Question mark

A punctuation mark that replaces a full stop (period) at the end of an interrogative sentence and is often used in place of missing or unknown data.
Hello Ivan,

Just a note of thanks for your visit to the Edmonds Bookshop. So far we have sold 119 copies of Sweet Thunder! We truly appreciate your wonderful stories and your support of independent booksellers.

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You’re awesome!
A tale of two brothers, dutiful and impetuous

Jhumpa Lahiri's new novel explores how the past colors the present, and the ties and tensions of family

'The Lowland'
by Jhumpa Lahiri
Knopf, 340 pp., $27.95

Reviewed by ELLEN EMRY HELTZEL
Special to The Seattle Times

"The Namesake," Jhumpa Lahiri's first novel, made for good reading and a decent movie, built around the divided loyalties that plague a first-generation immigrant. Her second, "The Lowland," roams around the globe but only peripherally touches on the culture shock that comes with trading one country for another.

Rather, this new novel is a more ambitious work, tracing a family caught in the turbulent history of post-independence India. Its title — a reference to the flood plain where the story begins — stands as a symbol of a changing country.

As the story opens, two innocent boys play alongside the swampy ground near their home in 1950s Calcutta. By book's end, the swamp has vanished, absorbed in the development of a modern nation. Time and memory move on.

The two boys are Subhash and Udayan Mitra, brothers born 15 months apart after World War II. Their parents belong to India's insecure middle class. Although close as any can be, the two brothers are mirror opposites: Subhash, the older, is cautious and self-doubting; Udayan is quick and charismatic, "blind to self-constraints, like an animal incapable of perceiving certain colors."

Not surprisingly, it is Udayan who's attracted to radical causes as the boys grow into men. When Subhash leaves for Rhode Island to pursue graduate studies in oceanography, his younger brother remains behind, breaking rules right and left. First he brings home a bride that his parents haven't approved. Then he takes part in an anti-government plot, with disastrous results.

The ripple effect of Udayan's choices will be felt into the next generation and the generation after that.

In the meantime, the dutiful Subhash returns home to take charge of the mess left behind. He returns to America with his brother's baggage, in both literal and emotional terms.

This narrative gives Lahiri the chance to pursue the answers to elusive questions. What is the formula that holds family members together? Why do the events of the past inject themselves so strongly, and so destructively, into the present? "The Lowland" asks us to look at how the ties that bind all families become corrupted by trauma and tragedy.

Lahiri tells her tale in waves, moving forward and back, the rhythms set by both willful forgetting ("time she'd crushed between her fingertips") and inevitability ("With children the clock is reset. We forget what came before."). She switches point of view between the characters. Appropriately, no spot on the landscape remains fixed.

Lahiri, who was born in England of Indian background, won the Pulitzer Prize in 2000 for her first book, a short-story collection titled "Interpreter of Maladies." Her artful writing combines short, simple sentences with lyrical turns of phrase. She sorts through her characters' lives with uncommon delicacy.

And yet, "The Lowland" has its limitations. A revelation at the end falls short of fully explaining the behavior of the woman both brothers love. When the novel lags, it's not because it's too long. Rather, it's because we've skimmed across the surface of so many lives without getting fully invested in what's happening to them.

A reasonable conclusion is that, for all her talents, Jhumpa Lahiri works best in the tighter format of the short story. No insult intended here: Some of our best contemporary writers — Alice Munro and William Trevor, to name two — also have found their métier in the short story.

Ellen Emry Heltzel lives and writes in Portland, OR.
Hardcover Fiction

1. *Sweet Thunder*
   Ivan Doig, Riverhead, $27.95, 9781594487347

2. *MaddAddam*
   Margaret Atwood, Nan A. Talese, $27.95, 9780385528788

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   Jamie Ford, Ballantine, $26, 9780345522023

4. *The Cuckoo's Calling*
   Robert Galbraith, Mulholland, $26, 9780316206846

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   Sue Grafton, Putnam, $28.95, 9780399158988

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    Samantha Shannon, Bloomsbury, $24, 9781620401392

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    Mitchell S. Jackson, Bloomsbury, $26, 9781620400289

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    George R.R. Martin, Bantam, $35, 9780553801477

15. *Bad Monkey*
    Carl Hiaasen, Knopf, $26.95, 9780307272591

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Ivan Doig

New Life in Antique Details

by Gregory McNamee on August 29, 2013 | Posted in Fiction

Morrie Morgan is a bit like his creator, Ivan Doig. He’s a traveler, familiar with many parts of the country, but most at home in Montana. He’s a journalist, a newspaper editorialist, a master of the stinging denunciation of injustice. And, like his inventor, he’s an affable fellow, fine conversationalist and talented writer.

“Morrie is smarter than I am, though,” says Doig. “He knows Latin phrases by heart that I have to look up. Of course, I don’t know that a writer should admit that a character is smarter than the author.” And besides, Morrie owns what might be the biggest money pit in the history of Butte, a mansion that he came into by curious means that Doig describes in his new novel, Sweet Thunder, continuing a story begun in The Whistling Season (2006). “My wife and I don’t have that problem,” he says. “We have what we call an ‘envied house’ 300 feet above the Puget Sound. I had to scratch my head to think of everything that might go wrong with a big house such as Morrie owns. The mansions that went up in Butte at the time were and are fantastic, but I liked putting Morrie in a situation where he had more house than he knew what to do with.”

Sweet Thunder isn’t just about the tribulations of a homeowner, though. It is set in a time when Montana is booming thanks to the worldwide demand for the copper and other ores that miners are pulling out of its skin—but dying, one a week or so, for the privilege of being paid skinflint wages by the bosses who live in those big piles up on the hill. Morrie is a crusader on their behalf, and his energetic labors threaten to cost him marriage, job, home, and even life at various points in the story. It’s the classic American struggle between capital and labor, a story familiar to the likes of Jack London and Sinclair Lewis but not so widely aired these days.

The period details are exactly right, for Doig is renowned as a historical researcher as well as writer. His first books, This House of Sky and Winter Brothers, are deeply researched if also highly personal studies in the history of the Northwest, books populated by artifacts, letters and memories of another time.

Continue reading >

My God
by Randy Kyle Hachtel

"A compelling autobiographical... featuring a unique spiritual vision." – Kirkus Reviews

In his debut autobiography, Hachtel, a West Texas survivor of the Permian Basin oil bust, relates his encounter with a feminine God.

Read full review >

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After both books proved successful, Doig says, his editor said to him, “Write whatever you want to.” He couldn’t figure out how to cast the next story that came to him in the form of nonfiction, and so his first historical novel, The Sea Runners (1982), was born. Two novels later came Dancing at the Rascal Fair (1987), when, he says, “I was finally able to make a living at writing books.”

Doig immersed himself in those details, studying old newspapers and maps, reading everything he could find on the Montana of a centur
It helps, he says, that “I have a penchant for hanging around with librarians.” Even so, he adds, “With a novel you don’t want people saying you’ve written a great history. You want them saying you’ve written a great story.” Doig has succeeded in doing just that, turning in an entertainment fraught with plenty of tense moments—and full of authentic history to boot.

While waiting for a tour of the Pacific Northwest and Northern California in support of *Sweet Thunder*, Doig is now busy working on what he calls his “lucky 13th” novel, one that will take him to the relatively unfamiliar territory of Wisconsin in 1951. He’s well along in writing that story, he says, drawing on his own experiences as a teenager living for a time with relatives far from his native Montana. Readers to the left of the 100th meridian shouldn’t worry, though—for, he promises, the story “will loop back to the West” as soon as it can.

*Gregory McNamee is a contributing editor at Kirkus Reviews.*
From: "Saletan, Rebecca" <Rebecca Saletan@us.penguin.com>
Subject: FW: Five New Mysteries Top This Week's Best Books
Date: August 27, 2013 8:29:54 AM PDT
To: "carol doig" <cddoig@comcast.net>
Cc: "Plata, Glory" <Glory Plata@us.penguin.com>, "Rudd, Lily N"
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     1 Attachment, 73 bytes

From: Deykerhoff, Paul
Sent: Tuesday, August 27, 2013 11:29 AM
To: Kloske, Geoffrey; Martin, Jynne L; Saletan, Rebecca; Stark, Kate
Cc: Lawton, John M. ( PGI ); Heffernan, Dick
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See below for Ivan Doig's SWEET THUNDER.

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Hi Ivan – As mentioned I'll have an updated schedule for you later today, but in the meantime I wanted to share a couple of nice Sweet Thunder reviews with you. Attached here is a copy of what ran in the Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star this past Sunday. I particularly love this line: "It is always a pleasure to read Ivan Doig, who is consistently able to capture the innocence of another era. It is an innocence that, living in today's world, seems fairy tale-like in the telling. But again, that is what Doig has done exceptionally well throughout his 12 novels, which stand more like bridges to the past than mere tales conjured from his imagination."

Shelf Awareness also ran their review of the book this morning, which is another great addition to our growing list of media: http://www.shelf-awareness.com/readers-issue.html?issue=226#m4151

All best,
Glory

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Archangel

New in Memoirs
Ivan Doig’s latest book, “Sweet Thunder,” brings a favorite Doig character, Morrie Morgan, to Butte to take on the Anaconda Copper Co. with his biting editorials.

Ivan Doig’s latest novel, “Sweet Thunder,” produces some insight into Montana’s history, particularly the mining and newspaper business.

But the greatest gift that Doig gives us is the memorable characters who spit tobacco, run bootleg liquor and slug it out in alleys.

Doig’s 12th work of fiction, “Sweet Thunder” was released in hard cover on Aug. 20 on Riverhead Books. It is available at Barnes and Noble and Costco.

Doig, 74, grew up in Montana on the Hi-Line in “bunk-house small-town Montana” in the 1940s and ’50s, far away from the mansions and corruption in Butte.

“We were scared of Butte. It was a big city, foreign and tough. People did their work down in the ground there like badgers and gophers,” Doig said.

Doig has lived in Seattle for many years, but most of his novels focus on Montana during the 1800s and early 1900s. After graduating from Valier High School, Doig earned a master’s degree in journalism at Northwestern University and a PhD in American history at the University of Washington.

Doig, a former newspaper man, said he chose not to return to Montana after college because he was disgusted by the Anaconda Copper Mining Co.’s control of Montana media.

Other well-known Montana authors did the same. AB Guthrie moved to Kentucky to start his newspaper career; Norman Maclean left as well.
"Norman Maclean once told me that one reason he bailed out of the state was he didn’t want to kiss Anaconda’s ass," Doig said.

It wasn’t until 1959 when Anaconda Copper tried to buy a radio station in Great Falls that the FCC began to examine the situation and forced Anaconda out of the newspaper business.

“Sweet Thunder” takes its name from a fictional newspaper, “The Thunder,” that starts up in Butte during the “newspaper wars” of 1920 and 1921. Parts of the story are based on the history of Butte, which is slightly altered for plot purposes. In real life Anaconda Copper ran the mines in Butte, often referred to as the “richest hill in the world,” but also owned most of the newspapers in the Montana, including in Butte, Missoula, Helena and Billings.

“The Thunder” is launched by a group of men to rail against Anaconda Copper. Morrie Morgan, a Doig character from two previous books, “The Whistling Season” and “Work Song," becomes the editorial writer.

Doig spent years researching Butte’s history for the book. The characters eat pasties in the Purity Cafeteria, a place he learned of in an old Chamber of Commerce brochure. Doig read about Butte’s legendary parades so he could include details in the novel, and the cover of the book is taken from an old colored postcard of the Tower Building on Park Street.

“It was a building with a café. When it got busy, the proprietor would just turn around the sign and people would help themselves. It was very Butte. I picked up that kind of lore. It’s often hard to outdo Butte in actuality,” Doig said.

Doig said he also used his own experiences, including driving truck in the summer on Whiskey Gap as settings in the book.

Two of the most likable characters in “Sweet Thunder” are Hoop and Griff, worn-out bachelor miners who help Morrie understand Butte. You can picture these two stooped men with their bald heads and worn-out shuffle because of Doig’s rich details: “Hoop and Griff moved in as though tooling up to attack a rock face in the days when they were a flash team of drillers in many a mine, with a clatter and a magpie glitter of interest in what awaited.”

Humor is a key element in Doig’s work and it serves to offset the harsh reality of the dangerous conditions in the mines. Doig’s specialty is using poetic phrases in the dialogue, narration and in Morrie’s editorials so the barbs stab with purpose, but also wit.

“Oh, I was aware of the old bromide that an editorial writer does nothing more than observe from the high ground until the battle is over, then descend and shoot the wounded on both sides,” reads Morrie’s thoughts on his new career.

As the story unfolds, though, Morrie’s words become more dangerous to Anaconda Copper.

“For far too long, the Treasure State has been robbed of a source of its natural wealth — the jealously guarded profits of the mining industry,” one editorial reads.

Finding what feels like Doig’s voice coming through in Morrie’s words is part of the fun of reading “Sweet Thunder.”

Tags Ivan Doig, Sweet Thunder, Anaconda Copper Company

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http://billingsgazette.com/entertainment/books-and-literature/montana...ok-rich-in-history/article_97978833-b7e7-58c4-a46f-e3cfff8c6987.html
Doig does it again with 'Sweet Thunder'

Ivan Doig
Riverhead
$27.95, 320 pages

Ivan Doig is one of the finest novelists writing today, especially when his work chronicles the history of the West, and particularly his native state of Montana. His newest book, his 15th, brings back some memorable and crafty characters from two earlier novels, "The Whistling Season" and "Work Song," chiefly Morrie Morgan, the erudite, risk-taking rascal who attracts all kinds of trouble and who has worked in the past as a teacher and as an assistant to Butte, Mont., librarian, Samuel "Sandy" Sandison.

In "Sweet Thunder" it's 1919 and Morrie and his new bride, Grace, have returned to Butte, a city described here "as if a section of Pittsburgh had been grafted onto an alpine scene, the power of industry and that of nature juxtaposed." The Morgans are fresh off their yearlong, world-traversed honeymoon to begin married life in their just-bequeathed mansion on Horse Thief Row, passed on from librarian Sandy whose wife had recently died. What seems surprisingly generous at first soon proves to be an incredible burden as the upkeep and taxes on the huge home, which not-so-coincidentally includes Sandy as a lodger, is overwhelming. But it is filled with rare books (many of which the librarian seems to have acquired with city funds!) and offers a clear benefit to Morrie's new job as chief editorialist at the newly formed union

newspaper, the Thunder.

The sole mission of the Thunder -- and therefore Morrie's editorials -- is to counter another Butte paper, the Post, a mouthpiece for Anaconda Copper Company, which imperially rules the city and practically the entire state of Montana with little or no regard for the safety and welfare of its miners. The great value of copper, especially in electric wiring during this time, made this an era of violent reactions to strikes, mysterious accidents to union activists, a serious distrust of Wobblies, and assassination attempts on certain newspaper editorialists. Morrie's uncanny resemblance to Butte's most notorious and successful bootlegger (this was the time of Prohibition) also creates some excitement. ("Gunfire gets your attention like nothing else," Morrie tells us.)

Doig knows how to spin a tale, and he does so here with wonderful language that flows effortlessly from his rich and diverse characters that show humor ("Samuel Sandison himself was nearly geographic, the great sloping body ascending from an avalanche of midriff to a snowy summit of beard and cowlick.").) and sorrow ("There it was left, Pat Quinlin of Dublin Gulch six feet under Butte soil after a life at its deeper depths, the mystery of his death interred with him.").) Despite the grittiness of Butte and some of its inhabitants, "Sweet Thunder" floats above all that because of the intellectual elegance of Morrie and his friend Sandy, and after finishing this fine novel, one just wants more.

Jim Carmin recently reviewed "Southern League" by Larry Colton for The Oregonian.

Reading: Doig reads from "Sweet Thunder" at 7:30 p.m. Oct. 7 at Powell's City of Books (http://www.powells.com/), 1005 W. Burnside St.

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Butte ‘still grabs imagination’ of author

A new novel by celebrated Montana native and novelist Ivan Doig debuted this month. Set in the Gilded Age, “Sweet Thunder” returns character Morrie Morgan, who has landed a job in Butte as an editorial writer for a union newspaper taking on the Anaconda Co., which dominated the town and state.

1. At 70 with the “The Bartender’s Tale,” you hit the New York Times best-seller list for the first time. Did that change the experience of writing this book?

Ivan Doig: Not in the writing. We'll see if it smoothed the way anyway, and it might. This book has gotten some weeks of attention in New York City, which didn't happen before I landed on the best-seller list. It doesn't help the writing, which is still day by day, word by word. The pressure is always the same, and it’s always mine on myself. I'm still doing so many words a day, so many days a week, and making those words the best I can find. I've never had pressure from a publisher or editor for any of these books telling me, if you shape it this way it will help. I've always just turned in the manuscript, and then there's usually very few changes.

2. How did the nature of a trilogy influence where you took character Morrie Morgan’s story?

I: I have an unintentional Morrie trilogy here, I put him as one of the three main characters in “The Whistling Season.” Morrie tags along with Rosie the housekeeper. Once he got on the page, Morrie did take on a life of his own. Readers respond to him as the schoolteacher, saying "Gosh, I wish I had a teacher like him." That showed me I had a character worth bringing back.

What could I do with this repulsion walking encyclopedist? Well, I put him in Butte with half the rest of the characters of Montana. That happened in “Work Song,” and that book worked well enough that I got to thinking, ahh, maybe a sequel to “Work Song” would do the trick again.

There is continuation of the characters in the two Butte books. Here in “Sweet Thunder,” I was bringing back familiar characters, but Morrie's got to encounter a couple allied with the Anaconda Co. I'm going to make them bigger than life, and the newspaper people, too. The editor has a green eyeshade, and editors still wear green eyeshades at the time. He's going to be iconic with that. The bootleggers have classic names like Smitty and Raphie.

There are genre touches as if I was writing a detective novel in a continuing series. I deliberately did that in the making of this trilogy. There are touches where I'm signaling to the reader that hey, Morrie is up against these kind of mystery book people. He realizes it, and here's a nudge for you to realize it.

3. What newspapers did you work at? How did that experience influence “Sweet Thunder”?

I: I was on the editorial writing staff of a newspaper chain in Decatur, Ill., where the ownership was like Lee in Montana. It was Lindsay-Schaub Newspapers in the university cities of Downstate Illinois. The circulation was 30,000 of each, about the same as the Tribune.

Decatur was a proving ground for young upwardly aimed professionals. My editor said even the ministers who come to this town are destined for bigger churches. That was the case for a lot of us as the newspaper. I moved on to a magazine. Another guy went to the Washington Post.

It was a good year and a half of a lot of freedom, a lot of writing — maybe four editorials a day — handling the wire service every month or six weeks on a Saturday night. A lot of newspapering got crammed into a person in a hurry, and I was there when Kennedy was assassinated 50 years ago and went through all of that there. That was my newspapering history, a bunch in a hurry.

One thing about being a novelist, you never know what you're going to go back and draw on. My wife, Carol, was also a newspaper reporter, with a much longer and more distinct career. When I let out to create newspapering in this book, we would put our heads together and remember how lode is spelled and ADI for "any old time" as a slug put on stories in her day.

There were backrooms full of presses when both of us were there. We have memories of going back there with proofs in our hands to correct something. Because of union strictures, we couldn't touch the type but could point to something wrong with a metal ruler.

The Great Falls Tribune was about the only place in Montana where you didn't have to work for the Anaconda Co. Jobs there were coveted and tight; that's why I was in Illinois.

4. The book has been described as a “love song to newspapers” and those who make and read them. Do you see any of that old spirit in today’s newspapers?

I: In this household you do. We have the New York Times delivered every day, along with the Seattle Times. Our hearts are still with newspapers and our eyes when we can find newspapers to rely on as we do with that pair.

We were both Northwestern University journalism majors, both cut our teeth on newspaper jobs, and they hold a place in our hearts.

It's been heartbreaking to see what's happened to American newspapers with the loss of papers and jobs. We think the country is a lot poorer for that, not having responsible, investigative journalism backed up by intelligent, perception editing. Bloggers generally don't have the resources to investigate deeply and thoroughly as newspapers down through time have so usefully done.

5. Was Morrie in this career inspired by any actual newspapermen of the era?

I: No. He is straight out of my head. He is a character (laughs) I have to try to keep up with in imagining what he might know and would think, and say. He's a lively character to write.

Creating a character like that, where he's
Doig

Continued from TL

the voice of the book, the novelist has to be a ventriloquist. You have to create a voice for that character, with the personality and body of knowledge and background. Morrie is very stimulating in a way to write. Maybe he’s going to go off into Latin or quote Shakespeare. I’m sent to my Latin phrasebook and volumes of Shakespeare. Morrie is original in various ways.

6. What did you do to research the story?

I’ve lived in Butte in my head and books for three of the last five years, since I began on “Work Song.” I have a stack of Butte books, and Butte is a very literary place, such a colorful part of Montana history. There are good books, both academic and novels. Dennis Swid-

bols’ “Copper Country” was an excel-

lent source for me.

Carol and I have been to Butte train-

ing around in snowy weather in June

looking at the head frames, mine shafts, the library going through their old files, doing the piece of research where Google doesn’t go. The library has a photocopied picture of original Butte

library, a toned archivist’s work

I’ve used in the book. It’s long since

burned down and just about no trace

remains besides these files. It seemed

that I knew that old library would need to be recharted.

A lot of research on the language, the names of the mines. I made up one

mine name in line with real names. I

used the actual Nevar Swift just for

how it looks and sounds on the page.

“Tidewater” means the actual trails of

mining on the hill, a miner a week dying in the mines, the Anaconda Co. gripped on

the state. That all comes out of research, as well as having grown up in a Mont-

tana where Anaconda still had a grip on

things. 7. “Work Song” with its themes of

corporate greed and environmental
catastrophe resonated with modern
times for many readers. Will this one

apply as well?

I’d: The reviews have been at least as
good as “Work Song” if not better. The

Denver Post praised “Sweet Thunder”

for making Butte a memorable charac-
ter for the book. Some of the others

also feature Butte and are doing a job

about “The Tortured, boastful,

inventive, grudge-ridden, with-cracking city, not upon bedrock but copper ore.”

Evidently Butte and its rough and
troubled times in 1921 are resonating

with reviewers seeing rough times now,

the corporate muscle power, the run-

away power of the corporate owners-

hips that resonates a lot with people

having seen some of the Wall Street

misbehavior of current times.

I didn’t set out to write about that,

but I did aim to write about the work-

ing man’s end of things with the mine

workers. I’m out of the bunk houses

of Dupuyer and Valier as a summer ranch

hand.

My folks and grandparents were

ranch hands and cooks. I come from the

lentil proletariat, the working class, as

point of view, I have no problem put-

ting Morrie on the side of the working

man.

Out of that comes the portrait of

Anaconda trying to run the state, and

largely succeeding economically and

politically and journalistically.

8. How have you changed as a writer over the years?

I started off as a journalist and non-

fiction writer and now I’m working on

my 13th novel. My imagination was fre-

ed up with the success of “This House of

Sky” and other nonfiction books that

made me along to write a novel when-

ever I wanted.

And, the novels have been both

large and successful enough, with renewed

success lately. My editor said when

“Whistling Season” took off that not

many writers my age see their sales go

up. I took that as a good sign and a nice

tribute.

I don’t really know how I would

respond. How do I want to spend my

time. I can’t imagine not doing it.

9. How did growing up the way you did in Montana influence your

writing?

It comes from doing the chores, the

folks I had and the summer jobs I had

living on the ranches and farms, really

taught me very deep there are chores in

life you have to get up and do. I’ve

never had a great problem sitting down

and doing that daily chore of producing

so many words.

I got from newspaper to magazines to

writing these books by writing so many

words a day so many days in a row.

People say they want to be writers. I
n always say, can you stand to be

yourself. Your crazy. Is there the

chores to be done of the research, of

the thinking, of mining your imagina-

tion all the time of creating these

characters and associations. Not every-

one can do it.

You’re not going to go to the water

cooler if you’re on your own with the

language and the work you’re trying to

do. A lot of people can’t stand the

solitude, which I think is a necessary part

of my life. It began on the tractors

and the grain trucks. The job is there for you to do and you have to do it on your

own.

10. Where will your next book be set? (My hometown of Choteau

is always a good choice, by the way).

Choteau is old stumping grounds for

Carol and me.

In the next book, I’m going to get off

on a bus from Gros Ventre, fictitious

Choteau — "so far from anywhere you

have to catch a bus from nowhere" —

and take a Chey bus to Great Falls in

1921, based on something that hap-

pened to me at 12, as this kid in the

story will be.

In there novel, there’s a medical crisis.

The grandmother raising him on ranch

will be laid up all summer, and the runs

are going to take her as a charity case in

Great Falls, so he has to do something

with this kid.

My trip was uneventful enough. I

don’t remember much, but this kids will

have lots of events as he travels across

a lot of the US, people he encounters,

things that happened to him, he is

going to mass a bus in Minneapolis? He

gets back to Midwestern family, and

they’ll be strange to him.

It will boomerang back to the West, to

Montana, but it’s a novel about the

Montana of the mind, both what people

think Montana was like in 1917 and how

it stays in his mind and imagination as

he back there alone with these strangers who are relatives.

It’s interesting to write about the

people on the bus, and he will cross

paths with a few characters from my

earlier books.

It’s half done, and I have to take out

time for promotion on the West Coast

for "Sweet Thunder," from Bellingham to San Francisco for book events.

Click

Continued from TL

bucks there, too.

TOM: But there’s something to

keep in mind: You might not save any

money. Let’s say the typical
directional bulb lasts 5,000 miles

(that’s a guess), and somehow you

make your lasts 60,000 miles, and the

car lasts 150,000 miles. You may save 20 bucks because you only had to change the bulbs twice.

RAY: But if the car happens to last

190,000 miles, you’ll still re-

place the bulb three times in the

life of the car. So you save nothing.

TOM: And the risk you’re as-
numing is way out of proportion to

the possible reward. If failing to

signal a turn causes some dis-

tracted driver to rear-end you, or

some oncoming driver to not real-

ize you’re making a left turn (left-
turn only lanes aren’t marked for
people coming from the opposite
direction), you could be out hun-

dreds or thousands of dollars. Not
to mention a couple of vertebrae.

RAY: Plus the alarm from having

no one else to help with the last straw

for your long-suffering spouse.

TOM: More importantly, the
"lights of automotive light bulbs" are

shortened much more by going over

bumps and rattling the filaments

than they are by blinking.

RAY: So if you’re really con-

cerned about minimizing costs,

don’t drive, Randy. We know for

a fact that you’ll save money if your

car spends its life sitting in your
driveway.

Dogs need back to school too
Ivan Doig

Morrie Morgan returns to Butte in Doig’s new novel Sweet Thunder.

Free Library Program

when : 7 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 24
where : The Microsoft Auditorium,
        Central Library
info : authors.spl.org/doig924

The Seattle Public Library Foundation
The Seattle Times

This ad presented as a community service
by The Seattle Times Company.
A crusading newspaper takes on the all-mighty Anaconda Copper Mining Company in 1920 Butte in Ivan Doig’s latest book, “Sweet Thunder” just released this week by Riverhead Books.

Morrie Morgan is back. And as usual, trouble trails on his coat tails.

The erudite, charming, sometime school teacher who first appeared in Doig’s “The Whistling Season” and later as a librarian extraordinary in “Work Song” returns to Butte with his bride, Grace, after he inherits a Butte mansion.

However, it comes with a few strings attached — such as a permanent occupant, the former owner Sam Sandison, and a huge tax bill.

He knows Latin and some Greek.

“He is smarter and more clever than I am,” laughs Doig. “He comes up with something he wants to say in Latin and so I physically and mentally in ‘Whistling Season’ when he first shows up on the depot platform. I could see him and describe him — what he looked like. I knew he had a big Rudyard Kipling mustache and that he hides behind that.”

“He is a walking encyclopedia.”

Doig’s latest scores sweet reviews

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However, it comes with a few strings attached — such as a permanent occupant, the former owner Sam Sandison, and a huge tax bill.

Soon Morrie’s passion for the written word lands him a job as editorial writer of the upstart union paper, the Thunder, where he lobbs valley after valley at the Anaconda Copper Company, attacking its stranglehold on the state Legislature and its union-busting, anti-labor practices.

The Anaconda bosses retaliate, hiring word-slinger Curthroot Carrtriff out of Chicago.

Stepping from Doig’s pages are a host of one-off characters — retired miners, Wynford Griffith and Maynard Hopper, the volatile Wobblly miner and union rep, Pat Quinn; scruffy newspaperman, Russian Famine; miner and freshly minted legislator, Jared Evans.

“Think ‘Shane’ but with dueling journalists, instead of gunsfighters,” writes the American Library Association’s Booklist.

This past weekend “Sweet Thunder” scored some sweet reviews in the Seattle Times and Denver Post.

Not only are Morrie and his buddies fascinating characters, but so is Butte.

“(It) is Butte itself, a tough-fisted city of pluggers and promoters, bootleggers and union workers, sharpers and window men and crooked boxers, that binds the story together,” writes the Denver Post. “Doig re-creates one of America’s legendary cities and fills it with characters to match.”

Here, breathtaking beauty and grandeur collide with smog-filled skies and slag piles of staggering proportions.

Smoke and noise spew from mines around the clock in a city that never sleeps. When the shift changes, 10,000 men would pour out 2,000 miles of tunnels, said Doig, in an LR phone interview from his home in Seattle.

While re-creating Butte took meticulous research, Morrie sprang forth from Doig’s imagination.

“Morrie is an original in more ways than one,” said Doig. “He came fully formed physically and mentally in “Whistling Season” when he first shows up on the depot platform. I could see him and describe him — what he looked like. I knew he had a big Rudyard Kipling mustache and that he hides behind that.”

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“Morrie is smarter and more clever than I am,” laughs Doig. “He comes up with something he wants to say in Latin and so I have to scramble off and find out how to say it....”

Not only has Morrie proved an education, but so has Butte.

“I consider myself from the other Montana,” Doig said, having grown up ranching and sheep herding in White Sulphur Springs and Dupuyer.

For the past few years, he’s pored over Butte history books, researched its history at the Montana Historical Society and wandered its streets, alleys and mine sites.

Some places and events — like Venus Alley, the Purity Cafeteria and the visit of Teddy Roosevelt — are true, while others spring fully from Doig’s imagination.

But the Anaconda Company’s stranglehold on Butte and Montana’s politics and press couldn’t have been more real. In fact, it’s what drove some of Montana’s best writers out of state to pursue writing careers elsewhere — including Doig, A.B. Guthrie and Norman Maclean.

“Sweet Thunder” has been called “a love song to newspapers and the countless writers, reporters and editors who bring them to life each day, and to the readers who see the...
Doig fans, he won't hesitate to slip into the stratosphere of language and poetry. Doig's new book, "Sweet Thunder," is now available at Montana Book Company, 331 N. Last Chance Gulch.

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BELLY UP TO THE BAR

Local writer Ivan Doig’s novel of a bartender and son goes down nice and smooth

Review by JIM DOUGLAS
Contributing Writer

Seattle author Ivan Doig is widely regarded as a master storyteller of the American west. “A Bartender’s Tale,” chosen by the American Library Association “Booklist” as one of last year’s 10 best works of historical fiction, adds to his reputation.

Doig became prominent with the publication of the “McCaskill trilogy”: “English Creek” (1984), “Dancing at the Rascal Fair” (1987) and “Ride with Me, Mariah Montana” (1990). The books followed a family during Montana’s first hundred years as a state.

The former journalist’s prose is absorbing and very evocative of place. His characters are interesting, usually colorful and have an engaging way of reappearing in subsequent novels. But, for my money, it’s the stories. Simply put, Ivan Doig creates engaging, entertaining yarns.

Like most of Doig’s 12 novels, “A Bartender’s Tale” is set in Montana and casts fictional characters against a background of historical fact. The narrator, Rusty, relates his story of the summer of 1960. He is 12 and living in the small town of Gros Ventre. Six years earlier his father, Tom Harry, retrieved him from the custody of an uncaring aunt in Phoenix. The two of them are now living the small-town bachelor life.

Tom runs the Medicine Lodge, one of two saloons in town, and father and son live in a large two-story house across the alley from the back of the “joint.” But, as Rusty says, “the house was where we slept and kept our clothes. We lived at the Medicine Lodge.”

In the book’s first sentence, Rusty asserts, “My father was the best bartender who ever lived.” He was not “the absolute best father of all time. . . . Yet, as peculiar a pair as we made, the bachelor saloonkeeper with a streak of frost in his black pompadour and the inquisitive boy who had been an accident between the sheets, in the end I would not have traded my involuntary parent for a more standard model.” Rusty is curious, perhaps even troubled, by the fact that Tom brushes off questions about his son’s past, including what happened to the boy’s mother. However, as the events of the summer unfold, the truth — “The Bartender’s Tale” — is pried out of Tom, to Rusty’s surprise.

Tom spends his time in the dark interior of his small-town saloon, surrounded by animal heads high on the walls, including a one-eyed bison over the door. He pours a quality drink and polishes the long oak bar with his towel. He also listens intently to the tales of his clientele, who include ranchers, shepherders on a binge, day-tripping tourists, the editor of the local paper and almost everyone else in the area. As Tom lends an ear to his patrons, so does Rusty. The boy does this from the adjoining room, following the happenings in the Lodge through a vent, unseen by the bars’ patrons.

The room, also used for storage, is crammed with things Tom has taken as collateral from patrons unable to pay their bills in cash: saddles, bridles, axes, shovels, bedrolls, rain slickers, Stetson hats, ties, and a guitar — apparently, at least one of every kind of item of value owned by the inhabitants of Two Medicine country.

Early that summer of 1960, a girl named Zoe moves to town with her parents, who have come to run a restaurant. Her fertile imagination matches Rusty’s, and the two become fast friends. They share time at the vent, creatively consider the items in the storage room, adopt a language shorthand all their own, try to solve the town’s mysteries, have their meals together at her parents’ restaurant and help the wife of the newspaper editor prepare her lines for a play in a nearby town. If they were older, they probably would realize they were also falling in love.

The plot also involves several other characters. The silver-blond Proxy appears without warning from Tom’s past. She was a “taxi dancer” at a legendary saloon he owned in Fort Peck when dam construction created a boom town. She says she now works in Hollywood and is a stand-in for Marilyn Monroe. To Tom’s consternation, Proxy comes and goes as she apparently has done at times in the past. Because of the way she treats him, Rusty wonders whether she is his mother.

On one of her visits, Proxy surprises Tom and Rusty by introducing Francine, who wants to be called, “France, like the country,” as Tom’s daughter. Francine has been at loose ends, and Proxy convinces Tom to take her on as a trainee. She is a decent bartender, but stuff keeps turning up missing when she’s in charge of the bar.

Delano, named in honor president Roosevelt, is clean-cut and right out of college. In Montana on behalf of the Library of Congress to make recordings of lingua Americana, he drives a VW bus he calls “the Gab Lab.” His enthusiasm for his assignment is boundless, and he prevails upon Tom to pave the way for interviews with the “mudjacks” who return to Fort Peck for a reunion marking the anniversary of building the dam.

As unlikely as it may seem, the story of the summer of 1960 culminates at the annual fishing derby, the event of the season in Gros Ventre. The derby is held at the reservoir, and the day unfolds unpredictably, dramatic in more ways than one.

Doig has recently published “Sweet Thunder,” a novel about labor unrest in Butte, Mont., in the 1920’s and a sequel to his “Work Song.” One review said, “Friendship, loyalty, love, politics and the pitched labor wars of the early 20th century all come to bear on this epic tale.” Sounds like another of Ivan Doig’s books that his fans won’t want to miss.
what’s going on behind the scenes

Novelist Ivan Doig at Village Books Tuesday

As someone who deals in both the newspaper world and the world of books, I found Ivan Doig’s newest novel, “Sweet Thunder,” an absolute delight.

I last interviewed the Seattle author in 2006 for his book “The Whistling Season,” and since his lead character, Morrie, makes a reappearance in the new novel, I felt it was time to talk to Doig again. He’s on tour, with a stop Tuesday, Sept. 17, at Village Books, so it was most convenient to email him.

Here is our electronic conversation. He’s 74, by the way.

Question: How do you see the role of journalists — you call them “word-slingers” in “Sweet Thunder” — today?

Answer: Like so much else, journalistic “word-slinging” has changed over the years, maybe most notably in the almost total decline in the number of cities with rival newspapers.

Margaret Bikman

MORE ONLINE

To read Margaret Bikman’s full interview with Ivan Doig, see this story online at BellinghaHerald.com

— it’d be hard to find a Thunder and a Daily Post lambasting each other daily, as in my Butte editorial.

Universe Morrie’s time — an it’s true that the upsurge of TV talking heads and blogs, most with more mouth than brainwork behind their constant comments.

My wife, Carol, and I are old-school Northwestern University journalism majors, and we both cut our teeth on newspaper jobs, so it’s been heartbreaking to see what’s happened to daily newspapers with the loss of readers, jobs, and ultimately papers, such as the Seattle P-I.

We believe the country is much poorer for that, not having responsible, investigative journalism backed up by intelligent, perceptive editing. Certainly newspapers are still honorable work, maybe more so than ever in the onslaught of the profession’s hard times.

Q: Would you expand on your comment about the editorial writer’s role of “afflicting the comfortable and comforting the afflicted?”

A: As an editorial writer back in the sixties, when civil rights marchers were being met by Bull Connor’s cops with fire hoses in Birmingham, I came to believe then and still do that “afflicting the comfortable and comforting the afflicted” was a natural given role for an editorial page.

In having Morrie take on the domineering Anaconda Copper Mining Co. with his typewriter, I wanted that journalistic role simply sunk into the story, not blaming out loud on the page — as a novelist, you don’t want the preaching to get in the way of the choir; readers are there to hear the singing.

Q: What’s your “trick” of creating such delicious words in your books?

A: The “trick” of using the language on the page as I do is to work at it all the time, two to three years per book.

While crafting a rough draft, partly on a manual typewriter as a way of feeling the shape of each sentence, akin to sculpting on the paper, then revising on the computer, I do make a lot of changes as better turns of phrase come to mind.

(Through my decades as a professional writer I’ve always carried a pocket notebook for jotting, if I’m not close to a keyboard.)

When I have perhaps 50 or a hundred pages of manuscript, I have Carol look at it over, as she has a great eye for plot and pace, but we agree she doesn’t insist on changes and I don’t necessarily make them — we’re old pros, trusting how the book will shape up by the time I’m done with it.

Some language comes easier when you borrow it from Shakespeare, as I did for the title of this third Morrie Morgan novel.

I somehow noticed the line “So melodious a discord, such sweet thunder,” from “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” and immediately thought that’s just the kind of thing that would make Morrie go off on one of his “balloon ascensions” of erudition and end up sonorously naming the miners’ union-backed newspaper the Thunder, in rivalry with the Anaconda Co.’s corporately muted Daily Post.

Q: Is a journalist compelled to take an editorial stand on say, the coal issue in the Pacific Northwest, or the minimum wage?

A: By the standards of the old sacred wall between news and opinion, which I think still should hold, the newspaper journalists reporters and editors ought not take a stand for or against, say, the coal terminal and coal trains issue, or the state minimum wage issue. Their job, as Morrie says it best, is to tell “chapters of the earthly saga, old as the alphabet. Humanity’s never-ending tale of who did what to whom, when and where, and if told right, how and why.”

The editorial page staff, on the other hand — I’d include columnists here — must make itself heard on such matters of critical importance to the community.

Again, Morrie: “A newspaper without a cause is little more than a tally sheet of mishaps local and national and whatever social gather.”

See SCENES, Page 6
Novelist Ivan Doig at Village Books

SCENES from Page 4

ings and sporting events will fill the rest of the paper.

Q: How do you envision the future of books?
A: As to the future of e-books, online, and "physical books," I'll echo my editor who says those of us trying to "peddle quality literature" will be okay as long as people keep reading book-length works in some format. I must add that from the writer's wallet point of view, the lower royalties that come from usually more cheaply priced e-books are a nasty wage cut.

So is the growing online-generated trend of libraries to provide multiple customers with e-books, instead of actual books. The library formerly would have purchased from the publisher, providing the more healthy royalties to writers, whose average income nationwide notoriously is statistically below the poverty line.

Readers' groups could help both writers and bookstores by resolving to buy hardback books for their discussions even a time or two a year; it would only cost each participant about as much as going out for lunch, and surely some book that an author has put two or three years of his or her life into qualifies as a keeper.

Q: What makes you catch a breath, makes you think, when you read fiction, nonfiction, newspapers?
A: In my own reading and, yes, book-buying (if anyone is curious, it runs about a thousand dollars a year in this book-reading household, and we consider every bit of it well-spent), I'll simply speak as a novelist to say what has to hold me is "the fictional substance ... the sounds that come off the page," as the critic Richard Poirier rightly put it.

Right from the first words, this can be a matter of voice — "Mom and Pop were just a couple of kids when they got married. He was eighteen, she was sixteen, and I was three ..." ("Ladies Sings the Blues," by Billie Holiday), or sheer storytelling — "The gale tore at him and he felt its bite deep within and he knew that if they did not make landfall in three days they would all be dead ..." ("Shogun," by James Clavell) or gutsy inventiveness — "It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen ..." ("1984," by George Orwell).

And let's not forget humor: in "Sweet Thunder" I devilishly have Morrie run on his otherwise sober editorial page a limerick from an Irish miner, one of the many impromptu anthems of Butte:

"My sweetheart's a mule in the mine,
I drive her with only one line.
On the ore car I sit,
While tobacco I spit,
All over my sweetheart's behind."

Behind the Scenes focuses on the people who make the arts and entertainment world of Whatcom County happen. It appears in Take Five, The Bellingham Herald's entertainment section, each Thursday. Margaret Bikman is the Entertainment News Coordinator at The Bellingham Herald. Contact her at margaret.bikman@bellinghamerald.com or 360-715-2273.

Chuck Dingee celebrates birthday

PROFILE from Page 4

items (combs, pens, key rings, etc.) to stores. That supplemented my music income for a few years in Milwaukee, and later in Bellingham.

In the early 1980s I got engrossed in reading books by and about Buckminster Fuller. I wrote a song for Bucky's 88th birthday, but he died the day after I wrote it, and I never got to send it to him.

In 1986 I moved to Philadelphia to work with the World Game, an offshoot of his office. I travelled all over the world with that organization from 1986 to 1993. I decided then to move back to Bellingham.

I met Kathy Sheehan in Philadelphia and wrote her a song. (Fortunately, she's still alive.) We were married in Philadelphia in 1994 and moved to Bellingham. I started a web design business and still dabble with that, and Kathy and I occasionally do some photography work, too.

Q: What is your take on live music in Bellingham and how does a musician make a living in this town?
A: There are many budding musicians in Bellingham, and that is wonderful. Unfortunately, the pay for musicians in clubs today is about the same as it was in 1975, so if you want to make a living with it, you'll have to play a lot, and especially private parties. And don't play for free, unless it's on your terms.

Open mics are great for getting your feet wet, or for trying out new songs, etc. I hosted an open mic at the Fairhaven Pub for eight years, and I really enjoy helping musicians get started.

Q: What are your plans?
A: I love playing music and playing with the Warus is always a blast. We plan to keep playing as long as we still have a pulse (and a voice). I've led a charmed life and see no reason why that should change.

Q: What else is fun for you besides music?
A: I love sailing and hiking around the Northwest, and I enjoy photography, bicycling and hunting wild mushrooms. I am also a big fan of Scrabble and backgammon.

Reach Margaret Bikman at margaret.bikman@bellinghamerald.com or 360-715-2273.

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Ivan Doig’s latest novel, ‘Sweet Thunder’ is set in Butte during the heyday of the Anaconda Mining Company.

A crusading newspaper takes on the all-mighty Anaconda Copper Mining Company in 1920 Butte.

http://helenair.com/entertainment/yourtime/sweet-thunder/article_fd4fedab-0bb5-11e3-a4fd-001a4bfc887a.html

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http://helenair.com/entertainment/yourtime/sweet-thunder/article_fd4fed46-0bb5-11e3-a4fd-001a4bcf887a.html
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“Sweet Thunder” has been called “a love song to newspapers and the countless writers, reporters and editors who bring them to life each day, and to the readers who see the world through them.”

“The heady smell of ink, newprint and tobacco smoke fairly lifts from the pages,” writes Tim McNulty in The Seattle Times review.

Doig, who earned a degree in journalism and worked as an editorial writer in Decatur, Ill., admits that he loves gutsy newspapers and particularly relished pounding out Morrie’s inflammatory editorials. The Thunder is based on a succession of newspapers that stood up to the Anaconda Copper Mining Company, he said.

The book is also a celebration of Doig’s love of language and poetry.

“You have to be a ventriloquist as a writer,” he said. “I try to put a kind of shimmer under the language of the book ... how people talk and the turn of a phrase that comes out of the mouths of ranchers ... and miners.”

Because of his love of poetry and song, Doig seeks the poetic in the everyday and doesn’t hesitate to slip into iambic pentameter and also quote “high powered” poetry from Shakespeare.

“Sandison and Morrie have their heads in the stratosphere of language ... as do I,” said Doig.

A prolific writer with 15 previous books, Doig already has another project in the works, a semi-autobiographical novel of a 12-year-old boy who travels alone by bus from Montana to Manitowoc, Wis.

Doig’s previous book, “The Bartender’s Tale,” was a New York Times Bestseller and earned a place this spring on Booklist’s list of 10 Best Historical Works of Fiction.

Also, Recorded Books just reissued Doig’s audio recording of the Norman Maclean classic, “A River Runs Through It,” which earned Doig an Audie, the equivalent of an Oscar in the world of literature.

Unfortunately, for Doig fans, he won’t be returning to the Treasure State anytime soon. Last year, he was a guest of the Montana Festival of the Book, allowing him to squeeze in a visit to Helena for a reading and book signing. This year, his appearances are all in the Northwest and along the Pacific coast.

For a list of these dates and more information on Doig, visit www.ivandoig.com.

“Sweet Thunder” is now available at Montana Book Company, 331, N. Last Chance Gulch.
PARKPLACE BOOKS WELCOMES

IVAN DOIG

An Evening with Ivan Doig

Tuesday, September 10th 7:00 pm

One of our perennial favorites, Ivan Doig will discuss and sign copies of his newest book, *Sweet Thunder*, a stirring tale of greed, corruption and the power of past sins set in 1920s Montana. A wonderfully atmospheric portrait of the bygone newspaper trade, *Sweet Thunder* has an engaging cast of characters including Morrie Morgan who is drawn back to Butte by a quirky bequest. And the town itself, with its army of miners struggling to extricate itself from the stranglehold of the ruthless Anaconda Copper Mining Company, seems on the verge of implosion.

Join us for what is always an enjoyable evening. Reservations are requested.

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Here in the book department, our pulse is quickening. This coming fall will see tomes published by writers gifted at making things up, with new novels out by Margaret Atwood, Jamie Ford, Stephen King, Jhumpa Lahiri, Jonathan Lethem, Thomas Pynchon, Donna Tartt and Amy Tan.

These who like their reading material factual must settle for a slightly less-stellar list, but there are new works of history by Bill Bryson and Simon Winchester. There’s a memoir by Linda Ronstadt, and biographies of Johnny Cash, Norman Mailer and Ian Fleming. Rebecca Eaton, the force behind “Masterpiece Theater,” offers a glimpse at her gilded world. And the late Nora Ephron’s publisher collects some of her best work.

This list is organized by fiction and nonfiction — within these categories by month of publication.

FICTION AND POETRY

AUGUST

“Sweet Thunder” by Ivan Doig (Riverhead). The Seattle author publishes his 11th Montana-set novel. It’s set in 1919 Butte, where Morrie Morgan, the teetotaler-burner from “The Whirling Season” and “Work Song,” becomes an editor—al for an uptight Butte newspaper that challenges the reign of the ruthless Anaconda mining company.

“The Good Lord Bird” by James McBride (Riverhead). A fresh take on abolitionist John Brown, as told through the memoir of a slave boy who pretends to be a girl.

“How the Light Gets In” by Louise Penny (Minotaur). In the latest by the

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BOOK REVIEW

James McBride gives abolitionist John Brown an interesting sidekick-H4

ILLUSTRATION BY JEFF PASY

The Seattle Times

THE SHORT LIST

Bumbershoot 2013 takes place at Seattle Center Aug. 24-Sept. 2; here are some of our favorite performances from years past. For this year’s Bumbershoot schedule and ticket info, go to bumbershoot.org.

Ben Harper
Music

Ben Harper, Sharon Jones

My greatest thrills at Bumbershoot have been discovering someone mighty special — before most of America does. When a little-known Ben Harper appeared solo in the 1990s, his rough-hewn voice and heartfelt original songs were captivating, and surely destined for a wide audience. And though I knew her band the Dap Kings from their work on Amy Winehouse recordings, I was not prepared for the soul cyclone that is Ms. Sharon Jones. Lord have mercy, that woman cooked in her 2012 show! It was as if James Brown had been reborn: a righteous woman, who could turn “This Land Is Your Land” into hasty R&B. Later I learned they’re both from Augusta, Ga. — there must be something in the water.