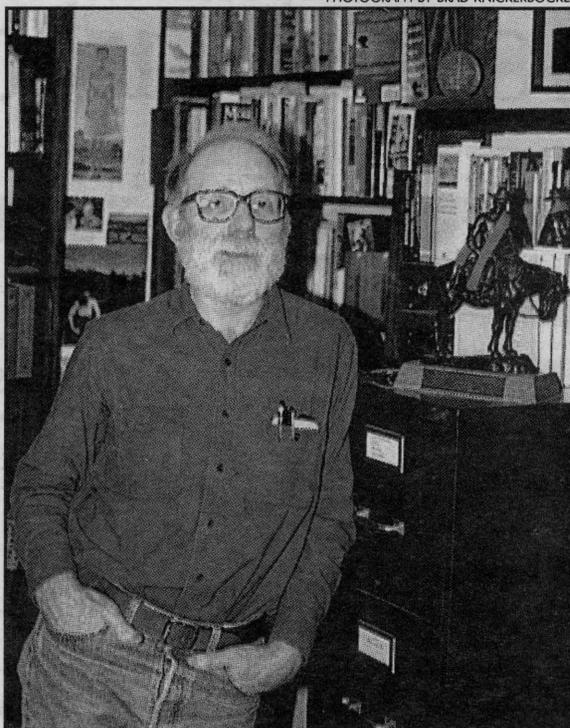
must write "with the passion of the scientist and the precision of the artist."

In a spare bedroom office he shares with his wife at home in the north end of Seattle, Doig works away at an old gray Royal typewriter. The remembrance of Scottish ancestors are in his sandy hair and beard. Just back from 50 book readings and signings in San Francisco, Boston, Washington, Chicago, and Minnesota, he relaxes in jeans, a red-striped shirt, and Birkenstocks.

Shelved around him are his favorite writers, including Wallace Stegner, Nadine Gordimer, John Steinbeck, Isak Dinesen, Edward Hoagland, Robinson Jeffers, Loren Eiseley, Beryl Markham, Eudora Welty, Frank O'Connor, Joseph Conrad, Barbara Tuchman, Gretel Ehrlich, and William Faulkner. Contemporary western historians Patricia Nelson Limerick and Donald Worster are there. And also "The Songwriter's Rhyming Dictionary," by Sammy Kahn.

"I like people who dance on the page," he says, leaning back in his chair. "Anybody hip-deep in love with the language." One of his characters in "Mariah Montana" says, "Language is the light that comes out of us."

But "with nine-tenths of the ink of this century now expended," he told the western historians in Nevada, "modern American fiction in terms of originality and staying power still adds up to 'Faulkner and the rest of us.'" On another shelf, just next to



IVAN DOIG AT HIS SEATTLE HOME

PHOTOGRAPH BY BRAD KNICKERBOCKER

where he writes, are his notebooks: "Comparison and Description," "Ideas," "Lingo," "Anecdotes," "Phrasing," and "Technique." Bits and pieces waiting to be worked into future projects.

His next book, which will focus on his mother (based on letters to an uncle during World War II, interviews with family members, and his dim recollections as a small boy), will feature "deliberate dreams."

"It's the only way I can think of to get at what might have gone on beyond what I can hear and see," he explains. When it comes right down to it, he admits, "a lot of style and technique is best guess." Then, too, "the alchemy of language carries with it the high probability of fizzle."

Of the growing recognition of contemporary literature coming out of the American West, he says: "I think there are enough classy writers west of St. Paul that scholars will eventually have to write about them as a group as they did about the Southern fugitives."

The thing that connects many of these writers, he acknowledges, is love of the spectacular landscape.

"But I don't agree that that's our strongest muscle," he says. "The language, the style, the craft is of such a skill that I don't see why this kind of travelogue tag is at all justified. I mean, Louise Erdrich is a world-class writer - the equivalent of Robert Penn Warren. Jim Welch in "Fools Crow" has produced a truly great book. Bill Kittredge has been a unique writer. I mean, this is increasingly fine stuff, and even if it appeared on a barren planet it would be unique writing."

Yet Doig and many of his contemporaries do connect with the land and worry about what's become of it over the past century or so.

"It is saddening that a lot of what we tried in the West - with reasonably good intentions - has not worked out," he says. "Plowing up the prairies was not a good idea. Pulling up the ore and running it poisonously through smelter stacks turns out not to have been a good idea. Damming up every river of any consequence except the Yellowstone hasn't been a good idea, either. So the stance many of us write from out here is 'Wait a minute, we'd better try something else.'" In "Mariah Montana," Jick McCaskill arranges to protect his land when he retires from sheep ranching without selling out to developers or a big agri-business spread.

The result of Ivan Doig's passion for detail and "the lingo" is more than the sum of the parts. Much more, and it comes through most obviously in the clear personality and especially the sound character of the people we meet.

He has been described by one reviewer as "the most hopeful of writers - not blindly optimistic but deeply humanistic." A friend of mine wrote recently: "Over the past year I read most of his books and just fell in love with his characters and their goodness, and of course his descriptions of the West."

Another says she slows down when she gets near the end of a Doig novel because she doesn't want it to end. Not to worry. He's got many productive years ahead of him and plenty of history to mine ... with passion and precision.

Brad Knickerbocker

'Ride With Me, Mariah Montana'

Despite their differences, rancher Jick McCaskill, his daughter Mariah, and her ex-husband Riley have packed their lives into a Winnebago and are driving around Montana. Mariah, a photographer, and Riley, a journalist, are on assignment for the Missoula Montanian newspaper - hoping to capture the spirit of the state 100 years after it joined the Union. Jick, acting as chauffeur, narrates their story. The following is an excerpt from Ivan Doig's most recent book, "Ride With Me, Mariah Montana."

A YAPPITY pup careened across the yard to challenge the Bago. I braked just in time to keep him from becoming a pup pancake.

The canine commotion brought a woman out onto the porch of the older house. Plentiful without being plump, in blue jeans ageworn to maximum comfort and a red-checked shirt with a yoke of blue piping in emphasis across the chest, she still was wearing her hair in a summer hank - it sheened whiter than gray, grayer than white - more abbreviated than a ponytail, to keep it off her neck in back. Somewhat leathered and weathered, she nonetheless had a well-preserved appearance: time simply paid its respects to a face like that. She stood deliberating at the motorhome while the kiwi chorus of the pup reached new crescendos, until Riley slid back the sidewindow and yelled out, "Call off your dog pack, Mother, we're relatively peaceful."

"Here, Manslaughter," she spoke to the barking guardian and patted a denim thigh for him to come to her. By now the woman had recognized Mariah's red hair as well as Riley's vocal presence and she came down off the porch striding quickly, in a kind of aimed glide, toward the Winnebago as if she had something vital to deliver. But when the *Montanian* duo stepped out of the motorhome, followed by me, Riley's mother halted a good distance away and somehow managed to gaze from one to the other of them and both of them at once while saying diagnostically, "I saw by your performances in the paper that you two are tangled together again."

Riley, trust him, cupped a hand to his ear and asked, "Did I hear a 'hello' or was that thunder?" Then he braced on over as if doing a major favor by delivering a kiss to his matriarch.

"It would help, Riley, it really would, if you'd keep me informed as to when you're on speaking terms with her," his mother gazed indicatively straight at Mariah, "so I can stay in step. Couldn't you have it announced on the radio or something?"

A watcher of this didn't have to be rocket-swift to pretty speedily realize that Riley's mother had as much peeve built up at Mariah as I did at Riley and for the one and same reason, the crash of their marriage. Why this surprised me any I don't know - just one more case of an in-law flopped into an outlaw - but it did.

Mariah looked like she'd rather be juggling hot coals, but she said to the silver-haired woman, "We maybe both better get in practice on our terms, how about."

Riley's mother eyed my daughter skeptically. Then perhaps registering the echo of McCaskill boneline in Mariah's form and my own over Mariah's shoulder, she cast her first full look at me. A moment was required to decipher me under the beard and then her eyes went wide.

"Jick!" she let out with her blaze of a smile. "Hello again."

"Lo, Leona."

Half a century it had been, since I first said that. Since Leona Tracy, as she was then, all but married my brother Alec.

■ Reprinted by arrangement with Atheneum Publishers, an imprint of Macmillan Publishing Company, from "Ride With Me, Mariah Montana," by Ivan Doig, ©1990 by Ivan Doig.

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.

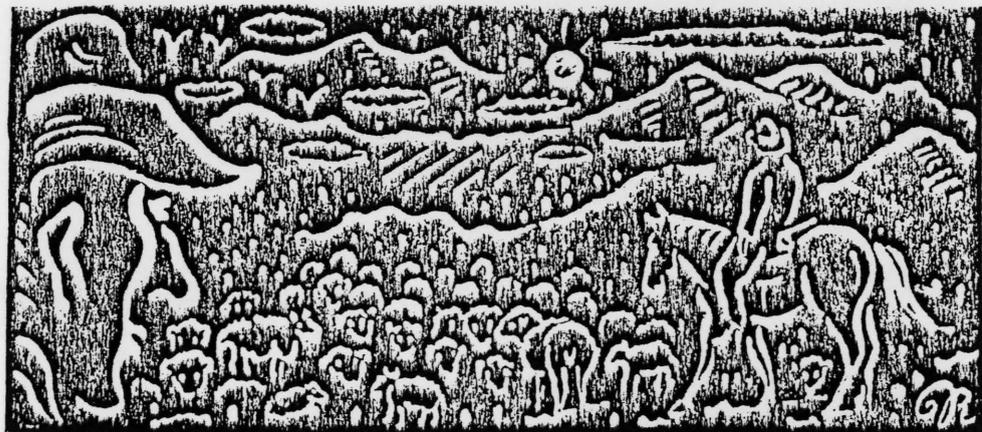


ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN RYAN FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

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

Dancing at the Rascal Fair

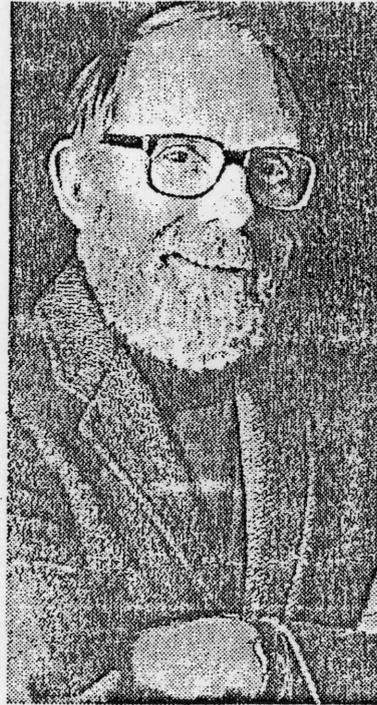
Continued from page 1

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



BY JIM BATES

Ivan Doig

past life as it was 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.

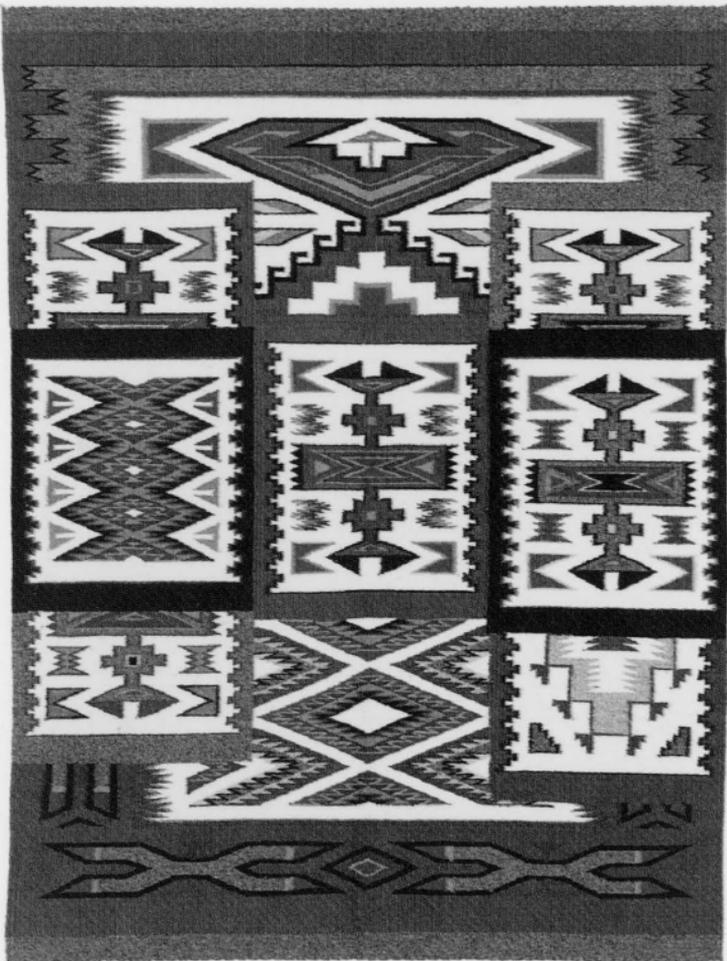
In the earliest, 1889, passages of *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, his two Scots speak English strongly influenced by Biblical and Shakespearean cadences. By 1919, they sound a lot more like their fellow American sheep-herders and ranchers. Doig can enter the talk of Burns-quoting Scottish immigrants or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

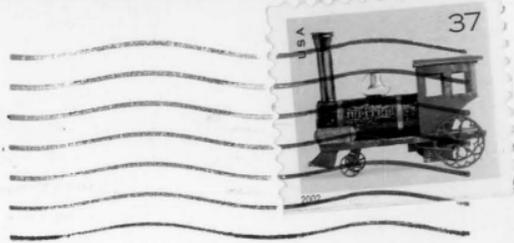
Nor is Doig's gift merely literary. Besides his intuitions and artistry there is the iron of purpose of an ex-ranch hand who has earned his PhD in history. An enormous researcher, Doig is one of those historians who goes from library to library forever on the scent of new documentation. He pours over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



Those who have one foot in the canoe and one foot
in the boat are going to fall into the river.

BRILLIANT!!



IVAN DOLG

17277 15th Ave NW

SEATTLE, WA

98177

98177-9899



B DOLG

209 W 30th

FARMINGTON, NM

87401



About the author and *Mountain Time*

"Ivan Doig has been, from *This House of Sky*, his first grand entry into literature, one of the great American voices, full of grace, abounding in humanity, easeful in narration, hypnotic in pace, grand in range," says his international contemporary Thomas Keneally of Australia, author of *Schindler's List*. Doig, much honored for his portrayals of the American past, now finds that his latest novel, *Mountain Time*, is coinciding with headlines about a struggle over one of the country's last great natural areas.

"The Rocky Mountain Front is a remarkably intact ecological centerpiece of this continent," Doig explains from his personal and research background along the chain of peaks and escarpments that rise from the plains of northern Montana to the Continental Divide. (Described by the *Washington Post* as having "the iron of purpose of an ex-ranch hand who has earned his PhD in history," Doig worked ranch jobs and herded sheep with his family along the Front before embarking on degrees at Northwestern University and the University of Washington.) "I had no idea three years ago, when I thought up a generational tussle over the question of oil and gas leases there as part of the plot of this book, that I'd be racing the headlines."

While he was finishing the writing of *Mountain Time*, Lewis & Clark National Forest Supervisor Gloria Flora made the long-argued-over decision to ban oil and gas leasing along the Rocky Mountain Front. Since then, the chief of the U.S. Forest Service has added a two-year moratorium on mining claims in the area. Doig applauds both actions: "To put it mildly, oil and gas leases and mining claims along the edge of the Front would be equivalent to scissor attacks on a magnificent tapestry of nature."

Mountain Time, a novel of the Baby Boom generation he describes as "jelly-sandwiched between grown children who've gone their own way and aging parents who are losing control of their lives," attempts to give contemporary voice to universal dilemmas: Can we go home again? *Dare* we? How can we live and love in the present, when faced with obligations from the past?

"It simply felt to me like a book where it's all there waiting," says Doig of this closely observed work of fiction set in Seattle, San Francisco, Alaska, and the Rocky Mountain Front. "My own concerns about the land and its people, that dreaded but strengthening ordeal of coming to the aid of a parent near the end of life, my fascination with the mammoth behavioral bulge caused by the Baby Boomers--I was born just far enough ahead of them (1939) to tag along with their generation and yet not quite be of it--it seemed to me time to write about the generation that was shaped by the Sixties meeting its time of reckoning." Certain exploits of his characters--a small-plane flight along the Alaska pipeline and into the remote Brooks Range; a backpacking trip into Montana's Bob Marshall Wilderness Area made memorable by muddy pawprints of a grizzly bear on a camping tent--were based on experiences by Doig and his wife Carol, but not, he says, the novel's wild whirligig scene of hundreds of in-line skaters darting through San Francisco on a Friday night: "That one, I was happy to be just a researching guy taking notes."

"Ivan Doig has been, from *This House of Sky*, his first grand entry into literature, one of the great American voices, full of grace, abounding in humanity, easeful in narration, hypnotic in pace, grand in range," says his international contemporary Thomas Keneally of Australia, author of *Schindler's List*. Richard Critchfield added in the Washington Post: "Nor is Doig's gift merely literary. Besides his intuitions and artistry there is the iron purpose of an ex-ranchhand who has earned his Ph.D. in history." Born in Montana in 1939, Doig grew up along the Rocky Mountain Front, the dramatic landscape that has inspired much of his writing. His career has been honored with the lifetime "Distinguished Achievement" award by the Western Literature Association, and in the San Francisco Chronicle poll to name the best American West novels and works of non-fiction of the twentieth century, he is the only living writer with books in the top dozen of both lists: *English Creek* in fiction and *This House of Sky* in non-fiction. He and his wife Carol divide their time between their home in Seattle and the places his writing takes him.

Books (all are available in paperback) and awards:

This House of Sky, 1978; finalist for the National Book Award; Christopher Award; chosen "best book about Montana" in Montana, The Magazine of Western History readers' poll; more than 200,000 copies sold.

Winter Brothers, 1980; Governor's Writers Award; adapted for television by KCTS, Seattle.

The Sea Runners, 1982; Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award for Literary Excellence; chosen as one of "ten best books of the year" by Chicago Sun-Times and "notable books of the year" by the New York Times Book Review.

English Creek, 1984; Western Heritage Award as best novel of the year; Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award; read by The Radio Reader on National Public Radio.

Dancing at the Rascal Fair, 1987; Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award; his most popular book, now in its 4th edition.

Ride with Me, Mariah Montana, 1990; Library Journal "highly recommended" choice; Christian Science Monitor serialization.

Heart Earth, 1993; \$10,000 Evans Biography Award; Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award.

Bucking the Sun, 1996; Governor's Writers Award.

Mountain Time, 1999; NewStar audio set.

Prairie Nocturne, 2003; graded 'A' by Entertainment Weekly; book club favorite.

The Whistling Season, 2006; six printings; Booksense national bestseller list; American Library Association's 2007 Alex Award as one of ten best books for Young Adults; Reader's Digest Condensed Book; Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award; nominated for International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award.

The Eleventh Man, 2008; Recorded Books audio set; paperback published September 2009.

Forthcoming: *Work Song*, spring 2010.

"Ivan Doig has been, from *This House of Sky*, his first grand entry into literature, one of the great American voices, full of grace, abounding in humanity, easeful in narration, hypnotic in pace, grand in range," says his international contemporary Thomas Keneally of Australia, author of *Schindler's List*. Richard Critchfield added in the Washington Post: "Nor is Doig's gift merely literary. Besides his intuitions and artistry there is the iron purpose of an ex-ranchhand who has earned his Ph.D. in history." Born in Montana in 1939, Doig grew up along the Rocky Mountain Front, the dramatic landscape that has inspired much of his writing. His career has been honored with the lifetime "Distinguished Achievement" award by the Western Literature Association, and in the San Francisco Chronicle poll to name the best American West novels and works of non-fiction of the twentieth century, he is the only living writer with books in the top dozen of both lists: *English Creek* in fiction and *This House of Sky* in non-fiction. He and his wife Carol divide their time between their home in Seattle and the places his writing takes him.

Books (all are available in paperback) and awards:

This House of Sky, 1978; finalist for the National Book Award; Christopher Award; chosen "best book about Montana" in Montana, The Magazine of Western History readers' poll; more than 200,000 copies sold.

Winter Brothers, 1980; Governor's Writers Award; adapted for television by KCTS, Seattle.

The Sea Runners, 1982; Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award for Literary Excellence; chosen as one of "ten best books of the year" by Chicago Sun-Times and "notable books of the year" by the New York Times Book Review.

English Creek, 1984; Western Heritage Award as best novel of the year; Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award; read by The Radio Reader on National Public Radio.

Dancing at the Rascal Fair, 1987; Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award; his most popular book, now in its 4th edition.

Ride with Me, Mariah Montana, 1990; Library Journal "highly recommended" choice; Christian Science Monitor serialization.

Heart Earth, 1993; \$10,000 Evans Biography Award; Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award.

Bucking the Sun, 1996; Governor's Writers Award.

Mountain Time, 1999; NewStar audio set.

Prairie Nocturne, 2003; graded 'A' by Entertainment Weekly; book club favorite.

The Whistling Season, 2006; six printings; Booksense national bestseller list; American Library Association's 2007 Alex Award as one of ten best books for Young Adults; Reader's Digest Condensed Book; Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award; Recorded Books audio set; movie rights optioned.

The Historian as Literary Craftsman

The West of Ivan Doig

William G. Robbins

Imposing and sometimes incongruous, the American West offers setting in abundance for storytelling both romantic and realistic. Sentimentalized, mythologized, homogenized (or perhaps petrified) in the work of Owen Wister, Zane Grey, Louis L'Amour, the region has suffered in literary and historical assessments. The real West—the one of harsh climate, of vast spaces, of stultifying boredom and loneliness, of accident, suffering, and death—received early and honest treatment from writers like Hamlin Garland, Willa Cather, Ole Rølvaag, and Mari Sandoz, and, later, from H. L. Davis, Wallace Stegner, and A. B. Guthrie, to name only a few. In the years since the Second World War, that list has become extensive, and today it includes a remarkable coterie of respected authors who have taken as the setting for their most important works the northern West.¹

Nonetheless, some in the literary establishment believe that western authors are still wandering somewhere in the purple sage looking for the proper mood and setting for their fiction. Joan Didion, who has brilliantly chronicled the California West of the 1960s in several books, is less perceptive in her assessment of the ability of writers to portray the region beyond trendy California: "The authentic Western voice . . . is one heard often in life but only rarely in literature, the reason being that to truly know the West is to lack all will to write it down." That remark, gleaned from a review of Norman Mailer's *Executioner's Song*, ignores important works of fiction and mistakenly dismisses, among others, present-day writers like Larry McMurtry and Ivan Doig.²

Begin with Bernard De Voto, A. B. Guthrie, and Wallace Stegner, literary craftsmen whose work is steeped in sense of place, historical backdrop, and always the great landscape. There are common themes in Guthrie's novels *The Big Sky* (1947) and *The Way West* (1949) and Stegner's nonfictional *Wolf Willow* (1962): isolation and ruralism, change, the ever-present struggle to establish community; there is also, in Stegner's words, "the magic figure of the horseman." But more significant, the thread that links the best creative writing about

the West—from Willa Cather, H. L. Davis, Stegner, Guthrie, to Ivan Doig, Norman Maclean, Thomas McGuane, James Welch, and Craig Lesley—is a feel for language: dialogue, idiom, the sense of the beauty of a people's everyday expression.³

Bernard De Voto understood the importance of authentic dialogue in his great trilogy on the American West. Of the mountain men who scoured the valleys and streams of the Rocky Mountains in the 1830s and 1840s, he observed that, like the native people among whom they lived, the trappers transmitted information orally. And, like those first people, mountain men were gifted storytellers. "Solitude," De Voto noted, "had given them a surpassing gift of friendship and simple survival proved the sharpness of their wits. There were few books and few trappers were given to reading what there were: *talk was everything*" (italics mine).⁴

That tradition of lodging house and campfire talk, in a 20th-century setting of cafe, saloon, post office, and service station banter, has sustained a host of western writers who have collectively produced a literature centered in the experiences and truths of the region. As skilled and creative artists, those authors make use of both oral and documented sources in crafting a fully developed western literary tradition. Several writers in the great Pacific Northwest—spanning the region from Montana to the Pacific—

1. Ivan Doig suggests that there is "a lineage, a family tree of western writers," especially among the likes of Stegner, Sandoz, and Garland, "people whose growing up was somewhat along the lines of mine"; see "Interviews with Northwest Writers: Ivan Doig," *Seattle Review*, Vol. 8 (Spring 1985), 33.

2. Joan Didion, review of *The Executioner's Song*, by Norman Mailer, *New York Times Book Review*, Oct. 7, 1979, p. 26.

3. Wallace Stegner, *The Sound of Mountain Water* (1969; rpt. Lincoln, Neb., 1980), 188; "Interviews with Northwest Writers," 33.

4. Bernard De Voto, *Across the Wide Missouri* (Cambridge, Mass., 1947), 44.

have contributed to that maturity. Among them is Ivan Doig.⁵

Since the appearance in 1978 of his first major book, *This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind*, Ivan Doig has been—as William Kittredge recently put it—among “the establishment” of writers in the northern West. His subsequent books—*Winter Brothers* (1980), *The Sea Runners* (1982), and especially *English Creek* (1984) and *Dancing at the Rascal Fair* (1987)—have won wide acclaim, but none of them has gained the popularity of *This House of Sky*. Although the paperback royalties from that memoir “will never keep me out of the poorhouse,” Doig remarked, the “book does keep selling and selling.” Its appeal, as numerous critics have indicated, can be attributed to its balance between character and landscape, to its evocation of western idiom, and to Doig’s gifts as a storyteller.⁶

Like his fellow Montana authors Thomas McGuane and Norman Maclean, Doig has a unique literary style and a sense of humor and of irony. In *This House of Sky* and *English Creek*, both set in Montana, he displays a sensitivity for the land and its people, the unpredictable seasonal changes in the Big Sky country, and a firm grasp of the major currents of regional and national history. Fidelity to the West imbues all his writing.

Each of his books, whether fiction or nonfiction, gives a vivid presence to the historical setting. Both by instinct and by training—Doig holds an M.A. in journalism from the Medill School at Northwestern University and a Ph.D. in history from the University of Washington—he has developed a detective’s sense for ferreting out minute detail and a fine touch for circumstance and locale. Armed with tape recorder and note pad, he is an inveterate gatherer of information and has traveled the length and breadth of his native Montana, to distant archives, and most recently to his father’s ancestral homeland in Scotland for shards of evidence. The purpose of the latter trip was to gather materials for his trilogy on the fictional McCaskill family, which had Scottish roots. Doig reasons that he writes “best about things I can either see or get firmly in mind through research.”⁷

As for *This House of Sky*, the author insists it is “a book about memory,” about a boy becoming an adult. In a letter to a friend, Doig said he considered the book a memoir, “‘a narrative of the experiences the writer has lived through’—rather than an autobiography”:

That is, it is the experiences [emphasis mine] rather than the life that I wanted to write about. I found it hard to put much of myself into the book, and would quite possibly not have done it in the first-person except for the technical advantages of that. That the experiences add up to my life is in a way coincidental.

He recalls that he “knew, journalistically, that my father’s life had been an interesting one.” He recognized that his childhood was unusual as well. It is “significant,” he believes, that he wrote those parts of the manuscript first. As he persistently redrafted the early sections, he remembers, always “the first few sentences dealt with my mother’s death on my sixth birthday. In cold-blooded terms, I knew that was an arresting fact.” The tour of saloons, which he worked on next, he “also knew was an unusual experience.” The manuscript had its beginnings in a “couple of hours of tapes” of his father, one of the last times the elder Doig “was well enough for such a session.” Those recollections and his grandmother’s, Bessie Ringer’s, led Doig to interview other people in White Sulphur Springs during his Montana visits. He consulted relatives and friends of the family, took copious notes, solicited information by letter, ransacked the archives at the Montana Historical Society and the collections at Montana State University in Bozeman.⁸

To gain an accurate understanding of the early sheep industry in Montana, Doig turned to anecdotal material gathered by the Federal Writers’ Project in the late 1930s. That information provided the background for the discussion of the solitary and reclusive life of the sheep tenders in *This House of Sky*. Karl the Swede, Finnigan from Finland, Rumanians and Norwegians—some fictional, others real people—inform readers about sheepherding in the Montana backcountry during the author’s boyhood. Arriving at a herder’s camp, Doig recalls, “had some of the touchiness of coming ashore on a self-exile’s island.” That knowledge also

enabled him to portray the sheepherders in the Two Medicine National Forest in *English Creek*.⁹

Doig has remained faithful to his working-class roots: “There are many Wests,” he once told a classroom of college students, but “my West is the West of working people—people working on the land.” To the historian’s fetish for facts and the journalist’s for reportage, Doig adds the literary craftsman’s insistence on an accurate rendering of his characters’ “working language.” A recent critic remarked that “Doig’s fidelity to common speech and local dialect holds a mirror to the most spontaneous expression of his people.”¹⁰

“The magic of stories” is born of that expression. And it is storytelling that

5. One of the best essays on the growing maturity of regional literature in the Pacific Northwest is Harold P. Simonson, “Pacific Northwest Literature—Its Coming of Age,” *PNQ*, Vol. 71 (1980), 146-51.

6. William Kittredge, “Voices and Spirits: Doors to Our House,” *Northern Lights*, Vol. 2 (January/February 1986), 20. Early acclaim for *This House of Sky* appeared in: *Time*, Vol. 112 (Sept. 11, 1978), 90, 92; *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 13, 1978; and *New York Times Book Review*, Jan. 7, 1979, pp. 14-15. Ivan Doig to author, Jan. 10, 1986; for the appeal of *This House of Sky*, see, for example, Jack Brenner, review of *Winter Brothers*, by Ivan Doig, *Pacific Northwest*, Vol. 14 (November 1980), 41; and Edwin R. Bingham, “American Wests through Autobiography and Memoir,” *PHR*, Vol. 56 (1987), 18-20.

7. John Dally, “Interpreting the West: An Interview with Ivan Doig,” *Elliott Bay Booknotes* (Seattle, 1983), n. pag.

8. *Ibid.* (1st qtn.); Ivan Doig to Mike Olsen, Jan. 28, 1979, copy in author’s files.

9. Ivan Doig, *This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind* (New York, 1978), 170 (hereafter quotations from this work are cited in the text by page number or by HS and page).

10. *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, April 25, 1985; “Interviews with Northwest Writers,” 33 (“working language”). The classroom setting was the author’s course, “History of the Twentieth-Century West,” at Oregon State University, spring 1985. William Bevis, “*English Creek* and Western Historical Fiction,” *Montana, the Magazine of Western History*, Vol. 35 (Spring 1985), 76 (last qtn.).

moves Doig most when he writes, a tradition that he believes is more obvious in the West than elsewhere. He made that clear in an address to the Montana Library Association in 1982: "In *House of Sky* almost all of the dialogue is storytelling of one kind or another, the material which lodged in my head as I listened in the bars of White Sulphur or in the Chadwick's cafe in Dupuyer." Storytelling, Doig told his audience, "is a kind of chinook of the western soul, thawing the cold routines of life, promising us warmth and a new green horizon and maybe the first laugh we've had since the thermometer hit 30 below." But the writer must be wary that "the storying chinook doesn't become just hot air." There is, of course, never a shred of doubt about the veracity of the story, especially if the teller is a Montanan. Doig recalls one old resident telling another: "Why that fella was the most honest person I ever knew. He'd tell a story a dozen different ways rather than lie about it."¹¹

But whether the sources are oral or documented, Doig argues that writers have an obligation to be faithful to language, mood, and setting. There is a simple "rightness" to strict authenticity: "By God, you ought to do it right, it seems to me. . . . There simply was a right way to build a haystack or fix a fence, in these people's minds—my dad among them." *This House of Sky* began to take shape, he points out, "when I let the people in it tell their own stories." He is proud of his portrayal of Kate and Walter Badgett, Ringling neighbors who were "very old and very interesting to me. . . . Across nearly 30 years now, they still loom mightily in my memory." Recollection, interview, and correspondence served to flesh out their story. One bit of correspondence from an unlettered and half-blind niece, although not used directly to portray the Badgetts, provided Doig with something "to live up to in my own use of language and in the effort to accurately trace the trajectory of the Montana lives I was writing about."¹²

In Ivan Doig's West, and in the lives of many people who grew to maturity in the rural West of his day, the process of socialization was different from the idealized version. Those boyhood years in Montana sheep camps, of boarding in

town for the school term, of living out of the suitcase and being always on the move were powerful influences. But not in the negative sense that some critics familiar with Doig's work would have it.¹³

That unorthodox upbringing is especially apparent in the widowed father's decision to allow Ivan's boyhood to "be the miniature of how he himself lived" (HS, 54). The hours Charlie and Ivan passed together in the saloons of White Sulphur Springs—the Stockman's Cafe, the Pioneer—"carried rewards," the son later recalled, "such as few other times of my life" (p. 66). Neither father nor son, as far as he knows, "ever was lectured that a bar is no place for a seven-eight-nine-ten-year old." For those saloons of the rural West were the vital stuff of working-class culture: the place where news was disseminated; where crews were hired; where one gained information about the price of beef, lamb, and wheat; but mostly where people came to socialize after a week or more of working with little human companionship. For Doig, those experiences lasted even after he left Montana, and they continue to influence his writing.¹⁴

Montana's past has instructed a host of writers over the years, men and women who have chronicled the economic domination of the state by individuals and institutions in distant places. They include people like De Voto and his friend, the Great Falls newspaperman Joseph Kinsey Howard. More than any other writer of his time, and especially in Montana: *High, Wide, and Handsome*, Howard drew attention to economic colonialism: the insidious land policy of the railroad baron James J. Hill, who sold land to thousands of settlers gulled by clever advertising into believing that rainfall was abundant on the high plains; the pervasive and powerful presence of Anaconda, which sat astride the state's mining economy and controlled its newspapers; and a network of other activities the purse strings of which were manipulated from afar.¹⁵

In the world of fiction, A. B. Guthrie addressed the issue of corruption in high places—especially the cattle barons—in *These Thousand Hills*. More recently, the Montana historian K. Ross Toole detailed

the energy consortiums' meddling in state and federal politics to obtain leases on public and private land for strip mining and oil exploration. Add to that list of observers Wallace Stegner, who traveled through Montana in the late 1970s and remarked that the state was, like the Indian reservations within its borders, "a colonial dependency struggling to gain control of its own economy." Those influences, well known to most residents, have shaped the perceptions of the current cast of Montana writers, including Ivan Doig.¹⁶

His father's experience in moving from one leasehold, share-cropping arrangement to the next was instruction enough. But it is the son's grasp of the broader picture that is striking in *This House of Sky*—his ability as a writer to understand that his youth was a period when the powerful integrating forces of modern capitalism were transforming rural America. According to the novelist Wright Morris, Doig has attempted "to hold on to the receding horizons in Montana," to preserve in literature the rural

11. Ivan Doig, "Storying," an address to the Montana Library Association, 1982, tape-recorded copy in the author's files.

12. "Interviews with Northwest Writers," 32 (1st qtn.); Doig, "Storying."

13. For the negative influence of Doig's Montana past, see especially Kerry David Ahearn, "Ivan Doig's Self-Narratives: The West, Wilderness, and the Prophetic Impulse," *South Dakota Review*, Vol. 20 (Winter 1982-83), 7-22; and Bingham, 21.

14. Ivan Doig, "You Can't Not Go Home Again," *Montana, the Magazine of Western History*, Vol. 35 (Winter 1985), 11.

15. Joseph Kinsey Howard, *Montana: High, Wide, and Handsome* (New Haven, 1943). For the broader issue of economic colonialism in the West, see Bernard De Voto, "The West: A Plundered Province," *Harpers Magazine*, Vol. 169 (August 1934), 355-64; for a current summary of the argument, see William G. Robbins, "The 'Plundered Province' Thesis and the Recent Historiography of the American West," *PHR*, Vol. 55 (1986), 577-97.

16. A. B. Guthrie, Jr., *These Thousand Hills* (Boston, 1956); K. Ross Toole, *The Rape of the Great Plains: Northwest America, Cattle and Coal* (Boston, 1976); Wallace Stegner and Page Stegner, "Rocky Mountain Country," *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 241 (April 1978), 45-73 (qtn., 73).

landscapes that are being homogenized into oblivion.¹⁷

In the case of Montana's Tierney Basin, the corporate presence came early. With the formation of the first forest reserves—hence, national forests—the government restricted the high-mountain ranges to those who held leases. That system of allotments meant that the right to graze on federal land “began to pass to the region's corporate ranches which already were big, and getting bigger” (HS, 28). Thus, small stockmen had to battle not only the uncertainty of weather, but the land policies of the federal government as well. Doig the historian informs his readers that even the homestead laws’ “seed acres for yeoman farms” turned into something quite different: “They turned out to be landing sites, quarters to hold people until they were able to scramble away to somewhere else. Quarters, it could be said, that did for that region of rural America what the tenements of the immigrant ghettos did for city America” (p. 29).

John Ringling, of circus fame, was among those who attempted to build a “sagebrush empire” (p. 47) in the Smith Valley. But more immediate to Doig's boyhood years and beyond was Wellington Rankin, a Helena lawyer with “a pirate's shrewdness,” who purchased, among other lands, the bankrupted Ringling holdings during the depression. Rankin grazed too many cattle on his acreage, hired “shabby stick figures” as herders, and earned Charlie Doig's everlasting contempt (p. 47). Still, former homesteaders, men like Charlie, had a role on the large ranches that were being pieced together. They were “valuable as foremen—the top sergeants for the country's regimenting” (p. 48), according to the son.

There is a deeply affecting story in the generations of the Doigs—a landless family immigrating to the Tierney Basin with dreams of establishing a successful homestead. For the Doigs the circle was closed during the depression when the basin homestead was sold for a pittance. The landless Charlie, unable to bid with the emerging big owners for land, then moved into a cycle of “working on shares.” The son points out that, as in the

South, “the landless man did the labor for the landed” (p. 52). Those experiences weighed heavily in Ivan's decision to spring himself free from a life of wage labor and to attend college. He told an interviewer in 1985: “My notion was to go away to college to break out of what seemed to me not a very promising ranch future in Montana.”¹⁸

During Charlie Doig's last years, as his strong body began to give way to illness, mother-in-law and son-in-law returned to White Sulphur Springs where Bessie Ringer had an established network of friends. But the town and the surrounding countryside were markedly different from what they had been during Ivan's boyhood. The area's “ranches were being reached by the continental metamorphosis from agriculture to agribusiness.” Summer haying was mechanized, the sheep were gone altogether; the valley comprised “people swathed in synthetics.” Corporate America had come to the Smith River valley with a vengeance: “Ye know who owns the Dogie [ranch] now? Dad demanded indignantly when I arrived on one of my visits: A-goddamn-Kansas-City-paper-box-company” (p. 295).

Those were dramatic and changing contours in Ivan Doig's West, and they have left their mark on the writer. Although he does not want to exaggerate the influence of the corporate world on his Montana instruction, “neither,” he recognizes, “can it be scanted.” Growing to maturity in the Big Sky State, he wrote recently in *Montana, the Magazine of Western History*, “taught me to despise a number of things I still believe are worth despising. Economic domination from afar, whether afar is across a continent or up the stories of a corporate high-rise.” A powerful insight there, but one that is widely shared among other Montana writers.¹⁹

This House of Sky etches a largely vanished America, one that has undergone the wrenching destruction of small-scale agriculture and its consequences for rural culture. Young Ivan, taking advantage of his talent for academic work, eventually leaves behind “the narrowing opportunities” of rural Montana for a writing career. Although he now lives close by Puget Sound, the profoundly rural and western world of his early life

has been the major influence in his career as a writer. An appreciative refugee from Montana's winter storms, he acknowledges that “in ways great and small” the state “keeps becoming more vital to the writerly part of me.”²⁰

Thus, those critics are mistaken who claim that Doig has turned his back on his native land, that he resented the loneliness and disruption of his boyhood years, or that his writing is a personal quest for a spiritual avatar. His Montana writings are short on symbolism and suggestion and long on authentic detail. Doig admits to being “literal minded”; even when he is writing fiction, his “imagination works off facts, by and large.” He is one of those western writers, as William Kittredge said recently, who “are trying to rub their eyes clear of mythic and legendary cobwebs, and see straight to the actual.”²¹

For Ivan Doig is of the rural West, and it is his grasp of “domestic sociology” set in the particularity of place that gives concreteness to his writing. He has not consciously applied any particular theory to the region. Rather, because of his journalism and history background, he told an interviewer, “I'm more interested in trying to interpret what the actual West seems to be like.” This emotional and intellectual understanding of parenting, of family and community, of the process of socialization, and of the strains and stresses of backcountry life, and the ability to communicate it, help to make *This House of Sky* and his subsequent

17. Wright Morris, review of *This House of Sky*, by Ivan Doig, *New York Times Book Review*, Jan. 7, 1979, p. 14.

18. “Interviews with Northwest Writers,” 29.

19. Doig, “You Can't Not Go Home Again,” 13.

20. Richard Maxwell Brown, “The New Regionalism in America, 1970-1981,” in *Regionalism and the Pacific Northwest*, ed. William G. Robbins, Robert J. Frank, and Richard E. Ross (Corvallis, Oreg., 1983), 75 (1st qtn.); Doig, “You Can't Not Go Home Again,” 7.

21. Bingham, 21, and Ahearn, 20; Bevis, 77; “Interviews with Northwest Writers,” 34-35; and Kittredge, 20.

writing on Montana such compelling literature.²²

Among the shearers, haying crews, bartenders, service station and cafe attendants that troop through the writer's Montana books, the person of Charlie Doig—the preeminent Montanan—looms largest. As his father weakened in his lost bout with emphysema, the son reflected on their relationship—the desperate times, the errors, the human shortcomings. But outlined sharp and clear against that bleak backdrop was the dying man's "one great rightness":

"the constant clasp of keeping me at your side, whatever the place or the hour or the weather or the mood or task or venture. So swiftly did you have me grown beyond my years that neither of us entirely understood the happening of it, but knew it to be rare, a triumph and terribly needed . . . that it was you, in your burring troubadour's way of passing to me all you knew of the valley and the Basin, who enchanted into me such a love of language and story that it has become my life-work." (p. 273)

The son appreciated Charlie's principle of fatherhood: Ivan "might as well have a look at life sooner than later" (p. 77). And for all of his affection for Bessie Ringer—her sense of sacrifice, her steadiness, the security that she represented—there is no doubt that Ivan would have chosen life with Charlie if father and grandmother had parted ways: "If my ranchman father could not manage to be enough family for me, at least he was going to be a friend such as none other in the world" (p. 156).

But the "cobbled" relationship between Bessie and Charlie, that "thin-tempered pair," did provide a semblance of family (p. 213). Perhaps that can be attributed to Bessie's "unattackable" (p. 115) belief in the institution. Yet, it was Charlie who brought her into the family, wary though he was of her ambition: "My grandmother . . . want[ed] me as a child to raise, the way a retired clipper captain might have yearned to make one last voyage down the trade winds under clouds of sail" (p. 133). Through Charlie's occasional visits to bars when the family went to town for weekly shopping needs, to Bessie's Gibraltar-like and uncompromising notions about right and wrong, the family stuck together. By the time Ivan was attending high school, he

was the centerpiece in the decisions made by father and grandmother.

There were other important anchors to Doig's upbringing. The Chadwicks, with whom Ivan boarded during his high school years, provided stability and steadiness: Gertie, "plain to look at, hearty the day long, and years-deep in polished affections"; Harold, "a tall black-handed wizard cobbling away at the community of machinery with deep pondering sighs"; and their son, Tom, "anvil shoulders and solid beams of arms" (pp. 185, 186). The constant warmth of the Chadwick family extended outward to the unpretentious town of Dupuyer—three gas stations, three saloons, the Chadwick cafe, a bit of sidewalk, a few dozen homes, and "long winters, pushing winds, a hundred people, and a highway trenching it into halves" (p. 187). In truth, Dupuyer fits the description of many rural western communities today.

Schooling provided another constant for Doig's adolescent years. The small number of high school students in Dupuyer traveled 20 miles to Valier, where Ivan enjoyed "an unusually self-steadying group of classmates" (p. 215). He reasons that those years—normally ones of turmoil, fast friendships, and deep hatreds—were quiet ones "because I had so much blaze elsewhere in my life." That high school class, he notes, "seems to me now, as then, a regiment of calm" (p. 215). Above all, there was the "Last Duchess" (p. 231), Mrs. Frances Tidyman, whose love of language and "foliage of . . . learning laced everywhere through the school" (p. 191). Powerful medicine, too, for one keen on the nuance of sound and meaning in words.

That appreciation for words and a poetic sense of place are apparent in his second book, *Winter Brothers*. Here Doig demonstrates the historian's touch for accurate detail, perspective, and understanding of the gap between Indian and Euro-American cultures. While working in the manuscript section of the University of Washington Libraries, Doig noted the fascinating diaries—an estimated 2.5 million words—of the New England-born James Gilchrist Swan, an 1850s im-

migrant to the Puget Sound country. With the publication of *This House of Sky* pending, Doig launched on an innovative literary tour of the Olympic Peninsula from Port Townsend to Neah Bay and adjacent places for three winter months of observation and reflection in the company of Swan's diaries.²³

The resulting book further established Doig as a perceptive observer of landscape and character. Swan, an impressively sentient observer in his own right, was an incessant compiler and recorder of information. Doig uses to advantage the diaries to produce an introspective and personal account of Swan, his wider social circle, and the landscape of the upper Olympic Peninsula. Now the physical setting is not Montana but the misty world of the peninsula, damp and moss-shrouded trails, and wintry storms that regularly batter that far corner of the continent.

Many of the words in *Winter Brothers* are Swan's. Doig lets Swan speak through the diaries, observes Swan observing himself and others. For nearly 30 years a faithful collector of artifacts and information for the Smithsonian Institution, Swan became an astute ethnographer and developed some competence with the Makah dialect (good enough, according to Doig, to understand their culture). His Smithsonian publication, *The Indians of Cape Flattery*, published in 1870, remains the basic ethnographic account of the Makah to this day. Doig recognizes in Swan's diaries storytelling of a high order; his own storytelling frames that of his 19th-century literary partner.

Swan is intriguing to the historian Doig for other reasons. Both 19th-century diarist and 20th-century writer immigrated to the edge of the continent, one from Boston, the other from landlocked central Montana. And that pricks Doig's cu-

22. Robin W. Winks, "Regionalism in Comparative Perspective," in *Regionalism and the Pacific Northwest*, 27 (1st qtn.); Dally, n. pag.

23. Ivan Doig, *Winter Brothers* (New York, 1980), 3-4, 245 (hereafter quotations from this work are cited in the text by page number or by WB and page).

riosity—the westering impulse of New Englander and Montanan. The westernness of his Doig ancestors, he suggests, was as “extreme as we could manage to make it. We lived our first seventy years as Americans on slopes of the Rockies as naturally, single-mindedly, as kulaks on the Russian steppes” (WB, 108). Swan’s happening upon “the place to invest his life meant, as it has to me, finding a West” (p. 109). The winter brothers have, in the words of one critic, a “shared geography.” For Doig, therefore, Swan is a kindred spirit; his “Wests come recognizable to me, are places which still have clear overtones of my own places, stand alike with mine in being distinctly unlike other of the national geography” (p. 110).²⁴

Their adopted homeland, in Doig’s view, is an undefinable West of continuing mystery, experience, and inquiry. Why does the West seize the imagination “of a James Swan, an Ivan Doig,” he asks (p. 120). Ruminating from notes taken during a backpacking trip, he responds: “The west of America draws some of us not because it is the newest region of the country but because it is the oldest, in the sense that the landscape . . . more resembles the original continent.” With a voice of caution, he remarks that here are “virtually the last pieces of earth we have not someway tamed, transformed. Although we are striving” (p. 120).

Doig’s West is also instructive, at least for those with the patience to reflect and observe. It is where he found personal maturity, where he became “less headlong and more aware that I dwell in a community of time as well as of people” (WB, 4). The western part of his being, he believes, has something “to do with that community of time” (p. 4). Indeed, that sense of connectedness between the present and the past led to his fascination with Swan, “a westcomer, and stayer. . . [who] has gone before me through this matter of siting oneself specifically here: West” (p. 5).

When he departed Neah Bay in 1866, Swan was “gratified” (p. 124) at the affection shown by the Makah. Doig regrets his return to white culture: “I want not to see Swan step from Neah Bay . . . townward from the ultimate point of the West,

Cape Flattery” (p. 123). Swan resided in Port Townsend (town fathers declared him “an Habitual Drunkard” [p. 233]) until his death in 1900.

Ivan Doig’s first novel, *The Sea Runners*, was a direct consequence of his research on *Winter Brothers*. While scanning microfilmed newspaper copy for information on the whale-hunting techniques of the Makah Indians, Doig noticed an 11-inch item detailing the escape from Russian-controlled Sitka of four “poor fellows . . . [who] found they could not bear the ill usage” at the fur-trading post. That newspaper column in the *Oregon Weekly Times* in early 1853, the only existing account of the incident, was sufficient to fuel Doig’s creative instincts. In his fictional version of the story, Doig has the four men escaping the Russian post in the midst of a Christmas night celebration, stealing an Indian canoe, and wending their way south toward the small American settlement, Astoria, at the mouth of the Columbia River.²⁵

To flesh out the imagined details—to show that the life of his sea runners “does draw breath from actuality” (SR, 276)—Doig set out on his own odyssey. His search took him to the Alaska State Historical Library at Juneau, where he discovered several maps made at Sitka during the 1850s. In the fictional account the maps are critical to the voyagers as they make their way along the coast during the dead of winter. Like the Montana stories, *The Sea Runners* is based on weeks of note taking in archives. Doig also traveled his characters’ route courtesy of a University of Alaska oceanographic ship and had extended conversations with people knowledgeable about the intricate coastal passageways.

To forge an authentic story about life in Russian America, especially about New Archangel and its indentured labor force, Doig sought the advice of authorities on the economics of that system. He also benefited from an artist’s “expertise about the hues and forms of the Northwest coast,” and he visited Sitka, whose citizens have “preserved so much of their town’s vivid history” (SR, 278). The historian’s concern for accuracy; the writer’s skill in shaping character and

plot, and his mastery of description; and the storyteller’s way with dialogue—these combine to forge good historical fiction.

But Doig’s forays to Puget Sound and the Alaskan panhandle were diversions of a sort. While he was writing *The Sea Runners*, he was already laying the groundwork for his Montana trilogy. *English Creek* might be classed as an imagined version of the Doig family history. Uprooting themselves from Scotland, the McCaskills, like the Doigs, wend their way westward to the front range country in northern Montana. The fictional town of Gros Ventre, set on the actual site of Dupuyer, has in common with the real community only its beginnings as a way station on a freight route. It shares that, Doig points out, “and my love for the place.” Stories gleaned from Dupuyer area pioneers provide Doig with working detail for the Gros Ventre setting.²⁶

In a sense, *English Creek* might be described as a fictional *Montaillou*, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie’s classic reconstruction of life in a 14th-century French village. Doig has used every available source at hand to re-create the life of a small Montana town and its surrounding countryside during the summer of 1939. His personal reconnoitering of the area, his intimate feel for its geography, his knowledge of Montana in the late depression era, and his familiarity with human character give the novel the concreteness of historical documentary. *English Creek* employs little symbolism and is less a novel than “an immense chat, a folk history,” according to a friendly critic. It is also firmly grounded in historical fact.²⁷

24. Brenner, 41.

25. Ivan Doig, *The Sea Runners* (New York, 1982), 273-76 (qtn., 274) (hereafter quotations from this work are cited in the text by page number or by SR and page); *idem*, “Blue as the Odyssey: a case study of how a novel happens,” proposal submitted to the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, 1982, copy in author’s files.

26. Ivan Doig, *English Creek* (New York, 1984), 339.

27. Bevis, 76-77. Doig suggested the Montana potential for “mosaic” history in “You Can’t Not Go Home Again,” 11.

To check the authenticity of a sheep-skinning incident in the novel, Doig sent his manuscript version to Horace Morgan, a resident of the Sixteen country. "Something awful has happened to me," he told Morgan, "I'm no longer sure I know how to skin a sheep." He asked the friend to examine the pertinent section "to see that I've got it right." Back came the blunt reply, detailing the positioning of the sheep and the step-by-step procedures for cutting the hide free from the corpse. Doig thanked Morgan for the information and reported that his editor liked the manuscript and hoped that it would repeat the success of *This House of Sky*. He added: "On the other hand, he doesn't know a damn thing about skinning sheep either."²⁸

Dancing at the Rascal Fair, the second volume in the trilogy, also demonstrates Doig's careful attention to historical detail. On his trip to Scotland to gather material, Doig visited Glasgow to learn about immigrant ships, how his own ancestors would have traveled in steerage, and something of what they might have been thinking when they set sail for North America. There had to be a rationale for leaving as well, so he made the McCaskill ancestor a wheelwright, working at what "I figure was a dying craft about the time he left for Montana to seek free land." Doig the historian firmly anchors his fiction in realism. Although quirky things happen to the fam-

ily, they *could* have happened. The McCaskills "more or less careen through life like other people."²⁹

The third of the Montana novels will conclude with the state's celebration of its centennial in 1989. Although his plans beyond it are uncertain, Doig is happy with his present work. He likes the notion of taking his "characters through big patches of time." When he finishes the trilogy, he will have traced more than four generations of McCaskills: "I'll have covered 100 years—and in the writing, I'll have spent eight years of my own."³⁰

More than 40 years ago, Joseph Kinsey Howard complained that Montana had never developed a writer of the caliber of a Mark Twain or a Bret Harte "to chronicle its wealth of frontier history and anecdote in order that it might become a cultural entity in the national consciousness." Begin with Henry David Thoreau who, more than any other early American writer, established the precedent for the "literature of place" in the United States. That tradition was nurtured further through the work of Twain, William Faulkner, and a host of others whose environment defined them as writers. "Life began for me," Willa Cather observed, "when I ceased to admire and began to remember."³¹

For contemporary Montana writers, there is a fundamental truth to Cather's state-

ment (Howard's assessment no longer holds true). Norman Maclean achieved popular acclaim as a writer only after he retired, returned to Montana, and used the state as the backdrop for "A River Runs through It." Ivan Doig wandered east to Illinois, then west to Washington's Puget Sound, where he wrote *This House of Sky*, a memoir woven from the threads of his Montana childhood and adolescence. Those threads pulled him back to rural Montana after *Winter Brothers* and *The Sea Runners*, back to the Montana setting he finds most comfortable. □

William Robbins is professor of history at Oregon State University and editor of *Environmental Review*. His most recent book, *Hard Times in Paradise: Coos Bay, Oregon, 1850-1986*, will appear in 1988 (University of Washington Press). He is currently working on a study of metropolitan-hinterland relations in the 20th-century West.

28. Doig to Horace Morgan, Dec. 28, 1983; Morgan to Doig, Jan. 3, 1984; and Doig to Morgan, Jan. 9, 1984, copies in author's files.

29. *Portland Oregonian*, Feb. 17, 1987.

30. *Ibid.*

31. Howard, 6; Cather quoted in Frederick Turner, "Literature Lost in the Thickets," *New York Times Book Review*, Feb. 15, 1987, pp. 34-35.



S C R I B N E R

Simon & Schuster Consumer Group
1230 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10020

**About the Author
and
*Mountain Time***

"Ivan Doig has been, from *This House of the Sky*, his first grand entry into literature, one of the great American voices, full of grace, abounding in humanity, easeful in narration, hypnotic in pace, grand in range," says his international contemporary Thomas Kenneally of Australia, author of *Schindler's List*. Doig, much honored for his portrayals of the American past, now finds that his latest novel, *Mountain Time*, is coinciding with headlines about a struggle over one of the country's last great natural areas.

"The Rocky Mountain Front is a remarkably intact ecological centerpiece of this continent," Doig explains from his personal and research background along the chain of peaks and escarpments that rise from the plains of Northern Montana to the Continental Divide, (Described by the *Washington Post* as having "the iron of purpose of an ex-ranch hand who has earned his Ph.D. in history," Doig worked ranch jobs and herded sheep with his family along the Front before embarking on degrees at Northwestern University and the University of Washington.). "I had no idea three years ago, when I thought up a generational tussle over the question of oil and gas leases there as part of the plot of this book, that I'd be reaching headlines.

While he was finishing *Mountain Time*, Lewis and Clark National Forest Supervisor Gloria Flora made the long-argued-over decision to ban oil and gas leasing along the Rocky Mountain Front. Since then, the chief of the U.S. Forest Service has added a two-year moratorium on mining claims in the area. Doig applauds both actions: "To put it mildly, oil and gas leases and mining claims along the edge of the Front would be equivalent to scissor attacks on a magnificent tapestry of nature."

Mountain Time, a novel of the Baby Boom generation he describes as "jelly-sandwiched between grown children who've gone their own way and aging parents who are losing control of their lives," attempts to give contemporary voice to universal dilemmas: Can we go home again? *Dare* we? How can we live and love in the present when faced with obligations from the past?

"It simply felt to me like a book where it's all there waiting," says Doig of this closely observed work of fiction set in Seattle, San Francisco, Alaska, and the Rocky Mountain Front. "My own concerns about the land and its people, that dreaded but strengthening ordeal of coming to the aid of a parent near the end of life, my fascination with the mammoth behavioral bulge caused by the Baby Boomers—I was born just far enough ahead of them (1939) to tag along with their generation and yet not quite be of it—it seemed to me time to write about the generation that was shaped by the Sixties meeting its time of reckoning." Certain exploits of his characters—the small-plane flight along the Alaska pipeline and into the remote Brooks Range; a backpacking trip into Montana's Bob Marshall Wilderness Area made memorable by muddy pawprints of a grizzly bear on a camping tent—were based on experiences by Doig and his wife Carol, but not, he says, the novel's wild whirligig scene of hundreds of in-line skaters darting through San Francisco on a Friday night: "That one, I was happy to be just a researching guy taking notes."

Sally--

This is a review of the book the Book Club is interested in, and I'll be talking somewhat about @ Sat. dinner.

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.

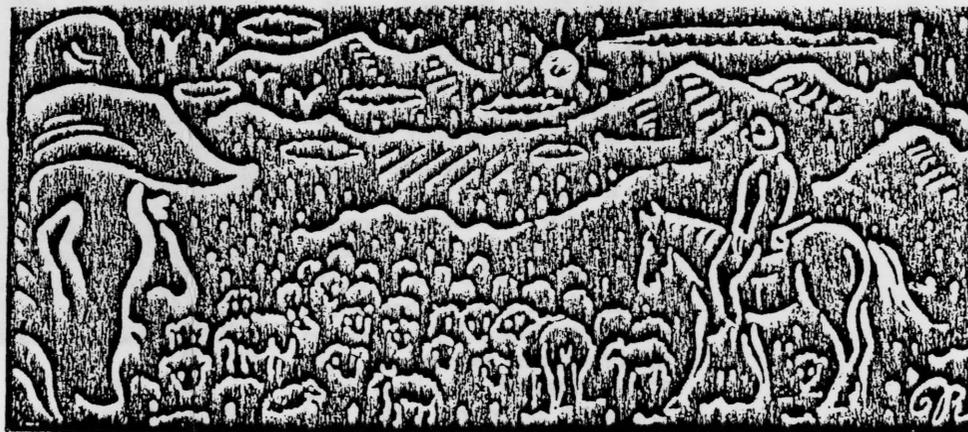


ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN RYAN FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

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

Dancing at the Rascal Fair

Dancing at the Rascal Fair

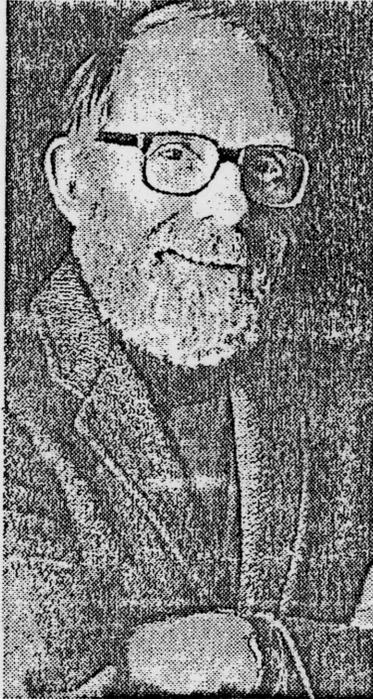
Continued from page 1

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 Shakespearean 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 explores, 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. ■

News from

SCRIBNER

An Imprint of Simon & Schuster

1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, New York 10020

Patricia R. Elsemann, Vice President & Director of Publicity

tel: (212) 632-4945 fax: (212) 632-4957

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A VIACOM COMPANY

MOUNTAIN TIME

By Ivan Doig

Publication Date: August 4, 1999

Price: \$25.00/ 320 pages

ISBN: 0-684-83295-X

Contact: Jennifer Swihart

Phone: (212) 632-4951

Fax: (212) 632-4957

Advanced Praise for:

Mountain Time

“Infused with his knowledge and appreciation for Western landscapes, Ivan Doig’s novels are a finger on the pulse of the people who try to reconcile their love of open spaces with the demands of modern life.... [Doig] excels in lively dialogue and in grasping the nuances of male-female relationships.”

--Publishers Weekly

Mountain Time

A novel by

Ivan Doig

In his latest novel, *MOUNTAIN TIME* (Scribner; August '99), critically acclaimed author Ivan Doig writes the compelling story of a man who must uncover the secrets of his father's past before he can move forward with his own life. Set in Seattle, Montana and Alaska, *MOUNTAIN TIME* poignantly explores the complexities of family ties and man's tenuous bond with nature.

At 50, Mitch Rozier is floundering. His career as an environmental journalist is in a tailspin; he's estranged from his children; his relationship with his feisty, outdoorsy girlfriend, Lexa McCaskill, has come to an ominous standstill; and his cantankerous father, Lyle, is more demanding than ever.

When summoned home to discuss what he expects to be just another one of his father's get-rich-quick schemes--to sell the family land to a gravel company-- Mitch is shocked to discover that the "hard-as-nails" old man is dying of leukemia and for the first time needs his help. With no alternative, Mitch moves back to his childhood home to ease Lyle's last days and hopefully gain some insight into his father's life before it is too late.

Lexa, accompanied by her sultry red-headed sister who has just returned from a year-long photographic expedition around the world, follows Mitch to Montana.

There, in a cluttered old house, Lyle's illness and death unleash a flood of troubling memories and unpleasant surprises. Even his father's dying wish seems intended to aggravate Mitch and he is unable to shake the anger and confusion his father leaves behind. Tensions between Mitch and Lexa and between Lexa and Mariah come to a head when they set out on a hike in the mountains to scatter Lyle's ashes. It is a journey that will change all of their lives forever and test the true strength of their love for one another.

With the vivid descriptions of landscape for which he is celebrated, Doig expertly renders the natural beauty of the land. His universal themes of family conflict and the need to understand prior generations will resonate with all readers. **MOUNTAIN TIME** cements Ivan Doig's standing as one of the greatest writers of the American West.

About the author:

Ivan Doig's works include *This House of Sky*, about his upbringing in a family of Montana sheep ranchers; his "Montana Trilogy": *English Creek*, *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, *Ride with me Mariah Montana*; and, most recently, *Bucking the Sun*. He lives in Seattle with his wife Carol.

Simon & Schuster, the publishing operation of Viacom, Inc., is a global leader in the field of general interest publishing, dedicated to providing the best in fiction and nonfiction for consumers of all ages, across all printed and multi-media formats. Its divisions include Simon & Schuster Trade Publishing, Pocket Books, Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, Simon & Schuster New Media, Simon & Schuster Online, Simon & Schuster U.K., and Simon & Schuster Australia. For more information about Simon & Schuster, visit our website at <http://www.simonsays.com>



S C R I B N E R

Simon & Schuster Consumer Group
1230 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10020

**About the Author
and
*Mountain Time***

"Ivan Doig has been, from *This House of the Sky*, his first grand entry into literature, one of the great American voices, full of grace, abounding in humanity, easeful in narration, hypnotic in pace, grand in range," says his international contemporary Thomas Kenneally of Australia, author of *Schindler's List*. Doig, much honored for his portrayals of the American past, now finds that his latest novel, *Mountain Time*, is coinciding with headlines about a struggle over one of the country's last great natural areas.

"The Rocky Mountain Front is a remarkably intact ecological centerpiece of this continent," Doig explains from his personal and research background along the chain of peaks and escarpments that rise from the plains of Northern Montana to the Continental Divide. (Described by the *Washington Post* as having "the iron of purpose of an ex-ranch hand who has earned his Ph.D. in history," Doig worked ranch jobs and herded sheep with his family along the Front before embarking on degrees at Northwestern University and the University of Washington.) "I had no idea three years ago, when I thought up a generational tussle over the question of oil and gas leases there as part of the plot of this book, that I'd be reaching headlines.

While he was finishing *Mountain Time*, Lewis and Clark National Forest Supervisor Gloria Flora made the long-argued-over decision to ban oil and gas leasing along the Rocky Mountain Front. Since then, the chief of the U.S. Forest Service has added a two-year moratorium on mining claims in the area. Doig applauds both actions: "To put it mildly, oil and gas leases and mining claims along the edge of the Front would be equivalent to scissor attacks on a magnificent tapestry of nature."

Mountain Time, a novel of the Baby Boom generation he describes as "jelly-sandwiched between grown children who've gone their own way and aging parents who are losing control of their lives," attempts to give contemporary voice to universal dilemmas: Can we go home again? *Dare* we? How can we live and love in the present when faced with obligations from the past?

"It simply felt to me like a book where it's all there waiting," says Doig of this closely observed work of fiction set in Seattle, San Francisco, Alaska, and the Rocky Mountain Front. "My own concerns about the land and its people, that dreaded but strengthening ordeal of coming to the aid of a parent near the end of life, my fascination with the mammoth behavioral bulge caused by the Baby Boomers—I was born just far enough ahead of them (1939) to tag along with their generation and yet not quite be of it—it seemed to me time to write about the generation that was shaped by the Sixties meeting its time of reckoning." Certain exploits of his characters—the small-plane flight along the Alaska pipeline and into the remote Brooks Range; a backpacking trip into Montana's Bob Marshall Wilderness Area made memorable by muddy pawprints of a grizzly bear on a camping tent—were based on experiences by Doig and his wife Carol, but not, he says, the novel's wild whirligig scene of hundreds of in-line skaters darting through San Francisco on a Friday night: "That one, I was happy to be just a researching guy taking notes."

have been recently orphaned and, according to their guardian's decree, are to be separated—Margaret to go to her aunt in Fredericton and Johnny to be sent to his uncle in England. However, the children make their own plans and the story evolves around that.”

* * *

DOIG, Ivan 1939-

PERSONAL: Born June 27, 1939, in White Sulphur Springs, MT; son of Charles Campbell (a ranch worker) and Berneta (Ringer) Doig; married Carol Muller (a professor), April 17, 1965. **Education:** Northwestern University, B.S., 1961, M.S., 1962; University of Washington, Seattle, Ph.D., 1969. **Avocational interests:** Reading, hiking.

ADDRESSES: Home—17021 10th Ave. N.W., Seattle, WA 98177.

CAREER: Writer. Lindsay-Schaub Newspapers, Decatur, IL, editorial writer, 1963-64; Rotarian, Evanston, IL, assistant editor, 1964-66; freelance writer, 1969-78. **Military service:** U.S. Air Force Reserve, 1962-68; became sergeant.

MEMBER: Authors Guild, Authors League of America, PEN.

AWARDS, HONORS: National Book Award nomination and Christopher Award, both 1979, both for *This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind*; Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award for Literary Excellence, 1979, 1980, 1982, 1984, 1987, and 1993; National Endowment for the Arts fellowship, 1985; D.Lit., Montana State University, 1984, and Lewis and Clark College, 1987. Western Heritage Award for best western novel, 1985, for *English Creek*; Evans Biography Award, 1993, for *Heart Earth*; Western Literature Association Distinguished Achievement Award, 1989.

WRITINGS:

(With wife, Carol M. Doig) *News: A Consumer's Guide*, Prentice-Hall (Englewood Cliffs, NJ), 1972.

The Streets We Have Come Down (textbook), Hayden (Rochelle Park, NJ), 1975.

Utopian America: Dreams and Realities, Hayden, 1976.

Early Forestry Research, U.S. Forestry Service (Washington), 1976.

This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind (memoir), Harcourt (San Diego, CA), 1978.

Winter Brothers: A Season at the Edge of America (nonfiction), Harcourt, 1980.

The Sea Runners (novel), Atheneum (New York City), 1982.

(With Duncan Kelso) *Inside This House of Sky*, Atheneum, 1983.

English Creek (first novel in McCaskill family trilogy), Atheneum, 1984.

Dancing at the Rascal Fair (second novel in McCaskill family trilogy), Atheneum, 1987.

Ride with Me, Mariah Montana (final novel in McCaskill family trilogy), Atheneum, 1990.

Heart Earth, Atheneum, 1993.

Contributor to periodicals, including *Modern Maturity*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, and *Writer's Digest*.

WORK IN PROGRESS: A novel “about a Depression-era family at work on the biggest earthen dam in the world, and their encounters with love, mystery, engineering, prostitution, and communism.”

SIDELIGHTS: “Ivan Doig doesn't exactly own the Pacific Northwest,” notes James Kaufmann in the *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, “but the loving and lively ways he describes it mark him as a regional writer in the absolute best sense of the word.” Indeed, Doig has integrated his knowledge of this area of the United States into a number of well-known nonfiction books and novels, including *This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind*, *Winter Brothers: A Season on the Edge of America*, *Heart Earth*, and *English Creek*, *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, and *Ride with Me, Mariah Montana*, Doig's fictional trilogy.

Of This House of Sky—a memoir that describes the harsh but rewarding life of the author's forebears, who settled in the mining towns of western Montana—*Washington Post* critic Curt Suplee says, “This is no country for tennis-shoe ecologists or Snail Darter evangelists—in the uneasy lee of the great mountains, amid the heartless rocky sprawl, nature is not a friend, but an omnipotent and endlessly inventive adversary, and a daily measure of courage is needful as water.” Remarking that the memoir format in general “is notorious for snaring even gifted writers in thickets of anecdote and sentiment,” *Time's* Frank Trippet finds that Doig “avoids such traps. Exercising a talent at once robust and sensitive, he redeems the promise of [his] first fetching sentences.” The author, Trippet concludes, “lifts what might have been marginally engaging reminiscence into an engrossing and moving recovery of an obscure human struggle. There is defeat and triumph here, grief and joy, nobility and meanness, all arising from commonplace events, episodes and locales.”

Winter Brothers is a nonfiction work with an unusual premise: Doig recreated the journey of a nineteenth-century traveller named James Gilchrist Swan, who left a wife and children in antebellum Boston to explore the Pacific Northwest. Doig, who studied Swan's extensive diaries, intersperses passages of Swan's writing with his own comments on the trip he took with his wife. “Sometimes the exercise is forced; sometimes it pushes [the author]

into overwriting," states Raymond A. Sokolov in the *New York Times Book Review*. "But the occasional patches of dullness or lushness should deter no one from devouring this gorgeous tribute to a man and a region unjustly neglected heretofore. The reader has the pleasure of encountering two contrasting styles and two angles of view, both infused with the fresh air and spirit of the Northwest."

Doig returns to the subject of his forebears with *Heart Earth*, a memoir inspired by a collection of his mother's letters and a "masterful companion to *This House of Sky*," according to John Marshall of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. Brad Knickerbocker of the *Christian Science Monitor* also has high praise for Doig's memoir, noting that though the book closes with the death of Berneta Doig when the author was six the "poignancy and sadness are not overwhelming, and one is left remembering the humor and family closeness (quarrels as well as affection), the strength of character and essential hopefulness that have come to be Doig trademarks." Novelist Michael Dorris, writing in the *Los Angeles Times*, praises Doig's lyricism, particularly as he describes his native Montana, but notes also that in the end *Heart Earth* is "a love story, the gift of a child to a parent who wouldn't stay forgotten."

Internal conflict among members of the McCaskill family and the coming-of-age of its younger son in 1939 form the basis for *English Creek*, a novel that "achieves a flawless weld of fact and fiction," according to Carol Van Strum in a *USA Today* article. As in his previous nonfiction, Doig describes the Pacific region of years past, evoking, as Van Strum says, "the sturdy, generous spirit of an era when survival—of child and adult—demanded quick wits, hard work and humor enough to fuel both." *English Creek* "is old-fashioned in the best sense of the word," notes *Christian Science Monitor* critic James Kaufmann. "Doig is concerned with telling a story that entertains, and he is also concerned with the novel's moral and ethical implications. He mounts no soapbox, however."

To *Newsday* reviewer Wendy Smith, Doig's novel "is neither nostalgic nor simple: It's too concrete and detailed in its evocation of the past, too tough-minded in its evaluation of human behavior for that. There are no truly evil characters, but there are weak ones, and Doig makes it clear that the West is cruel to those who can't stand up to its demands." Concluding that *English Creek* is "firmly anchored in the American West," Smith adds that the book "nonetheless resembles a 19th Century European novel in its leisurely pace, measured tone and focus on understanding rather than action. In supple, muscular prose as terse and yet redolent with meaning as the speech of Montana, [Doig] grapples with universal issues of character and morality."

The sequel to *English Creek*, *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, occurs a generation earlier and features two Scotchmen, Rob Barclay and Angus McCaskell, who homestead in Montana. Richard Critchfield of the *Washington Post Book World* praises Doig's ability to interweave history and fiction and for his skills with dialogue, noting that "his people come alive when they talk" whether they are nineteenth Century Scotchmen speaking English with Biblical cadences or contemporary, rural Americans. Writing in the *Seattle Times*, Michael Dorris calls this "prequel" to *English Creek* a "fine work" in which "every word, every surprise, every resolution rings true."

In the conclusion of the trilogy, *Ride with Me, Mariah Montana*, Jick McCaskell, the adolescent protagonist of *English Creek*, is now a crusty, retired rancher who narrates the goings-on as he squires his daughter, Moriah, and her ex-husband around Montana to report on the state of the state for the *Missoula Montanian*. "Feeling the reins of present and future slip from his hands," writes Susan Dodd of the *Washington Post Book World*, "Jick has grown a little irritable, loss around him everywhere he looks." It's Jick's voice, Dodd suggests, "cranky, confused, honest, stubborn and lovelorn" that "orchestrates the journey" and "makes the whole novel sing." Even so, says Burr Snider in the *San Francisco Examiner*, "the real star of this book is Montana," and Doig "takes you right into its big troubled heart."

"I am Montana-born and now live within half a mile of Puget Sound," the author told *CA*. "Inevitably, or so it seems to me, my books are the result of those popular pulls of the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific. Whichever the setting, in both my fiction and nonfiction I try to work two stubborn substances, research and craft, into becoming the hardest alloy of all—a good story. And that to me is the ultimate 'region,' the true home, for a writer. Specific geographies, but galaxies of imaginative expression—we've seen them both exist in William Faulkner's postage-stamp size Yoknapatawpha County, and in Gabriel Garcia-Marquez' nowhere village of Macondo dreaming in its hundred years of solitude. It is my utter belief that writers of caliber can ground their work in specific land and lingo and yet be writing of that larger country: life."

BIOGRAPHICAL/CRITICAL SOURCES:

BOOKS

- Bredahl, A. Carl. *New Ground: Western American Narrative and the Literary Canon*, University of North Carolina Press (Chapel Hill), 1989.
- Doig, Ivan, *This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind*, Harcourt, 1978.
- Doig, Ivan, *Winter Brothers: A Season at the Edge of America*, Harcourt, 1980.
- Doig, Ivan, *Heart Earth*, Atheneum, 1993.

- Martin, Russell, *Writers of the Purple Sage*, Viking (New York), 1984.
- Morris, Gregory L., *Talking Up a Storm: Voices of the New West*, University of Nebraska Press (Lincoln, NE), 1994.
- O'Connell, Nicholas, *At the Field's End: Interviews with 20 Pacific Northwest Writers*, Madrona Press (Austin, TX), 1987.
- Simpson, Elizabeth, *Earthlight, Wordfire: The Work of Ivan Doig*, University of Idaho Press (Moscow, ID), 1992.

PERIODICALS

- Aspen Times* (CO), October 2-3, 1993.
- Bloomsbury Review*, July/August, 1991.
- Boston Globe*, October 10, 1982.
- Bozeman Daily Chronicle* (MT), September 12, 1993.
- Chicago Tribune*, September 17, 1978; December 10, 1987.
- Christian Science Monitor*, December 24, 1984; November 20, 1990; February 12, 1992; September 16, 1993.
- Eugene (OR) Register-Guard*, October 3, 1993.
- Kirkus Reviews*, July 1, 1993.
- Los Angeles Times*, September 13, 1978; October 20, 1980; August 29, 1993.
- Los Angeles Times Book Review*, December 9, 1984; October 18, 1987; February 12, 1992.
- Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, winter, 1985.
- Newsday* (NY), November 11, 1984.
- New Yorker*, January 21, 1985.
- New York Times Book Review*, January 7, 1979; January 11, 1981; October 3, 1982; November 1, 1987; September 5, 1993.
- Northwestern Perspective*, winter, 1992.
- Ogden Standard-Examiner* (UT), May 30, 1993.
- Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, October, 1987.
- Publishers Weekly*, September 18, 1987; July 5, 1993.
- Salt Lake Tribune*, August 15, 1993.
- San Francisco Examiner*, November 4, 1990.
- Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, October 1, 1978; September 30, 1993.
- Seattle Times*, September 13, 1987.
- Time*, September 11, 1978.
- Tribune Books* (Chicago), August 30, 1987; September 26, 1993.
- USA Today*, October 26, 1984.
- Washington Post*, December 11, 1978; January 6, 1981; November 28, 1987.
- Washington Post Book World*, October 17, 1982; October 18, 1987; September 30, 1990; January 19, 1992.
- Western American Literature*, winter, 1980; August, 1981; February, 1986.
- Western Historical Quarterly*, April, 1980.

DONALDS, Gordon

See SHIRREFFS, Gordon D(onald)

* * *

DONLEAVY, J(ames) P(atrick) 1926-

PERSONAL: Born April 23, 1926, in Brooklyn, NY; became Irish citizen, 1967; married Valerie Heron (divorced); married Mary Wilson Price, 1970 (divorced); children: (first marriage) Philip, Karen; (second marriage) Rebecca Wallis, Rory. **Education:** Attended Trinity College, Dublin.

ADDRESSES: Home and office—Levington Park, Mullingar, County Westmeath, Ireland.

CAREER: Writer and playwright. Founder with son Philip Donleavy and producer Robert Mitchell of De Alfonso Tennis Association for the Promotion of the Superlative Game of Eccentric Champions. **Military service:** U.S. Navy, served in World War II.

AWARDS, HONORS: Most Promising Playwright Award, *Evening Standard*, 1960, for *Fairy Tales of New York*; Brandeis University Creative Arts Award, 1961-62, for two plays, *The Ginger Man* and *Fairy Tales of New York*; citation from National Institute and American Academy of Arts and Letters, 1975; American Academy of Arts and Letters grantee, 1975; Worldfest Houston Gold Award, 1992; Cine Golden Eagle Award for writer and narrator, 1993.

WRITINGS:

FICTION

- The Ginger Man* (novel; also see below), Olympia Press (Paris), 1955, published with introduction by Arland Ussher, Spearman (London), 1956, Obolensky (New York City), 1958, complete and unexpurgated edition, Delacorte (New York City), 1965.
- A Singular Man* (novel), Little, Brown (Boston), 1963.
- Meet My Maker the Mad Molecule* (short stories; also see below), Little, Brown, 1964, reprinted, Penguin (New York City), 1981.
- The Saddest Summer of Samuel S* (novel; also see below), Delacorte/Seymour Lawrence (New York City), 1966.
- The Beastly Beatitudes of Balthazar B* (novel), Delacorte/Seymour Lawrence, 1968.
- The Onion Eaters* (novel), Delacorte, 1971, reprinted, Penguin/Eyre & Spottiswoode (Andover, England), 1986.
- A Fairy Tale of New York* (novel; also see below), Delacorte/Seymour Lawrence, 1973.

Schlager Group, Inc.
2501 Oak Lawn Ave.
Ste. 440
Dallas, TX 75219
United States
Phone: 214-347-9469
Fax: 214-347-9469

June 6, 2009

Mr. Ivan Doig
c/o Author Mail
Houghton Mifflin Company, Trade Division
Adult Editorial, 8th Floor; 222 Berkeley Street
Boston, MA 02116-3764

Dear Mr. Doig:

An entry has been prepared about you for inclusion in a forthcoming volume of Contemporary Authors New Revision (CANR), a reference series that provides information on approximately 100,000 writers in a wide range of media, including fiction, nonfiction, poetry, journalism, drama, and screenwriting. CANR is published by Thomson Gale, a leading provider in meeting the world's information and education needs. **There is absolutely no charge or obligation of any kind for listings in CANR**, nor is this letter a solicitation. For more information regarding the series, please visit www.gale.com.

As a courtesy, we forward to the author his/her sketch prior to publication. We invite you to take this opportunity to review the enclosed preliminary copy for accuracy. If any facts are incorrect, please let us know. Likewise, if any important information is missing, please alert us to that fact.

The sketches include a **personal** section, a **career** section, a list of **works**, and a **sidelights** section. The "Sidelights" section may include information on reviews of your work. At the end of this section, you can speak directly to our readers about such matters as your background, career, and life as a writer. For more information about this section, please see the second page of this letter.

The information you provide will be published online as well as in print, and will be considered part of the Contemporary Authors database and distribution channels. Any comments about the Contemporary Authors series provided by authors may be used in promoting Gale Group products and databases.

Please review the manuscript and email me about any necessary changes at author@schlagergroup.com by **June 12, 2009** if possible. Even if no changes are necessary, please let me know that as well. You may also fax or phone the information to us at (214) 347-9469. Alternatively, our mailing address is: *Schlager Group, 2501 Oak Lawn Ave., Ste. 440, Dallas, TX 75219*. While we are unfortunately unable to provide a complimentary copy of the volume your entry appears in, we do provide a forty percent author discount should you wish to purchase one. To place an order, please email galeord@thomson.com, call 1-800-877-GALE, or mail a written request to: *Contemporary Authors, Gale Group, 27500 Drake Rd., Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535, USA*.

Thank you for your time and effort in helping us make your sketch as complete and accurate as possible.

Cordially,

LaToya Stevenson
Assistant Editor, Schlager Group
On behalf of Gale Group

Please feel free to answer any or all of the following questions for use in the "Sidelights" section of your CA sketch, though you are certainly not limited to these questions only.

- What first got you interested in writing?
- Who or what particularly influences your work?
- Describe your writing process.
- What is the most surprising thing you have learned as a writer?
- Which of your books is your favorite and why?

[CANR 191]

2500
250
250
Dallas, TX 75219
United States
Phone: 214-347-9489
Fax: 214-347-9489

Contemporary Authors

An entry has been prepared about you for inclusion in a forthcoming volume of Contemporary Authors New Revision (CANR), a reference series that provides information on approximately 100,000 writers in a wide range of media, including fiction, nonfiction, poetry, journalism, drama, and screenwriting. CANR is published by Thomson Gale, a leading provider in meeting the world's information and education needs. There is absolutely no charge or obligation of any kind for listings in CANR, nor is there a solicitation. For more information regarding the series, please visit www.gale.com.

As a courtesy, we forward to the author his/her sketch prior to publication. We invite you to take this opportunity to review the enclosed preliminary copy for accuracy. If any facts are incorrect, please let us know. Likewise, if any important information is missing, please alert us to that fact.

The sketches include a personal section, a career section, a list of works, and a sidelights section. The "Sidelights" section may include information on reviews of your work. At the end of this section, you can speak directly to our readers about such matters as your background, career, and life as a writer. For more information about this section, please see the second page of this letter.

The information you provide will be published online as well as in print, and will be considered part of the Contemporary Authors database and distribution channels. Any comments about the Contemporary Authors series provided by authors may be used in promoting Gale Group products and databases.

Please review the manuscript and email me about any necessary changes at authorfeedback@gale.com by June 15, 2009 if possible. Even if no changes are necessary, please let me know first as well. You may also fax or phone the information to us at (214) 347-9489. Alternatively, our mailing address is: Gale Group, 2501 Oak Lawn Ave., Ste. 440, Dallas, TX 75219. While we are unfortunately unable to provide a complimentary copy of the volume your entry appears in, we do provide a forty percent author discount should you wish to purchase one. To place an order, please email orders@gale.com, call 1-800-877-GALE, or mail a written request to: Contemporary Authors, Gale Group, 27500 Drake Rd., Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3235, USA.

Thank you for your time and effort in helping us make your sketch as complete and accurate as possible.

Cordially,

Latoya Stevenson
Assistant Editor, Schlager Group
On behalf of Gale Group

DOIG, Ivan 1939-

PERSONAL: Born June 27, 1939, in White Sulphur Springs, MT; son of Charles Campbell (a ranch worker) and Berneta (a ranch cook) Doig; married Carol Dean Muller (an academic), April 17, 1965. Nationality: American Education: Northwestern University, B.J., 1961, M.S., 1962; University of Washington, Seattle, Ph.D., 1969. Hobbies and other interests: Reading, hiking, gardening.

ADDRESSES: Home--Seattle, WA. Office--Darhansoff, Verrill & Feldman, 236 W. 26th St., Ste. 802, New York, NY 10001.

CAREER: Writer and journalist. Lindsay-Schaub Newspapers, Decatur, IL, editorial writer, 1963-64; Rotarian, Evanston, IL, assistant editor, 1964-66; freelance journalist and novelist, 1969--. Also worked as a ranch hand.

MEMBER: Authors Guild, Authors League of America, PEN, Nature Conservancy, Western History Association.

AWARDS, HONORS: National Book Award finalist, National Book Foundation, and winner of Christopher Award, both 1979, for *This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind*; Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award for Literary Excellence, 1979, 1981, 1983, 1985, 1988, and 1994; Governor's Writers Day awards, 1979, 1981, 1985, 1988, 1996; D.Litt., Montana State University, 1984, and Lewis and Clark College, 1987; National Endowment for the Arts fellowship, 1985; Western Heritage Award, best western novel, National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum, 1985, for *English Creek*; distinguished achievement award, Western Literature Association, 1989; Evans Biography Award, Utah State University, 1993, for *Heart Earth*; Pacific Northwest Writers Association Achievement Award, 2002; Wallace Stegner Award, Center of the American West, University of Colorado at Boulder, 2007, for sustained contribution to the cultural identity of the American West.

WRITINGS:

NONFICTION

(With wife, Carol M. Doig) *News: A Consumer's Guide*, Prentice-Hall (Englewood Cliffs, NJ), 1972.

The Streets We Have Come Down (textbook), Hayden (Rochelle Park, NJ), 1975.

(Editor) *Utopian America: Dreams and Realities*, Hayden (Rochelle Park, NJ), 1976.

Early Forestry Research: A History of the Pacific Northwest Forest & Range Experiment Station, 1925-1975, U.S. Forestry Service (Washington, DC), 1976.

This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind (memoir), Harcourt (New York, NY), 1978.

Winter Brothers: A Season at the Edge of America, Harcourt (New York, NY), 1980.

(With Duncan Kelso) *Inside This House of Sky*, Atheneum (New York, NY), 1983.

Heart Earth (memoir), Atheneum (New York, NY), 1993.

"McCASKILL TRILOGY" OF NOVELS

English Creek, Atheneum (New York, NY), 1984.

Dancing at the Rascal Fair, Atheneum (New York, NY), 1987.

Ride with Me, Mariah Montana, Atheneum (New York, NY), 1990.

OTHER NOVELS

The Sea Runners, Atheneum (New York, NY), 1982, Harcourt (New York, NY), 2006.

Bucking the Sun, Simon & Schuster (New York, NY), 1996.

Mountain Time, Scribner (New York, NY), 1999.

Prairie Nocturne, Scribner (New York, NY), 2003.

The Whistling Season, Harcourt (New York, NY), 2006.

The Eleventh Man, Harcourt (New York, NY), 2008.

Contributor to periodicals, including Modern Maturity, New York Times, Los Angeles Times Book Review, and Writer's Digest.

SIDELIGHTS:

Ivan Doig has integrated his knowledge and love of the Pacific Northwest region of the United States into a number of well-known books, including the memoir *This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind*, *Winter Brothers: A Season at the Edge of America*, and the novel *Bucking the Sun*. In addition, *English Creek*, *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, and *Ride with Me*, *Mariah Montana* comprise a trilogy of novels that also take place in the northwestern United States.

This House of Sky is a memoir that describes the harsh but rewarding life of the author's forebears, settlers in the mining towns of western Montana. Remarking that the memoir format in general "is notorious for snaring even gifted writers in thickets of anecdote and sentiment," *Time* reviewer Frank Trippet found that Doig "avoids such traps. Exercising a talent at once robust and sensitive, he redeems the promise of [his] first fetching sentences." The author, Trippet concluded, "lifts what might have been marginally engaging reminiscence into an engrossing and moving recovery of an obscure human struggle. There is defeat and triumph here, grief and joy, nobility and meanness, all arising from commonplace events, episodes and locales."

Carl Bredahl, writing in *World and I*, commented that "recent scholarship … rejects monomyth" as presented in much Western genre fiction. According to the critic, "the clean westerns of Zane Grey, Owen Western, or Louis L'Amour … are of narrowly limited interest to anyone attracted to the diversity of western/American experience. Western writing is no longer only the province of names like Willa Cather and Walter Van Tilburg Clark." Bredahl included Doig among such contemporary Western chroniclers, which "includes such native Americans as Wendy Rose, Scott Momaday, Leslie Silko, and Louise Erdrich, and Chicano writers including Rudolfo Anaya, Jose Villarreal, and Raymond Barrio." Each

writer brings to the literary table a distinct "tribal culture" or other "contextual experience" of the region.

Doig returns to the world of his forebears in *Heart Earth*, a memoir inspired by a collection of his mother's letters that serves as a "masterful companion to *This House of Sky*," according to John Marshall, writing in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. Brad Knickerbocker, in a review for the *Christian Science Monitor* also recommended this memoir, noting that, though the book closes with the death of Berneta Doig when the author was age six, the "poignancy and sadness are not overwhelming, and one is left remembering the humor and family closeness … the strength of character and essential hopefulness that have come to be Doig trademarks." Michael Dorris, writing in the *Los Angeles Times*, made special note of Doig's lyricism, particularly in his descriptions of his native Montana, but noted also that in the end *Heart Earth* is "a love story, the gift of a child to a parent who wouldn't stay forgotten."

Winter Brothers is a nonfiction work with an unusual premise: Doig recreates the journey of nineteenth-century traveler James Gilchrist Swan, who left his wife and children in antebellum Boston to explore the Pacific Northwest. Doig, who studied Swan's extensive diaries, intersperses passages of Swan's own writing with his own comments on a trip that Doig took with his wife. "Sometimes the exercise is forced; sometimes it pushes [the author] into overwriting," observed Raymond A. Sokolov in the *New York Times Book Review*. "But the occasional patches of dullness or lushness should deter no one from devouring this gorgeous tribute to a man and a region unjustly neglected heretofore. The reader has the pleasure of encountering two contrasting styles and two angles of view, both infused with the fresh air and spirit of the Northwest."

In *Bucking the Sun* Doig mixes fact and fiction as he chronicles the construction of the Fort Peck Dam, an enormous earthmoving project begun under the auspices of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal to benefit the economy of northern Montana during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Fort Peck became the largest earth-fill dam in the world upon its completion, and the process of its construction--an "absolutely stunning premise for a novel," according to *Washington Post Book World* reviewer David Laskin--is recounted by Doig through its effect upon an independent-minded clan of recent Scots immigrants. The Duffs first attempted to make a living as farmers, but when the dam project put their acreage under water, family members were compelled to join the 10,000-member construction crew. Causing a rift in the family is the fact that Hugh Duff's son, Owen, who left home to get a college degree, has returned as one of the leading engineers on the project while his father serves on a work crew under him. Calling *Bucking the Sun* "a tour de force of historical fiction," Laskin added that the novel "is one of those books that takes you over as you read it, invading your daydreams…. Doig writes with absolute, perfect-pitch authority on dams, Duffs, the Depression, and the feel of life under Montana's fabled sky." While *Los Angeles Times Book Review* contributor Judith Freeman noted that the novel did not include "a glimpse of the soul, no matter how tormented or sane," Timothy Foote wrote in the *New York Times Book Review* that Doig "artfully seasons the history lesson by serving it up with an intricate case of murder" that "helps with the occasional case of

longueurs of what is otherwise a wide-screen, Depression-era narrative" largely devoted to dam building.

Internal conflict among members of a close-knit family and the coming of age of its younger son in 1939 form the basis for Doig's novel *English Creek*, the first part of the "McCaskill Family" trilogy and a book that "achieves a flawless weld of fact and fiction," according to Carol Van Strum in *USA Today*. As in his previous nonfiction, Doig describes the Pacific region of years past, evoking, according to Van Strum, "the sturdy, generous spirit of an era when survival--of child and adult--demanded quick wits, hard work and humor enough to fuel both." *English Creek* "is old-fashioned in the best sense of the word," noted *Christian Science Monitor* critic James Kaufmann, adding that, while "Doig is concerned with telling a story that entertains, … he is also concerned with the novel's moral and ethical implications."

To *Newsday* reviewer Wendy Smith, *English Creek* "is neither nostalgic nor simple: It's too concrete and detailed in its evocation of the past, too tough-minded in its evaluation of human behavior for that. There are no truly evil characters, but there are weak ones, and Doig makes it clear that the West is cruel to those who can't stand up to its demands." Noting that the novel is "firmly anchored in the American West," Smith added that *English Creek* "nonetheless resembles a nineteenth-century European novel in its leisurely pace, measured tone and focus on understanding rather than action. In supple, muscular prose as terse and yet redolent with meaning as the speech of Montana, [Doig] grapples with universal issues of character and morality."

The second installment in the "McCaskill Family" saga, *Dancing at the Rascal Fair* takes place a generation prior to *English Creek* and features two Scots, Rob Barclay and Angus McCaskill, who homestead in Montana. Richard Critchfield, in the *Washington Post Book World*, noted Doig's ability to interweave history and fiction and his creation of dialogue, noting that his characters "come alive when they talk," whether they are nineteenth-century Scots speaking English with Biblical cadences or contemporary rural Americans.

In *Ride with Me*, Mariah Montana Jick McCaskill, the adolescent protagonist of *English Creek*, is now a crusty, retired rancher who narrates the goings-on as he squires his daughter Mariah and Mariah's ex-husband around Montana to report on the state of the state for the *Missoula Montanian*. "Feeling the reins of present and future slip from his hands," wrote Susan Dodd in the *Washington Post Book World*, "Jick has grown a little irritable." It is Jick's voice, Dodd suggested, "cranky, confused, honest, stubborn and lovelorn," that "orchestrates the journey" and "makes the whole novel sing." Even so, wrote Burr Snider in the *San Francisco Examiner*, "the real star of this book is Montana," and Doig "takes you right into its big troubled heart."

Another novel, *Mountain Time* is set in Seattle at the end of the twentieth century. The story revolves around Mitch Rozier, a divorced Montana native in his fifties working as an environmental news columnist. His love interest is divorcee Lexa McCaskill, also from Montana, who caters parties for the software giants of Seattle. Mitch is summoned by

his sick father to return home to Montana where tensions between the two--as well as between Lexa and her sister Mariah--come to a head. Critics were generally positive in their assessment of the novel. Though Charlotte L. Glover in *Library Journal* found *Mountain Time* to be less than Doig's best, she nonetheless concluded that it is "essential reading for fans of his … trilogy." A *Publishers Weekly* contributor cited among the "considerable strengths" of the novel the author's "lyrical writing about scenery" and his immersion in local history. "But most importantly," the reviewer added, "this is an honest and resonant portrait of idealists facing middle age and learning to deal with past issues that shadow their lives." Bill Ott commented in *Booklist*: "Doig lets his penchant for poetic prose get the best of him on occasion, but fortunately, the grittiness of his characters more than offsets the florid authorial voice. A worthy addition to Doig's impressive saga of the twentieth-century West."

In *Prairie Nocturne* Doig rejoins several characters from *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*. Susan Duff, a schoolgirl in the first novel, is now in her forties and contentedly living alone in Helena and giving voice lessons after her affair with gubernatorial candidate Wes Williamson. Williamson brings his black chauffeur, Monty Rathbun, to Susan for voice training. Her willingness to take on a black student in the racially charged early twentieth century prompts the Ku Klux Klan to vandalize the Duff homestead. Monty flees to Harlem, in New York City, where he becomes an overnight success, singing spirituals on the concert stage, and Susan and Wes follow him there. Bill Ott commented in *Booklist* that the novel contains "a vast amount of fascinating historical material" but added: "The heart of the matter … is the three-sided relationship among Susan, Wes, and Monty…. Doig tightens the reins on his sometimes mannered prose and constructs a subtle, highly textured love story, nicely balancing period detail and well-modulated emotion." A *Kirkus Reviews* contributor wrote that Doig's "marvelously idiosyncratic sentences have the bite of mountain air and the springy rhythms of mountain folks' speech, but they're also more disciplined and less gnarled than in some past work." *Seattle Times* contributor Tim McNulty added that in *Prairie Nocturne* Doig "moves well beyond the romanticism of prairie homesteading and takes a level-eyed look at its costs. His characters … are saddled with the … brutality of their parents' lives." McNulty added, "All these events dramatize the tide of racism, genocide and conquest that accompanied European settlement of the West. This dark side of our history … haunts the lives of these characters." Speaking with Christy Karras for the *Salt Lake Tribune*, Doig commented on the rise of the Ku Klux Klan following World War I and noted that the organization was fueled by "new resentments. It's not just black and white resentment--it's anti-Catholic, anti-immigration, anti-Jewish and, to an extent, anti-urban. The U.S. was losing its rural roots." This frustration is the heart of *Prairie Nocturne*, the author explained.

The Whistling Season continues Doig's saga of Montana history. In the late 1950s, school superintendent Paul Milliron has been told to close the state's remaining one-room schools. The decision causes Paul to reflect on his childhood in one of those schools, in the pivotal year of 1910, when his mother died and a housekeeper came to live with the family. The housekeeper, an unconventional and demanding widow from

Minnesota, and her brother, who soon becomes the new schoolteacher, change thirteen-year-old Paul's life in ways he had not anticipated as the family struggles to eke out a living as "dryland farmers." Signifying the importance of this time is the appearance of Haley's Comet, which the schoolchildren greet with a chorus of harmonicas. Though a writer for Kirkus Reviews commented that the novel was full of "homespun charm" but lacked a satisfying ending, in Booklist Bill Ott observed that Doig "digs the details of his historical moments from the dirt in which they thrived" and concluded that the novel is the author's best since English Creek.

In 2008 Doig published the novel *The Eleventh Man*. In the novel, protagonist Ben Reinking is annoyed at being removed from his pilot training schedule in order to write military propaganda for the Threshold Press War Project about the football team at his former alma mater. Mired in negative memories and falsehoods, Reinking complies. He also begins an affair with the married ace pilot Cass Standish. She is coping with the fact that her gender is being used as an excuse to keep her from the battlefield and with worries about what will happen to her after her husband returns from the Pacific front.

Kirstin Merrihew, reviewing the novel in *Mostly Fiction*, found that, for her at least, the language in the novel "is a two-edged sword." Doig writes with a "poetic streak" that offers "some poignant moments" but it "sometimes bogs down the reader in awkward phrasing." She then wonders if her discomfort may be "less a criticism of Doig's writing style than the vernacular of the day?" Merrihew also noted a rather "schizophrenic tone" in the narrative. "On the one hand," she wrote, "the subject matter couldn't be sterner stuff: the human costs of war" versus a certain amount of irony. Ultimately, Merrihew concluded that "*The Eleventh Man* is a worthy, meaty novel. It isn't without shortcomings, but it deserves to be read for its metaphysical ponderings, for its remarkable reconnection with some facts about World War II that many have forgotten or never yet learned, and for memorable characters."

Alden Mudge, writing in *BookPage*, offered a similar sentiment, noting that "some of that magic derives from the language Doig deploys in telling his tale. He has often used the phrase 'poetry under the prose' to describe the effect he is looking for." Regarding the players in the novel, Mudge commented that "Doig's cast of characters here is large and vivid. And although this a novel of war and football, his women characters--a Russian woman pilot ferrying bombers from Fairbanks to the Soviet Union, for example, or Cass Standish, an American flyer in the WASP (Women Airforce Service Pilots) with whom Ben develops a complicated wartime romance--are among his most interesting characters." Seattle *Post-Intelligencer* book critic John Marshall felt that the brevity of the numerous plot elements makes it difficult "to build much momentum in this long novel. Readers can feel as yo-yo'd as Reinking does." Marshall also commented that the author's choice of Reinking's "grandiose" military assignment "is a rare misstep for Doig, but a crucial one in this novel. It is even more disappointing after the mastery of his previous novel, *The Whistling Season*, one of his best books."

Molly Gloss, reviewing the novel in the Washington Post Book World, found that the novel "vividly evokes a prior time and way of being. It takes a serious view of war and the practitioners of war, and looks hard at the meaning of heroism. And not incidentally, it contains enough loose threads to hint at a sequel, which will be good news to Doig's many loyal readers." Writing in an article in the Boston Globe, David Liss described the novel as "accessible" and "compelling," adding: "It's hard not to read some kind of contemporary analogy into this historical tale about a government's willingness to manipulate truth and lies to further its own ends. On the other hand, such manipulation is fairly universal in times of war, and if there is anything Doig has shown himself adept at over his career, it is accessing the universal through the particular." A contributor writing in Kirkus Reviews called the novel "another fine effort from a veteran writer who knows how to play to his strengths while continuing to challenge himself."

"I am Montana-born and live within half a mile of Puget Sound," Doig once told CA: "Inevitably, or so it seems to me, my books are the result of those popular pulls of the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific. Whichever the setting, in both my fiction and nonfiction I try to work two stubborn substances, research and craft, into becoming the hardest alloy of all--a good story. And that to me is the ultimate 'region,' the true home, for a writer. Specific geographies, but galaxies of imaginative expression--we've seen them both exist in William Faulkner's postage-stamp-size Yoknapatawpha county, and in Gabriel García-Márquez' nowhere village of Macondo dreaming in its hundred years of solitude. It is my utter belief that writers of caliber can ground their work in specific land and lingo and yet be writing of that larger country: life."

Doig also told CA: "By one of those strokes of luck that was entirely disguised at the time, I happened to attend high school in a western town built on a particularly dreamy boast. 'Aridity is insurance against flood!' trumpeted the turn-of-the-century advertisements for land around Valier, an indeed arid spot on the Montana prairie chosen for a gargantuan irrigation project, a manmade lake three miles long, and the exuberant plat of a town to hold 10,000 people.

"But by the time I put in my four years of school there just after mid-century, Valier had peaked at a population of only a thousand, and having waned to half of that since, it is ending up as a slow-motion ghost town. The irrigation project, however, continues to make the prairies bloom, and that ungainly small-town school, with its sprinkling of idiosyncratic scintillating teachers gave me some roots as a wordsmith who looks back at boom-and-bust places such as Valier. I saw a natural work of fiction (The Whistling Season) waiting there in the story of the pell-mell Montana land rush which drew in people by the boxcar-load. They would pile all their belongings and themselves into Great Northern Railway boxcars in the Midwest and be delivered to sidings on the naked earth of the West, where they would climb off and try to turn themselves into homesteaders. This storyline of dreamers galore is told by a boy narrator who views it all for us through one of the most versatile lenses of the American experience, a one-room school.

"As ever, I strove with this novel, in its eternal concern with the land and the American restlessness on it that is our history, to reach the territory cited by William Carlos Williams: 'The classic is the local fully realized, words marked by a place.'

"Nothing is more current than the past. The small-town and ranching West where I grew up was centered on something that the nation to this day should make its primary priority but no longer does: its schools. In my parents' generation, one-room schools were the pivots of career and social life; my mother and father met at a schoolhouse dance. My own school years saw my family make extraordinary arrangements in order 'for Ivan to go to school.' Against the current grain of politics and budget constraints, *The Whistling Season* presents the passion of its narrator, Paul Milliron, for far-flung public schools that inculcate vitality into their neighborhoods and against 'dormitories on wheels,' the fleets of school busses that 'consolidate' his archipelago of one-room schools out of existence. 'No child left behind?' In *The Whistling Season*, Paul Milliron truly means it."

BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL SOURCES:

BOOKS

- Bredahl, A. Carl, *New Ground: Western American Narrative and the Literary Canon*, University of North Carolina Press (Chapel Hill, NC), 1989.
- Doig, Ivan, *This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind*, Harcourt (New York, NY), 1978.
- Doig, Ivan, *Heart Earth*, Atheneum (New York, NY), 1993.
- Martin, Russell, *Writers of the Purple Sage*, Viking (New York, NY), 1984.
- Meldrum, Barbara Howard, editor, *Old West-New West: Centennial Essays*, University of Idaho Press (Moscow, ID), 1993.
- Morris, Gregory L., *Talking Up a Storm: Voices of the New West*, University of Nebraska Press (Lincoln, NE), 1994.
- O'Connell, Nicholas, *At the Field's End: Interviews with Twenty Pacific Northwest Writers*, Madrona Press (Austin, TX), 1987.
- Simpson, Elizabeth, *Earthlight, Wordfire: The Work of Ivan Doig*, University of Idaho Press (Moscow, ID), 1992.

PERIODICALS

- American Photographer*, February, 1984, Charles McLaughlin, review of *Inside This House of Sky*, p. 73.
- American West*, March-April, 1979, Richard B. Roeder, review of *This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind*, p. 53; March-April, 1981, review of *Winter Brothers: A Season at the Edge of America*, p. 66; January-February, 1984, review of *Inside This House of Sky*, p. 54.
- Booklist*, January 15, 1973, review of *News: A Consumer's Guide*, p. 454; September 1, 1978, review of *This House of Sky*, p. 22; January 1, 1981, review of *Winter Brothers*, p. 612; September 1, 1982, review of *The Sea Runners*, p. 27; October 15, 1984, review of *English Creek*, p. 281; July, 1987, review of *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, p. 1625; September 15, 1990, review of *Ride with Me, Mariah Montana*, p. 99; September 15, 1993, Bill Ott, review of *Heart Earth*, p. 99; October 15, 1994, Donna Seaman, "There Was a River," p. 397; March 15, 1996, Bill Ott, review of *Bucking the*

Sun, p. 1219; June 1, 1999, Bill Ott, review of Mountain Time, p. 1741; August, 2003, Bill Ott, review of Prairie Nocturne, p. 1925; December 15, 2005, Bill Ott, review of The Whistling Season, p. 4; July 1, 2008, Bill Ott, review of The Eleventh Man, p. 5.

Boston Globe, December 19, 2008, David Liss, review of The Eleventh Man.

Christian Century, December 12, 2006, review of The Whistling Season, p. 24.

Christian Science Monitor, October 23, 1978, review of This House of Sky, p. B15; March 9, 1981, James Kaufmann, review of Winter Brothers, p. 13; February 3, 1984, James Kaufmann, review of The Sea Runners, p. B8; December 24, 1984, James Kaufmann, review of English Creek, p. 19; November 20, 1990, Jon Remmerde, review of Ride with Me, Mariah Montana, p. 13; September 16, 1993, Brad Knickerbocker, review of Heart Earth, p. 13; January 26, 1995, Kim Campbell, review of Heart Earth, p. B4; June 27, 1996, Brad Knickerbocker, review of Bucking the Sun, p. B4.

Denver Post, November 2, 2008, review of The Eleventh Man, p. 11.

English Journal, September, 1989, review of This House of Sky, p. 74; September, 1989, review of English Creek, p. 74; September, 1989, review of Dancing at the Rascal Fair, p. 77; November, 1994, Jonathan Larson, review of Ride with Me, Mariah Montana, p. 107.

Entertainment Weekly, June 21, 1996, Gene Lyons, review of Bucking the Sun, p. 59; October 10, 2003, Ben Spier, review of Prairie Nocturne, p. 129.

Hudson Review, spring, 1980, review of This House of Sky, p. 147.

Journal of the West, April, 1994, Ramon Powers, review of Heart Earth, p. 86.

Kirkus Reviews, August 1, 1978, review of This House of Sky, p. 847; October 15, 1980, review of Winter Brothers, p. 1374; July 1, 1982, review of The Sea Runners, p. 746; August 15, 1984, review of English Creek, p. 764; August 1, 1987, review of Dancing at the Rascal Fair, p. 1090; July 15, 1990, review of Ride with Me, Mariah Montana, p. 947; July 1, 1993, review of Heart Earth, p. 831; March 1, 1996, review of Bucking the Sun, p. 313; June 1, 1999, review of Mountain Time, p. 817; July 15, 2003, review of Prairie Nocturne, p. 924; March 1, 2006, review of The Whistling Season, p. 197; August 1, 2008, review of The Eleventh Man.

Kliatt, spring, 1980, review of This House of Sky, p. 27; winter, 1983, review of Winter Brothers, p. 62; winter, 1984, review of The Sea Runners, p. 8; winter, 1986, review of English Creek, p. 8; September, 1997, review of This House of Sky, p. 6.

Library Journal, September 15, 1978, review of This House of Sky, p. 1734; October 15, 1980, review of Winter Brothers, p. 2202; September 1, 1982, review of The Sea Runners, p. 1675; October 1, 1984, review of English Creek, p. 1860; September 15, 1987, Thomas L. Kilpatrick, review of Dancing at the Rascal Fair, p. 93; September 15, 1990, James B. Hemesath, review of Ride with Me, Mariah Montana, p. 98; August, 1993, Lesley Jorbin, review of Heart Earth, p. 103; April 1, 1996, Albert E. Wilhelm, review of Bucking the Sun, p. 116; August, 1999, Charlotte L. Glover, review of Mountain Time, p. 137; October 1, 2003, Harold Augenbraum, review of Prairie Nocturne, p. 114; February 1, 2006, Patrick Sullivan, review of The Whistling Season, p. 70; August 1, 2008, Patrick Sullivan, review of The Eleventh Man, p. 66.

Los Angeles Times, August 29, 1993, Michael Dorris, review of Heart Earth, p. 2.

Los Angeles Times Book Review, November 13, 1983, Beverly Beyette, review of *Inside This House of Sky*, p. 14; December 9, 1984, James Kaufmann, review of *English Creek*, p. 11; October 18, 1987, Winifred Evans, review of *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, p. 15; September 30, 1990, review of *Ride with Me, Mariah Montana*, p. 2; December 13, 1992, review of *This House of Sky*, p. 6; May 12, 1996, Judith Freeman, review of *Bucking the Sun*, p. 3; July 9, 2006, Kai Maristed, review of *The Whistling Season*.

NASSP Bulletin, January, 1973, review of *News*, p. 98.

National Post, November 1, 2008, review of *The Eleventh Man*, p. 16.

New York Times Book Review, January 7, 1979, Wright Morris, review of *This House of Sky*, p. 14; January 11, 1981, Raymond A. Sokolov, review of *Winter Brothers*, p. 12; October 3, 1982, Mary Lee Settle, review of *The Sea Runners*, p. 9; January 27, 1985, Janice Eidus, review of *English Creek*, p. 22; January 19, 1986, Patricia T. O'Conner, review of *English Creek*, p. 32; November 1, 1987, Lee K. Abbott, review of *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, p. 20; September 30, 1990, Sharon Oard Warner, review of *Ride with Me, Mariah Montana*, p. 28; September 5, 1993, Lauren Belfer, review of *Heart Earth*, p. 12; June 16, 1996, Timothy Foote, review of *Bucking the Sun*, p. 28; August 15, 1999, Bruce Barcott, review of *Mountain Time*, p. 27; July 2, 2006, Sven Birkerts, review of *The Whistling Season*, p. 16; November 23, 2008, Mike Peed, review of *The Eleventh Man*, p. 9.

New Yorker, October 16, 1978, review of *This House of Sky*, p. 197; January 19, 1981, review of *Winter Brothers*, p. 113; January 21, 1985, review of *English Creek*, p. 93.

Newsday, November 11, 1984, Wendy Smith, review of *English Creek*.

People, February 2, 1981, review of *Winter Brothers*, p. 13.

Publishers Weekly, August 7, 1972, review of *News*, p. 44; July 17, 1978, review of *This House of Sky*, p. 160; October 24, 1980, review of *Winter Brothers*, p. 36; July 9, 1982, review of *The Sea Runners*, p. 42; August 19, 1983, review of *The Sea Runners*, p. 77; August 31, 1984, review of *English Creek*, p. 420; September 27, 1985, review of *English Creek*, p. 95; July 31, 1987, Sybil Steinberg, review of *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, p. 70; September 18, 1987, Wendy Smith, "Ivan Doig;" July 20, 1990, Sybil Steinberg, review of *Ride with Me, Mariah Montana*, p. 49; October 11, 1991, review of *Ride with Me, Mariah Montana*, p. 61; July 5, 1993, review of *Heart Earth*, p. 54; March 18, 1996, review of *Bucking the Sun*, p. 57; June 2, 1997, review of *Bucking the Sun*, p. 39; June 14, 1999, review of *Mountain Time*, p. 48; September 1, 2003, review of *Prairie Nocturne*, p. 61; March 20, 2006, Rick Bass, review of *The Whistling Season*, p. 33; June 16, 2008, review of *The Eleventh Man*, p. 28.

Rocky Mountain News, June 9, 2006, Jennie A. Camp, review of *The Whistling Season*.

Roundup, August, 2007, Tom Carpenter, review of *The Whistling Season*, p. 21.

Salt Lake Tribune, October 19, 2003, Christy Karras, author interview.

San Francisco Examiner, November 4, 1990, Burr Snider, review of *English Creek*.

San Francisco Review of Books, 1992, review of *This House of Sky*, p. 39.

Seattle Post-Intelligencer, September 30, 1993, John Marshall, review of *Heart Earth*.

Seattle Times, October 12, 2003, Tim McNulty, review of *Prairie Nocturne*, p. K12; May 26, 2006, Tim McNulty, review of *The Whistling Season*; October 16, 2008, John Marshall, review of *The Eleventh Man*.

South Dakota Review, spring, 1993, Kerry David Ahearn, "Ivan Doig's Self-Narratives: The West, the Wilderness, and the Prophetic Impulse," p. 63.
Time, September 11, 1978, Frank Trippet, review of This House of Sky, p. 90; July 1, 1996, John Skow, review of Bucking the Sun, p. 63.
Tribune Books (Chicago, IL), August 30, 1987, review of Dancing at the Rascal Fair, p. 7; September 23, 1990, review of Ride with Me, Mariah Montana, p. 3; September 26, 1993, review of Heart Earth, p. 7; June 8, 1997, review of This House of Sky, p. 9.
USA Today, October 26, 1984, Carol Van Strum, review of English Creek, p. 3D; June 28, 2006, Bob Minzesheimer, review of The Whistling Season, p. 7D; November 18, 2008, Bob Minzesheimer, review of The Eleventh Man, p. 9D.
Virginia Quarterly, autumn, 1996, review of Bucking the Sun, p. 128; spring, 2000, review of Mountain Time, p. 61; September 7, 2003, review of Prairie Nocturne, p. 3.
Washington Post Book World, October 17, 1982, review of The Sea Runners, p. 3; November 21, 1982, review of Winter Brothers, p. 12; November 10, 1985, review of English Creek, p. 12; October 18, 1987, Richard Critchfield, review of Dancing at Rascal Fair; September 25, 1988, review of Dancing at Rascal Fair, p. 12; September 30, 1990, Susan Dodd, review of Ride with Me, Mariah Montana, p. 7; June 16, 1996, David Laskin, review of Bucking the Sun, p. 4; October 6, 1996, review of Dancing at the Rascal Fair, p. 12; August 22, 1999, review of Mountain Time, p. 2; November 9, 2003, review of Prairie Nocturne, p. 7; June 11, 2006, Ron Charles, review of The Whistling Season, p. 6; October 19, 2008, Molly Gloss, review of The Eleventh Man, p. 4.
Western American Literature, winter, 1984, review of The Sea Runners, p. 347; winter, 1986, review of English Creek, p. 353; summer, 1988, review of Dancing at the Rascal Fair, p. 169; fall, 1991, review of Ride with Me, Mariah Montana, p. 257; winter, 1997, review of Bucking the Sun, p. 416.
World and I, January, 1991, Carl Bredahl, "Western Writing, Ivan Doig, and New Ground;" January 1, 1991, review of Ride with Me, Mariah Montana, p. 359.

ONLINE

BookPage, <http://www.bookpage.com/> (October 31, 2003), review of Prairie Nocturne; (October 25, 2006), Leslie Budewitz, review of The Whistling Season; (April 16, 2009), Alden Mudge, review of The Eleventh Man.
Ivan Doig Home Page, <http://www.ivandoig.com> (October 25, 2006), author biography.
Mostly Fiction, <http://www.mostlyfiction.com/> (December 23, 2008), Kirstin Merrihew, review of The Eleventh Man.
University of Colorado at Boulder Web site, <http://www.colorado.edu/> (September 12, 2007), "Author Ivan Doig To Receive Stegner Award."*

"Ivan Doig has been, from *This House of Sky*, his first grand entry into literature, one of the great American voices, full of grace, abounding in humanity, easeful in narration, hypnotic in pace, grand in range," says his international contemporary Thomas Keneally of Australia, author of *Schindler's List*. Richard Critchfield added in the Washington Post: "Nor is Doig's gift merely literary. Besides his intuitions and artistry there is the iron purpose of an ex-ranchhand who has earned his Ph.D. in history." Born in Montana in 1939, Doig grew up along the Rocky Mountain Front, the dramatic landscape that has inspired much of his writing. His career has been honored with the lifetime "Distinguished Achievement" award by the Western Literature Association, and in the San Francisco Chronicle poll to name the best American West novels and works of non-fiction of the twentieth century, he is the only living writer with books in the top dozen of both lists: *English Creek* in fiction and *This House of Sky* in non-fiction. He and his wife Carol divide their time between their home in Seattle and the places his writing takes him.

Books and awards include:

This House of Sky, 1978; finalist for the National Book Award; Christopher Award; chosen "best book about Montana" in Montana, The Magazine of Western History readers' poll; more than 200,000 copies sold.

Winter Brothers, 1980; Governor's Writers Award; adapted for television by KCTS, Seattle.

The Sea Runners, 1982; Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award for Literary Excellence; chosen as one of "ten best books of the year" by Chicago Sun-Times and "notable books of the year" by the New York Times Book Review.

English Creek, 1984; Western Heritage Award as best novel of the year; Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award; read by The Radio Reader on National Public Radio.

Dancing at the Rascal Fair, 1987; Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award.

Ride with Me, Mariah Montana, 1990; Library Journal "highly recommended" choice; Christian Science Monitor serialization.

Heart Earth, 1993; \$10,000 Evans Biography Award; Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award.

Bucking the Sun, 1996; Governor's Writers Award.

Mountain Time, 1999.

Prairie Nocturne, 2003; adapted for the stage by Book-It Theatre, Feb. 2012.

The Whistling Season, 2006; six printings; Booksense national bestseller list; American Library Association's 2007 Alex Award as one of ten best books for Young Adults; Reader's Digest Condensed Book; Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award; nominated for International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award.

The Eleventh Man, 2008; Recorded Books audio set

Work Song, 2010; Indie national bestseller list.

The Bartender's Tale, 2012.

Sweet Thunder, 2013.

Last Bus to Wisdom, 2015.