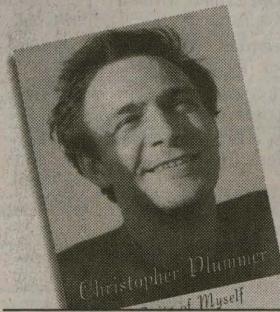


Plummer gets wordy, naughty and nice 'In Spite of Myself'

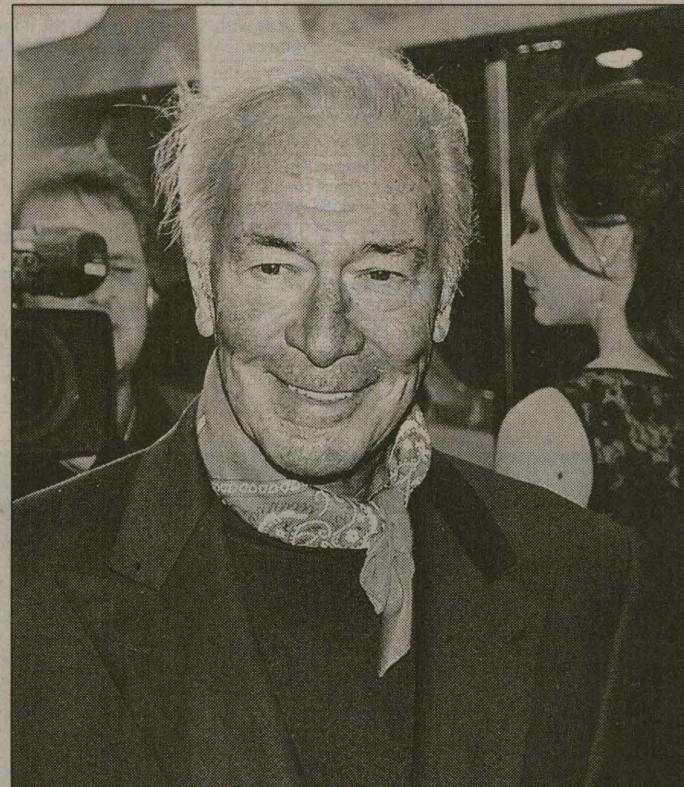


In Spite of Myself
By Christopher Plummer
Knopf, 648 pp., \$29.95

By Elysa Gardner
USA TODAY

For some public figures, the memoir can be a means of self-defense or catharsis, an attempt to either justify or come to terms with one's failings and foibles.

Review Not so Christopher Plummer, bless his heart. No one reading *In Spite of Myself*, the veteran actor's delightfully sprawling account of his life and career, could accuse him of being a withholding guy. He is candid to



An actor with stories to tell: Christopher Plummer, 78, shares his passions, both professional and personal, in his memoir.

a fault, and many faults are acknowledged here.

But Plummer isn't begging our forgiveness or courting our affection and admiration. He has a loftier goal: offering access to the world of a tireless working artist and bon vivant, someone gifted and lucky enough to be able to fully engage his passions and inspire others in doing so.

Plummer, 78, paints that world in almost exhausting detail.

Recalling his early years in theater, he lustfully drops names, iconic and obscure, and embellishes their exploits with effusively captioned photos: "Roddy McDowell, the welcome court jester!" or "Jean Gascon, Renaissance figure who brought all of life to the stage."

The writing is robust and unapologetically florid, littered with exclamation points, bawdy slang and French. (Plummer was raised outside Montreal.) There's plenty of self-deprecating humor and reports of naughty and gory escapades, a few involving hospitals, that can be mercilessly graphic.

But there also are moments of unfettered poignancy. Plummer

doesn't dish on his most famous role, that of Captain von Trapp in the beloved screen version of *The Sound of Music*, until nearly 400 pages in; but his witty musings and heartfelt appreciation of the film — and its golden star, Julie Andrews — are worth the wait. "The picture belongs to Julie," he writes. "Her optimism, delicious humor and selfless nature were always on parade. ... She held us together and made us a team."

His complex and redeeming relationships with two other

British actresses — his daughter Amanda Plummer and his third and current wife, Elaine Taylor — are addressed with frankness and tenderness.

"How lucky I have been to have made the acquaintance of such an extraordinary collection of vagabonds," Plummer writes. "And how fortunate that the same century sent such remarkable women to show me the way."

And how nice that we can now share in that bounty.

Add 'Eleventh Man' to Ivan Doig's best yarns

The Eleventh Man
By Ivan Doig
Harcourt, 406 pp., \$26

Ivan Doig, who blends the skills of novelist and historian, was researching another book when he lucked onto a forgotten but stunning scrap of history:

In World War II, the 11 starters on the football team at Montana State College in Bozeman joined the military. All 11 died.

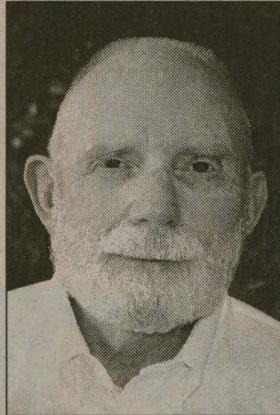
That "breath of actuality," as he puts it, inspired Doig's ninth novel, *The Eleventh Man*. It's his most ambitious and one of his best.

In the novel, a small-town newspaper editor says, "History writes the best yarns."

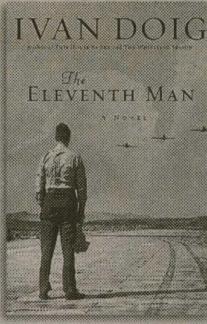
Doig has been doing just that in books such as *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, set in his native Montana, as literary as it is sparse.

His new novel employs his usual brand of characters — prickly, quotable Westerners — and throws them into a world at war.

His fictional hero is Ben Reinking, the



By A. Wayne Arnst



Doig:
Eleventh is his ninth novel.

newspaper editor's son, and a talented writer in his own right.

As a football star, Ben was part of that championship season at fictional Treasure State University, undefeated in 1941. Two years later, he's yanked from pilot training to become a military correspondent.

The brass, eager for heroes, orders him to write a series of articles about his former

teammates scattered around the globe. But Ben is no propagandist, which means hinting at the complexities between the lines, as his ex-teammates are killed one by one.

Doig is at his best exploring little-known crannies of the war: work camps for conscientious objectors and the role played by WASPs (Women Air Force Service Pilots), one of whom Ben falls in love with. She's smart, pretty and married.

The former football players and a mysterious 12th man who died in a team practice are hard to keep straight, at least early in the novel. Readers may wish for a scorecard to refer to.

But Doig's language is a joy to read. His accounts of combat and the home front take on new resonance in the context of the current war, which seems to have no home front, at least for most Americans.

Near the end of World War II, Ben comes to realize that "The world was more complicated now, but he also knew that every era makes that excuse for tripping over itself."

True then; true now.

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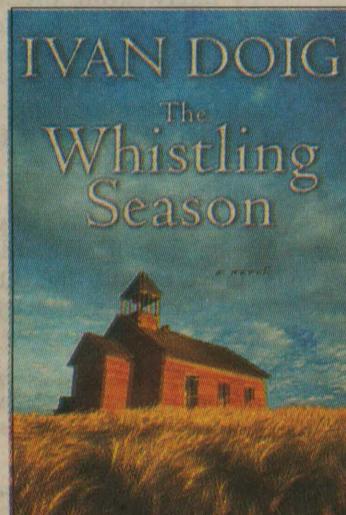
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Ivan Doig's richly detailed novel tells the story of a boy and his teacher in 1909 Montana

Tiny school, giant legacy

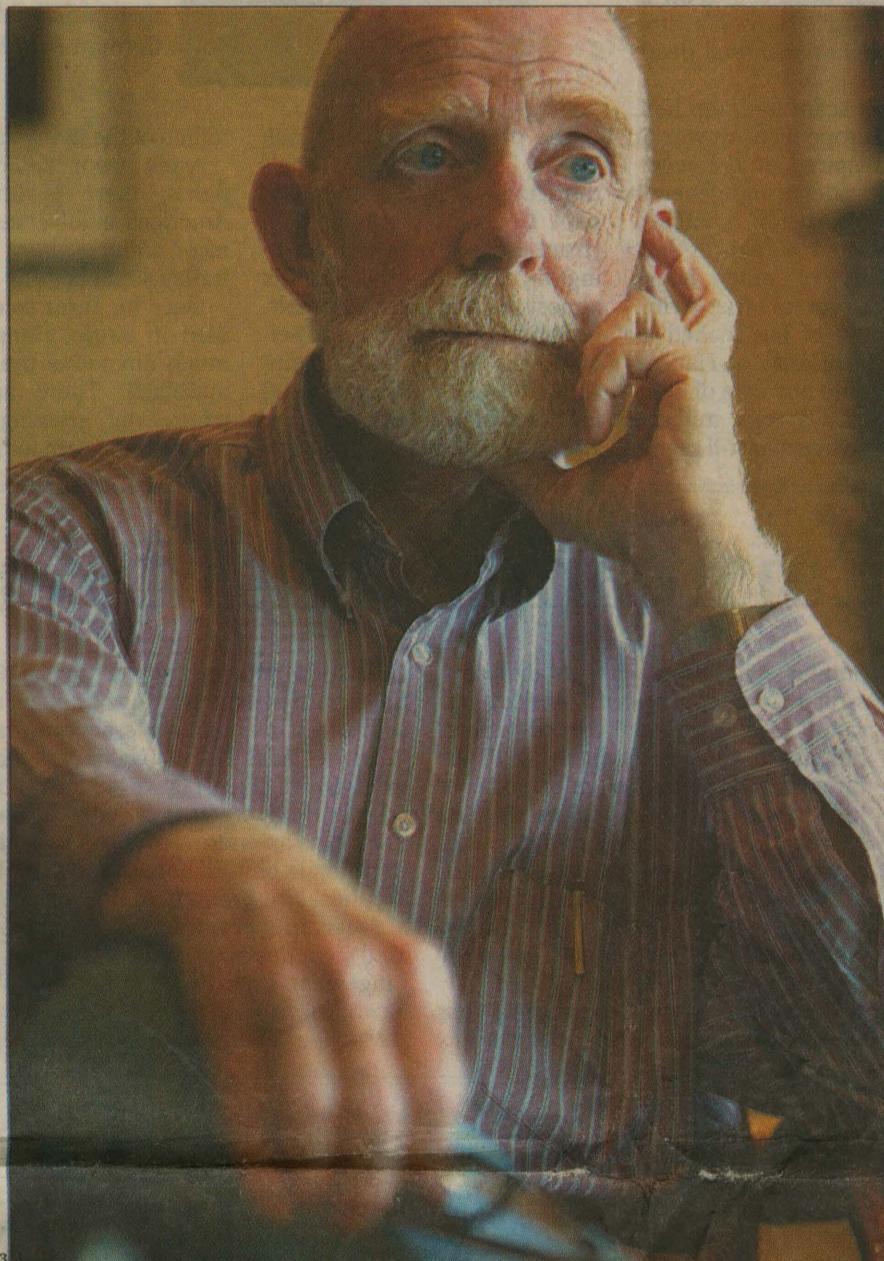


Author appearances

IVAN DOIG will read from "The Whistling Season" next month at these locations:

- At 7:30 p.m. Thursday at Seattle's Elliott Bay Book Co. (206-624-6600; www.elliottbaybook.com).
- At 1 p.m. Saturday at the Edmonds Bookshop, 111 Fifth Ave S., Edmonds (425-775-2789; www.edmondsbookshop.com).
- At 7 p.m. June 9 at the University Book Store Seattle branch (206-634-3400; www.ubookstore.com).
- At 6:30 p.m. June 10 at Third Place Books in Lake Forest Park (206-366-3333; www.thirdplacebooks.com).

HARLEY SOLTES / THE SEATTLE TIMES, 2003



Compelling story lost in the translation

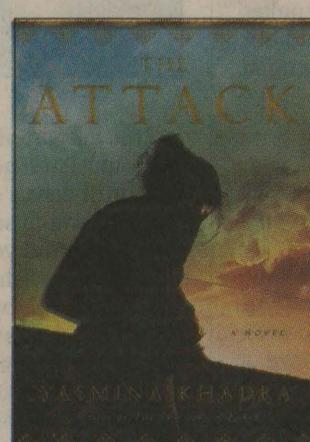
"The Attack"

by Yasmina Khadra; translated from the French by John Cullen
Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, 257 pp., \$18.95

REVIEWED BY VALERIE RYAN
Special to The Seattle Times

Yasmina Khadra is the nom de plume of former Algerian Army officer Mohammed Moulessehoul. After winning a French literary prize for a collection of short stories, he was ordered to submit his writing to Army censors thereafter. Instead, he assumed a female pseudonym and kept writing. Author of "The Swallows of Kabul," he has since retired, moved to France and revealed his true identity.

In "The Attack," a prominent surgeon, Amin, and Sihem, his loving wife of 15 years, live in an opulent Tel Aviv suburb. Both are Arabs who have assimilated deeply into Israeli society.



hours, Amin is taken into a private room, shown his wife's body and told: "Our preliminary investigations indicate that the massive injuries sustained by your wife are typical of those found on the bodies of fundamentalist suicide bombers ... The woman who blew herself up ... the suicide bomber ... it was

message from loudspeakers, taxi radios, his relatives and the man on the street.

There are problems with this novel that are solely the fault of the translator. The author's concept is brilliant; the rendering of it sometimes laughably bad. A case in point is this dialogue after the eponymous terrorist bomb attack:

"A nurse comes to help me."

"His hand is gone," she cries.

"This is no time to lose your nerve," I tell her. "Put a tourniquet on him and take him to the operating room immediately. There's not a minute to spare."

"Very well, Doctor."

"Are you sure you'll be all right?"

"Don't worry about me, Doctor, I'll manage."

An exchange from a bad melodrama found its way into this passage and too many others like it. Awkward translation and bad diction distracts the reader from concentration on the timely and original plot.

Despite these shortcomings, Khadra

has written a compelling story that is lost in the translation.

Valerie Ryan is a Seattle Times staff writer.

"The Whistling Season"

by Ivan Doig

Harcourt, 345 pp., \$25

REVIEWED BY TIM MCNUILT

Special to The Seattle Times

Early in Ivan Doig's new novel, "The Whistling Season," the narrator reflects on his Montana boyhood and observes that "childhood is the one story that stands by itself in every soul." That has certainly been the case for the Seattle author. Doig's first book, "This House of Sky," a gripping memoir of his Montana childhood, has become a classic. "English Creek," the inaugural novel of his popular Montana trilogy, is narrated by the unforgettable character of Jick McCaskill, a young teen when the story takes place. Both books established the author as one of the great contemporary writers of the American West.

Doig's new novel returns to the well-tiled ground of his Montana roots as experienced by a bright young homestead boy who is coping with a grown man's burden of grief. In fact, close readers of Doig will note more than a few parallels between Paul of "The Whistling Season" and the young Doig of "This House of Sky."

In "The Whistling Season," Doig blends a coming of age story and late-life reflection to luminous effect. The author is masterful at portraying the emotional complexities of family and community through the eyes of a precocious youngster. In this case, a formative time for a boy and his family is remembered a half-century later.

The year is 1909. Paul Milliron and his two younger brothers have lost their mother the year before. Paul is riddled with grief and plagued by bitter dreams. He and his brothers are doing their best to help their father manage the prairie homestead while soaking up what rudimentary education they can in a one-room school.

Everything changes when two strangers from the East step off the train and into their lives.

Rose, a tender and insightful young widow, is hired as housekeeper for the family. She soon becomes Paul's trusted confidante. Her dapper brother Morris, polished and erudite, fills in for the year as schoolmaster. The two usher Paul into worlds of learning and self-discovery. But there is something mysterious about this unlikely pair and the events that sent them west.

The story, which recounts a remarkable school year that is a turning point for Paul and his family, is told from young Paul's perspective. But it is remembered by an older Paul, now late in his career as superintendent of public instruction for the state of Montana. The world of his old one-room school with its commingling of immigrant nationalities, social classes, ages and abilities is 40 years behind him — and about to disappear forever.

The stalwart American virtue of a common public education for all comes through heroically in this novel. At one point Paul contemplates the radiating horse paths through the prairie that converge on the schoolhouse and he realizes "the central power of that country school in all of

Best-sellers

As reported by
Publishers Weekly

Hardcover fiction

1. Beach Road
James Patterson and Peter de Jonge
2. Mother: A Cradle to Hold Me
Maya Angelou
3. Two Little Girls in Blue
Mary Higgins Clark
4. Digging to America
Anne Tyler
5. Promise Me
Harlan Coben
6. Blue Shoes and Happiness
Alexander McCall Smith
7. I Say a Little Prayer
E. Lynn Harris
8. Everyman
Philip Roth
9. Bad Twin
Gary Troup
10. Definitely Dead
Charlaine Harris

Hardcover nonfiction

1. Marley & Me
John Grogan
2. Mayflower
Nathaniel Philbrick
3. You: The Owner's Manual
Michael F. Roizen, M.D., and Mehmet C. Oz, M.D.
4. Don't Make a Black Woman Take Off Her Earrings
Tyler Perry
5. Burnt Toast
Terri Hatcher
6. The World Is Flat
(Updated and Expanded)
Thomas Friedman
7. Lies at the Altar
Robin L. Smith
8. Cesar's Way
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Compelling story lost in the translation

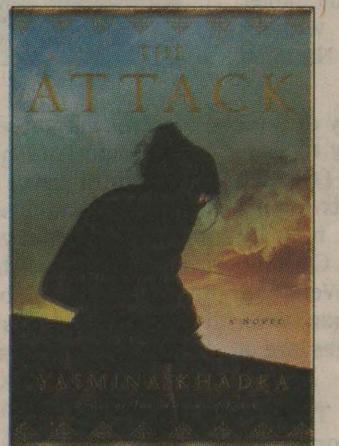
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In "The Attack," a prominent surgeon, Amin, and Sihem, his loving wife of 15 years, live in an opulent Tel Aviv suburb. Both are Arabs who have assimilated seamlessly into Israeli society. They are neither religious nor political. Amin pursues his medical career, and honors are heaped upon him. In the course of an ordinary day at the hospital, Amin and his colleagues are called upon to treat the survivors of a suicide bombing attack at a nearby restaurant. After working tirelessly for several



hours, Amin is taken into a private room, shown his wife's body and told: "Our preliminary investigations indicate that the massive injuries sustained by your wife are typical of those found on the bodies of fundamentalist suicide bombers ... The woman who blew herself up ... the suicide bomber ... it was your wife."

Amin is angry, heartbroken and confused. Sihem has sent him a cryptic letter that explains nothing, but sends him looking for answers. The tribal world he left behind for the good life in Tel Aviv calls him back. He witnesses fresh horrors everywhere, and hears the Islamist

message from loudspeakers, taxi radios, his relatives and the man on the street.

There are problems with this novel that are solely the fault of the translator. The author's concept is brilliant; the rendering of it sometimes laughably bad. A case in point is this dialogue after the eponymous terrorist bomb attack:

"A nurse comes to help me.
'His hand is gone,' she cries.

"This is no time to lose your nerve,' I tell her. 'Put a tourniquet on him and take him to the operating room immediately. There's not a minute to spare.'

"Very well, Doctor.
'Are you sure you'll be all right?'
'Don't worry about me, Doctor, I'll manage.'

An exchange from a bad melodrama found its way into this passage and too many others like it. Awkward translation and bad diction distract the reader from concentration on the timely and original plot.

Despite these shortcomings, Khadra lays out both sides of the conflict very well. Amin, whose calling is saving lives, must try to understand the willingness of Islamists to die for The Cause and thereby discern his wife's motives.

As in real life, the perfect and inevitable ending clarifies nothing.

Story of a 19th-century Martha Stewart

"The Short Life and Long Times of Mrs. Beeton: the First Domestic Goddess" by Kathryn Hughes Knopf, 480 pp., \$29.95

REVIEWED BY BETSY AOKI
Special to The Seattle Times

Before Martha Stewart, before Betty Crocker put her dip-level-pour stamp on 20th-century femininity, there was a Victorian domestic diva who held iron sway: Isabella Beeton, author of "Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management."

Despite never having had the means to run a full complement of servants, despite dying at age 28 after a bad childbirth, Mrs. Beeton emerged as a Victorian watchword and the subject of Kathryn Hughes' charming biography: "The Short Life and Long Times of Mrs. Beeton."

Like Martha Stewart, Beeton's fame went hand in hand with controversy. Where did she get her recipes and ad-

vice? (Answer: She copied tips and recipes, sometimes verbatim, from other books.) It earned her adoration — Victorians loved rules and Beeton not only created a system, she also clearly organized it with an index at the back, uncommon for that time.

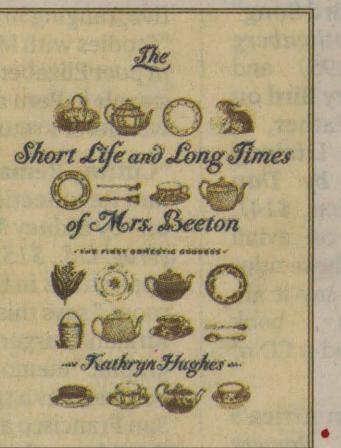
Like Martha, Beeton preached that through order and attention to detail,

one could appear far higher up the social scale. Economizing at home while creating beauty were the Victorian woman's chief goals.

And like Martha, Mrs. Beeton was more than a mere woman, she was a franchise. Her seminal book spawned multiple popular titles under her name after she died, and the original was updated years later to include such new-fangled projects as making ice cream.

What readers may find the most striking, however, are the parallels between newly industrial England and today — concern over food quality and contamination, consumer choice that bred anxieties over presentation, and societal expectations that pressured women to be originators of beauty when in reality, they had to be domestic servants as well, or nothing would get clean.

Whether you buy into the domestic-diva aesthetic or want to figure out why movements like this take hold, "The Short Life and Long Times of Mrs. Beeton" makes for an engrossing read.



Rose, a tender and insightful young widow, is hired as housekeeper for the family. She soon becomes Paul's trusted confidante. Her dapper brother Morris, polished and erudite, fills in for the year as schoolmaster. The two usher Paul into worlds of learning and self-discovery. But there is something mysterious about this unlikely pair and the events that sent them west.

The story, which recounts a remarkable school year that is a turning point for Paul and his family, is told from young Paul's perspective. But it is remembered by an older Paul, now late in his career as superintendent of public instruction for the state of Montana. The world of his old one-room school with its commingling of immigrant nationalities, social classes, ages and abilities is 40 years behind him — and about to disappear forever.

The stalwart American virtue of a common public education for all comes through heroically in this novel. At one point Paul contemplates the radiating horse paths through the prairie that converge on the schoolhouse and he realizes "the central power of that country school in all of our lives." Everyone he knows is in some way deeply tied to it.

Doig brings that observation to life in rich detail. In his hands, Paul's Montana prairie community becomes a microcosm for all communities. And though the setting is the historical West, the forces at play on the characters remain current, from ethnic mistrust and millennial panic, to standardized tests and school closures — and a distant bureaucracy that holds sway over all.

In his earlier memoir, Doig, who like his character Paul lost his mother at an early age, describes an inspiring teacher who introduced the author to the wonders of language. She was at once "exhausting and exasperating and exhilarating." Doig brings those traits to lively fruition in the character of the teacher, Morris. The schoolmaster's revitalizing affect on the young Paul is a lovely process to behold.

Late in the novel, undercurrents converge, and Paul's acumen leads him to the truth of Morris' and Rose's history. The emotional maturity he gains under their tutelage prompts a resolution that is as startling as it is humane.

Doig has given us yet another memorable tale set in the historical West but contemporary in its themes and universal in its insights into the human heart.

Tim McNulty's most recent book of poetry, "Through High Still Air," was published last fall. He lives on the Olympic Peninsula.

Robin L. Smith
8. Cesar's Way
Cesar Millan
with Melissa Jo Peltier

9. Freakonomics
Steven D. Levitt
and Stephen J. Dubner
10. My Life In and Out of the Rough
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4. A Dirty Job Christopher Moore
5. Marley & Me John Grogan

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1. The History of Love Nicole Krauss
2. Never Let Me Go Kazuo Ishiguro
3. The Coroner's Lunch Colin Cotterill
4. How Evan Broke His Head & Other Stories Garth Stein
5. Zorro Isabel Allende



Books**Roundup:
Memoirs**

The Afterlife
By Donald Antrim
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 193 pp.
\$21

Is there life after death? Yes, for the survivors of the deceased. And the "after-life" isn't exactly a barrel of laughs, except when it is. Donald Antrim's absurdist struggles in the wake of his mother's death make for an unsettling yet exhilarating read. In these tragicomic essays written for *The New Yorker* and now gathered as a non-linear memoir, Antrim agonizes over his troubled relationship with his mother, a former beauty whose looks and life were ruined by alcoholism and then cancer, presumably brought on by years of smoking. The brilliant, uncomfortably hilarious opening essay, in which Antrim manages to link his grief with his difficulties buying a new bed, is alone worth the price of admission.

—Jocelyn McClurg



Seminary Boy
By John Cornwell
Doubleday, 322 pp., \$24.95

John Cornwell's beautifully written *Seminary Boy* brings alive a hidden world of religious faith and its practitioners. Cornwell, a prominent British writer on religion, makes the people from his past

come alive. Born into an impoverished London family and abandoned by his father, Cornwell was

13 in the 1950s when a parish priest recommended that he be sent to a Roman Catholic seminary. Beautiful and isolated, Cotton College trained English boys for the priesthood. Cornwell captures the priests as individuals: some good, some generous, some petty — and one a sexual predator. Although he rejected the priesthood, Cornwell also conveys the education, discipline and opportunities his years at Cotton College provided.

—Deirdre Donahue



Most of the story is set in 1909 when Paul was 13 and one-half of the entire seventh grade at Marias Coulee School. His father, a widower, is attracted by an ad for a would-be housekeeper that proclaims, "Can't Cook, But Doesn't Bite." He hires the formidable Rose Llewellyn.

She arrives from Minnesota with her mysterious, erudite brother, Morris Morgan, a walking encyclopedia. He has fallen on hard times despite a University of Chicago education that hasn't worn off.

When the school's teacher elopes, Morris is pressed into service. He thrives, teaches Paul Latin and introduces new ideas. He wonders why "Thoreau, if he wanted a full-fathomed pool of solitude, had never joined the Oregon Trail migration and come west."

Paul asks, "Who's Thorough?"

Doig's pace is leisurely, but the plot takes a surprising twist. There's intrigue to be found on the prairie. His best characters are quietly heroic, perhaps too heroic, but the writing carries the novel.

It's filled with "veteran talkers," as Doig puts it. They're from an era when home entertainment was strictly do-it-yourself. To some, that's hopelessly old-fashioned. To me, it's lovely storytelling, whether you're in Montana or New York.

**Roundup:
Memoirs**

Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time
By David Goodwillie
Algonquin, 352 pp., \$24.95

It's a dog-eat-dog world out there, and David Goodwillie finds out the hard way in *Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time*. He graduates from college, loses an opportunity for a professional baseball career, then goes in search of something just as elusive: a successful gig as a writer in New York. At first, things don't go as planned, and Goodwillie takes on a string of jobs, including private investigator and copywriter for a sports memorabilia auction house. His writing is at its best when he recounts the details of these workaday jobs, but beware of the level of self-absorption when Goodwillie dwells on his relationships and hopes for the future.

—Carol Memmott



Floor Sample
By Julia Cameron
Tarcher/Penguin, 406 pp., \$24.95

Julia Cameron's *Floor Sample* has some nuggets of real wisdom about creativity, addiction and art. But by the end, they are buried beneath an ego the size of the pyramids. Julia Cameron is famous for her best seller *The Artist's Way*, in which she shared her ideas about accessing one's inner artist. She also is director Martin Scorsese's ex-wife. (Alas, there's no visit to any marital *Mean Streets*. She's very discreet.) Instead, Cameron keeps the spotlight on her work, her alcoholism, her sobriety, her love life and her mental illness. This is meaty stuff. Alas, there's more. Much more: details about every house and apartment she's owned or rented. Aborted writing projects. Book tours. By the end of the book, the reader cries out, "Save it for your tax returns!"

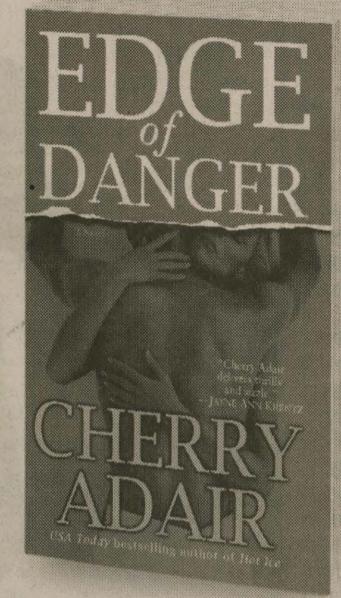
—Deirdre Donahue

**Military thrills meet paranormal chills . . .**

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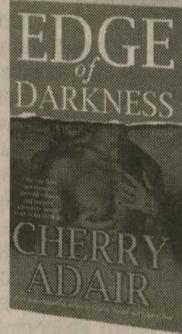
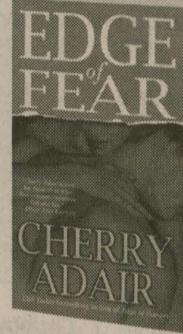
—MARIAH STEWART



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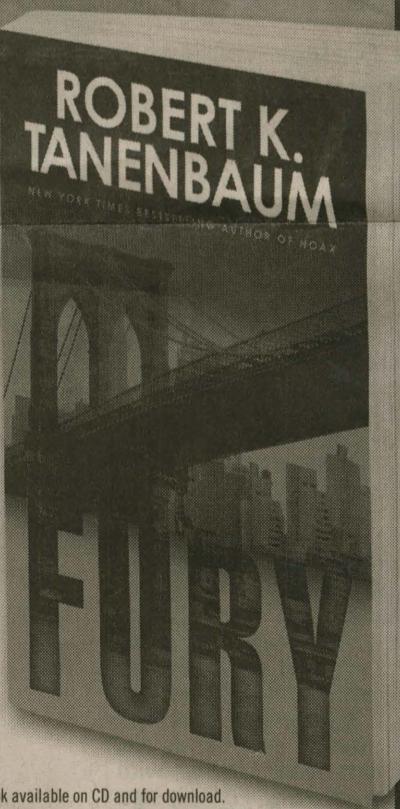
—Linda Fairstein,
author of *Death Dance*

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—Catherine Crier,
former judge, Court TV host, and author of *A Deadly Game*

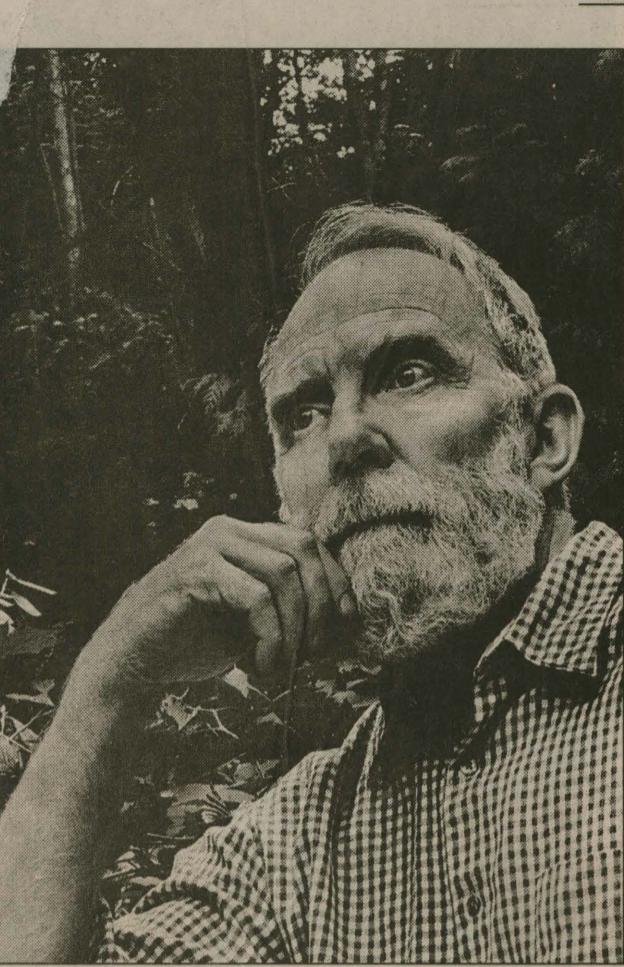
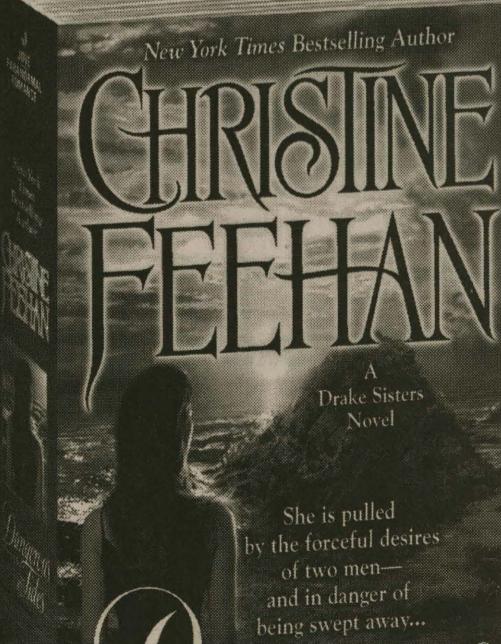
"A riveting, morally complex legal thriller."

—Vincent Bugliosi,
former Los Angeles district attorney and author of *Helter Skelter*



New from New York Times bestselling author

CHRISTINE FEEHAN



Tales of Montana: Author Ivan Doig captures the cadence of wide-open spaces and heroic characters in *The Whistling Season* and other novels.

'Whistling Season': Quietly beautiful

The Whistling Season
By Ivan Doig
Harcourt, 345 pp., \$25

Two writers, Ivan Doig and Norman Maclean, inspired me years ago to visit Montana, which has lots of room for good writing.

I've lived mostly on the East Coast and discovered another world in their books.

Doig's *This House of Sky* (1978) and Maclean's *A River Runs Through It* (1976) are about coming of age.

Both had trouble finding publishers. One New York editor complained that Maclean's story had

Review
By Bob Minzesheimer

too many trees in it. But both books have lived long and successful lives and remain in print.

Maclean was boosted by Robert Redford's 1992 movie and by a trendy passion for fly fishing.

Doig, who has written eight fine novels, hasn't found friends in Hollywood. He's not trendy but deserves to be better known. His writing is as well crafted as the best carpentry.

The Whistling Season does what Doig does best: evoke the past and create a landscape and characters worth caring about.

Set on the Montana prairie, it's a story any good teacher, or anyone who appreciates learning, should love. It's about a one-room school and the several kinds of education found in and out of the classroom.

Its narrator is the state school superintendent. In 1957, he is being pressured in the name of progress



NEW YORK TIMES
BESTSELLING AUTHOR

KAT MARTIN

When it comes to saving the life of your child, how far would you go?

206-542-6658

A great review for **THE WHISTLING SEASON** by Ivan Doig ran in yesterday's (7/9) edition of the *Los Angeles Times Book Review* !!!

*"Along with his much praised, incantatory gifts for evoking quintessentially American prairie life and history, the National Book Award finalist brings to a rather simple and foreseeable plotline a bushel and peck of irresistible characters, each so full of spunk, wit, ambition or sheer orneriness that not one of them will lie down on the page and sleep for a moment.... Both elegiac and life-affirming, **THE WHISTLING SEASON** takes the chill out of today's literary winds."*



Little tale of the prairie

The Whistling Season A Novel Ivan Doig Harcourt: 346 pp., \$25

By Kai Maristed

Kai Maristed is the author of the novels "Broken Ground," "Out After Dark" and "Fall."

July 9, 2006

IF apple pie hadn't gotten there first, might we all be saying, "as American as a one-room schoolhouse"? Although other countries have their analogous cabins of learning (not to mention desserts), the platonic ideal of the one-room schoolhouse seems to encompass a mansion's worth of American history and values: sod-busting pioneer spirit, making do with what you have, ingenuity, grass-roots democracy, public education, Rockwellian high jinks in the schoolyard, gingham and pigtails, short pants and slingshots. This iconic institution forms part of the nation's collective memory, even if most of the population has never seen the inside of one.

Now, because a classic schoolhouse figures as the true hero in Ivan Doig's new novel,

"The Whistling Season," readers can step inside one, warm their hands at the coal stove, sniff the chalk and floor wax and sit a spell at the oak double desks lined up in eight rows for eight grades.

Arguably, such a leitmotif could easily drown in cliché and sentimentality. But along with his much praised, incantatory gifts for evoking quintessentially American prairie life and history, the National Book Award finalist brings to a rather simple and foreseeable plotline a bushel and peck of irresistible characters, each so full of spunk, wit, ambition or sheer orneriness that not one of them will lie down on the page and sleep for a moment.

Sleep, or the lack of it, is an abiding concern for the narrator, Paul Milliron, who is 13 in 1909 as the novel opens in the wind-swept dryland farming community of Marias Coulee, Mont. A year earlier, his father, Oliver (homesteader, hauler for a massive irrigation dig, father of three and head of the school board), lost his young wife to appendicitis. In the benumbed, now all-male household, Oliver has his hands more than full. As Paul, the oldest son, recalls: "I thought of it as like the cauterizing I had read about Civil War doctors doing when they performed amputations, the fierce burn sealing off the wound." The only loss they mourn aloud is that of decently cooked meals and "regular upkeep.... If anything, we practiced downkeep." It is small wonder that nightmares, sleepwalking fits and "indelible dreams" that "stay with me like annals of the Arabian Nights" leave Paul hollow-eyed come morning.

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Mountebank, polymath or both, Morrie is a beguiling, prismatic character. His florid yet perfectly precise speech thoroughly one-ups Oliver Milliron's penchant for pedantic locutions: Morrie calls the rattlesnake placed under the schoolhouse by a vengeful enemy a "[r]emarkable jest of nature ... the creature carrying toxin at one end and a tocsin at the other." And Doig offers some amazing nuggets, including the origin of the measure "yard" (hint: Robin Hood) and the history of Halley's comet, due to swoop over Marias Coulee come spring.

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"THE WHISTLING SEASON is one of those novels that sets its own stage in the opening pages, promising unique characters, poetic passages and memorable scenes. And, perhaps more than in any of his previous volumes, Doig delivers."

Rocky Mountain News

Doig's finest 'Season'

Quirky characters come alive on prairie

By Jennie A. Camp, Special to the News

June 9, 2006

Ivan Doig is a contemporary Western writer whose works can be classified with the likes of such literary masters as Wallace Stegner and A.B. Guthrie. In his newest novel, *The Whistling Season*, Doig is at his best.

A former ranch hand and journalist, Doig has written 10 previous books that range from the page-turning passion of *This House of Sky* and *Prairie Nocturne* to the somewhat slower-paced but evocative *Winter Brothers* and *Bucking the Sun*. In *The Whistling Season*, Doig creates a tale that employs literary subtlety and unforgettably quirky characters to keep readers engrossed in a time long past: a turn-of-the-century one-room schoolhouse where youth and hopefulness challenge the harsh winters and arid summers of the vast Montana prairie.

The novel opens in the fall of 1909 with a newspaper ad that catches the eye of Oliver Milliron, a recently widowed father of three: "Can't Cook But Doesn't Bite," the ad begins from a Minneapolis widow of "sound morals, exceptional disposition" who seeks a housekeeping position in Montana. Oliver, whose home has become overrun by dust and the general disorder of raising three boys, responds to the ad, and soon Rose Llewellyn is on her way.

Rose arrives with her slick-tongued brother Morris Morgan in tow, and the two soon embed themselves in life in Marias Coulee, Mont., with Rose polishing the Milliron home to a gleam it hasn't seen in months, and Morris eventually accepting a position as headmaster of the local school after the most recent schoolmarm elopes unexpectedly with an itinerant preacher.

Oliver Milliron's oldest son, Paul, narrates the novel, and his tales of seventh grade in small-town Montana are both humorous and poignant. When local bully Eddie Turley teases Paul about Rose's impending arrival and Paul instinctively punches Eddie, for example, the two agree to resolve their differences with a "wrong-end-to race": two boys clinging precariously backward to their madly galloping horses.

And later, when schoolmaster Morrie determines that Eddie needs glasses, Morrie surprises the boys of Marias Coulee by asking them to surreptitiously dog pile Eddie and hold him still while Morrie slides pair after pair of eyeglasses on Eddie's face until they find the right match for him to read the letters printed on the chalkboard.

Paul, who frequently wakes in the predawn hours with restless, disturbing dreams, is thrilled when Morrie declares him a prodigy and prescribes hourlong after-school Latin lessons.

Beyond the Milliron boys and their schoolyard antics lies the wonderfully subtle intrigue of the ever-whistling Rose and her quick-witted brother Morrie. Even from their earliest arrival in Marias Coulee, something is askew with these two. **But Doig's hints are rare and oh-so-subtle,**

leaving us wondering whether we're reading too much into an otherwise peaceable situation. Suffice it to say, Doig does not disappoint.

And, drifting gently across the stage throughout the novel is Doig's ever-attentive use of setting. Often a trademark of effective literature from the American West, this use of setting can be a catalyst of mood, a foreshadow of impending action or change, a harbored emotion of a character or town. Consider, for example, a chapter-opener midway through the novel that hints at interminable small-town life - and, perhaps, something unexpected on the horizon:

"Winters were the tree rings of homestead life, circumferences of weather thick or thin, which over time swelled into the abiding pattern of memory. Everyone still spoke of the big winter of 1906 with its Valentine's Day blizzard that kept us out of school for a week, and eternally drifting snow that mounted beneath the eaves of houses until it reached the sharp hanging curtains of icicles. By any comparison, our weather of 1910 came into the world in the same fashion it had left 1909, puny. Only the wind showed some spirit."

The Whistling Season is one of those novels that sets its own stage in the opening pages, promising unique characters, poetic passages and memorable scenes.

And, perhaps more than in any of his previous volumes, Doig delivers.

Jennie A. Camp's reviews and short stories have appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *Colorado Review*, and other publications. She lives in Platteville.
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0 Magazine



Boys aloft:
High jinks
on the cattle
chute.

This Broom for Hire

A mail-order housekeeper stirs things up—and sets them right—in this rollicking Western.

The Whistling Season (Harcourt), Ivan Doig's 11th book, is a large, charming coming-of-age tale set under the boundless skies of Montana in the early days of the 20th century. A bereaved family of four—a rancher and hauler with three sons whose wife has passed away—hires a vibrant and unlikely housekeeper through an ad in the paper. She arrives on the train from Minnesota resplendently decked out and with a highly educated and slightly rakish brother in tow. The narrator of the book is Paul, the eldest and most studious of the three frontier brothers: He looks back from adulthood to

his early adolescence and the psychological changes that the family underwent at the hands of this exotic pair. Doig is in the best sense an old-fashioned novelist: You feel as if you're in the hands of an absolute expert at story-making, a hard-hewn frontier version of Walter Scott or early Dickens. The landscape and characters are vivid, the prose flawless, and like the earlier masters, Doig imbues each scene and his spacious story with deep emotional understanding and a sense of possibility and personal adventure. *The Whistling Season* is a book that strives for more than beauty, which it achieves: It reaches for joy. —VINCE PASSARO

The Love of a Good Horse

Unlike me, Lay Me Down seemed to feel no rancor. In spite of everything, she was open and trusting of people, qualities I decidedly lacked. It was her capacity to engage that drew me to her, that made me aware of what was possible for me if I had her capacity to...to what? Forgive? Forget? Live in the moment? What exactly was it that enabled an abused animal, for lack of a better word, to love again?

—FROM *CHOSEN BY A HORSE*, BY SUSAN RICHARDS, OUT IN JUNE FROM SOHO

Hey, It Is Brain Surgery

A woman neurosurgeon's brisk, funny, incisive memoir.

If, like me, you spend way too much of your life glued to TV shows such as *House* and *Grey's Anatomy*, you'll be riveted by Katrina Firlik's first book, *Another Day in the Frontal Lobe: A Brain Surgeon Exposes Life on the Inside* (Random House). As Firlik delivers a behind-the-scenes look at the making of a neurosurgeon, from internship to full-fledged practitioner, it's clear that stamina, nerves, tidiness, and a bit of cowboy in the soul are all requirements. Firlik is a 37-year-old rarity (only around 6 percent of neurosurgeons in the United States are female) who, thankfully, found time in her sleep-deprived life to record in detail some of her more bizarre cases (a construction worker with a nail in his brain, for example) and to think about more abstract problems like memory loss or autism. Not only is Firlik a breezy and engaging writer, she has urgent things to say about the nature of modern medicine and the ethical issues raised in any decision to

operate on the brain. As much

as she enjoys the sheer mechanics of taking a drill to someone's skull, she's extremely honest about the personal cost of her

long days (sometimes

crawling into bed smelling of "bol

dust"). Firlik

is a compelling guide to this

arcane world,

seeing the black

humor in the OR

and the glory in

understanding our own

center. —ELAINA

RICHARDSON

READING ROOM

Brain surgeon
Katrina Firlik, M.D.,
sees herself as
part mechanic,
part scientist.

Legends Before the Fall

Widower meets widow (and her brother) in Ivan Doig's new novel, set in his familiar Big Sky Country.



Nick Craine

THE WHISTLING SEASON

By Ivan Doig.
345 pp. Harcourt. \$25.

By SVEN BIRKERTS

IN "E Unibus Pluram," his darkly diagnostic assessment of the state of contemporary fiction, David Foster Wallace brought himself right up against the breakwall of irony. Is there any way to write nowadays, he asked, that can escape the taint of knowingness, of wised-up cynicism? Though he was mainly focused on representation of aspects of our media-saturated reality, these days the question relates to all literary practice. After such exposures, such knowledge, what sincerity? Pondering the outlook for fiction, Wallace concluded: "The next real literary 'rebels' in this country might well emerge as some weird bunch of anti-rebels, born oglers who dare somehow to back away from ironic watching, who have the childish gall actually to endorse and instantiate single-entendre principles. Who treat of plain old untrendy human troubles and emotions in U.S. life with reverence and conviction."

Wallace, writing in the early 1990's, probably did not have Ivan Doig in mind. But in fact the description fits Doig perfectly. Untrendy, reverent, the author of seven previous novels and a widely celebrated memoir, "This House of Sky," Doig has in recent decades established his standing, along with William Kittredge and Tom McGuane, as a presiding figure in the literature of the American West. He himself repudiates the regional tag, proclaiming in a note to readers posted on his Web site: "I don't think of myself as a 'Western' writer. To me, language — the substance on the page, that poetry under the prose — is the ultimate 'region,' the true home, for a writer."

I understand and second the impulse, though I would add that the language, the "poetry," is so in thrall to the particulars of place, mainly the Montana of his birth and younger years, that the distinction collapses. As the sen-

tences create the intimacy of locale, we find that the ends overshadow the means — we are very much *there*.

Doig's new novel, "The Whistling Season," is of a piece with its predecessors. It is, like most of his books, set in rural Montana, and though the author uses a somewhat more recent historical platform — the narrator, Paul Milliron, is looking back from the vantage of 1957 — the main story unfolds over a few seasons in 1909, when Paul was a boy.

The premise is simple — indeed, so simple that part of the suspense is in wondering how Doig will manage to fill out a whole novel with so few dramatic complications. Oliver Milliron, a recently widowed father of three boys, answers a newspaper ad from a widow in Minneapolis seeking employment. "Can't Cook But Doesn't Bite," is the woman's headline tag. Oliver, a wry man with a love of language, can't resist; he takes the bait. When Rose Llewellyn's train arrives, however, he discovers he will have to chew more than he thought he had bitten off, for she has brought a companion — her brother, Morris.

Like everyone else in his family, Paul is startled — first by Rose: "This mourner of Mr. Llewellyn, whoever he may have been, was all but swathed in a traveling dress the shade of blue flame — Minneapolis evidently did not lack for satin — and there did not seem to be an ounce extra anywhere on her pert frame." (The "sprung rhythm" feel of the prose is characteristic.)

Morris, the surprise, is something else again: "He was lightly built, and an extraordinary amount of him was mustache. It was one of those maximum ones such as I had seen in pictures of Rudyard Kipling, a soup-strainer and a lady-tickler and a fashion show, all in one. Almost as remarkable, he was the only bare-headed man in Montana, the wind teasing his dramatically barbered hair."

Rose and Morris are the principal catalysts of the novel, though what they catalyze is hardly large-scale. Rose, as feisty and willful as she is charming, takes over housekeeping duties (whistling all the while); Morris, owing to the sudden elopement of the community's one teacher, is appointed to the post. The familiar seasons of work, home life and lessons in

the classic one-room schoolhouse continue, only inflected now by the presence of these spirited eccentrics. And what events transpire do not revolutionize so much as deepen our basic understandings. One of those events could be surmised from the moment Rose extends "a smartly gloved hand."

Doig's writerly ambition is less in plotting than evoking, and it is his obvious pleasure to recreate from the ground up — or the sky down — a prior world, a prior way of being. The land and its people — the family, the neighbors — are laid out before us with a fresh, natural openness. We get uncluttered space, the no-nonsense solidity of things, a close-up registering of weather and the movement of the sun (and, under Morris's tutelage, the stars in the night sky and the once-in-a-lifetime coming of Halley's comet). Studying his surroundings, Paul notices the "smooth-buttered plain leading to Westwater," and, nearer, the "round

rims of shadow on the patch of prairie where the horses we rode to school had eaten the grass down in circles around their picket stakes." Earth-seeking writers like Willa Cather and Norman Maclean come to mind.

But this is, as Doig reminds us, not the world beheld directly, but rather captured in the "Rembrandt light of memory, finicky and magical and faithful at the same time." So faithful, I would say, that at times it seems the nuances of things are better known through the distillation of memory than through immediate observation.

PAUL, in 1957, is a man coming to the end of a long career as an overseer of Montana schools. What connects the inhabited past to the present, narratively anyway, is his current mission: he has been charged with announcing the mandated closing of the state's remaining one-room schools. America is now in the era of Sputnik and ramped-up modernization; the old life is falling to the blade of progress, a loss beyond all but artistic reckoning.

"The Whistling Season" is quiet and unassuming throughout. If the novel carries any shock it is of contrast with the past. Could people have ever been that ... unmodern? That straight-up, or straight-on, or at least compounded of such seemingly simple ingredients? Even where we find chicanery and vile behavior — there is a bit — it's chicanery and vileness of the old sort; we almost pine for it. This takes us back to Wallace's point about the limits of irony and the possibility of 'single-entendre' virtues. Is a novelist like Doig simply writing past the circumstance of the now, high-tailing it back to a time before the Fall (whichever Fall we prefer, 9/11 being the latest by common consensus), escaping deeper engagement with the cultural now? Or is this in fact a triumphant reclaiming of terrain through a leap of imagination? The care Doig takes with language suggests to me the latter — this is a deeply meditated and achieved art. But I also suspect many readers will have to keep fighting off the ironist's defense, a hip condescension toward what seems just too decent to be real, too good to be true. □



Marion Ettinger

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Sven Birkerts is the author of five books of essays and a memoir. He edits the journal *Agni* at Boston University.

Down by the Schoolyard

Page 1 of 2

washingtonpost.com

Down by the Schoolyard

A Montana man takes a nostalgic look back at his boyhood.

Reviewed by Ron Charles
Sunday, June 11, 2006; BW06

THE WHISTLING SEASON

A Novel

By Ivan Doig

Harcourt. 345 pp. \$25

Ivan Doig writes about a vanished way of life on the Western plains with the kind of irony-free nostalgia that seems downright courageous in these ironic times. A celebration tinged with sadness, his new novel, *The Whistling Season*, tells a story twice removed from us: It's the late 1950s, and that little Soviet satellite has startled the United States into an educational panic. Paul Milliron, the narrator, is superintendent of the Montana schools, and he's come to Great Falls to make a sad announcement to the superintendents, teachers and school boards of Montana's 56 counties: In pursuit of greater efficiency and rigor, the state has decided to close all its one-room schoolhouses. "What is being asked, no, demanded of me," Paul laments, "is not only the forced extinction of the little schools. It will also slowly kill those rural neighborhoods, the ones that have struggled from homestead days on to adapt to dryland Montana." As the burden of making that speech weighs on him, Paul remembers his own experience in a one-room school 43 years earlier, and that reverie forms the body of this charming novel.

"When I visit the back corners of my life again after so long a time," he begins, "littlest things jump out first." Indeed, this story is mostly a collection of "littlest things," but all of them jump under the animating influence of Doig's vision. At 13, Paul was the oldest son of a widely respected homesteader named Oliver Milliron. A recently widowed father of three, he raised his boys in an idyllic atmosphere of deep affection and rich intellectuality, but the housekeeping had reached a crisis point: "We practiced downkeep," Paul admits. His father finally decided to hire someone to clean up and cook their meals. Perhaps the comic tone of an ad he spotted in the newspaper is what sealed his determination: "Can't Cook But Doesn't Bite. . . . Housekeeping position sought by widow. Sound morals, exceptional disposition."

When this woman arrives all the way from Minneapolis, she's everything they could have hoped for and more: Pretty, kind, industrious, full of interesting stories. "Just by showing up," Paul says, "she turned the mood of a place around the way a magnet acts on a compass."

Hmm, a witty, saintly father of three hires a beautiful widow with abundant charm: How on Earth does this turn out?

Okay, so the major arc of the plot isn't packed with suspense, but *The Whistling Season* isn't about the destination (which is a good thing, because some contrived surprises at the end are the novel's only real weakness). Nevertheless, complications arise from the fact that the new housekeeper doesn't arrive by herself.

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VICTORIA'S SECRET

Down by the Schoolyard

Page 2 of 2

Her brother, Morrie, a quirky little man with an enormous mustache and a vocabulary to match, tags along. Rose and Morrie come with few possessions and even fewer explanations: vague rumors of a troubled past, a lost fortune, the heartache of "perdition." When asked what skills he can offer in this remote Montana town, Morrie claims: "Whist. Identification of birds. A passable reciting voice. . . Latin declensions. A bit rusty on Greek."

But as luck would have it, the town's joyless school teacher elopes with the preacher, and Morrie is pressed into service. He has no experience in a classroom, but he is a widely educated man with an infinitely curious mind, a good heart and enough enthusiasm to win over the children -- or at least make a spectacle of himself. Even the oldest kids, the thugs in eighth grade who have "a rim of fuzz on the upper lip . . . as if they were starting to grow moss from all their years trapped in the schoolroom," are captivated when Morrie offers explanations that "soar off into full trapeze flight."

To read these delightful chapters about his impromptu lessons on astronomy, weather and ancient history is to feel with renewed intensity the tragedy of the cavernous, regimented testing factories we sentence our children to nowadays. "If only I could bottle it for every teacher under my jurisdiction," Paul thinks, "the fluid passion Morrie put into those class hours."

As the school year progresses, we follow Paul and his siblings through the usual confrontations with older bullies and sassy girls. Most of this is sweet and funny, but sometimes the story touches on the real hardships and cruelties of desperate families living in a remote, unforgiving land.

Doig has been at this for a long time; he's 67 and the author of eight previous novels and three works of nonfiction, including the memoir *This House of Sky*. You can see the evidence of that experience in his new novel: its gentle pace, its persistent warmth, its complete freedom from cynicism -- and the confidence to take those risks without winking or apologizing. When a voice as pleasurable as his evokes a lost era, somehow it doesn't seem so lost after all.

Ron Charles is a senior editor of Book World.

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Los Angeles Times
calendarlive.com

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Sleep, or the lack of it, is an abiding concern for the narrator, Paul Milliron, who is 13 in 1909 as the novel opens in the wind-swept dryland farming community of Marias Coulee, Mont. A year earlier, his father, Oliver (homesteader, hauler for a massive irrigation dig, father of three and head of the school board), lost his young wife to appendicitis. In the benumbed, now all-male household, Oliver has his hands more than full. As Paul, the oldest son, recalls: "I thought of it as like the cauterizing I had read about Civil War doctors doing when they performed amputations, the fierce burn sealing off the wound." The only loss they mourn aloud is that of decently cooked meals and "regular upkeep.... If anything, we practiced downkeep." It is small wonder that nightmares, sleepwalking fits and "indelible dreams" that "stay with me like annals of the Arabian Nights" leave Paul hollow-eyed come morning.

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Down by the Schoolyard

A Montana man takes a nostalgic look back at his boyhood.

Ivan Doig writes about a vanished way of life on the Western plains with the kind of irony-free nostalgia that seems downright courageous in these ironic times. A celebration tinged with sadness, his new novel, *The Whistling Season*, tells a story twice removed from us: It's the late 1950s, and that little Soviet satellite has startled the United States into an educational panic. Paul Milliron, the narrator, is superintendent of the Montana schools, and he's come to Great Falls to make a sad announcement to the superintendents, teachers and school boards of Montana's 56 counties: In pursuit of greater efficiency and rigor, the state has decided to close all its one-room schoolhouses. "What is being asked, no, demanded of me," Paul laments, "is not only the forced extinction of the little schools. It will also slowly kill those rural neighborhoods, the ones that have struggled from homestead days on to adapt to dryland Montana." As the burden of making that speech weighs on him, Paul remembers his own experience in a one-room school 43 years earlier, and that reverie forms the body of this charming novel.

"When I visit the back corners of my life again after so long a time," he begins, "littlest things jump out first." Indeed, this story is mostly a collection of "littlest things," but all of them jump under the animating influence of Doig's vision. At 13, Paul was the oldest son of a widely respected homesteader named Oliver Milliron. A recently widowed father of three, he raised his boys in an idyllic atmosphere of deep affection and rich intellectuality, but the housekeeping had reached a crisis point: "We practiced downkeep," Paul admits. His father finally decided to hire someone to clean up and cook their meals. Perhaps the comic tone of an ad he spotted in the newspaper is what sealed his determination: "Can't Cook But Doesn't Bite. . . . Housekeeping position sought by widow. Sound morals, exceptional disposition."

THE WHISTLING SEASON A Novel

By Ivan Doig

Harcourt. 345 pp. \$25

Reviewed by RON CHARLES

When this woman arrives all the way from Minneapolis, she's everything they could have hoped for and more: Pretty, kind, industrious, full of interesting stories. "Just by showing up," Paul says, "she turned the mood of a place around the way a magnet acts on a compass."

Hmm, a witty, saintly father of three hires a beautiful widow with abundant charm: How on Earth does this turn out?

Okay, so the major arc of the plot isn't packed with suspense, but *The Whistling Season* isn't about the destination (which is a good thing, because some contrived surprises at the end are the novel's only real weakness). Nevertheless, complications arise from the fact that the new housekeeper doesn't arrive by herself. Her brother, Morrie, a quirky little man with an enormous mustache and a vocabulary to match, tags along. Rose and Morrie come with few possessions and even fewer explanations: vague rumors of a troubled past, a lost fortune, the heartache of "perdition." When asked what skills he can offer in this remote Montana town, Morrie claims: "Whist. Identification of birds. A passable reciting voice. . . . Latin declensions. A bit rusty on Greek."

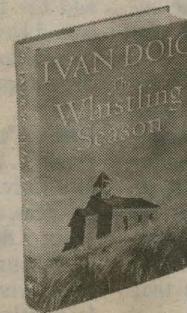
But as luck would have it, the town's joyless school teacher

elopement with the preacher, and Morrie is pressed into service. He has no experience in a classroom, but he is a widely educated man with an infinitely curious mind, a good heart and enough enthusiasm to win over the children — or at least make a spectacle of himself. Even the oldest kids, the thugs in eighth grade who have "a rim of fuzz on the upper lip . . . as if they were starting to grow moss from all their years trapped in the schoolroom," are captivated when Morrie offers explanations that "soar off into full trapeze flight."

To read these delightful chapters about his impromptu lessons on astronomy, weather and ancient history is to feel with renewed intensity the tragedy of the cavernous, regimented testing factories we sentence our children to nowadays. "If only I could bottle it for every teacher under my jurisdiction," Paul thinks, "the fluid passion Morrie put into those class hours."

As the school year progresses, we follow Paul and his siblings through the usual confrontations with older bullies and sassy girls. Most of this is sweet and funny, but sometimes the story touches on the real hardships and cruelties of desperate families living in a remote, unforgiving land.

Doig has been at this for a long time; he's 67 and the author of eight previous novels and three works of nonfiction, including the memoir *This House of Sky*. You can see the evidence of that experience in his new novel: its gentle pace, its persistent warmth, its complete freedom from cynicism — and the confidence to take those risks without winking or apologizing. When a voice as pleasurable as his evokes a lost era, somehow it doesn't seem so lost after all. ■



Ron Charles is a senior editor of Book World.

putter was meant to keep the ball safely on the green, hugging it all the way. In golf's early days, though, a putter could hardly be distinguished from any other club in a player's bag — that's because courses were scruffy, rag-

Nick Owchar is deputy editor of Book Review.

Little tale of the prairie

By KAI MARISTED

The Whistling Season

A Novel

Ivan Doig

Harcourt: 346 pp., \$25

If apple pie hadn't gotten there first, might we all be saying, "as American as a one-room schoolhouse"? Although other countries have their analogous cabins of learning (not to mention desserts), the platonic ideal of the one-room schoolhouse seems to encompass a mansion's worth of American history and values: sod-busting pioneer spirit, making do with what you have, ingenuity, grass-roots democracy, public education, Rockwellian high jinks in the schoolyard, gingham and pigtails, short pants and slingshots. This iconic institution forms part of the nation's collective memory, even if most of the population has never seen the inside of one.

Now, because a classic schoolhouse figures as the true

Kai Maristed is the author of the novels "Broken Ground," "Out After Dark" and "Fall."

ten for the screams."

Around that time, things began to change — that wobbly little leather mess was replaced by the rubber or "gutty" ball, and, in the decades that followed, lawnmowers became more commonly used at courses. Then, in the

hero in Ivan Doig's new novel, "The Whistling Season," readers can step inside one, warm their hands at the coal stove, sniff the chalk and floor wax and sit a spell at the oak double desks lined up in eight rows for eight grades.

Arguably, such a leitmotif could easily drown in cliché and sentimentality. But along with his much praised, incantatory gifts for evoking quintessentially American prairie life and history, the National Book Award finalist brings to a rather simple and foreseeable plotline a bushel and peck of irresistible characters, each so full of spunk, wit, ambition or sheer orneriness that not one of them will lie down on the page and sleep for a moment.

Sleep, or the lack of it, is an abiding concern for the narrator, Paul Milliron, who is 13 in 1909 as the novel opens in the wind-swept dryland farming community of Marias Coulee, Mont. A year earlier, his father, Oliver (homesteader, hauler for a massive irrigation dig, father of three and head of the school board), lost his young wife to appendicitis. In the benumbed, now all-male household, Oliver has his hands more than full. As Paul, the oldest son, recalls: "I thought of it as like the cauterizing I had read about Civil War doctors doing when they performed amputations, the fierce burn sealing off the wound." The only loss they mourn aloud is that of decently cooked meals and "regular upkeep.... If anything, we practiced downkeep." It is small wonder that nightmares, sleepwalking fits and "indelible dreams" that "stay with me like annals of the Arabian Nights" leave Paul hollow-eyed come morning.

"Can't Cook but Doesn't Bite." So begins the employment request of a housekeeper strangely keen to quit civi-

lized Minneapolis for the wilds of Montana. Despite her caveat, widow Rose Llewellyn is invited and accepts, alighting at the train depot with a series of surprises for the Millirons: her youth and prettiness, a gamine frame in chic apparel ("Minneapolis did not lack for satin"), a demand for an immediate advance on wages and, above all, a dapper, mustachioed companion, whom she introduces as her unshakably devoted brother Morris Morgan. Although the Millirons are perplexingly loath to pose many questions, there's clearly some mystery afoot here. "Morrie" turns out to be a fountain of entertaining erudition, and when the local teacher elopes with a traveling revivalist preacher, he takes over not only the one-room schoolhouse, but center stage in the novel as well.

Mountebank, polymath or both, Morrie is a beguiling, prismatic character. His florid yet perfectly precise speech thoroughly one-ups Oliver Milliron's penchant for pedantic locutions: Morrie calls the rattlesnake placed under the schoolhouse by a vengeful enemy a "[r]emarkable jest of nature... the creature carrying toxin at one end and a tocsin at the other." And Doig offers some amazing nuggets, including the origin of the measure "yard" (hint: Robin Hood) and the history of Halley's comet, due to swoop over Marias Coulee come spring.

With Montana known as "Big Sky Country," it is fitting that celestial goings-on play a role in this paean to prairie life. The comet's 76-year cycle bracketed the life and death of Mark Twain, to whom Doig pays direct homage with the novel's wry comedy and love of classic Americana. Both elegiac and life-affirming, "The Whistling Season" takes the chill out of today's literary winds. ■



Boys aloft
High jinks
on the cattle
chute.

This Broom for Hire

A mail-order housekeeper stirs things up—and sets them right—in this rollicking Western.

The Whistling Season (Harcourt), Ivan Doig's 11th book, is a large, charming coming-of-age tale set under the boundless skies of Montana in the early days of the 20th century. A bereaved family of four—a rancher and hauler with three sons whose wife has passed away—hires a vibrant and unlikely housekeeper through an ad in the paper. She arrives on the train from Minnesota resplendently decked out and with a highly educated and slightly rakish brother in tow. The narrator of the book is Paul, the eldest and most studious of the three frontier brothers: He looks back from adulthood to

his early adolescence and the psychological changes that the family underwent at the hands of this exotic pair. Doig is in the best sense an old-fashioned novelist: You feel as if you're in the hands of an absolute expert at story-making, a hard-hewn frontier version of Walter Scott or early Dickens. The landscape and characters are vivid, the prose flawless, and like the earlier masters, Doig imbues each scene and his spacious story with deep emotional understanding and a sense of possibility and personal adventure. *The Whistling Season* is a book that strives for more than beauty, which it achieves: It reaches for joy. —VINCE PASSARO

The Love of a Good Horse

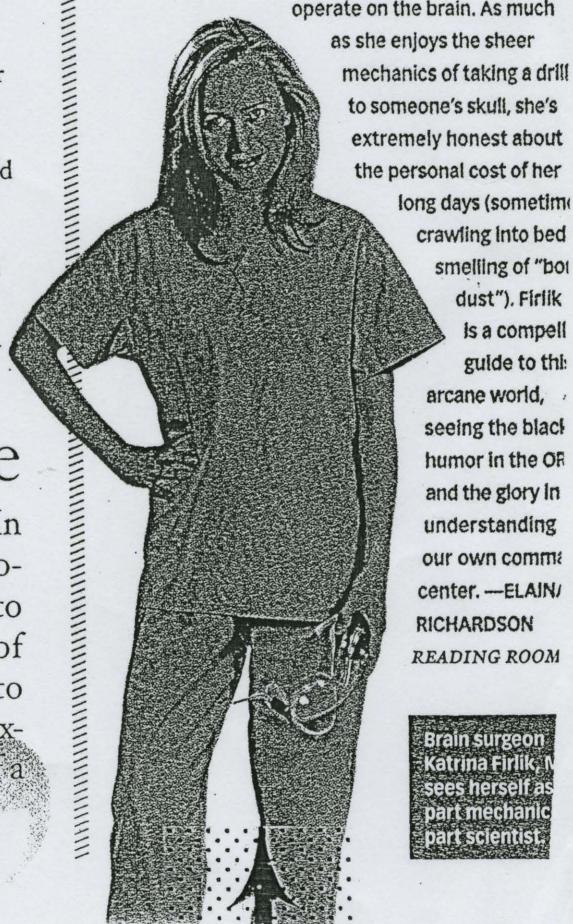
Unlike me, Lay Me Down seemed to feel no rancor. In spite of everything, she was open and trusting of people, qualities I decidedly lacked. It was her capacity to engage that drew me to her, that made me aware of what was possible for me if I had her capacity to...to what? Forgive? Forget? Live in the moment? What exactly was it that enabled an abused animal, for lack of a better word, to love again?

— FROM CHOSEN BY A HORSE, BY SUSAN RICHARDS, OUT IN JUNE FROM SOHO

Hey, It Is Brain Surgery

A woman neurosurgeon's brisk, funny, incisive memoir.

If, like me, you spend way too much of your life glued to TV shows such as *House* and *Grey's Anatomy*, you'll be riveted by Katrina Firlik's first book, *Another Day in the Frontal Lobe: A Brain Surgeon Exposes Life on the Inside* (Random House). As Firlik delivers a behind-the-scenes look at the making of a neurosurgeon, from internship to full-fledged practitioner, it's clear that stamina, nerves, tidiness, and a bit of cowboy in the soul are all requirements. Firlik is a 37-year-old rarity (only around 6 percent of neurosurgeons in the United States are female) who, thankfully, found time in her sleep-deprived life to record in detail some of her more bizarre cases (a construction worker with a nail in his brain, for example) and to think about more abstract problems like memory loss or autism. Not only is Firlik a breezy and engaging writer, she has urgent things to say about the nature of modern medicine and the ethical issues raised in any decision to



operate on the brain. As much as she enjoys the sheer mechanics of taking a drill to someone's skull, she's extremely honest about the personal cost of her long days (sometimes crawling into bed smelling of "boil dust"). Firlik is a compelling guide to this arcane world, seeing the black humor in the OR and the glory in understanding our own command center. —ELAIN/RICHARDSON

Brain surgeon
Katrina Firlik, N
sees herself as
part mechanic
part scientist.

A great review for THE WHISTLING SEASON by Ivan Doig ran in yesterday's (7/9) edition of the *Los Angeles Times Book Review* !!!



Little tale of the prairie

The Whistling Season A Novel Ivan Doig Harcourt: 346 pp., \$25

By Kai Maristed

Kai Maristed is the author of the novels "Broken Ground," "Out After Dark" and "Fall."

July 9, 2006

IF apple pie hadn't gotten there first, might we all be saying, "as American as a one-room schoolhouse"? Although other countries have their analogous cabins of learning (not to mention desserts), the platonic ideal of the one-room schoolhouse seems to encompass a mansion's worth of American history and values: sod-busting pioneer spirit, making do with what you have, ingenuity, grass-roots democracy, public education, Rockwellian high jinks in the schoolyard, gingham and pigtails, short pants and slingshots. This iconic institution forms part of the nation's collective memory, even if most of the population has never seen the inside of one.

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Arguably, such a leitmotif could easily drown in cliché and sentimentality. But along with his much praised, incantatory gifts for evoking quintessentially American prairie life and history, the National Book Award finalist brings to a rather simple and foreseeable plotline a bushel and peck of irresistible characters, each so full of spunk, wit, ambition or sheer orneriness that not one of them will lie down on the page and sleep for a moment.

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benumbed, now all-male household, Oliver has his hands more than full. As Paul, the oldest son, recalls: "I thought of it as like the cauterizing I had read about Civil War doctors doing when they performed amputations, the fierce burn sealing off the wound." The only loss they mourn aloud is that of decently cooked meals and "regular upkeep.... If anything, we practiced downkeep." It is small wonder that nightmares, sleepwalking fits and "indelible dreams" that "stay with me like annals of the Arabian Nights" leave Paul hollow-eyed come morning.

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Legends Before the Fall

Widower meets widow (and her brother) in Ivan Doig's new novel, set in his familiar Big Sky Country.



Nick Craine

THE WHISTLING SEASON

By Ivan Doig.
345 pp. Harcourt. \$25.

By SVEN BIRKERTS

IN "E Unibus Pluram," his darkly diagnostic assessment of the state of contemporary fiction, David Foster Wallace brought himself right up against the breakwall of irony. Is there any way to write nowadays, he asked, that can escape the taint of knowingness, of wised-up cynicism? Though he was mainly focused on representation of aspects of our media-saturated reality, these days the question relates to all literary practice. After such exposures, such knowledge, what sincerity? Pondering the outlook for fiction, Wallace concluded: "The next real literary 'rebels' in this country might well emerge as some weird bunch of anti-rebels, born oglers who dare somehow to back away from ironic watching, who have the childish gall actually to endorse and instantiate single-entendre principles. Who treat of plain old untrendy human troubles and emotions in U.S. life with reverence and conviction."

Wallace, writing in the early 1990's, probably did not have Ivan Doig in mind. But in fact the description fits Doig perfectly. Untrendy, reverent, the author of seven previous novels and a widely celebrated memoir, "This House of Sky," Doig has in recent decades established his standing, along with William Kittredge and Tom McGuane, as a presiding figure in the literature of the American West. He himself repudiates the regional tag, proclaiming in a note to readers posted on his Web site: "I don't think of myself as a 'Western' writer. To me, language — the substance on the page, that poetry under the prose — is the ultimate 'region,' the true home, for a writer."

I understand and second the impulse, though I would add that the language, the "poetry," is so in thrall to the particulars of place, mainly the Montana of his birth and younger years, that the distinction collapses. As the sen-

Sven Birkerts is the author of five books of essays and a memoir. He edits the journal *Agni* at Boston University.

tences create the intimacy of locale, we find that the ends overshadow the means — we are very much *there*.

Doig's new novel, "The Whistling Season," is of a piece with its predecessors. It is, like most of his books, set in rural Montana, and though the author uses a somewhat more recent historical platform — the narrator, Paul Milliron, is looking back from the vantage of 1957 — the main story unfolds over a few seasons in 1909, when Paul was a boy.

The premise is simple — indeed, so simple that part of the suspense is in wondering how Doig will manage to fill out a whole novel with so few dramatic complications. Oliver Milliron, a recently widowed father of three boys, answers a newspaper ad from a widow in Minneapolis seeking employment. "Can't Cook But Doesn't Bite," is the woman's headline tag. Oliver, a wry man with a love of language, can't resist: he takes the bait. When Rose Llewellyn's train arrives, however, he discovers he will have to chew more than he thought he had bitten off, for she has brought a companion — her brother, Morris.

Like everyone else in his family, Paul is startled — first by Rose: "This mourner of Mr. Llewellyn, whoever he may have been, was all but swathed in a traveling dress the shade of blue flame — Minneapolis evidently did not lack for satin — and there did not seem to be an ounce extra anywhere on her pert frame." (The "sprung rhythm" feel of the prose is characteristic.)

Morris, the surprise, is something else again: "He was lightly built, and an extraordinary amount of him was mustache. It was one of those maximum ones such as I had seen in pictures of Rudyard Kipling, a soup-strainer and a lady-tickler and a fashion show, all in one. Almost as remarkable, he was the only bare-headed man in Montana, the wind teasing his dramatically barbecued hair."

Rose and Morris are the principal catalysts of the novel, though what they catalyze is hardly large-scale. Rose, as feisty and willful as she is charming, takes over housekeeping duties (whistling all the while); Morris, owing to the sudden elopement of the community's one teacher, is appointed to the post. The familiar seasons of work, home life and lessons in

the classic one-room schoolhouse continue, only inflected now by the presence of these spirited eccentrics. And what events transpire do not revolutionize so much as deepen our basic understandings. One of those events could be surmised from the moment Rose extends "a smartly gloved hand."

Doig's writerly ambition is less in plotting than evoking, and it is his obvious pleasure to recreate from the ground up — or the sky down — a prior world, a prior way of being. The land and its people — the family, the neighbors — are laid out before us with a fresh, natural openness. We get uncluttered space, the no-nonsense solidity of things, a close-up registering of weather and the movement of the sun (and, under Morris's tutelage, the stars in the night sky and the once-in-a-lifetime coming of Halley's comet). Studying his surroundings, Paul notices the "smooth-buttered plain leading to Westwater," and, nearer, the "round

rims of shadow on the patch of prairie where the horses we rode to school had eaten the grass down in circles around their picket stakes." Earth-seeking writers like Willa Cather and Norman Maclean come to mind.

But this is, as Doig reminds us, not the world beheld directly, but rather captured in the "Rembrandt light of memory, finicky and magical and faithful at the same time." So faithful, I would say, that at times it seems the nuances of things are better known through the distillation of memory than through immediate observation.

PAUL, in 1957, is a man coming to the end of a long career as an overseer of Montana schools. What connects the inhabited past to the present, narratively anyway, is his current mission: he has been charged with announcing the mandated closing of the state's remaining one-room schoolhouses. America is now in the era of Sputnik and ramped-up modernization; the old life is falling to the blade of progress, a loss beyond all but artistic reckoning.

"The Whistling Season" is quiet and unassuming throughout. If the novel carries any shock it is of contrast with the past. Could people have ever been that ... unmodern? That straight-up, or straight-on, or at least compounded of such seemingly simple ingredients? Even where we find chicanery and vile behavior — there is a bit — it's chicanery and vileness of the old sort; we almost pine for it. This takes us back to Wallace's point about the limits of irony and the possibility of 'single-entendre' virtues. Is a novelist like Doig simply writing past the circumstance of the now, high-tailing it back to a time before the Fall (whichever Fall we prefer, 9/11 being the latest by common consensus), escaping deeper engagement with the cultural now? Or is this in fact a triumphant reclaiming of terrain through a leap of imagination? The care Doig takes with language suggests to me the latter — this is a deeply meditated and achieved art. But I also suspect many readers will have to keep fighting off the ironist's defense, a hip condescension toward what seems just too decent to be real, too good to be true. □



Marion Ettlinger

Doig's ambition is less in plotting than evoking, and it is his obvious pleasure to recreate a prior way of being.



DorothyAKC@aol.com
06/15/2006 11:26 AM

Diane Rehm show June 15 '06

To drshow@wamu.org
cc
bcc
Subject Ivan Doig

I have read every one of Doig's books and now look forward to getting my copy of this most recent one, which I just read about in the Post's book section this past year. He is way up there on my list of favorite authors and I'm delighted to be, at this moment, listening to your interview. Thank you!

Dorothy Cockrell



"Del Stutzman"
<delstutzman@earthlink.net>

06/15/2006 11:36 AM

To <dr@wamu.org>
cc
bcc
Subject Re: 1room school

My late husband was a product of a one room school in northeast Washington State during the early 1930's. After the 3rd grade the family moved to Seattle and he was a straight A student the rest of his schooling, he always said it was because of the background in that one room schoolhouse.

Please don't use my name.



doren harley
<marifed@verizon.net>
06/15/2006 11:37 AM

To drshow@wamu.org
cc
bcc
Subject My aunt

Dear Diane and Ivan,

My aunt was the superintendent of rural schools in Park County (more than 30) for nearly forty years. She was required to visit each school a minimum twice a year and going on those visits with her was a very exciting privilege. One school, Pine Creek, which is still open today, was close enough to attend special events, such as the Christmas play and to make friends and spend weekends with their families. All of this is a very special memory for me. She loved the work, the teachers, and the kids. We have a few taped memories of her but certainly not enough. After she and my mother died in 2002 I and my siblings created a scholarship in her name for a student entering early childhood education. She was a very special woman. What a loss of a great American institution.

Marilyn Fedelchak (fed-ul-check)



joel@jhu.edu

06/15/2006 11:41 AM

Please respond to
joel@jhu.edu

To dr@wamu.org

cc

bcc

Subject Q for Ivan Doig

Posted: Thu, 15 Jun 2006 08:41:38 -0700

From: joel@jhu.edu(Joel Schildbach)

To: dr@wamu.org (Diane Rehm)

Subject: Q for Ivan Doig

Message: Writing from Baltimore ---Mr. Doig --- What a pleasure. Please allow me the most backward of compliments --- so good to hear your voice so robust and you sounding so healthy. I say this because I've been reading you for 20 years --- half my life. Given your voice --- the sagacity, the experience --- I figured you were about 150 years old. I've a long standing appreciation. I can remember sitting on the Red Line in Boston 20 years ago, a recent transplant from Oregon (for graduate studies) and reading the opening chapter of "This House of Sky" and looking around thinking, "None of you guys would get this." And there are a couple of deaths in "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" ---- I'd have to rate these as a couple of the most vicious literary sucker punches I've ever suffered. To be honest, I resented the hell out of them for quite a while. Not that I stopped reading. Please, please keep bringing out the novels.Joel Schildbach

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User-agent: Mozilla/5.0 (Macintosh; U; PPC Mac OS X Mach-O; en-US; rv:1.7.12)
Gecko/20050915 Firefox/1.0.7



"Lyn McCarter"
<Lmccarter@novell.com>
06/15/2006 11:47 AM

To <drshow@wamu.org>
cc
bcc
Subject Question for Ivan Doig

As a writer strongly identified as a writer of the American West, what do you make of the "popularity" of romanticized western states (Montana, Wyoming) and the lack of "popularity" of other western states like Idaho, Nevada, and my home state Utah. As a writer myself I have a difficult time interesting agents and publishers in fiction set in these other states.



horserescuer@hotmail.com
06/15/2006 11:45 AM
Please respond to
horserescuer@hotmail.com

To dr@wamu.org
cc
bcc
Subject The Whistling Season

Posted: Thu, 15 Jun 2006 08:45:33 -0700

From: horserescuer@hotmail.com(Sara)

To: dr@wamu.org (Diane Rehm)

Subject: The Whistling Season

Message: I live in Northern Michigan, and LIVE in an old one-room school house!We have a number of them around here, and most have been converted to homes.The atmosphere is wonderful- big old trees with carvings from the many students way up high, documenting the age of the carvings!

Available debug info follows:

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User-agent: Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 6.0; Windows NT 5.1; SV1; .NET CLR 1.1.4322; .NET CLR 2.0.50727)

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|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. Terrorist - Debut | Last Week/
Weeks on List |
| John Updike, Alfred A. Knopf, \$24.95,
0307264653 | /1 |
| Updike plumbs the mind of a young terrorist born
and bred in New Jersey. | |
| 2. Water for Elephants | 3/3 |
| Sara Gruen, Algonquin, \$23.95, 1565124995 | |
| Indies are buzzing about this rich, romantic story
set in a long-ago traveling circus. The #1 June
Book Sense Pick. | |
| 3. Digging to America | 2/6 |
| Anne Tyler, Knopf, \$24.95, 0307263940 | |
| A family drama of cross-cultural adjustment and
acceptance. | |
| 4. The Foreign Correspondent | 4/2 |
| Alan Furst, Random House, \$24.95, 1400060192 | |
| Dateline: Paris, 1939. Genre: Noirish, smoky
thriller. | |
| 5. Suite Francaise | 8/9 |
| Irene Nemirovsky, Knopf, \$25, 1400044731 | |
| Long-lost stories set in German-occupied Paris, | |

by an author exterminated shortly after their completion. A Book Sense Pick.

- 6. Blue Shoes and Happiness** 1/8
Alexander McCall Smith, Pantheon, \$21.95,
0375422722
Precious Ramotswe is back for her seventh delightful adventure.
- 7. Beach Road** 6/6
James Patterson, Peter de Jonge, Little Brown,
\$27.95, 0316159786
A new "Trial of the Century" features a local sports hero accused in a triple murder in East Hampton.
- 8. Everyman** 7/8
Philip Roth, Houghton Mifflin, \$24, 061873516X
Roth movingly and beautifully considers mortality and illness.
- 9. At Risk** 5/3
Patricia D. Cornwell, Putnam, \$21.95,
0399153624
The New York Times Magazine serialized police procedural novel in one volume.
- 10. The Whole World Over** 11/3
Julia Glass, Pantheon, \$25.95, 0375422749
A lovely, engaging follow-up to the National Book Award-winning debut and Book Sense Pick, *Three Junes*.
- 11. Telegraph Days** 14/3
Larry McMurtry, S&S, \$25, 0743250788
In this June Book Sense Notable, a young telegraph operator becomes witness to the iconic Old West.
- 12. The Whistling Season** 1/2
Ivan Doig, Harcourt, \$25, 0151012377
"Flawlessly crafted," says bookseller Stephen Grutzmacher of Passtimes Books, Sister Bay, WI, of this Book Sense Pick.
- 13. The Hard Way** 10/4
Lee Child, Delacorte, \$25, 0385336691
The new fast-paced adventure of former military cop Jack Reacher.
- 14. The Book of the Dead** 9/2
Douglas J. Preston, Lincoln Child, Warner,
\$25.95, 0446576980
The Pendergast brothers battle to the death in the denouement of this collaborative trilogy.
- 15. Dead Watch** 13/4
John Sandford, Putnam, \$26.95, 0399153543

Pacific Northwest Independent Bestseller List

for the week ending June 4, 2006

Fiction

HARDCOVER

- 1. The Whistling Season
Ivan Doig, Harcourt, \$25, 0151012377
- 2. Blue Shoes and Happiness
Alexander McCall Smith, Pantheon, \$21.95, 0375422722
- 3. The Foreign Correspondent
Alan Furst, Random House, \$24.95, 1400060192
- 4. Water for Elephants
Sara Gruen, Algonquin, \$23.95, 1565124995
- 5. Suite Francaise
Irene Nemirovsky, Knopf, \$25, 1400044731
- 6. Digging to America
Anne Tyler, Knopf, \$24.95, 0307263940
- 7. The Book of the Dead
Douglas J. Preston, Warner, \$25.95, 0446576980
- 8. The Hard Way
Lee Child, Delacorte, \$25, 0385336691
- 9. The Art of Detection
Laurie R. King, Bantam, \$24, 0553804537
- 10. The Whole World Over
Julia Glass, Pantheon, \$25.95, 0375422749
- 11. The Bookwoman's Last Fling
John Dunning, Scribner, \$25, 0743289455
- 12. At Risk
Patricia D. Cornwell, Putnam, \$21.95, 0399153624
- 13. Piece of My Heart
Peter Robinson, Morrow, \$24.95, 006054435X
- 14. Book of Longing
Leonard Cohen, Ecco, \$24.95, 006112558X
- 15. Mother
Maya Angelou, Random House, \$9.95, 1400066018

PAPERBACK

- 1. Broken for You
Stephanie Kallos, Grove, \$13, 0802142109
- 2. The Highest Tide
Jim Lynch, Bloomsbury, \$13.95, 1582346291
- 3. The Kite Runner
Khaled Hosseini, Riverhead, \$14, 1594480001
- 4. The Mermaid Chair
Sue Monk Kidd, Penguin, \$14, 0143036696
- 5. Saturday
Ian McEwan, Anchor, \$14.95, 1400076196
- 6. March
Geraldine Brooks, Penguin, \$14, 0143036661
- 7. History of Love
Nicole Krauss, Norton, \$13.95, 0393328627
- 8. Snow Flower and the Secret Fan
Lisa See, Random House, \$13.95, 0812968069
- 9. Until I Find You
John Irving, Ballantine, \$15.95, 0345479726
- 10. The Memory Keeper's Daughter
Kim Edwards, Penguin, \$14, 0143037145
- 11. Never Let Me Go
Kazuo Ishiguro, Vintage, \$14, 1400078776
- 12. Gilead
Marilynne Robinson, Picador, \$14, 031242440X
- 13. Acts of Faith
Philip Caputo, Vintage, \$15.95, 0375725970
- 14. The Shadow of the Wind
Carlos Ruiz Zafon, Penguin, \$15, 0143034901
- 15. The Alchemist (Updated)
Paulo Coelho, HarperSanFrancisco, \$13.95, 0061122416

MASS MARKET

- 1. The Da Vinci Code
Dan Brown, Anchor, \$7.99, 1400079179
- 2. Angels and Demons
Dan Brown, Pocket, \$9.99, 1416524797
- 3. Blood From a Stone
Donna Leon, Penguin, \$7.99, 014303698X
- 4. Lost Lake
Phillip Margolin, HarperTorch, \$9.99, 006073504X
- 5. Blue Smoke
Nora Roberts, Jove, \$7.99, 0515141399
- 6. Bookmarked to Die
Jo Dereske, Avon, \$6.99, 0060790822
- 7. The Devil Wears Prada
Lauren Weisberger, Anchor, \$7.99, 0307275558
- 8. With No One as Witness
Elizabeth A. George, HarperTorch, \$7.99, 0060545615
- 9. Digital Fortress
Dan Brown, St. Martin's, \$7.99, 0312995423
- 10. Strange Affair
Peter Robinson, Avon, \$7.99, 0060544341

Ivan - I wanted you to see this. First week, and
you're already #1!!

Congratulations, and thanks again,
for everything. Thom

From: Thom Chambliss <thom@pnba.org>
Subject: PNW independent Bestseller List, for the week ending 5/28/06
Date: June 1, 2006 10:25:32 AM PDT
To: PNBA Members <info@pnba.org>



The Pacific Northwest Independent Bestseller List, as brought to you by Book Sense and PNBA, for the week ended Sunday, May 28, 2006. Based on reporting from the independent booksellers of the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association and Book Sense.

Titles shown with a mark (•) before the name are not listed on the comparable National Independent Bestseller List for the same week. (Note that for children's books, our regional list is not comparable to the National List, which is broken out into "Children's Interest," "Children's Illustrated," and "Children's Fiction Series." The children's titles we show with a mark (•) are not on ANY of those lists this week.)

The Pacific Northwest Independent Bestseller List, a weekly list of the bestselling books in the independent bookstores of Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana, is available FREE to any newspaper or publication. To publish the Pacific Northwest Independent Bestseller List, contact Meg Smith at the American Booksellers Association at 800-637-0037, x1239 or <meg@booksense.com>.

HARDCOVER FICTION

1. The Whistling Season Ivan Doig, Harcourt, \$25, 0151012377
2. Blue Shoes and Happiness Alexander McCall Smith, Pantheon, \$21.95, 0375422722
3. Digging to America Anne Tyler, Knopf, \$24.95, 0307263940
4. Suite Francaise Irene Nemirovsky, Knopf, \$25, 1400044731
5. Everyman Philip Roth, Houghton Mifflin, \$24, 061873516X
- 6. The Bookwoman's Last Fling John Dunning, Scribner, \$25, 0743289455
7. The Whole World Over Julia Glass, Pantheon, \$25.95, 0375422749

8. The Hard Way

Lee Child, Delacorte, \$25, 0385336691

9. Water for Elephants

Sara Gruen, Algonquin, \$23.95, 1565124995

10. Telegraph Days

Larry McMurtry, S&S, \$25, 0743250788

•11. A Dirty Job

Christopher Moore, Morrow, \$24.95, 0060590270

12. Theft

Peter Carey, Knopf, \$24, 0307263711

•13. Firetrap

Earl Emerson, Ballantine, \$24.95, 0345462920

14. At Risk

Patricia D. Cornwell, Putnam, \$21.95, 0399153624

•15. Through a Glass, Darkly

Donna Leon, Atlantic Monthly, \$23, 0871139375

HARDCOVER NONFICTION

1. Marley & Me

John Grogan, Morrow, \$21.95, 0060817089

2. Cesar's Way

Cesar Millan, Melissa Jo Peltier, Harmony, \$24.95, 0307337332

3. The Omnivore's Dilemma

Michael Pollan, Penguin Press, \$26.95, 1594200823

4. Dispatches from the Edge

Anderson Cooper, HarperCollins, \$24.95, 0061132381

5. My Life in France

Julia Child, Alex Prud'homme, Knopf, \$25.95, 1400043468

6. The Mighty and the Almighty

Madeleine Albright, HarperCollins, \$25.95, 0060892579

7. Wisdom of Our Fathers

Tim Russert, Random House, \$22.95, 1400064805

•8. God Laughs & Plays

David James Duncan, Triad, \$22.95, 0977717003

9. Freakonomics

Steven D. Levitt, Stephen J. Dubner, Morrow, \$25.95, 006073132X

10. The World Is Flat (Updated and Expanded)

Thomas L. Friedman, FSG, \$30, 0374292795

11. The Year of Magical Thinking

Joan Didion, Knopf, \$23.95, 140004314X

12. An Inconvenient Truth

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Published June 11, 2006

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Seattle's Ivan Doig crafts stellar novel

Barbara Lloyd McMichael

The Bookmonger

"The Whistling Season," Ivan Doig, Harcourt, 345 pages, \$25

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Business  

600-523-GUNN (4866)

Lately, outside of the reading that I do for this column, I've been running into books with rather dour life-views. How refreshing, then, to pick up Seattle writer Ivan Doig's new novel, "The Whistling Season," and to know within a few pages that I had found a storyteller who hasn't given up on the human race.

Doig is well known for his evocations of life in the Montana of yore ("Dancing

at the Rascal Fair," "Bucking the Sun," etc.)

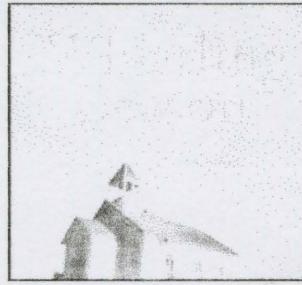
In this latest work of fiction, narrator Paul Milliron is Montana's state superintendent of schools in 1957. The Soviets' launch of Sputnik has made Americans turn a critical eye on their own educational system, and some are saying that one-room schoolhouses have no place in the dawning space age.

But Paul is a product of a one-room schoolhouse, and he is thinking back to when he was 13, the oldest son in a motherless family of three boys.

It is 1909 and his dad, Oliver Milliron, is the widowed patriarch trying to hold together his family, his farm, and on the side a drayage business that aids in construction of the big new irrigation project.

Oliver recognizes his shortcomings - particularly when it comes to cooking - so when he sees an ad in the local paper about a housekeeper seeking to relocate from Minneapolis, he responds. The ad contains an explicit caveat that this housekeeper does not cook, but Oliver hopes that when she arrives she'll take pity upon his boys and will acquiesce to feeding them.

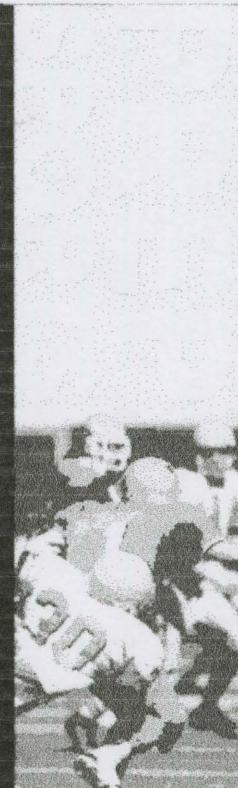
But all preconceptions the Millirons might have had about the widow lady who is coming to work for them quickly vanish when the comely Rose Llewellyn steps off the train from Minnesota, accompanied by her dapper brother, Morris Morgan.

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The charming duo is eager to fit in, and they throw themselves into the work that is presented to them.

Rose turns out to be an excellent housekeeper who whistles while she cleans. Morris tackles any chore he's assigned - cheerfully if not always skillfully. (His University of Chicago education didn't do much to prepare him for such work.)

But then the crotchety teacher at the one-room schoolhouse elopes, and Oliver (who also serves as president of the local school board) puts Morris in charge. Under his inspired tutelage, the local farm kids delve into anthropology, biology, even Latin. The coming of Halley's Comet inspires studies of the solar system and beyond.

This happy scenario cannot last; it is star-crossed by jealousies, dark secrets, and violence.

But the metaphors that Doig discreetly seeds throughout the story seem to germinate and flower when sprinkled with the blood, sweat or tears of the characters, and the lessons begun in Morris' classroom continue well beyond that brief, shining year and those weather-beaten walls.

"The Whistling Season" is meticulously constructed, some might even complain it is too tidy. But I regard this story as a sort of literary harmonic convergence. Just like Halley's comet: what goes around, comes around.

The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Northwest. Contact her at bkmonger@nwlink.com.

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The Whistling Season

By Ivan Doig
Harcourt, \$25
352 pages
ISBN 0151012377

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Doig charts the landscape of the heart

REVIEW BY LESLIE BUDEWITZ

1909, north central Montana. In the year since their mother died, 13-year-old Paul Milliron and his younger brothers have all found ways to cope. When their attentive but overworked father spies a newspaper ad for a housekeeper willing to trek from Minneapolis to Marias Coulee, Montana ("Can't cook, but doesn't bite," reads the headline), change sweeps in like the wind whistling down the Rockies on to the wide, dry prairie.

Rose Llewellyn can't cook, but she can clean—and whistle. And when the teacher in the one-room school runs off with a tent show preacher, Rose's brother Morris Morgan is drafted to replace her. The fifth teacher in four years, Morrie appears to be a dandy with a mind full of trivia. Can he manage three dozen youngsters—including farm boys, ditch diggers' kids, the battling Swedes and Slavs? With a quick wit, a willingness to conspire and an uncanny ability to discern hidden needs and talents, Morrie is an unlikely success. When the state inspector shows up just in time for the school's celebration of Halley's comet, the children rise to the occasion and ensure the school's future. But then Paul unexpectedly discovers the secret of Rose and Morrie's past, and the whistling season threatens to end.

Ivan Doig's memoir of a dryland boyhood, *This House of S~~A~~* (1978), helped define modern Western literature, and he's one of its masters. While other writers revel in Montana's mountains, Doig gives us the plains in all their hard beauty. *The Whistling Season*, Doig's eighth novel, returns to territory he first plowed in *English Creek* and *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*—the deceptively simple stories of lives shaped by the land.

Paul narrates *The Whistling Season* from his perspective nearly 40 years later as the state superintendent who must decide the future of Montana's one-room schools. Adult Paul intervenes only when necessary, to tell the reader what the boy is still learning: that some of our greatest influences are people we loved for just a season.

Leslie Budewitz is a native Montanan who still lives under the Big Sky.

Local Scene

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Hardcover

1. **Suite Française**
Irene Nemirovsky
2. **The Whistling Season**
Ivan Doig
3. **The Omnivore's Dilemma**
Michael Pollan
4. **Digging to America**
Anne Tyler
5. **Possible Side Effects**
Augusten Burroughs

Paperback

1. **Cloud Atlas**
David Mitchell
2. **The Shadow of the Wind**
Carlos Ruiz Zafon
3. **Extremely Loud
and Incredibly Close**
Jonathan Safran Foer
4. **The History of Love**
Nicole Krauss
5. **The Golden Spruce**
John Vaillant

Pacific Northwest Independent Bestseller List

for the week ending June 11, 2006

Fiction

HARDCOVER

1. The Whistling Season
Ivan Doig, Harcourt, \$25, 0151012377
2. Water for Elephants
Sara Gruen, Algonquin, \$23.95, 1565124995
3. Digging to America
Anne Tyler, Knopf, \$24.95, 0307263940
4. Terrorist
John Updike, Knopf, \$24.95, 0307264653
5. Blue Shoes and Happiness
Alexander McCall Smith, Pantheon, \$21.95, 0375422722
6. Suite Francaise
Irene Nemirovsky, Knopf, \$25, 1400044731
7. The Book of the Dead
Douglas J. Preston, Warner, \$25.95, 0446576980
8. The Foreign Correspondent
Alan Furst, Random House, \$24.95, 1400060192
9. Telegraph Days
Larry McMurtry, S&S, \$25, 0743250788
10. Everyman
Philip Roth, Houghton Mifflin, \$24, 061873516X
- 11. The Art of Detection
Laurie R. King, Bantam, \$24, 0553804537
12. The Whole World Over
Julia Glass, Pantheon, \$25.95, 0375422749
- 13. The Husband
Dean R. Koontz, Bantam, \$27, 0553804790
- 14. The Poe Shadow
Matthew Pearl, Random House, \$24.95, 1400061032
- 15. Absurdistan
Gary Shteyngart, Random House, \$24.95, 1400061962

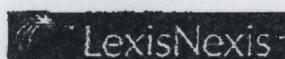
PAPERBACK

1. The Kite Runner
Khaled Hosseini, Riverhead, \$14, 1594480001
2. March
Geraldine Brooks, Penguin, \$14, 0143036661
- 3. The Highest Tide
Jim Lynch, Bloomsbury, \$13.95, 1582346291
4. Snow Flower and the Secret Fan
Lisa See, Random House, \$13.95, 0812968069
5. Never Let Me Go
Kazuo Ishiguro, Vintage, \$14, 1400078776
6. History of Love
Nicole Krauss, Norton, \$13.95, 0393328627
- 7. Broken for You
Stephanie Kallos, Grove, \$13, 0802142109
8. Gilead
Marilynne Robinson, Picador, \$14, 031242440X
9. Until I Find You
John Irving, Ballantine, \$15.95, 0345479726
10. The Memory Keeper's Daughter
Kim Edwards, Penguin, \$14, 0143037145
11. Saturday
Ian McEwan, Anchor, \$14.95, 1400076196
- 12. Zorro
Isabelle Allende, Harper Perennial, \$14.95, 0060779004
- 13. The Alchemist (Updated)
Paulo Coelho, HarperSanFrancisco, \$13.95, 0061122416
14. The Shadow of the Wind
Carlos Ruiz Zafon, Penguin, \$15, 0143034901
- 15. Wicked
Gregory Maguire, Regan Books, \$16, 0060987103

MASS MARKET

1. The Da Vinci Code
Dan Brown, Anchor, \$7.99, 1400079179
2. Angels and Demons
Dan Brown, Pocket, \$9.99, 1416524797
3. The Devil Wears Prada
Lauren Weisberger, Anchor, \$7.99, 0307275558
4. Deception Point
Dan Brown, Pocket, \$9.99, 1416524800
5. Black Wind
Clive Cussler, Dirk Cussler, Berkley, \$9.99, 0425204235

- 6. Bookmarked to Die
Jo Dereske, Avon, \$6.99, 0060790822
7. Skinny Dip
Carl Hiaasen, Warner, \$7.99, 0446615129
8. Blood From a Stone
Donna Leon, Penguin, \$7.99, 014303698X
- 9. Black Powder War
Naomi Novik, Del Rey, \$7.50, 0345481305
10. The Innocent
Harlan Coben, Signet, \$9.99, 045121577X



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Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

July 16, 2006 Sunday

LENGTH: 875 words

HEADLINE: Doig prefers to draw from specific period

BYLINE: Susan Whitney Deseret Morning News

BODY:

Ivan Doig rises early, sometimes at 4 a.m. He's at his desk by 6:30. He sets himself the task of writing 400 words a day. Every afternoon, Doig naps. When he wakes, if he feels energetic, he revises.

Doig makes deadlines for himself and makes himself meet them. "I'm a writer," he says. "So I'm going to work at it." Thus he turns out a book every two or three years.

Doig is amused to report that some people can't believe he doesn't take longer to polish his words, while others are amazed his novels take this long. "I get comments in both directions. Do I get to be the worst of both worlds?"

The true measure of his work, of course, is its quality. Doig has won the Evans Biography Award and has been a finalist for the National Book Award.

Doig's 11th book, "**The Whistling Season**," is just out. Set in Montana in 1909, it is a story about a widowed homesteader and his three young sons. Doig will be in Utah later this week to sign and read from it.

During a phone conversation from the Seattle home he shares with his wife, Carol, Doig talked about "**The Whistling Season**." Though he's busy promoting it, the novel feels like an old sweetheart, Doig said.

He's already 100 pages into his next book -- also with a Montana setting -- this one on an airbase during World War II.

"**The Whistling Season**" began with two completely unrelated thoughts, Doig explained. His first inspiration was the sentence, "Can't Cook, But Doesn't Bite."

Doig saw the words in his mind and realized they could be used in a novel, could be an intriguing ad placed by a woman seeking a job as a housekeeper. Then he realized the person reading the ad could be a man with a messy house and some rambunctious kids. That's how he got the setting and characters.

His second inspiration was for the structure of "**The Whistling Season**." Doig said he liked the idea of "drawing

a big parenthesis in the sky." So he began his book with a schoolroom full of kids looking forward to the 1910 Hailey's Comet. He ends with Sputnik in 1957.

"I like to have a time period to spin my novels on," he said. "You have the natural magic of the comet coming back forever -- and this technical magic, which in essence, as the plot develops, works against what my main character has been trying to do, which is further education in his home county."

Of course "The Whistling Season" called for research. "Research is a man-made glacier," Doig noted.

Over the years he has never thrown away any historical research. His files are well organized and complete.

When he is stuck for dialogue as he is writing, he picks up one of his notecards on dialogue. He refreshes himself on the cadences of the era.

He does the same for scenes. In fact, for this book, he got his best descriptions of a one-room schoolhouse by referring to notecards he wrote for himself in 1983.

It was in 1983, at a book signing, that he met a man who had been to a reunion for three one-room Montana schools. The man offered Doig a copy of the program from the reunion.

The reunion had taken place in 1976. Doig leafed through the program and found it listed the addresses of the graduates. He wrote to 40 of them, asking what their schools looked like and what went on inside. People wrote back.

Of course the time period they described was the 1930s, 20 years after the scene Doig wanted to set in "The Whistling Season." Still, Doig knew which aspects of the one-room school would have remained constant.

One of the things that wouldn't have changed, he figured, was what kids did for fun. He got his scene of the backward horse race from a letter from one of the women who went to the reunion. She wrote that, when she was young on the Montana prairie, she and her sister often raced home while riding their horses backward. Anything for a little excitement, she said.

The memories he collected from the reunion group became a lasting bonanza, Doig said. Of course the memories of his own childhood are also a bonanza when it comes to describing Montana.

Doig grew up on a ranch. He once wrote this autobiography: "Born in White Sulphur Springs, Montana, in 1939 . . . the red-headed only child, son of ranch hand Charlie Doig and ranch cook Berneta Ringer Doig (who died of her lifelong asthma on my sixth birthday). . . ."

"Doig is a graduate of Northwestern University where he received a bachelor's and a master's degree in journalism . . . he also holds a Ph.D. in history from the University of Washington. . . ."

Being a historian gives him a long view. But being a journalist is also good training for a novelist, Doig said. Working on newspapers in Illinois he was surrounded by men who had been war correspondents. To see them write an article in 15 minutes is to know, "Yeah, this is perfectly possible," he said. So Doig writes quickly. But he is not so interested in speed that he doesn't revise and rework. Still, he said, "I can't see where any book I've ever written would have come out any better by taking much longer."

As he settles into his 12th book, Doig seems to have reached a comfortable stride. If you go

What: Ivan Doig book reading and signing

Where: The King's English Bookstore, 1511 S. 1500 East

When: Friday, 7 p.m.

How much: free

Phone: 484-9100

Web: <http://kingsenglish.booksense.com> E-mail: susan@desnews.com

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The Salt Lake Tribune

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Article Last Updated: 7/15/2006 01:58 PM

Secrets of time and place

Novel set in the homesteading era gives author plenty of room to explore

By Ellen Fagg
The Salt Lake Tribune
Salt Lake Tribune

The Whistling Season is the tenth book by author Ivan Doig. It is on track to outsell his previous four books. The headline of a housekeeper's position wanted ad, "Can't cook, doesn't bite," became the spark that ignited Ivan Doig's popular new novel, *The Whistling Season*, which focuses on a turn-of-the-century homesteading family during the year the skies are lit up by Halley's comet.

"I should say I went through 50 years of rural newspapers' classified ads, but it just popped into my head," says Doig, a Montana native transplanted to Seattle, in a phone interview during his book tour through Montana.

Just published last month, the book has already been returned for a fourth printing and is on track to outsell the author's last four books, according to Michelle Blankenship, publicity manager for Harcourt. *The Whistling Season* appears to be one of the summer's breakout books, thanks to the attention of booksellers and strong reviews, including *The New York Times*, where Sven Birkerts lauded Doig's book for its "quiet and unassuming" tone, and deeply meditated language.

"It's the best book he has written for years," raves bookseller Betsy Burton of The King's English. "It's nostalgic without being sentimental, and it's real. I think he writes about reality as we all experience it."

The book is narrated by Paul Milliron, the Montana superintendent of public schools who, during the educational frenzy that follows the 1957 Soviet launch of the Sputnik satellite, returns to visit the one-room schoolhouse he attended. As the administrator considers the fate of the state's smallest schools, he's caught up in memories of his seventh-grade year, when he learned Latin and astronomy from his eccentric teacher, the brother of the family's new housekeeper.

Just as the fictional narrator returns home, Doig's 10th book marks the 67-year-old writer's return to familiar fictional territory. He was raised in rural Montana, which is the homeland for such novels as *English Creek* and *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, as well as the memoirs *This House of Sky* and *Heart Earth*.

As a historian, Doig finds fertile fictional ground in the homesteading era, how it attracted Americans to make a new life for themselves in the West. In *Whistling Season*, Rose, the housekeeper who upturns the Milliron household, and Morris, her mysterious brother who becomes the schoolmaster, move to Montana after being outsmarted by their lives in the Midwest.

In the novel, the narrator's life is marked by the bookends of two heavenly events, the extraordinary sight of Halley's comet as well as the intellectual weight of Sputnik's launch. Yet *Whistling Season* is also grounded by its exploration of the childhood obsession with secrets, as the writer pulls rabbit after rabbit from the hat of the book's plot. "Secrets interest me philosophically," Doig says, "but I wanted those secrets to pile up and up, particularly on the narrator, Paul. I wanted the momentum, the pacing of that."

Thanks to the grounded nature of the book's fictional world, the story offers a keyhole inside the community of a one-room schoolhouse, where younger kids learn from overhearing the lessons of their elders. And one of the book's

central episodes, where a state inspector visits Paul's school to administer standardized tests, seems freshly relevant, nearly 100 years later, in a No Child Left Behind educational era.

Doig is often categorized as a Western regional writer, like such contemporary Montana writers as William Kittredge, Dee McNamer and Rick Bass. Yet he'd rather be known for his attention to language than his attention to a particular place. For an explanation, he returns to a quote from the poet William Carlos Williams: "The classic is the local fully realized, words marked by a place."

Over the course of seven novels, the writer has created a constellation of about 360 fictional characters, some of whom might be reintroduced to play a role in another of his books. "That's pretty much all I've wanted to do," says Doig, a former ranch hand, newspaper writer, editor and university-trained historian. "Besides having a good marriage and a decent place to live, I've wanted to work with the language and tell these stories."

Contact Ellen Fagg at ellenf@sltrib.com or 801-257-8621. Send comments about this story to livingeditor@sltrib.com.

Italian idyll

- Ivan Doig offers a free reading from his new novel, "The Whistling Season," at 7 p.m. Friday on the patio of the King's English Bookstore, 1511 S. 1500 East, Salt Lake. For information, call the bookstore at 801-484-9100.

Ivan,

Thanks so much for the inscribed
Heart Earth! It will always have a
special place in my heart and on my
bookshelf.

all best,
Susan

The June 4, 2006 edition of the *Star Tribune* includes a glowing review of THE WHISTLING SEASON by Ivan Doig!!!

"The prose positively sings in this elegy to the one-room schoolhouse and the kind of community it once fostered."

<http://www.startribune.com/384/story/468324.html>

StarTribune.com | MINNEAPOLIS - ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

With a broom and some chalk

A widower with three sons homesteading in Montana turns to the Want Ads for help, and gets much more than he bargained for.

Brigitte Frase,, Special to the Star Tribune

Over several decades and 10 books (seven novels, a memoir and two essay collections), Ivan Doig has pitched his literary camp in his native northern Montana, just east of the Rockies. **I have never been there, but the dryland farms and towns of his homesteaders rise vividly from his language, which manages to be both muscular and poetic.** Doig, with a nod to Charlotte Bronte, once wrote, "Reader, my story is flirting with you; please love it back." **I'm here to report on my love affair with this magical novel.**

"The Whistling Season" won me over on the first page, which begins with a widower and his three sons sitting at an oil-cloth covered table in the year 1909. The story is narrated by the oldest son, Paul Milliron, who looks back on his childhood home in Marias Coulee from the vantage point of 1957. Sputnik has just scared the beejeezus out of the nation's educators, and Montana's schoolboard appropriations chairman has told Paul, who is now the superintendent, to shut down all the remaining one-room schoolhouses and consolidate. Paul thinks wryly that a tin can in space is serving as "the starter's gun in a race to the school bus."

What sets his memory in motion is a visit to the abandoned little house -- not just a school but the center of the universe to Paul and his brothers, along with about 20 other kids from first to eighth grade.

In that October of 1909, an ad has caught the eye of Paul's father, Oliver Milliron. A widow from Minneapolis wants a housekeeping position. "No culinary skills, but A-1 in all other household tasks." The ad's heading advises, "Can't Cook But

Doesn't Bite." Impetuously, he hires her, though warning his boys "not to get our hopes up too high, although plainly his were elbowing the moon."

That last phrase is a lovely example of Doig's adept way, all through the book, of filtering young Paul's perceptions through the shrewd understanding of his mature self.

The dowdy old bag they expected turns out to be a slight young woman with bouncing curls, warm brown eyes and a sky-blue satin dress. Unannounced, Rose Llewellyn has brought with her a brother, Morrie Morgan, as incongruously fashionable amid the dusty ranchers as she. But the two aren't afraid of hard work. Rose plows full steam into shaping up the Milliron house, whistling all the while, as if the whistling itself could charm dirt into submission.

And when the teacher in the town's one-room schoolhouse elopes, Oliver conscripts Morrie, who seems to know something about everything. Morrie, with his rhetorical and imaginative flights, his inventiveness and sheer delight in everything from spelling to Archimedes, proves to be a pedagogic magician. Through him, the schoolhouse becomes the vibrant heart of the community, and of the novel.

Morrie takes precocious Paul under his wing and teaches him Latin. It deepens his pleasure in English. "Suddenly everything I read was wearing a toga."

The book is an elegy to the one-room schoolhouse and the kind of community it fostered, but it's never weepily nostalgic. Rose and Morrie, the Millirons, their neighbors and every one of the school children are full of color and crackling with life. **The language that renders them swoops and dives like a vigorous song. The precise and satisfying metaphors click into place** as when Morrie's handlebar mustache comes off and he looks smarter somehow, "a blade in a woolly world," a man who can "talk the air full."

These people are so decent and likeable I hated to leave them there, waving to me from the last page. But Doig isn't writing a frontier sit-com where everyone is good and all problems are solved. Paul is plagued by nightmares, and he learns, from the violent wolf trapper Brose Turley and his loutish son, that there were always people "who could drive a nail through a butterfly, too." He finds out Rose and Morrie's secret, a weight he'll have to bear all his life.

The novel's climax, however, is a happy one. For months before April 21, 1910, Morrie has been preparing his class for the appearance of Halley's comet, making its 75-year loop. At the peak of its plumed glory, Morrie's "young scholars" perform a celebratory concert for the parents, with instruments befitting the harmony of the spheres. (Guess; I'm not about to spoil the surprise.) **Like so many of Doig's scenes, it is both funny and affecting.** "Little kids and big, we

blew into the homeliest instrument in the world, with the harps of our hearts behind it."

Sputnik, "this Russian kettle of gadgetry," kindled fear rather than awe. And next time the comet swings around, there will be no country schoolroom band to salute it.

The Whistling Season

By: Ivan Doig.

Publisher: Harcourt, 345 pages, \$25.

Review: The prose positively sings in this elegy to the one-room schoolhouse and the kind of community it once fostered.

Brigitte Frase, of Minneapolis, also reviews for Speakeasy, Ruminator Review, the New York Times and Salon.com.

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Two Harcourt titles, **54** by Wu Ming and **THE WHISTLING SEASON** by Ivan Doig, were included in the *Los Angeles Times Book Review's* summer reading round-up (6/4)!!



<http://www.calendarlive.com/books/cl-bk-summerbooks4jun04,0,6419152.htmlstory?coll=cl-books-utility-right>

SPECIAL ISSUE | THE OTHER SIDE OF SUMMER

45 reasons to stay inside

June 4, 2006

JUNE

The Abortionist's Daughter: A Novel

Elisabeth Hyde

Alfred A. Knopf

The murder of the idealistic director of the Center for Reproductive Choice disrupts life in a small Colorado town.

Boudica: The Life of Britain's Legendary Warrior Queen

Vanessa Collingridge

Overlook

The true story of the female warrior who almost drove the Romans out of Britain in AD 60.

Burning Rainbow Farm: How a Stoner Utopia Went Up in Smoke

Dean Kuipers

Bloomsbury

State and federal officers' attempt to seize a marijuana-growing farm in southwestern Michigan ends in a lethal hail of gunfire.

Cellophane: A Novel

Marie Arana

Dial Press

An entrepreneur and his family struggle with "a plague of truth" that descends on them in the heart of the Peruvian rain forest.

Considering Genius: Writings on Jazz

Stanley Crouch

Basic Books

Collected essays by the esteemed jazz critic and co-founder of Jazz at Lincoln Center on the art and its performers.

The Fellowship: The Untold Story of Frank Lloyd Wright & the Taliesin Fellowship

Roger Friedland and Harold Zellman

ReganBooks

An exposé of the dark side of the great architect's Arizona colony.

Staying Up Much Too Late: Edward Hopper's Nighthawks and the Dark Side of the American Psyche

Gordon Theisen

St. Martin's/Dunne

An essay on the lonely and downtrodden underpinnings of American life as captured in Hopper's iconic painting.

Swapping Lives: A Novel

Jane Green

Viking

A married American woman with children and a high-powered single British career woman trade places.

The Whistling Season: A Novel

Ivan Doig

Harcourt

The story of life on a farm in the dry stretches of rural eastern Montana in the early 20th century.

JULY

54: A Novel

Wu Ming

Harcourt

Cary Grant, Lucky Luciano, the KGB and Britain's MI-6 are intertwined in this satire set in the Cold War era.

The Black Book: A Novel

Orhan Pamuk; translated from the Turkish by Maureen Freely

Vintage

A tale about an Istanbul lawyer whose mystery-loving wife has gone missing.

Breach of Faith: Hurricane Katrina and the Near Death of a Great American City

Jed Horne
Random House

A chronicle of the disaster and its various perpetrators, by the metro editor of the Times-Picayune in New Orleans.

Conservatives Without Conscience

John Dean
Viking

President Nixon's legal counsel rails against Christian fundamentalists, neoconservatives and others he claims have hijacked the Republican Party.

Friendship: An Exposé

Joseph Epstein
Houghton Mifflin

The noted essayist examines our ideas about friendship in its various forms.

History Lesson for Girls: A Novel

Aurelie Sheehan
Viking

Bonded by their love of horses, two teenage girls cling to each other amid the tumult in their Connecticut town in the 1970s.

The Inhabited World: A Novel

David Long
Houghton Mifflin

The ghost of a man who killed himself over his marital infidelities tries to help a Seattle-area woman in the same situation.

The Librettist of Venice: The Remarkable Life of Lorenzo Da Ponte

Rodney Bolt
Bloomsbury

A biography of the Jewish orphan from a Venice ghetto who became a priest, poet and collaborator of Mozart's.

Forty Million Dollar Slaves: The Rise, Fall, and Redemption of the Black Athlete

William C. Rhoden
Crown

An account of the virtual enslavement of black athletes in America's money-minded sports industry.

One Mississippi: A Novel

Mark Childress
Little, Brown

A Midwestern teenager makes new friends in an Alabama town, where he encounters bullying and racism.

Pegasus Descending: A Dave Robicheaux Novel

James Lee Burke

Simon & Schuster

The New Iberia police detective tracks a grifter on the prowl in Louisiana bayou country.

River of No Reprieve: Descending Siberia's Waterway of Exile, Death, and Destiny

Jeffrey Tayler

Houghton Mifflin

The author's account of his harrowing 2,400-mile trip in an inflatable raft on Siberia's Lena River.

The Ruins: A Novel

Scott Smith

Alfred A. Knopf

Young Americans lost in a Mexican jungle turn on each other as a deadly menace stalks them.

Sacco and Vanzetti Must Die!: A Novel

Mark Binelli

Dalkey Archive

The infamous anarchists are imagined as vaudevillians-turned-silent film comics *à la* Laurel and Hardy.

Siddhartha: A Novel

Hermann Hesse, translated from the German by Susan Bernofsky

Modern Library

A new translation of the classic story of an idealistic young Brahmin who learns life's hardest lessons.

Spoiling for a Fight: The Rise of Eliot Spitzer

Brooke A. Masters

Times Books

A look at the New York state attorney general's crusade against corporate and Wall Street miscreants and his bid to be governor.

Talk Talk: A Novel

T.C. Boyle

Viking

A deaf woman and her lover set out to find the con artist who stole her identity.

We: A Novel

Yevgeny Zamyatin, translated from the Russian by Natasha Randall

Modern Library

A new translation of the Russian revolutionary's 1920s satire about a dystopian future world where all work for the collective good.

What It Used to Be Like: A Portrait of My Marriage to Raymond Carver

Maryann Burk Carver

St. Martin's

Carver's long-suffering wife recounts their life together through 25 years of marriage, alcoholism and infidelities.

AUGUST

All Aunt Hagar's Children: Stories

Edward P. Jones

Amistad

The Pulitzer Prize-winning author ("The Known World") presents linked stories of newly arrived country folk and hardened natives in a racially tiered Washington, D.C.

Blood Money: A Story of Wasted Billions, Lost Lives, and Corporate Greed in Iraq

T. Christian Miller

Little, Brown

A Los Angeles Times reporter describes the Bush administration's plan to turn Iraq into a lucrative business opportunity for its supporters.

The Broken Branch: How Congress Is Failing America and How to Get It Back on Track

Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein

Oxford University Press

Galvanized majorities on both sides of the aisle have warped the way Congress was intended to operate — but there's still hope, the authors argue.

Dragon Fire: A Novel

William S. Cohen

Forge

An inside-the-Beltway political thriller by the former secretary of Defense.

A Fictional History of the United States (with huge chunks missing): An Anthology of Original Stories

Edited by T Cooper and Adam Mansbach

Akashic

Amy Bloom, Valerie Miner, Paul La Farge and others offer a counter-narrative of our country's current events.

Heat Signature: A Novel

Lisa Teasley

Bloomsbury

When he learns that his mother's killer is getting paroled, Sam Brown leaves his home in Twentynine Palms to forget his pain on a restless trip up the Pacific coast.

I Feel Earthquakes More Often Than They Happen: Coming to California in the Age of Schwarzenegger

Amy Wilentz

Simon & Schuster

A former Jerusalem correspondent for the New Yorker flees the East Coast and embraces all the contradictions — sun, sand and plenty of sideshows — of living in the Golden State.

The Keep: A Novel

Jennifer Egan

Alfred A. Knopf

A pair of hip cousins renovate an Eastern European castle and hope to turn it into a luxury hotel in a novel-within-a-novel being written by a prison inmate.

LBJ: Architect of American Ambition

Randall B. Woods

Free Press

Newly released tapes and other material inform this portrait of President Johnson as a tragic hero — a more sympathetic treatment than can be found in other recent biographies.

A Madman Dreams of Turing Machines: A Novel

Janna Levin

Alfred A. Knopf

The debut novel by a Columbia University physicist takes us inside the lives of Kurt Gödel and Alan Turing, with a cameo appearance by Ludwig Wittgenstein.

Malory: The Knight Who Became King Arthur's Chronicler

Christina Hardymon

HarperCollins

This substantial biography of Sir Thomas Malory, little-known 15th century author of "Le Morte d'Arthur," also illuminates the life and times of medieval England.

Mask Market: A Novel

Andrew Vachas

Pantheon

Tough guy investigator Burke searches for a missing woman he'd rescued 20 years earlier from a brutal pimp. Now he wonders whether he did such a good job the first time.

New Stories From the South: 2006 {mdash} The Year's Best

Edited by Allan Gurganus

Algonquin

Gurganus gathers together a wide range of stories about love, slavery, hunting and Hollywood by writers including Wendell Berry and Tony Earley.

The Night Gardener: A Novel

George Pelecanos
Little, Brown

Three cops confront old demons when a Washington, D.C., teenager's murder causes an old case the trio had worked on together to resurface.

Orson Welles: Hello Americans (Vol. 2)

Simon Callow
Viking

This follow-up to Callow's "The Road to Xanadu" charts Welles' declining Hollywood career during the 1940s starting with "Citizen Kane" and ending with "Macbeth."

Pound for Pound: A Novel

F.X. O'Toole
Ecco

A posthumously published novel with a prizefighting mise-en-scène, by the author of the short story "Million Dollar Baby."

Seeing Double: A Novel

Patrick Wilmot
St. Martin's/Dunne

A political satire skewering African governmental corruption and U.S. policy in Africa.

Ron Berthel's round-up of June books for his **Associated Press** column includes a mention of **THE WHISTLING SEASON** by Ivan Doig!!

jun2006-----

- | a 1bx
- | BC-FEA--Books-New-June,1396
- | New-books menu features 3-course feast for foodies
- | Eds: spelling of 'Happyness' is cq in graf 31
- | with BC-FEA--Books-June-First novels
- | AP Photos NY634, NY636-NY639
- | By RON BERTHEL
- | Associated Press writer
- | 06-05-2006 10:07
- | Something's cooking in new books _ especially in three volumes about food and the people who create it.
- | Authors Bill Buford, Anthony Bourdain and Michael Ruhlman _ no strangers to a hot stove _ each offer some food for thought in books that visit kitchens and cooks across the country and around the world.
- | Their books are among the latest hardcover nonfiction titles. For readers whose taste turns more to fiction, the list of new books also includes novels by John Updike, Larry McMurtry, Fay Weldon and Meg Cabot.
- | If you can stand the kitchen, get into "Heat" (Knopf). Curious to see how good a cook he could be, Buford cashed in on an opportunity to train under Mario Batali in his three-star Manhattan restaurant, Babbo. Buford describes his relationship with Batali and with other kitchen colleagues before he went to Italy, where he continued his education under some of the chefs who taught Batali.
- | Bourdain, executive chef at New York's Les Halles and host of TV's "No Reservations," shares his opinionated observations about food and adventures with it at home and abroad in "The Nasty Bits: Collected Varietal Cuts, Usable Trim, Scraps, and Bones" (Bloomsbury). In this smorgasbord of essays _ most previously unpublished _ Bourdain delves into restaurants and their kitchens, chefs and staffs. The culinary tour ranges from Bahia (for

grilled piranha) to the Bronx (for a Yankee Stadium hot dog).

¶ In "The Reach of a Chef: Beyond the Kitchen" (Viking), Ruhlman stays closer to home as he visits the kitchens of some of America's top restaurants. It begins in New York at Per Se, one of city's most exclusive and expensive four-star eateries, and makes Chicago, Las Vegas and Rockland, Maine, among its stops. Ruhlman, former host of TV's "Cooking Under Fire," explores and explains new trends and phenomena, but also returns to familiar haunts to see if anything has changed.

¶ In "Terrorist" (Knopf), his 22nd novel, Updike introduces readers to Ahmad Molloy, a high-school student in a declining factory town in New Jersey, who is a devoted Muslim and scornful of self-indulgent American society. When Ahmad takes a job in a furniture store owned by recent immigrants from Lebanon, the stage is set for his becoming involved in a plot that gets the attention of Homeland Security.

¶ A new tale of the Old West is told in McMurtry's "Telegraph Days" (Simon & Schuster). Its narrator is Nellie, a young woman heading West with her brother Jackson. They settle in tiny Rita Blanca, where Nellie is hired as a telegrapher and Jackson becomes a sheriff's deputy and instant _ and accidental _ hero. Nellie takes readers through 50 years of her life, in which she meets Billy the Kid, the Earp brothers, Doc Holliday and other historical figures.

¶ In "She May Not Leave" (Atlantic Monthly), Weldon offers a dark comedy about a middle-class London couple whose household changes big-time with the arrival of their infant's au pair. The charming and bright nanny spoils the couple, bringing order to their household and fine dining to their table. But the baby's great-grandmother, who narrates the story, suspects that something is not quite right with this "perfect" au pair.

¶ Something is not quite right also with Lizzie's boyfriend in "Queen of Babble" (William Morrow). In this, Cabot's first hardcover novel for adults, Lizzie arrives in London to visit her boyfriend only to discover that he has been unfaithful. She sets out for the south of France to join a friend

who does catering work at a chateau. There, Lizzie is hired as the bartender, even though she has no experience tending bar or speaking French.

¶ <

¶ Other new fiction:

¶ "JPod" (Bloomsbury) by Douglas Coupland describes the strange adventures of a video-game developer who is having creative differences with his firm's marketing department and whose mother informs him that she has killed her boyfriend in a dispute about drug money and wants his help to dump the body.

¶ Parental instincts run high in "Swapping Lives" (Viking) by Jane Green, in which an editor in London who longs for motherhood changes places for a month with a mother of two in Connecticut, and in "Baby Proof" (St. Martin's Press) by Emily Griffin, about a married couple whose agreement to remain childless springs a leak when one of them decides otherwise.

¶ An elderly man in a nursing home recalls his days with a traveling circus during the Great Depression in Sara Gruen's "Water for Elephants" (Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill).

¶ Weight loss brings unexpected results for three female friends who agree to diet together in "The Cinderella Pact" (Dutton) by Sarah Strohmeyer.

¶ 1864 is the setting for "Fort Pillow" (St. Martin's Press), Harry Turtledove's fictionalized account of a Civil War battle in which an attack upon a Union fort killed a large number of black soldiers. And 1909 is the year in "The Whistling Season" (Harcourt), Ivan Doig's story of the arrival in a Montana town of a single father's new housekeeper and her brother, who unexpectedly becomes the "schoolmarm."

¶ The future is present in:

¶ _"The Possibility of an Island" (Knopf) by Michel Houellebecq, in which civilization's decline is narrated by the clones of a successful filmmaker who years earlier had joined a cult devoted to creating eternal, burden-free life.

¶ _"There Will Never Be Another You" (Random House), Carolyn See's tale of a dermatologist with a humdrum life who is recruited for a top-secret

project in a near-future when terrorism paranoia runs high.

¶ _ "The Eagle's Throne" (Random House), Carlos Fuentes' dark comedy in which the U.S. president orders a satellite to disable all electronic communications in Mexico when he becomes irked at his Mexican counterpart.

¶ _ "Betrayal" (Ballantine) by Aaron Allston, is the first of nine planned "Star Wars" novels in the "Legacy of the Force" series.

¶ <

¶ Other new nonfiction:

¶ Authors who are also familiar faces on TV news include Anderson Cooper, whose "Dispatches From the Edge" (HarperCollins) chronicles the CNN newsman's coverage of recent events, including the tsunami in Asia, Hurricane Katrina and the war in Iraq; and Tim Russert, moderator of "Meet the Press," whose "Wisdom of Our Fathers" (Random House) contains letters from readers of his 2004 book about his father, "Big Russ & Me."

¶ History is relived in "Kristallnacht" (HarperCollins), Martin Gilbert's account of the systematic destruction of synagogues and Jewish businesses in Germany by Nazi storm troopers in November 1938; and "America: The Last Best Hope" (Nelson Current) by William J. Bennett, the first of two volumes celebrating U.S. history.

¶ Authors with gripes include:

¶ _ Ann Coulter, the political conservative, who attacks liberals for their attitude against traditional religion in "Godless: The Church of Liberalism" (Crown Forum).

¶ _ Calvin Trillin, who targets the Bush administration in his volume of verse, "A Heckuva Job" (Random House).

¶ _ Helen Thomas, veteran political reporter, who offers commentary and observations about how media coverage of the White House has changed — and not for the better — during her 60 years on the job, in "watchdogs of Democracy?" (Scribner).

¶ "The Pursuit of Happyness" (Amistad) is Chris Gardner's account of his journey from poverty to prosperity; "Tabloid Love" (Da Capo Lifelong) is Bridget Harrison's tale of her search for Mr. Right while working as a reporter for the New York Post;

and "But Enough About Me . . ." (HarperCollins) is Jancee Dunn's celebrity-filled adventure as a Rolling Stone reporter.

¶ Also on tap is "Flushed: How the Plumber Saved Civilization" (Atria), W. Hodding Carter's popular history of plumbing and its significance to mankind.

¶ In "Armed Madhouse" (Dutton), British journalist Greg Palast shares observations and revelations about the current world situation, from Bush to bin Laden and from Cheney to China.

¶

^ABC-FEA--Books-June-First novels,0241<

^New first novels<

^Eds: with BC-FEA--Books-New-June<

^AAP Photo NY635<

^By The Associated Press=

¶ Among new first novels:

¶ _"London Is the Best City in America" (Viking) by Laura Dave. A woman returns home in New York to attend her brother's wedding and learns that he is having serious doubts about marriage.

¶ _"Literacy and Longing in L.A." (Delacorte Press) by Jennifer Kaufman and Karen Mack. In Los Angeles, a woman finds escape from her disappointing life by immersing herself in great works of literature.

¶ _"The Chinatown Death Cloud Peril" (Simon & Schuster) by Paul Malmont. The bitter rivalry between real-life 1930s pulp-fiction novelists Walter Gibson ("The Shadow") and Lester Dent ("Doc Savage") fuels this pulp-style adventure.

¶ _"The Birthdays" (Norton) by Heidi Pitlor. Sparks fly when three siblings, all first-time expectant parents, reunite for their father's 75th birthday celebration.

¶ _"Academy X" (Bloomsbury) by Andrew Trees. An English teacher at an elite private high school in New York tries to juggle his teaching duties, pressure from students' parents and his crush on the school's librarian.

¶ _"You're Not You" (Thomas Dunne) by Michelle Wildgen. A college student struggling academically and emotionally becomes a caregiver to an affluent young woman who is terminally ill.

¶

A tip of the hat to the West, true love, the common good

The Whistling Season

By Ivan Doig

HARCOURT; 345 PAGES; \$25

By Stephen J. Lyons

REVIEW

times the works of these authors all blend together so it seems they write the same books over and over.

In "The Whistling Season," East meets West circa 1909 in the pretty form of widow Rose Llewellyn, a housekeeper from the urban wilds of Minneapolis. She arrives in Montana's Marias Coulee as the hire of harried widower Oliver Milliron and his three sons, Paul, Damon and Toby. True to her advertisement, "Can't cook but doesn't bite," Rose can't boil water but she is a dervish in every other domestic category. And readers will quickly anticipate what is inevitable when a widow meets a widower on the lonesome Western prairie. However, Rose's past has a few skeletons that could threaten the coupling.

Arriving with Rose is her unad-

vertised brother, the articulate and cultured Morris "Morrie" Morgan, who plays the role of the Eastern dandy so well that he is a literary scene stealer. Oldest son Paul, the book's precocious 13-year-old narrator, assesses the tweed-clad newcomer. "He was lightly built, and an extraordinary amount of him was mustache. It was one of those maximum ones such as I had seen in pictures of Rudyard Kipling, a soup-strainer and a lady-tickler and a fashion show, all in one. Almost as remarkable, he was the only bare-headed man in Montana, the wind teasing his dramatically barbered hair." Like his "sister" Rose, Morrie has a secret that Doig draws out cleverly until the novel's dramatic conclusion.

When an unexpected teaching vacancy arises at Marias Coulee's one-room schoolhouse, Morrie steps in. His pedagogy is unortho-

dox and his resume is dubious, but he does ignite the minds of his pupils. The gifted Paul even begins Latin lessons after school. Morrie's finest teaching moment comes when he organizes the children to honor the arrival of Halley's comet with a harmonica concert for their astonished parents. There are those long days, though, when Morrie questions teaching rural kids whose academic careers will end with eighth grade. "Sisyphus. I will trade tasks with Sisyphus, straight across. Why Montana? Why didn't I ship out to Tanzania?"

For Doig, the one-room schoolhouse is a symbol of the vanished old-growth West for which he pines in novel upon novel. He advances this idea by narrating the book through a flashback by Paul, who (and here, perhaps, is a bit of Doig irony), more than 40 years later, is now a school superinten-

dent for Montana with the awkward charge of determining the fate of that state's one-room schoolhouses. The conflicted Paul likens the job to forced extinction of rural neighborhoods. "No schoolhouse to send their children to. No schoolhouse for a Saturday-night dance. No schoolhouse for election day; for the Grange meeting; for the 4-H club; for the quilting bee; for the pinochle tournament; for the reading group; for any of the gatherings that are the bloodstream of community."

At times, "The Whistling Season" reads as a young-adult genre book. Tension is built around such innocuous events as the arrival of the school inspector. (Will the children pass their standards? Will Morrie pass muster?) There is the menacing illiterate, fur trapper Brose Turley, whose pugnacious boy Eddie challenges Paul to a race on horseback, riding . . . their

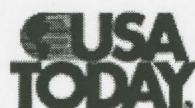
. . . saddles . . . backward! And when the youngest Milliron, Toby, gets his foot crushed beneath a plow horse's hoof, everyone pitches in good-naturedly to help the bedridden boy. When the comet appears Paul says, cheerfully, "Father and I can carry Toby out in a chair."

A little innocence in a novel is a sweet counterweight to today's irony-laden fiction and an enjoyable escape from current realities. Read "The Whistling Season" as a throwback novel to a slower life in which love wins out, wounds heal and community trumps the individual. Another familiar theme also appears. For newcomers Morrie and Rose, the West represents a blank canvas. In Montana they are able to reinvent themselves, bury their secrets and impress the impressionable locals. For Doig, it works every time. ■

Stephen J. Lyons lives in the Midwest. This year he received a fellowship in prose writing from the Illinois Arts Council.

Today's edition of ***USA Today*** includes a wonderful review for THE WHISTLING SEASON by Ivan Doig!!

"[Doig's] writing is as well crafted as the best carpentry.... [THE WHISTLING SEASON is] filled with 'veteran talkers,' as Doig puts it. They're from an era when home entertainment was strictly do-it-yourself. To some, that's hopelessly old-fashioned. To me, it's lovely storytelling, whether you're in Montana or New York."



'Whistling Season': Quietly beautiful

Posted 6/28/2006 9:41 PM ET

By Bob Minzesheimer, USA TODAY

Two writers, Ivan Doig and Norman Maclean, inspired me years ago to visit Montana, which has lots of room for good writing.

I've lived mostly on the East Coast and discovered another world in their books.

Doig's *This House of Sky* (1978) and Maclean's *A River Runs Through It* (1976) are about coming of age.

Both had trouble finding publishers. One New York editor complained that Maclean's story had too many trees in it. But both books have lived long and successful lives and remain in print.

Maclean was boosted by Robert Redford's 1992 movie and by a trendy passion for fly fishing.

Doig, who has written eight fine novels, hasn't found friends in Hollywood. He's not trendy but deserves to be better known. His writing is as well crafted as the best carpentry.

The Whistling Season does what Doig does best: evoke the past and create a landscape and characters worth caring about.

Set on the Montana prairie, it's a story any good teacher, or anyone who appreciates learning, should love. It's about a one-room school and the several kinds of education found in and out of the classroom.

Its narrator is the state school superintendent. In 1957, he is being pressured in the name of progress to close Montana's one-room schools, "the small arks of education such as the one that was the making of me."

The Soviet Union has launched the satellite Sputnik. And as the superintendent, Paul Milliron, puts it, "Science will be king, elected by panic."

Most of the story is set in 1909 when Paul was 13 and one-half of the entire seventh grade at Marias Coulee School.

His father, a widower, is attracted by an ad for a would-be housekeeper that proclaims, "Can't Cook, But Doesn't Bite." He hires the formidable Rose Llewellyn.

She arrives from Minnesota with her mysterious, erudite brother, Morris Morgan, a walking encyclopedia. He has fallen on hard times despite a University of Chicago education that hasn't worn off.

When the school's teacher elopes, Morris is pressed into service. He thrives, teaches Paul Latin and introduces new ideas. He wonders why "Thoreau, if he wanted a full-fathomed pool of solitude, had never joined the Oregon Trail migration and come west."

Paul asks, "Who's Thorough?"

Doig's pace is leisurely, but the plot takes a surprising twist. There's intrigue to be found on the prairie. His best characters are quietly heroic, perhaps too heroic, but the writing carries the novel.

It's filled with "veteran talkers," as Doig puts it. They're from an era when home entertainment was strictly do-it-yourself. To some, that's hopelessly old-fashioned. To me, it's lovely storytelling, whether you're in Montana or New York.



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The

Inkslinger

Volume 14, Number 1

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for Independent Minds

Spring 2006

The Range of Memory:

An Interview with Edward Riddell
and Terry Tempest Williams

by Betsy Burton

BB: Although words don't directly accompany images in *Range of Memory*, they seem to meld somehow in a way that I found astonishing. I tried to imagine Terry Tempest Williams coming to your photographs, Ed, and attempting to script them, or you coming to her text and trying to illustrate it, and that clearly was not what was going on. It was as if both of you were walking the landscape itself and the landscape of memory in totally separate ways and somehow creating a wonderful unity in the process. How did you manage this? Could you tell us anything about the process you went through?

ER: You've hit on exactly what Terry and I are up to. Both of us dislike photography books where words



RANGE OF MEMORY continued on page 23

Pat Bagley, Political Cartoonist with a Monkey on His Back

by Anne Holman

The other day we had the good fortune to run into Pat Bagley, who was in the neighborhood with his faithful dog, Balto. We jumped at the chance to see what's been on his mind of late (Pat, not Balto) and to ask him about his upcoming book,

Clueless George is Watching YOU!

(White Horse Books, \$7.95)

AWH: We understand you have a new book due in July?

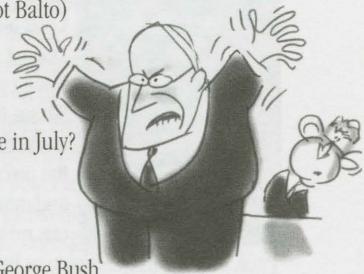
Pat: Yes, it's coming out on July 4th.

AWH: Independence Day?

Pat: Yep, it's the second in what I believe will be a trilogy about our hapless president, George Bush.

AWH: Trilogy?

Pat: Well, we have almost three years left, and while there is an abundance of material, I think I will write about Clueless George and the environment.



POLITICAL CARTOONIST continued on page 2

Calendar of Events

JUNE

Thursday, June 8 – Sunday, June 11: Sale!

Discounts, fun and games all around the block at 15th & 15th. At TKE, our usual **Summer Sale**: hardcovers 30% off (40% for three or more) and everything else 10% off. **Kid's Day**, Saturday, June 10, will feature Ann Cannon, pirates, stories, and some lively line dancing as well (see page 16 for details).

Thursday, June 15, 7 pm

Tribune funnyman **Pat Bagley** is at it again with

Clueless George is Watching You!

Shhh! In order to keep Americans safe from themselves, the Man (Cheney) and the Monkey (Bush) have created the Monkey Spy Agency (MSA)...don't miss Pat's story hour on the patio...



Monday, June 26, 7 pm

Terry Tempest Williams and photographer Edward Riddell will join us for a slide show and reading from their magnificent book on Wyoming mountains, *Range of Memory*.

Wednesday, June 28, 7 pm

Novelist **Sara Gruen** will read from and sign her book, *Water for Elephants* — a circus extravaganza of a novel (we especially love the elephant!). Please join us on the patio.

JULY

Friday, July 7, 10:30 pm to 12:30 am

Robin Goldsby, author of the bumptious, bawdy, laugh-out-loud memoir,

Piano Girl, joins local favorite Emilee Floor in the lobby of the Grand America during the Salt Lake Jazz Festival for an ivory-tickling reading.

Saturday, July 8 – Saturday, July 15

Independent's Week for locally owned businesses all across Utah; see page 28 for details.

Friday, July 21, 7 pm

One of our all-time favorite novelists, **Ivan Doig** will join us to read from and sign *The Whistling Season* (see page 2) — a book which may well prove to be one of our favorite novels of all time. Don't you dare miss it!

Saturday, July 22, 7 pm

Mountains and Plains award-winner **Karen Fisher** will join us to read from and sign her novel, *A Sudden Country* (see page 5).

Tuesday, July 25, 7 pm

U of U graduate **Rae Meadows** will read from and sign her poignant, debut novel, *Calling Out* (see page 5).

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AUGUST

Monday, August 14, 7 pm

Pulitzer prize winning journalist **J.R. Moehringer** will read from his wildly entertaining memoir, *The Tender Bar* (see page 10). Prepare to be wowed—and moved.

Saturday, August 19, 2 pm

Gibbs Smith author **Susan Curtis** will serve up recipes and food from *Southwest Flavors*.

NEW BOOKS

NEW FICTION

Ivan Doig, whose new novel has been hailed by the staff at TKE as his best ever, will visit us **Friday, July 21, 7 pm**. Please join us on the patio for a reading by the West's pre-eminent novelist, followed by a reception and signing.

The Whistling Season, Ivan Doig
A tale of family, of one-room schoolhouses and of Montana dry farming, **The Whistling Season** is also the story of what happens to one family when a housekeeper, who has headlined



her ad with the words, "Can't Cook but Doesn't Bite," is hired by post. We see the world through the precocious and ever-curious mind of

Paul, one of three brothers; as his life and that of his family become entangled with the housekeeper's, we begin to suspect that a whale of a tale is in the offing. It is, and it would be criminal to say more, except to note that this may be the finest—and most enjoyable—novel by a prodigiously talented writer. —BB, Harcourt, \$25

Water for Elephants, Sara Gruen
Jacob Jankowski's life takes a wonderfully strange turn when his parents are killed in a car accident just as he is finishing his veterinary degree at Cornell.



Overcome with grief, he quits school and hops a train headed west. It's the Depression and the train belongs to the *Benzini Brothers Most Spectacular Show on Earth*. As he is swept into the world of the traveling circus, Jacob finds love, deceit, sideshow freaks, and a lemonade-drinking elephant. A wonderful summer read, this novel has been named the Book Sense Book of the Month for June. —AWH, Algonquin, \$23.95

Editor's Note: The author will join us

Continued on page 3

POLITICAL CARTOONIST *continued from page 1*

AWH: Will it have seagulls in it?

Pat: Yes, seagulls have been very good to me!

AWH: Which comes first for a political cartoonist; the chicken or the egg? In other words, does President Bush really look like a monkey or do we think he looks like a monkey because that's how you drew him?

Pat: I wanted to draw him as a jackass but a monkey was easier.

AWH: That's a great segue into the monkey business of our government spying on us. Are you worried that your phones and computers are tapped?

Pat: I wonder sometimes but how can any of us know? I have friends in the UAE [United Arab Emirates] that I talk with via phone and email, and we vent our frustrations with the administration all the time.

AWH: What kind of friends?

Pat: They're librarians.

AWH: Right; they're a scary bunch. So are you in trouble at work?

Pat: Not yet . . .

AWH: What do you think about the idea of impeaching Bush?

Pat: It would be worse because then we'd have Cheney.

AWH: Speaking of Cheney, in your portrayal, George seems like a dupe of the Vice President. Do you really see him that way?

Pat: I don't think he's a puppet but he is dumb.

AWH: What are you going to do if the next president is normal?



Pat: Well as far as I can tell, this president is the only one who has been abnormal. They've all had their issues but each of them has fallen inside the norm. Statistically, Bush is an "outlier".

AWH: If we could switch gears for a moment, I'd like to ask you what else you're working on right now.

Pat: I'm pretty obsessed with this topic at the moment.

Balto chose this moment to get up and wander away so we said our farewells. *Editor's note: If you'd like to get a copy of Pat's new book, he will be at TKE for a pre-release signing party on Thursday, June 15, at 7 pm.*

The Frequent Buyer Club Just Got Easier

Don't you hate going through your wallet trying to find your TKE Frequent Buyer card only to find your coffee card, your bread card, your dry cleaning card, and so on? We do too! So we've created an online system that will keep track of your card for you. The program will work the same way it always did—you will accumulate credit toward a discount and our register will record that discount. The only thing you'll need to remember is your phone number. If you'd like, you can bring your current card in and we will calculate the discount already earned and get you started with the new program. Sound easy? We think so, and we all love the idea of one less thing to carry.

Author! Author!

Do you love hearing authors read? Do you love signed first editions? Then this might be the club for you! TKE is forming **Author! Author!** to encourage healthy participation at our author appearances. How does it work? Simply make a commitment to be on call for attendance at author events—at least one a quarter or four per year. What you receive in exchange is advance notice of upcoming authors, preferred seating at events, access to Advanced Readers Copies (ARCs), and special member discounts at the store. And . . . you do NOT need to be eighteen years old or older to enter. It's open to everyone! Sound good? Then give us a call to sign up or email us at books@kingsenglish.com and put "Author! Author!" in the subject line. We can't wait to hear from you.

Book

American Booksellers Association

Hardcover Fiction



Based on sales from
independent bookstores
across America.

bestsellers

Bestseller List for July 20, 2006

from sales the week ending July 16, 2006

For the Book Sense store nearest you, call 1-888-BOOKSENSE
or visit www.booksense.com

Hardcover Fiction

Last
Week/
Weeks
on
List

- | | |
|--|------|
| 1. Water for Elephants
Sara Gruen, Algonquin, \$23.95, 1565124995
Indies are buzzing about this rich, romantic story set in a long-ago traveling circus. The #1 June Book Sense Pick. | 1/7 |
| 2. Twelve Sharp
Janet Evanovich, St. Martin's, \$26.95, 0312349483
Fans are eating up the new Stephanie Plum mystery! | 2/3 |
| 3. Suite Francaise
Irene Nemirovsky, Knopf, \$25, 1400044731
Long-lost vignettes set in German-occupied Paris, by an author exterminated in Auschwitz. A Book Sense Pick. | 3/13 |
| 4. Terrorist
John Updike, Knopf, \$24.95, 0307264653
Updike plumbs the mind of a young terrorist born and bred in New Jersey. | 4/5 |
| 5. Can't Wait to Get to Heaven
Fannie Flagg, Random House, \$25.95, | 6/2 |

1400061261

More of the down-home charm and humor Flagg introduced in *Fried Green Tomatoes*.

6. Angels Fall - Debut

/1

Nora Roberts, Putnam, \$25.95, 0399153721
Damsel in distress rescued in Wyoming, amid menace and suspense.

7. Break No Bones - Debut

/1

Kathy Reichs, Scribner, \$25.95, 0743233492
The working forensic anthropologist's newest adventure featuring alter-ego Tempe Brennan (TV's *Bones*).

8. Digging to America

5/10

Anne Tyler, Knopf, \$24.95, 0307263940
A family drama of cross-cultural adjustment and acceptance.

9. The Whole World Over

7/7

Julia Glass, Pantheon, \$25.95, 0375422749
A lovely, engaging follow-up to the National Book Award-winning debut and Book Sense Pick, *Three Junes*.

10. Beach Road

9/10

James Patterson, Peter de Jonge, Little Brown, \$27.95, 0316159786
A new "Trial of the Century" features a local sports hero accused in a triple murder in East Hampton.

11. Blue Shoes and Happiness

12/12

Alexander McCall Smith, Pantheon, \$21.95, 0375422722
Precious Ramotswe is back for her seventh delightful adventure.

12. Talk Talk - Debut

/1

T.C. Boyle, Viking, \$25.95, 0670037702
Clever entry from Boyle, whose heroine's identity is borrowed and misused.

13. The Devil and Miss Prym - Debut

/1

Paulo Coelho, HarperCollins, \$24.95, 0060527994
A parable of good and evil, first published overseas in 1992, by the author of the still-bestselling *The Alchemist*.

14. The Whistling Season

10/6

Ivan Doig, Harcourt, \$25, 0151012377
"Flawlessly crafted," says bookseller Stephen Grutzmacher of Passtimes Books, Sister Bay, WI, of this Book Sense Pick.

15. The Foreign Correspondent

8/6

Alan Furst, Random House, \$24.95, 1400060192

Pacific Northwest Independent Bestseller List

for the week ending July 16, 2006

Fiction

HARDCOVER

1. Water for Elephants
Sara Gruen, Algonquin, \$23.95, 1565124995
2. The Whistling Season
Ivan Doig, Harcourt, \$25, 0151012377
3. Twelve Sharp
Janet Evanovich, St. Martin's, \$26.95, 0312349483
4. Suite Francaise
Irene Nemirovsky, Knopf, \$25, 1400044731
5. Digging to America
Anne Tyler, Knopf, \$24.95, 0307263940
6. Can't Wait to Get to Heaven
Fannie Flagg, Random House, \$25.95, 1400061261
7. Blue Shoes and Happiness
Alexander McCall Smith, Pantheon, \$21.95, 0375422722
- 8. Gallatin Canyon
Thomas McGuane, Knopf, \$24, 1400041562
- 9. Telegraph Days
Larry McMurtry, S&S, \$25, 0743250788
- 10. The Brief History of the Dead
Kevin Brockmeier, Pantheon, \$22.95, 0375423699
11. The Whole World Over
Julia Glass, Pantheon, \$25.95, 0375422749
12. Angels Fall
Nora Roberts, Putnam, \$25.95, 0399153721
13. Terrorist
John Updike, Knopf, \$24.95, 0307264653
- 14. Now Is the Hour
Tom Spanbauer, Houghton Mifflin, \$26, 0618584218
- 15. The Art of Detection
Laurie R. King, Bantam, \$24, 0553804537

PAPERBACK

1. The Memory Keeper's Daughter
Kim Edwards, Penguin, \$14, 0143037145
2. History of Love
Nicole Krauss, Norton, \$13.95, 0393328627
3. Snow Flower and the Secret Fan
Lisa See, Random House, \$13.95, 0812968069
- 4. The Highest Tide
Jim Lynch, Bloomsbury, \$13.95, 1582346291
- 5. A Sudden Country
Karen Fisher, Random House, \$13.95, 0812973437
6. March
Geraldine Brooks, Penguin, \$14, 0143036661
7. The Kite Runner
Khaled Hosseini, Riverhead, \$14, 1594480001
- 8. Broken for You
Stephanie Kallos, Grove, \$13, 0802142109
- 9. Espresso Tales
Alexander McCall Smith, Anchor, \$13.95, 0307275973
10. Never Let Me Go
Kazuo Ishiguro, Vintage, \$14, 1400078776
11. Gilead
Marilynne Robinson, Picador, \$14, 031242440X
12. Saturday
Ian McEwan, Anchor, \$14.95, 1400076196
13. The Shadow of the Wind
Carlos Ruiz Zafon, Penguin, \$15, 0143034901
14. Until I Find You
John Irving, Ballantine, \$15.95, 0345479726
- 15. Case Histories
Kate Atkinson, Back Bay, \$13.95, 0316010707

MASS MARKET

1. The Devil Wears Prada
Lauren Weisberger, Anchor, \$7.99, 0307275558
2. The Lincoln Lawyer
Michael Connelly, Warner, \$7.99, 0446616451
3. The Da Vinci Code
Dan Brown, Anchor, \$7.99, 1400079179
4. Angels and Demons
Dan Brown, Pocket, \$9.99, 1416524797
5. Eleven on Top
Janet Evanovich, St. Martin's, \$7.99, 0312985347
- 6. One for the Money
Janet Evanovich, St. Martin's, \$7.99, 0312990456
7. Fire Sale
Sara Paretsky, Signet, \$9.99, 045121899X
- 8. Black Wind
Clive Cussler, Dirk Cussler, Berkley, \$9.99, 0425204235
- 9. Lost Lake
Phillip Margolin, HarperTorch, \$9.99, 006073504X
10. To Kill a Mockingbird
Harper Lee, Warner, \$6.99, 0446310786

BOOKS

Top grade

Ivan Doig rules the schoolyard

by Joe Campana

Convinced that his low count of wolf pelts has something to do with an odd trail of light in the midnight sky, Brose Turley holds Morrie Morgan at knifepoint and demands, "The world ending in fire? Is it?"

Who among us can blame Turley? His superstitious mind may be on to something. After all, things were swell in 1909 in eastern Montana until this rakish schoolteacher named Morgan arrived, bringing with him a fancy-pants vocabulary, brass knuckles, knowledge of Halley's Comet and, worse, some unmanly spectacles to help Turley's willfully ignorant son learn to read. Now things are out of joint. Someone will have to pay.

In *The Whistling Season*,

Montana native Ivan Doig's 11th book, that someone turns out to be not Mr. Morgan but rather Paul Milliron, Morgan's most willing pupil. Forty-eight years after his days as a seventh-grader in Morgan's one-room schoolhouse, Milliron, now the superintendent of Montana schools, is charged with bringing the state's young boys up to snuff in math and science. How to begin? Close all the one-room schoolhouses.

Loathe to raze the sorts of places where he was formed, Milliron nevertheless decides to initiate the purge with the school he attended in Marias Coulee. Driving home in his state-issued car, Milliron recalls October of 1909 as the last time he was at such a loose end. Aged 13, he lived on a homestead with his father and two younger brothers. Their mother had recently died. Obvious emotional problems notwithstanding, the real troubles in the Milliron house are the accumulating dust and the inedible meals. On a whim, Paul's father responds to a classified ad with the headline "Can't Cook But Doesn't Bite." The catchy phrase comes from Rose Llewellyn, a Minneapolis widow who pledges sound morals and "A-1" service in all other domestic tasks. Milliron reassures his hungry and skeptical eldest son, "These want ads, you know, Paul—there's always some give to them." As luck would have it, the "give" works in the other direction as well. Fetching and brisk with her blue satin traveling dress and firm handshake, Rose greets her new employer by asking for a three-month advance and introducing the family to her extravagantly mustachioed brother—Morrie Morgan—who will need a job and a place to sleep. After failing as a lumberjack Morgan takes over as schoolmarm when the despised Miss Trent runs off with a preacher.

You'll often hear Doig compared to giants of Western prose such as Wallace Stegner and A.B. Guthrie, masters whose work has defined an entire genre of American literature. Such lofty praise is all well and good, but it can deter as many new read-

ers as it attracts. If you're among the thus-far deterred, it's time to snatch Doig's eighth novel from the shelf (\$25 be damned), not because we may have a legend in our midst but because what we have is a flinty working man who's great at his job. Doig is an old pro, an expert storyteller. And I watch him work much the way I'd watch a bent-backed woodworker fashion cabinets.

A coming-of-age schoolyard novel is a minefield of clichés. Common in this genre are young love, schoolyard bullies, jeopardized budgets, unorthodox teachers, secret handshakes, fussy administrators and at some point an auditorium of rapt parents—in short, all manner of potential hokum we've seen a million times and promised ourselves we won't fall for again. Thankfully, Doig never asks us to. Sure, much of the above finds its way into the book—this is middle school after all—but Doig surprises at every turn.

Like Robin Williams in *Dead Poets Society*, Morgan summons profundities at will. Held at knifepoint, he tells Brose Turley, "Light is the desire of the universe...The impulse to illumination somehow is written

into the heavenly order of things. The sun, stars, they all carry light, that seems to be their mission in being." Earnest and pedantic as this is, the improbable speech and the implausibly melodramatic tête-à-tête in which it's spoken serve a greater purpose: an inspired, downright cool un-Hollywood ending that will not be disclosed here.

We are carried to that end by Doig's flirtation with but ultimate refusal to succumb to nostalgia and sentiment, and by his understated humor, which takes the bite out of the air in what could easily have become, without the occasional joke, a solemn novel. Describing his gaunt, curmudgeonly Aunt Eunice, Paul says, "Thus far the 20th Century had no effect on her except to make her look more like a leftover daguerreotype." Later, upon meeting Rose, he shares his surprise by saying, "Aunt Eunice always excepted, in our experience widows were massive."

Milliron's mischievous wit and Morgan's well-harnessed flair give a modest elegance to the entire book. One could quibble with some of Doig's minor choices—at times Rose and Morgan compete a bit too much for the novel's center stage, with Rose retreating too far into the background in the middle portion, and there are moments when the text lags like a school year—but these smudges leave only a faint trace. They do not so much as scuff the varnish on Doig's handiwork. □

Ivan Doig reads from and signs copies of *The Whistling Season* at Fact & Fiction Tuesday, July 11, at 7 PM.

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Sunday, July 9, 2006

BOOKS 8

The San Diego Union-Tribune

BIG SKY SENSIBILITIES

Ivan Doig's Montana tale is vast in scope and rich in character

Reviewed by Gail Caldwell

However inaccurate or inconclusive the grouping may be, we tend to equate the idea of Western literature with the place itself: big sky and inclement weather, a sparse human population trying to withstand nature's nonchalant cruelties. There are other trials as well: The adversities of poverty or ill health take on an even harsher cast when they're measured against miles and miles of empty space. Time, too, has to buckle and bend under all that sky — beholden to early mornings and long winter nights, or blizzards or lonely disasters that can stop the clock altogether.

The Western novel, accordingly, moves with a particular interior momentum we tend to overlook in view of the genre's other dramas. Wallace Stegner's fiction epitomized this notion, what with his languid, generous stories as big as the country they tried to lasso and reveal.

Ivan Doig has long been beloved as a Montana writer; his 1980 memoir, "This House of Sky," helped fix the landscape of the modern West in the contemporary American imagination. "The Whistling Season" is his 10th book, an autumnal work in a long writing career, and it feels almost radically old-fashioned, a testament to a way of life as sweetly gone-but-

familiar as railway stations and the Waltons.

The narrator of the novel is a middle-aged man named Paul Milliron, a superintendent of schools in mid-century Montana looking back to his childhood — an interior country shaped by loss and huge vistas and the chance circumstances of any life. So the year of the story itself is 1909, in a little place called Marias Coulee, where 13-year-old Paul and his two little brothers live with their recently widowed father. Oliver Milliron is a taciturn, loving man, a dryland farmer trying to take care of his own land, plow the fields next door and get his boys educated.

When they see a newspaper posting of a widow in Minneapolis seeking a housekeeping position — "Can't Cook But Doesn't Bite" — its no-nonsense humor appeals enough to Oliver for him to overlook the fact that a cook is what they need. So here comes Rose McLewellyn, stepping off the train "at memory's depot" as Paul looks back on the education she brought them all.

"The Whistling Season" takes its title in part from Rose's remarkable temperament. She whistles soliloquy while she cleans the dust-ridden farmhouse from top to bottom, then induces her tag-along

brother to scrub down the filthy chicken house for free. Brother Morrie, with his dandy wardrobe and his propensity for Latin, showed up on the same train, and the pair turn out to have just about everything Marias Coulee needs: While Rose remakes the Milliron boys' spartan male lives, Morrie takes on their education. The one-room schoolhouse of the town has gone through several teachers in five years, each leaving for the easier prospect of marriage, and Morrie, with his University of Chicago pedigree and his infinite curiosity, seems superior to all his predecessors.

Within no time he has all his charges — from first-graders to hulking boys on the verge of 16 — engaged in spelling bees and Newtonian physics, learning a tailor-made curriculum that will serve them well and even save them.

Because this novel is in many ways a paean to the sheltering world of local, rural schooling, Morrie can't help being its star. He protects the class bully from his father, a loathsome wolf trapper with the remarkable name of Brose Turley, and he probably changes the boy's



THE WHISTLING SEASON

Ivan Doig
Harcourt, 345 pages, \$25

So life is more eventful than you might imagine in turn-of-the-century Montana, what with its fine skies and whistling housecleaners and renegade teachers, and Doig tells a tale that can warm on you with the same gradual insistence as Morrie and Rose. The narrative voice is by turns evocative and unsettlingly anachronistic. Looking back on his youth, Paul remembers that "Winters were the tree rings of homestead life, circumferences of weather thick or thin, which over time swelled into the abiding pattern of memory." Yet this same voice can sometimes sound fussy and dated in its narrative earnestness (where characters "exult" instead of speak), pedantic on its dictates about education. Best to leave such excesses to Morrie, who has the style to pull it off as well as the mystery to counterbalance it.

And there is indeed a mystery inside "The Whistling Season," gratifying in its eventual revelations but oddly hollow in its resolution. This problem, too, bears traces of the old-fashioned Western — a world where men were men and the shadows disappeared at high noon, even if the menace behind them never really went away.

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