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

By Christopher Plummer

Knopf, 648 pp., $29.95

By Elysia 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.

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 the point of being wordy, naughty and nice.

**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'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 former 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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By Christopher Plummer

Knopf, 648 pp., $29.95

**Review**

By Bob Minzesheimer

Montana

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True then; true now.
**Ivan Doig**'s richly detailed novel tells the story of a boy and his teacher in 1909 Montana

**Tiny school, giant legacy**

**IVAN DOIG/Whistling Season**

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 (206-624-6400; www.ubookstore.com).
- At 6:30 p.m. June 10 at Third Place Books in Lake Forest Park (206-692-1333; www.thirdplacebooks.com).

**Compelling story lost in the translation**

"The Attack" by Yasmina Khadra; translated from the French by John Cullen

Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, 257 pp., $16.95

**REVIEWED BY VALERIE RYAN Special to the Seattle Times**

Yasmina Khadra is the nom de plume of former Algerian Army officer Mo­hammad Bitat. 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 Swallow of Kabul," he has since retired, moved to France and revealed his true identity.

In "The Attack," a prominent surgeon, Amin, and his family are challenged by a suicide bomber. The story begins with Amin and his wife, Mariam, at the hospital. They are joined by their son, a young intern, who is assisting in the operating room. Amin is a dedicated and respected surgeon, known for his kind nature and attention to detail. His wife, Mariam, is supportive and loving, and they are deeply devoted to their children.

The story takes place in a hospital in a war-torn country, where Amin has been called upon to assist with a suicide attack on the premises. The attack is carried out by a young man who detonates a bomb in the hospital, killing several people and wounding many more. Amin, in the midst of the chaos, manages to save a young girl who is injured in the explosion. He is hailed as a hero, but the cost of the attack is too high.

The aftermath of the attack is a time of mourning and reflection. Amin is haunted by the faces of those who died and the families who lost loved ones. Mariam, too, grapples with the reality of death and the fragility of life.

The novel is a powerful exploration of the human condition, of the choices we make and the consequences of those choices. It is a story of love and loss, of strength and vulnerability. The characters are well-drawn and the setting is vividly rendered. The language is clear and concise, yet evocative and emotionally charged. "The Attack" is a compelling read that will stay with you long after you have turned the last page.
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 Mohamed 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 Kabal,” he has since retired, moved to France and revealed his true identity.

In “The Attack,” a prominent surgeon, Tahar 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 dictation distracts 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 his 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 advice? (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 newfangled 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, poised and erudite, quickly fills in for the 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. 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 combination 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, underrcurent 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.
**Books**

**Roundup: Memoirs**

**The Afterlife**
By Donald Antrim
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 193 pp., $24.95

Is there life after death? Yes, for the survivors of the deceased. And the "afterlife" isn't exactly a bazaar of laugh, except when it is. Donald Antrim's droll narrative struggles in the wake of his mother's death for an unsettingly exhilarating read. In these comicoving essays written for The New Yorker and now gathered as a non-linear memoir, Antrim outlines 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. —Joceyn McClurg

**Seminary Boy**
By John Cornell
Doubleday, 332 pp., $24.95

John Cornell's well-written Seminary Boy brings alive a hidden world of religious faith and its adherents. Cornell, 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, Cornell was 13 in 1951 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. Cornell captures the priests as individuals: some good, some generous, some petty — and one a sexual predator. Although he rejected the priesthood, Cornell conveys his education, discipline and opportunities his years at Cotton College provided. —Deirdre Donahue

**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 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 reconnects the details of these weekday jobs, but beware of the level of self-absorption that Goodwillie dwells on in his relationships and hopes for the future. —Carol Memmott

**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
Harpercol, 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 was "too many trees in it." But both books have lived long and successful lives and remain in print.

Read by Bob Minsheimer

Review by Robert Redford

Too many trees in it. But both books have lived long and successful lives and remain in print. Maclean was hosted by Robert Redford's 1992 movie and a trendy passion for fly fishing. Doig, who has written eight novels, hasn't found that kind of audience. He's written mostly on the East Coast and discovered another world in their books.

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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.

"Can't Cook but Doesn't Bite." So begins the employment request of a housekeeper strangely keen to quit civilized 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
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A rave review for THE WHISTLING SEASON by Ivan Doig ran in the June 9, 2006 edition of the Rocky Mountain News! Doig read at The Tattered Cover in Denver last night and drew a crowd of over 100 - tonight he'll be in Boulder!!

"THE WHISTLING SEASON is one of those novels that sets it 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."

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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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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 hailer 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
The Whistling Season

By Ivan Doig.

345 pp. Harcourt. $25.

By Sven Birkerts

I n "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 witching, who have the childish gall actually to endorse and instantiate single-entendre principles. Who treat of plain old unruly human troubles and emotions in U.S. life with reverent human impulses.

Wallace, writing in the early 1990's, probably did not have Ivan Doig in mind. But in fact the description fits Doig perfectly. Untruly, reverently, 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 sentences 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 his 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 1987—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—"finally Rose." This mourner of Mr. Llewellyn, whoever he may have been, was all but swathed in a traveling dress the shade of blue-fame—Minneapolis evidently did not lack for satins—and there did not seem to be an ounce extra anywhere on her pert frame. (The "spring 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 soap-strainer and a lady-dicker 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 revolve so much as develop our understandings. One of those events could be surmised from the moment Rose extended "a smartly gloved hand."

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

Hmn, 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.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/08/AR2006060801423_pf.html
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._
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 eulogistic 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 pigtailed, 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 ornerness 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 cautering 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 wonders 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 together startle the reader out of his usual reveries. The hereafter of the book is a tale of his new job: He has no experience in a classroom, but he is a widely practiced kind, industrious, gentle, persistent warmth, its complete freedom from cynicism — 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."

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— 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 “bone dust”). Firlik is a compelling guide to the arcane world, seeing the black humor in the Of and the glory in understanding our own center.

—ELAINE RICHARDSON

READING ROOM

Brain surgeon Katrina Firlik 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 !!!
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 civilized 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.

If you want other stories on this topic, search the Archives at latimes.com/archives.

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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.

THE WHISTLING SEASON
By Ivan Doig. 345 pp. Harcourt. $25.

By SVEN BIRKERTS

I n "E Unibus Pluram," his darkly diagnos tic assessment of the state of contempo rary 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 knowing ness, of wisened 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 princi ples. 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, prob ably did not have Ivan Doig in mind. But in fact the description fits Doig perfectly. Unstendy, reverent, the author of seven previous novels and a widely celebrated memoir, "This House of Sky," Doig has in recent decades established himself right up against the breakwall of ironic, 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 discov ers she 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 cata lysists 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 con tinue, only inflected now by the pres ence of these spirited eccentrics. And what events transpire do not revolu tionize so much as deepen our basic un derstandings. One of those events could be surmised from the moment Rose ex tends "a smartly gloved hand."

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

MONICA MILLER

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

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

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 Milli on, 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 she will have to chew more than he thought he had bitten off, for she has brought a companion — her brother, Morris.

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Doig's writerly 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

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
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.
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)
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
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.
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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Hardcover Fiction

Bestseller List for June 15, 2006

Based on sales from independent bookstores across America.

Hardcover Fiction

1. **Terrorist** - Debut
   John Updike, Alfred A. Knopf, $24.95, 0307264653
   Updike plumbs the mind of a young terrorist born and bred in New Jersey.

2. **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.

3. **Digging to America**
   Anne Tyler, Knopf, $24.95, 0307263940
   A family drama of cross-cultural adjustment and acceptance.

4. **The Foreign Correspondent**
   Alan Furst, Random House, $24.95, 1400060192

5. **Suite Francaise**
   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**  
Alexander McCall Smith, Pantheon, $21.95, 0375422722  
Precious Ramotswe is back for her seventh delightful adventure.

7. **Beach Road**  
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**  
Philip Roth, Houghton Mifflin, $24, 061873516X  
Roth movingly and beautifully considers mortality and illness.

9. **At Risk**  
Patricia D. Cornwell, Putnam, $21.95, 0399153624  

10. **The Whole World Over**  
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**  
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**  
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**  
Lee Child, Delacorte, $25, 0385336691  
The new fast-paced adventure of former military cop Jack Reacher.

14. **The Book of the Dead**  
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**  
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, 156512-1-995
5. Suite Francaise
Irene Nemirovsky, Knopf, $25, 11000-1--1-731
6. Digging to America
Anne Tyler, Knopf, $24.95, 03072639-1-0
7. The Book of the Dead
Douglas Preston, Bantam, $25.95, 0385336691
8. The Hard Yell
Lee Child, Delacorte, $24.95, 0385336691
9. The Art of Detection
Laurie R. King, Bantam, $24, 055380-1-537
10. The Whole World Over
Julia Glass, Pantheon, $25.95, 0375422749
11. The Bookwoman's Last Fling
John Dunning, Scribner, $25, 074-3289455
12. At Risk
Patricia D. Cornwell, Putnam, $21.95, 039915362-1-
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 Mermaid Chair
Sue Monk Kidd, Penguin, $14, 0143036696
4. Saturday
Ian McEwan, Anchor, $14.95, 1400076196
5. March
Geraldine Brooks, Penguin, $14, 0143036661
6. The History of Love
Nicole Krauss, Norton, $13.95, 0393328627
7. Snow Flower and the Secret Fan
Lisa See, Random House, $13.95, 0812968069
8. Never Let Me Go
Kazuo Ishiguro, Vintage, $14, 1400078776
9. Gilead
Marilynne Robinson, Picador, $14, 031242440X
10. Acts of Faith
Philip Caputo, Vintage, $15.95, 0375725970
11. The Alchemist (Updated)
Paulo Coelho, HarperSanFrancisco, $13.95, 0061122416
12. The Shadow of the Wind
Carlos Ruiz Zafon, Penguin, $15, 0143034901

13. Bookmarked to Die
Jo Dereske, Avon, $6.99, 0060790822
14. With No One as Witness
Elizabeth A. George, HarperTorch, $7.99, 0060545615
15. Digital Fortress
Peter Robinson, Avon, $7.99, 0060543431

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
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, 0060543431
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
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<td>Ballantine</td>
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<td>At Risk</td>
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<td>Putnam</td>
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**HARDCOVER NONFICTION**

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<td>Tim Russert</td>
<td>Random House</td>
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<td>David James Duncan</td>
<td>Triad</td>
<td>$22.95</td>
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<td>Freakonomics</td>
<td>Steven D. Levitt, Stephen J. Dubner</td>
<td>Morrow</td>
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Seattle's Ivan Doig crafts stellar novel
Barbara Lloyd McMichael


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.
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.
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 Sky (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

Current best-sellers at Santoro's Books, 7216 Greenwood Ave. N., Seattle, 206-784-2113 or www.santorosbooks.com

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, 0446376980
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, 0812968069
2. March
   Geraldine Brooks, Penguin, $14, 0143036661
*3. The Highest Tide
   Jon 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

* indicates a bestseller

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

LOAD-DATE: July 16, 2006
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."

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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,

[Signature]
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."


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 Hardyment
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 Vachss
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 lbx
¶ 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._

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Other new nonfiction:

Authors who are also familiar faces on TV news include Anderson Cooper, whose "Dispatches From the Edge" (HarperCollins) chronicles the CNN newsmen'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;_
"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.

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

Unapologetic nostalgia and a refreshing lack of irony are at the core of most of Ivan Doig's fiction. From "English Creek," to "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" and now "The Whistling Season," a typical Doig book harks back to a more innocent American West — specifically, Montana — in which agrarian families toiled hard on the land and lived off-the-grid behind a protective shield of Big Sky mountains. These eloquent writings echo a prevailing mantra of many "Western writers": they will quickly anticipate what is inevitable when a widow meets a widower on election day; for the Grange meeting; for the 4-H club; for the quilt bee; for the pinochle tournament; for the reading group; for any of the gatherings that are the bloodstream of the West for which he is a symbol of the vanished old-growth prairie. However, Rose's past reads as a young-adult genre throwback novel to a slower pace in which love wins out, wounds heal 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.

... 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 counterpart 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.

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 superintendent 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
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.
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.

*The Range of Memory: An Interview with Edward Riddell and Terry Tempest Williams*  
*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.

**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,

**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 give a reading, book discussion and a chance to taste some of her delicious southwestern dishes from her new book, *Southwest Flavors*. Please join us in the shop’s kitchen.
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
Jacob Jankowski's life takes a wonderful turn when a 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

Editors Note: The author will join us on the patio for a reading, followed by a reception and signing. It will visit us Friday, July 21, 7 pm.

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! Sounds 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.

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 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.

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.

AWH: What are you going to do if the next president is a puppet? Pat: I don't think he's a puppet but he is dumb.


AWH: Right; they're a scary bunch. So are you in awe of Cheney? Pat: Yes, seagulls have been very good to me!

AWH: Which comes first for a political cartoonist; the words, or the image? Pat: The words, and that of his family become entangled 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 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 on the patio for a reading, followed by a reception and signing. It will visit us Friday, July 21, 7 pm.

The Inkslinger
Bestseller List for July 20, 2006

Based on sales from independent bookstores across America.

Hardcover Fiction

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.

2. Twelve Sharp
   Janet Evanovich, St. Martin's, $26.95, 0312349483
   Fans are eating up the new Stephanie Plum mystery!

3. Suite Francaise
   Irene Nemirovsky, Knopf, $25, 1400044731

4. Terrorist
   John Updike, Knopf, $24.95, 0307264653
   Updike plumbs the mind of a young terrorist born and bred in New Jersey.

5. Can't Wait to Get to Heaven
   Fannie Flagg, Random House, $25.95,
More of the down-home charm and humor Flagg introduced in *Fried Green Tomatoes.*

6. **Angels Fall** - Debut  
Nora Roberts, Putnam, $25.95, 0399153721  
Damsel in distress rescued in Wyoming, amid menace and suspense.

7. **Break No Bones** - Debut  
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**  
Anne Tyler, Knopf, $24.95, 0307263940  
A family drama of cross-cultural adjustment and acceptance.

9. **The Whole World Over**  
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**  
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**  
Alexander McCall Smith, Pantheon, $21.95, 0375422722  
Precious Ramotswe is back for her seventh delightful adventure.

12. **Talk Talk** - Debut  
T.C. Boyle, Viking, $25.95, 0670037702  
Clever entry from Boyle, whose heroine's identity is borrowed and misued.

13. **The Devil and Miss Prym** - Debut  
Paulo Coelho, HarperCollins, $24.95, 0060527994  

14. **The Whistling Season**  
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**  
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*
   - Sam 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, 0375422722
5. *Gallatin Canyon*
   - Thomas McGuane, *Knopf*, $24, 1400041562
6. *Can't Wait to Get to Heaven*
   - Fannie Flagg, *Random House*, $25.95, 15000061261
7. *The Brief History of the Dead*
   - Ke· Fin Brockmeier, *Pantheon*, $21.95, 0375422722
8. *Gilead*
   - Marilynne Robinson, *Picador*, $25, 0312020707
9. *S.F. Ten*
10. *The Secret History*
    - Kate Atkinson, *Back Bay*, $13.95, 0316010707
11. *Gone Girl*
12. *1Q84*
13. *The Remains of the Day*
    - Kazuo Ishiguro, *Vintage*, $13, 0375750900
14. *Lacuna*
    - Don DeLillo, *Random House*, $25.95, 0375422722
15. *The Spark of Life*
    - Lawrence Wright, *Knopf*, $24.95, 1400041562

### PAPERBACK

1. *The Memory Keeper's Daughter*
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*
6. *March*
   - Geraldine Brooks, *Penguin*, $14, 0143036661
7. *The Kite Runner*
   - Khaled Hosseini, *Riverhead*, $14, 1594480001
8. *Broken for You*
   - Stephanie Kallos, *Grove*, $13, 0802122141
9. *Espresso Tales*
   - Alexander McCall Smith, *Anchor*, $13.95, 030725973
10. *Never Let Me Go*
    - Kazuo Ishiguro, *Vintage*, $14, 1400078776
11. *Gone Girl*
12. *The Secret History*
    - Kate Atkinson, *Back Bay*, $13.95, 0316010707
13. *The Spark of Life*
    - Lawrence Wright, *Knopf*, $24.95, 1400041562
14. *The Brief History of the Dead*
    - Ke· Fin Brockmeier, *Pantheon*, $21.95, 0375422722
15. *Lacuna*
    - Don DeLillo, *Random House*, $25.95, 0375422722

### MASS MARKET

1. *The Devil Wears Prada*
   - Lauren Weisberger, *Anchor*, $7.99, 0307275558
2. *The Lincoln Lawyer*
3. *The Da Vinci Code*
4. *Angels and Demons*
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*
8. *Black Wind*
9. *Lost Lake*
10. *To Kill a Mockingbird*
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 superstitions 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 at 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 satin traveling dress and firm handshake, Rose greets her new employer by asking for a month advance and introducing the family to her pete a bit too 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 rape 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 pensive 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 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 dagnabbitpeachine." 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 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 satin traveling dress and firm handshake, Rose greets her new employer by asking for a month advance and introducing the family to her pete a bit too much the way I'd watch a bent-backed woodworker fashion cabinets.

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

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BIG SKY SENSIBILITIES

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

Reviewed by Gail Caldwell

H

owever inaccurate or inconclusive the grouping may be, we tend to equate the idea of Western literature with the place itself: big sky and incluent weather, a sparse human population trying to withstand nature's manifold 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—battles 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, stream-of-consciousness 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 auutumnal work in a long writing career, and it feels almost radically old-fashioned, a testament to a way of life as swiftly 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 loose vistas and the chance circumstances of any life. So the year of the story itself is 1985, in a little place called Maris Coyle, where 13-year-old Paul and his two little brothers live with their recently widowed father. Oliver Milliron is a taciturn, loving man, a dry-land 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 Minnesota seeking a housekeeping position—"Can't Cook, Won't Serve. Doesnt Bite. Nonsense humans, good enough for Oliver to hunch him to overlook the fact that a cook is what they need. So here comes Rose Llewellyn, 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 softly 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 daddy's wardrobe and his propensity for Latin, showed up on the same train, and the pair turn out to have just about everything Marias Coyle needs: White Rose makes 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 Latin-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 laconic, wool-trapper with the remarkable name of Bruce Turley, and he probably changes the boy's life when he gives him reading glasses. He sees in Paul a scholar waiting to be born, and begins tutoring him in Latin every afternoon—a language that, Paul remembers, "gave my mind a place to go, and to make itself at home for a good, long while." Morrie is made even more exotic by the traits that don't match his fancy clothes and high ideas: When Turley shows up at the schoolroom looking for trouble, Morrie quietly reaches into his pocket, and out comes a hand wearing braces lamblly.

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 up with you the same gradual insistence as Morrie and Rose. The narrative voice is by turns evocative and unsettlingly anarchistic. Looking back on his youth, Paul remembers that "Winters were the tree rings of homestead life, circumstances of whether thick or thin, which over time swelled into the abiding pattern of memory." Yet this same voice can sometimes sound funny and dazed in its narrative carelessness (where characters "exist" instead of speak), pedantic on its districts 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 aside "The Whistling Season," gristly in its eventual revelations but oddly hollow in its revolution. 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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