possible inserts:

--Sandison's ham hands; cracking his knuckles

--national turmoil; temper of the times more like distemper

--specter of goons during Lyre meetings

--explanation of IWW philosophy

--more personification of Jared

--more Morrie musing on Grace?

--Morrie abt reading himself to sleep every night.

--more personification of Rab?

--typewriter & adding machine

--gallows frames

--why the Butte band won't undertake the union song

--Woodrow Wilson comes to Butte

- Grace & Nivs
- drill sound in mineshaft scene
- Grace: gzzcl lb
- " : warms of house rules
- Dora

possible add to lead

All such ~~freshets~~ whiffs of chance included,

my side of tale

the kind that blows a thaw on one's dreams.

Wafted by those winds of fortune, this is mine.

Buffeted (a bit) somewhat

Riding

whirlwind tale

Tailored by those elements,

easy as breeze — Chancy / Inescapable / Vagrant / adventurous

Following me like breeze Unfettered / Spirited / Complete

the spirit of ... adamant / Frolicsome / Steady

insistent

in that earlier time stirs

vouch for disturbances

Dora?

they stand in ~~my~~ her mind the way bedsheets would stiffen on the Nan Hall's

clothesline on a bright cold day. Fabric, yet unbending.

Should Griff & Hoop call Grace "Mrs. Farraday"? (Probably)

Thus, on p. 6, change to:

"Start by calling me Grace, even though this pair of old Galahads ~~can't bring themselves~~ won't."

"Wouldn't be right," G or H said.

"Manners ~~are~~ manners," said H or G.

later, one or the other can say "It isn't right" about the union's disadvantage against Anaconda. (taking away the lost dollar, maybe?)

insert "gallows frame" into ch. 2 ?

add p. 1927

Dickens should have been living at this hour to commemorate the extremes of the times.

That is beyond my ken.

Caligula, Dic of Qns:

120, 18: Would that the Roman people had but one neck.

For all its mass and might, the Anaconda Co. had but one neck. (Income? Profit?)

lead or transition:

The OO!

book-taught

Cutlass ?

He swallowed on that as if trying to get rid of an overpowering taste.

00: 2-finger typist, hopping from key to key like Liza across the ice floes

gnarled old hands

Armbrister

salty language

"Those books. They're really something."

Harlem Ren'sce
as a lyrical time

...and I'm interested in lyrical work. Not just the music of the time--which gave us Duke Ellington and the voices of Paul Robeson & Roland Hayes--but poetry such as Countee Cullen's:

To John Keats, Poet, at Springtime, includes:

I cannot hold my peace, John Keats;
There never was a spring like this;
It is an echo, that repeats
My last year's song and next year's bliss.
I know, in spite of all men say
Of beauty, you have felt her most.
Yea, even in your grave her way
Is laid. Poor, troubled, lyric ghost,
Spring never was so fair and dear
As Beauty makes her seem this year.

"I can't quarrel with that."

ogled

A fly and a flea were trapped caught in a flue.

Let us fly, said the flea.

Let us flee, said the fly.

And away they flew.

In what simple-minded universe...?

...was Warren Gamaliel Harding fit to be Pres?

Wind fingered in at a crack

Burns, Dic of Qns, 106:25

Life is all a variorum

107: 11 The best laid plans o' mice an' men/Gang aft a-gley.

108:1 Tho' poor in gear, we're rich in love.

razzmatazz

Am Her. p. 1084 ...1. A flashy action or display intended to bewilder, confuse, or deceive. 2. Ambiguous or evasive language; double talk. 3. Ebullient energy; vigor, vim. (variant of razzle-dazzle)

DARE, V. 4 p. 489

razzled: confused, rattled...."So many things were going on at the same time, that he got copletely razzled." IND, MA

Put me down in the book of ignorance. I had no idea...

I could sit up in the middle of the night and recite it:

(Turner's rhetoric)

His
~~Her~~ voice flexed into speculation.

"That tickles my funnybone."

or: "Is something tickling your funnybone, Paul Miliron?"

Moe about why "magick" has a k in it:

"We are more approximate than you might think." (or: Our tongues are...
The human tongue is...

Heart Earth

having the right hates.

I hope she had... (link to "snow angel" #)

Having...

More: It's important to have the right hates.

A newspaper is a daily miracle,...

Amaconda...to put a stop to the Thunder and its noise in the world.

add music room w/ dreadful wallpaper (Gilbert & Sullivan-themed?); someone play the piano? Morrie? Grace?

swift as a whistle

Without saying so, OO questioned that.

rustle of pp., intake of breath, hoot of laughter (passing bedroom of) someone reading.

The house felt like an empty book.

Anaconda as faceless as it was heartless

could steal your back teeth without your knowing it.

could steal the puff puffball off a dandelion.

thread refces to manse thru mentions of the house

00 had the morals of a (whorsehouse) mattress.

"What makes you tick?"

Thesaurus, p. 79, 148 Interchange

a Roland for an Oliver: measure for measure, tit for tat

OO ruminated.

"This isn't jump rope." (i.e. it's hard, dangerous)

till all is blue (for eternally, always)

woman w/ large dark eyes which look at you as if seeing a human for the fi rst time

but not astonished by the discovery; a kind of ~~timliness~~ timelessness abt her

Thesaurus, 503:12 (p. 342) mad as Ajax

Morrie about Red fear, gov't repression, etc.

--the 3 anarchist pres'l assassinations

--but soldiers (w/ Laskin's Long Journey names) served loyally

add a mine sstory from Jared or Grace?

--Jared: & I was better off than he was (his father). Famine...

I said to myself, Morgan Llewelyn, you...



while we each tried to look more reassuring than the other.

Fowler, 612

ottava rima: 'octave verse'....eight five-foot iambic lines rhyming abababcc.

When Newton saw an apple fall, he found
In that slight startle from his contemplation--
'Tis said (for I'll not answer above ground
For any sage's creed or calculation)--
A mode of proving that the earth turn'd round
In a most natural whirl, called 'gravitation';
And this is the sole mortal who could grapple,
Since Adam, with a fall, or with an apple.

"A good storyteller is a person who has a good memory and hopes other people havne't."
--I. Cobb

Thesaurus ftnote, 594 Description, p. 405

insert gallows frame somewhere early ?

Dora

She was the kind who wanted her hand kissed to the elbow.

Add: villain need a face

& mean bastard - cartoon kind

with 3 chins and dollar signs on his vest

Morrie

...and the wind will rise and blow the stars into new formations, I suppose.
next.

the manse

archipelago of rooms

Copper Camp--pp. of interest

121-3

137-158

186-9

227-30

honeycomb (Butte beneath...w/ mines)

So, with no belongings to speak of,...

slag heaps: don't use the term for mine dumps.

ms p. 126, biblical scholar: cite Ecclesiastes?

add:

when Miss Runyon is showing Morrie around the library, mention mineralogy collection.

p. 42--abt books: change "beautiful" to "They're magical."

Jared at dynamited pay office: a miner dies nearly every day...(see Mineshaft file,
2nd Annual Report)

Morrie

"What in the world--"

I have a strong aversion to guns.

Sandison

"Phases of the moon."

Morrie: "I think not."

If you touch a life, you are apt to change it.

I was staggered.

The typeface in the books as if rising from the paper...

Morrie

insert: whenever he has a chance, he steals time in the library to read from the gorgeous classic books.

--Conrad?

--Stendhal?

--the Russians?

--Melville?

--Blake?

--Cather?

Morrie

the library book collection is the kind he would have for himself if he were rich.

(if my ship came in, as the saying is.)

Grace

nicely chesty figure

as far as the eye can carry

winter

B/W the miners

the narrow hours of daylight

use - ferry trip to PT?

the Hill in it

serape (Mt. Rainier snow)

B in the whores?

rouging themselves

Whatever the geological intent (of the planet) here, the bonanza result (copper) was...

Butte

A city has a face... as Venice has water and Edinburgh has stone.
menacing

Butte, the crossroads of the mining world (nationalities; labor & capital)...It was all marshalled there...

It all traficked there,...

Butte was no beauty.

1880 ?

Swan in spate... again
W full

Sandison?

is
This was getting good.
^

in one of his patented (digressions)

A certain slant of glance, out of those ~~cinnamon~~ eyes. The Look.

cutting

Sandison

has to cluck his disapproval early in book, to set up later use.

Conan Doyle & spiritualism. "Has he gone off his rockers"

"As for the purported photograph of fairies, I shall believe tha when the little folk da a clog dance on the brim of my hat."

Sandison

his bushy eyebrows flying at all angles

That's

Life in the alphabet.

the mountainous geography of Sandison's bookshelves.

Sandison?

00 cracked his knuckles.

Sandison

His mouth, what cd be seen of it in the OO of beard, turned down.

Sandison to Morrie

"Don't be a jackass."

Sandison barked a laugh.

Sandison

"When it came to cows, Teddy barely knew which end the grass goes in."

Sandison

"Emerson is so full of hot air he could (be a dirigible).

cal/Ley

it's a wonder he didn't float away. 00, now there's a person worth listening to.

Morrie: "You're joking." A Think.

Sandison: "Can't tell, eh? Your sense of humor needs work."

Morrie

As I talked on,

Morrie

Fortunately, a reply does not necessarily have to be an answer.

I blanched.

Movie in mine?

His
~~Her~~ footfall was nearly mine. (i.e., someone very close in life)

I had no more business there than a kangaroo.

There are some questions that do not have answers.

Morrie?

My head was a slum.

possible Morrie use

Am Heritage, 221--

cestus: a covering for the hand, made of leather straps weighted with iron or lead, worn by ancient Roman boxers. (from caedere, to strike)
caestus, cestus, boxing glove,

use w/ Mackaness?

? RF Mack?

Maybe
(I believe that) memory takes a fix from landmarks as any other traveler will.

Pop @ ft Peck

possible Susan diary entry:

on

My wandering mind kept wandering.

Morrie:

That stumped me.

to whir up inside myself

Morrie

I have the habit of...

the marshaling of thought

I was tired of catching myself at this.

cd have had

money by the tubful & still (be more)

A have learned to be

He long had been cautious with his emotions.

about twitches of heart.

Morrie

, I refined that.

Morrie

I soaked in... (i.e., absorbed what was being said)

Morrie

This is astounding.

Morrie

I was moved by this.

Must I? (i.e., Do I have to?)

Morrie:

It is not in me to do something like that.

Morrie

And if my luck (ever) returned...

home truths

(use as a lead?)

bottom-page notes in Thesaurus could yield sayings for Morrie.

lex talionus--law of the talon?

Morrie

the logic of the page (ledgers, books)

Morrie wardrobe of names

- is called by various characters:

"Morrie": Grace, Cuff, Hoop

"Morgan": Sandition

"Mister Morgan": Rab ~~Sir~~

"Mister": Russian famine Sir

"Morgie": Armbrister & Thunder staff

Virgil, Dic of Qns:

p. 554, 4: Tacitae per amica silentia lunae: Through the friendly silence of the mute moon.

555,6: Quadripedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum:
The sound of galloping hooves shook the crumbling plain.

555, 10: Audentis Fortuna iuvat: Fortune is ally to the brave.

555, 22: Habitarunt di quoque silvas: Even gods have dwelt in woods.

556, 5: Nunc scio quid sit Amor: Now do I know what Love is.

556, 21: Sed fugit interea, fugit inreparabile tempus:
Meanwhile, Time is flying--flying, never to return.

There is no biblical verse, "Blessed are the ameleriorators, for they shall do marginally less harm than those of fiercer brow..."

It is not a footing I have been aware of choosing for myself (?). Perhaps such footings never are.

manmade

Time goes odd in our prisms. My 00th of March is Swan's week of 00, 00 years ago.

precipitate (noun)
words are - precipitate of (thought?) (music?)

poetry/music is the precipitate of the soul.

a cross-hatch of problems

slake

Chasing the fire, (of constellations?)

imagination
(i.e., naming them)

It jostled through me as I understood what...

Monty?

raw as a peeled potato

I felt

In conditions like these, dignity took working at.

R7

4 I was stung. (affronted)

It hit him with 00 clarity

me electric
lightning

PauL

I could endorse that.

Marty & Gates?

My
~~His~~ mind kept skipping past the tasks at hand, beelining off to where it shouldn't.

RF

My head was going around and around.

mind

too OO, too OO; too OO. (i.e., the semicolon and final adjective are intensifiers.)

(a warning thought) Its voices were several. (I.e., several reasons...)

Becoming more so.

...and " " ".

What is the most apt comparison? Fever? Emotional binge?

I had to

unload my head

next level of thinking

...everything I have put through my head...

use w/ conclusion?

Alone with his thoughts, or to frame it another way, with thoughts that would not leave him alone.

memory begins to bunch itself there like a muscle

slimmer than a magic wand

slim as ?

the head the other globe (worth exploring)

as long as we walk the earth.

Morrie shd use brass knuckles again.

Prize fight in Butte; Morrie gets drawn in, is recognized (perhaps) by someone from the Chicago fight scene, back to when the Capper threw the fight etc.

what?

Morrie's skill at playing cards:

He thinks of the 52 cards as four seasons: spades winter, diamonds summer, hearts springtime, and clubs autumn--& "With a trained memory and a bit of guesswork you can calendar what's been dealt."

Susan:

You don't want to be aware of each of your teeth. (analogy for concentrating on a wholeness rather than oversensitized details)

Morrie:

The human mind is a fever swamp.

Moe:

"Casper was a thing of beauty with the gloves on."

Just by being reasonably fastidious, I stuck out like a Venice masquer to anyone capable of suspicion.

the compass of my/the heart

I patched myself back together and...

Morrie

Using a single word:

"Realistically."

no.

There is no other feeling like it (love) (finding the person you want to spend the rest of your life with)

Morrie

"That was another me," I pleaded. "In another time and place. I'm not that person anymore, you have to believe--"

(changing colors like a snowshoe rabbit)

Morrie

The stunt is, (use w/ newspaper?)

someone to Morrie about how dressed up he is: "You're really putting on the dog."

As far as the east is from the west (Thes, 196: Distance; the Bible)

My ears must have sharpened to points.

My mind was awhirl.

device for Morrie

"But I'm not--" I (paused) surprised that he was letting me finish. "I am not..."

in some way station in the head

Ben?

El(la) and Nora Deuce...Well, never mind.

Eleanora Duse, Italian actress 1859-1924

FIND

# times Morrie used "ah"

Morrie

...as if I had been pushed adrift by a long pole.

Morrie

"Ah."

(use it standing alone, 1-word sentence of reaction.)

FIND how many times used generally

It brought joy to my heart.

I succumbed. My better judgment checked out and left no forwarding address.

"Pertaining to--?"

Morrie (fairly early in the book, w/ Sandison)

"I'll rustle some up." (Sandison looks at him, suspicious of whether he has used "rustle" deliberately.)

Morrie's watch, as mentioned in Whistling

?

Morrie crosses paths with miner named Mazzetti (in refce to Inez in 11th Man)
" " O'Fallon?

add: The typewriter is a wonderful machine. (Morrie drowns out Sandison w/ machinegun typing when he has to.)

Morrie's lost trunk:

belongings

Prized books, diary, keepsakes--all were gone. As if his past was gone. His identity swept clear, like an erased blackboard. It gives one an odd feeling, to have your identity erased like...

- add graf or more in ch. 1 ?

Morrie: More Latin or quotations toward [redacted] later part of book?

more friendliness than I was comfortable with

Cont

A cold eye; a cold I.

you end up ...

M

preening himself on the sound of his own voice

his proclamtns

memory begins to beat there

began

prism

prism

memory is a detailist, & OO recalled

K(?)

wet-eyed

scuff of hooves

Dialogue

many a time I . . .

Lady

stored it up against (someone)

I could see she was storing it up against me.

scalawag of a place

Bilibin?

goad

That proved to be the right...
just a goad needed.

a bright terrible wink of lightning

words to toll me back

sometimes . . . always . . . often ?

used ?

sidebets of fate

H= phrasing - used?

books--words on paper--were fireships in my head

HE phrasing

jerked him up short

HE phrasing

it is as much guess as fact, but I can see how . .

HE phrasing

pearled

HE phrasing

magnetized by

with a teacup delicacy

Lady

the scald of that face

almost sober

holy gosh

dialogue (Sky)

way the hell and gone

Gosh sakes

Tell 'em you come from Tough Creek and you sleep on the roof of the last house.

Give me a hunk of that Mormon glue

you old blister

dialogue

he do-' sno sick 'em

There's not much sand to a man like that

dialogue

the willies

dialogue

weather as cold as the north slope of hell

dialogue

hit a dry hole

dialogue

crowbait

dialogue

peeing into the wind

dialogue

"pair of ladies": pair of queens in poker hand

aye, yes or no

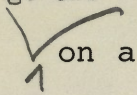
the old duffers

on account

dialogue

straight as a die

go off



on a big binge

memory handles the past with heavy mittens on,
occasionally fumbling onto a treasure while
letting all else drop.

HE phrasing

conk

HE phrasing

plasmal

HE phasing

merzyle

tagged after by Manish (on. Trial?) HE phrasing

HE phrasing

Yesterlife

HE phrasing

Yestertime

to war against

HE phrasing

HE phasing

rapt

HE phrasing ~~poem~~

Just this:

HE phrasing

[a kind of sleep for] my mind

prospector

in a sense, were my folks prospecting--for a future--in AZ?

in the skull crevices

until the earth grows cold

atoms of time

Something before memory: it is not big enough to be history, but is traceable enough not to be only (family) legend. I will call it00, and let it tell itself.

then-ness

life, and half-life, would go on yet awhile

rim of it all

Trouble was...

tusking at ...them again.

a hand broad

bands of colored light

the sweeps of . . .

the print of ruts

for one last time

abraded

-borne (anger-borne, for ex)

off-angle

undersides

fidget

bodying (verb)

regathering

the tuck of

the severe inside

heavy as sandbags
(moods...

prism

the chain of generations was made of sequences of carved trees

use c coastal Tribes

Brain blind with that scaredness

prism

I hold it up like a mirror, but it is . . .

native to what, it might have been asked

sameness of hrs, yet not of days. Islands stayed
(:) separate in mind

ink (i.e., her letters dutifully abt.
same length), yet not of

bolts of silence--the rivers of lightning in that thunder
threatened but were never seen

stiff and heavy and empty

stayed through

furtive terror

their silent stand against time

shaley

...not yet...
empire had begun to go
the blood ~~gone~~ thin

used in Sea Runners?

turning the if, seeing where else its lines may
have pointed

cursive

M was a man who liked to turn "if"...

Let it tell itself

used, ch. 7
check: used earlier
in Dancing, or any
other book?

pared (adj)

eyelet

some flouncing sewed around the edges

raddled

snaggled

prism

This is time without hours or minutes, the time of memory. memory's time.

ocean's
the earth's bones

bones of an earlier ocean.

the early minutes

the pull of 00, the shove of00

splines--splined together

used ?

Valley
used

It can be told in a rush . . .

the cold hush

regular as cedar

presin

The haze over their dead faces thins away and
I see them again. . .

The memories of memory--or the memory of memories

Prusin

islands of memory--an archipelago

the brain's hiding places

prism

Parents are link to chain of the past

Tiemdies too, and is buried. The years of 00 are held in this 00 . . .

poesim

what neither memory nor photos show

prism

Where do I begin to be born? It is a writer's question . . .

rackety

Facing North

it was the one question we couldn't scant.

M for me

HE phrasing

then would come boiling back

HE phasing prisms

the mindscape of those years

HE phrasing

. . . with an exactness--the exactness still in my memory, hard-edged, unchanging-- . . .

Seeet Thunder

With each book, I try to sum up to myself, in one word, what it's about, what the ultimate "feel" of the story is. With The Whistling Season, I think it was compassion. Work Song was, by and large, about redemption. The Bartender's Tale is about conscience--what people do or don't do according to their sense of right and wrong. At that same level, the pulse under the skin of the book, Sweet Thunder is deliberately about identity--personal identity, mistaken identity, finding identity, choosing identity. But I hope that's simply tucked into the story, not blaring out loud--as a novelist, you don't want the preaching to get in the way of the choir; people want to hear the singing.

Richard Rodriguez's great phrase about the heyday of newspapers, "the weight of the world, carried by boys."

## PART III

27) What compelled you to write this book?

Morrie Morgan, the incandescent teacher from THE WHISTLING SEASON, demanded to be heard from again.

28) Did anything surprise you, or anything surprising happen, during the course of writing the book?

Mile-high Butte always surprises a person. (Its lofty wages in the dangerous copper mines caused the saying among astonished miners across Europe, "Don't even stop in America, just go to Butte.") As my wife Carol photographed abandoned mines and hardscrabble neighborhoods for me and I took research notes a sunny June day, we barely beat a snowstorm out of town.

**The Butte Public Library is almost one of the characters in this book. Why did you make the library and its books so central to the story?**

The library's wondrous book collection provides Morrie "the wealth of minds down through all of recorded time," and in particular, the inspiration at a crucial point of the story to take a risk as immortal writers do, to "set sail on the winds of chance."

**WORK SONG is a return to the story of Morris Morgan, one of the central characters of your bestselling 2006 novel, *The Whistling Season*. What compelled you to return to this character and his story?**

With his quicksilver mind and golden tongue, Morrie has turned out to be such a treasure for a writer that I figured it would be a mistake not to welcome him back onto the page. After his performances of mental magic in the one-room schoolhouse of *The Whistling Season,* countless of the readers who made that book a runaway hit remarked to me, "Oh, I wish I'd had a teacher who could talk like that." It seemed only natural for such a compelling voice to take over the telling of this next story. By now, I'm not sure which of us is the ventriloquist: Morrie or me.

redemption

**Did you write any of the songs or dig them up somewhere? If you did write any of them, how do you go about it?**

You bet, some of the songs in the novel are from my non-piano keyboard. Which ones, I'm not saying, as music is best when it has a little mystery to it.

The process? What can I tell you--it's magic. More seriously, a song develops from some rhyme or turn of phrase that catches my imagination. It is much like writing poetry, which I've also done for some of my books, except for a more pronounced rhythm. The syllables in a line have to be counted to make the right beat--and they have to be the right syllables to create musicality.

**How much of yourself is in Morrie?**

Morrie is slicker than I am, more dapper, more roguish, more an intellectual jack-of-all-trades. And I don't carry a set of brass knuckles.

## *Work Song* Discussion Points

1. Work Song brings back Morrie Morgan, the beloved teacher from The Whistling Season, and this time he's the narrator. What is gained and what is lost by having him tell the story?

2. Think of the opening scenes in terms of movie shots. How does Ivan bring readers into the Butte of 1919?

3. How do the two Welsh boarders function in the plot? What would be lost if they weren't there?

4. Why do you think Ivan made the library central to the novel?

5. The librarian is loosely based on an actual historical character. Do you find him believable? Do you think he's supposed to be?

OVER

6. How does the character of Russian Famine illuminate life in Butte?

7. Rabrab provides a central glue for the plot. Discuss examples that illustrate her importance.

8. Which characters did you most relate to? Can you explain why?

9. Ivan immerses readers in time and place. Does he succeed in making you see and feel Butte?

10. Why show that Morrie can cook with more flair than Grace? (Ivan has a reason for everything he includes.)

11. Are you satisfied with the ending?

29) What writer or writers have had the greatest influence on you?

It all starts back there at Shakespeare, that old inventor of words and exemplar that history has the best yarns.

30) What advice would you give to aspiring writers?

Keep a journal or diary to strengthen the habit of writing regularly.

31) Why did you become a writer? Was it a lifelong goal?

I believe in the power of stories. Having sold my first magazine article when I was a college sophomore, I suppose that belief is very nearly lifelong.

**Song plays a prominent role in this novel--even making its way into the title--and has also made an appearance in nearly all of your previous books, from the Scandinavian drinking song in *The Sea Runners* to the "old" Scottish ballad you made up as the title for *Dancing at the Rascal Fair* to the homesteaders' song on comet night in *The Whistling Season.* Why has song been so consistently present in your work?**

A novelist with as many books as I've written--now a full round ten--has to be a kind of troubador, and troubadors have always known that songs brighten a story. And inventing the songs that are the anthems of my characters' lives gives me one more way to stretch the craft of writing toward the areas where it mysteriously starts to be art. That is, the territory that my friend Norman Maclean said was the secret of writers like him and me, the poetry under the prose--rhythm, word choice, lyrical intent premeditated.

**What is 'the poetry under the prose'?**

As squarely as I can look at myself and the kind of writing I've produced--which on the one hand relies on dogged research and on the other, fancy flights of words --I seem to be either something like a poet yearning to be a clerk or a clerk fumbling around with poetry. In either case, I can tell you poetic leanings caught up with me in an unexpected place--while I was working on a Ph.D. in history. What graduate school taught me, back there in the late '60s, was that I didn't have what it took to be on a university faculty. I found myself freelancing magazine articles during grad school at the University of Washington--just as if I didn't have any seminar papers due--and I also began, to my complete surprise, writing poetry, which I had never even thought of attempting before.

My eight or nine published poems showed me that I lacked the poet's final skill, the one Yeats called closing a poem with the click of a well-made box. But still wanting to stretch the craft of writing toward the areas where it mysteriously starts to be art, it was back then that I began working on what my friend Norman Maclean said was the secret of writers like him and me, the poetry under the prose. Rhythm, word choice, lyrical intent premeditated--in the diary I kept during my work on *This House of Sky* I vowed to try to have "a trap of poetry" in the book's every sentence, and I suppose that inclination is visible in all my books.

**You grew up in Montana, and it's the setting for much of your fiction. Yet you've said you don't consider yourself a "Western" writer. Why not?**

To me, it just seems silly to slap geographic tags onto literary novelists that way, when we're absolutely not writing the old shoot-em-up blood-and-guts westerns of forty years ago. In the material my imagination leads me to and the most vivid speech patterns in my head, I'm simply doing what writers have always done--paying homage to the home territory as creatively as I can. (James Joyce wrote "Ulysses" about Dublin, remember, not the Paris where he lived.) I don't think of myself as writing "about Montana" or "about the West"--I'm trying to write about the human condition: love and work, and life and death, how dreams are born, dreams are torn apart, dreams change... My characters and my language and my stories may be grounded back there in the familiar territory where I grew up, but if I'm any good at this craft of making books, it all ends up being about that larger country: life.

I never had the privilege of knowing Eudora Welty, but I'll bet she rolled those unforgettable eyes whenever she was called a "Southern" writer. She said it best for all of us, back to Homer and Tolstoy and Turgenev, who draw our material from the our original world:

"The art that speaks most clearly, explicitly, directly, and passionately from its place of origin, will remain the longest understood."

The contents of my head...

Unfortunately, it's not a table of contents, it's more like an attic, holding all kinds of stuff.

So I do, I go to the skunkworks every day and invent.

**Gabriel Garcia Marquez: It is "enough for the author to have written something for it to be true, with no proofs other than the power of his talent and the authority of his voice."**

**Adam Gopnik: "Fiction departs from the truth to intensify it."**

highly academic questioner:

"What is it that western writers will have to do to produce a crop of dinstinguished novels

Stegner: "Write good books."

language

Russell Martin, years ago in anthology titled Writers of the Purple Sage, put me in the camp of writers of prose "meant to be heard while it tells its story." Sure, you bet; that's what Shakespeare was up to.

John Clare, rural poet of early 19th c.: "a language that is ever green."

In the beginning is the language: the alpha, the omega, and the all between.

Poetry of the vernacular: I try to attain language which makes a shimmer behind the story: the appeal, the wonder, of the vernacular itself coming through.

Everything counts. (cont.)

the language:

I'm trying to make the words sing. ("Fiction lives by the energy of its prose," said Thomas Flanagan.)

Rhythms and cadences and wordplay are part of the music of the mind. (For ex, I've written snatches of song in every one of my ~~seven~~ 8 novels; the closet poet in me...)

A ventroliquism of art. For ex, Susan remembers having read somewhere "the inlaid words"--"The beautiful contradiction of love is that it is a fidelity beyond truth, which is merely occasional." That's one of those "Oh, who said that" brain teasers--(was it) Lord Byron, Keats, Longfellow...? Actually I made it up--ventriloquized it into the realm of unforgettable quotations--to set up a crucial decision one of the characters makes at the end. (Susan determines not to pass on to Monty the horrific truth about what their fathers did to each other--"Some truths stand taller than others," she says, and chooses the fidelity of love instead.)

Shakespeare: "...that in black ink my love may still shine bright."

trumpeter Herb Alpert: "Man, I'm going to make visual music....Music that conjures up images (for me as I'm creating it and playing it).

**How long does it take to write a book?**

Generally it takes me three years to put a book together. The processes are many, many, but I'll cite just one trade secret: when I am rough-drafting a manuscript, I write four hundred words a day. Every day.

traveling: Be ready for--

--cabdrivers of all ilks

--plane delays on runways (try to nap or do diary)

--airporter luggage handling: hang on to my briefcase

--luggage generally: careful of my elbows, lift suitcase by shouldering the strap

--cold precautions: wash my hands @ every chance, vit. C, vaseline, zinc

--readings: check sound system & podium, per "speech strategies" card

--signing: Band-Aid my finger beforehand; keep arm rested on table; take breaks; signing up stock, have someone open the books and stack them afterward
--~~emphasize to bookstore people that I don't want to sign up collectors' batches.~~
--have escort run interference in getting me out pronto afterwards

--media: stick to what I want to say ("I don't know about that, but if you ask me if I..."

--phone disconnects during interview (particularly radio), hang up pronto so interviewer can re-dial me.

hotel glitches: see over

hotel glitches: immediately look over room for chair, desk, possible outside noise (inc. ice machine, elevator, & stairwell) & ask to be changed to another room if nec.

--learn the key system, light system, & phone system

--find a breakfast source, 5:30-6 a.m. rm svce if possible, fast-food no more than 2 blocks

-- " " newspaper "

--rest & nap as much as possible: earplugs, eyemask, backgrnd music

speech strategies:

--check the sound system beforehand: mike level, tilt and lip of lectern to see if it will hold pack of file cards in readable position, lectern reading light. (see if it pops consonants, such as p's)

--don't eat at the banquet; get a good supper beforehand and use the time at the head table to visit or to look over the speech.

--see if it's possible to give the speech before dinner; people wd be more alert then, and the speech cd provide something to talk about during the meal.

--while speaking, learn to use silences; pauses to let dramatic points sink in, such as the WWI toll in Big Horn county; or as at L&C commencement, the 2nd, larger laugh as "you can't have everything, where would you put it?" sank in philosophically.
--own the stage.

**Why do you write the songs and poems that show up in your fiction, instead of simply tapping into the existing body of music and literature?**

Because it's a chance to flagrantly indulge in what my friend Norman Maclean said was the secret of writers like him and me, the poetry under the prose. From the snatch of 19th Century Scandinavian drinking song in *The Sea Runners* to the old Scottish ballad (entirely made up by me) that provided the book title I wanted to use, *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, to the "spirit songs" Monty Rathbun sings during the Harlem Renaissance in *Prairie Nocturne*, I have tailored rhyme and rhythm to fit the time period, in all eight of my novels. Although there's only one dab of singing in *The Whistling Season,* when the Marias Coulee community of homesteaders greets the appearance of Halley's Comet in the Montana sky of 1910 with *When I see that evening star/Then I know that I've come far/Through the day, through all plight/To the watchfire of the night*, I seem to be more hooked than ever--note the front-rhymes (*When/Then* and*Through/To*) as well as the line endings.

**'poetry under the prose', p. 2: actual poems and songs**

It maybe hasn't been generally recognized, but one way I have openly indulged in this is by writing the songs and poems that show up in my fiction, instead of simply tapping into the existing body of music and literature. From the snatch of 19th Century Scandinavian drinking song in *The Sea Runners* to the old Scottish ballad (entirely made up by me) that provided the book title I wanted to use, *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, to the "spirit songs" Monty Rathbun sings during the Harlem Renaissance in *Prairie Nocturne*, I have tailored rhyme and rhythm to fit the time period, in all eight of my novels. Although there's only one dab of singing in *The Whistling Season,* when the Marias Coulee community of homesteaders greets the appearance of Halley's Comet in the Montana sky of 1910 with *When I see that evening star/Then I know that I've come far/Through the day, through all plight/To the watchfire of the night*, I seem to be more hooked than ever--note the front-rhymes (*When/Then* and*Through/To*) as well as the line endings.

Richard Maxwell Brown, "Violence," Oxford History of the American West:

p. 422--"...the West was a turbulent region. This was the result, however, of the particular historical experience of the West. Westerners were not innately more violent than people elsewhere. Leading social, ecomomic, and political blocs freely resorted to violence to advance or defend their interests. Closely connected to key episodes of this western violence were such leading figures and men of power as Leland Stanford...Albert Bacon Fall, and Granveille Stuart..."

p. 423--"The turbulent history and values of the West have been a major contributor to our nation's violent heritage but no more so than ethnic, racial, religious, industrial, agrarian, and political conflict or than the crime, lynch-law, and violent examples and legacies of the American Revolution and the Civil War.

No Duty to Retreat, p. 110--"Of those who took part in the Mussel Slough gunfight of May 11, 1880, the deadliest by far was the grassroots and incorporation gunfighter Walter J. Crow, who accounted for 5 lives before losing his own later in the day. ...he was one of the finest marksmen in all of California, a great wing shot who constantly practiced target shooting. None of the glorified gunfighters of the West such as Wild Bill Hickok, Wyatt Earp, Billy the Kid, or John Wesley Hardin came anywhere close to killing as many men in a single episode as did Walter J. Crow.
(Mussel Slough in Tulare County, an arm of the Kings River)

I did some research once for an article I never wrote: writers in political patronage jobs

Nathaniel Hawthorne, US consul in Liverpool, 1853-58
--this audience very well knows what was going on there then--the great immigration of Mormon converts from Britain and Scandinavia. Yet there Hawthorne sat, in charge of the paperwork for those ships, and there'sn no sign he had any interest in this great flood to America, to the American West. So, there went a great novel--
Dickens did; went on those ships...

it was left to another customs house guy, Melville, to try a big book on an oceanic theme: Moby Dick.

- ask audience how many want books signed?

(Anthony Hopkins; Emma Thompson)

Maureen Harrington of Denver Post - Kazuo Ishiguro: Remains of Day
- wanted to write that myth
(C. Clivedon said)

· West on tv: how about an episode o · weather of · West?
childhood b - West?
· West as refuge - gay h'stdrs, sex, guns

- history bookish (TV is called a medium - neither rare nor well-done.)
- pics that aren't actual: b my n'hd of writing, mo's called fictions.
- "Nothing in · West will ever be · same agn."
- y what rough beast, it's hour come round @ last/
Slouches toward Bethlehem to be born."
or: "The gyre is widening y · falcon cannot hear falconer."

speech & interview use--Love Is The Heart of Everything (Mayakovsky-Brik letters)--

46--M: "Having put all the anguish of my young soul into the epigraph, I turn to facts."

145--M telegraphs B, Paris to Moscow, Dec. ~~22~~ 1924, in ineffably poetic meter: "Worry miss you love you kiss you."

178--M carried a "traveling glass" on his reading tours, so he wouldn't have to drink out of other people's. (Valid reasoning; flu etc. rampant)

183--M: "I'm doing everything I can to curtail the time I spend in these rotten abroads (sic) as much as possible."

183--M: "In Prague I signed so many copies of my books I completely wore my hand out."

186--M: "...I go off to read in all the directions there are." 1927: Yalta - Sevastopol Simferopol Crimea

203--M: "My life is rather strange, with no events but many details..."

215--L to M, from London: "Voloshk, I kiss you right in the parliament!"

I generate my fiction from historical set points--the tumultuous period after World War One, in this case--but I do absolutely make up my plots and people. So, within the wilder boundaries of my imagination there are historical laws of gravity, events and details I go to great trouble to be accurate about.

reading equivalencies:

book p.=2 min.

script p.=45 sec. in 24 pt. 1 min. in 22 pt.

(settings for script p.: 0" margin, 24 pt type)

interview
techniques

--I don't know about that, but if you were to ask me...

--That's very interesting, but I don't see how it changes (my point)...

i.e., Stick to my own ground, instead of fighting on theirs. Own the stage.

return to notebk

1/3 of life spent in sleep: the 00 third

Solitude, 22--sleeping on it

" , 24--the mad world of dreams

(Why not live in Montana?) My house and my wife's job happen to be in Seattle, but in my words and travels I am living in Montana.

--James Joyce: "Have I ever left?" (asked how he cd write abt Dublin while living in Paris)

(McGinnis) Memoirs have to be the essence of a life, instead of a framework as in biography.

Speech, Memory

--Great memoirs, such as Midnight Oil by V.S. Pritchett, or Bronx Primitive by Kate Simon, or Sorrowless Times by James Herndon, have never hesitated to give a version of conversations that happened decades ago. There's no other way you can convey the sound of the people you're writing about, the patterns of their talk, the habits of their sayings.

--So, as long as the ground-rules are made plain to the reader (which I did in This House of Sky by putting the dialogue into italics instead of quote marks, to indicate this is memory's version; and which I've done in Heart Earth by this is a deliberate dream of what I believe happened), I think the memoirist can use some techniques of imagination.

--It's when the ground-rules aren't announced, and a book that's announced as one thing is actually another, that I thnk readers have a right to be indignant: a biography that says what a person was thinking when there's really no way of knowing, or a travel book that makes up people.

(Bruce Chatwin, The Songlines)

Stories seem to be a kind of social plasma--a necessary portion of the society's bloodstream.

--wall paintings in caves as stories

A Long Long Way - Sebastian Barry

Books to cite: The Good Soldiers--David Finkel

The Lighthouse Stevensons--Bella Bathhurst

Creation (about Audubon the bird painter), by Katherine Govier (Canadian poet)

Chronicle in Stone, Ismail Kadare

In Sunlight, in a Beautiful Garden (Johnstown Flood, 1889)--Kathleen Cambor

Balsamroot & All But the Waltz--Mary Clearman Blew

Regeneration, by Pat Barker (uses actuality of Sigfreid Sassoon & Wilfred Owen)

The Commitments, by Roddy Doyle (music onto the page) (very dirty-mouthed)

God's Secretaries, by Adam Nicolson (making of King James Bible, early 1600's; Puritans & Jacobeans were not just versions of us in ruffed colors) (the past is another country)

The All of It

Go With Me - Castle Freeman

the homestead boom: (based on Lang article)

--Between 1905 and 1920, some 300,000 people established 80,000 new farms. Historian William Lang calls it "the largest single agricultural migration in North American history." (Bigger, say, than the famous Oklahoma land-rush.) It also was "the single largest five-year movement of people in U.S. history"--bigger than the gold rushes, bigger than the mass migration of Southern blacks to the northern states after the Civil War and during the 19-teens.

Lang: "These people created a society that's never been created before or since...They created a civilization, a society out of thin air."

Lang: By 1920, Montana was "the largest purchaser of power agricultural equipment in the world."

Then the bottom dropped out, w/ plunge in crop prices after WWI ended, and years of drought hit these highly leveraged newcomers to the land. Between 1920 and 1925, half the banks in Montana failed, and by 1935, one-quarter of Montana families were on gov't relief.

So, that great land-rush was a grand illusion: but you don't put an area of farms as big as the states of NY or Ohio onto a prairie, along with an instant population bigger than most American cities of the time (10 of 100 largest were 300,000+), without human saga. And that's what interests me, the mosaic of stories within that one big story.

(women's suffrage, Over)

A couple of intriguing historical currents traceable to this tide of homesteaders:

--the one-room schools, such as the one I created in The Whistling Season: the homestead families created these neighborhood-based schools all across the landscape.

--women's suffrage was won in Montana in 1914, six years ahead of the national constitutional amendment, and that vote was won in the "overshoe" counties, the rural homesteader counties; the cities by and large voted against it.

30) What advice would you give to aspiring writers?

Keep a journal or diary to strengthen the habit of writing regularly.

31) Why did you become a writer? Was it a lifelong goal?
I believe in the power of stories. Having sold my first magazine article when I was a college sophomore, I suppose that belief is very nearly lifelong.

Hermia, in A Midsummer Night's Dream: "I am amazed, and know not what to say." (& exits)

--the perfect response, in iambic pentameter

Savage Peace - Ann Hagedorn (Feb. 1919 Seattle general strike

It's a mile high and a mile deep, but Butte people are on the level.

Mnemosyne: goddess of memory, mother of all the Muses.

(ni-moss-uh-nee)

Paul's condition: mnesia, protraction of recall. ("Dreams slide over into my memory, in a way that I am helpless to regulate.")

--amnesia, a departure of memory

--A fiction writer has to ask himself one big question all the time: "what if?" (In this case, what if a kid remembered all his dreams--all his life?)

--I miss Norman Maclean so many ways, but one is mischievous--the eternally missed chance to ask a "what if" of him. In "A River Runs through It," Norman from that magnificently memorable perspective of his religious fly-fishing family imagines that God is not only a fisherman but a dry-fly fisherman as well. That's fine, Norman--but what if you get up there in the trout stream of Presbyterian afterlife and God is a fish?

**Are you working on another book?**

I always have book ideas cooking, and the next one is about a bachelor saloonkeeper with a past, "the best bartender who ever lived," and his incurably curious son, set in the 1950s.

But will the reading world hear more from Morrie? Like him, I'd never say never.

from CBC: "Be yourself. Everyone else is taken."

**Reading my own work aloud...**

I admit to my own personal angle on this--a little-known secret about me is that I majored in broadcast journalism in college, when worthy giants such as Edward R. Murrow still worked in that profession, and I also am an inveterate practicer, professional as I can be, before giving speeches and readings. But anything worth doing is worth doing well, so I believe writers should work to become good readers-aloud, too. It has paid off for me not only in the popularity and recognition of the *This House of Sky* audio, but brought me an Audie (the audio industry's equivalent of an Oscar) and participation in a national bestseller when I recorded the audio of Norman Maclean's classic, *A River Runs through It.*

Why not move back to Montana?

--James Joyce's reply when asked if he'd ever return to Dublin: "Have I ever left it?"

--(Joyce's father's unbeatable occupation: "enterer of contests.")

It's less important where a writer lives than where his or her imagination lives.

Faulkner didn't live in the big woods with the bear. And Steinbeck wasn't an Okie.

Irina Kolpakova, "the top ballerina in the Kirov Ballet in Leningrad when she asked a young dancer named Mikhail Baryshnikov to become her partner nearly 30 yrs ago," in NY to teach Baryshnikov's American Ballet Theatre dancers; about the famous role as Aurora, the princess in "The Sleeping Beauty," she said "The pas de deux at the wedding in Act III is about love and trust in the frame of etiquette. It is full of curtsies and not an ordinary pas de deux. If you dance it all, it is wonderful and very hard."--NYTimes, May 29, '89

(pah de deu

22) **Please provide a biography of yourself, highlighting your background and what led you to write this book.**

The attached bio sheet provides career highlights. As to the part of my background pertinent to **The Bartender's Tale**, I was mostly raised, like Rusty, by my father, a widower. My dad was a haymaker: a haying contractor, a kind of free-lance foreman, who would hire his own crew and put up ranchers' hay crops. Saloons where I was lucky enough to tag along with him were his hiring halls, so when I was about as tall as his elbow as he judiciously bent it in the nine drinking spots of our small Montana town, I saw a lot of character on display, in the ranch hands and sheepherders of half a century ago. Fortuitously, it was back there that I developed an abiding interest in the trait called character and its even more seductive flowering into a plural form, characters. In my eleven novels I've created over five hundred characters, in what some reviewers have referrred to as my Montana Yoknapatawpha, and this one features the gruff but gifted bartender, Tom Harry, who persistently has shown up in three previous books in a lesser but evidently unforgettable role. So, from my own experience of hanging around saloons, at precisely the wondrous time of life when I was too young for them to do me any harm, I was impelled to invoke the novelist's magic words, "What if?", and give Tom a bright, inquisitive kid to cope with, along with living up to his reputation as the best bartender who ever lived.

**27) What compelled you to write this book?**

The story of an only child being raised by a challenged but resourceful single father is one I haven't summoned since This House of Sky, and never in fiction. With a fabled bartender already brought to life in earlier novels, the chance to invent an inadvertent son for him, and write in Rusty's distinctive voice, could not be passed up.

Besides, The Bartender's Tale felt to me like a grand adventure in storytelling.

**28) Did anything surprise you, or anything surprising happen, during the course of writing the book?** What the imagination holds in the years of creating a novel is always surprising, but two examples, dramatic and musical. --In the ending coda, Rusty is to perform the role of his life in, as I imagined it, "the much-anticipated Chicago revival of The Iceman Cometh." True to the workings of my imagination, the Goodman Theater in Chicago is reviving that Eugene O'Neill classic, starring Nathan Lane and Brian Dennehy. --In all my novels I've written snatches of songs--ballads, country and western, spirituals etc.--to fit the period or endow a character. This time, surprise to me as much as anyone, it's blues, on the order of: "Everythin' nailed down 's comin' loose, Seems like livin' ain't no use," a la Leadbelly, I hope.

24) What do you think should be emphasized in the promotion of your book? What points seem to you most newsworthy?

Its stylistic and storytelling relationship to my earlier well-known novels that share some of the same milieu or characters or similar narrative voice--Dancing at the Rascal Fair, English Creek, Bucking the Sun, and The Whistling Season--which, combined, have sold well over a half million copies. And its suitability for reading groups and young adults, akin in both cases to The Whistling Season. Newsworthiness: the Depression hard times Tom and Proxy and other characters went through certainly resonate with economic and social conditions today, as does the restless next generational scene struggling to be born.

**The Bartender's Tale** is the story of a father and son left on their own in a shifting world--a tale in itself as old as kinship, but ever new in the way "the bachelor saloonkeeper with a streak of frost in his black pompadour and the inquisitive 12-year-old boy who had been an accident between the sheets" go about life in a small western town in 1960.

Tom Harry, the nonpariel bartender and proprietor of the "nearly holy oasis," the Medicine Lodge, has a past he won't talk about and a habit of sudden disappearances for a few days, which plagues his impressionable son, Rusty, as does the unexplained absence of his mother ever since he was born. In their otherwise companionable bachelor life together, Rusty has free run of the saloon's fantastic back room. And in the momentous summer that is the heart of the novel, he shares this secret aperture into the often mystifying world of grownups with Zoe, the new girl down the street whose imagination outdoes even his own amid the wonders of the back of the saloon.

History, as it tends to do, arrives to these prime characters with gale force, first in the person of enthusiastic young oral historian Delano Robertson and then in the shapely form of Proxy, an unforgettable taxi dancer in Tom's earlier fabled saloon in a Fort Peck dam boomtown. Proxy comes bearing the news that she and Tom have a daughter he's never known about, who needs to learn a reliable profession, i.e. bartending. Francine's arrival--"We thought she looked like a beatnik because we didn't yet know what a hippie was"--brings with it the generational equator between Tom's Depression era and her incipient flowering of the Sixties, with Rusty and Zoe marveling at what grownups get themselves into. The tale unfolds in Rusty's richly reminiscent voice, leading to the climax where a catastrophe delivers them all trials of conscience. In sum, this is a warmhearted yet consequential family saga in the spirited storytelling tradition of, perhaps, William Faulkner's *The Reivers* and Isak Dinesen's *Winter's Tales*.

"The classic is the local fully realized, words marked by a place."

--William Carlos Williams, cited by David Wyatt, The Fall Into Eden; source given as " " " , "Kenneth Burke," in Imaginations, ed. Webster Schott, (NY: New Directions, 1970), p. 356.

Doing what writers have always done--paying homage to the home territory.
(Joyce wrote "Ulysses" about Dublin, not the Paris where he lived.)

It's less important where a writer lives than where his imagination lives.

"The art that speaks most clearly, explicitly, directly, and passionately from its place of origin, will remain the longest understood." --Eudora Welty
(passed along by Derek Sheffield)

Joseph Conrad's never came ashore from the sea, Willa Cather's returned to Nebraska long after she became a high-powered New York magazine editor...

Saul Bellow (quoted by James Wood, "Sins of the Father," New Yorker July 22 '13):

"When you open a novel--and I mean of course the real thing--you enter into a state of intimacy with its writer...You hear a voice, or more significantly, an individual tone under the words. This tone you, the reader, will identify not so much by a name, the name of the author, as by a distinct and unique human quality. It seems to issue from the bosom, from a place beneath the breastbone. It is more musical than verbal, and it is the characteristic signature of a person, of a soul."

this book has had a much longer gestation
than a pregnancy

With each book, I try to sum up to myself, in one word, what it's about, what the ultimate "feel" of the story is. With The Whistling Season, I think it was compassion. Work Song is, by and large, about redemption. The Bartender's Tale is about conscience--what people do or don't do according to their sense of right and wrong. But I hope that's simply tucked into the story, not blaring out loud--as novelist, you don't want the preaching to get in the way of the choir; people want to hear the singing.

What gave me the idea for the book? ...Orange Crush pop and the jukebox...many long years ago. Subconsciously I must have perched there on a bar stool next to my dad's and wondered what it's like on the other side of the bar.

This is the novel closest to my own experience, but with full-throttle imagination taking over the characters. They are all made up, out of bits and pieces from the workshop of my mind.

(root: Latin & Greek for math & drama)

recommend: Out Stealing Horses, Per Petterson, Norwegian author: magical prose, and a a work of fiction that uses coincidence in a convincing natural way.
--nonfiction, a remarkable joint biography, a collective place-centered biography of several individuals that historians call a prosopography: Bella Bathhurst, Lths Stvnsns.

**How much do I base my characters on real people?**

I started my writing life as a journalist, and I am devoutly careful to keep real people and my fictional characters separate. True, on a couple of occasions I have used incidents from history as a springboard for fiction--the actuality of four men escaping from servitude in Russian Alaska in 1853 that I re-imagined into *The Sea Runners*, and my townsman Taylor Gordon's rise to prominence during the Harlem Renaissance that I fashioned Monty Rathbun's singing career on in *Prairie Nocturne*, most notably. But even there, the fictional counterparts are sheerly residents of my imagination, as distinctly different from the historical templates as I can make them. My profession, as a novelist, is to create, not copy. In an article I wrote for the *Washington Post* about creating characters, I counted up some 360 characters I had invented in my fiction by then, and the headcount in *The Whistling Season* must be another fifty or more. I make up these people from filecards, historical photographs, books of lingo, and imagination. So, no, I don't let actual and fictional blur together.

Everything counts. (cont.)

Characters: I build mine from dossiers--file cards, note, old photos, strangers seen across a room. The father in this book, Oliver Milliron, came into creation from two main ingredients: a startlingly long-faced leathery rancher whom I saw in a bar in a small town in Montana--he immediately entered my pocket notebook and eventually turned into Oliver, facially--a "weather-tanned face, with its work wrinkles running down his cheeks, like a copper coin a bit melted." And with a phrase that simply popped into my head, I knew what he sounded like when he thought something was funny: "Father had a short, sniffing way of laughing, as if anything funny had to prove it to his nose first."

title from "A Midsummer Night's Dream": the scene in which Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons, harking back to hunting bear the company of the strongest man in the world and a certain slayer of dragons:

"I was with Hercules and Cadmus once, when in a wood ~~of Crete~~ they bay'd the bear, with hounds of Sparta...I never heard so musical a discord, such sweet thunder."

**29) What writer or writers have had the greatest influence on you?**

**It all starts back there at Shakespeare, that old inventor of words and exemplar that history has the best yarns.**

But I should add that storytelling of the Twain and Dickens sort is still a prized form of literary enchantment, and I am proud to delve into their bag of tricks as deep as my authorial arm will reach. It's bottomless.

story/storytelling

Isak Dinesen: "all sorrows can be borne if you put them into a story or tell a story about them."

Seamas Heaney: "The poet is on the side of undeceiving the world....Poetry tries to help you to be a truer, purer, wholer being."

" ": "The way we are living, timorous or bold, will have been our life."

" ": "...I've no spade to follow men (father a farmer & bog cutter) in Ireland
like them.
Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests.
I'll dig with it."

side characters (not minor characters)

[redacted]

I don't think of myself as writing "about Montana." I'm trying to write about the human condition: love and work, and life and death, how dreams are born, dreams are torn apart, dreams change... In my characters and my language and my stories, while they may be grounded in Montana, they're about that larger country, life.

The writer's job: to make words speak forever on silent paper

computer scientist Jaron Lanier (NYT May 6 '13) warns against being seduced by "dazzlingly designed forms of cognitive waste."

The contents of my head: Unfortunately, it's not a table of contents, it's more like an attic, holding all kinds of leftover stuff.

I go to the skunkworks every day and invent.

June '89

MHS: exhibit

By 1899 MT was producing over 1/2 nation's copper & a 1/4 world's.
-39 shafts on Butte Hill Ultimately there were 2,000 miles of tunnels

- during late 1890s, an average of 44 miners/yr died a job
& 1/2 the others injured.
Thousands more contracted "Miner's Con" & other lung diseases.

One of the darker descriptions of Butte mining was that it was a "violation (of the earth?) paid in fire and flood, instant death and lingering disease."

a mountain of copper to be fought over, and rough factions ready to do the fighting.

Butte was no beauty.

Butte was sometimes called the best poor man's town in the world. ("Don't even stop in America, just go to Butte.")

Work Song is about redemption

Marcus Daly--foreman at a highly productive silver mine at Alta, who in the late 1870s went to look over the mining properties at Butte, Montana. Daly was said "to see farther into the earth than any other man," and he saw something in a so-so silver mine called the Anaconda. He bought it, worked the silver out of it for a while, and one day in 1881 his crew sent word that they had hit "new material" at the 300-foot level, which in Butte was barely scratching the skin of the earth. Daly went to have a look, the crew blasted into the "new material", and Daly picked up a chunk of the peacock of metal ore--copper ore shows itself in blues and greens and other pretty colors--and he turned to his foreman and said, "Mike, we've got it!"

What he had was the greatest copper deposit the world had ever seen. The Anaconda mine became a leading producer in the copper boom as the world wired itself for electricity in the next decades, and by the turn of the 20th century, the Butte hill was producing more than half of America's supply of copper.

Standard Oil trust--William Rockefeller & Henry Rogers

**Morrie says, "If America was a melting pot, Butte seemed to be its boiling point." What does he mean by that?**

Writers endlessly have called Butte in its smoky industrial heyday "the Pittsburgh of the West," but Morrie and I prefer to dub it "the Constantinople of the Rockies" because it was such a colossal mix of peoples. Hard-rock miners from several nations came seeking some of the best wages in the world on that "richest hill"--the saying was, "Don't even stop in America, just come to Butte"--and in blood-bound habit they formed their own neighborhoods--Dublin Gulch for the Irish, Meaderville for the Italians, not be confused with Centerville for the Cornish, Finntown self-explanatory, and so on. This simmer of nationalities inevitably added to the heated labor atmosphere of the time. There were rival miners' unions just before and during World War One, which sometimes turned into a kind of war in the streets--the Miners Union Hall was dynamited in 1914--and there was always the struggle against The Company, Anaconda, and its power over the powers-that-be. Six times in that period, the city was (1914-20) occupied by the National Guard or Army units. (Any WWII buffs might be interested in a sidelight event of those years--in 1918 troops under Major Omar Bradley raided the IWW in a converted church [St. Paul's, on S. Idaho]. Only in Butte, hmm?)

**Why did you set the novel in Butte, and in 1919? What is it about that city and that era that fascinated you?**

In its copper heyday, Butte and its "richest hill on earth" were unique; more than a mining town, it was the largest city of the northern Rockies, straining to be cosmopolitan, with mile-deep mineshafts directly beneath its busy streets. The place saw itself as self-made, tough, and proud--never short on attitude; as Morrie notices, when people say they're from Butte, their chin comes up an inch on the word.

Why 1919? It was a time full of trouble, always a lure for a novelist. The period just after World War One was terrifically contentious in America, with labor strife, fear of domestic Bolshevism, and government and Wall Street suppression of dissent. Butte with its mineral wealth and rock-hard miners, many of them foreign born, was a crucible of all that. It's a setting where characters hear the big questions of life in their sleep, in the round-the-clock workings of the mines on the famous and infamous hill.

hi(story) – from · Latin, historia (story or tale)

provides ingredients in city recipe, not · whole feast

twitch @ "hist'l novelist": readers never say, Boy, that was great history! Characters & language – contents ∫ · imagntn, not · history ehs Hilary Mantel?

Anaconda agnst Wall St co: Mr, Norman Maclean, AB Guthrie

Loren Eiseley: · Immense journey

mgt & admiration: Alan Furst, diff/nt settings ∫ WWII

You don't want to let the preaching get in the way of the choir.

**How did you research this book?**

To me, research is like that dark mysterious hill that stands over Butte and its great era--I know valuable stuff is there, but it takes a lot of digging.

On the large scale, I take great care that my characters and their circumstances are subject to the laws of historical gravity--in this novel, the bootleg bottle in a coat pocket at an Irish wake is a Butte fact of life a year before national Prohibition because Montana had voted itself dry, for instance.

The finer details, what I call the slow poetry of fact, simply have to be gathered one by one, like nuggets. This meant spending time in Butte, traipsing around to the old mine sites--in near-freezing weather, in June!--to find what my characters would have experienced nearly a century ago, such as the phone booth-size elevator that plunges Morrie to the blandly named "thirty hundred level"--i.e., three thousand feet beneath the surface of the earth. The crystalizing details I seek are often in some obscure record of the past--where Google doesn't go, or at least hadn't gone yet when I was doing my research. One of my best finds began with a single photo at the bottom of a pile in a historical archive. I had gone through many, many photos showing miners at work and people of the time in their downtown clothes, but this one picture with nobody in it caught my imagination. It featured the Butte Public Library of the time, a wonderful architectural show-off--a gray granite extravaganza with arched doorways and a balcony and a peaked tower like a castle. Just the kind of place, I knew at once, where Morrie would go to consult the city directory for some job worthy of his unique talents and fall in love with "the finest book collection west of Chicago."

In the early 1950's a Delaware holding company all too innocently called the Fairmont Investment Company applied to the Federal Communications Commission for permission to buy radio station KFBB in Great Falls, coincidentally enough the one Montana city where the Anaconda Copper Company did not own or control the local daily newspaper. In those days the FCC took seriously its mandate to see that broadcasting properties were operated in the public interest, so it required Fairmont to disclose any other media holdings, and corporate structure, and guess what, it was openly revealed that Anaconda had a virtual monopoly on the daily press of Montana and the puppet company (Fairmont) company was run by Anaconda lawyers and such.

The FCC turned down the bid to buy the radio station, and by the end of the 1950's the Anaconda Company did at last get out of the newspaper business--the copper collar was loosened a bit.

I suppose a writer should not admit that a character is smarter than he is, but that's pretty much the case with Morrie and me. He'll think of some obscure fact or something he wants to say in Latin, and I have to scramble off to find it. In Work Song, it was "light is the desire of the universe." I had to go to the University of Washington classics dept. for help in rendering that as "Lux desiderium universitatis."

book recommendations:

Out Stealing Horses, by Per Petterson, a Norwegian author; magical prose, and a work of fiction that uses coincidence in a convincing natural way.

--in nonfiction, a remarkable joint biography, a collective place-centered biography of several individuals that historians call a poropography:
The Lighthouse Stevensons, by Bella Bathhurst. (& Laskin, The Family...)

Ivan Doig

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Ivan Doig was born in Montana in 1939 and grew up along the Rocky Mountain Front, the dramatic landscape that has inspired much of his writing. His first book, This House of Sky, was a finalist for the National Book Award in contemporary thought. "The language begins in western territory and experience but in the hands of an artist it touches all landscape and all life," Robert Kirsch wrote in the *Los Angeles Times*. "Doig is such an artist." Richard Critchfield added in the *Washington Post*: "Nor is Doig's gift merely literary. Besides his intuitions and artistry there is the iron purpose of an ex-ranchhand who has earned his Ph.D. in history." His career has been honored with the lifetime "Distinguished Achievement" award by the Western Literature Association, and in the century's-end *San Francisco Chronicle* polls to name the best Western novels and works of non-fiction, he is the only living writer with books in the top dozen of both lists: English Creek in fiction and This House of Sky in non-fiction. He and his wife Carol divide their time between his home in Seattle and the places his writing takes him.

Books and awards:

This House of Sky, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978; Harcourt paperback; finalist for the National Book Award; winner of The Christopher Award; chosen "best book about Montana" in *Montana, The Magazine of Western History* readers' poll; more than 200,000 copies have been sold in the U.S.

Winter Brothers, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980; Harcourt paperback; Governor's Writers Award; Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award for Literary Excellence; adapted for television by KCTS, Seattle.

The Sea Runners, Atheneum, 1982; Harcourt paperback; chosen for "ten best books of 1982" by Chicago Sun-Times and for "notable books of 1982" by the New York Times Book Review.

English Creek, Atheneum, 1984; Scribner paperback; winner of the Western Heritage Award as best novel of 1984; read by The Radio Reader on National Public Radio.

Dancing at the Rascal Fair, Atheneum, 1987; Scribner paperback; Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award for Literary Excellence; his most popular book, now in its fourth edition.

Ride with Me, Mariah Montana, Atheneum, 1990; Scribner paperback; Library Journal "highly recommended" choice.

Heart Earth, Atheneum, 1993; Harcourt paperback; winner of the $10,000 Evans Biography Award.

Bucking the Sun, Simon and Schuster, 1996; Scribner paperback; winner of the Governor's Writers Award.

Mountain Time, Scribner, 1999; Scribner paperback; NewStar audio set.

Prairie Nocturne, Scribner, 2003; Scribner paperback; book club favorite.