A striking characteristic of Northwest Indian art is that it often lets two or more figures occupy the same space simultaneously. Haida artists, for example, have no qualms about carving four animals into the same piece of stone, or portraying one creature as both a wolf and a whale. Ivan Doig's new book, Winter Brothers, is an attempt to craft a narrative on a similar principle; it incorporates two men's diaries into one essay with the hope of forging their lives into a single image. The two diarists who thus become "winter brothers" are Doig himself, and James Gilchrist Swan, one of the first white men ever to spend a lifetime in the Pacific Northwest. Winter Brothers is a curious blend of historical investigation and personal confession—a book intended not only to reconstruct a 19th century pioneer's experience of the Northwest, but also to give Doig a fuller understanding of his own. It generally succeeds at both; by using the landscape to link his own experience to that of the pioneer, Doig gives new currency to the past and discovers new ways of perceiving the present.

The book is structured as a daily record of Doig's three-month journey through Swan's diaries. One of the things Doig does during those three months is to tell us Swan's life story as it emerges from the thousands of handwritten pages he is reading. The process by which Doig reconstructs Swan's experience is interesting in itself, for it involves actively reimagining, and not simply recounting, what happened during the fifty years recorded in Swan's diaries. Swan is a prolific author of his surroundings, but he rarely says anything about himself; figuring out what was really on his mind on a given day becomes, for Doig, a matter of interpretation.

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Ivan Doig forges a link with the Northwest past

by Geoffrey Cowley

A talk with
Ivan Doig

Brandt Morgan conducted the following interview with Seattleite Ivan Doig shortly before the publication of Winter Brothers, his second book.

Morgan: This House of Sky received high praise all over the country, including reviews in Time, The New York Times, and a nomination for the National Book Award. Did you expect this kind of critical acclaim for your first book?

Doig: No way!

Morgan: What were your expectations?

Doig: Well, certainly not very much at first. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich was the thirteenth publishing house that looked at the sample. But in the end things took care of themselves far beyond my expectations. And a lot of it was just absolute, sheer, golden luck as far as I can see. The editor who took it on, Carol Hill, very much liked the manuscript as she received it, suggesting only a few changes. And then there was an editorial bloodletting at Harcourt Brace about two months after the manuscript came in. Out of that shuffle around, Carol Hill emerged as editor-in-chief and took the book up with her.

Morgan: How did the book get to Time?

Doig: I think through Carol Hill, although I've never been entirely sure. She took the step you only take every so often of sending books and cover letters around to a few selected editors saying, "This is a book we don't want you to miss."

Morgan: OK, I can see how luck had a hand in getting it off the ground, but obviously the book has something special. What do you think it is?

continued on page 4
to Swan stems from a desire to understand the force that drew him westward. Dog’s impression of that, as a young man, Swan fearfully abandoned a comfortable life in Boston in order to spend the rest of his days in the untamed Northwest, “reinventing its landscape and its native cultures.”

Swan’s story begins in 1850, as he leaves his wife, two children, and a way of life unsuited to his spirit, to head west on a schooner bound for San Francisco. Following a year of San Francisco docks life and a brief trip to Hawaii on a potato boat, Swan joins a half-band of madcap oystermen and moves north to Shelwater Bay, where he spends three years “stretching ever more distance between himself and the 220 years of New England rectitude in his family line.” During the years at Shelwater, Swan befriends the Chinese and Chehalis Indians, drinks a good deal of rye whiskey, and eats not only salmon and crab but also beaver, crow, owl, and skunk.

By 1859 he has moved up the coast, farther north, further west, to the tip of the Olympic Peninsula. Except for occasional travels, Swan spends the rest of his life, the next forty-one years, on the north shore of the peninsula between Neah Bay and Port Townsend. He lives among the Makah Indians—a hearty seagoing people who hunted grey whales from hand-crafted canoes—learning their customs and their language, collecting their art, and recording their legends.

A westcoaster himself, though only from Montana, Doig regards his own decision to settle on the peninsula as evidence of a quality he has in common with Swan. He quotes himself from an earlier diary:

Perhaps the choice of place is in our body chemistry simply as other patterns of care, regulating us to dislike brussels sprouts, the color pink, and square miles of pavement. The west of America draws some of us not because it is the newest region of the country but because it is the oldest, in the sense that the landscape here—the fundament, nature’s shape of things—more resembles the original continent than does the city-nation of the Eastern Seaboard or the agricultural factory of the Midwest.

This shared impulse toward the west provides a significant link between two men separated by a century, but Doig’s attempts to link himself to Swan on the basis of shared personal qualities often seem overly self-conscious. The observation that he and Swan are “bearded watchful men both” is, for instance, one that we could have been left to make for ourselves. And when Doig quotes a review of his first book (This House of Sky from The New York Times Book Review) in order to suggest that he, like Swan, is one of those people who are “never part of the time they were born into” and who “walk their generations as strangers,” he begins to sound a bit self-indulgent. (Doig’s sentimentalities about his beard and his temperament would be less distracting if he weren’t addressing us in his own person. But he is, and when he falls into these modest but romantic characterizations of himself he inevitably subverts whatever connection he seeks with the less self-conscious Swan.

Fortunately, though, Winter Brothers does more than sentimentalize the personal similarities between its two main characters; it also leads to a new apprehension of the geography they share. When Doig surrender’s himself to the task of reconstructing Swan’s life, and to reimagining the Northwest in light of Swan’s experience of it, he leads us to a new understanding of what it means to live here. The Indian lore recorded in Swan’s diaries leads us back to a world where the sun rises every morning by bounding stars off his head and trampling darkness under his feet, where rainbows are anchored to the earth by potentially dangerous claws, and where moors manifest the luminous spirits of dead chiefs.

In the Northwest that emerges from Swan’s diaries, no detail of the landscape is insignificant—everything is charged with life and meaning. A wet rock exudes an Edinoo campfire is evidence of an angry spirit. When the aurora borealis glows in the northern sky, the Makah know that their Alaskan relatives—a race of little men, very strong, who are dressed in skins—and “can dive down into the sea and catch a seal or a fish with their bare hands”—are building bonfires to keep warm. The crown of the blue bird links humanity to the birds, and links the Makah to their past.

The Makahs explained to Swan that the blue jay was the mother of a rascal Indi- an named Kwahlie. She had asked him to fetch some water, saying that she wished he would hurry, because she felt as if she were turning into a bird. Kwahlie ignored her and went on making the arrow he was at work on. While she was talking she turned into a blue jay and flew into a bush. Kwahlie tried to shoot her, but his arrow passed behind her, glowing over the top of her head, ruffling up the feathers, as they have always remained in the head of the blue jay.

Needless to say, the Northwest has changed considerably during the 130 years since Swan first encountered it; concrete and steel have overtaken the ground that was then alive with giant fir and spruce and cedar. But rather than mourning what has changed since Swan wrote his diaries, Doig learns to see what remains through the eyes of a pioneer. The west may be less western than it was, but westernness remains an accessible state of mind. Doig recovers it, and hence his fraternity with Swan, by reminding himself that in watching the gulls fly across the horizon he is witnessing life exactly as Swan saw it.

Swan’s westernness, his capacity to live and think in relation to the immediate conditions of a place, is, as it turns out, not easily drowned by chain saws and bulldozers. Whether our eyes are focused on a craggy western horizon or on a pink tombstone sign, it can govern what we see.
Doig: I wish I had little bottles of ingredients sitting all around me so I could pour them into every book. The late Robert Kirch of the L.A. Times called my father an American hero. My father could never have dreamed of that sort of thing. And I was surprised by that, too. I don’t think of it as a heroic book, and I certainly didn’t set out to write it that way. But I did try to focus on the people and their language as closely as I could. It’s a book I worked on by sentence time and again across those years. If I did it right, there’s something happening in just about every sentence, and I think that’s what carries it.

Morgan: Winter Brothers is a very different book—a 90-day diary of your thoughts juxtaposed with the diaries of a 19th century West Coast pioneer. Isn’t it an odd subject for you to have chosen?

Doig: It perhaps was. I have always been taken with James Swan’s diaries, though—the sheer accomplishment of forty years of day-by-day notations on his life. And I wanted a chance to do some traveling and thinking back and forth between Swan’s time and ours. So he seemed to me a kind of guide: a character by which I could try to get at some thinking about the West.

Morgan: Did you ever consider it a literary risk?

Doig: Yes, very much so. And the book wrote itself much differently than House of Sky. It kept changing and becoming, really, until February of this year. Twice after I thought I was finished with it, I found myself saying, “Well, this really doesn’t belong here,” and then I’d jerk things out. And other things got amplified. The problem was most aware of was how not to lose the reader as I did all that shifting back and forth in time, to find a pace which would carry the reader along and yet not befuddle him. So I was seeking a tension and balance. It’s a much more technically risky book, I know, but I wanted to see what I could do with it. And I had a contract for it, so it was one of those rare chances in my life.

Morgan: You had a contract before you really got started?

Doig: Yes, I had a $15,000 advance on it—probably the easiest advance I’m ever going to get. I was given extraordinarily free reign by Carol Hill. She never asked to see a prospectus or anything. It was just a few sentences described over lunch. Eventually, out of conscience, I did her a one-page prospectus and then sent in the first 100 pages that were (as usual, with my manuscript samples) fairly shaky. Again, she sent more money and said, “Go ahead and finish it, then we’ll talk about editing.”

INTER BROTHERS is a much more technically risky book, I know, but I wanted to see what I could do with it. And I had a contract for it, so it was one of those rare chances in my life.

Morgan: Is there any indication yet as to how Winter Brothers will be accepted?

Doig: It’s surprising me. It’s gone through its first printing of 10,000. The size of that printing shocked me. Harcourt has done another 2,500 as a second printing. I got a call from the regional sales rep today who told me Pacific Pipeline here in town has taken 800 of those. It’s still six days and some minutes till publication date yet, so the book is traveling rapidly through its first 12,500.

Morgan: Do you think much of that is a dividend from This House of Sky?

Doig: I’d say House of Sky’s skirt is broad and long and broadened and everything else yes. It’s traveling extensively on the strength of the first book.

Morgan: What are your long-range hopes for Winter Brothers?

Doig: There’s an enormous “sophomore jinx” in this publishing business, and if there’s any single major thing Winter Brothers can do for me, it would be to get me past that.

Morgan: “Sophomore jinx”?

Doig: Well, take a case such as mine where you write what is really your first trade book. It’s a National Book Award nominee and probably the strongest emotional story I will ever have to tell. So people say, “That’s a wonderful highwire act—what’s he going to do next?” I’ve been a professional writer for twenty years now, and I was not really haunted by what I was going to do next. But the question was to try to beat the game if I could and have a second book which would not have reviewers moaning and groaning.

Morgan: How do you top This House of Sky—or how do you write something even comparable to it?

Doig: I hope whatever books I do will be notable for their language as much as anything else involved in them. In one sense, Winter Brothers was a dice shoot. If it didn’t get me past the “sophomore jinx,” then I had tried a book I wanted to try. And I can always rationalize that it was such a hell of a wonderful technical job that none of those blind reviewers saw me pull all those cards out of my sleeve.

Morgan: You say you’ve been writing twenty years. What’s your daily routine?

Doig: I start writing at 7:30 in the morning and work until about 11:30. I try to write between 1,000 and 1,200 words a day, five days a week. In the afternoons I will revise or do research. I don’t let myself get more than a day or so off my quota. If I simply can’t do more than 800 words one day, I’ll hack, work, say I’ve sagged in the quality of the words the first time around is not all that important. The more vital thing is to get something down on paper.

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Doig: Yeah, I think there are vast advantages. I'm even told so by East Coast writers I hear from. I've been trying for a Guggenheim for the last three years in a row, so I've been in correspondence with people like Geoffrey Wolff, Michael Arlen, Edward Hoagland, and Peter Matthiessen—people who've agreed to recommend me. And there's a kind of chorus that comes from writers back there, saying, "You're really well off in Seattle, you're better off out of this." I find it personally more efficient—and I guess more efficacious as well—to be kind of holed up here.

Morgan: Is there a community of writers here you keep in touch with?

Doig: No, and I think that's individual idiosyncrasy. I know fewer writers in Seattle than I do in Missoula. Whatever real writing chars I have, the exception being Archie Satterfield, with whom I have lunch about every two months, the guys I'm in closest touch with are the "Missoula Gang,... as they are called in the dedication of Winter Brothers; people like Richard Hugo, Jim Welch, Bill Kittredge, A.B. Guthrie, Norman Maclean. I see them once or twice a year, we have a hell of a good time together, an evening of gossip and catching up, and go back to our typewriters. And that's about right for me.

Morgan: So getting together with other writers is not that important?

Doig: For me it's not. I tend to wonder, though, if those of us who are writing out here don't tend to hole up a bit more. The climate gives us a chance to do that. You go to Missoula and the opposite happens. Energy flows thigh-deep in the streets back there, and it's disheartening to me how people get as much writing done as they do.

Morgan: Does the Western landscape also help to bring out the creativity?

Doig: Yes, in me it starts the language perking. Again, I'm kind of a technician about all this. I can't simply lie back and let it wash over me. For example, I just returned from Montana where I went out with a friend for three days under the Rocky Mountain Front. The Rockies were just looming over us—these mile-long reefs with dramatic canyons split in between each one of them. Stunning, enormous country. But while I indeed feel the enormity and grandeur of it, at the same time as a writer I keep thinking, God, how can I catch that?

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Domestic nightmare: the punishment and crime of housewife Francine Hughes

The Burning Bed
By Faith McNulty
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich $12.95

by Ann Rule

T
HE BURNING BED oozes outrage, frustration, tears, and horror. Francine Hughes was twenty-nine years old when she killed her ex-husband, Mickey, by pouring gasoline on him as he lay in a drunken stupor and then tossing a match onto the bed. She has never denied her actions. And though it would seem, on the surface, that this was a "murder most foul," that nothing human being might do to another warrants such a painful death, I found myself snarling halfway through Faith McNulty's chronicle of a battered wife, "Burn him! Do it now!"

A computer program couldn't have produced a more likely target for a wife abuser than pretty, slender Francine Hughes. Both Francine's mother and grandmother were products of a bitterly poor Kentucky-Missouri background. The women in her family learned early on that a wife stays home, cares for her children, and makes with what little money a husband brings home after a stop in a tavern on payday. To the men of that clan, defeated by a losing fight, to be masculine was to dominate women; there was no one lower in the pecking order. And the men accepted it as their only reality.

Francine's family moved north to Michigan where it was rumored that there was gold money to be made by prospectors in the 1940s. In truth, toil in the onion and potato fields brought meager salaries; there were many moves to rundown towns provided by farm owners, and the social stigma of being "hillbillies." Her father drank, but that was "normal". He did not become an abusive drunk until later—and then Francine's mother tried to hide the bloodied bruises from her children. Propitiately, perhaps, Francine's earliest memory is of a Halloween where her new winter coat and all her candy barrier failed the threat where her drunken father and uncle had dropped their cigarettes.

She has a happy little girl, proud to be called pretty, proud that she could color and read, proud that she could be trusted to look after a small brother she had lifted away from her and was critically injured by a car. Whatever work for the Washington State Department of Public Assistance.

This little girl who believed that women did what they were told was given to see Mickey Hughes, a handsome, rain-haired, high-school dropout who, along with his brothers born to a poor, often absent indulgent mother and a weak father. Mickey had always gotten what he wanted, and he wanted Francine.

Ann Rule, author of The Stranger Beside Me (W.W. Norton), a book about Ted Bundy, is a former Seattle policewoman and columnist for the Washington State Department of Public Assistance.

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Doubtful of her commitment to him, but overwhelmed by the huge high school in Jackson, Francine dropped out in the 10th grade and, reluctantly, married Mickey Hughes. "I was scared to death. All I could think of...was that I was closing a chapter in my life—too soon.

The sixteen-year-old bride and the eighteen-year-old groom (who was unemployed) moved in with his parents—a pattern that would repeat itself many times.

The first violence was only weeks away. Manically jealous, the bridegroom regularly ripped Francine's clothing to pieces if she wore anything but drab, loose garments. She soon learned what it was like to be hit in the face with a man's fist.

His parents pretended nothing had happened. She could not go home; her leaving meant a financial crisis. The son with older children had to support her. After each battering, each black eye, Mickey would be contrite and beg for forgiveness. The pattern was set.

Poorly educated, too young, consumed by the feeling that she wasn't trying hard enough to make the marriage work, Francine Hughes was trapped. Over the next thirteen years, she bore Mickey Hughes four children; her pregnancies seemed to validate his manhood, but he was never around when labor began. There were too many moves to relate him, too many times when Mickey quit his job, too many bills, too many nights when the children had no food, and so many beatings for Francine that the number and the intensity are impossible for the rational mind to comprehend. Mickey drank, and was unfaithful.

The children were literally starving when Francine went to the welfare office to beg for help. Told that she would have to be divorced to get assistance, Francine divorced Mickey. It did no good; he refused to accept the divorce and moved in with her to enjoy the largesse of the welfare support.

Even so, Francine might have been able to break away, but Mickey suffered cataclysmic injuries in an automobile accident and his family persuaded her that it was her duty to nurse him back to health. The woman whose sympathy for others was her undoing. Agreeing. Mickey Hughes recovered, and began a reign of terror over Francine and the children. Local police patrolmen knew their address by heart; they often saw Francine with bruises and cuts, heard Mickey's threats. But statute made it impossible to arrest him unless he actually hurt her in their presence.

Occasionally, he battled the responding officers and was hauled off to jail. More often, nothing was done. Time after time, Francine fled in the night to Mickey's parents' home, where they hid her from her raging husband, but they did nothing to help her either.

Incomprehensible as it might seem—except to police and social welfare agencies—there is very little that officers can do to protect participants in family fights. Francine Hughes attempted to get help from the courts, welfare, the police, and there was no help forthcoming, beyond a patrol car dispatched after each beating. She could not run away; Mickey vowed to follow and kill her, and she never doubted that he would. Francine had fallen through the loopholes in the system, and her desperation grew beyond all measure.

McNulty details in agonizing specifics the torment Francine Hughes suffered over her thirteen years with Mickey, as he systematically attempted to destroy her. The children suffered. Even the family dog gaped in fear as Mickey sat on a frigid Michigan night as she struggled to give birth to a litter outside in the cold because Mickey would not allow her in the house.

What was happening to Francine Hughes was so horrible that no one seemed to want to think about it at all. That the frail woman did not crack sooner is, perhaps, the biggest puzzle of The Burning Bed.

Francine had tried religion, but found no salvation there. Finally, she somehow gathered enough courage to return to school. There, she found a measure of self-worth: she wanted something. The precious hours in school meant everything to her. But Mickey's inadequacies could not allow her even that; the fact that Francine was realizing a modicum of her long-sublimated ambitions for education drove him to frenzy.

And it ended in his death—not hers.

On March 9, 1977, Mickey Hughes subjected Francine to a series of beatings. Mickey threw the family's dinner on the floor, rubbed the jumble of garbage in her face. terrorized the children, and sent Francine to bed hungry. He'd done all of this before many times. But, on this night, he tried to take from her the last of her self-respect. He showed her tear up her school books, her painstakingly written reports, and then he forced her to read them. As she suffered through the humiliation, he demanded that she submit to intercourse. To save her children, she complied. And then Mickey Hughes died.

Francine Hughes knew that the only way that she and the children could escape was to destroy the rest of Mickey Hughes's life at that point. That Mickey was part of everything made some kind of bizarre sense to her. Mickey, who had never consciously hurt living thing before.

McNulty's strength in The Burning Bed is her willingness to tell the story through Francine Hughes' eyes; she wisely chooses not to moralize or comment. And Francine's story is gripping. McNulty's writing is spare, non-intrusive, and meticulously researched. The reader is there, reliving the desperate years of shame and terror and submission. Francine Hughes' life was a horror and a tragedy, a story that has to be told—never to be forgotten.

There is a hero in the book, it is Arvon Greydams, a vice-president of a major company who found to save Francine Hughes from a murder conviction. After thirteen years, the marriage was broken and Francine Hughes was able to continue on with her life. She is a remarkable woman, and Francine Hughes is a remarkable woman, and Francine Hughes is a remarkable woman. The Burning Bed is a remarkable book; but it is a book that shows more than any other thus far exactly what a battered woman endures. It is a book that tests our compassion for years and years and years. Since the book was published, faith McNulty—and Francine Hughes—deserve respect for all the things they have had to go through without any help from any other source.
Escape From Alaska
In a Stolen Canoe

THE SEA RUNNERS
By Ivan Doig
Athenaeum; $13.95

BY HENRY MAYER

Ivan Doig has written a stirring novel of peril and endurance. Its energetic pace and stunning turns kept me reading far later into the night than is wise for a man with a new baby in the house, even though ultimately, the book is a disappointment.

In a very short time (“The Sea Runners” is his third book in five years) Doig has won a reputation as the most impressive Western writer of our generation. His first book, “This House of Sky” (1978), is a richly detailed, contemplative memoir of his Montana boyhood that treats the passage of generations with unusual subtlety and grace. Its successor, “Winter Brothers” (1980), probes the imaginative border be-

 tween past and present by mingling the biography of a 19th century Puget Sound pioneer with Doig’s own exploration of the same territory.

Both books take as their underlying subject the special quality of the Western experience. “The Sea Runners,” however, Doig’s first novel, sacrifices his unique perspective for a salt-sprayed version of a familiar genre Western.

The story is about four Swedish indentured servants who in 1852 escape from the Russian fort at New Archangel (now Sitka), Alaska, and set out in a stolen Tlingit canoe for the American settlement at the south of the Columbia River, 1200 miles southeast along the treacherous, island-strewn North Pacific coast.

In this audacious, wintry voyage Doig gives us a glib intellectual, Melander, bold enough to conceive the scheme and charismatic enough to entice others into it; the quiet, even chily hunter and oarsman Karlsson, and the cherubic-looking thief, Braf. The trio prepares quietly for months, cleverly co-opts the oafish blacksmith, Wennerg, who tumbles to the plan, and finally makes the break.

Once the quartet is aloft—and clear of the Russian masters who sensibly give only token pursuit, we know from dozens of movies that this disparate crew is destined to undergo social transformation along with physical hardship. Unfortunately the character-types never grow into fully realized people, and despite some heavy manipulation by the author, the social drama never crystallizes into a story of parallel strength.

We get instead only a generalized sense of human aspiration pitted against the coastline’s intractable wildness. Natural forces dwarf the men even as their daring enterprises them, and their effort to “dodge life’s odds” moves to an ignominious and exhausting conclusion.

Doig, I believe, is a writer best suited to the literature of actuality. Even this novel takes its inspiration from a very sketchy report of a real incident, and Doig’s wholly imaginary, but authentically furnished account is based on considerable research. He has the historian’s interest in causation, in the way that individuals are caught up in larger forces even while making their choices that affect their destiny.

He also has the researcher’s fondness for sharing all that he has learned, and the narrative is studied with charming little lectures about maps and currents, place names, native cultures and colonialism. Here his writing is secure, reflective and filled with striking images.

The dialogue, however, falters, sometimes becoming too witty in the contemporary screenplay style or too self-consciously archaic. Although the action sequences have propulsive excitement, there is a stumbling quality to the narrative, a quirky syntax that serves no discernible purpose.

“The Sea Runners” succeeds well enough as entertainment and will probably make a fine movie, but it lacks the ruminative power, the artistic vision that has made Ivan Doig’s previous work so remarkable.

Henry Mayer is a Berkeley writer and critic.
Winter Brothers:
an intimate view of our region,
seen through the eyes of
two men generations apart.
Thoughts Regarding Winter Brothers
by Jean Waikingshaw, Producer

When one works with an on-camera personality who happens to be a resolute Scotsman with a dry wit, amusing moments are bound to occur. Ivan Doig, second generation Scot, was not about to become a "personality kid" while reciting excerpts from his book, Winter Brothers, in our latest film for KCTS/9.

As we filmed Ivan in the center of the street in Port Townsend, I asked him if he could possibly appear a bit more natural. "How can I seem natural?" he asked. "I'm really not used to standing in the center of the street on a cold rainy day reciting lines from my book."

Yet Ivan was completely himself throughout the filming and it is for this very reason he did such a remarkable job. He is offbeat, surprisingly relaxed, and an excellent conveyor of his own prose. In this film based on his book—a book reviewers have called "a classic," "a masterpiece," a versatile and daring feat of writing"—Ivan carries the show.

Winter Brothers intertwines the diaries of James Gilchrist Swan, a colorful early settler on the Olympic Peninsula, with Doig's own journal. The result is a book which records the daily growth of a strange and powerful bond between the long-dead Swan, or "coastal nomad," and the sensitive modern writer, Ivan Doig. Winter Brothers has a complex construction as it shifts back and forth in time. In creating the film, we had an almost insurmountable challenge in our opening scenes: how to reveal to our viewers that this is a film about a book which includes diaries from yesteryear. I hope—after many edits and re-edits—that we have finally come up with an opening which not only draws in the audience, but also gives them some idea of what is happening in this complex plot structure.

In his book, Ivan used the landscape to link his own experience to that of the pioneer Swan. Of his writing, one reviewer said, "Doig weaves Swan's words into his own narrative...yet it is his own beautiful writing, original and filled with poetic imagery, revealing the true romantic, that makes this a grand book."

And it was the potential of combining Ivan's writing with photographer Wayne Sourbeer's intimate and intuitive perceptions of landscape and place that first inspired this film and makes the program such an aesthetically exciting experience.

The book reviewer for the New York Times wrote of Winter Brothers, "...it is a gorgeous tribute to a man and a region unjustly neglected here-to-fore." We trust the film based on this exceptional book justly captures the essence of Ivan Doig's tribute to our beautiful Northwest as seen by two sets of eyes 100 years separated.

Excerpts From Winter Brothers

DOIG: Four decades of Swan's diaries, some two and a half million pen words. Opening these pages of Swan's years is like entering a room filled with jugglers and tumbrels and swallowers of flame, performance crowding performance.

SWAN: The grandeur of the scenery about Cape Flattery, the wild and varied sounds which fill the air, from the dash of water into the caverns and fissures of the rocks, mingle with the living cries of innumerable fowl...all combined, present an accumulation of sights and sounds sufficient to fill a less superstitious beholder than the Indian with mysterious awe.

DOIG: There is a kind of border crossing allowed us by time: special temporary passage permitted us if we seek out the right company for it. Some guide such as Swan willing to lead us back where we have never been.

SWAN: Mr. Fitzgerald of Sequim Prairie, better known as "Skip," walked off the wharf near the Custom House last night and broke his neck. The night was very dark and he mistook his way...Mr. Tucker is very ill with his eye, his face is badly swollen. This evening I got Kichook's Cowitchian squaw to milk her breast into a cup, and then I bathed Mr. Tucker's eye with it...Yesterday my cat killed all my chickens. So this morning I shot the cat.

DOIG: Swan was born two decades or so before my own great-grandfather, but more and more I feel that we dwell in a community of time as well as of people.
 Trial by sea and by time.

VO Van Doig writes a clear, clean prose, simple but powerful, which is the hardest to achieve. He sculpts language, wielding verb and noun like hammer and chisel, carving sentences with the skill of a craftsman. This House of Sky and Water, Brothers, two meditations on American Westernness, prove his originality as stylist and liker. Currently, in The Sea Runners (Atheneum, $13.95), he has also become a splendid lyric storyteller with his first venture into fiction—an adventure novel, at that. Observe: "Melander you would have spied early. Top- look man withリンク link so that he seemed to be all long sections and hinges."

Clumps of wan light, warms taken through chinks in the overcast, now would pinto the forest flanks.

Now is the winter of 1852 at New Archangel, Baranof Island, Russian America. Melander, a Swedish seaman indentured to the "seamren" for four years, is reading the fever letters of a girl of near slavery. He resolves to escape by sea, stealing one of the 20-foot Indian canoes from the men outside the fort. Coast Guard fort. The route: 1,200 perilous miles stearting past islands, straits and sounds down the Inside Passage to Alaska, ultimately to the Russian fort.

For mate he chooses an axeman named Karlsson, tenderer and reticent, "a man built smoke-tight," and for "poorsoner" appoints Braaf, a apple-cheeked, nimble-fingered thief. Both look later, and during the preparations, a brutish, fiery-tempred blacksmith called Wenzberg discovers the plot and demands entrance.

Mistrusted at first, Wensberg proves his worth once the quartet gets away. His brow makes the canoes flyy. Unexpected talents rise in the others also. Karlsson turns out to be a fine cook, Braaf a sensitive weather-reader, and leader Melander a master of both a soaring charikey and a mastery of detail.

As the voyage lengthens each man faces a sea-change in himself. With further hidden re- veals, each becomes more of what he seems, the lines carved deeper. The press of endurance upon characterdraws back to homier, but Doig freshens the odyssey.

Tontful days, surf, the crash of tide accompany the voyagers. Now a storm, now a calm: each day a new teat of nature and of self. "Vast bands of grey" are the words. Gravity of waves, the blood of the ocean compellingly. Melander claiming away the friction that sur- faces among men under such circumstances.

Until the halfway point, off the coast of New California (now British Columbia), when Mel- ander is shot to death by Indians. Karlsson, chosen leader by default (only he can read), discovers that Melander had maps of coast just to the northern tip of Vancouver Island, barely two-thirds of the voyage, and he had kept quiet about it, trusting to his ally's sense to take them the rest of the way. Karlsson is no seaman, but with doggedness and luck the canoemans struggle up character Island and the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

The rest, let me say only that there is further loss and, criis, and growing, regarding the voyage. This, after all, is high adventure, and not knowing how it ends makes the tension of reading all the higher.

Ivan Doig's story is simple, yet his muscular style and novelty of historical detail—what other tales do you know of Alaska before 1867?—it set apart among survival fiction. I can't recant another adventure novel so thoughtfully written.

And it delights me to learn that Doig is at work on a second novel, this one set in Montana.
Novels of History and Imagination

**THE SEA RUNNERS**
By Ivan Doig.

**THE BAREFOOT BRIGADE**
By Douglas C. Jones.

*By MARY LEE SETTLE*

We carry our history within us, in our habits, our language, our country, our names, our mores, our memories. To write from within that timescape is the prime function of the novelist whose subject is the past. The historian is concerned with facts, the archeologist with physical objects, but the novelist must find that universal center that is both contemporary and historically true if the novel is to transcend romance and create its own present. Both of these novels do this.

"The Sea Runners" by Ivan Doig goes beyond being "about" survival and becomes, mile by terrible mile, the experience itself. Mr. Doig has created the illusion of going with four men in a 20-foot canoe over a thousand miles of the Pacific Northwest, from Alaska to the Territory of Washington, in 1852. The voyagers are Swedes, indentured servants in what was then Russian America, before it was bought as "Seward's folly" and became Alaska.

The feeling for the winter sea and the forbidding land is formidable. The four men are Melander, a sailor; Karlsson, a woodsman; Braaf, a thief; and Wenberg, a blacksmith. There is little courage or camaraderie — only the awesome sea and four men who have little in common and bear with each other because of their mutual need. Slow and brutal time passes; from cove to cove, island to island, in storms, in fog, the days and hours of survival are the drama and plot.

The book contains factual surprises: Russian America was settled by somewhat the same system of indenture used in Virginia 200 years before, even to the seven-year commitment; much of the West was settled by people who got there by sea and not across land. Yet the research never intrudes on the story.

The journey is a true one, based on an 1853 letter to the editor of the Oregon Weekly Times about the survival of three men following the same sea route. Only their names are known. The characters in the novel are Mr. Doig's creation. As he says in the author's acknowledgment, they "have lived only in the world of this book." And they do live (or die), in prose that suits the experience without straining for poetic "transcendence."

In "The Barefoot Brigade" Douglas C. Jones writes about some of the most haunting men in the history of the American South — the dirt-farm infantry of the Confederate Army. They trudged through Shelby Foote's fine account of the Civil War, so alive that fiction would need the evocative magic of "War and Peace" to re-create them more vividly.

Mr. Jones's research has been extensive — in the classic histories of the Civil War and the local records of the Third Arkansas Infantry. Out of it have been born six men: two brothers from a hill farm in Arkansas, a circuit-riding judge, a Welsh professional soldier...

Continued on Page 18

**A NEW WOMAN**
By Janine Boissard.
Translated by Mary Feeney.

**THE CAGE**
By Susan Cheever.

her husband suddenly requests a divorce. Miss Boissard opens her story at the moment of Claudine's greatest shock, then goes on to record her moving and often painful journey with great artistry.

There isn't a wasted word in this haunting book: A woman's emotional death, struggle and rebirth are all contained in the six-month period between her husband's departure and their divorce. Her history, expectations, loss and recovery, her convictions about...
Interpreting The West:
An Interview With Ivan Doig

Ivan Doig is a man of medium size, with a rugged academic look about him. He has published three books: This House Of Sky (HBJ, $5.95), Water Brothers (HBJ, $3.95), and The Sea Runners (Athenaeum, $13.95) soon to be released as a Penguin paperback. You are made immediately aware of his Celtic origins by the heavy red beard which is just beginning to grey. Minus the glasses and dressed in buckskin he could be one of Charles Russell's trappers.

I met with Ivan and Carol, his wife, in The Elliott Bay Cafe on a rainy summer day. Ivan preferred to tape the interview because he said he was spending enough time behind a typewriter working on his new novel, which he talked about at some length. Great artists inspire us not only with their works but with their presence as well. I found this to be true of Ivan Doig.

Interviewed by John Dally

JD: There seems to be a lot of scholastic as well as experiential background to your work. In the section of The Sea Runners where they're paddling south to the Queen Charlotte, the description of the ocean was incredible. I used to work on a commercial salmon troller, and I started to get seasick all over again. What sorts of research have you done and how did you start writing?

ID: I think I write best about things I can either see or get firmly in mind through research. In that particular part of Sea Runners set around the Queen Charlotte, the descriptions of the water and so forth are from flying over it in a Grumman Goose when Carol and I went out to the village of Massett for the sake of a beach scene. We had what turned out to be the good luck of a very foggy, overcast day, so the Goose from Prince Rupert flew very low over the water. The pilot was simply going by a radio beam and was going to pick up the shoreline of the Queen Charlottes eventually. So, I was able to look right down on the water and get the descriptions.

JD: Have you spent some time on the water?

ID: No, I'm not a water-person. I'm not a canoeist or kayaker. I'm a lover of the shoreline. I really haven't done water traveling except, again on The Sea Runners, coming down from Juneau to Seattle on a University of Alaska oceanography ship, which gave me the rest of the water and coastal descriptions.

JD: The thing I find remarkable about your style is that it resembles the landscape in its luxuriousness. There is a real lyricism to it that I think is part of the landscape as well. Is that something you work for?

ID: Well, I only had two English courses in my college life, but somewhere I heard that form ought to fit content and content ought to fit form. I think the books reflect that notion—Winter Brothers being a journal because it's primarily about a guy who keeps journals, and House Of Sky with the italic musings on memory being a book about memory, and The Sea Runners in brief, almost movie-like takes, paragraph by paragraph, moments of a long journey. So this probably carries over into the descriptions too. I've been interested in trying to capture landscape in metaphor. I do feel that after Sea Runners and Winter Brothers back to back, I've run dry of coastal descriptions for a while. The book I'm working on now, and maybe the next couple, will be set in Montana. But, yeah, I do try to think of what the landscape will suggest in terms of language.

JD: Maybe this would be a good time to talk about your new book?

ID: Okay. It's a novel set in Montana in the late years of the Depression, in the area where I lived during high school. That's between Sun River and Glacier Park on the east side of the Rocky Mountains. I'm creating a town Continued on the back page.

The Elliott Bay Book Company
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photo by Wayne Sourbeer

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and a ranching valley to put on the actual landscape up there. And also a National Forest. This gives me the chance to do whatever I want with the characteristics of the town and the ranches and the forest and so on. Carol has taken photographs of Montana buildings that would have been around in the 1930s. We piece them together to get what that small town main street would look like in the '30s. I've been working on that today, in fact.

The book is about a family that's been through the Depression. My narrator is a fourteen-year-old son of a forest ranger, both native born to that area. So, 'it's a look at the generation that is coming out of the Depression. I'm interested in the late years of the 1930s as a historical hinge: of people feeling they had endured the major historical event of their lives and, of course, having no way of knowing another one, World War II, is coming. This novel will be much more like House Of Sky than the other two books.

JD: This House Of Sky is subtitled Landscapes of a Western Mind. Do you see yourself as a "Western writer," a "Northwest writer?"

ID: I would generally say "Western," simply because so much of my stuff is set in Montana. I have no notion of where the dividing lines rest, but I consider myself interested in regional topics out here, and hope to get to larger topics of life through a particular lens of regional characteristics.

JD: When I think of your work I also think of the works of Thomas McGuane, Richard Hugo, and Jim Welch. It seems like these writers, yourself included, are defining some kind of "Western" attitude, way of life, philosophy, style of living. Does that interest you? Do you look for them consciously?

ID: I'm not conscious of working on my own theory of the West. Because my background is in journalism and history I'm more interested in trying to interpret what the actual West seems to me to be like.

JD: I say I gave you the task of putting together a reading list on Northwest culture. What would be some of the books you'd include?

ID: Well, in Montana there are classes taught now in Montana literature, which often include The Lady In Kicking Horse Reservoir, Jim Welch's Winter In The Blook, and Norman Maclean's A River Runs Through It, which I think is one of the great stories of America, not just the West. The Big Sky by A.B. Guthrie, which is a book important to a lot of us because it showed that a Montana writer could write a book that got published, when I was a kid out there. From farther this direction, Ken Kesey's Sometimes A Great Notion, Don Berry's Trask, Norman Clark's Milltown. I would probably put in there Swan's own Northwest Coast.

JD: Any painters you're included?

ID: Tony Angell.

JD: Tony Angell.

ID: Because he's a friend and I'm paying close attention to what he's doing. We're about the same age. We're kind of watching each other go at life in this way. Tony's painting and sculpture interests me a lot.

JD: Do you make your living as a writer?

ID: Some years.

CD: But he doesn't do anything else. [laughs]

ID: [laughing] Yeah, I don't do anything else. I've been full time at it for thirteen years.

JD: Do you have a daily schedule?

ID: I usually wander into my office, in my house, a little after 7 a.m. and will work from then till about 11:30, lunch time. Maybe go out for a cup of coffee along elegant Aurora Avenue in between. And then in the afternoon after a break or reading or walking around the neighborhood I either write some more or edit what's been done in the morning, or do research or whatever. Pretty much go till 5 p.m. Out of this I achieve so many pages a day. It varies as to where I am in a book. If it's first draft it's four or five pages a day, usually five days a week.

JD: Do you write out those four or five pages and then go back to edit, or do you write one sentence over and over till you get it exactly right and then move on to the next?

ID: Well, I think quite a lot as I go along. I'm a cut and paste writer because of my journalistic background. My manuscripts gain heft from Elmer's glue and the additions of paper as I go along. That's the primary method of tinkering. The book I'm doing now in the most natural sounding book I've done. It has a first person narrator, this fourteen-year-old, and it's written in colloquial Montana lingo. And so it has a slow and grinding existential flow that is slowly the dense parts of all other three books. Some of those were revised endlessly. I'm purposefully drawing back on the current book and not revising it till my kid narrator would sound like me, a forty-four-year-old Seattleite with a Ph.D.

Days of rain, those four next.

Of Channel water like a gray-blue field very gently stirred by wind.

Of clouds loping the mountains, so they seemed strange shagged buttes of green.

Of soft rattle of wings as gulls would rise in a hundred from a shore point of gravel.

Of fog walking the top of the forest in morning.

The Sea Runners, Atheneum, 1982: p. 182

Printed with permission from the author.

JD: Who do you write for?

ID: I wish I knew how to answer that. This may be too glib, it just came to me. I write for the sheet of paper in front of me. I try things out on Carol incessantly, of course. She's my first and best editor. Because of having been a journalist where stuff had to be accessible enough to attract people, and having been around history departments and a lot of unreadable histories, I do want these books of mine to be readable. That's in the back of my mind. But with Winter Brothers, if I'd had any particular reader in mind, I probably wouldn't have made that as difficult in format.

JD: Is accessibility something, then, that worries you in your writing?

ID: Not much. Only in that I have a habit of looking things over and if it sounds pretty good to me, which is what I'm primarily trying to achieve—to Carol and friends who look at the manuscript—that's generally good enough. It then goes to an editor in New York who's being paid decently to see how easily it reads. However, I'm interested in less accessible books that others have done. I thought Ridley Walker a wonderful piece of work. Also The Book Of Ebenezer Le Page. And One Hundred Years of Solitude. But my notion would be that if you're set out to do a technically arcane kind of fiction you had better do it as good as any of those three, and not just make it difficult in an academic sense.

JD: What are your other great inspirations?

ID: I guess the English language is the prime one. I'm interested in the sounds of the English language. From what I've read it's somewhat like Russian, a great swirling expressive language where you have a lot of freedom to roam. That's the basic that would have attracted me to a typewriter in the first place, in high school and then in college to becoming a journalist.

Certainly, growing up in the ranching West, as I did, has stayed with me as inspiration, too. The Independence and the ability to stand myself, to work alone at home (which daunts a lot of people), those I think come out of the way I grew up.

JD: I should ask you what advice you give beginning writers.

ID: That's about the hardest question of all. I end up saying I'm not sure my own example would be a particular prize to anybody else. My choice was to go into journalism, get some further background in history, then top it off with about ten years as a magazine freelancer. I think that's about twice too long to fight the freelance life. Freeline writing in this country seems to get more and more impossible. But it did teach me quite a lot about writing. Most writers who are making it in this country are doing it by teaching. If you're able to do that I suppose that's a good compromise. I'd rather not split my time that way, and I so never have.

But it seems to come down to this: a person who is going to be a writer probably just can't be stopped. There might be some specific advice and courses in writing that might be helpful, but the writers I know—Hugo came out of Boeing, Jim Welch came out of Indian reservation life, Guthrie came out of a newspaper career in middle age in Kentucky to write about Montana, Maclean didn't really begin fiction till he retired from the University of Chicago—these are all widely different backgrounds. But in each case the stubbornness of the person largely accounts for making it, that they simply wanted so much to write that in every case a way has been found. They've managed to go ahead without a lot of money and security, which could have been got some other way. But it ought to be made clear to anybody who thinks they're interested in writing that it's a very difficult financial proposition. A person who wants to write a book had better have some means of support for the time it takes.

JD: What makes a good story?

ID: John Gardner, one of the real gurus of writing in this country, said there are only two good stories: somebody takes a journey, and a stranger takes you to town. [laughs] I was thrilled to read that because the Montana novel I'm writing has both those complements. People still stop to hear a good story.
Visit becomes a homecoming

Those who helped shape Doig’s books drop by to say ’hi’

By J.M. SWANSON
For the Tribune

Looking like an English professor, Montana-born author Ivan Doig came to town on a Wednesday afternoon, and all the sons of shepherders and ranchers came from miles around to see him and his new book, “English Creek.”

“The fastest pen in the West,” Doig’s wife, Carol, calls him. Indeed, he swallows best wishes and autographs swiftly in fine black old-fashioned script.

“It’s like following a national monument around,” Carol says later, half-wryly. No doubt she means a Montana monument on this tour. A pert, rosy-faced and bright-eyed New Jersey native with short salt-and-peppered hair and casual manner, Carol percolates good cheer.

“This is fun!” she exclaims at one point before continuing her rounds.

Meanwhile, Doig contemplates the possibility of writer’s cramp before this Montana tour is done, as he signs about 270 copies of a new book and countless copies of older ones at a bookstore in Times Square in Great Falls.

And the next day? A Bozeman bookstore had ordered 800 copies for Thursday.

Doig, an unabashed red-haired Scot, said with a grin that he was excited to meet Doig’s fans.

“People talk about Montana in a 1981 poll. Montanaans are still reading and buying it, says Doig.

Returning to Great Falls is like a homecoming, as locals from White Sulphur Springs, Choteau, Stanford and Duperuy line up to reminisce with Doig or tell him how he has touched their lives.

This fourth book, after two books set on the Northwest Coast, is Doig’s first piece of Montana fiction, and the first of a planned trilogy.

“Thanks for having Johnny for a father so I could steal a few stories,” Doig tells one woman.

“This is the first person I met in Grade One,” Doig explains with beaming pleasure as he stands to give a woman a hug. He greets another high-school classmate. “Valier, 1961!” he proclaims.

“Charlie Doig, we knew by stories,” one couple tells Carol Doig. Even Sen. Max Baucus’s uncle shows up to talk. And here’s a deputy county attorney and over there are the library workers and the media.

“A land office business!” Doig tells one enquiring fan.

“Waiting for the Hunchback of Notre Dame to come out with all these bells,” he mutters in aside later, as bells ring periodically close by.

Meanwhile, chatting with Carol is George Engler of Great Falls, retired as Lewis and Clark National Forest supervisor since 1976, and a chief source of information on the forest ranger and forest fire in Doig’s new book.

Also stopping to talk are the Hamlets. Joy preceded Doig on sour cream chocolate pie for dessert on the Fourth of July in “English Creek.” It would have been angel food cake, if there were lots of eggs, she explains.

Obviously, Doig, who has degrees in journalism and a Ph.D. in history, does not lack for research. Generally his books take two years to write, he says.

In August of 1982, the Doigs spent a month in Montana interviewing “survivors” of the Depression and cataloging data from the drought and grasshopper infestations of the 1930s.

Carol took scenic photographs, which Doig then put in a holder by his typewriter, along with notes, to jog his memory as he wrote.

That fall, “The Sea Runners,” Doig’s first fiction, partly set in Alaska was going into publication. Doig’s work won him the Royal Order Tusk, a pin making him an honorary Alaskan. He wore it proudly Wednesday.

Doig’s earlier book, “Winter Brothers, A Season at the Edge of America,” from 1980, based on the journals of James Swan, won the Pacific Northwest Bestsellers Award and was adapted for a public television documentary.

In 1982, Doig drew back into the Montana heartland and set his sights on the Hi-Line, that larger-than-life area where the Rockies greet the plains.

Now that “English Creek” is out, Doig has begun research on the next book. He has visited “the Scandinavian coast of Scotland” for background research.

“English Creek” the middle book of the trilogy, focuses on the Depression; Doig is now at work on the “first” of the trilogy.

The new book will focus on the homesteading days from 1899 and statehood to the winter of 1919. A final book will follow the family to the Centennial.

The Doigs plan to return for research during the next few years.

Doig, who has focused on the past in his first four books, partly because of his interest in history, says he is not restricted to the past.

“I try to look at each generation
somewhat on their own terms. Various generations have their own sets of courage. The Depression generation looked at both ends of the spectrum. They had a grim situation with a lack of cash, since life was so rural. They remember that they got through it by the generosity of neighbors and friends.”

Carol says that A.B. Guthrie Jr.’s well-known “The Big Sky” trilogy may have influenced Doig in a distant way. “Ivan grew up and read Guthrie’s books and — I don’t think it’s too much to say — idolized him.”

Like Guthrie, Doig worked for newspapers. After he received his Ph.D., he never taught. Instead, he became a magazine free-lance writer for the next 10 years, “twice as long as I should have,” he admits now.

“Making a living became worse and worse, considering the effects of inflation,” Doig says. So he tried writing books instead.

“I try to be a grown-up about it and write stuff that will last,” he says. He’s been a full-time writer now for 13 years.

Asks about his move to fiction, Doig says, “I never thought of it as a departure in that my fiction is so closely based on historical detail. With fiction there’s the freedom of being able to make up the characters and not be bound by iron fact.”

So far, Doig says “English Creek” may be the best seller of all his books.

He has promoted his own books, beginning with “House of Sky.” “Nobody knew who I was. It’s a hard book to describe.”

Adds Carol, “Ivan thinks that you’d better be interested in the business side of book publishing if you’re going to succeed.”

While in Montana this week, the Doigs visited Kalispell and Helena, and were to travel to Bozeman Thursday, the Montana Historical Conference in Lewistown Friday and the University of Montana homecoming in Missoula Saturday.

In June they hope to return for “a real vacation,” Carol says.

When the Doigs finally return to Seattle, where they have lived the past 18 years, Carol says they will resume a quiet life.

She teaches journalism at a community college in the mornings and Ivan writes from 7 to 11 a.m., doing editing and correspondence in the afternoons.

“Ivan’s a morning person,” says Carol. “Surprising, the amount of correspondence and the details!” she marvels.

“We try and lead a rational life,” she says. At 5 p.m., they listen to National Public Radio and they usually turn in early.

With all this reception, have the Doigs ever considered uprooting their Seattle lives and moving to Montana?

“Yes, we think about it. We’d love to do it, at least seasonally,” says Carol. Doig explains the immediate problems of Carol’s Seattle job and their preference for the Seattle climate.

“We’d both like to spend more time here. We’re not quite clear about how to do it,” he adds.
Boyhood in Montana

REVIEW

Scouting out grown-ups' territory

English Creek
By Ivan Doig
Atheneum, 339 pp., $15.95

By Carol Van Strum
Special for USA TODAY

Ivan Doig has a rare, uncanny skill for bringing history to life. Shadows of the past animate the landscapes of his non-fiction, and his first novel, The Sea Runners, reads like an eyewitness account of a desperate 1853 voyage. In English Creek, his second novel, Doig again achieves a flawless weld of fact and fiction.

Drawing on the same heritage and landscape he celebrated in This House of Sky, Doig tells English Creek through the reminiscences of Jack McCaskill, the second son of a forest ranger in the fictional Two Medicine National Forest of northern Montana. The time is 1939. Jack's story of his 14th summer, a time of discovery and turning points, is a vivid portrait of a family, community and nation perched on the exhilarating brink between Depression and war.

Jack's summer begins with his older brother's defiant declaration of independence from his parents and inexplicable rejection of a promising future. Thrust suddenly into the unfamiliar role of eldest and only son as he ventures into the mountains on his father's business, Jack struggles to understand the rift his brother has caused in their family. An unexpected trail ride with an aging alcoholic, the memorable — and exquisitely funny — events of a 24-hour Fourth of July celebration, and a forest fire high in the Rockies mark the passage of what Jack calls "that summer where all our lives made their bend."

Warnly scouting the outermost boundaries of adulthood, Jack explores the lives around him with fresh curiosity and awe. Overnight, it seems, his brother and parents acquire separate and fascinating personalities, half the world's population sud-

IVAN DOIG: A vivid portrait of a boy's 14th summer, just before World War II
denly becomes female, and the rambling tales of old-timers hold vital clues to the mysteries that baffle Jack at every turn. He emerges from his landmark summer with a deeper love and understanding of the forces that have shaped his existence. As the summer ends, the world plunges into a war that will reaffirm Jack's discovery of home.

English Creek evokes the sturdy, generous spirit of an era when survival — of child or adult — demanded quick wits, hard work and humor enough to fuel both. Jack's energetic summer of discovery contrasts keenly with the entropy that afflicts his modern counterparts, and Doig's gift for idiom — the inventive, exuberant language of the frontier — is sheer magic in a world of Newspeak. Like Mark Twain, he captures the essence of a faded heritage in the voices of the people who lived it; for its language alone, English Creek is simply a national treasure.

"All the people of that English Creek summer of 1939," Jack McGaskill says, looking back from middle age, "they stay on in me even though so many of them are gone from life."

They stay on, too, long after the book is closed, more colorful and enduring than the history that inspired them. No more can be asked of the storyteller's art.

Carol Van Strum is the author of A Bitter Fog: Herbicides and Human Rights.
Inside: ‘Places in the Heart,’ GRCC’s Season, Seaside Brunch

RAVE!
WEEKLY ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

Ivan Doig captures the Northwest like no other author. See page 3

VALLEY NEWSPAPERS
September 28-October 4, 1984
You'll wholly love 'How The Other Half Loves'

How The Other Half Loves, staged by the Valley Community Players, through Oct. 13, Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m. Carpe Theater, 1717 Maple Valley Road. For tickets and information, call 298-5190.

By RON ALLEN
Rave Correspondent

The Valley Community Players have opened another season with their best comedy effort yet.

Ayckbourn, the author of How The Other Half Loves, was once labeled as one of British theaters "wits and dandies" by the London Times. The London theater playwright has been cranking out smash successes for years. His clarity and humor have crossed the Atlantic with ease. In the late 1970s he was beaten out only by the Bard, William Shakespeare for the number of productions being done by regional theaters in the US in a single season. Ayckbourn even topped the likes of George Bernard Shaw and Moliere.

Ayckbourn builds ingenious, elaborate and daring structures with a foundation of conventional wit. He is one of few playwrights that can make you laugh just by reading through his script.

The story is about three families who are as different as day to night. The only thing they really share in common is that the three husbands work together. Fiona Foster decides to have a fling with Bob Phillips. To cover up her indiscretion she tells her husband she was consoling one of the Detweilers because their marriage is troubled by an unfaithful spouse. Likewise Bob tells his wife the same story, with minor variations. Bob's wife goes over to the Detweilers to dinner, thinking of a helping hand. Among things to compound things more than just a little, Fiona's husband Frank decides to do the same on another night.

Ayckbourn places both the Foster's and the Phillips' living rooms on the same set. The characters from one scene walk through the space of the other. He establishes this for us in the opening scene. He then weaves magic for us by unfolding the happenings of the two nights and the dinner parties at the same time. The dinner scenes in this play must be one of the toughest bits of stage work around.

My hat's off to the people at VCP. They were great. They even made it look easy, like a piece of cake. While there were some weakesses in the plot, the audience was compund things to come.

Maggie Parkinson does an outstanding job with the role Fiona. She is the first to produce with strong and consistent sense of energy and direction. When one of the actors forgot a line and lost concentration, Parkinson pulled it back together beautifully, without losing the audience for the most part.

The sign of a good actor. Nan Hackler and Steve Appelo turned in equally outstanding efforts as the Detweiler's. This duo worked off one another beautifully. Their combined performances were like a well-woven tapestry, a composite of creativity, skill and energy.

Niles Schomburg does a fine job with the part of Fiona's husband Frank. Schomburg invents all kinds of flirr and attitudes for Frank, all of which work very well.

John Bacon and Karen Rouse are the over-battling Bob and Teresa Phillips. The two did well with their characters, particularly once the work was in motion.

The director for this work was one of my favorites, Lee Pasach. She directed such VCP successful efforts as The Miracle Worker and The Sunshine Boys and one really can't forget her efforts at Centerstage Theatre in Federal Way with Gigi. There is good direction throughout this work. It would be easy to get lost in the opening scene, with all the character cross-overs. The dinner scene could have been more dramatic. But Pasach did an excellent job holding firm and giving this difficult work a real sense of direction and movement.

None of the people who work on stage and backstage deserve the money for their efforts. Imagine if you would, all the hours of rehearsal and hard work that go into work like this, often with little more than a thank you from fellow cast members.

Well from those of us in the community that love live theatre, here's a big thank you. You've got a good one going.

About the Cover

Ivan Doig, popular and respected Native American, appeared at a meeting of the Kent Friends of the Library.

Staff photo by Jim Bates

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Editor Jim Kershner

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Lists compiled by Donna Moore.

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Out To Lunch

A pleasant Sunday brunch, out on Hood Canal

by ANN STROSNIDER
Rave Correspondent

A drive to Alderbrook Inn for Sunday champagne brunch makes a delightful outing on a crisp fall day.

First there's the trip itself — it's fun to drive along Hood Canal on Highway 106, checking out the real estate. On the closely spaced, waterfront lots, you'll see everything from modest cottages to ultra-modern glass and cedar showplace. The owners delight in giving their places quaint names like Tooth Acres (apparently built by a dentist) and Camp Run-A-Muck.

Alderbrook Inn is located on Highway 106 near Union, about an hour and a half from Seattle. Brunch is served in the main lodge. The popular resort offers golf, an indoor swimming pool and jacuzzi, and boats for rent. From one of the many window seats in the large dining room, you can gaze out at the canal, the resort's dock and the Olympic Mountains.

A friend and I made the trip recently and spent nearly three relaxing hours talking, eating and taking in the scenery. Service was casual and friendly, and no one tried to rush us. Our waitress, Debbie, came around frequently to fill our cups with coffee and our glasses with Jacobs Monet extra dry champagne.

The price is $9.95 for adults and $5.45 for children under 12. You're allowed to make as many trips to the lavish brunch buffet as you wish. While it's not as sumptuous as, for example, the Benson Hotel brunch in Portland, no one will go away hungry from Alderbrook's Sunday feast.

The food tends toward old-fashioned cooking that might remind you of after-school snacks. From the outlay were some of the more sophisticated brunch favorites — no crepes or quiches were in evidence, for example.

I made three forays to the buffet: sampling just about everything in the interest of research. I started out with kiwi fruit, strawberries and fresh pineapple chunks accompanied by a croissant. The fruit was pleasantly fresh, but the croissant was unfortunately rather stale and tired tasting.

Next I tried the main courses — scrambled eggs with crab meat, strawberry blintzes, scallop potatoes, creole meatballs, rhubarb cobbler, deep-fried apple wedges, sausage links and bacon. The meat balls, served with a spicy tomato sauce, proved the most interesting and tasty dish. The blintzes, filled with cottage cheese and covered with a strawberry sauce, were a close runner-up.

Scallop potatoes can be detectable, but they need to cook for a good ten minutes, coming from a fresh steam tray, the onions and the potatoes were still hard.

My friend pronounced the scrambled eggs "as little blintzes." Though they were studded with big welcome chunks of Dungeness crab.

The buffet tables were nearly groaning under a surf of delectable desserts. I tried a piece of German chocolate cake and a lemon bar, passing up the cookies, the rum balls, the crumb cakes and various layer cakes. Sweet things appear to be Alderbrook's specialty, and they do a good job with them.

After brunch, we strolled around the resort's pretty wooded grounds and walked out on the dock, where you can rent paddleboats or sailboats for $6 an hour. We peered into the glassed-in building that houses the pool and Jacuzzi — an inviting sight but barred to all except paying guests.

While its food may not be quite up to the standard of some of the better Seattle brunches, Alderbrook Inn makes an excellent destination for a Sunday expedition to the canal. Its wonderful setting and relaxed atmosphere alone are probably worth the price of the meal.
Doig's books celebrate people who matter, like sheepmen and foresters

By JIM KERSHNER
Rave Editor

If you haven't read anything by Ivan Doig, you haven't read the best contemporary literature about the Northwest. Doig, of Seattle, has written three successful books, all taking place in the northwest quadrant of the U.S. Now, he is about to release a fourth. As he told a crowd Tuesday at the Kent Friends of the Library meeting, "I am at the nervous stage for an author. I am about to have a book."

The book is called English Creek, and it's about a boy growing up in Montana during the Great Depression. It should be in bookstores within a few weeks.

Doig read some excerpts from English Creek, and judging from the crowd's enthusiastic reaction, the new book will be loved by those who loved Doig's most popular book, This House of Sky. English Creek is funny, affectionate, and canny into the ways of 14-year-old boys. As in all of Doig's writing, he uses words so effectively that you can smell the lodgepole pine; see the clouds decorating the edges of the Big Sky; and hear the creak of leather on a pack saddle. He's an author who can skin a sheep and turn it into prose poetry.

He's also an author who chooses to celebrate people who normally couldn't even get their names in the paper except when they die.

"I'm sick and tired of books being written about disgraced politicians, washed-up athletes, and movie stars," said Doig. "If you've done something interesting, like herding sheep, you can't be in a book."

Doig's strength — some would say his genius — is his dead-perfect ability to render the conversational style of the northern Rockies. Westerners use conversation as kind of whimsical play, making little Twain-like jokes out of the most mundane statements. In English Creek, a forest ranger doesn't merely offer someone some peaches. He says: "Do you want some peaches? There are still a few in here we haven't stabbed dead yet."

A man in the audience on Tuesday said, "I've tried to write my own recollections of my growing up, and they came out dull and pedestrian. Yours come alive. Can you tell us how you do it?"

Doig said that he has taped hours of conversations with his relatives, with sheepherders, with forest rangers, with cowboys. He studies the way they talk. He also keeps note cards with words, phrases, and ideas. But mostly, as a man who grew up in the towns and sheep ranches near Dupuyer and White Sulphur Springs, the dialogue is simply a part of him.

"Do you want some peaches? There are still a few in here we haven't stabbed dead yet."

A character from 'English Creek'

"A lot of it comes straight from my father, I'm sure," said Doig. "Once I was writing a piece in which a character says, 'How much longer?' and I wanted to say 'We're about done.' I looked down at my typewriter, and I had written, 'We're pretty close to got it.' Here are some other words and phrases from a short excerpt of English Creek:

- "The bread was dry enough to strike a match on."
- "The conversation was mysteriously kinked."
- "His face had a lot of routes of squint wrinkles."
- "I've always thought the two commonest affections of Montana — probably everywhere, but I haven't been everywhere — are drink and orneriness."
- "It danced off Canada Dan like a berry off a buffalo."
- "He laughed a little now, in what I considered an egg-sucking way."

- (After skinning some sheep, and then sitting down to a mutton dinner) "The report came into my mind that I had just been elbow deep in dead sheep, and now I was expected to eat some of that. I tried to keep that thought traveling."

English Creek is part of a trilogy that Doig plans, which will span all 100 years of Montana's statehood. English Creek is actually the chronological middle of the story, taking place during the Great Depression. It will be in bookstores within a few weeks.

Doig is now working on the next volume, which will trace Scottish immigrants from the County Angus to a new homestead in Montana in the 1880s. The final book will take place in the 1980's.

Doig also discussed each of his previous books:

- This House of Sky, an evocative memoir of his childhood in Montana.

Doig said this book was spawned almost by accident. He was in his hometown in Montana, waiting to interview a black gospel singer ("the most famous person to come from that small town"). The singer, now an elderly sheepherder, couldn't talk to him that day. There Doig was, with a new tape recorder, so he taped lengthy interviews with his father and grandmother.

Ivan Doig, at a Kent Library appearance

'I'm sick and tired of books being written about disgraced politicians, washed-up athletes, and movie stars. If you've done something interesting, like herding sheep, you can't be in a book.'

Ivan Doig

Interviews became the raw material for the book. (The book about the black singer never got written.)

Winter Brothers, a true story about an Olympic Peninsula pioneer trader.

Doig said this book was inspired by the trader's diaries, which Doig ran across at the University of Washington while he was a graduate student.

- The Sea Runners, a gripping adventure story which takes place along the Northwest coastline from Sitka to Astoria.

Doig said he deliberately wrote this in the style of a nineteenth century historian, such as H.H. Bancroft.

The style may be archaic, but the words are poetry, and Doig makes the story compelling. It's about two Scandinavians in the Russian colony of Archangel, Alaska (now Sitka) in the early 1800's. They decide to escape indentured servitude by the only method available to them — by rowing an Indian canoe all the way to Astoria, Oregon.

They endure killing cold, blinding fog, unfriendly Indians, and mile upon mile of fir-covered coastline. It's a trip a reader will not soon forget.
Twisted Sister lashes out into mascara metal

By GEORGE ARTHUR
Rave Correspondent

If you're interested in the very latest twist in the never changing saga of American heavy metal, tomorrow evening's rock double-header at the Seattle Center Arena is the place to be. Y&T and headliners Twisted Sister are in the high-decibel vanguard of what might be called mascara metal.

Of course, to an outsider, heavy metal does appear unchanging. The same bands of long-haired males churn out the same chords of glory, for mostly male and often rowdy audiences in the western world's sports arenas. But both performers and fans tend to renew themselves in the two-year cycles.

Not so long ago, Ted Nugent, Kiss, Aerosmith and AC/DC were the champions of the arena rock circuit. More recently, Def Leppard recruited its youthful following from the same stages, while the Benny Hill of ghoul rock, Ozzy Osbourne, has revitalized his career with capacity concerts in those same venues.

Currently, Ted Nugent is a legend in the "inactive" file and Kiss, a regrouped Aerosmith and AC/DC flail away on the concert circuit, trying to rebuild their massive following of only a few years ago. Current champion, Def Leppard, isn't due back in the U.S. for some time, having toured last year. While the group scurries around recording a new album, an LP from early in the band's career has been remixed and re-released to fill the gap.

Enter mascara metal. This new wave of bands, including tomorrow evening's Twisted Sister, Quiet Riot, Motley Crue and even, at some level, Bellevue's Queensryche, borrow freely from the past fifteen years in both sound and style.

The debt owed outrage rockers like Alice Cooper and the never fabulously successful (but authentically bizarre) New York Dolls is more than obvious. Kiss, with its larger-than-life image and hype, is a more direct inspiration. And the looming example of Van Halen and its supercharged success must also be counted as a source.

With six members, Twisted Sister almost qualifies as a heavy metal big band, probably a factor in the record industry's lingering disinterest in the group. As with others in heavy metal's new wave (most notably, England's Def Leppard), Twisted Sister first recorded on its own, sans support from any free-spending record labels.

Interestingly, the independent route to the turntable was adopted from what once was heavy metal's most hated rock rival, punk.

Twisted Sister's current LP release is entitled, Stay Hungry, and it's definitely not a homemade album. Y&T is second on Saturday's Arena bill and beyond knowing this band's current album is called In Rock We Trust (a title which doesn't get many points for creativity), there's not much to report from this source. Their advertisements and album covers indicate that they're seeking a kind of sci-fi comic book appeal. Maybe they will start a new trend, 'Masters of the Universe' rock.

Lita Ford was originally scheduled to open the concert, but was replaced at the last minute by QS. Ford's rise to success has also had some interesting twists. Ford, along with Joan Jett, was a member of the Runaways, the female band which (prematurely) tried to rewrite the book on American heavy metal.

The group was better received the further it got from home. In Japan, the Runaways were front-page news and their British and European concert tours helped set the stage for punk's rowdy arrival.

But in the U.S., the Runaways were treated as a bad joke, for all the wrong reasons. After the act's eventual dissolution, its members were virtual rock outcasts. It took Joan Jett's single-handed success to make rock sit up and take respectful notice of the Runaways' accomplishments of seven and eight years ago.

Signed by the same company which released the Runaways' records, Ford's second solo LP is entitled Dancing on the Edge.

When Talking Heads leave studio, they 'Stop Making Sense'

By MIKE MOORE
Rave Staff

A
talking Heads concert movie seems like a good idea — the band has a fine artistic edge, their music a compelling quality and leader David Byrne a genuinely striking, haunting presence.

They have made interesting, entertaining videos, without relying on a lot of expensive gimmicks — in short, the kind of visuals that might transfer easily to the concert stage.

After listening to Stop Making Sense, the LP taken from the Heads' film with director the feeling the final product just couldn't have been any better. It stands to reason, then, that any change in the Louisiana

Wartime and a slightly popped-up, pompous Take Me To The River.

The energy level on side two is generally higher, and the Heads seem a lot more comfortable with this older material than when they're trying to duplicate the seamless craftwork of the Speaking In Tongues material.

Because Stop Making Sense isn't a great live LP doesn't mean the Heads aren't capable of great live shows.

The movie — especially if it includes cranked-up Dolby stereo with industrial-strength woofers — should do the band and the music more justice.

Donna Summer
Cuts Without Claws

Michael Omarten, the producer re-
SON OF THE BIG SKY

Writer Ivan Doig weaves tales of the old and new West set against Montana’s northern Rockies.

By Caroline Green

Listeners pack the Elliott Bay Book Co. reading room to its brick-and-bookcase walls this rainy Friday evening in Seattle. Wash., and the overflow crowd spills cheerfully into the café beyond. Cafe lattes and bottles of ale are carefully balanced on knees and laps, as audience members wedge closer to see, to hear. This reading has been sold out for days and booked forward to for months, for the simple joy of listening to tonight’s reader, writer Ivan Doig (301, G56).

Standing amid a sea of upturned faces, Doig holds the expectant crowd’s attention by the very surprise of his unprepared manner. Lights glint off his glasses, making him appear a little reassigned. Perry fills his shirt pocket, ever handy to make a note. His coat, unlike the high-tech weatherproof outerwear most of his Pacific Northwest listeners sport, is made of scholarly corduroy and fits neatly folded beside him. Doig’s hands smooth the edges of the lectern as though willing its encouragement, and his beard, which pokes out toward his audience, gives him an air of amiable inquiry.

The Elliott Bay Book Co. Doig tells his listeners, “is the Carnegie Hall of literary readings.” If so, then Ivan Doig is the Vladimir Horowitz of readers—a master of his art and shamelessly entertaining. For the next 30 minutes Doig has more than 200 listeners laughing over the exploits of the geriatric Baloney Express from his latest novel, Ride with Me.

Marish Montana (Althennium Publishers), and acting for its curmudgeonly hero, the newly widowed Jack McCaskill. The reading, delivered with relish by its author, is quintessential Doig. The dialogue is wryly hilarious, the landscape a vision informed by the daily lives of its residents, and its theme is a gentle lesson in, as Doig puts it, “the task of turning loss into change.”

Sums up one admiring listener, “Ivan Doig’s work keeps writers writing and readers reading.”

Ivan Doig is perhaps best known these days as what one headline writer dubbed him, “The Master of Montana.” Marish Montana completes a trilogy of novels chronicling four generations of the Scottish McCaskill family as their lives play out against the front range of Montana’s northern Rockies. (The other two McCaskill books are English Creek and Dancing at the Rascal Fair.) Two works with a Pacific Northwest setting precede the trilogy, The Sea Runners and Winter Brothers. His first book, This House of Sky, Landscapes of a Western Mind, is a reflection on his own remarkable boyhood in Montana and his journey toward the writing life. Published in 1978, the memoir was nominated for a National Book Award.

This House of Sky also details Doig’s five years of study at the Medill School of Journalism—an opportunity he clearly views as pivotal in saving him from the economic uncertainties of a life on the land in Montana.

“My presence at Northwestern was our equivalent of a moon shot, a launching project which for four years took most of our family’s resources and then some,” Doig has written. The “then some” included relentless dishwashing and after Frugal on Doig’s part, but he knew it beat baling hay and digging postholes. (A $2,500 fellowship for his master’s in 1962 enabled him to quit the Northwestern Apartments dish room and live, as he puts it, “like the Aga Khan.”)

After a brief stint in the military, Doig returned to Illinois, working first as an editorial writer at the Lindsey-Schaub newspaper chain in Decatur, then, back in Evanston, as assistant editor of The Evanston. He put his time in Illinois to further good use, marrying Medill graduate Carol Muller (355, G56).

In 1966, the couple “yearned our way out of the Mid-
west," Doig recalls, back to the mountains, beyond Montana to Seattle. There at the University of Washington, Doig earned a doctorate in American history and, in the process, concluded a career in higher education. He was not for him. "Spending three years around a graduate school watching how much time is eaten up by committee work and other necessary evils of academia, I decided I really wasn't cut out for that," he laughs.

"I've never really worked happily in situations where the extraneous parts of the job began to overwhelm the parts I've been hired to do."

Instead he concentrated on "words coming out on the page," free-lancing 200 articles in 10 years, "which I now realize is about twice too long by any standard," he laughs. Inflation in the mid-70s convinced him "to take the total cure from magazine free-lancing." He tightened his focus to the writing of This House of Sky. Twelve years and six critically acclaimed books later, Doig has polished his distinctive blend of historical authenticity and delightful wordplay to a high shine.

To read Doig is to step confidently into genuine scenes of Western life. His meticulously researched books are built from the facts he records as oral histories, searches out from original documents, and jots down through first-person observation. "I'm not much of a believer in what I'm packing around within myself," Doig says. "I'm probably the kind of person Medill loved to have show up. It isn't particularly real to me until I pound it out of a keyboard, until I hear somebody say it, until I go out and take a look at it for myself."

He describes himself as "an absent-minded person with a pretty good memory." Raised by a father and grandmother easily as preoccupied and original as himself, Doig grew up making notes for reliability's sake, a habit that helped form the foundation of his commitment to factual honesty. Beyond

Doig doesn't lose an opportunity to write.

accuracy, though, he possesses the rare ability to transmit the humanity of his sources across the decades and onto the modern page.

Dave Walter, research director of the Montana Historical Society in Helena, Mont., where Doig digs regularly through primary sources, says the author is a rarity among researchers. When Doig walks through the door, says Walter, he knows what he wants, knows where to find it, and then "just disappears into the stuff." If Doig excels at research, he thrives on what he calls "working with the words." This is, after all, a man who tunes up before writing by reading The Dictionary of American Regional English just "to see how the language is putting itself together."

On a usual day, Doig wakes before dawn, makes his wife breakfast, and then sits down at his manual typewriter to write whatever needs to be said. "I'm methodical, but I'm not consecutive," he says. "I write so many words a day. I think it was 800 on Mariah Montana. Some books it's been a thousand. I will do whatever I have to get that 800 words on the paper. Maybe write a page of dialogue to get the characters talking. Maybe I'll visit the landscape or the weather. Maybe I'll try to describe somebody more fully than I have. Then it goes into a ring binder in what I think is an approximate order, and I'll fill in between the chunks. It's not nearly as tidy as it could be, but it keeps a lot of possibilities in the air that I might otherwise bypass by having my head down in consecutiveness."

He also maintains a perpetually expanding category called "phrasing" in which reside his own word sketches — distinctive combinations of thought and vocabulary recognizable to regular readers as hallmarks of the Doig style. When, in Mariah Montana, Jack McCaikill catches an unexpected, unsettling glimpse of his first wife in a Missoula grocery store, he muses, "The fiery thoughts of the mind. Why should memory forever own us the way it does?" A perfectly reasonable, poetic rumination by a crotchety sheep rancher in Ivan Doig's Montana.

Doig's art is a hearthmix of the dogged and the lyrical, his discipline fired by his delight in the bottomless paintbox called English. "Why am I doing this?" Because I love dancing with the language. "Dehydrated minimalism has never appealed to me either as a writer or a reader," he says. "I try to approach writing as a craft. And if you perform it well enough, maybe it begins to shade into art. But all you can do is perform it in all its increments in that direction and make it add up as much as you can towards the ultimate creation you want. I've always been an enthusiast of language. A lot of things you're not supposed to do with words forms just never occur to me."

Carol Doig, a warm, exuberant woman who is a successful writer and teacher in her own right, serves as her husband's companion in adventure. As such, she helped him research Mariah Montana — much of which takes place in a Winnebago — by rattling around the state in a motor home just "seeing how it worked." (Not too well, it turned out, once the thermometer hit 105 degrees. Assorted mechanical systems broke down on the Doigs in prompt order, recalls Carol. The couple, they dryly notes, prefers backpacking.)

While Carol is involved up to her eyebrows in much of Ivan's research and serves as his first reader, she laughingly but firmly refuses to be termed a literary collaborator. "When he has a scene to the point where he thinks it's a good, readable draft, then I get to see it," she says. "So I read it, and I say, 'That's nice, dear,' and he says, 'Well, it's better after I revise it.' And I don't see how he can revise it. But then later he shows it to me, and he has improved it. And that's what I mean by not being a whole lot of help."

Bill Kittredge, editor, writer, and professor at the University of Montana, describes Doig's work as the antithesis of the standard American "western." Rather than teaching us to solve our problems with guns, says Kittredge, Doig's books tell of people who solve their problems by taking time, understanding each other and of the land. "He gives you a world in all its textures and all its sacredness.

"The guts and power and wonderfulness of people's
A Passage from English Creek

Jack McGuckin is almost 15 and is having the summer of his life in 1939. This describes his August morning ride on his way to harvest hay. Reprinted with permission of Abeneum Publishers, an imprint of Macmillan Publishing Co., from English Creek by Ivan Doig. Copyright © 1984 by Ivan Doig.

Where morning is concerned, I am my father all over again.

"The day goes downhill after daybreak" was his creed. I don't suppose there are too many people now who have seen a majority of the days of their life, but my father did, and I have. And of my lifetime of early rising I have never known better days than those when I rode from English Creek to my haying job on Noon Creek.

The ford of the ranger station Peary and I would cross, if there was enough moon the wild roses along the creek could be seen, pale crowds of them, and in a few minutes of climbing we came atop the bench of land which divides the two creek drainages. Up there, at that brink of dawn hour, the world revealed all its edges. Dark lines of the tops of buttes and benches to the north, towards the Two Medicine River and the Blackburn Reservation. The Sweetgrass Hills bumping up far on the eastern horizon like five dunes of sand. The timbered crest of Breast Butte standing up against the snow mountain wall of the west. What trick of light it is I can't really say, but everything looked as if it drawn in heavy strokes, with the final shade of eight penciled in wherever there was a gulch or coulee.

The only breaks in the stillness were Peary's hooves against the earth, and the west breeze which generally met us atop that broad benchesland. I say breeze. In the Two country any wind that didn't lift off your horse is only a breeze. My mountain coat was on me, my hat pulled low, my hands in leather work gloves, and I was just about comfortable.

NORTHEASTERN ALUMNI NEWS

A Message from the Director

As we ring in the second year of the new decade, I am pleased to announce a new series of programs offering services and opportunities to all Northwestern alumni.

NAA president Bob Creamer introduced the new, no-annual-fee (for at least three, and most likely for many more years) Visa Card program in the Fall issue of Perspective. If you haven't received an application yet, or if you have questions, please call 1-800-655-6627. In addition to the benefits you receive from using this Visa Card, the benefit to the NAA (at no cost to you) from purchases made on your card will support AlumnNet, our alumni-student career network program. Thanks to the efforts of hundreds of volunteers, AlumnNet is up and running, serving students and alumni alike. The database service iXenos, designed to facilitate alumni job searches, is now in place. Call 1-800-NL-ALUMNS for information. Complete and return the form on page 24 to participate in AlumnNet yourself.

Throughout 1992, during the commemoration of the 50th anniversary year of Pearl Harbor and America's entry into World War II, the NAA will salute those alumni who served, as well as the role Northwestern played, in the war effort. The NAA will mark this historic anniversary with events filled with reverence, June 19–21. This also coincides with our annual Half Century Banquet, and the 50th, 55th, and 60th class reunion celebrations.

The Nature Place, NAA Family Camp in the Colorado Rockies, has been added to our Travel Study program. Two one-week sessions, August 9–16 and August 16–23, will welcome you, your children, and/or grandchildren for a stimulating, educational, entertaining, and individually structured retreat in modern, comfortable facilities. Three generations of the Drake family are signed up to kick off the first session.

Finally, I'm pleased to announce that after much consideration and after listening to your sensible advice, the NAA will "cluster" those class reunions (5th, 10th, 15th, 20th, 30th, 40th, 50th) that are not celebrating another (10th, 25th, 40th, 50th) year. That is, for certain celebrations, more than one class will gather for a "cluster reunion." The "clusters" change, so you will not always celebrate with the same classes. We believe that adopting this system will enrich your reunion experience because you will share it with a greater number and a more diverse group of NU friends. Please review the chart on page 24 to see how your own reunion falls.

In closing, on behalf of the University and the entire NAA I send good wishes for a joyous new year.

Sincerely,

Melissa R. Drake, Director of Alumni Relations

Please submit notices of births, marriages, deaths, and other news of classmates to Margaret Ross Bjornason, Alumni Editor, 1800 Sheridan Road, Evanston, IL 60201-1900.

Because of the quarterly publication schedule, and the abundance of material received, "Classmates" submissions generally appear within two issues of the time of submission.

Caroline Green is a free-lance writer based in Seattle, Wash.
Far, far removed from glitzy world

DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR

IVAN DOEY

Aftenoon. 40S pp. $3.50

Ivan Doig's "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" and Tom Wolfe's "The Bonfire of the Vanities," which was considered here last week, are both novels about life in these United States. But the cultural gap between the two worlds is to be reckoned in literary light-years.

Wolfe is writing about Manhattan in the '80s. His is a cynical, glitzy trendy world. Doig's subject is the coming of the homesteaders to the English Creek/South Heaven section of Montana, about a century earlier in American history. His is a hard-scrabble world, where the settlers and the sheep they tend are hard put to survive the cruel, long winters. Both are hard world. The weather is unforgiving in Doig's Montana; the people are unforgiving in Wolfe's.

The distance between the two worlds can be calculated in economic terms.

In Doig's Montana, "The time was September of 1886, a week before shipping the lambs, and Lucas and Bob and I were holding a Saturday war council on the west ridge line of Bread Butte where we could meanwhile keep an eye on our grazing bands. By now Bob and Lucas's sheep had accumulated into two oversized bands, nearly twenty-five hundred altogether, as Bob kept back the ewes lambs each year since '82 rather than send them to market at pitiful prices. The band he and I owned in partnership I always insisted keeping at a regular thousand, as many as my bay would carry through the winter. So here they were in splendid gray scatter below us, six years of striving and effort, three and a half thousand prime ewes and a fat lamb beside each of them, and currently worth about as much as that many weeds."

And here we are in Manhattan, where Sherman McCoy and his wife are attending a dinner party in Wolfe's world. "Sherman and Judy attended the Ravaldrages' building on Fifth Avenue in a black Buick sedan, with a white-haired driver, hired for the evening from Mayfair Town Car, Inc. They lived only six blocks from the Ravaldrages, but walking was out of the question. "It would be perfectly okay for the two of them to arrive for dinner at a Good Building (the going term) on Fifth Avenue by taxi, and it would cost less than three dollars. But what would they do after the party? How could they walk out of the Ravaldrages' building and have all the world, tout le monde, see them standing out in the street, the McCloys, that game couple, their hands up in the air, brave, by, desperately, pathetically trying to hail a taxi? The doornoses would be no help, because they would be tied up unshoring feet de monde to their limousines. So he had hired this car and this driver, this white-haired driver, who would drive them six blocks and depart. Including a 15 percent tip and the sales tax, the cost would be $19S.30 or $244.50, depending on whether they were charged for four or five hours in all.""

Angus McCaskill — home- steadier, shepherd, schoolmaster, father and family man — is an economic survivor in Montana at the turn of the century, and just marginally that. Sherman McCoy, the boy behind.

William L. Tazewell is a Charlot- tsville writer formerly of Norfolk.

WILLIAM L. TAZEWELL

salesman, is earning just under a million dollars a year in Man- hattan before his world falls in upon his head. I suppose he is distance from the one to the other is the triumph of capital- ism, unless you happen to think it's the Decline of the West. In either event, it's not a literary judgment.

"Dancing at the Rascal Fair" is the second in Ivan Doeig's Montana trilogy, but chronologi- cally it precedes "English Creek," the first, which is set in Montana in the 1890s. Angus McCaskill, the immigrant-narrator of "Rascal Fair," is the grandfather of Jack McCaskill, the boy narrator of "English Creek." The connection between the two is Vivick, Angie's son and the father of Jack. He is born in "Rascal Fair" and grows up during the narrative's span of 30 years; he breaks complete- ly with his father, leaves home, goes off to World War I, survives the flu epidemic of 1919, and is reconciled with Angie at the book's end. In "English Creek," Vivick is a forest ranger, a job that is overshadowed in "Rascal Fair," and Jack is growing up in hard times, too. The third novel in the trilogy is unfinished; I pre- sume it will be Jack's story and bring the McCaskill saga up to the present.

The fictional Montana of "English Creek" and "Rascal Fair" is an invented landscape Doig has named "the Two Medicine Country," but it closely parallels "the actual area along the Bocky Mountain Front near Dupuyer Creek, Montana, the cherished country of my growing-up years." Doig wrote about his "growing-up years" in his memoir "This House of Sky," which was nomi- nated for a National Book Award. I admire all three of the books greatly; I haven't read his two earlier novels.

"Rascal Fair" is a frontier sto- ry. It's about the settlement of one of the last frontiers in the old 48 states, and it isn't an ironic in its telling as "English Creek," which bursts with the juices of youth. But I don't mean to sug- gest that it is a grim narrative, or covert economic history, or anything of the sort. Doig is a marvelous writer, and "Rascal Fair" is full of incident and readable set pieces — the Atlan- tic passage, sheep-shearing, square dances in the one-room schoolhouse and an account of the overturning of the outhouse by the schoolboys that would be a credit to Mark Twain. Above all else, the book is a love story about the woman Angie McCas- kill courted, who jilted him, and the woman he married, Bob's sister, and the life they all led.

Doig's Montana saga, still un- folding, is one to which the ad- jective "epic" can be applied without any embarrassment.

He now lives in Seattle. If he lived in Manhattan he might be one of our most celebrated novelists — though maybe he wouldn't be writing about Mon- tana and I can't imagine his wearing a white suit, a la Tom Wolfe, or appearing comfortable on the cover of Vanity Fair. But it'll be people will be reading Ivan Doig when they've forgot- ten Tom Wolfe.
In a sweeping saga, set in Montana, a writer tells of

The High Life

by Michael Dorris

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

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

The chronicle is constructed with the eye to detail and the unparalleled sense of place that characterize Doig's previous award-winning fiction and nonfiction. Virtually a “prequel” to his 1984 novel, “English Creek,” it overflows with the precise yet magically evocative images of the northern Rockies that so distinguished his 1979 memoir, “This House of Sky.”

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

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

expectation: “We eat unpeeling for a while, in that supreme silence that makes the eaves creak. When the woods of the valley part, we’ll see the lake at right angles and the hills praised, red and unwearying. A curling mist in drifts massive flight across the slope below us as if revealing curlicues in the air. Everything fits everything else this day.”

And in this place — “Scotch Heavens” as it comes to be called over the next 30 years — Angus and Rob marry and father children, dream and experience latter disappointment, fight the weather and each other to a tempestuous draw. They ride the crest of boom times, know the depredations and economic disaster and most of all realize the pangs of disillusionment, in trust, in the boundaries of decency, in the future weasel.

The other characters — Rob's determined sister, Adair; the indelible school teacher, Anna Ramay; Angus' eventual son, Varrick; the shrewd Lucas and his lifelong Blackfeet "housekeeper," Nancy — the Buffalo Calf Speaks, the sanguiine forest ranger, Stanley Meikell — are none less compelling.

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

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

We have heard these voices, been touched by these lives.

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

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

From the dust jacket of "Dancing at the Rascal Fair"
His Mother’s Days

By John Marshall
P-I Reporter

Writer Ivan Doig had tried his darndest before to get some sense of this woman who had died at 31 in the pre-dawn hours of his sixth birthday, this woman he could remember years afterward only in patchwork memory, this woman who was his mother.

There were family photographs taken with a Brownie camera and tape-recorded reminiscences of his father and his grandmother, some help in the remembering, but Doig still feared he would probably go to his grave with no recollection of his mother’s voice.

Then came the surprise bequest of an estranged uncle, his mother’s brother. It was a small packet of letters held together by a strand of grocery store string. There were 20 letters in all, 12 from Doig’s mother, six from his grandmother, two from his father, all written over a few months in the spring of 1945. Doig took this simple family inheritance in his hands, then promptly set it aside, excited but skittish.

Several days passed before Doig untied the string and made his way through the letters; his head suddenly filled with his mother’s voice, as immediate as today, a real person’s voice at last.

“She had been this cutout, this figure from a melodrama,” Doig recalls. “Dying that early meant nobody ever spoke ill of her or in anything but highly emotional terms. Neither my dad or my grandmother could talk long about her without breaking down.

“But to encounter her in these letters — she’s a lively sort of person with kind of a wicked eye for behavior and a wicked ear for gossip; in short, a writer. That brought a person from behind the cutout — she leaps out from behind, really — and it made me think about her and me. I grew up thinking I was my father’s son and my grandmother’s grandson, but then it dawned on me how much I am my mother’s son, too.”

What Berneta Doig had written in letters to her brother, who was serving on a Navy ship in the South Pacific, was not destined to remain family secret much longer. For her writing son has mined family memory for more than 15 years now, giving public life to the unsung laboring people who clawed an existence out of the unforgiving land in the shadow of the Montana Rockies.

“This House of Sky: Landscape of a Western Mind” came first in 1978: Doig’s evocative memoir of his upbringing at the hands of his father and grandmother, staunch enemies turned makeshift family partners by his mother’s tragic death from an unknown heart condition. This first book by Doig — then a little-known journalist on the free-lance fringe — became a Western classic, nominated for the National Book Award, studied in colleges, beloved by thousands, still selling at a rate of 10,000 copies a year (with more than 130,000 sold).

Two Northwest-based books followed, “Winter Brothers” and “The Sea Runners.” Then came a Montana trilogy based on a fictional family called the McCaskills, bearing few similarities to the Doigs, their story told through “English Creek,” “Dancing at the Rascal Fair” and “Ride with Me, Mariah Montana.”

BUT DESPITE years of critical praise and increasing success, Doig seemed destined to be forever linked with “This House of Sky,” still his most personal work, his introduction to many readers, the literary equivalent of a first love. Until the unexpected legacy of his mother’s letters.

Doig has now worked this paper bequest into “Heart Earth” (Atheneum, $19), a masterful companion memoir to “This House of Sky.” It is his mother’s story, a slim volume, but Doig at the top of his considerable powers, moving smoothly between fact and memory and meditation, and the language bearing his distinctive stamp, as if handmade.

Doig writes of “silverghost illumination,” “stiffbacked rectitude,” “the dreamslow rhythm of the ride” and “moods deep and inscrutable as the keels of icebergs.” He portrays a Montana dance hall on a Saturday night as “a plaid of bandanaed gallantry and hooty mischief.” And he describes a meadow with “such grass, this rain-fed early summer, that the sheep will fatten on it as if it were candied.”

See DOIG, Page C3
"I mean," Doig emphasizes, "for the language to be the strength of my work — the actual dance of the words on the page, sentence by sentence. And it may be for some readers. But that also might be the weakness of my work for others. I don't let up, I don't give people much time for their eyes to breathe. The stuff may be a little too intense."

Doig, an easy-talking, good-natured man in conversation, is intent and serious about his work. Woe to anyone who might dare suggest that he could turn a few wartime letters into a memoir by merely sitting at his manual typewriter in his home north of Seattle and letting the words flow.

He is a stickler for detail, a fanatic about research. Doig, 54, gives the impression that one of the great joys of his life is coming upon a well-organized museum in a small town and poring over its dusty files and musty newspapers. Like he did in Wickenburg, Ariz., for "Heart Earth."

His parents had left Montana for Arizona during the war, a trek on "war-bald tires and waning ration books" that the writer would come to see as emblematic of larger themes — the search in the West for the next great place, the dislocations caused by the war, the urge to reinvent lives. Charlie Doig had gone from boss on a Montana sheep ranch to worker in an Arizona aluminum plant, before finally returning north to the Big Sky with his family for good.

SO IVAN DOIG poked around sites in Arizona, sought facts of that state during wartime from the National Archives, submerged himself in Wickenburg's Desert Caballeros Western Museum, all these findings carefully cataloged.

"Details tell you more," he says, "and even if I don't ultimately use a piece of information, there's a resonance there."

Doig takes particular pride in the surprise discovery during research, especially when it leads to the debunking of myth. What had originally brought the Doigs from Scotland to Montana had been lost in the passing generations, re-

Where readers can hear author

Ivan Doig will make the following local appearances for his new book, "Heart Earth."

Oct. 7: 7 p.m. reading at Kane Hall, University of Washington.

Oct. 8: 7:30 p.m. reading at Eagle Harbor Book Company, Bainbridge Island.

Oct. 9: 1 p.m. signing at University Book Store, Bellevue.

Oct. 13: 3:30 p.m. signing at Magnolia's Book Store.


Oct. 14: 7:30 p.m. reading at The Elliott Bay Book Co., Seattle.

placed with a proposition that they found the landscape similar, heather replaced by sagebrush. But a research trip to Scotland convinced Doig otherwise.

"I checked up on that and the place they came from looks more like the coast of Maine than Montana; there's no heather for 35 miles," he says. "So they must have come to Montana simply out of choice, putting down roots there with three generations trying to make a living in a place that doesn't want to give you a living."

Doig himself fled the state for journalism school at Northwestern, near Chicago, knowing he wanted to write and convinced he could only pursue his trade outside his native state. He never really went back — this great irony now, the writer who has done for Montana what William Faulkner did for Mississippi has been a refugee from the place almost all of his adult life.

Seattle has been his home since 1966, originally chosen because of its moderate climate and his doctoral studies in history at the University of Washington. But Doig's wife, Carol, got a teaching job at Shoreline Community College, a job that kept the larder full during her husband's lean years as a magazine free-lancer and a beginning book writer. Their roots in the soggy ground of Puget Sound have only deepened since.

"This has always been the best place for my work," Doig emphasizes. "And there is citizenship incumbent on Montana writers in Montana; there, I would have responsibilities I do not have here, like serving on committees."

Doig is not one to shrug a writer's responsibilities, whether the well-crafted paragraph or the well-presented public performance. When readings started to become an important part of a writer's life, Doig did not just start showing up at bookstores and winging it on stage, as some writers do. He studied a book on acting by Laurence Olivier.

Prestigious awards continue to come Doig's way: a Distinguished Achievement Award from the Western Literature Association in 1989 for his body of work, a Western biography award (with a $10,000 prize) this year for "Heart Earth." The prizes, in Doig's mind, belong to the books.

What he considers his is the personal response from readers, the heartfelt expressions of those touched by his work, what matters so much to this writer who freely admits he writes to be read.

Some rare writers do indeed become loved by their readers and Doig demonstrated again why he is one during a recent book-store appearance in Montana. A woman approached him, asking him to inscribe a copy of "Heart Earth" in the memory of her husband, who had just died.

And then the woman broke down, consumed by grief. And Doig let her cry on his shoulder for a time, before writing a long and careful inscription about the need for life to go on in the spirit of her husband.

"In this work," Doig would remark later, "you've got to be a practitioner of the human soul; there's a responsibility that goes with these words."
Way out West, it's a real Doig's life

Ranching hardships pushed scholarly writer into a life of the mind

By Burr Snider

JACK McCASKILL, the protagonist of "Ride With Me, Mariah Montana," is a crusty, retired Montana sheepherder with a willful and beautiful daughter, a wicked way with a one-liner and a serious disdain for most of what modern America has wrought—especially as the acme of contemporary life has manifested itself on the craggy face of his beloved state of Montana.

You wouldn't say that Jack is terminally annoyed, but you might not want to invite him on a long trip, either. Which is exactly what Jack's daughter, the maddening, mercurial Mariah, blithely calendar does. The Montana centennial is in the offing and Mariah, a talented photojournalist, and her ex-husband, Riley Wright, a columnist, have been assigned to come up with a series of features on the state for their paper, The Montanian. Mariah dragoons the reluctant Jack into chauffeuring the pair around in his Winnebago while they go poking into the far corners of the state looking for story ideas.

Since Jack and Riley harbor a cordial loathing for one another, it's a mismatch made in heaven, but it sure makes for a hell of a book. "Ride With Me, Mariah Montana" (Atheneum; $24.95) is the third entry in Ivan Doig's Rocky Mountain trilogy ("English Creek" deals with the Far West of the 1930s, and "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" with the late 19th century), and even if there's not much in the way of two-fisted action and if the sex is by inference only, this is still a book that sports major huevos.

Ivan Doig: "I am a writer grounded in the country where I was born."

And Orwell, writers who were grounded in their backgrounds, but who, by God, were speaking out to the universe. Plus, there wasn't that much of the classic cowboy-shepherd conflict in Montana so I don't emerge with any animal ideologies. It wasn't particularly the big-hat and six-gun-type cowboy that settled there.

In contrast to Jack McCaskill, Doig is a soft-spoken scholar-man with a Ph.D. in history who revels in research. "Actually, 'rummaging' is a better description of what I do," he laughs. "I love going through archives and oral histories, always looking for details. And I like roaming the country, too, taking a look at the land I write about."

'Big, broad place'

To research "Mariah," Doig and his photographer wife did just what Jack and his gang did—set out in a Bago to explore the state. "It's a big, broad place with a wonderful history of lots of trouble-making," Doig says. "Butte, for example, was a powerful union town and a powerful owner town, which made for some real battles. I'm fascinated by the radical political tradition of Montana—the unions, the Wobblies. . . . There was even a corner in the '30s where a county elected a communist administration, sheriff and all. The New Deal was too wimpy for them!"

For Doig, these RV meanderings were reminiscent of his Depression childhood on the range. "For me the Winnebago is no less than a modern sheep wagon. In the summers we used to live in a small trailer hauled by a Jeep across the Blackfoot Reservation. It was a difficult life and we were perpetually at the mercy of the Montana climate. It made me really wary of that wonderful Big Sky because time and again it held May blizzards during lambing and cold rains in July during shearing. My family came to economic calamity time and again from the consequences of trying to ranch in country which may not have been ravished."

The experience, Doig says, is what drove him to a life of the mind. "It sent me out into a profession where I hoped to be able to control my circumstances," he says with a laugh. "I became a freelance writer."

Jack McCaskill is also a man having trouble controlling his circumstances. He is not going at all gently into the dark afternoon of "senior citizenship," and he is mortally depressed that Montana, ever more in the grasp of the big-money interests, is losing its character as a place where a hard-working and frugal family can carve a meager living out of the land.

"Well, Jack has lost a lot. His wife has just died, he may have to give up his ranch, and Mariah and Riley are making eyes at each other again," says Doig. "My theme is the task of turning loss into change, and Jack's trying, but those calendar leaves are being blown away and the prospects aren't rosy."

'Economic refugee'

Doig will tell you that there but for the grace of God goes he. "I'm sort of an economic refugee from Montana. If I hadn't gotten a scholarship to Northwestern, the future looked to me like piling bales of hay until the body wore out, and then what? Jack is a little luckier in that he got some land, that old hole can't cut, but still, what's facing him has him quite worried.

"It's been a pretty tough decade in Montana and the rest of the rural West—partly because of the overwhelming urbanization and partly because of a public policy that sometimes willfully works against supporting life in small places. It's the intensification of a cycle that started when I was young. The West always feels the tip of the whip lash.""Ivan Doig makes the reader feel it, too. The real star of this book is Montana, and Doig takes you right into its big troubled heart.
These volumes follow a similar format. Edited by a well-known scholar of Oregon literature or history, each book opens with general comments about the series and a brief introduction by the volume editor. Contents are divided topically, with selections generally following chronological order within the topical divisions. Brief bibliographical paragraphs preface each selection, an abbreviated list of suggested readings follows each story or excerpt, and another pertinent bibliography closes each volume. Most of the entries run five to ten pages, a few to only one or two pages, with each anthology containing an average of forty or so items.

As expected the volumes include selections from several nationally recognized Oregon authors. The volume on short fiction, for instance, includes stories by Joaquin Miller, H. L. Davis, Ernest Haycox, Ken Kesey, Don Berry, and Raymond Carver; the autobiographical collection has writings by Abigail Scott Dunway, Homer Davenport, John Reed, and William Kittredge; and the prose anthology includes work from CES Wood, Harvey Scott, Stewart Holbrook, Richard Neuberger, and Ursula Le Guin. Dozens of recent or lesser-known writers also find their places here. Only when selections from family members or close friends of the editors and "necessary" selections from multicultural writers appear dragged in does the selective process seem questionable. In addition, more attention to detail would have kept dozens of factual and spelling errors and incorrect citations from creeping into the editorial prefaces and bibliographies.

The content and format of these volumes raise two questions. Do the literary contributions of Oregon merit all this space and expense? By all means, not only because the state has spawned a notable crop of writers in the last century and a half but also because these collections reveal as much about the diverse, shifting cultures of the region as they sample its bellettristic achievements. Second, is this format—six large-sized, durable volumes—the best medium in which to present Oregon literature. For scholars, teachers, and collectors, it probably is; but will students and generalists part with $220 for the six cloth volumes or even $130 or so for the paperbacks? The most obvious alternative format was the Montana anthology, The Last Best Place, edited by William Kittredge and Amnick Smith, which, chronologically organized, includes half as many selections and sells for one-fourth as much in cloth and the same ratio in paper. One suspects that the costs of the Oregon volumes will keep them out of most classes, except in advanced college-level courses.

These volumes are notably important in other ways, however. Their contents attest to the abundant strengths of dozens of Oregon writers. The anthologies are also well-organized, attractively presented collections, useful to academic and lay historians. Further, they are clear proof of Newsweek's recent observation that Montana, New Mexico, and Oregon are three of the West's busiest and strongest literary colonies. Finally, these volumes are instructive models for other states and literary groups sufficiently ambitious and well funded to launch similar projects.

Richard W. Etulain
University of New Mexico, Albuquerque

Readers who have waited eagerly since the 1978 publication of This House of Sky, Ivan Doig's return to his home ground—the country of spiritual autobiography and memoir—will find in Heart Earth (1993) that those fifteen years were well-spent. They brought us the author's Winter Brothers (1980), The Sea Runners (1982), and his Montana trilogy—English Creek (1984), Dancing at The Rascal Fair (1987), and Ride With Me, Mariah Montana (1990)—works in which he further refined and honed his powers of research, observation, and expression.

Nearly a decade after the publication of This House of Sky, those years brought Ivan Doig his mother's voice. That voice arrived as an uncle's bequest, a collection of letters written in 1944 and 1945 during the last six months of her life by Berneta Ringer Doig to her sailor brother Wally. Heart Earth is Ivan Doig's deeply affecting response to the letters' revelation that the "chosen world where I strive to live full slam—earth of alphabet, the Twenty-Six country—had this earlier family inhabitant who wordworked, played seriously at phrase, cast a sly eye at the human herd. . . . As I put words to pages, I voyage on her ink" (p. 156). Her son's palpable joy, relief, and pride in the discovery of his previously unsuspected maternal inheritance, the "lost side of my past" (p. 5), fairly radiate from the pages of this moving and beautifully constructed book.

Heart Earth, set in the Sixteen country of the Smith River valley of south central Montana and in Arizona, broadens our view of the "landscapes of a Western mind" offered in This House of Sky. Heart Earth also adds historical complexity and emotional resonance to our understanding of the ways in which the historical memories of the Ringer and Doig families were shaped by "the resonances of heart and earth" (p. x of the Author's Note). The book illustrates how the sweep of international political and economic forces buffeted the Ringers, Doigs, and the rest of the West's "lariat proletariat" in the 1940s. It is both more richly poetic and lyrical than Doig's first memoir and more specific and explicit in placing the family's experiences into the broader historical context of western and American history. In concrete ways it shows the impact of World War II on the Smith River valley and its inhabitants, while also exploring Doig's family connection to that country, his mother's "heart-chosen ground" (p. 93).

Ivan Doig's historical understanding allows him to shape his reflections on his mother's letters into a meditation on memory and history. He sees his parents as being "of the relic world of muscle-driven tasks" (p. 35). This work becomes his "Requiem for the lariat proletariat" (p. 55). He understands that his childhood memory of the new
sound of a ranch’s generator was “the sound of history turning” (p. 33). While land that might have supported multiple modest ranches was increasingly falling into the hands of large landholders and corporations, Charlie and Berneta Doig struggled to make ends meet by working ranches on shares, shepherding, haying, working the grain harvest, cooking for the crews, tramping, hanging on. Doig sees the working cowboys, shepherders, and haying crews being “done in by mechanization, ending up in town jobs or none” (p. 25). Five-year-old Ivan, “spying on history” and “prowling with [my]ears” (p. 29), hears the radio bulletin announcing Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s death: “When the bulletin was over, I came out from behind the couch on all fours, then stood up curious into another age” (p. 73). He understands that his parents’ move to Arizona in late 1944, in hopes of finding a climate more bearable for his asthmatic mother, was also part of the beginning of the Sunbelt’s postwar land rush: “you can feel the growth thrust gathering,” he reports (p. 41). He sees himself, now living in Seattle, as one of the “economic refugees” from the home ground of Montana.

Ancient human tasks such as childrearing, sewing, caring for the sick, moving camp, herding animals, caring for dogs and livestock are juxtaposed with reports of defense factory work and modern air combat in the South Pacific. A less sensitive writer would have failed to show how individual lives can be honored and rendered more resonant with meaning when placed in this broad context of change and upheaval in human experience. Doig’s sure sense of place and time allow him to reveal the dignity of love, physical labor, and the impulse to order experience, dream, and shape a personal, telling story.

Heart Earth is Doig’s most elegantly constructed book. Divided into five sections roughly reflecting the five months’ worth of letters from Berneta to Wally, each part begins with a postmarked excerpt from a letter and the author’s responses to the passage. Throughout the book quotations from letters help to advance the action and develop our understanding of the family’s members. The middle section, opening with a letter reporting: “Winona and I spent Saturday making formals and catching mice” (p. 69), is perhaps one of Doig’s funniest, reflecting a brief interlude of family happiness, relief, and ease on their return to Montana. But the fifth and final section, marvelously detailed, rich with images of landscape, animals, work, and intimacy, and relentlessly building in tension—as well as a sense of foreboding and tragic inevitability—is the best piece of writing in any of this author’s work. It reveals Ivan Doig at the height of his powers as a writer, equipped with the invaluable capacity to imagine the internal and external lives of others.

Doig’s voice, sure and powerful in this work, is equally powerful in his audiotaped reading of Heart Earth, available in a two-cassette package from North Word Press, Inc., of Minocqua, Wisconsin. Doig reads with clarity, care, and resonance. The reader who may have been startled by some of his wordplay on the page (“heafy,” “birthdayed,” “smellhall,” “drinkeries,” “gastorms and earquakes”) will be delighted by their renderings as the writer savors his reading of this tribute to his family. Both the written and the spoken versions of Heart Earth will warm your heart with gratitude for Ivan Doig’s care and skill in depicting the ties that bind families to one another and to the land.

Margaret C. Kingsland
Montana Committee for the Humanities, Missoula

Informative and well illustrated, Painting Texas History provides a valuable entrée into an intriguing but much neglected topic: How visual artists represent the past. Beginning with prehistoric pictographs and petroglyphs—an innovative and intriguing addition to the subject—and ending with Julius Stockfleths’s haunting streetscapes of the Galveston flood in 1900—”the final historically significant event in premodern Texas” (p. 92)—Ratcliffe assembles reproductions of more than one hundred works of art (fifty in color), plus extensive documentation on their production and content.

Many of Ratcliffe’s selections are familiar, indeed, inevitable—"classic" Texas history paintings, including scenes of Austin’s colony, the Alamo, San Jacinto, and the Mier expedition, produced by nineteenth-century artists Henry Arthur Mearkle, Theodore Gentilz, Robert Jenkins Onderdonk, William Henry Huddle, and Frederic Remington. Less well known are the sketches, prototypes, prints, photographs of lost or unlocated paintings, and other closely related images that greatly enrich our understanding of the primary icons; to have these images conveniently assembled in one volume is indeed a treat!

Other selections are more diverse, even surprising, yet all “function as historically evocative documents” (p. xii). Ratcliffe’s purview extends beyond what painters or art historians classify as formal history paintings to encompass a wide range of imagery that modern historians use to research and communicate ideas about past life and historical events—indigenous rock art, European maps, ethnographic portraits and scenes of Native American life, rural genre scenes, and landscape and topographical sketches with tiny staffage figures. Although the author does not claim a comprehensive survey, his broad scope makes conspicuous the absence of any reference to the landscapes and ethnographic studies produced by Mexican artists Lino and José María Sánchez y Tapia during the 1829 Mier y Terán expedition into Texas.

To examine "how paintings . . . serve as a visual narrative of the state’s history up to 1900" (p. xii), Ratcliffe
A Chart of Ivan Doig's Literature

Could geography be taught along with literature? The works of Ivan Doig beckon this use. Doig’s six published books are unique as each begins with a map laying out the terrain of the story in the volume to follow, highlighting the role of the land. Doig’s works are the epitome of geography—the study of the earth and its features and the effects of (or on) human activity. The prominence of geography and Doig’s use of it in his works is captured in Melander’s meditation about maps in The Sea Runners.

Each time, this unfolding of his set of the Tebenkov maps ruffles a profound pleasure through Melander. It is as if an entire tiny commonwealth has sprung to creation just for him. Sprigs small as the point of his pencil denote the great stands of forest. Tideflats are delicately dotted, as if speck-sized clams breathe calmly beneath...To cast a glance onto these superbly functional maps is like seeing suddenly beneath the fog-and-cloud skin of this shore, down to the truth of nature’s bone and muscle and ligament. The frame of this shoulder of the Pacific is what Melander avidly needs to know, and the Tebenkov maps peel it into sight for him (1983, 111).
Starting in 1978 with the autobiographical memoir *This House of Sky*, Doig has produced a series of choice works which concentrate on a locale even to the point of being lessons in local history. Doig creates living history or what might be called 'history with work boots.' In *This House of Sky* we see the influence of the land shaping a person's character. The subtitle tells all: "Landscapes of a Western Mind." In an *English Journal* article a few years ago, Zirinsky and Morache (1989) point out that student responses to *This House of Sky* might range from recollections of childhood memories to oral history projects, and even investigations into their personal family histories (76).

In *Winter Brothers*, a 1980 non-fiction work, Doig exhumes the diaries of James Gilchrist Swan (1818-1900), an early arrival to the Puget Sound region, revivifying 18th century frontier life. Swan meticulously reported his studies of Makah Indians (among others) and exploration of the Puget Sound region in his voluminous (2.5 million words!) journals covering 1859-1900.

His Montana Trilogy (*English Creek* [1985], *Dancing at the Rascal Fair* [1988], and *Ride with Me, Mariah Montana* [1991]) minutely explores the features of Montana life. This is "Not 'Montana as the last grass heaven, the end of the longhorn trail'" (*Mariah Montana*, 49). Rather, Doig's Montana in *Dancing at the Rascal Fair* includes sheep ranch homesteaders braving the terrible heat and drought, then cold and blizzard of 1918-19. Outwitting a forest fire in 1939 climaxes *English Creek*. Traversing the state in a motor home to view the 1989 centennial through the eyes of a photographer and a journalist provides the backdrop of *Ride with Me, Mariah Montana*. The novels also dramatize contours of human life like the alienation between friends, the rupture of a family, and the reorientation of life after retirement and the loss of a spouse.
The Sea Runners (Penguin, 1983) is a one-volume, stand-alone piece, combining action, adventure, and the gravitational effect of the land. Topography defines the drama in The Sea Runners. The story involves the 1853 escape from the Russian colony of New Archangel (now Sitka, AK) by four indentures and their subsequent flight down the Pacific Coast toward freedom. The geography of the coast is both threatening and accommodating to the fugitives, as Doig describes. At one time it is as beautiful as "Time and time, the canoemen saw a storm swoop onto a single mountain amid many, as if sacking up a hostage as a lesson to all the rest" (105). At another time it is as ominous as "...amid a climbing stride by Braaf as he began to cross the wrist of rock, surf burst its power in front of him...a startling white weight of water leapt, seemed to stand in the air...it then fell onto Braaf" (230).

I've taught The Sea Runners successfully not only as an adventure story featuring literary realism and naturalism, but also as a guide to the geography and culture of the Pacific Northwest coast. Student projects in conjunction with the novel have included investigations of the Tlingit Indians of Canada, as well as the history of Russian colonization of Alaska, with connections made to Swedish immigration to the Russian colony of Alaska.

The story's vigorous plot carefully tracks history and the movements of the characters, yet it also frequently raises the reader's eyes to reflection. Doig uses the character of Wennberg, an invidious personality, to delineate human motivation. In connection with Wennberg, the question is posed: "How was it you could be wearily familiar with every inch of a man and know not much of him at all?" (254). Later, with just Wennberg and Karlsson in the canoe, Doig hints at a theme. "Karlsson day by day finding dimension..."
he never knew of, and Wennberg in over his head as he always would be in life" (260).

On top of the domination of geography in his works, Doig is a master of description, as the quotes above show. Doig himself says he exalts language.

The history and the characterization and so forth, those are all fine and obviously important to me, but I think the language is the constant orbit or magnetic force that has me doing all this. That’s what really interests me constantly in the writing.

History and characters, sure they’re interesting, but what I enjoy more are the interesting turns of language as you deal with the history and characters (Auer 1991, 9).

An example of Doig’s skill is when he has Melander--a word-smith himself--say in *The Sea Runners*, "...a lazy wind...it goes through you instead of around you" (142).

Whether for one’s own pleasure, or as an alternative to the usual round of geography, or for a modern entrée of realistic literature, Ivan Doig can guide one into new territory.

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Works Cited


Definitions

topography--the technique of graphically representing the exact physical features of a place or region on a map; the physical features of a region.

cartography--the art of technique of making maps or charts.

map (synonyms)--chart, graph, plot, sketch, diagram, projection, delineation types of maps--topographical, relief, contour

Residue

"Fleece-thick as this forest was, it seemed possible that every tree of the coast was in green touch with every other, limb to limb, a continent-long tagline of thicket" (96).

In The Sea Runners we read this description: "The major island called Prince of Wales rests dominantly in this topography like a long platter on a table, smaller isles along its west a strew of lesser plateware of this North Pacific setting" (100). And "One last new reach of coast, then, and its visible population only these two kinned against their will, the one family of the kind in all creation, slim Swede and broad Swede arked in a Tlingit canoe" (242).

Jick McCaskill, Doig's protagonist in both English Creek and Ride with Me, Mariah Montana, observes as a youth, "I cite all this because by my third afternoon shift of digging, I had confirmed for myself the Two country's reputation for being a toupee of grass on a cranium of rock" (English Creek, p. 107).

James Gilchrist Swan--Jan. 11, 1818-May 18, 1900. His journals consisted of some 2,500,000 handwritten words. The Makah Indians were the primary objects of his study, among others.
14 Briarwood Drive
Athens, Ohio 45701

April 1, 1993

Mr. Tom Siekmeier
7614 S. Datura Circle
Littleton, Colorado 80120-4119

Dear Tom:

Thank you for your submission, "A Chart of Ivan Doig's Literature." I enjoyed your article and would like to use it in a future issue of Focus: Teaching English Language Arts.

The next two issues deal with "Advocacy for English" and with the push for "standards." It is possible, if there is space in either of the next two issues, I would use the article even though it doesn't fit the theme. Otherwise, I would like to use the article next spring (1994). I would understand, of course, if you would prefer not to wait that long to see your article published and would prefer to submit it elsewhere. (If you choose to submit elsewhere please let me know so I can return your manuscript to you.)

I would like to hear from you regarding your willingness to accept the possibility that the article may not be published for a year. Please feel free to call me at work at 614-753-3591, ext. 2370, or at home at 614-592-2632. If you prefer to write, please address correspondence to me at address above.

Again, thank you for your submission.

Sincerely,

Ron Luce
Editor, Focus: Teaching English Language Arts
RECOMMENDED READING

BY LYN LEgendre

"I never desire to converse with a man who has written more books than he has read."

—Samuel Johnson

So you want to write fiction. By all accounts, you should read, read, read. But where should you begin? To find out, North Shore Magazine asked a high school librarian and six area bookstores to recommend three seminal novels for aspiring, young writers.

BEVERLY LIBRARIAN

Beverly High School librarian Cathy Milligan readily chooses Ray Bradbury's "Fahrenheit 451" for its theme — the value of books and free thought in society. She further selects E.L. Doctorow's "Ragtime" for its entertaining blend of fictional and historical characters and J.D. Salinger's "Catcher in the Rye" for its character development, its enduring ability to evoke a strong response, and because it is still checked out of high school libraries "all the time."

TOAD HALL

Eleanor Hoy, of Toad Hall, 51 Main St., Rockport, suggests "Lyddie" by Katherine Paterson, "The Giver" by Lois Lowry, and "English Creek" by Ivan Doig. "Lyddie," the story of a young mill girl in mid-19th century Lowell, has a strong basis in history and is a "good read." "The Giver," winner of the 1994 Newbery Medal, is a futuristic adventure story about choosing life values. "English Creek," set in the Northwest corner of Montana, also provocatively explores the search for one's own values and for self-reliance.

THE BOOKSTORE

Lee Cunningham, of The Bookstore, 61 Main St., Gloucester, does not hesitate to name "All the Pretty Horses" by Cormac McCarthy for its powerful, descriptive, clean language and "The Shipping News" by E. Annie Proulx for its carefully woven threads and enticings plot. Recognizing that these titles are for serious, mature readers, she nevertheless believes they are within the grasp of teen-agers who honestly want to become writers. Lastly, she independent casts a second ballot for "English Creek" by Ivan Doig for its remarkable, smooth-as-butter language and its well developed characters.

THE BOOK RACK

Writer Jack Herlihy and former children's librarian Terri Kyrios, both of The Book Rack, 52 State St., Newburyport, recommend Avi's "Nothing But the Truth," Harper Lee's "To Kill a Mockingbird," and Betty Smith's "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn." The Avi book is a docudrama, with a different point of view in each chapter. Lee's 1961 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel excels in "voice and specificity." Smith's story is selected for its "emotional power" and for its illustration of Jack Kerouac's belief that, "Anything felt will find its own form."

BORDERS BOOKS

Phil Salmon, of Borders Books and Music, Route 114, Peabody, praises Thomas Wolfe's first novel, "Look Homeward, Angel," for the rhythm and beauty of its language and for the way it captures the flavor of the American South. Salmon favors "Voices from the Moon" by Andre Dubus (whom he calls a "writer's writer") for its truly memorable characters, its powerful sense of place and its exquisite detail. Finally, Salmon considers Kazuo Ishiguro's "The Remains of the Day," a novel in journal form, to be "very internal, introspective and masked, yet still extremely intimate and outwardly communicating."

THE BOOK SHOP

Laurence Brengle and Pam Price, of The Book Shop, 40 West St., Beverly Farms, vote for "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" by James Joyce for its language, its wonderful picture of a life, and because they believe young people will be able to identify with the emerging artist's experiences. J.D. Salinger's classic "Catcher in the Rye," with its angst-ridden protagonist and his changing awareness of the world, is a repeat choice. Thirdly, any of the Anne Tyler novels, such as "Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant," "The Accidental Tourist" or "Breathing Lessons," are championed for being "accessible, quirky, funny and alive."

SUE LITTLE OF JABBERWOCKY BOOKS

Sue Little of Jabberwocky, at The Tannery, Newburyport, selects Michael Shaara's Civil War saga "The Killer Angels," Margaret Atwood's anti-utopian, futuristic novel "The Handmaid's Tale," and Jane Smiley's contemporary story "A Thousand Acres." Little says, "All three are beautifully written and well crafted, as well as commercially successful."

Again, these strictly limited suggestions are merely a starting place. Sue Little urges all young writers to read "everything from Dickens to Vonnegut," including Annie Dillard, John Gardner, May Sarton and Virginia Woof.

Go forth and read! For only when a writer has first drunk deeply from the wells of life and literature can he or she really hope to plumb new territories of the mind, the imagination, the heart and the soul.

Lyn LeGendre is a free-lance writer who lives in West Newbury.
Movies can inspire a passion for literature

BY DANIEL GEWERTZ

When I was 15 and a budding writer, the discovery of movies on late-night television lured me away from reading fiction. And then, like a cunning sleight of hand, Hollywood on the tube led me right back to the printed page with a larger understanding.

Like many boys, I did not have interests, I had passions. Subjects either bored me, or I went after them in a virtually hormonal overdrive. First, oddly, it was an encyclopedic knowledge of U.S. presidents. Then, for several years, major-league baseball. I had just begun my lust for British Invasion rock 'n' roll, Bob Dylan songs and writing Dylan-esque poetry when I entered high school, and I like to think it was the 10th-grade schedule that created my unbridled passion for movies.

It was Queens, N.Y., circa 1965, and because of the baby boom, city high schools were so over-crowded that grades went to school in sessions. The 10th-grade had late session, and I arrived at school at 12:30 p.m. and left at 5:30. I was allowed, therefore, the sin of going to sleep very late and getting up very late. It felt delicious.

There were on New York TV back then very few talk shows, but the movies came and went all night long. The titles of the programming itself were enticing: "The Late Show," "The Late Late Show" and "The Late Late Late Show." Now, finally, I could indulge in these nocturnal adult TV rites I'd only heard of before. I would often watch movies until 3. Sometimes I'd retire early, set my clock to 3:30 a.m., see a film that ran to 5:15, and then go back to sleep. I was intransigent.

At first, my habit of reading for pleasure diminished. But over that year of "late session," certain films led me back to the written word. The first may have been East of Eden, a wonderful film directed by Elia Kazan, starring James Dean and based on a John Steinbeck novel. When I picked up the 600-page book I was astonished to discover that the film had only told the final third of a multi-generational saga. It was a wise decision: the book held far too many characters and plots to be encompassed in a two-hour movie. Yet I found myself just as enthralled by the stories that preceded the movie's plot as the parts familiar to me.

I not only discovered Steinbeck, and then read almost every novel he'd written, but I was struck by the whole concept of creative adaptation between mediums. The decisions a director and scriptwriter make in translating a novel to the screen made me think about the decisions the novelist made in the first place. The whole notion of interpreting the meaning of a book, and envisioning who the characters are and what they might look like, made itself known to me in exciting new ways.

Take Breakfast at Tiffany's, for instance. This charming movie romance led me to the novella by Truman Capote, and then, afterward, to every word that Capote ever wrote. But beyond pointing me toward a master of style, the weird differences between the movie Breakfast and the book it sprang from amazed me. At the end of the movie, Holly Golightly falls in love with the story's narrator, her apartment-house neighbor. Audrey Hepburn and George Peppard made a lovely couple and they live happily ever after. In the book, what becomes of Holly is left a mystery. A bad end is possible. Even more important, the narrator is a friend, not a lover. Which makes sense: it is obviously Capote himself telling the tale, and he's gay.

That movies could change endings and transform characters made me read the novels these movies were based upon with new perception. Sometimes the adaptation was beautifully faithful. Old British versions of Charles Dickens' "Great Expectations" and "A Christmas Carol" are both splendid and true. Yet it was also fascinating to see an old Dana Andrews movie on "The Late, Late Show" called My Foolish Heart, and realize that it was based on a favorite J.D. Salinger story, "Uncle Wiggly in Connecticut," and that the filmmakers used the story only as a springboard, spending almost all the film on an anecdote within the story, filling out what Salinger only hinted at. It turned a sharp look at the neurosis of post-war domestic suburbia into a pleasing yet generic war romance. (Fortunately, Salinger never allowed "Catcher in the Rye," my favorite book as a teen, to be filmed. Holden Caulfield's image remains undiluted.)

My knowledge of Steinbeck, Capote, Dickens, William Styron, Tennessee Williams and Larry McMurtry was one reward of my cinematic lust. My new knowledge of the myriad decisions that go into a piece of writing was my dividend.

Daniel Gewertz is a free-lance writer and movie reviewer.
Molly Ivins
*Nothin' But Good Times Ahead*
Tues., October 4th
Kane Hall, Room 130, 7pm

Lou Whittaker
*Whittaker: Memories of a Mountain Guide*
Wed., October 5th
Kane Hall, Room 120, 7PM

Mary Matalin & James Carville
*All's Fair*
Fri., October 7th
***HUB Auditorium, 7PM***

Naomi Wolfe
*Fire With Fire*
Wed., October 12th
Kane Hall, Room 130, 7PM

Earl Emerson
*Portland Laugher*
Thur., October 13th
Kane Hall, Room 120, 7PM

Prof. Elizabeth Loftus
*The Myth of Repressed Memory*
Tues., October 18th
Kane Hall, Room 120, 7PM

Ivan Doig
*Heart Earth*
Thur., October 20th
Kane Hall, Room 120, 7PM

Sasquatch Publisher's Party
Fri., October 21st
Kane Hall, Room 220, 7PM

Michael Dorris
*Guests & Working Men*
Tues., October 25th
Kane Hall, Room 120, 7PM

Matthew Stadler
*The Sex Offender*

Rebecca Brown
*The Gifts of the Body*
Thur., October 27th
Kane Hall, Room 220, 7PM

Melvin Morse
*Parting Visions*
Fri., October 28th
Kane Hall, Room 120, 7PM

All lectures are free. Tickets are not required. First come, first seated. No standing room.
To join our mailing list, please call (206) 634-3400.
Autograph Parties

Tom Robbins
*Half Asleep In Frog Pajamas*
Sun., October 2nd
Ave Store, General Books, 1PM

Amy Tan & Gretchen Schields
*The Chinese Siamese Cat*
Mon., October 3rd
Ave Store, General Books, Noon - 1PM

Chin-Ning Chu
*Thick Face Black Heart*
Wed., October 5th
Ave Store, General Books
4 - 5PM

Charles De Lint
*Memory and Dream*
Thur., October 6th
Ave Store, General Books, 7PM

Bruce Sterling
*Heavy Weather*
Tues., October 18th
Ave Store, General Books
3 - 4PM

Cleveland Amory
*The Best Cat Ever*
Wed., October 19th
Ave Store, General Books
2 - 3PM

Bruce Barcott
*Northwest Passages*
Sat., October 22nd
Ave Store, General Books
12PM

Mark Morris
*Mark Morris*
Mon., October 24th
Ave Store, General Books
2PM

Robert Jordan
*Lord of Chaos*
Tues., October 25th
Ave Store, General Books
4PM
mornings free for writing and I couldn't use more time than that anyway. So, I don't think teaching has cut into my time for writing at all.

NB: Do you think that what you're teaching makes any difference to your writing?

SM: I haven't thought about that, but it probably does. If I'm teaching books that I admire very much, it probably is an incentive. I'm constantly coming upon passages in books that, no matter how many times I've read them, impress me in a new way and I feel a kind of inspiration: "Ah, that's well done. I could do that. I might just do something like that." It happens all the time.

The intellectual encounter is probably helpful too. You trade ideas with students; you are forced to articulate your ideas. I suppose in all that, there is some benefit to your writing. Better, say, than not to trade ideas with someone, not to be forced to articulate your ideas to a class. So teaching is probably beneficial in a great many different ways, not all of which I recognize.

NB: Do you have any particular goals for the students?

SM: Yes, each course has its own goals and objectives, but in general I want them not only to learn something, but to perform to their capacities. I look for excellence and if I don't get it, I'm disappointed and I grade the papers accordingly.

NB: What kinds of literature courses do you teach?

SM: I teach a course called, "The Autobiographical Narrative" which is an investigation of the first person voice and the viewpoint of the writer who is looking inward on his own experience and writing about it.

NB: That sounds like something you've done.

SM: The Names is an example of that particular form and I was very much interested in books of that kind when I was writing The Names, so I fashioned a course out of it. We read things like Out of Africa, Speak, Memory and Goodbye to All That and Sartre's The Words and Lillian Hellman's Pentimento. I'm teaching that course this quarter and for the first time I'm using a book called This House of Sky by Ivan Doig about growing up in Montana. It's wonderful. Regularly I teach a course in oral tradition which is focused on American Indian oral tradition. And I teach a course of the American West from 1850 to the Present. Of the landscape in American Literature and a course on Emerson and Frederick Tuckerman.

NB: Your courses sound wonderful.

SM: They're fun. Yeah. I enjoy them.

NB: I imagine that you designed most of them.

SM: All of those I mentioned.

NB: Which comes first, the reading for the course or your own writing?

SM: It works both ways. I guess I had the idea of writing Th Names before I had the idea of offering a course in the autobiographical narrative, so the course probably proceeded from my interest in writing in that form. But I'm sure it works the other way too. Every year you're sent a questionnaire as to what you propose to offer in the next year and that's the time when you think, "Ah, what might be fascinating to explore? What will the students find fascinating? And so you are encouraged to be inventive.

NB: One thing that interested me in your writing was the idea that people are losing their sensitivity to words. Do you deal with that in your course on oral tradition?

SM: We talk a great deal about that in that course. It really is a fundamental examination of the way we exist in the element of language. It turns out to be a comparison between the oral tradition and the written tradition. It's great fun because few people think about their existence in language at that fundamental level. So it is fascinating and I learn a great deal every time I teach it. I think the students do too because I'm sure most of them have never thought about language in the way that I force them to think about it in the course. And we do, as you say, spend time talking about what words are and what their potential is for us in literature and in conversation —in every way.

When I first offered the course, I had no idea how it would receive. I was hoping that I could get maybe ten or twelve students together around a table. Well, 150 students showed up for the first meeting. I didn't want to turn anybody away, so I had to adjust the
The Spy in Rags

HERE'S A short quiz to determine your publishing smarts. Suppose an eager, exotic Spanish student had penned a memoir of her World War II espionage activities that became a surprise hit. For a million dollars, you'd want the author to leave her original publisher and do two sequels for your firm. That's pretty much history. To earn back, those two books are going to have to end up on a lot of night tables.

When the first sequel is published, the bookstores order almost 100,000 copies, but sell less than half. That isn't bad, but neither is it particularly good—especially since the author has a large television public and was invited to do the kind of media attention that will move books in large quantities.

Give up? Well, here's how: Why not leak a story that your countess's adventures are less true than they seem?

Never mind the disclaimer in the front of the books that she created composite characters and her stories are only "based on the actual events." Cook up a story about how the publishing discovery, and then watch the others follow suit. First, though, give your countess a new name. Let her show up in the media training, so she can look like a reporter in the event. Let her absolutely convincingly in her protestations of innocence.

The sure-fire result: bestseller bonanza.

That's one strategy that someone at Putnam, the publisher, leaked to a reporter at Women's Wear Daily any notion that the countess embellished her facts. But I doubt if they were dissuaded with the media attention that followed. Newsweek, for example, recently devoles a full page to an ordinary book review. Scandal, however, is a different matter, and The Spy Wore Silver garnered that valuable sales secrecy.

Yet planned or not, the media coverage of the countess's alleged film—her code name was not "Tiger" but "Buchy," and dramatic moments like her last-minute escape would have been sassed tend to be unconfirmed in her National Archives file. It makes any difference. (Which means there's one way to win this quiz. Sorry.) The Spy Wore Silver sold only 27,000 copies, half the number of the preceding book.

This was one of two exceptions to the rule of Media Attention, which says that the greater the attention the more copies a book sells, the less attention that misfortune concentrated in a short span of time. And there's no such thing as the wrong kind of attention.

The second exception occurred with a Putnam book: Inside Out: An Insider's Account of Wall Street, by former inside trader and ex-judge, Thomas J. Lang. For his supposed tale of crime, redemption and recovery, Levine was to receive, a reliable source says, a million dollars (obviously the going rate at Putnam). That outcome was based on the proposal, which promised more than the manuscript delivered. Consequently, Levine received $250,000 less.

In the final chapter, Levine asserts, "This time I will do it right." A surprisingly large number of people bought this claim. Bill Barnhart, in a precis review in the Chicago Tribune, was one of the few that was more guarded.

"He is starting over (as a business consultant), but he will no doubt use the talents that brought him earlier success, whatever they are," Barnhart wrote. "We would be more eager to wish him well in his second chance if we knew what his scorecard is today."

That scorecard was quickly revealed when "60 Minutes" reported Levine had gotten clients involved in deals with individuals who had a history of defrauding investors. He had apparently learned less about right and wrong than about the difference between getting away with it and getting caught.

All the returns aren't in, but Putnam is said to have a good chance of getting an astonishing 50,000 copies back out of the 70,000 it published. Conclusion: It's a little soon to talk about an '80s revival.

A State of Mind

MONTANA BOASTS an abundance of writers, but the one who really got the state on the literary map is Ivan Doig. So where does he live? A suburb of Seattle.

"I consider myself an economic refugee," Doig says, explaining that he left as a young man because he needed to make a living. As for the notion of returning now, "I hope I don't live to eat these words, but moving back is kind of my fancy-pants writer who's made his name somewhat in the world—well, that is the sort of grandee-ish I seem up rating."

It helps, he adds, that the Montana climate lacks a certain baldness. Otherwise, he might just be swayed in spite of himself.

But if it might be more fun to live in the state where he was born and which is the locale of his popular trilogy about the fictional McCaskill family and their Two Medicine country—English Creek, Dancing at the Rascal Fair and Ride With Me, Mariah Moon—he's staying away has its advantages too. Doig gets more done this way.

"I'm not much of a citizen in the sense of being on committees, and there's not much of a literary community in Vergo. I tend to just hole up and work. If I lived in Montana, I'm not at all sure I would have published six books. I would have had to be a professor years ago to support myself, and then that would have cut into my writing time. Only since Rascal Fair appeared I've been 'reasonable' income flowed from his books.

These books don't exactly cover the territory he once figured they would, either. Doig slipped into fiction very slowly. First he was a newspaper and magazine freelancer for a decade. In 1978, he published his first book, This House of Sky. The Western Mind. The title conceals that it was a personal story, not so much memoir as well-researched reportage on his childhood.

The next book, Winter Brothers, was non-fiction, too, a recreation of an 1890s diary of exploration, Circle. The Tie Rain, which sprang from a real-life 19th-century incident in which four men escaped from a Russian prison and made their way down the Pacific coast. Even the Montana trilogy, for that matter, is more heavily researched than some books passing for nonfiction these days.

"I always thought, and maybe this comes out of growing up in a community as small as it is, but I would think it's a matter of something like the way, I don't know. We've grown a lot since one's going to come up and say, 'Damn, didn't you know better than that?' It didn't happen that way at all. And you can bet I'll be going. You don't have to be a Montana fanatic to enjoy Dog's trilogy. In fact, the writer isn't going to make much money with it. And then there's the Montana that is so utterly special that you can wet a finger and wave it in the air and know whether you're there or not in the air, and that's the landscape overshadowing any other.

The three books cover the century that the white man has lived in Montana, with a brief look at each for a century, the Great Depression and the contemporary scene. Part of the author's intention is to get us to see the cowboy West. In a word quite repeating, Doig once told Publishers Weekly that he is trying to paint the grain of what I call 'Winters,' after Owen Wister, the author of The Virginian."

"He went off from Philadelphia and Harvard and got in with some of the rich cattlemen of Wyoming. So far as he could tell, no one in the West ever had to do any work. In 'Winters' it's all card games and saving schoolmarmies; nobody ever milks a cow or plants a spud. As best I can tell, there's got to be some kind of catering service out of Cheyenne that comes out and takes all of that whole damn West. It's nonsense, and I think it's harmful nonsense."

Still Concerned

YOU CAN tell a lot about a bookstore by how it presents itself to the passing world. In the window of Vergot Books at 1337 Connecticut Ave. N.W. a few weeks ago were Green Cane and Jucy Flax, by Caribbean Women, Kuoni V. An African and European Instruction of Culture and Cooking, Stars of the Negro League playing cards, a volume on the history of Dixie, and one on the gastronomic history of Southern Italy. The former, listed "500 Years of the New World Order."

Does this bring back echoes of Common Concerns, the politically committed bookstore with a few doors up from Vergot that went out of business in July? It should: Two of the employees in Common Concerns are now partners in Vergot, and there's been at least some carryover of philosophy, too.

"We're carrying Penguin Classics so we don't have to say, 'No, we don't have Chekhov,"' says Warren. "And we're now in the romance of a political bookstore," explains Bridget Warren, one of the partners in Vergot. "But we're still carrying Common Concerns in the political or advocacy community in the city, we want to do that too."

This means that the store must avoid being perceived as a lefty Common Concerns (and scary off some customers) and, at the other extreme, being pegged as simply a small backroom on interest books and giving customers no reason to go there instead of the nearby Olson's. "That's a line we have to walk," concedes Warren.

It's the books on the shelves, of course, that will supply the final answer. The literature and humanities sections are already stocked, and there were no Common Concerns—there's probably the best selection around of the Heinemann African Writers and many books by Warren's partner, in New York as well as "all the books people saw at Common Concerns, minus the Nicaraguan coffee."

Why call it Vergot? Basically, because the dictionary, by the name, Broadway Books, an early contender, was discarded as being too bland. "We were getting desperate," says Warren, "we'd get in before our bookshelves were right. We didn't have a book on Vietnam, for fact," Warren jokes, "we have a chain planned—The Psycho Store, then The Japanese..."

The proprietors have more serious plans to reach the readership for such specialties as African-American topics. Warren says she was trying to decide on a name. Broadway Books, an early contender, was discarded as being too bland. "We were getting desperate," says Warren, "we'd get in before our bookshelves were right. We didn't have a book on Vietnam, for fact," Warren jokes, "we have a chain planned—The Psycho Store, then The Japanese..."

The jacket that Michael Jan Kaye and Melissa Hayden have done for Pay Weldon's new novel, Life Force (reviewed on p. 6), is thus something out of the ordinary. The novel, about a weed eradicator's use of seeds in '60s London, at first featured a snapshot of two (clothed) statuettes on the cover. The Viking sales reps, when they were sent out to order the book to the stores, felt something a little more corporeal was in order.

First, the old photo was dropped in favor of a close-up of Michelangelo's David. Then, to strategically protect his midfield, a paper band was attached that gives the book's title and author.

In an innovation of sorts, the band is attached to the book's spine, which means it will be ultimately part of the book's permanent label. "You don't want David dropping his fig leaf down to his knees," notes Viking editor Nain Graham. "What good is it going to do there?"
Author’s images rise from imagination and memories

Running the mind’s ridges

As broadcaster of sheep her mind is free to go while the rest of her has to ride the horse, and she dreams ahead now. Extend yourself full slam; if she has found anything to believe, it’s that. It reached her to Charlie, lyrical wire in the wind. It was what pushed her to the gamble of Ivan, chancy pregnancy atop her chancy lung health. She can’t feel any regret for how any child of hers ridge-runs the country of his head.”

— HEART EARTH
by Ivan Doig
Doig links the personal to the political as he looks back at that beginning work. The death of his mother in 1949, on Ivan's sixth birthday, required a "new constellation of family." By the mid 1970s, his father and grandmother had died. "This House of Sky" honors the courage and persistence of these two disparate and often warring people who placed his upbringing above their differences.

"It's a technical, professional choice," he says, explaining the book's first-person viewpoint. "It got me to sit down and excavate out of my own memories."

He began his excavation in the early '70s, the period of Watergate. He'd been in grad school in the '60s, "logging through that Vietnam affair...one foot on an Air Force reserve plane and one foot off." He didn't have to go. "But," he emphasizes, "that and the politics of the period after Watergate when every political felon convicted or otherwise in fact got a fat book contract" enraged him.

"Whenever the going would get tough on 'This House of Sky,' a tough book to write, a densely poetical book, I would remember Spiro Agnew's publishing deal and say: 'Other people need to have a chance to have their stories told in this country — people like my parents.'"

Doig told his family's story, and an editor at Harcourt Brace took a risk on a non-traditional biography at a time when some American historians were beginning to revise the traditional histories of the West.

Richard Maxwell Brown, a University of Oregon history professor, believes that "This House of Sky" began "grassroots biography."

For the past four years, Brown has served as a juror for the Evans Biography Award. This year, Doig's "Heart Earth" won the $10,000 prize. The jurors, Brown says, found "Heart Earth" to be "a unique biographical perspective on the Depression decade of the 1930s and the era of World Turn to DOIG, Page 2F

Author Ivan Doig visited Eugene recently on a tour promoting his latest book "Heart Earth," a memoir of his mother, Berneta Augusta Maggie Ringer Doig. (Top left) Sunset along the Continental Divide in Montana's northern Rocky Mountains.

by SUSAN GLASSOW FOR THE REGISTER-GUARD

photos by CARL DAVAZ

Older writers let their creativity soar in 'Reflections'

By BOB WELCH
The Register-Guard

O N THE NINTH FLOOR of her high-rise apartment, in front of a new Smith Corona PWP 4300 word processor that wouldn't look out of place on the Starship Enterprise, she works on her latest novel.

It is a fantasy about a person who has a near-death experience while on an operating table. The woman spends up to six hours a day on the manuscript.

If you're envisioning some baby boomer in her Central Park flat, think again. The woman is Marie Melton Wilson, whose writing perch is the Ya-Po-Ah Terrace retirement home. In two weeks, Wilson will turn 86.

She was among the 100 oldest adults from around the state whose works are featured in the just-released "Reflections," a two-volume booklet sponsored by the Oregon Association of Homes for the Aging as part of its Creative Writing and Poetry Festival.

On a late September afternoon, some 250 people gathered at the Hult Center to listen to celebrity readers read the 10 best of the bunch. The work had to have been penned in the last 10 years while the author was 65 years or older. All authors were residents of nursing and retirement homes that belong to the association.

"The idea was partly to offer an outlet to older writers, who wondered why we offered something similar for artists, and partly to try to overcome some stereotypes," said Sally Goodwin, the association's executive director.

"Some people see these older adults as all nice, pleasant, polite people who stay happy by not doing much. Just because someone is 55 or 95 doesn't mean they can't be creative."

The stories and poems range in theme, from the personal ("To: Max On Our 42nd Anniversary") to the humorous ("Cupid, You're Stupid"), from authors lost in memories ("Going to the Fourth of July") to those who have found peace amid the ailments of age ("Reflections On Aging").

"Some I couldn't read without crying and some without laughing," Goodwin said.

Eugene writers who made the booklet were Wilson, for "More Than Clay"; Gladys Irene King, Olive Plaza, for "Only Yesterday!"; Elizabeth Osgood, Washington Abbey, for "Why We Quit Cruising"; Ruth Barton Davis, Ya-Po-Ah Terrace, for "Happily Ever After (A Child's Story)"; Mary Jo Stephenson, Good Samaritan, for "Lilac Tide"; Trudi DeMarchi, Olive Plaza, for "We Must Say Goodbye"; Edna Thomas, Ya-Po-Ah Terrace, for "Doctor Jim"; Loucie Steen, Ya-Po-Ah Terrace, for "Lilac Dragon Cloud"; and Faye McCoy, Olive Plaza, for "A Winter Morning."

If ever there was an example of the "you're never too old-to-start" adage, it's the 94-year-old McCoy. "I've always liked poetry but I didn't start writing until I was 90," she said.

Turn to DOIG, Page 2F

Marie Melton Wilson: "Writing is just something I have to do. It's part of me."

ANDY NELSON/The Register-Guard
DOIG Continued from Page 1F

War II in the West, graphically, memorably portraying the opposite sides, the French and the Germans, as if they were two teams of baseball players that are so deeply rooted in Western history and society.

"Heart Earth" is a delicate, beautifully woven memoir by Vermont Augusta Ringe. The story of Doig, built from letters she wrote during the last year of World War II to her brother, Wally Ringe.

Bequested to Doig in 1986 by his uncle, Vermont's airmail letters connect Doig to the mother he barely knew: "I had given up ever trying to contact my mother. Now I was led back. Upward from her, and then over again.

In "This House of Sky" he has written: "The truth is a father of mine paid in all the surviving he had to do, I know enough about. But why the life had no idea of his name, was, not entirely.

In "Heart Earth," Doig explores that this farmer of mine paid in all the surviving he had to do, I know enough about. But why the life had no idea of his name, was, not entirely.

In "Heart Earth," Doig explores that this farmer of mine paid in all the surviving he had to do, I know enough about. But why the life had no idea of his name, was, not entirely.

The "hands and arms of Bessie Ringer were scarred from every kind of barbwire work, yet there she sat hooking away at the most intricate of crochetwork, snowflaking the rough rooms of her existence with dolly upon dolly." IVAN DOIG Author

"The six-shooter, the gunfighter, the resort to easy bravado and terrible violence: that is not the real West. The real West is vastly more quilted and complicated than that." IVAN DOIG Author


WRITERS Continued from Page 1F

It happened in a calligraphy class. "I got tired of just doing the ABCs, so I started to write little poems. People laughed at them and enjoyed them. Pretty soon, rhyming words started running through my head and I was writing poetry for Halloween, Christmas, whatever.

McCoy has written gift books for her friends and family, an ample audience. She has three children, one of whom is 71; six grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren; and one great-great-grandchild.

Her poem selected for "Reflections," called "A Winter Morning," deals with how perspective molds our moods. "I read the news of gloom and doom... I must, I must, escape this room... And I'm done with my coat, with spirits dour/Walked straight outside into a shower/With lowered head and plodding gait/A still small voice would bring to mind/That what you look for you will find./I raised my head, the sun came out and from within there came a shout," Oh! Oh! Oh! What's this I see?/Purple crocus marching round our apple tree...

"At our age, we have a lot of aches and pains and sometimes we focus on them," said McCoy. "I believe in focusing on what's good.

McCoy is a newcomer to the art of writing, but Good Samaritan's Stephenson has been writing for most of her 83 years. "I just love to work with words," she said.

Her published poem, "Lilac Tide," is a tribute to her mother. "The Lilacs that bloomed 'Back Home' strangely seemed more fair, seemed to be more fragrant. Just because she was there..."

Yo-Pa-Ah's Wilson first published poems when she was a 15-year-old in Tipton, Kan. In the 20s, she got paid for her writing — 47 from the Chicago Tribune for a poem on the Ozark Mountains, where she had grown up.

She has had more than 100 poems and stories published in magazines, and has had books published, autobiographies called "Nellie's Girl" and "Nellie's Girl 2."

"Writing is just something I have to do," she said. "It's part of me. You get caught up in your characters. It's the same kind of satisfaction you get from reading." The title of her chosen for the "Reflections" volume, "More Than Clay," is a fictitious piece about a little white girl and black girl becoming friends in a small Southern town, then being forced apart by a society that won't accept integration.

The point is that color makes no difference," she said. "We are who we are.

Goodwin, the association's executive secretary, says organizers of the creative writing and poetry festival toyed with the idea of "making everyone a winner." But they decided they're going to let people really win.

"Judges Choice" awards went to Thomas Williams, Willamette View Inc.; Nathan Horowitz, Robson Jewish Home; Beatrece Bliss White, Jennings McClung; James Lewis, Ross Knots Center; Frances Rieder, Hillside Manor; Fred Buehling, Capital Manor; Evelyn Guth, Willamette Valley Inc.; Hazel Bowden, Rogue Valley Manor; Mary Craig, Willamette Valley Inc.; and Allen Smith Case, Willamette Valley Inc.

After Breast Surgery, Amoena Gives You More Choice

Choose from the most extensive line of external breast forms and accessories...
Once the soldiers of the salad days, men can't comprehend this current male movement of returning to the forest and beating drums, finding a "warrior self."

"The macho myth of the West is the West I hate and I have been writing against it in all these books. The six-shooter, the gunfighter, the city's easy bravado and terrible violence: that is not the real West. The real West is vast and more quilled and complicated than that. I'm dumbfounded that this notion is still current: we see it in the Reagan White House, and we see it now in the current 'cowboy' stuff — Bakersfield, California, dressed the part and walking the streets of Bozeman today."

Doig and his wife, Carol, have been married almost 30 years. In the meticulous notes that accompany each of his books, fiction or non-fiction, she is given credit for research photography, for manuscript readings.

He laughs and recalls the time they wrote a jour-
Insider's view of law makes great fiction

There's been a lot of muscle at the top of the best-seller list this summer: predictable blockbusters from Stephen King, Tom Clancy and Louis L'Amour, as well as surprises such as Allan Bloom's controversial "The Closing of the American Mind."

But one book by a first-time novelist has refused to be shouldered aside by King and Clancy et al. Scott Turow's "Presumed Innocent" has been near the top of sales charts since its July release. If you're a reader who regularly bemoans the lack of "quality" on the best-seller list, "Presumed Innocent" is cause for celebration.

It's that rarest of things: a popular entertainment with a finely drawn setting, an ingenious plot and wholly believable characters. At once a murder mystery and courtroom drama, it also is a meditation on marriage and adultery, a chilling view of political corruption and moral bankruptcy and a case study of a laudable but imperfect legal system.

This uncommonly good first novel was written by an attorney who turned to law school after his early dreams of a writing career were shattered.

"I had no ambition other than being a novelist," recalled Turow during a recent Seattle visit. After Amherst College — where he studied under the respected writer Tillie Olsen and published a short story before graduating in 1970 — he moved on to the graduate writing program at Stanford University.

He spent five years there as a fellow student and lecturer, but as early as his second year he had begun having second thoughts. When a novel he had worked on for four years was rejected by 25 publishers, he turned to Harvard Law School, where a journal he kept argues the first time he visited.

In a sweeping saga, set in Montana, a writer tells of The high life

"Dancing at the Rascal Fair"
by Ivan Doig
Atheneum, $18.95

by Michael Dorris

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

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

The chronicle is constructed with the eye to detail and the unparalleled sense of place that characterize Doig's previous award-winning fiction and nonfiction. Virtually a "prequel" to his 1984 novel, "English Creek," it overflows with the precise yet magically evocative images of the northern expectation: "We sat unspeaking for a while, in that supreme silence that makes the ears ring. Where the bevels of the valley met, the creek ran in ripples and rested in beaver ponds. A curlew made aft evasive flight across the slope below us as if revealing curlicues in the air. Everything fit everything else this day."

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

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

With the varied community of Scottish shepherds and homesteaders, they constitute a self-contained world in which all the grand dramas are played out, worldwide.
Turow, 38, is now a defense attorney for one of Chicago's largest firms, but he spent eight years after law school as a prosecutor in the U.S. attorney's office in Chicago. Involved in a crackdown on corruption in the state judicial system, Turow learned firsthand much that he has rendered as fiction in "Presumed Innocent." The book he began by writing 30 minutes on the commuter train each day.

Perhaps more than anything, "Presumed Innocent" will cause you to re-examine our legal system — or, rather, The Law. Admittedly it's naive, but I have always thought of The Law as an immutable body of regulations that can be applied equally across the board, everything clear cut.

Not so, you learn in "Presumed Innocent." As you watch deputy prosecutor Rusty Sabich stand trial for the murder of a colleague, he is circled warily by the ambitious new prosecutor, Nico Dela Guardia, the judge, Warren Lytle, who has an overpowering presence and a compromised past; and his own defense lawyer, the urbane and infinitely subtle Alejandro Stern. Far from immutable, The Law among these contenders is revealed as a shifting vehicle open to myriad interpretations; truth can hang on the arch of an eye.

"Being a trial lawyer and being a novelist are not entirely different," Turow observed.

"There is the same sort of editorial process: You control what your witnesses say. One of the first questions you ask yourself is, 'How are you going to draw the reader — and jury — in?' You better start telling your story right away.

"One other thing I've learned as a lawyer: to be a ruthless editor. You only get so much a day's time. If you have something to say in a brief, and he only has time for 20 pages, don't get to your point by page 30.

A reading public has gotten the point about "Presumed Innocent," as has Hollywood. Sydney Pollack ("Tootsie," "Out of Africa") has purchased the film rights for $1 million, and the paperback rights recently were sold for $3 million — a record for a first novel.

"My idea was that it is a serious novel that happens to be a murder mystery," said Turow. "The fact that it happens to be considered nonstop reading by people just blows me away."

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

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**Spotlight: Short Stories**

**Two Eclectic Collections**

by Frank Moore

There are almost as many types of the short story as there are literary genres. Some feature dialogue with little description; some are descriptive with no dialogue. Some are brief, amounting to no more than three or four pages, while others border on the novel. Short stories can treat love, hate, death, and divorce, and sometimes they rejoice in life.

"Prize Stories: The 1987 O. Henry Awards," edited by William Abrahams (Doublay, $17.95), and "American Short Story Masterpieces," edited by Raymond Carver and Tom Jenks (Delacorte, $19.95), are collections of stories published previously in various magazines and literary journals. It is obvious that the editors have taken care in culling stories from hundreds of possible sources.

The O. Henry Awards collection, with no stories published prior to 1906, continues its distinguished tradition — the awards began in 1919 — of recognizing excellence in the craft of contemporary short fiction. "American Short Story Masterpieces," on the other hand, goes as far back as 1954 for its material and is intended as an American companion to the well-known "Short Story Masterpieces," edited by Robert Penn Warren and Albert Erskine in 1954, which also included English and Irish writers.

Their intention may be admirable, although editors Raymond Carver and Tom Jenks have taken the concept a bit too far by rejecting any author who appeared in the earlier collection. Thus, we get no work from acknowledged American masters such as Eudora Welty and John Cheever (although we do get one from Carver).

The important thing, however, is not what was left out but what was included. Both "American Short Story Masterpieces" and the O. Henry winners are beyond criticism in their selection of authors and styles. The Carver-Jenks book includes works from Bernard Malamud, Arthur Miller, Grace Paley, Stanley Elkin, E.L. Doctorow, John Gardner, Philip Roth and Richard Brautigan, as well as more recent writers who are not yet household names but soon may be, like Tess Gallagher and Mark Helprin.

The O. Henry collection includes Louise Erdrich and Joyce Johnson (co-winners of first prize), as well as Donald Barthelme, Millicent Dillon, Helen Norris, Joyce Carol Oates and Paley again. The authors names should be enough in both cases to tempt any reader to investigate either collection without disappointment.

Whatever else one may say about the short story, it is finally an author's ability to evoke a world in a teardrop that holds the reader spellbound.

"Fleur," Louise Erdrich describes her central character: "She was plagued with guilt, laughed at the old woman's advice, and dressed like a man... She related with individuals who crash and splinter against each other from season to season, has not been better presented. Men and women get along because they have no choice; they adore and despise as if they invented the emotions.

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

They are eager to adapt, to shed Old World preconceptions and prejudice, and to make the Two Medicine country where they settle breathtakingly splendid, matching every landscape of limitless expanse but never claustrophobic social interaction. It is a world in which secrets are not so much kept as respected, where time moves rather than heals, and where nothing is guaranteed beyond the next chinook.

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

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

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

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**Best Sellers**

**Hardback Fiction**

1. "Patriot Games," Tom Clancy
2. "Presumed Innocent," Scott Turow
4. "Dancing at the Rascal Fair," Robert Burns
5. "The High Dive," John Donoghue
7. "Legacy," James Michener

**Hardback Nonfiction**

1. "Spycatcher," Peter Wright
2. "Rubber Legs and White Tail Hairs," Patricia Edmonston
3. "It's All in the Playing," Shirley MacLaine
5. "Family: The Ties That Bind ... and Gali!", Erma Bombeck
6. "Straight on Till Morning: The Biography of Beryl Markham," Mary S. Lovell
7. "Getting Better All the Time," Liz Carpenter
8. "8-Week Cholesterol Cure," Robert E. Kowalski

**Regional Interest**

1. "So You Want a Divorce," Daniel Giboney
2. "Oregon's Quiet Waters," Cheryl McLean and Clint Brown
3. "Moonshiner's Bed and Breakfast," Myrna Oakley
5. "The Year in Bloom," Ann Lovejoy
6. "Gunkholing in the San Juans," Al Cummings and Jo Orman Johnson
7. "Roadside Geology of Washington," David Al and Donald Johnson
8. "San Juan Islands: Afoot and Afloat!" Marge Mueller
NONFICTION

THIS HOUSE OF SKY by Ivan Doig (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; $24.95; 314 pp.) Only when a way of life is vanishing does it begin to seem worth writing about. The window of opportunity is narrow. Ivan Doig grew up on Montana ranches, but he had to go away to college—to become an outsider—to recognize that life as a literary subject, and by then the real insiders were almost gone. Doig's father, Charlie, dying of emphysema, gasped out stories into a tape recorder; his maternal grandmother, Bessie Ringer, added others; Doig filled in the gaps by ransacking his own memories and those of decrepit ex-cowboys and saloonkeepers who had known his family decades before.

The result was "This House of Sky," the memoir whose appearance 15 years ago established Doig as one of the leading "sagebrush writers"—modern folks who write about the rural West without necessarily writing Westerns. Since then, he has become known for novels ("Dancing at the Rascal Fair," "Ride With Me, Mariah Montana"), but "Sky" has quietly retained its appeal. Hence this anniversary edition.

In retrospect, "Sky" seems an unlikely debut—a long book that shies away from most of the commercial kinds of excitement. What distinguishes it, besides a wealth of detail, is a lyrical style muscled with active verbs ("A bow of meadow makes the rifled water curl wide to the west...A low rumble of the mountain knolls itself up watchfully") and what reveals itself to be a story of uncommon devotion.
essays, *The Territory Ahead*, Wright Morris discusses what he sees as the relationship between art and life. “We have a need, however illusory, for a life that is more real than life. It lies in the imagination. Fiction would seem to be the way it is processed into reality. . . . If man is nature self-conscious, as we have reason to believe, art is his expanding universe.” The fiction of Morris is a particularly good place to see the expanding universe of one man’s imagination. The urge is to live fully in a universe whole and alive. In *Orbit*, then, is only in part the story of Jubal E. Gainer. It is also part of Morris’s imaginative attempt to explore the territory ahead, to conceive and articulate an integrated, dynamic, fertile—in a word, a living—image.

Among westerners, the appearance of *This House of Sky* in 1978 led to interest in and respect for a new writer, Ivan Doig. Among easterners, however, Doig continues to be largely unknown. Ivan Doig was born in 1939 in White Sulphur Springs, Montana, and grew up along the Rocky Mountain front, where several of his books take place. After establishing a career as a free-lance writer, he settled in Seattle, Washington. Doig’s growing reputation in the West and his relative obscurity on the East Coast suggest, I believe, that his work embodies the qualities I have been detailing and challenges the assumptions of contemporary criticism, which do not perceive surface as having essential substance. While Doig shares with his fellow westerners a concern for the direction of society, he is a writer who does not lament current conditions; instead, he pursues “place” within his particular physical and social environment.

In a talk given at the 1987 meeting of the Western Literature Association, Harold Simonson suggested that “place” need not be restricted to an interest in regional writing or a horizontal focus on geography. Vertically, said Simonson, a sense of place makes the individual aware of where he stands within and what he shares with ecological and social systems. I have shown how among western writers Lewis Garaud begins the search for place and how this search continues in the work of such writers as Mary Austin, Ernest Hemingway, Wright Morris, and Harvey Ferguson. Ivan Doig brings that search up to the present, making it the core of his imaginative work.

Readers familiar with Doig would expect any discussion of his writing to begin with *This House of Sky*, the book that brought him significant attention and a nomination for the National Book Award. However, Doig’s first published book was *News: A Consumer’s Guide*, cowrit-
ten with his wife Carol in 1972 and important because it reveals much about relationships that develop later in Doig’s imagination. News represents a cautious first step, one taken together with his wife. More significantly, the co-writing hints of the function of family in Ivan Doig’s work and in western literature generally.

Family is not a subject that generates much interest in the scholarship of the traditional American canon, unless one is talking about the deteriorating familial structures in such writers as Hawthorne and Faulkner. The traditional central figures—Leatherstocking, Ishmael, Huck Finn, Isabel Archer, Carrie Meeber—move away from family. Midwestern and western writers, however, give prominence to family: Hamlin Garland, Willa Cather, Conrad Richter, Frank Waters, and Wallace Stegner come to mind, as do such ethnic writers as Rudolfo Anaya, Leslie Silko, and Scott Momaday. Like the ocean in Stephen Crane’s “The Open Boat,” western space in its enormity demands human interaction. From the pages of James Pike’s tale of his harrowing experience with blizzards to the opening scenes in Hamlin Garland’s Boy Life on the Prairie emerge pictures of individuals acutely conscious of themselves in relation to the physical environment. Under conditions in which surface and place are central, human relationships become crucial.1

Valuing surface focuses attention on discrete events and on the ability of the individual to respond to those events. The title of News: A Consumer’s Guide seems therefore especially appropriate to the imagination’s effort to understand surface, pointing both to the discrete events designated “news” and to the fact that these events are important less in themselves than in the response of individuals to them. Interesting, of course, is that Ivan Doig, an individual who has chosen to spend his life working with the verbal packages called “words,” begins his career with an examination of how these packages are made, how they relate to the physical world, and how they are consumed. “A word is like a section of telephone cable,” says Doig, “a sheath with several conduits inside it. Each of the conduits can carry a different meaning, but all within the same unit.” “News stories are made, not born. Made by workers and machines that refine random happenings into bundles of information.”2

When Doig discusses the editing of news, he talks about the consumer’s act as well as the more traditional role of the newspaper or television editor—interpretation being the common denominator in both instances. Selecting material to be reported is certainly an important step in the process of receiving news, but the consumer’s perceiving act provides the distinctive focus of Doig’s book. Because the narrators in all Doig’s work function as consumers seeking to understand and facilitate the perceiving act, we should expect that in his books Doig will not jump from event to event but will work with events themselves.

Given his interest in event, it is not surprising to see how Doig chooses to focus his next and best-known work, This House of Sky. News indicated that only with consciousness of the event’s shaping could an individual make use of (consume) that event. With This House of Sky Doig turns to the event that is himself and begins a process of particularizing that will extend to his next book, Winter Brothers. From the general (news and consumer) to the particular (this house), Doig begins to apply ideas developed in the relative safety of impersonal moments to the more crucial concern of an individual life, and, for Doig, such definition is intensely verbal.

“Where [my father’s] outline touched the air, my knowing must truly begin.” The narrator returns to this image at the end of the narrative: “My single outline meets the time-swept air that knew theirs.” “Outline” in each case points to the narrator’s perception of the centrality of surface; each outline establishes a point of contact with other surfaces. The word outline also has clear verbal connotations appropriate to an imagination that, in the previous book, has established its sensitivity to language. “That is as much as can be eked out—landscape, settlers’ patterns on it, the family fate within the pattern—about the past my father came out of. I read into it all I can, plot out likelihoods and chase after blood hunches. But still the story draws itself away from the dry twinnings of map work and bloodlines, and into the boundaries of my father’s own body and brain” (emphasis added). “Story” is important to Doig because events in his landscape function within a developing narrative; becoming aware of his life within that story requires that he train his visual and verbal skills.

Like that of Scott Momaday’s House Made of Dawn, the title of the narrative, This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind, points to a perception of structure and enclosure significantly different from that developed in the East, where the architectural metaphors of Henry
James dominate the literary landscape. With Doig and Momaday, as with Austin and Hemingway, structure depends upon a physical organic environment. These are “Landscapes of a Western Mind,” not the narratives of the Great Plains or the adventures of a Montana sheepherder. “House,” “sky,” “landscapes,” “western,” and “mind” integrate to form an image of an imagination seeking its place within a world dominated by land and sky. The interrelating of physical and mental landscapes define the focus of the narrative.

“I glance higher for some hint of the weather,” says the narrator at the end of the second section, “and the square of air broadens and broadens to become the blue expanse over Montana rangeland, so vast and vaulting that it rears, from the foundation-line of the plains horizon, to form the walls and roof of all of life’s experience that my younger self could imagine, a single great house of sky.” Tony Tanner has said, extending the argument of Richard Poirier’s A World Elsewhere, that when the American builds his house of style, he withdraws into it, seeking a “stay against diffusion.” Alexis de Tocqueville made a similar point 130 years earlier: the American “shuts himself up tightly within himself and insists upon judging the world from there.” Taken together, these statements present a picture of the traditional American imagination as cut off from and unable to relate to the world. Ivan Doig’s “house,” in contrast, is something that one expands into, that allows the individual to embrace rather than exclude. Doig’s house is thus the inevitable outcome of the difference between the protective imagination of Francis Parkman and the inclusive joy of Lewis Garrard.

The opening and closing lines of Doig’s narrative define the shape of the book:

Soon before daybreak on my sixth birthday, my mother’s breathing wheezed more raggedly than ever, then quieted. And then stopped.

The remembering begins out of that new silence. Through the time since, I reach back along my father’s tellings and around the urgings which would have me face about and forget, to feel into these oldest shadows for the first sudden edge of it all.

Then my father and my grandmother go, together, back elsewhere in memory, and I am left to think through the fortune of all we experienced together. And of how, now, my single outline meets the time-swept air that knew theirs.

The narrative springs out of “new silence.” Learning to speak within that silence, getting from the opening to the closing lines, is an effort that necessitates seeing the self within the context of family and environment. In the first sentence, the sixth birthday and the mother’s dying breaths go together—youth and age, child and parent, health and illness, beginning and end—not as distinct from each other in separate sentences but as interrelated within one sentence. This House of Sky does not dwell on the mother or, more particularly, her death. Its focus moves quickly out of death in the direction of expanding life. In fact, the first seven words imply eager, youthful anticipation. The strikingly abrupt first paragraph does not initiate a narrative of a young person breaking free from confinement but of a narrative voice—and one distinctly older than six years—moving immediately into the second paragraph, where its effort will be to “reach” and “feel” back along its father’s tellings in spite of “urgings” to forget.

Those tellings call attention to both the communal and the individual acts of narration, acts that permit outlines to meet within the common story. Replacing the chronological continuity of chapters, seven sections develop a continuity growing out of the narrator’s acts of remembering; the first section, the brief “Time Since,” establishes memory and language as the prominent concerns of the book. The last two pages of the first section discuss memory as “a set of sagas we live by. . . . That such rememberings take place in a single cave of brain . . . makes them sagas no less.” This particular saga, this “thirty-year story,” begins in “Time Since” with the narrator working to capture something of his mother, something that eludes him—particularly because he does not have the sound of her voice, “the one thing which would pulse her alive for me.” He has other voices, though, voices that appear in italics and talk about her. And he has black-and-white photographs—“I coax from the photos . . . as if I might finger through the emulsion patterns to the moments themselves”—striking in their detail of the moment and frustrating in their lack of the life that was his mother.

Most important, the narrator has his own voice, one that creates images and uses language to detail the surfaces that once were the life of the early surroundings: “The single sound is hidden water—the south fork of Sixteenmile Creek diving down its willow-masked gulch. The stream flees north through this secret and peopleless land
until, under the fir-dark flanks of Hatfield Mountain, a bow of meadow makes the riffled water curl wide to the west.” One of the great pleasures in reading Ivan Doig is the discovery of a language that seems to want to touch the world’s surfaces. The more one reads of Doig, the stronger the sense that Doig uses language as a vital point of contact between the individual and the natural or social worlds.

Mary Austin’s *Land of Little Rain* contrasted the fluidity of Indian naming with the effort of the white man to fix change by imposing single, definitive names. The Indian recognized change in the surface, the outline, but he also recognized substance in the essence of the individual. Doig’s perception is much like that of the Indian, with an additional white man’s sensitivity to the desire for resisting change, for succumbing to the “urgings” to forget. Consequently, the technical devices throughout Doig’s writings—the alliteration and assonance in the passage above or the gradually shifting accents in *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*—are ways into “place” rather than means of escape from the vagaries of life: “That is as much as can be eked out... about the past my father came out of.” Language for Doig is a prominent means of “eking” out.

So also does Doig’s imagery integrate imagination and natural environment; in the following sentence, language and imagery combine to sustain the imagination as the wind sustains the hawk: “Alone here on our abrupt time shelf, the three of us eased through May and the first twenty-six days of June secure as hawks with wind under our wings.” But this idyllic world within the Bridger Range of southwestern Montana, cut off from the outside except for the weekly delivery of supplies, cannot itself be sustained; it ends with the death of the mother—“the clockless mountain summers were over for my father.” The two males are forced to seek the nurturing of place rather than that of wife and mother. “I coax from the photos” begins the imaginative and narrative acts of consuming events, acts outlined in *News: A Consumer’s Guide* and that now become the driving force of *This House of Sky*.

*This House of Sky* is a story not of breaking free but of discovering and accepting “place,” defined early in the text as the name given to any “piece of land where some worn-out family had lost eventually to weather or market prices.” As in Wright Morris’s *The Home Place*, these locales are in reality less geographical than human, their substance very real even if not tangible. “One such place was where our own lives were compassed from,” with “compass” suggesting the inextricable bond between individual and land, what Morris speaks of as “making connections.” Narratively, Doig’s text compasses from such “places,” detailing with an eye for surface and outline the patterns that reveal lives and relationships. “Little by little, and across more time than I want to count, I have come to see where our lives fit then into the valley.”

Some of Doig’s narrative compassing is achieved intellectually, as when he speculates about “place” or memory or when he outlines such past events as the arrival of his ancestors in Montana, but the compassing achieved imaginatively, the effort verbally to bring surfaces of the past into contact with experiences of the present becomes increasingly distinctive of Doig’s writing.

Before we could reach the corral, a sharp rain began to sting down. The mountains had vanished, and the gray which blotted them already was taking the ridgeline. Chill sifted into the air as the rain drilled through. Now a wind steadily sharpening the storm’s attack. The sheep milled in the corral as if being stirred by a giant paddle, quickening and quickening. A stalled wave of them had begun to pack so tightly against the wooden gate that Dad and I together couldn’t undo the wire that held it closed; the gate bowed, snapped apart against the tonnage of the hundreds of struggling bodies... And so we fought, running, raging, hurling the dogs and ourselves at the waves of sheep, flogging with the gunny sacks we had grabbed off a corrals post, shaking the wire rings of cans to a din, and steadily as the rain shot down on us, we lost ground. We were like skirmishers against a running army. We might bend the band slightly and gradually toward the coulee, but all the while their circling panic was carrying towards the cliffs now not more than a few thousand yards away. Only several minutes away for sheep running headlong. It was not yet midday, and grayness had clamped in on the ridgeline over us as if to rain for the rest of time.

Even a long passage such as this one cannot adequately suggest Doig’s careful attention to detail. In scene after scene, the narrative reaches for the substance of the moment via the focus on detail. The particularity can seem like nothing more than a showing off of verbal skills—and perhaps that is the central problem a writer like Doig must continually confront—but what Doig seeks is consciousness of the mo-
ment. He seeks detail not for its own sake but for the sake of verbal contact with the detail.

Like the forest fire in *English Creek* and the blizzard in *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, the battle described above does not lend itself to symbolic reading, nor does much of Doig’s writing. He is not writing a history, trying to get his facts correct; nor is he trying to transcend the physical world through the symbol. Instead, Doig’s world has solidity, as conveyed in the passage above by verbs that appeal to the senses—the “rain began to sting down”—and by descriptions that make nature an active, physical force—the gray “blotted” (instead of the more clichéd expression, “blotted out”) the mountains. Varying sentence structures and lengths—one sentence incomplete; one sentence nicely balanced against the semicolon like the sheep against the gate so that the sentence itself seems to bow as the gate does—reinforce the portrayal of two men struggling. Scenes such as these indicate the effort of imaginative coaxing, the eking out of the substance of events, which will allow outlines (that of the event and that of the working imagination) to touch.

Part of that imagination’s grappling with the past is its recognition of the need to struggle forward: “If there was any mooring in our lives now, it was my schooling.” Education, which in an earlier sense meant a leading out, becomes a central topic as Doig leaves Montana for school in Chicago in the second half of the book. This traditional leading out—this move *East*—does not produce the freedom hoped for; in fact, the section detailing that move, “Ivory,” is the choppier in the book. We are given letters and fragments of activity rather than the extended descriptions of events that characterize the other sections. The schooling, the mooring, is accepted by all as valuable, but the particular form of the mooring, a doctorate and the study of journalism, does not lead to the expected results; the narrator has not discovered the desired skills for coaxing life from outlines. The previous section, “North,” concludes:

The words of all the ties of blood interest me, for they seem never quite deft enough, not entirely bold and guiled enough, to speak the mysterious strengths of lineage. . . . What I miss in our special blood-words is a sense of recasting themselves for each generation, each fresh situation of kindredness. It seems somehow too meager that they should merely exist, plain pack-

ets of sound like any other, and not hold power to texture each new conformation with the bright exact ones that are yearned for. . . . For my father had to be more than is coded in the standard six-letter sound of “father.”

In the final section, “Endings,” the father is dying, the being “who enchanted into me such a love of language and story that it has become my lifework.” Consuming, integrating that connection into himself therefore becomes essential to the narrator and provides the stimulus to the text.

The book, then, is shaped by the dying of the parents and the consequent imaginative growth of the child. Out of the frustration with the loss of the physically fertile mother and with the narrative effort to break through the verbal code of “father,” Doig comes to value the land and people and to see the need for verbalizing that value. “All of his way of life that I had sought escape from—the grinding routine of ranching, the existence at the mercy of mauling weather, the endless starting-over from one calamity or another—was passing with him, and while I still wanted my distance from such a gauntlet, I found that I did not want my knowing of it to go from me. . . . I had begun to see that it counted for much.” Seeing requires speaking if outlines are to touch, but speaking requires an internal education, and intellectual growth alone will not do: “Exactly at the point of my life when I had meant to turn myself to teaching, to the routined assurances of scholariness, I found myself veering inward instead.”

The inward veering eventually produces *This House of Sky* and the struggle of “my single outline” to meet “the time-swept air that knew theirs.” This action might generate little more than sentimentality were it to remain an expression of homesickness, but the looking into the narrator’s past, his contact with the father, generates new movement and a new story, just as the focus on news generated the interest in the event that was himself. The narrative voice once again moves, in *Winter Brothers* turning to the historical past and its relationship to the historical present.

All of Doig’s writings to date depend on a collecting and consumption of data, the act of a natural creature functioning at the peak of its ability within the natural world. In *This House of Sky*, the imagination wrestles with voices, facts about ancestors, photos, and personal experience in an effort to understand itself in relation to the lives closest
to it. In Winter Brothers, the imagination moves temporally, going back one hundred years to the life and writings of James Gilchrist Swan, a man who occupied geographical spaces similar to the narrator's own. The effort is to discover narratively a brother, an individual with whom the narrator shares space, motivation, and values: “Here is the winter that will be the season of Swan. Rather, of Swan and me and those constant diaries. Day by day, a logbook of what is uppermost in any of the three of us. It is a venture that I have mulled these past years of my becoming less headlong and more aware that I dwell in a community of time as well as of people.” As in News and This House of Sky, the narrator begins by combing data, studying pieces of paper (containing some 2.5 million handwritten words), trying to put a life together, his own and that of a figure who, in “Day Sixty,” is “doubly valuable to me because the people of my own blood are gone now, buried in Montana, the storytellers, reciters of sayings . . . and Swan is an entrancing winterer—a tale-bringer, emissary from the time of the first people.”

Once again, it is the effort of outlines to touch, here temporally rather than spatially, that motivates Winter Brothers. Doig reads Swan and watches Doig read Swan, and he focuses on the outline of events every bit as intently as he focused on news events in his first book:

He scares me a little, though, about this winter's effort at precision, my try at knowing as much as possible of Swan. There is that easy deceit of acquaintanceship. . . . If I myself am such an example of private code, how findable can Swan be in his fifteen thousand days of Diary words? Findable enough, I still believe, for by now I have a strengthening sense of how it is that some of those coastal paths which for so many years carried him now hold me. But Swan does maintain boundaries, often numerical ones, with that deft pen. He may let me know exactly what size coat he wore, yet generally is going to make me guess about the inside of his head. Which perhaps is as much as one measurer can comfortably grant another. (“Day Twenty-Five”)

Data is what all of us have to work with. A postmodernist would stress the limitations, the sufficiency of the codes; in Doig's writings, working with codes allows contact with other outlines.

Winter Brothers begins slowly, almost formally, as the narrator sets out on what seems a relatively easy intellectual endeavor, one that ought to work—he will gather some information from Swan's writings and “lop it into magazine-article length.” However, the relationships between the two—no, three—lives, particularly the relationships between the writings of Swan and those of the narrator, begin to interrelate: “No question: the stickum that holds his life together is in his inkwell,” perhaps most accurately the inkwell of the imagination. Both men are westerners, meaning for Doig that each tries to push his imagination to the coast, the limit of its capability—“I wonder whether something more is not urging him as well: a longing to step away, if only temporarily, to a new horizon. To the next West he can find.” That westeringness fascinates Doig, an individual excited even by tracking rodent prints in the snow. It is the tracking that counts, even if tracking leads to the discovery that “the edge of America can also be a brink.”

This intellectually confident but imaginatively tentative opening does not characterize the book as a whole. At first glance, both This House of Sky and Winter Brothers appear to be intellectually clever, somewhat self-indulgent commentaries on time, space, and surface, but that is not an accurate assessment of either book. Each demands the reader's careful attention and moves quickly away from an intellectual struggle with pieces of data. The father and the land emerge at the end of This House of Sky in a way that no selective quoting can detail. Winter Brothers begins as a study of the past but ends as an integration of outlines: the Indian Haidas “‘weren’t bound by the silly feeling that it’s impossible for two figures to occupy the same space at the same time.’” The book places Doig's story within Swan's; Swan's life provides the structure of the divisions of the text, while the narrator's developing insight into relationship influences the organization of material within the divisions. What begins as a curious parallel/disjunction between two westerners becomes finally the junction of two imaginations:

Swan did not write those words. I have written them for him, or rather, for both of us, this dusk of winter and of his life . . . . From that eighty-second birthday of his, where my imagination takes over the telling, he has four months and a week to live.

But I discover an odd thing as this companion of my winter begins to fade from life. There at the first days of this century Swan comes into view to me in a strong new way . . . . Swan stepping to the century-line which I crossed in his direction almost three months ago now has endured into time which
touches my own. . . Unlearnable, those beneath-the-skin frontiers. Even the outer ones leave questions, for I believe now that no one winterbook—no book—can find nearly all that should be said of the West, the Wests. . . . What I do take from this time of musing in Swan’s Wests is fresh realization that my own westernness is going to have to be a direction of the mind.

Swan’s carving of a swan on the cliffs overlooking the sea punctuates this winter narrative, is a stone dot “that puts period—the seed of ellipsis [spoken of earlier as compressed through shorthand into the period] for whatever continuation is on its way—to this winter.”

In these three books, the imagination of Ivan Doig builds on the efforts of the westerners of the imagination who preceded him, picking up Lewis Garrard’s energy, Mary Austin’s attention to the physical world, and Wright Morris’s perception of the centrality of relationships. With The Sea Runners, Doig turns in a new direction but continues his commitment to event and surface. The Sea Runners again focuses on a moment in the past, but not with Doig as conscious presence; talking about Swan’s life is replaced by detailing the lives of men who escaped from a Russian camp and made their way down America’s West Coast. In English Creek and Dancing at the Rascal Fair, Doig begins a trilogy that recreates the lives of the ancestral Scotsmen who settled Montana. Once again the narrator explores the event that is his own world but now attempts to touch its surface without intellectualizing the process. As always, Ivan Doig takes narrative chances. In Dancing at the Rascal Fair, the narrator, Angus McCaskill, enjoys life’s rhythms; he wants to see, says his lover, Anna Ramsay, “how many ways life can rhyme.” The narrative he produces is one of those efforts at dancing with life, but in Doig that means dancing with storms both of the country and of the heart while keeping your wits about you through flood, blizzard, drought, and desire.

Doig’s writing, from News: A Consumer’s Guide to Dancing at the Rascal Fair, is a sustained imaginative work struggling to put into motion the surfaces that might otherwise overwhelm. In Wright Morris’s terms, “each time the writer creates and solves the problems of fiction, he makes it possible for men and women to live in the world,” and so Ivan Doig has done in finding a place for the individual.

The western story plays a particularly important role within the context of the American imagination, for the western story explores and communicates the strengths and responsibilities of human life within social and physical ecosystems. Consciousness of surfaces leads to consciousness of rhythms common to the individual and to his environment, opening the way for new relationships and a new story.

Readers of canonical contemporary American literature are all too aware of its tormented voices, voices that reflect a loss of the sense of place. Because distorting place leads to overweening ego, a sense of superiority within an ecosystem, and isolation, opening the canon to western as well as ethnic and feminist perspectives offers a significant corrective to the perspective of modern alienation.

Throughout my discussion I have focused on prose fiction, arguing that works accepted into the traditional literary canon have in common a preoccupation with enclosure based upon discomfort with the openness of space. This imagination finds the energy of the physical environment stimulating, but it is convinced that without the human commitment to enclosing and reshaping the natural, stimulation too often produces anarchy. This imagination therefore works within physical (houses, forts) or social (class structure) or cultural (myth) enclosures. In contrast, another aspect of the American imagination seeks to realign itself with the openness of space.

Narrative, of course, is not limited to prose fiction. The implications of my argument extend beyond the literary to the visual and practical arts and even to politics and foreign policy, where enclosed image has long had a troubling centrality. I will focus here on the visual arts, in particular on the western movies of two of America’s most prominent directors, John Ford and Sam Peckinpah, whose work evidences the
How the West was undone

This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind
by Ivan Doig;
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich;
314 pages; $24.95

Hole in the Sky: A Memoir
by William Kittredge;
Alfred A. Knopf;
238 pages; $20.00

Reviewed by Peter Booth Wiley

Each generation of Westerners has grown up on a vanishing frontier as the Western economy has passed from trapping to mining, ranching to agribusiness, and so on. Two sons of the ranching frontier have written classic accounts of a way of life that has all but disappeared as agribusiness overwhelms the last of the family ranchers.

Written more than fifteen years ago, Ivan Doig’s This House of Sky has been released in a new edition with a new preface by the author. William Kittredge’s memoir of his family’s ranch in southern Oregon, Hole in the Sky, was inspired, according to his dedication, by Doig. This pair of histories tell two very different family stories.

Doig was born to parents who worked together as hands on the cattle and sheep ranches of the desolate valleys of southwestern Montana. His memories begin in 1945, on the day his mother died of asthma at a summer sheep camp. Doig’s father, Charlie, raised him, wandering from ranch to ranch, working here and there as top hand, leasing his own place until luck ran out and they moved again. As the years passed, the small ranches disappeared—so many hollowed-out ruins scattered across the high prairie—while the drivers and the wheeler-dealers put together bigger and bigger spreads only to see them fall into the hands of anonymous corporations. “Ye know who owns the Dogie [ranch] now?” the property-less Charlie Doig asked his son near the end of his life. “A goddamn Kansas City paper box company.”

The Kittredges were a different breed. Where Charlie Doig worshipped hard work, demonstrated an incredible range of skills from breaking horses to repairing D-8 Caterpillars, and delighted in the company and lore of the colorful ranch population, the Kittredges were more single-minded, patching together over two generations a huge ranching empire that spread across the high desert of southern Oregon.

Following the ways of modern agriculture, Kittredge’s grandfather and father managed a bevy of fieldworkers and ranch hands, the unsung Charlie Doigs of the West, draining the desert marshes, dosing them with chemicals and water from miles and miles of newly fashioned irrigation ditches, and accumulating thousands of acres of ranchland. Accumulation was the family motto. “Whenever we got ahead,” said Kittredge’s grandmother, “we bought land.”

Kittredge’s parents adopted all the trappings of ranchland aristocracy: trips to the big city (San Francisco), wing-tipped shoes and tweed suits for their son, racehorses and an airplane, hobnobbing with politicians and movie people, and sending their son to private schools hoping he would get into Stanford. Kittredge’s father’s expansive ways brought him into conflict with his own father, the original accumulator, and a “mean bastard” as described by his grandson. Kittredge describes the conflict between his grandfather’s traditional notion of horse-driven cattle ranching and his father’s vision of a “new age kingdom,” powered by machines and chemicals and centered on irrigated grain farming.

Money was the final irritant: Kittredge’s father made and spent too much of it, and in retaliation his father found a substitute son, a distant relative who ended up with enough clout to control the family business.

Kittredge went back to the ranch as manager after a college degree in agriculture and a hitch in the air force. The ranch, however, was a different place; there were no more Charlie Doigs. “Men who hired out as ranch hands in the 1960s were missing the boat, and they knew it,” Kittredge writes. “They despised themselves for it. And they despised the work.”

Ultimately Kittredge found a rough justice in all of this. As ranchers his family had run the course; the ranch had been transmogrified from the site of God’s work to a blight on the land, a destructive enterprise that was wreaking havoc on the local ecology. Today the Kittredge’s first ranch has become a wildlife refuge, and there are current plans, which Kittredge applauds, to hook up the rest of the old family place with the Buffalo Common, a vast arc of private and public land stretching from Oregon to the prairies. Comes another frontier vision.

Kittredge was driven to tell this story by the very muteness of his people. His people told no stories, he repeats time and again.
The frontier ethos was based on male isolation, what D.H. Lawrence described as "an inward individual retraction...the breaking of the heart, the collapse of the flow of spontaneous warmth between man and his fellows." It was that breaking from which Kittredge sought escape and which he records so painfully in his memoir.

How different was the life recorded by Ivan Doig! Unencumbered by property, his father Charlie bounced along from one tough job to another, a man with a powerful sense of himself and a true delight in the company of his fellow man. As much as the elder Doig shared with his son, ranching would not be his son's future. At times father and son lived apart, Charlie working some remote piece of land while Ivan boarded with friends during the week so he could attend school. At other times they lived cramped together with Ivan's grandmother in a sheep trailer that had been dragged along to serve as home beside some summer pasture.

The moment of truth came for Doig when he was sixteen. As he, his father and grandmother tended 3,500 sheep on the Blackfoot Reservation, a winter storm threatened to drive the flock over a precipice. After a desperate struggle, the three managed to save most of the sheep, but this experience altered the young Doig's vision of his future. Books and education began to count, and with the support of father and grandmother, Doig went on to college and to writing.

Much of Doig's language and stories came from his father's way of telling things. He also turned to his task early enough to capture the Americanized brogue of his Scottish ancestry, recording the stories of his parents' and grandparents' generations. For Kittredge, it was a grimmer task. To retrieve his story he had to pick through his own entrails, through his sense of failure for abandoning the ranch and his family, and achieve reunion with the survivors in the end.

These are two writers of great substance. More than just fine literary hands, they have given us true social history: accounts of the passing of the ranch frontier, its people, and their psyches that will live from generation to generation.

Peter Booth

Culture clubbing

By Carina MacLeod

It seemed to be a phenomenon typical of the eighties: the literary star, a media darling more noteworthy for appearances at New York dance clubs than for writing prowess. Meanwhile back at the academy, literary theorists of an amazing variety of shapes and colors were asserting their power, questioning the autonomy of the author and the primacy of the text. Now here we are in the nineties and the writers are taking their revenge, in a most bitter, humorous, and often ambiguous fashion.

Recently I spoke with techno-populist hero Mark Leyner and academic-turned-satirist Robert Grudin about writing, critics, and fame. An interesting theme emerged—one that might be overlooked in the hype-driven nineties—authors still want to write engaging stories and to be appreciated for it.

Don't get me wrong, Robert Grudin is ultimately still concerned with issues of theory and Mark Leyner wants nothing if not to be cool. Possibly as cool as the fictionalized portrait of himself in Et Tu, Babe complete with skinhead boots, black leather sport coat, and a Hollywood breakfast to "do": “Okay, we're going to use Et Tu...and the Partridge Family, it's going to be an Et Tu/Partridge Family thing.”

But Leyner also prides himself on being the writer who brought young readers back to the bookstore by being relentlessly funny and intelligent. As one might expect from reading his hallucinatory prose, he has been created by today's fast-paced, disjointed media culture; a self-described satellite dish open to all types of information. But his influences are not the smorgasbord of popular culture that his writing suggests but rather a solid basis in the classics and modern nonfiction. (He was reading Madame Bovary and a book on naked mole rats on the day we spoke.) He rarely reads contemporary fiction and watches only the fringes of television—the Home Shopping Network, CNN, and the Weather Channel—where it is most "TV-like." The variety of his interests is central to his project (resulting in a mind-boggling array of information twisted within his stories) and to his approach to life. "If you're going to try to make a computer out of yourself, then be a computer that can read Madame Bovary and take in all sorts of information. Aspire to do everything."

BY THE BOOK

Like Leyner, Robert Grudin wants to legitimize storytelling and finds his influences in classic texts. Moby Dick inspired the nonfiction snippets about the history of the book that thread through his latest work. This is not an easy time for categorization, and I've recently heard Moby Dick with its mix of fiction and nonfiction referred to as proto-hypertext (the computer format now being promoted as the next revolution in literary style and thought). Interestingly, the nonfiction bits came from The Encyclopedia Britannica, one of Grudin's favorite texts as a child to which he recently contributed a substantial article on humanism.

Like Leyner, who plays the star and tries also to maintain the integrity of his writing, Grudin involves theory in his work but is critical of its role: "I'm all for theoretical discussion but the kind of theory now being touted is extreme and constitutes an attempt to take over the profession." While Leyner finds the act of creation psychologically taxing, even "hellish," Grudin is enamored of the idea of inspiration. His Book: A Novel focuses on an academic stalked by an insane literary theory professor who represents his inspired work of fiction.

Grudin himself says that he was "swept away" in the writing of this book. Ultimately, as Leyner contends, it comes down to the fact that "the goal of a writer is to write wonderful books. That's not inimical to becoming a celebrity [or to engaging in a little theory] if your desire to become a celebrity is to have a wide audience for your books."

Et Tu, Babe is published by Harmony Books; 168 pages; $17.00. Book: A Novel is published by Random House; 251 pages; $19.00.
Western author's next book

By J.C. Martin  
The Arizona Daily Star

Author Ivan Doig's Arizona fans who read his Montana sagas with unflagging pleasure will like this news: He is about to turn his attention to Arizona.

Doig, born in White Sulphur Springs, Mont., 51 years ago, began his published literary career in 1978 with a Montana memoir, "This House of Sky." He used family recollections to paint the harsh, rewarding life of early Montana pioneers. The book was nominated for a National Book Award.

His next effort, "Berneta's Book," — at the moment just a working title, — will be a continuation of "This House of Sky," Doig says. It will be partly factual.

Berneta was Doig's mother and she died in 1945 when he was barely 6. The family — Doig, his mother and father — spent the winter preceding her death in Phoenix and Wickenburg. There Berneta Doig, who had asthma, tried to regain her health.

In telling his mother's story, basically that of a girl and a woman who grew up in Montana in the early 20th century, the Arizona sojourn will come into the picture through her letters. They were sent faithfully every two weeks to her brother serving in the South Pacific during World War II.

"She was a clear, vivid writer," Doig says. One of her accounts, he remembers, concerned a Montana Club get-together in Mesa.

In spite of Berneta's improving health, Arizona could not keep the Doigs. "Homesickness, family considerations," Doig says, drew them back to Montana. So Ivan Doig did not grow up in Wickenburg, after all, where he might have devoted his talents to presenting Central Arizona with the same chiseled precision he uses on Montana.

On the other hand, although Doig has spent most of his literary career portraying Montana life, he hasn't lived there since 1957 when he left home to attend Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill.
book to include Arizona

For the past 26 years he has lived in Seattle with his wife, Carol, a former journalist who now teaches at Shoreline Community College.

He returns to Montana regularly, however, as he did earlier this month to receive Governor's Arts Award. He won similar awards in Washington in 1979, '81, '85 and '88.

Despite ties to his home state, Doig insists he could never live there. "You have to hear too many hats in a small city."

He cites the case of writer friends whose good citizen consciences "keep them on civic committees and boards. "That and listening on the downtown geezer table," Doig shakes his head in cheerful dismay. They just won't let you alone."

He prefers what he calls the "aloneness" of his Seattle suburb.

Doig traces his decision to be a writer back to junior high school and the encouragement of a sympathetic teacher.

"I dropped out of Future Farmers and signed up to take a course in typing. You talk about a career decision."

Graduating from Northwestern in 1961, Doig spent a few years at various journalistic jobs (a newspaper and a magazine) before getting a Ph.D. in Western history at the University of Washington.

Beginning in 1970, Doig spent the next 10 years, "twice the length for human sanity," as a full-time free-lance writer. He was turning out a couple dozen articles a year when "This House of Sky" started making the rounds of New York publishers.

Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, which bought it, was the 13th publisher to read it.

But when the rejection slips started coming back with comments such as, "This is really well-written but we don't see any commercial prospects," Doig says, he knew he was getting close.

"It's hard to say enough good things about what happens when Ivan Doig sets words down on a page," a critic wrote.

"He has that magical quality," one fan put it, "of being able to make you see, taste, feel and smell what he is writing about."

It is not something he achieves casually. Most Doig books have gone through at least three and often as many as seven rewrites. Doig, who still relies mainly on a manual typewriter, says, "It's the first writing that's tough. Getting the words out of my head and onto anything. By the third draft, it starts to sing."

Using a Roget's Thesaurus that he acquired in college, Doig works at what he describes as "sorting words." (For the Montana trilogy "English Creek," "Dancing at the Rascal Fair," and "Ride With Me, Mariah Montana," he also used a songwriter's rhyming dictionary.)

Sometimes, Doig says, he will look over a manuscript "just for verbs." Sometimes, "to see how every paragraph begins and ends. I like to read things out loud to hear their rhythm, the turns of phrase."

Doig will be at The Haunted Bookshop, 7211 N. Northern Ave., 2-4 p.m. tomorrow to sign books and greet readers.
At the Edge of America
with James Swan and Ivan Doig
by Harold P. Simonson

Harold Simonson is Professor of English and American Literature at the University of Washington. He has written about a variety of topics including, Turner's Frontier thesis, the American Puritans, Soren Kierkegaard, and John Muir. In this essay he revises an earlier estimation of Ivan Doig's work.

Ivan Doig's first book, This House of Sky (1978), was nominated for a National Book Award. Here was a virtually unknown former Montana ranch hand, newspaperman, small-time magazine editor, and a University of Washington Ph.D. in history suddenly hitting the big time. It appeared that with this first book Doig had proved himself a master of historical narrative. In it he recounted not only his childhood in Montana but also the deeper rhythms of love and landscape and truly turned these things into the stuff of art.

The book was no flash in the pan; it was followed two years later by Winter Brothers (1980), which won the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award. This second book was more original than the first. It set forth how Doig met the former Bostonian James Swan, over a hundred years his elder, met him in the University of Washington library where Swan's diaries and journals lay untouched--yes, met him in imagination and temperament and, as if by grace, recognized him as a brother, a "winter brother," both men living on the farthest western edge of America, living mysteriously as if out of time on this far-away corner of Washington's Olympic Peninsula.
Two years later Doig's third book appeared, *The Sea Runners* (1982), a splendid lyrical story of four men canoeing for their very life against all the ocean could throw at them, making their way down the hostile coast line from the Russian Sitka of 1853 (then called New Archangel) to Astoria.

Following still another two-year gestation, Doig's fourth book appeared, *English Creek* (1984), set in 1939 as the clouds of the coming war replaced those of the Depression and containing a wealth of details true to its western Montana locale. It's a fictional study of fourteen-year-old Jick McCaskill who, one supposes, will grow into full Western proportions when the trilogy that Doig promises to write is completed. Indeed, Doig's is a remarkable achievement: in less than a decade a reputation placing him atop Pacific Northwest's literary Mt. Olympus.

One of Doig's books, *Winter Brothers*, stands apart from the others in both subject and conception. Informed, the book is Doig's belief that words incarnate a person whom the outsider through these same words can meet and call "brother." In retrospect I realize that my book review--published in *Western American Literature* [16 (August 1981), 169-171], played down what Doig was attempting to do. I called his mindscape in this book mere "mist-icism" and generally questioned the notion that one mindscape fuses with another, specifically Doig's with Swan's, when in fact a hundred years and a thousand differences in culture and in nurturing separated the two writers. Doig was trying to convince us that his own Western mind discovered linkages with Swan's, and then to delineate the eventual fusion. Using impressionistic prose that sometimes rivaled Faulkner in its italicized stream-of-consciousness and that everywhere befitting a wintry Puget Sound fog, Doig (I said) sought to weave his own spell that supposedly would eventuate in a colloquy of three: Swan, Doig, and the reader's tallying response. I said then that Doig's effort failed to ring true. I want now to reconsider that judgment.

First let us look at *Winter Brothers*. Doig begins by remembering the day at the University of Washington library when he made a side trip into "archival box after box of Swan's diaries and began to realize that they held four full decades of his life and at least 2,500,000 handwritten words" (3). Doig began to read, and he says, "At closing hour, Swan got up from the research table with me" (4).

Thinking a magazine piece on Swan would do nicely—one of those "smooth packets of a few thousand words" that would show Swan as "a figureine of the Pacific Northwest past"—Doig soon realized that Swan was refusing "figureinehood" (4). With each attempt to summarize Swan, the more Doig sensed that to know this diarist would take more time than he could ever grant it. Yet, year after year, Swan remained alive in Doig; the "Westernness" of both, their mutual quest for place, called each to each. Swan had gone West first. Doig had followed in what he calls "this matter of sitting oneself specifically here: West" (5).

And the diaries? Doig confesses that they dazzled him, forty years of diaries, page after page, volume after volume, "the simple stubborn dailiness of Swan's achievement" (5)—comparable, say, to a carpenter hammering away on the same framework for forty years, or a monk spending that time tending the same vineyard, or a Tolstoy writing out a manuscript the equivalent length of five copies of *War and Peace*.

Once committed, Doig kept his daily appointment with this man who had come to the Pacific Northwest a hundred years ago—this oyster entrepreneur, schoolteacher, railroad specifier, amateur ethnologist, lawyer, judge, homesteader, linguist, ship's outfitter, explorer, customs collector, author, small-town bureaucrat, artist, clerk—this Bostonian who in 1850 at the age of thirty-two had left his wife and two sons behind, never to return to them. Doig wonders, "Did Swan simply come onto the porch one day, back there in Boston, and say to his wife, 'Matilda, I have been thinking I will go to California'?" (15) The household had been divided, Swan living in a Boston boardinghouse and Matilda in Chelsea with the two children. But Swan pointed no accusing finger at either her or himself, nor explained his real reason for leaving. Doig likewise refrains from any accusations; he accepts Swan for who he was and is. As for Swan's Western impulse, Doig is content—no, is compelled—to read on and on then to write about this man.

Swan went around Cape Horn in 1850, worked the waterfront in San Francisco and the river steamers on the Sacramento, sailed aboard a schooner to Hawaii, and returned to San Francisco but not for long. He headed north along the coastline, plopping ashore in what Doig calls the "misty, spongy, oozeful" tideflats of the Shoalwater sloughs, now called Willapa Harbor, a few miles north of the Columbia.

In those days Shoalwater Bay, named for the shallowness of its muddy flats, was a perpetual sea banquet, offering clams, crabs, shrimp, mussels, sand lobster, salmon, sturgeon, trout, sole, flounder, and oysters. Swan paid Indians to harvest oysters, which he shipped to San Francisco on passing schooners. As another kind of harvest he wrote his first book, *The Northwest Coast, Or...*
and italicized words appear like wisps of fog so evanescent they barely brush Doig's thoughts. Doig beckoned the words to appear and a century later to speak their own embodying things; the words are almost prehistoric to be sure and yet foreboding like an ocean fog or stark like a mountain ridge. I say that Doig beckoned Swan but the reverse is also true. What Doig lets happen was a merging, his own consciousness with that lying beneath Swan's silent words.

Doig, a Seattle man, makes journey after journey to Port Townsend and the remote places at Neah Bay and along the coast where Swan lived and traveled and where he sometimes had his own epiphanies. Traveling back and forth from the University's archival boxes to the Olympic Peninsula, from Swan's words to their headland and heartland origins, from one remote time to a time a hundred years later, from one mindscape to another, Doig resolved that nothing would avail to keep the two apart. His book records ninety such journeys, each seen as a day ("Day One...Day Twenty-five...Day Ninety"). Each day confirmed Swan's words because the researcher Doig experienced to the extent he could their origins and thus completed their meaning. The task was not easy; Doig insists that Swan was an "inward man," not an "elaborate" man but an inward one, a "winterer within himself as well as his far-frontier surroundings" (61). Doig finds this season of the soul congenial with his own, and so persists. Here is "Day Twenty-five".

I like about Swan that he has arithmetic in his eye.

When he and the Makahs dig around in the rubble of the short-lived Spanish fort at Neah Bay, the clay tiles they unearth are 10 inches long 4 1/4 wide & 1 1/4 thick. When Swan visits the Lighthouse on Tatoosh Island, the Fresnel lens measures 6 ft. across and is composed of 13 rings of glass above 6 rings below. When he is curious about how large the cemetery behind the Indian lodges at Neah is, he finds out by pacing it off...235 paces long 60 paces wide this will give at a rough estimate 2 9/10 acres.

He scares me a little, though, about this winter's effort at precision, my try at knowing as much as possible of Swan. There is that easy deceit of acquiescence; in the months since This House of Sky was published. I have heard again and again from schoolmates and Montana friends, "I figured I knew you pretty well, but..." If I myself am such an example of private code, how findable can Swan be in his fifteen thousand days of diary words? Findable enough, I still believe, for by now I have a strengthening sense of how it is that some of those coastal paths which for so many years carried him now hold me. But Swan does maintain boundaries, often numerical ones, with the deep pen. He may let me know exactly what size coat he wore, yet generally is going to make me guess about the inside of his head. Which perhaps is as much as one measurer can comfortably grant another (90; italics are Swan's quoted words).

Questions Doig never answers are whether he writes from his own mid-point, or ever gets inside the other's mind, or how congeniality between himself and Swan works. Yet a clue etches the importance of place. For Doig makes clear enough that had he remained in Montana he would never have understood Swan. Montana was not the place to discover this new kinship. "Not the winters of white steel but the coastal ones of pewter-gray, soft-toned, workable, with the insistent Northwest rain symphonic in the air like molecules mine ears." Visible are the necessary steady spans for me to seek the words of (103). Had Doig wished to work with different words, Montana words, he would have stayed; more to the point, his inner chambers already overflowed with Montana and he could go to the again. But in writing Winter Brothers he needed a different place to be.
Place bridges time; place evokes the past and makes possible its re-creation. Ordering is remembering, re-creating, but place begins the ordering. The fact that a different place evokes a different past or a different way of ordering only corroborates the generating force of place itself. This, I think, is what Doig seeks to verify in this book. Place is existential. Something happens that makes one place different from another, makes responses different, makes words different, and makes responses to those same words different too. Reading Swan in Alabama is out of place; so, too, is reading Faulkner in Port Townsend.

Granted that imagination bridges space and time, yet every Shelleyan skylark has its local nesting, every metaphor its local point or moment. Of course we read our Faulkner even though we've never spent a day or year or half a lifetime in Mississippi. But once having given ourselves to the place however briefly, once having strolled through the whispering streets of Oxford at dusk, the magnolia heavy and the burnished fragments of sunset still violent, we recognize Faulkner and in his words we find our kinship. This is what Doig found: kinship.

Before he began to share that winter season with Swan at the edge of America, something had first invited him in as if the diaries themselves had said, "Read me."

Through them Doig entered another's consciousness, barriers dissolved, certain thoughts and feelings of the old Northwesterner became identical with those of the younger, and the common element joining the two was place.

To interpret Doig's response to the diaries as passive is not to think of it as dull or sluggish but rather as his being "gripped" or possessed. It's what Georges Poulet has called "the experience of interiority"; the reader is held by and within the consciousness of the writer. 1 On the other hand, one might also interpret Doig's response as truly active. While joining Swan in the same sea mists and listening to the same relentless heft beyond, Doig had his own creative work to do. No author even of Swan's generous eye ever sets forth the whole picture of anything. The reader fills the gaps, makes connections, supplies tone and shading, and becomes a creator too. The phenomenologist Wolfgang Iser insists that reading is an event, in some ways as active for the reader as the writer. 2 Something happens, not on the page where we are accustomed to look for it but, according to Stanley Fish, "in the interaction between the flow of print (or sound) and the actively mediating consciousness of the reader-hearer." 3 In Doig's case, reading Swan summoned up a private world, and he used it to fill in and complete the other's work while creating his own.

What gives Winter Brothers its force is Doig's own risk-taking, his courage to let Swan's enigmas intermingle with his own. Doig wonders what "urges of the night" worked in Swan, what moved behind Swan's brow, under his thatches of beard, atop his thighs. In such wondering Doig dares to show himself as one alike and also "western-edged." After musing so long in Swan's West, Doig realized that his own Westernness was going to have to be "a direction of the mind...a personal geography"(214). Like Swan and Doig, I confess the same. Unlike before, when I first read this elusive book called Winter Brothers, I now take my place in this colloquy of three. I understand what Doig means when he says that "atoms merge out of the landscape into us"(241). Places fresh to them are fresh to me: "Whidbey Island, gulls balleting along the roofs of wind. Dungeness Spit, days there glossed with sea ducks and crowned with an eagle, the thrusting Capes, Flattery and Alava, their surf bring in perpetual cargoes of sound and thought" (241).

Notes

1. George Poulet, "Criticism and the Experience of Interiority,"
Voices of Experience

JEANNE FISCHER & HAROLD KITTLESON, BOOKSELLERS EMERITI

The memories and observations of booksellers can be the best record of a community's intellectual life. In the Twin Cities, retired booksellers Jeanne Fischer and Harold Kittleson are commonly acknowledged as the keepers of local bibliophiliac history. Their combined experience equals over 100 years of involvement in bookstores and publishing.

Harold Kittleson has always been interested in the rare book world. He started collecting first editions when he was in high school back in 1922. For many years, he managed the large book department of a Minneapolis department store and in 1945, joined the early Random House sales staff as a Midwest representative. Harold's colleague and friend, Jeanne Fischer began work as a bookseller in 1933. In addition to bookselling, for 40 years Jeanne lectured organizations and churches about new books "that I thought they should read," and about trends in publishing. Throughout their careers Jeanne and Harold met some of the leading lights of American literature. They both worked in bookstores when Minnesota was best known as the birthplace of F. Scott Fitzgerald, and home to the first American Nobel prize-winner, Sinclair Lewis.

WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT LEWIS? Harold: "Sinclair Lewis was a trailblazer. I remember an afternoon I spent with Lewis. He lived in a magnificent house in Duluth. He was writing books reviews then... but I think the most important thing—and I'll never forget this—the English department up there [at UM Duluth] had asked him to talk, not for a fee or anything, about books and writing, which he did. And he was very unhappy 'because you know,' he said, 'they never once thanked me for that.' He was charming. No affectation, no mannerism. You couldn't help but like him."

WHAT WAS BOOKSELLING LIKE BETWEEN THE WORLD WARS? Jean: "We sold new books, and we had a circulating library. People would come in on their lunch hour and stand on line to borrow books. The average novel was a dollar and a half or two dollars (in bound, hardcovers)."

Harold: "During the depression it was a constant battle. We continued to buy private libraries when we could get them cheap enough, and we continued to carry the new books as extensively as we could."

Jean: "We did a lot of carriage trade."

Harold: "That's people in the upper echelon, economically."

Jean: "I remember one woman came in once and said 'I want two hundred books.' I asked her what kind and she said, 'I don't care, I just want them principally in blues and greens.' She'd had her library redone and didn't like the old books because they were tattered."

HOW ARE YOU STILL INVOLVED WITH BOOKS? Jean: "I'm involved with friends of the library in St. Paul, and I review books for the St. Paul Pioneer press and other publications, and I'm still going out and telling people what I think they should read. I've had a wonderful life in books. I wouldn't have chosen any other."

Harold: "I read all the rare book catalogs, and I stay as involved and informed as possible."—Interviewed by Leslie Brody
News of current and upcoming movies and television that tie in to books

MOVIES

The Addams Family. Before the Simpsons and the Bundys, there was the Addams family. Now, television’s weirdest family is moving to the big screen. Due out in November, this film stars Anjelica Huston as Morticia, Raul Julia as her husband Gomez, and Christopher Lloyd as Uncle Fester. Scholastic is releasing three books based on the screenplay: a picture book for ages 5-7 by Jordan Horowitz ($2.50), a digest-size book for ages 7 and up by Stephanie Calmenson ($2.95), and a mass-market book for ages 12 and up by Elizabeth Fausher ($2.95).

At Play in the Fields of the Lord. To film this tale of gunrunners, missionaries, and natives, the all-star cast, including Aidan Quinn, Kathy Bates, John Lithgow, Tom Berenger, and Daryl Hannah, had to trek down to the Amazon jungle. Fortunately, the rest of us can just visit the local movie theatre in November. Peter Matthiessen’s book is available from Vintage ($11.00).

Boys N The Hood. In December, NAL will release a novelization of the summer’s surprise hit about life in South-Central Los Angeles that starred Ice Cube, Cuba Gooding Jr., and Larry Fishburne. Mike Phillips wrote the book based on John Singleton’s screenplay (price not yet determined).

City of Joy. Dirty Dancing star Patrick Swayze takes a more serious turn by playing a disillusioned doctor who finds new meaning among the poor of Calcutta. The film version of Dominique Lapierre’s book is slated for a December release and Warner is publishing a special edition hardcover ($24.95) as well as a movie tie-in ($5.99).

Hook. Steven Spielberg’s updating of the Peter Pan tale stars Robin Williams as the grown-up Pete. The boy who could fly is now an investment banker, but must return to Neverland to save his kidnapped kids from Captain Hook, played by Dustin Hoffman. Due out in December, the film also stars Julia Roberts as Tinkerbell. Ivy has a mass-market book by Terry Brooks ($5.99) while Fawcett has a special hardcover edition ($15.00) as well as a juvenile book by Geary Gravel ($2.99).

Madame Bovary. This French film version of Gustave Flaubert’s classic tale is scheduled for a fall release and stars Isabelle Huppert (Vintage $10.00).

The Mambo Kings. Armand Assante stars in this film about two musical Cuban brothers in New York during the 1950s. The book by Oscar Hijuelos is available from HarperCollins ($12.00).

Prince of Tides. Now slated for a Christmas release, this film stars Nick Nolte as a Southern teacher who has an affair with Barbara Streisand, the New York psychiatrist who is treating his sister. Kate Nelligan also stars as Nolte’s mom. The novel by Pat Conroy is available from Bantam ($5.99).

Rush. In December, Jennifer Jason Leigh plays an undercover narc who becomes hooked on cocaine. This film version of Kim Wozencraft’s book also stars Jason Patric and Sam Elliot (Ivy, $5.95).

Shattered. Starring Bob Hoskins and Tom Berenger, the film version of Richard Neely’s book about a man who becomes disfigured and suffers amnesia after a car crash is due to be released in October (Vintage, $9.00).

TELEVISION

False Arrest. On November 17 and 19, ABC will air this drama based on the true story of Phoenix housewife Joyce Lukezic, who was falsely accused of murder and confined to a maximum-security prison. Donna Mills and Robert Wagner star and the book by Lukezic and Ted Schwarz is from New Horizon Press ($21.95).

Memories of Midnight. Jane Seymour and Omar Sharif star in this miniseries based on Sidney Sheldon’s book about a woman who has amnesia and must face the evil Greek shipping tycoon who murdered her husband. The show is slated to air on independent stations during the last week of October. (Warner, $5.95).

A Murder of Quality. John Le Carre’s tale is set in an English public school and will air on PBS’s “Masterpiece Theatre” on October 13 and 20. The show stars Denholm Elliot, Glenda Jackson, and Joss Ackland (Bantam, $4.99).

A Woman Named Jackie. This fall, NBC will try to fit the life of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis into a six-hour miniseries based on the book by C. David Heymann. Tentatively scheduled for October 13, 14, and 15, the show stars former soap opera star Roma Downey as Jackie and Stephen Collins as JFK (NAL, $5.95).—Pam Long
Everyone wants a piece of something that was meant to be left alone.
Author Ivan Doig pounds out his fiction on a manual typewriter. The word processor he received as part of the 1985 National Endowment for the Arts grant sits under a dust cover in his Seattle office.
SEATTLE'S MONTANA WRITER

His Life is No 'Open Book'

Written by Ben Groff
Photographed by Craig Fuji

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Doig refuses to acknowledge any reservoir of pain dammed up behind his memories
DOIG’S LATEST


W

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Y

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

In his writing, the land and the language feed each other. He fashions a tough and knotty prose full of the language of unschooled, loose-tongued working people, folks who use their minds to feel with. “My people were poor in money, rich in words,” he says without noticeable pride.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Seriously is how he takes the writing of his colleagues, and he is known for aiding them whenever possible with their own research. "Usually I don't socialize much with other writers," Bierds confides. "There can be such an aura of competition. But with Ivan, there's none of that."

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

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

Attempting to sum him up, I once said to Ivan, "You seem like a doggedly cheerful man. Is that true?"
His voice turned ever so slightly steely and, yes, contemptuous. "I think I'm dogged, and I'm cheerful, so I guess that adds up, yeah."

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

Ivan Doig is stacking wood.
It is almost summer, a drowsy day of Puget Sound mildness when no wind ruffles the leaves of a treelined North Seattle neighborhood, and you can almost hear the creek water trickling through the green crease of alder and vine maple that gives signature, with a small brush-stroke of unobiterated topography, to the living-place of this self-described "suburban druid." Beguiling weather, yet Doig has a habitual eye on winter, and his expression beneath the baseball cap emblazoned "Doig Bros. Grain Co., White Sulphur, Mont." is all November.

You know, you can tell a guy by the way he wears his hat, and this guy wears his way down low across the forehead, dead level.
As he stoops to the job, blue jeans and an old work shirt concealed what might be the awkward curvies of an unhorsed cowboy, something lean, tense, and smaller-than-expected in the build. But from the neck up, he is a lumberjack with horn-rims.

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

He ushers me into his study and begins describing for me the realization of every writer's dream — critical acclaim for his first book, plus the sales figures to carry it along — in cautious language that seems unwilling even to risk breaking the bubble. "This House Of Sky" was nominated for the prestigious National Book Award, and enabled him to do whatever he pleased for an encore. There followed "Winter Brothers," "The Sea Runners," and "English Creek," the first Montana novel.

"Doig's is a remarkable achievement," notes the UW's Simonson. "In less than a decade, he has earned a reputation placing him atop Pacific Northwest's literary Mount Olympus."

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

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

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

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

NOW MENTHOL IS LOWEST

By U.S. Gov’t. testing method.

SURGEON GENERAL’S WARNING: Cigarette Smoke Contains Carbon Monoxide.

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

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

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

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

“If not?” he shrugs. “We’re lots of things in life. We’re bundles, not single reeds.”

“But you’re very methodical,” I say.

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

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

To that end, every morning around sunrise, he seats himself at a typewriter and circles back. His next novel, projected for completion in 1990, carries the intoxicating title “Ride With Me, Mariah Montana.”

He worries over it like an engineer over an equation, but whatever is lost in all the circlings was lost somewhere back in the Smith River Valley and is found again in the words on the page and the books on the shelf, of which there is now a new one. And the next after that will be here in 1990, put your money on it, not in 1991.

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

BEN GROFF IS A SEATTLE-AREA FREE-LANCE WRITER.
Catch up on your reading along way

The driver of the flashy foreign car was on me like Oprah to an eclair, but I wasn’t the least concerned.

I was having too much fun.

At that very minute I was drinking strong coffee and enjoying a Mark Twain short story, “Carnival of Crime,” with an introduction by Peter Benchley. And I never once took my eyes off the road.

This was a new phenomena for me. Instead of succumbing to the foul stench of talk radio or the pathetic maneuvers of that car behind me, I’d turned my commute into a lively session with Twain.

Very entertaining.

The story spinning out my car’s cassette player came to me via the local public library, where I’d discovered there are thousands of talking book titles available. A good many motorists, I soon learned, had long ago turned their dreary commutes into quality time with the likes of Dickens, Doig and Clancy.

After I’d talked with Tom Mayer, director of the Sno-Isle Regional Library System and Pat Shaw, the librarian, I couldn’t wait to sample talking books myself.

“They’re enormously popular,” says Mayer, who is currently enjoying John McPhee’s “Coming Into the Country” on his weekday commute.

And even though Sno-Isle has about 2,500 talking book titles, the library system can’t keep up with the demand, Shaw told me. She, by the way, has been a talking book fan for years and is currently listening to Ken Follett’s “The Pillars of the Earth,” on her Lynnwood-to-Marysville daily drive.

Mysteries, biographies, science fiction, children’s books, westerns and works of fiction are available on cassette, and the authors vary from Dickens, Fitzgerald, Ivan Doig and Anne Tyler to Robert Ludlum. There’s even (ouch!) a “State Voter’s Pamphlet” on cassette, in case you’re into that kind of torture.

“It’s very escapist,” Shaw says of the talking books. “It’s a bridge between work and home, and it really reduces the stress if you’re caught in a traffic jam. There’s something soothing as well as enjoyable about listening.” She went on to tell me that listening to books on tape is a much different experience than plopping down in a chair with a good book.

“If the reader is good, it’s kind of like the dramas on old radio: It can be very compelling, you can really visualize it,” she says.

Oh please, I thought at first, there’s nothing out there that could make my commute compelling. But that was before I’d actually begun listening to the car tapes and had a change of attitude.

Mayer discovered that listening to someone reading a book sometimes brings greater depth of understanding to the work.

If you happen to be a fan of big books, you can check out the “Bible,” which logs in at 48 cassette tapes. Or, there’s Michener’s “Texas,” rolling in at an exhausting 45 tapes. (The abridged version of “Texas” is only two tapes, which, I guess you could say, means the storyline must have been trimmed to something like this: “On a steamy November day in 1335 at the Mexican seaport of Vera Cruz, a sturdy boy led his mules to and from the shore where barges landed supplies from anchored cargo ships. The End.”)

Talking books are popular with commuters, but motorists leaving for long vacations also check out the tapes. As with print books, best-selling authors, such as the John Grishams and Stephen Kings of the modern literary world, are generally the most sought-after talking books.

Still, there’s a good selection of the classics, Shaw

See SMARTS, Page 2D
adds, and they too are popular with the driving crowd.

Talking book aficionados also tell me that the book's reader is very important. There are, apparently, both excellent professional readers and others who simply go through the motions for a paycheck. I noticed, for example, that Burt Reynolds narrates one of the talking books. I'll let you draw your own conclusions about that.

As Shaw puts it, "The quality of the book depends on the reader. If it's a really compelling performance, it makes listening a real joy."

Like all drivers, it seems, I have a choice on my commute. I can listen to talk radio, FM music or a really good story.

For now, I think I'll keep taking Twain to work.

If you have an idea, suggestion, complaint or an offbeat story you'd like pass along, call me at 672-6225 or 339-3496, fax 339-3464 or write to Street Smarts, c/o The Herald, P.O. Box 930, Everett, Wash. 98206.
Northwest Bookshelf

Ivan Doig, romances mysteries, and more.

A bimonthly selection of new titles by Washington writers and publishers, or of local interest. (Prices cited may not include shipping/handling costs).

Fiction

“Happy Endings,” by Katherine Stone (Kensington Books, $15.95). Romance from a Seattle-area author about a successful Los Angeles lawyer who is “a prisoner of her violent past.”

“Nautilus,” by Vonda N. McIntyre (Bantam Spectra, $5.99). The conclusion to the Seattle science-fiction writer’s Starfarer Saga finds Earth trying to join an interstellar civilization from which it has long been banned. Bantam has also reissued earlier McIntyre titles, “Starfarers” and “Dreamsnake,” both at $5.95.

“The Dissolution of Nicholas Dee,” by Matthew Stadler (Harper-Perennial, $12). A Dutch opera house, a history of insurance and an affable sinister dwarf all figure in this second novel, new in paperback, by the Seattle author about “Landscape: Memory.”

“Grave Secrets,” by Louise Hendricksen (Zebra, $3.99). This new Dr. Amy Prescott mystery, from the Renton writer, finds the sleuth tracking down a missing reporter in Idaho.


“A Toast in a Bottle,” by Tom Sparks (Northwest Publishing, $8.95). First novel by a Seattle author about a private investigator who accepts a job removing a nun from a convent — and comes up against a group of cultists.

Nonfiction


“This Bloody Deed: The Magruder Incident,” by Ladd Hamilton (Washington State University Press, $18.95). An account of the famous 1860s gold rush robbery.


“A Heart in Politics: Jeanette Rankin and Patsy T. Mink,” by Sue Davidson (Seal Press, $9.95). A Seattle author’s portraits of two feminist ground-breakers. Rankin, the first woman to run for Congress, was elected in 1916. Mink was the first woman of color elected to Congress.

“Fliers in Their Own Words,” by Katie Goode (Aviation Supplies & Academics, 7005 132nd Place S.E., Renton, WA 98059-3155, $14.95). Interviews with fliers, from a local publisher specializing in aviation.


Children’s Books


Anthologies


Compiled by Michael Upchurch

The Seattle Times Books Sunday, October 2, 1994

M 3

Northwest Ballet presents world-renowned Italian Ballet.

Seattle Premiere of the Northwest Ballet presents the world-renowned Italian Ballet.

The Seattle Premiere of the Northwest Ballet's production of the Italian Ballet is a treat for ballet audiences around the world. This ballet, known for its humor and liveliness, features a particularly hilarious scene involving the exclusive No-Clown company. The ballet is set to a fun and lively score, ensuring a delightful experience for audiences of all ages. Don't miss this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see this incredible ballet production!
IVAN DOIG has written novels because of his dreams and visions. In a recent interview, a house in Montana and his novels are about the American experience. In his first book, the writer's house was about his family and the land he was raised on. The book was published in 1978 and has won many awards. Doig discovered a cache of his mother's letters, this led him to write again about his family and how they have lived.

Doig's second book, "Heart Earth," was published in 1981 and has been described as a "national treasure." Doig's writing has been praised for its vivid imagery and rich storytelling.

The book is set in the 1940s and follows the story of a young boy, Ivan, who lives with his grandfather on a Montana farm. The book is a coming-of-age story that explores themes of family, nature, and the American West.

Doig's third book, "The Red Bird," was published in 1985 and is a collection of short stories. The stories are set in the Montana countryside and explore the lives of the people who live there.

Doig's latest book, "The Water Margin," was published in 2019 and is a collection of stories about the Chinese folk hero who led a group of bandits against the corrupt government. The book is a meditation on the power of the individual to resist authority and fight for justice.

Doig has received numerous awards for his writing, including the National Book Award for Fiction, the National Book Critics Circle Award, and the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction. He is a member of the Montana Hall of Fame and has been inducted into the Montana Authors Hall of Fame. Doig is also a professor of creative writing at the University of Montana.