23 May 1991

Fred Bourtwright
Permissions Dept.
Macmillan
866 Third Ave.
New York NY 10022

Dear Fred--

This is a follow-up on our phone conversation the other day, to put into writing my waiving of my share of fees for permissions granted to Dr. Elizabeth Simpson to quote from any of my Atheneum books, in her forthcoming book Earthlight, Wordfire: The Work of Ivan Doig (U. of Idaho Press, 1992, $21.95). As I said on the phone, I hope the most minimal permission fees can be accorded to Dr. Simpson on this scholarly work, as part of the point of her book is a textual analysis of passages from my novels; my understanding is that her book's press run will be only 1,000 copies, and far from detracting from sales of my Atheneum titles, her book is intended to increase scholarly interest in those titles.

Enjoyed talking to you. Dr. Simpson is teaching in Germany at the moment, but I believe you'll be receiving her permissions request within the month. Please feel free to call on me if I can be of any help in the process.

regards

cc: Lee Goerner

Lee--Just FYI. All modesty aside, the Simpson book is pretty damn good, canny (probably cannier than I am) about the folkloric texture of the Two Medicine trilogy; she takes on Stegner's old pronouncement about the West's paralyzing lack of culture and says hey, there is a culture, a fabric, it just ain't the European stuff that's been called culture. Also, herewith a belated but drumthumping Marish review from the St.Louis P-D, date unknown but recent.

best,

23 May 1991

Judi Kincaid
Permissions Dept.
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich
6277 Sea Harbor Drive, 8th flr
Orlando FL 32821

Dear Mrs. Kincaid--

This is simply to expedite a permissions request you'll be receiving from Dr. Elizabeth Simpson, to quote from my HBJ books This House of Sky and Winter Brothers in her forthcoming monograph, Earthlight, Wordfire: The Work of Ivan Doig (U. of Idaho Press, 1992, $21.95, press run 1,000 copies). I'll waive my half of ~~any~~ fee, please, and I hope HBJ can accord Dr. Simpson the most minimal possible permission rate on this scholarly work, as part of the point of her book is a textual analysis of some passages from my books. I don't think her book can detract in any way from sales of my two HBJ titles; on the contrary, her book is intended to increase scholarly interest in those titles and should eventually pay off for us in increased use of my books in regional literature and history courses, where they already have a pretty good sales figure.

Dr. Simpson is teaching in Germany at the moment, but I believe you'll be receiving her permissions request any time now. Please feel free to call on me if I can be of any help in the process.

best wishes,

21 May '91

Dear Elizabeth--

We still haven't had much spring here, so you might as well be cavorting in Vienna and Salzburg, right? I will say you and Henning cavort pretty rapidly, 8 hours here, 18 there...hummingbirds over the Continent, you two.

Permissions, hoo hoo hoo. And you thought getting a mere ph.D. was complicated. See why we fainthearts write fiction?--we can just make the goddamn quotes up. But, if you STILL really want to go through with this book, I guess the first thing to do is don't panic. The $500 advance on royalties is normally non-refundable--that is, if Earthlight should by some stretch of the imagination not become a wild bestseller and not earn beyond the advance, you don't gotta pay the Idahonians the money back. In effect, Heaney is pynying up money (albeit yours, but welcome to the world of publishing) for you to buy permissions with. How those will go on a case-by-case basis I wouldn't even venture to predict, but in terms of my books I'll (a) waive my half of the permission fees I normally get as the split with the publisher and (b) urge the publishers' permissions dept. to let you off as cheaply as possible, free if they can (though I don't know if that's in the cards). I do have some sway with my current publisher, Macmillan, and just phoned the guy you should write to there; I'll also write him a reminding note about forfeiting any fee to me and go-easy-on you. He is: Fred Courtwright, Permissions Dept., Macmillan, 866 Third Ave., NY NY 10022, and his phone if you have to follow up later is (202)702-2121. Since the pagination is the same in the paperback of Sea Runners as in the hardback, I suggest you include Sea Runners in this request along with Rascal Fair and Mariah; the only paperback in which the pagination is not exactly the same as in the hardback edition is English Creek, and I leave it to you whether it's easier to seek Penguin permission or change the page numbers in your ms references to accord with the Macmillan hardback. (See how much fun this is getting to be already?) As for Sky and WBros, you're right and Heaney is in left field--it's Harcourt Brace Jovanovich you have to deal with, not HarperCollins (nee Harper & Row). I'll write my fee-waiving act etc. to HBJ too but I don't have any real pull there, now that they're not my hardback publisher; I'd say just sound as scholarly and financially enfeebled as you can and see what happens. The address there is Permissions Dept., Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Orlando FL 32887 (that's right, no street address; it was explained to me that HBJ is the whole goddamn zipcode), phone there (407) 345-2000. Whoops, ignore preceding sentence; just thought to look up a copy of somebody's request to reprint a chapter of Sky and found a different address and an actual person: Mrs. Judi Kincaid, Permissions Dept., Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 6277 Sea Harbor Drive, Eighth Floor, Orlando FL 32821, phone (407)345-3983 or fax(!)407-352-8860. I guess you know you have to cite pp. numbers and approximate number of words for each quote used; the Macmillan permissions guy says they consider anything less than 300 words "fair use"--i.e., feeless--but I'm not sure if that's an industry-wide standard; you'd need to ask Heaney, I reckon. And if the Idahoers need world rights on this stuff, I do hold those rights on all my own books and would grant them to you gratis.

Ready to switch your scholarly interest to somebody neatly dead like Chaucer?

Well, what else. The UW chose a woman as its new athletic director, believe it or don't; sheesh, our brave footballyers will be the Purple and Pink, next thing we know. My hope is that Don James will be struck catatonic at thethought of being bossed by An Opposite Sex, football will be outlawed and the stadium turned into a roller rink. And, though we couldn't pry out of anybody what it was about, the English Dept. had a

retreat at, umm, well, Southcenter (didn't I tell you fiction is easier than actuality?) and whatever the hell went on, the couple of faculty members we were around afterward didn't much act like people who'd solved anything.

Oh, yeah, I know what I was going to ask you fluent Germanics, something so scholarly that

I'm going to put it down here on this interior fold so the international Moralpolizei don't get us all. Am using in the next book a term my mother picked up from my grandmother; to quote myself delicately, "the part of the body between the legs was called the coffee grounds by the Ringer women." All I've been able to find on this is a Dictionary of American Regional English reference:"coffee grains--the buttocks", given as a Pennsylvania regionalism, which made me wonder if it's Pennsylvania Dutch, which made me wonder if it's some kind of German pun (or pun on German; and yes, the DARE reference is to grains instead of grounds). I realize Johann is probably my best source on this, but if anybody in your household of folkloristas has any insights, I'd be glad to hear them.

Not much else going on here. Carol's grading papers, I'm typing. Look forward to seeing you when you get back. We'll be in Montana appxtly July 2-15, but otherwise reachable. Good luck permissioning. Regards to Herming, plus our sympathy for having to live with someone who spends all her time writing permission requests.

best,

Dear Ivan,

Herein, a copy of most of the Mariah additions to the manuscript. Not all -- I have inserted paragraphs and made amendments throughout to accomodate observations about the novel, but this stuff will tell you what I'm doing, and, more importantly, what I may have forgotten to do. When we get together I'd like to know what I have missed. If you remember, the totem pole structure of Winter Brothers eluded me entirely until you told me about it, and, especially since I have had less time to "mule" over Mariah than the other books, I have probably left out important connections within the novel or between this novel and the others, or, perhaps thrown the weight of my discussion too heavily on the theme of history.

The Introduction, Henning tells me, is not an introduction, but a preface. However, I am still going to call it an introduction, ask you to write a preface, and leave the intellectual histories for another time. I wrote this to tell readers what I'm up to, why the chapters are in the order they're in, what they'll find in the book, what they won't. If you have comments or suggestions, I'd appreciate them.

A title. God, a title. Henning and I have discussed several possibilities, and the one I like best so far is Earthlight, Wordfire: The Work of Ivan Doig. The others we came up with are good, and the editor would probably prefer them because they are much more folkloric: "I'm Here to Tell Ye": The West of Ivan Doig; Stories Our Lives Tell Us: The West of Ivan Doig; Realizing the Country: The West of Ivan Doig. For exactly the same reason the editor would like the above three, I don't. The first is nice because it's a quotation from your father, the second is from Mariah, the third is from Stegner. The problem with all three is that they sound too folkloric; from the titles alone, I would assume the book to be a collection of personal narratives. I like Earthlight because it's evocative, because it's from Mariah, and because it says something about your style. What do you think?

Now to the really important issue: a jacket. Henning reminds me that I have a choice about such things, and together, the two of us have gotten quite ambitious. And I need your help, and Carol's, because I'd like photographs, not only for the outside, but for the inside. I remember from pictures in the room off your living room, a photograph that Carol took of the cabin where you were born. I'd like that, or something comparable, for the cover. I also remember a wonderful shot of you (taken by a Mariah-like journalist) in which you are wearing a rare, wry, smile. That one seems to me to be the Essence of Ivan, and I'd like that one for a frontispiece. I would also like to ask you and Carol to select photographs for the book, four or five black and whites that you think appropriate. They do not have to be the biographical here-I-am-growing-up shots, by any means. Pictures of you, your parents and grandmother, you and Carol, Montana, the Northwest; you know what you have. The editor has not said anything about cover or photographs, but (as I have finally begun to discover) this is my book and I'll do what I want. (I know, I know -- that attitude will last til the galley proofs come back.)

I will be up on Lopez from March 17 til March 24, then come to Seattle for a couple of days. Could we possibly get together some time on the 25th or 26th? I'd like to send the finished manuscript to the publisher before I leave on April 7. If those dates don't fit your schedule, we can work out something else. My phone number there: 468-3335.

I may see you when I deliver this -- if not, ~~the~~ the very best to you both from the folklore guy and me.

Elizabeth

Nov. 4

Dear Evan and Carol,

I had to laugh at Evan's discussion of the weather. Everyone ~~else~~ else in the Northwest has been writing to us about how perfect the weather was this summer, and you call it "mungy". True Montanans (Carol may have been born in New Jersey but she's obviously Montanan), you are not happy unless there's a hurricane. My friend Cindy Henderson, who has been masquerading as a Northwesterner all these years, is obviously also Montanan. She and her husband are moving to Billings (or near Billings), and they just located a house there. Cindy writes, "How can I tell you about the beauty of Montana? The sun shines 300 days a year. Some of those days may be more than 30° below zero in the winter, but the sun shines!" Here we had a perfect fall, cool, crisp sunny days, the trees simply shouting with color. Now the rains have set in, and it's cold. I can handle the rain -- even bicycling to the store swathed in what feels like several layers of garbage bags -- but the cold makes me want to crawl under our down comforter and not come out til the sun does.

No chance of that, however. I'm taking an intensive German course three hours a day, five days a week, and it moves so fast there's no time to memorize vocabulary or internalize grammar, just to learn enough each day to make ~~last~~ lots more mistakes than the day before.

I'm also teaching -- the Powers O.K.'d my class (and salary, which is nice) the day before my first lecture, so the only advertisement for the class was a note on the bulletin board. Nonetheless, I had seven students the first night and twelve as of last count. They are all intelligent, articulate grad students, and respond to the material quite well. Carol, I'm enclosing a syllabus, since this is right up your alley. Actually, this is a modified version -- when I taught the course at St. Martins one summer, we read all of the above plus all of Giants in the Earth, Honey in the Horn and Horseman, Pass By. But English dept. folk told me students here do not devour books, and not to push

them too hard. Since we only meet once a week for 90 minutes, this material keeps us plenty busy. The idea is to trace how the concept of frontier has changed from the Puritans to the present, how those concepts have shaped various myths (the Mosaic for the Puritans, Adamic for the Romantics, etc) and how living out those myths has shaped American culture. Great fun. Students here do not buy their books -- I pull books from the Institute shelves, put them on a reserve shelf, and students either read them in the library or Xerox what they need. The Institute library is excellent, but students don't really use it. They have to have a pass to get in, and run the gamut past a dragon-lady guard to get in or out. Fortunately I have a key to a different set of doors, and, therefore, access on weekends, when the library is locked, but even during open hours I am in the company of only a few hardy souls who camp out there all day with thermoses of coffee, bottles of mineral water, and sandwiches. The rest leave the place strictly alone. Their collection is very good, but I often have the feeling that mine is the only human hand to touch some of these volumes since they were put on the shelves.

Henning's work is going in several different directions, but all of them productive. He and I manage to attend at least one concert per week -- the music here, both professional and amateur, is fantastic -- and he and Käthe have season tickets to the theatre. Käthe is maturing by leaps, and it's wonderful to hear her enthuse about Ibsen and see her check out Beethoven tapes from the city library. She has her own room at Christophenshaus, near her job, but joins us for supper every evening, a perfect balance of independence and dependence for a seventeen-year-old. Johann has settled in nicely, likes the drug-free, crime-free, pressure-free atmosphere of his school where no one will kill you for your

shoes or cut you dead for wearing the wrong brand.

Göttingen itself is a beautiful city, but its people are conservative and a bit dour. They prefer Brahams to Bartok, and restrain themselves from any enthusiastic displays, though they are very quick to correct you in low, nasty tones if you dare to ride a bike on the wrong side of the street, and tend to speak with patronizing impatience if you have a question. I think we have real regionality here -- the farther north you go, the nicer and warmer the folk -- the farther south, the colder and ruder they become. So much for stereotypes about cold Prussians and Jolly Bavarians.

Fortunately we are Martians, and can behave as we like, but sometimes the atmosphere here gets depressing. Especially for Reunification. We had prepared ourselves for fireworks, champagne and dancing in the streets? What happened? A march, arranged by the Socialist party, <u>against</u> Reunification, on Oct. 2. October 3, Henning and I went downtown to listen to the speeches and join in whatever subdued celebration there might be; we found <u>no</u> crowds, <u>no</u> speeches, only a little booth where workers for Kohl's party were handing out campaign pamphlets and <u>selling</u> little glasses of champagne. Jesus.

Ivan, your news about Carl Bredahl's note is <u>most</u> welcome, especially since he didn't like it much the first time he read it. No word from the publisher yet, which makes each day's mail interesting -- to look forward to, anyway.

I <u>know</u> <u>Mariah</u> would be a hit! Can't wait to read the finished version; I may be the last one in America to do so, the way it's selling. Hope your bookstore appearances stay interesting -- but not <u>too</u> interesting! Great "book" tales.

When you're through with your 20-cities-in-10-days stuff, I presume you'll get down to the

next task, the book inspired by your mothers' letters. Can't wait to hear & how that takes shape.

I'm flying back to Seattle on March 16, and will stay through the first week of April to do job interviews. Of course I don't have any yet, I'll have to send cover letters and resumes from here. Rather than wait til job listings come out, I'm going to fish a bit on the chance there's a whopper out there. (Honey, Isaak Walton) Carol, would you send me the name and address of the person I should contact at Shoreline? Just in case somebody retires or heads for Florida (non-Montanans, obviously).

My folklore guy sends his best to you both. I'll write again when I can -- you too, o.k.?

Love,
Elizabeth

Frontier in American Life, Landeskundeübung
Dr. Elizabeth Simpson
Montags, 18:15-19:45h.
Medienraum, E.S.

Week 1 -- The Concept of Frontier in American Culture.

Week 2 -- The Puritan Frontier: Trials in the New Eden. Discussion of excerpts from William Bradford's "Of Plymouth Plantation" in McMichael, American Literature, Vol. I, pgs. 30-52, and Mary Rowlandson's "A Narrative of Captivity..." in ~~McMichael, 183-9~~ Reinas, p 286-310

Week 3 -- Gentleman and Savage: The Role of the Frontier in Shaping American Character. Discussion of Crevecouer's "What is an American?" in McMichael, pgs. 381-89, and Chapter IX of James Fenimore Cooper's The Deerslayer.

Week 4 -- The Transcentental Frontier. Discussion of Thoreau's "Walking," in Thoreau, The Natural History Essays, pgs. 93-136.

Week 5 -- Rude, Crude and Socially Unacceptable: The Frontier Through European Eyes. Discussion of excerpt from Frances Trollope's Domestic Manners of the Americans. (Xerox copy available).

Week 6 -- Frontier as Epic Adventure. Discussion of excerpts from The Journals of Lewis and Clark, in Devoto, Chapter XI, pgs. 147-169. ("Portaging Around the Great Falls").

Week 7 -- The Immortal Boy: Discussion of Daniel Hoffman's "The American Hero: His Masquerade" in Hoffman, Form and Fable in American Fiction, Chapter 3, pgs. 33-82.

Week 8 -- Freedom and Death: The Frontier in Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn. Discussion of Chapters 1-16.

Week 9 -- Huckleberry Finn, Chapters 17-26.

Week 10 - Huckleberry Finn, Chapters 27-33.

Week 11 - The Immigrants. Discussion of Chapter II ("Home-Founding") in Rolvaag's Giants in the Earth.

Week 12 - The Frontier and Democracy. Discussion of Frederick Jackson Turner's "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" in Trachtenburg and DeMott, America in Literature, Vol. II, 697-719

Week 13 - Romance and Reality: The Language of the Frontier. Discussion of Chapters 10 and 11 of Mark Twain's Roughing It, and of Jay Gurion's "Literary Conventions and the Mining Romance." (Xerox copy of Gurion available).

Week 14 - Today's West. Discussion of Ivan Doig's "Valley" (xerox copy)

Week 15 - The Closed Frontier and American Tragedy. Discussion of Simonson's essay. (Xeroxed copy available)

Aug. 22

Dear Ivan and Carol,

Greetings from Göttingen! We are finally settled in to our apartment after a month of bicycle treks and visits with various family members; we are weather-proofed (this is a continental climate, and the ferocity of both sun and rain make me yearn for Seattle) and beginning to overcome the shock of immigration, though I still sometimes feel as if I'm on Ellis Island or some other hellish limbo-land. Göttingen itself is a feast. It's a city that moves from the Medieval to the modern in the space of a building. Every building boasts plaques listing people who slept there, including Otto von Bismark and Benjamin Franklin: walking through the city is like moving through a museum. Last year when my father-in-law brought us here for a day, the three of us sat in a sidewalk café, and Henning's father, who is now a spry 85 years old, talked long and learnedly about particular buildings we could see from there. I knew no German at the time, so ~~I~~ I asked Henning to tell me what he had learned. Henning said, "Well, at that window lived Elsa, and at that window lived Sabina, and..." Apparently Grandpa was pretty spry at 25, too.

The city seems very crowded to us, but we are told that when the students arrive the population will double. The fact that it <u>is</u> a university city means that there is a lot of music and theatre, not to speak of bars, pubs and dance-halls. Henning took Käthe and me out dancing last week -- it was "Salsa-Merengue Night" at the Blues Note Club -- and it was marvelous: students from all over the world solemnly dancing to hot Latin music.

Göttingen is also a very expensive city, and do we ever miss our own happy beef, vegetables, fruit, pickles, jam, cider, bread, etc. We have to go grocery shopping every other day because we are on bikes and also because our refigerator holds very little, and each trip is a shock to the wallet. We're finally healthy again, however, because we're able to do our own cooking and get away from the whole milk, butter, cheese, sausage, etc. that Germans eat for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

It isn't really breakfast, lunch and dinner, by the way, but breakfast, dinner, supper. We have adapted the European practice of eating our main meal

at 1 pm and having a light supper about 7. Stores are closed from 1-3, Saturday afternoons and all day Sunday. Once we got used to that (and learned to stock up on milk) we came to like it very much. There is a rhythm to each day, edges between day and evening, between working and not working, and a clear pattern to the week.

There is also no urban sprawl. We can be in farmland ten minutes outside the city. Although Göttingen is relatively small (130,000 people), this is true of all German cities, so bicycling is a pleasure. Even in the city there are bicycle paths and motorists are very considerate of us as we dash across intersections. They had better be. Smothered in rain boots, rain pants, rain capes, encumbered with groceries and books and bottles of wine, we are blind targets.

Henning has been welcomed at both the Folklore and Scandinavian Institutes, offered computers, offices, and opportunities to teach, lecture and do research. My own position is more ambiguous, but I'm nudging my way in. The libraries here are ancient, enormous, with confusing and antiquated cataloguing systems. I'm sure you ran into some of the same in Scotland -- it is not surprising that people take <u>years</u> to finish a degree or a book here.

My article was roundly rejected by WLA. Apparently they think it's well written but doesn't say enough about folklore in your books. Since that was not my purpose, I'm not sure what to do next. Have not yet heard from Idaho about the manuscript.

I'll leave Henning some room, and bring my own greetings to a close. Our address is

Zimmermannstr. 46c
D-3400 Göttingen
Western Germany

Hope all goes well for both of you.

Best wishes,
Elizabeth

After this report which would do Baedeker honor, there is not much left for me except to send you an affectionate hello. Hope you are well and that we will stay in touch.

All my best,

Henning.

June 20, 1990

Dear Ivan,

You will recognize the enclosed as a revision (and, I hope, an improvement) of the paper I gave at last year's WLA. There are enough changes that I wanted you to see it before (or rather if) it is accepted for publication.

There is plenty of time for any response -- I won't be in Göttingen til August, and, even if the article is accepted, I suspect that WLA is pretty backed up, since they publish only quarterly. My address in Göttingen will be

Dr. Elizabeth Simpson
Englishe Philologie
Humboldtallee 13
D-3400 Göttingen
Western Germany

This is our last day on the island, and we are very reluctant to leave, now that the weather is finally behaving. But there is much yet to do (including packing!) so I'll say goodbye for now. Love to you and Carol -- please keep in touch.

Elizabeth

# "Bring Forth the King's Remembrancer!":
# Folklore as History in the Work of Ivan Doig

Elizabeth Simpson, PhD.

> In the old days, in blizzardy weather, we used to tie a string of lariats from house to barn so as to make it from shelter to responsibility and back again. With personal, family, and cultural chores to do, I think we had better rig up such a line between past and present.
>
> Wallace Stegner

As a child growing up in one of the subregions of the West, Oregon's Hood River Valley, I was aware of profound discontinuities in the history of my home place, shifts in economics and demographics that separated the present from the past.

My friend and neighbor, Paul Keir, told me tales of his own boyhood in the valley, recounted memories of Indians exercising their ponies on the sandbars of the Columbia River. On the wall of his study hung a photograph of Indians dip-netting salmon at Celilo Falls. On horseback rides, he would take me to Indian encampments where a little digging would unearth hand-carved wooden stirrups and cooking spoons.

My mother, who had come to live in the valley in the 1940's, told me about signs appearing in local store windows during the Second World War, "No dogs or Japs allowed," and about how the minister of the Episcopal church lost three-quarters of his congregation by railing against the wartime internment of the Japanese and the confiscation of their orchards and homes.

By the time I heard these stories, the Indians of the valley were represented only by Indian Charlie, who rode in local parades. Celilo Falls had long disappeared behind the John Day Dam, and the tidy orchards planted and nurtured by the Japanese had become anonymous sections of the large holdings of wealthy whites. Now when I go back for a visit, I see the homes of childhood friends converted to bed-and-breakfasts, and old cafes reborn as "ethnic" restaurants that serve the wind surfers who have discovered the Columbia River.

The discontinuities in the history of my home place are not unique, nor do I recount them here from nostalgia. Rather, they illustrate a problem for western writers and historians, a problem deftly articulated by Wallace Stegner in "History, Myth and the Western Writer," published in 1967, and deftly answered, twenty years later, in the work of Ivan Doig.

In his essay, Stegner argues that historical discontinuity is the central fact of western experience. He notes that the nineteenth century settlement of the West often amounted to little more than a raid on its resources: one place after another was stripped of its minerals, its timber, its water, its grass, and then abandoned. Furthermore, the get-rich-and-get-out mentality created a large migrant population which precluded the development of stable communities in the West. Stegner writes:

> Despite their colorful history, there has hardly been a <u>continuous</u> community life in an Aspen or a Telluride; and when oilfields are superimposed on orchards in California, something disruptive has happened in the life

> of both people and towns...Few western places can show, even during their short life, the uninterrupted life of a Maine fishing village or a county seat in Indiana or Iowa or a southern town clustered around a courthouse square (Stegner, p. 191-192).

Stegner argues that the absence of stable communities stultified the development of traditions that could serve as foundations of personal and regional identity as they had in New England, the Midwest and the South. In turn, the lack of historical continuity, tradition and regional identity fragmented western literature.

Stegner divides western writing into two categories, each of which manifests the writers' sense of historical discontinuity. The first category, the formula Western, focuses on a brief (and heavily mythicized) period of history and ignores the present altogether. The formula Western not only reinforces the absence of community-based continuity, but actually raises it to the status of a genre motif. The cowboy hero usually lives in relative isolation and makes his own rules: he may come to the aid of a beleaguered town or a helpless schoolmarm (often breaking social mores or laws in order to do so), but he rides off again into the sunset, happily unencumbered by social restrictions or family life. In the formula Western, community is regarded not as a source of strength, but as a refuge for the weak.

The second category Stegner calls "western literature with a small w," in which he includes the work of Walter Van Tilburg

Clark, Willa Cather, and A.B. Guthrie. He points out that these authors are western by birth and therefore write from a strong sense of place, rather than from the Western Myth. But they are frequently overwhelmed by what has happened in that place, the urbanization and industrialization that have defiled a fragile landscape. Their attitude toward the past, therefore, is nostalgic, even elegaic, and their attitude toward the present one of disgust. Their work, according to Stegner, does not provide westerners with a sense of regional identity, nor a feeling that their present lives are linked meaningfully with the past. He writes:

> One of the lacks, through all the newly swarming regions of the West, is that millions of westerners, old and new, have no sense of a personal and **possessed** past, no sense of any continuity between the real western past which has been mythicized almost out of recognizability and a real western present that seems as cut-off and pointless as a ride on a merry-go-round that can't be stopped (p. 199).

Stegner's essay has all the power of a paradigm, all the authority of his own experience as a writer, historian, literary scholar and resident of the West. However, in the twenty years since the publication of "History, Myth and the Western Writer," there has been an explosion of writing in and about the West, some of the most vital and innovative writing in America. Many of these writers have moved away from the two categories of western writing Stegner describes. Rather than focusing on history writ large, the political and ecomomic events that have disrupted life

in the West, they focus on history writ small, the folk traditions within which westerners can locate themselves.

Foremost among these writers is Ivan Doig, westerner by birth and by choice. Doig writes, as the generation before him did, from a strong sense of place, and one of his main thematic concerns is to "place" westerners in their world. But unlike Stegner, Doig defines "place" not only in terms of location, but also in terms of folklore. In his work, a person's "place" often refers to membership in folk groups whose traditions and stories create continuity between the present and the past, and provide a sense of personal and regional identity.

Interestingly, Stegner considered folklore as a possible source of continuity and rejected it:

> Folklore, more often than not an improvisation on an occupational theme -- logging, river-boating, railroading, cowboying -- is only an improvisation, and though it may be curiously lasting, it lasts as the Western lasts: it is cut loose like a balloon from the actual and continuing lives of men and women (p. 191).

Stegner's dismissal of folklore is not surprising, considering that at the time he wrote his essay the study of folklore usually consisted of the examination of remnants or curiosities, bits of Indian legend or Grandmother's quilts, interesting as artifacts but essentially irrelevant to the present. However, folklore today is not a study of artifact but of living process. Jan Brunvand writes:

> Folklore comprises the unrecorded traditions of a people. The study of folklore records and analyzes these traditions because they reveal the common life of the mind below the level of "high" or formal culture, which is recorded by civilizations as the learned heritage of their times (Brunvand, p. 1).

Brunvand's definition marks an important shift away from Stegner's paradigm in its emphasis on folklore as commonality rather than curiosity. The "common life of the mind" is manifested in oral, customary and material traditions that are shared among members of folk groups and informally passed from generation to generation. Doig's knowledge of folklore has enabled him to articulate, as Stegner did, the interdependence of tradition and community. Where he differs from Stegner is in his recognition that community is not necessarily dependent on location.

It is clear from Stegner's essay that he defines "community" in terms of place -- towns like Aspen or Telluride, whose integrity has been threatened by major events. Doig is also aware of uneven urban development in the West, as he documents in his memoir This House of Sky. He describes a Montana dotted with abandoned homesteads, each named for the first family that tried, and failed, to make a life there. Towns are divided between ramshackle buildings which meet the needs of the present and huge empty carcasses of grander edifices, such as resort hotels and auditoriums, which recall dreams of a past that did not survive into the present. Equally emphemeral are the populations of Montana. In his novels English Creek and Dancing at the Rascal Fair, Doig records the vicissitudes of political and ecological

history that brought settlers to the West and sent them away again: the Homestead Act, the Depression, Montana winters, droughts and forest fires, the influenza epidemic of 1819. Under these circumstances, the instability of towns and populations is not surprising.

But Doig is also aware that "community" is created not only by location, but also by culture, and that the relationship between community and tradition is dual: communities create tradition, but tradition also creates communities. All of us are members of many culture-based communities: ethnic, familial, religious, occupational, fraternal, avocational, recreational. We are guided in our work habits, our knowledge of crafts, our aesthetics and foodways and dress codes, our sense of convention and propriety by the folk groups we belong to, and these groups are only partially determined by where we live and who our neighbors are.

One brief example from This House of Sky will illustrate what I mean. This is a scene where Ivan, his father Charlie Doig and the rancher McGrath are tallying sheep:

> McGrath has kept the count steady with his chopping hand. When Dad does the count, he stands half-sideways to the river of sheep, his right hand low off his hip and barely flicking as each sheep passes. I have seen buyers, the men in gabardine suits and creamy Stetsons, with other habits -- pointing just two fingers, or pushing the flat palm of a hand toward the sheep -- as they count. The one trick everyone has is somehow to pump the end of an arm at each whizzing sheep, make the motion joggle a signal to the brain (Sky, p. 166).

In this passage and others like it, Doig redefines "community" to mean a group of people whose common ground is knowledge and tradition, rather than place. The rancher McGrath, Charlie Doig and the buyers in gabardine suits are, regardless of where they live, members of the same community. They all know the same things: the difficulties of finding good herders; how to dock lambs and castrate them; how to "jacket" a motherless lamb so that another ewe will take him; when to shear and when to sell, when to throw the flock on new grass; how to train a dog that will "run on wool." Skills like these are informally acquired, passed from person to person, and connect the people who share them. The rancher carries these traditions with him like a snail carries its house on its back. And he will therefore have more in common with other sheep ranchers, herders and buyers in other parts of the country than he will with the banker in his own home town.

Even though much of the working population in Montana is migrant, its members are not homeless, nor are they strangers to one another. In English Creek, for example, the same men come together year after year for seasonal jobs such as haying or lambing or firefighting, and form effective crews because they know each other well and know how to work together. The temporary communities they create are oddly cosmopolitan: the men swap stories, talk about other towns or ranches they have seen, learn from each other's experiences. Their communities are work-related, rather than place-related, but are nonetheless stable and meaningful.

Folklife creates bonds that stretch across time as well as space: people follow the traditions of their predecessors, and reshape customs according to their needs. The traditions which comprise folklife are both stable and innovative: they have their roots in the past, but remain viable because they change with changing circumstances.

The first two novels of the Montana trilogy, English Creek and Dancing at the Rascal Fair, follow the fortunes of the McCaskill family through three generations from the homesteading period in the 1800's through the beginning of the Second World War. Doig examines the continuities and changes in the cultural life of the region in scenes which focus on its folklife: dances, rodeos, picnics, ranch life. In Rascal Fair, which takes place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, homesteaders dance Scottish dances to songs they brought with them from Scotland, such as "Tam Lin" and "Sir Patrick McWhirr." Two generations later, descendents of these immigrants dance square dances to western songs like "The Dude and Belle." The tradition of community dances has remained stable; the dances themselves have changed over time. Similarly, the turn-of-the-century rodeos in Rascal Fair are impromptu affairs held in somebody's corral. The rodeos in English Creek, two generations later, are more elaborate, but still feature events that recall the past. The clothing worn by the riders and ropers, the skills they demonstrate, the patter of the announcer, the rules of the contests between men and animals would be meaningless if they did not

deliberately recreate earlier rodeos and celebrate the traditional work of the cowboy.

The past is important in Doig's work: he is an historian as well as a writer, and major historical events inform the plots of his novels and shape the lives of his characters. In Rascal Fair, immigrants move west in response to the Homestead Act, and spend their lives meeting its demands and struggling against its shortcomings. They experience the development of the railroads which expand their markets, and the establishment of the National Forests and the grazing acts that restrict their access to grasslands. They suffer the devastation of wars and diseases.

These events are history writ large, and comprise the formal histories which order and interpret the past. In them we perceive the fragmentation Stegner talks about. But even though our lives are shaped by these events, we are usually unaware of their lasting significance -- they are best understood in retrospect. Our sense of a "personal and possessed past" is created by history writ small -- family history, local history, the kind that usually does not make its way into textbooks. Knowledge about our past and present worlds is essential to the formation of personal and regional identity. In This House of Sky, Doig writes:

> Memory is a set of sagas we live by, much the way of the Norse wildmen in their bear shirts. That such rememberings take place in a single cave of brain rather than half a hundred minds warrened wildly into one another makes them sagas no less. By now, my days would seem blank, unlit, if these familiar surges would not come (Sky, p. 10).

In this passage, Doig makes the point that the memories that tell us who we are take the form of saga, or story, and accordingly the narrative structures of most of his books feature three interdependent storytellers: Doig as author, a self-conscious narrator who orders his life by telling it as story, and various raconteurs who tell their stories to the narrator. Doig's memoir, for example, recounts the stories of his father, Charlie Doig, and his grandmother, Bessie Ringer. Charlie's stories take the form of personal narratives: reminiscences about his own family and about the pastoral idyll that he and Ivan's mother, Berneta, lived out in their moutain summers before her death. He tells occupational stories which succinctly and often humorously characterize skinflint ranchers or half-crazy sheepherders, or recall mishaps on the job. He tells tales of adventure, which center on his own brushes with death. Through his stories Charlie re-creates himself, his family, and life in the valley and thereby teaches his son how to live in that place. Bessie's stories recall Ivan's babyhood and early childhood, times before language could have shaped experience for the boy himself. At the end of This House of Sky, Doig acknowledges his debt to his father, saying, "It was you, in your burring troubadour's way of passing to me all you knew of the valley and the Basin, who enchanted me into such a love of language and story that it has become my lifework."

Doig also locates regional identity in memory and story. His West is distinct from the South or New England or the Midwest not

just because of differences in geography or history writ large, but because of the way history is experienced and interpreted by storytellers. In a passage from a book of stories read aloud by the school children in Rascal Fair, Doig illustrates the importance of oral tradition:

> "One more sun," sighed the king at evening, "and now another darkness. This has to stop. The days fly past us as if they were racing pigeons. We may as well be pebbles, for all the notice life takes of us or we of it. No one holds in mind the blind harper when he is gone. No one commemorates the girl who grains the geese. None of the deeds of our people leave the least tiny mark upon time...Oblivion has been the rule too long. What this kingdom needs in the time to come is some, ummm, some blivion. There, that's it, we need to become a more blivious people. Enough of this forgettery. But how to do it? It will take some doing. What's to be done? Tell me that, whoever can."
>
> "If you will recall, Sire, this morning you named a remembrancer."
>
> "Eh? I did? I mean, I did. And what a good idea it was, too. For a change things are going to be fixed into mind around here. Send me this remembering fellow."
>
> "Bring forth the king's remembrancer!" (RF, p. 131-132).

The king does not appoint a court recorder, but a storyteller, who will "fix things into mind." He does not comment on the need to recall wars and plagues, but "the blind harper," and "the girl who grains the geese." The king knows that without the ordering power of story, events and people remain isolated and meaningless, and a kingdom which has no sense of its own past and people can have no meaningful present or future.

Each of Doig's books is graced by a remembrancer such as

Toussaint Rennie, who appears in both English Creek and Dancing at the Rascal Fair. Toussaint Rennie recounts events he has experienced and thereby personalizes the impersonal past. Part Indian, part white, very old but still vital in the 1930's, Toussaint belongs to two cultures and two centuries. By his own account, he witnessed most of the history of western Montana: the decimation of the Native American tribes and the buffalo herds, the great cattle drives, the construction of the Valier irrigation project, the establishment of homesteads, the growth of the town of Gros Ventre. Toussaint holds the valley in his memory. When he refers to an incident in the life of Jick, the young narrator of English Creek, Jick marvels:

> If I was a Toussaint topic, just what did that constitute? The mix of apprehension and surmise was all through me. Plus a flavor of something which seemed surprisingly like pride. Better or worse, part of me now was in Toussaint's knowledge, his running history of the Two. In there with Phony Nose Gorman and the last buffalo hunt and the first sheep and the winter of '86 and Lieutenant Black Jack Pershing and the herded Crees and -- and what did that mean? Being a part of history, at the age of fourteen years and ten months: why had that responsibility picked me out? (English Creek, pp. 152-153).

The stories that Toussaint tells remain alive in Varick McCaskill and his sons, Alec and Jick. They feel the resonance of history when they look over hay fields in the valley and picture the buffalo and the cattle herds that once grazed there. Historical significance for them is not nostalgia for the past, but an understanding of how they themselves fit into the life of the

valley which preceeded them and which will continue after they are gone.

Oral history is the provenance of the folk: it is literally "his story" and "her story," and its significance lies in the personalizing of events and in the details of daily life that are so often neglected in formal histories.

In Winter Brothers, Doig comments on the limitations of formal history and implies the need to supplement it with oral history. Winter Brothers explores the journals of James Swan, a pioneer of the Northwest Coast. Swan recorded much of the tribal histories of the Makah and Haida Indians, and Doig notes that these histories become abbreviated through time as historians use them for different scholarly purposes. For example, Stingess, a Haida woman, spent an evening telling Swan about the practice of tattooing. Swan recorded only part of the information in his diaries, and Doig included even less in his book. Once oral history became formal history, something was lost. Of this process of abbreviation, Doig notes:

> How elliptical, literally, the past becomes. Stingess culls from what may have been an evening-long narrative an answer for Swan. Who chooses as much of it as he thinks worth cramming into his diary pages. At my hundred years' remove, I select lines from his and frame them in trios of editing dots. From her Haida tradition to Swan's white tribe to my even paler version. The logical end of the process signaled by my ellipses, I suppose, might be for the lore of Haida tattooing to compress down to something like a single magical speck of print, perhaps the period after the news that Stingess had got tired of all the chit-chat and hobbled home. But I've

> heard it offered that a period is simply the shorthand for the dots of an ellipsis. That a story never does end, only can pause. So that would not complete it either, the elliptical transit from Stingess to Swan to me to whomever abbreviates the past next (Winter Brothers, p. 202).

History writ large is inescapable: our lives are, as both Doig and Stegner emphasize, determined by major events. But a personal, a possessed past, which links people one to another and makes the present meaningful, is essential to the creation of personal and regional identity. Writers who explore that relationship are well on their way toward developing a regional literary canon.

The West described by Stegner is echoed in my own homeplace, where changes in economy and demographics have created major discontinuities in the valley's history. The Indians and their way of life, the small Japanese farms, are gone for good, and the little town that once served the needs of surrounding farmers and ranchers now caters to wind surfers. But the West described by Ivan Doig is also reflected in the valley. The past continues into the present in the stories that Paul Keir and my mother told, and through their words I can watch the Indians run their ponies on the sand bar, witness the intolerance that swept the Japanese from their homes. And I pass those memories, and my own, on to those who come after me. The lariat from the past to the present is, as Stegner knew it must be, woven of our words.

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Note: This is a revised and expanded version of a paper presented at the Western Literature Association conference held in Coeur D'Alene, Idaho, in October, 1989. A more detailed discussion of Doig's use of folklore can be found in "An Introduction to the Work of Ivan Doig," dissertation by Elizabeth Simpson, University of Washington, 1989.



From: E. Simpson
Rt 1, Box 1148
Hope Island, WA 98261

**Boating**
Edouard Manet, French, 1832–1883
Oil on canvas
THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART
Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 1929, H. O. Havemeyer Collection
29.100.115

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Dear Ivan and Carol,

Just a note to send you our greetings and to tell you that the University of Idaho Press is interested in publishing the manuscript, and are (is?) sending it out to readers. A long distance toast, from us to you! They'll be in touch w/ me in Germany -- I told them that any book had to include Mariah, so I'm eagerly awaiting her debut. Love from us both, E.

Ivan and Carol Doig
17021 10th Ave N.W.
Seattle, WA 98177

A4651-5

May 10, 1990

Dear Ivan,

Thanks for your letter. Yes, June looms. (Sounds like the title of a bad poem, doesn't it? Either that or the name of a 1960's weaving shop.) Sorry. June is coming up faster than I can pack up the house or grade papers or study German or decide what is going into those two whole suitcases I get to take with me. Henning and I are going up to Lopez June 1; then we come back and pick up Johann on the 21st and take off; then Käthe joins us in Germany at the end of July. We're going to spend a month visiting various relatives and settle into Göttingen the first of August. If the university deigns to find us housing. If not, we'll be on Lopez for the year, growing peas and writing books. Worse things have come to pass.

Thanks so much for the copy of the speech. It may come in handy very soon. I have located two possible publishers for the manuscript. One of them is University of Idaho: our friend Louie Attebery says that their new senior editor is interested in branching out into more ambitious projects than they have undertaken so far -- they've mostly done regional folklore til now -- and Louie is going to speak to the man about my work, and urges me to submit a copy.

Even more promising is the "Understanding Contemporary American Literature" series published by the University of South Carolina. I've looked at their stuff: they cover mostly short story writers and poets, but their authors are well chosen -- Raymond Carver, Theodore Roethke, etc. The books are aimed at the same audience as the Twayne series is/was. I am not crazy about the structure, which works text-by-text, rather than theoretically, but I haven't seen them all, so I may be over-generalizing. The really good thing about them is that they have the same market that the Twayne series does -- that is, nation wide, both in consideration of authors (your work would not be automatically classified as "regional") and in distribution. So I'll send them a letter and the manuscript, and we'll see what happens. If I get any offers, I'll want to include Mariah, of course, and (these things take a long time to fruit) maybe even the new book.

Henning and I will be at the reading on May 17 with bells on. As crazy as we are these days, we may be in motley, too. Any chance we can take you to dinner first? Nothing fancy because of time constraints, but it would be fun to get together one last time.

I really like Mariah's cover. Makes me want to read the book, you know?

Love to you and Carol,

Elizabeth

14 May '90

Dear Elizabeth & Henning--

I hope to talk to you on the phone before you get this, but my first couple of tries missed you, so just in case... Carol and I wish we could have a last going-to-Germany! dinner with you on Thurs., but we're swarmed over with logistics before my reading: a houseguest is arriving at some uncertain time around dinnertime, and then we have to be at a reception (all this being run by Carol's dept. chair, so <u>have to be</u> does apply) by about 7:20, so I think we're going to have to rest, for now, on memories of the Santa Fe Cafe dinner with you. Would you be interested in coming to the reception before the reading, to maybe meet some of the Shoreline College honchos--i.e., people who might someday hire a Ph.D. in English? If so, just show up (next to the auditorium where the reading will be) anytime after 7:30 and look up Carol and me, okay?

best,

26 April '90

Dear Elizabeth--

I understood Henning to say that your household goes to Germany in June rather than at the end of summer, and since June isn't that far away and our paths may not cross in the meantime, I wanted to get the enclosed pieces of Doigiana to you before they disappear into my office bog. The speech is an unedited version of what I gave in Bozeman last week at a conference on Montana-federal government relationships, particularly to do with the public lands; in essence, I was the token humanist. The reason I thought you might want to tuck a copy away is that it may portend my next book, if I go ahead and key it to my mother's recently-discovered letters from the last months of her life. (Also, as you'll see I cribbed from your dissertation the lines of poetry you cribbed from Stafford's "Lake Chelan"--where would us scholars be without serial quotation?) The other item is just for fun--a laserprint of the cover art for Mariah (the lettering will be in light color, i.e. readable, in the final version) which I wanted you and Henning to have.

Final bit of logistics: David Wagoner and I have been corraled, I guess as "neighborhood" residents, into reading at the ~~xxxx~~ opening of the Shoreline Community Center, NE 185th and 1st NE, May 17, 8 p.m., if one more public performance is of any use to you. I'll probably say a bit about being a suburban druid writing about the West, but likely it'll be retrievable on file cards if you ever want it. Anyway, see you or not, all best wishes for the German year.

regards,

February 1 '90

Dear Ivan and Carol,

Just wanted to express our thanks for the wonderful evening. We couldn't have asked for better company and conversation, nor more wonderful things to celebrate! I hope Mariah is on her way to the publishers -- no lady has ever deserved it more.

I also wanted to pass on a passage from a letter I received from my best friend. She and her husband have bought forty acres near Lolo Pass, and will be moving there soon. I could not think of more appropriate gifts than Dancing at the Rascal Fair and English Creek. Cindy writes:

"I finished Dancing at the Rascal Fair, but have not yet finished laughing unexpectedly, or crying in the same way. The book took me absolutely by surprise. I could not put it down. The characters follow me around all day, and I find myself disturbed because I can't instantly recall any one of the myriad phrases Doig uses to touch so poignantly the deepest, most honest of human emotions. The book swallowed me up. I want to read your dissertation. Dale has been reading English Creek, and periodically will break out laughing and then have to read aloud a segment (with appropriate ground-laying), so that I feel I already have a sense of that book. I have a need to let a good book settle before I can launch into its sequel, so I told him he had a week. Then I would no longer be responsible for his bookmark."

Think we ought to make her a reviewer?

Thank you so much for giving me my very own hardbound, autographed copy of This House of Sky. That book never ceases to be wonderful, and your inscription sets the seal on my degree.

In the spring, we'd like to have you come to Lopez for a weekend and help us count the hawks and herons and various ducks that frequent the pond. (Eagles don't show up much til summer, and then they are Frequent Flyers, terrorizing the cats and providing us endless diversion.) Lopez is beautiful in winter, too, but a little wet underfoot -- we'll wait till we can ramble the fields without getting soaked to the knees.

Hope Carol's term is progressing satisfactorily and that Ivan is taking out the garbage.

From our house to yours -- love,

Elizabeth

January 5, 1990

Dear Ivan and Carol,

Seasons Greetings! Thanks so much for your Christmas letter -- it is delightful. I'm sorry to get back to you so belatedly; between Henning's double-teaching and my dissertation, last quarter was so busy that we had to put off all chores and Christmas preparations until the last minute. The day after the defense, we fled to Lopez, chopped firewood, slaughtered one of the heifers, chased the spiders out of the house, and then dashed back down here just in time for Christmas, a tree in our arms. I am barely beginning to catch my breath, and we're already a week into the new quarter!

Thank you so much, Ivan, for coming to the defense. As it turned out, Mark forgot to tell anyone but Dick Dunn that you would be there, so it was a surprise to everyone else. I thought the questions were good, for the most part, and your input was wonderful. Dick told me afterwards that there would be some publicity about your attending the defense -- apparently he put the story in the University Weekly, and said that one of the Seattle papers would carry it, too. I haven't seen anything, but if Dick gives me a copy of an article I'll pass it on.

When Henning and I got home that afternoon, we found a bottle of champagne and a bouquet of flowers from Sally, and a huge poster the kids had made for me. The poster is a hoot -- I'll bring it along to show you when we get together for dinner.

Wonderful news about your finishing Mariah. I hope you two have now had a chance to relax a little. My only concern about the manuscript is that I couldn't read all of it. I want to know what happens next! That is one of three strong reactions -- the other two are laughter and tears. I laughed so often when I read through it on Lopez that Henning would make me stop and read passages aloud to him and then we would both giggle intermittantly for awhile -- the Good Help pig fucking story still sets me off. And I am amazed at what you do with the relationship between Jick and Mariah. Their affection for each other is so subtly portrayed that a short phrase or a look between them conveys volumes, and often I would find myself in tears at verbal gestures that show Jick's love and need for his daughter. The trilogy is not only a recapturing of stages of Montana history, but stages of life -- is it a sign of my own advancing age that I find this part of Jick's life the most moving?

For the rest of this commentary, I'm going to try to set aside my emotional embrace of the book and tell you what patterns I'm seeing:

Remember our discussion about what happens when a rural literary tradition becomes urban? That's one of the biggest differences I

see between Mariah and the first two books in the trilogy. The physical labor so carefully described in the first two has been replaced by the the creative labor of Mariah and Riley, and non-labor: the big money that comes in and rips the land up for tax purposes, the agribusinesses occupying ranch land. There is no impression of work here, just moneymaking. It smacks home one of the things that bothers me most about contemporary life -- there's very little product, or too many products that consume resources to no purpose. So many people spend their "working" days cutting deals, buying and selling, all on paper or over the telephone, and there is nothing to show for it; no lives improved, nothing really gained.

The whole concept of modernity is underscored by life in the Bago -- the air conditioning, the microwave...funny to think of outhouse-digging replaced by the wonders of a chemical toilet. Yet the book is written without regret or a nostalgic hankering after the good old days, which clearly were never as good as we'd like to think. I meant it when I said to Simonson that I do not find a tone of tragedy or loss in your writing. A hard realistic look at the way life is, and a sense that the core of life remains steady. That core is family, and history, again manifested in story and in memory. Jick finds himself beseiged on all sides by his own past, which, like the past of Montana, insists on repeating itself. Home and livelihood, love, marriage, children, and the inevitable loss of all of these. It's the human story, not just Montana's story or Jick's story.

The universality of other experiences, too -- economic depressions, weather cycles, young men and women dying in battle -- all these themes are supported by the structure in which Jick's memories are juxtaposed against Riley's words and Mariah's pictures which capture the past in the present.

I think the use of photography, camera angles, the juxtaposition of visual images and word images is a wonderful development of what you did in Sky. For the first time in your work, I'm seeing symbolism -- now don't growl. These are not symbols available in handbooks on literature, but rather ideas developed throughout the novel that are captured in a single image. Mariah's photo of the bird/landscape/buffalo is the best example, I think, but there are others, like the stuffed animal heads in BB's office that symbolize the ~~destruction~~ commodification of Montana's wildlife.

There are a lot of echoes of the other books -- the significance of naming, for example, the folklore in the form of family sagas and beaverslide stackers and letters on hillsides and jackstay fences.

There are several things that pull more weight in this book than in the other two -- the card game becomes a controlling image in places, which allows you to make wonderful triple puns out of a phrase like "that joker Riley," and to demonstrate shifting loyalites in the game of pitch which pits Jick and Mariah against

Riley. The turtle joke here plays a much stronger role than any of the stories in the other two books. It allows you to contrast the superficiality of TV (you old jouralist you) against print, but more important, makes the reader think about what is inside the turtle, what is cause and what is effect, what is the heart of history?

Speaking of which, I can hear Patricia Limerick applauding from here. Revisionist history in the whores-who-would-be-rich-and-other-stories, but most of all in the sense that history is what we have been told, history resides in memory, and is as flawed and prejudiced and colorful and rich as the people whose words bring it to us. I welcomed the letters of Isaac Reese and wanted more from him. He's always been one of my favorite characters.

And, Oh, God, have you become a master of the set piece. The story of the bear(s) is one of the most compelling I have ever heard/read anywhere. When you read it in the auditorium at the conference, I swear when people breathed at all they did it in unison and to the rhythm of your prose. The story did not lose any of its power when I read it for myself, or when I read it to Henning.

Before I forget, there is one tiny problem in the book, in a section I like very much, where Mariah explains to Jick what she wants to achieve in her photography. (p. 122-123) There were no stick figures of men in cave paintings. There is only one depiction of any human figure in the cave paintings, in The Well Scene at Lascaux, and the bird-man depicted there is not hunting. Small stuff, but you'd hear from disgruntled art historians on this one.

Am looking foward to seeing you both, and to further discussion of Mariah, if you can stand it -- you may just ~~tuck it~~ want to tuck it away for a while.

Anyway, give us a call about dinner -- we're looking foward to it.

Best,
Elizabeth

Dec. 1

Dear Ivan and Carol,

Thank you so much for the warmth and laughter and good talk last night. If I needed a "finished" feeling for the dissertation, that was it!

Here are Dunn's comments on Baby, and Hal Simonson's sort-of repentance article. Not, now that I read it, as good as it should be.

I talked with Henning last night about the Defense. I've been thinking about it as one more hoop to jump through, an hour's hell to squeeze in between making breakfast and taking my German final; Henning, who has sat at both ends of defense tables (does sound like an armament proposal, doesn't it?) tells me I'm wrong. That a defense is 1) a rite of passage important to scholar and committee alike and 2) when the dissertation is good (cough, cough) the defense can be a wonderful occasion for intellectual exchange. My committee is ideal for such an exchange: Dick Dunn has read all of your work (he's the one who recommended <u>This House of Sky</u> to me in the first place and got me started); Hal Simonson has, of course. Mark has not, and I'm not sure about John Griffith, but I chose them for my committee because they are both good scholars who value text over theory. If you did come, we could have a hell of a good discussion.

Carol, I would love to have you come, too. Since this is one of your own scholarly/teacherly passions, why don't you cancel your classes and be with us?

If neither of you can come, I certainly understand; I know what it's like to have <u>anything</u> interrupt writing. I have snarled at my mother, my husband and my children just for asking how things are going, let alone trying to drag me away from classroom, books and keyboard.

The big D. is scheduled at 10:30, December 11, in A 316 Padelford.

Thanks again for a wonderful evening! I'll be in touch as soon as relatives are gone, Christmas is celebrated, and Henning and I can surface for an evening with you that we both anticipate with considerable pleasure.

Best,

Elizabeth

11/27/89

Elizabeth Simpson

First, let me say how good it is to finally read a dissertation centering on works I have read and enjoyed. I mention this because my familiarity with Ivan and his work may make me the atypical reader of this dissertation.

Second, I do think you do a fine job discussing the works individually and in relation to one another and overall do Doig the great justice of recognizing his strengths and his diversity.

As I read the dissertation I had the sense of its growing and taking shape, especially in the final two chapters. Both of them expand upon the folklore chapter in particular ways.

The principal problem I have with the work is the delaying of its thesis. With the survey of his canon as a very long first chapter, it might be a good idea to have a brief preface, some early identification of just what you are going to do throughout the work, for although you do provide some end-of-chapter transitions, your focus needs sharpened earlier, I think. The title has the great advantage of avoiding the dreaded colon of dissertations, and that is fine, but I, for one, became a bit impatient in the first chapter because it was not evident just what you were doing with/to/for Ivan Doig.

The other problem that comes up now and again is that of the frame of reference with other Western writers. Often you mention a string of names; seldom do you say much in support of that listing, and one place in particular (Chapter 2, p 45) seems to call for an expanded concept of just how folklore has been used in Western literature of the past twenty years.

I like very much your handling of the idea of place (particularly, but I would remind you, not uniquely a Montana usage--I think you will find it similarly conceived in Steinbeck's Oklahoma, and I have heard the same usage in southwestern Pennsylvania).

The writing is better than I usually find in dissertations, but there are the inevitable typos for you to check. I'll give you back my copy after the defense, or you can borrow it before then if you wish.

Dick Dunn

Patterson

Department of English
University of Washington

REPORT ON THE DISSERTATION PRESENTED
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By: Elizabeth Ann Simpson

Title of Dissertation: Ivan Doig

1. Mechanics of Research
   Superior ____
   Acceptable ✓
   Inferior ____
   Comment:

2. Command of the literature on the subject; skill & judgment in gathering evidence
   Superior ____
   Acceptable ✓
   Inferior ____
   Comment:

3. Originality and insight to interpretation
   Superior ✓
   Acceptable ____
   Inferior ____
   Comment:

4. Clearness, logical arrangement, English style
   Superior ✓
   Acceptable ____
   Inferior ____
   Comment:

5. Adequacy of scope and substance
   Superior ✓
   Acceptable ____
   Inferior ____
   Comment:

6. Summary. Estimate of the work as a whole
   Honors ✓
   High Pass ____
   Pass ____
   Fail ____
   Comment:

This dissertation serves as a model for further studies of regional Western literature — studies that need to originate in the English Department.

E. Simpson 11/20/89
(Signature & date) Ivan Doig

(Reader reports, however brief, are much appreciated by the student; if you can, please turn in something beyond a list of six check marks.)

There possibly is more correspondence between Elizabeth Simpson and me in the Writing About Writing folder in Ivan's top file drawer

27 Oct. '89

Dear Elizabeth--

Since I can't seem to get away from the typewriter as far as the U District, I figured I'd better just dump this Mariah material in the mail to you.

It's about 2/3 of what will be the final manuscript--you can keep this copy, if it'd be useful to you for jotting on; although as you'll suspect, there will be considerable tinkering done between this and the ultimate published version--and all I'd like is a page or so, by Christmas if you can, telling me how this work aligns (or maybe more interestingly, doesn't align) with my earlier books, particularly of course English Creek and Rascal Fair. For heaven's sake, don't even think about doing a detailed analysis, at least on my behalf; all I need/want--you'll find Jick and Mariah mulling the difference in those words pretty quick into the pages--is an expert reader's impressions of how this sounds, compared with what has come before. In turn, I'll of course be glad to try and answer any questions that fit with what you're doing.

I've lost track; did you have your orals yet? If so, how'd Simonson behave? Should I have pushed him out of the airplane to Coeur d'Alene when I had the chance? Carol and I entirely meant it, about wanting to take you and Henning out for celebratory supper; feel free to nominate possible dates when come to her Western Lit class next Friday, okay?

you

best to Henning.

September 11

Dear Ivan,

Just wanted to give you an update. To paraphrase Jick, I've pretty close to got it. That is, the landscape chapter is done and revised, the style chapter is twenty-five pages and growing. I'm pleased with them both, and would send you the landscape chapter except, as you see from this missive, my printer ribbon is about done for. I'm going to Seattle in the next couple of days, and I'll pick up a new one then, run that chapter, and send you the one on style as soon as it's finished. I plan to have it on Mark's desk by the end of this month. He'll read the revisions (in each case, the chapters are longer than the versions you've seen, with a little more flesh on their bones, but otherwise pretty much the same) in October, and I should be able to defend by the end of fall quarter.

As you know I was feeling some trepidation about the style chapter, but finally set it up in two parts: text and context, and language. The first section talks about your use of historical/geographical/cultural contexts for plot, structure, characterization, theme. Bredahl's article on "Valuing Surface," which has been published in the latest issue of Western American Literature, was enormously helpful. The second section is roughly about how damned hard you make language work for you. I hope, thinking of Carroll, that you are paying it extra.

The landscape chapter worked out pretty much along the lines we talked about: I used other western writers as a critical frame without having to rehash the old issues of regionalism -- at least openly.

I don't have any specific questions this time, but I would appreciate it if we could get together after you've had a chance to read both of these chapters. How does mid-October sound? My calendar is pretty much open except from the 11th-15th, which is the WLA conference.

I'm giving a paper at that conference about your use of folklore as history. You said that your time there would be very brief and you probably won't be attending paper sessions, so I'll send you a copy as soon as it is pummeled into shape.

As good as it feels to have the end of this project in sight, I have enjoyed writing this more than anything else I can remember, and really hate to have it over with. I cannot empathize with my colleagues who say they finished their dissertations in a haze of nausea, completing them just because they couldn't stand them any more. My only frustration has been trying to squeeze time for this between kids and husband and teaching and gardening, and my gloriously "alone" time (my Doiging time, as Henning calls it) has been wonderful this summer.

Hope you and Carol are well, enjoying the nifty weather that has suddenly appeared, and that the novel is progressing to your satisfaction.

Best wishes,

Elizabeth

P.S. - I'll be back in Seattle Sept. 20 -- 527-4549

16 Feb. '89

Dear Elizabeth--

Hey, great news that you've about done me! Not from my personal point of view, because it's been pleasant and interesting to have somebody of your care and skill doing the work on my work, but I'm glad you're nearing the end of the Ph.D. gauntlet.

Yes, I can look over your chapter by mid-Oct. if you can get it to me by the last week of this month. How about the afternoon of Oct. 10, for you to come out and talk about it--3 o'clock? I hope that's not too close to WLA for you; frankly, it would help me focus toward WLA, to do it then. By the way, I loosened up a bit about how long I can devote to WLA, but I guess I'm still going to miss your paper; I'm flying over Wed. afternoon and back at 4:20 the next afternoon, so will be hobnobbing at least through lunch on Thurs.

I don't know if this is any help--I may already have said something of the sort to you--but while ransacking a box of file cards, I came up with this one from amid the work on English Creek. You're welcome to it if it's any help; a footnote, whatever:

"10 June '82: Each book has some great technical challenge which the solving of enriches the work. In Sky, it was to maintain a poetic flavor thruout the book; W Bros, to work with patterns and make the work mimic its source, to be a diary-of-a-diary; Runners, to do a big story scene by scene. In Eng Ork, it's going to be forming a completeness, a textured whole, of the details. To make a forest of the trees."

I'm on the final part of Mariah, and then (after Thanksgiving) comes a couple of months of final tinkering. It still seems a helluva lot of work, but I think the book is doing okay. Congrats on your own summer. Best to Henning.

Ivan

2 May '89

Dear Elizabeth--

Just a quick note, now that I'm back from Montana (and a 4-inch April snowstorm), to empty out a few things that came to mind after we last talked.

You asked about other writers I've harkened to, regarding landscape etc., and I was so concentrated on running through the "western" list that I forgot to cite Loren Eiseley to you. I'm probably attuned to his attitude, maybe most findable in The Immense Journey, that humankind is part of a long flow of life.

Also on landscape: I don't know if it was in the Sea Runners notecards you went through, but I fairly consciously regarded the NW coast as the fifth character in that book.

Folklore and how to prove it has literary validity: I don't know if this helps, but I've noticed in Vol. 1 (A-C) of the Dictionary of American Regional English that one of the most frequent citations for some homespunnery or another is Wm. Faulkner. That is, books are cited a lot, and Faulkner maybe most frequently of any. You maybe saw Hugh Kenner's review of the new OED in a recent NY Times Book Review; he'd been able to call up the computer whizzes and find out the number of times James Joyce, say, is cited in the OED; I dunno if the DARE office at U. of Wisconsin could or would do the same for you on Faulkner, or if it'd be worth your while, but if your adviser needs some numerical convincing.... Just a thought.

Happy islanding. See you in autumn if not before.

Ivan

p.s. And thanks a lot for the Bredahl papers.

Dear Ivan –

Thanks for yesterday – my head is buzzing with ideas and the "place" talk centers some of them beautifully. Now all I need is <u>time</u>!

Can't wait for Bredahl's book. I'm going to send him my two completed chapters, and I'll ask him for publishing info then.

Have a wonderful spring and summer –

Elizabeth

March 30

Dear Ivan,

Here's hoping that spring (such as it is so far) is treating you and Carol well. I tried calling you over spring break and concluded that you two had taken off on a well-deserved vacation. Mine was delightfully productive. I sequestered myself on our farm on Lopez and wrote. I so enjoyed writing this chapter that I hated to have to bring it to an end. Here it is, and I'd really appreciate a chance to get together with you to talk about it. Any comments, additions, suggestions, etc. are certainly welcome. Specifically, I need to ask about your sources for some of the items I mentioned; since this is a dissertation, I have to document them. When it's published (chortle, snort) we can banish them to end notes. Can you tell me where you found/heard/came up with the following? (References are to my page numbers.)

manure in the Christmas stocking 10
Methuselah and the salted coffee 11
The story of the Bell Rock Lighthouse, 35
Scottish dance tunes 36
drinking toasts 36
Zebra Dun 37
the Hogmanay good-luck tradition 37
the fillyloo bird 37

Hope your book is going smoothly (if not organically).

Best wishes,

Elizabeth

6272 19th Ave. NE.
Seattle, WA 98115
527-4549

Jan. 20, 1989

Dear Ivan,

Before I get to the contents herein, I wanted to tell you how much Henning and I enjoyed the reading last month. As you could probably tell from my conversation, I've been "bogging" rather than "Doiging" lately, trying to squeeze the dissertation into hours between family, teaching and editing, without sufficient time to tackle the big issues. I'm sure you know how the "niggles" feel. At any rate, the glimpse of the third novel refreshed me considerably, and I am looking forward to its publication. When I have the big blocks of time I need to write, I really do not get tired of your work (sometimes I get tired of mine) but I am so steeped in it that when Linda Bierds referred to the winter scene in Rascal Fair as a rescue operation for cattle, I almost said, "They're sheep, dammit, sheep!" Ah, well, the whole evening was great, and next time we'll make it dinner, too.

Here is the journal, and thank you so much. One of my purposes in sending you the draft of Chapter 1 is so that you can see what I have drawn from the journal, and let me know if it's o.k. The references appear on pgs. 46 and 47. The journal also confirms my suspicion that you avoid Symbolism, but I can argue that without reference, because the texts themselves bear it out.

The section I really need help with is Part 1. I gleaned information from Sky and from a few interviews, but it's presently random and choppy; it could become a discussion of the development of your writing and of your composition process, if you can answer some questions for me.

How did you get started free-lancing? Did you submit abstracts to journals? How long before you were established? What were the difficulties and rewards? I'd like to know the nuts and bolts of the post-graduate school years before the publication of This House of Sky. The statement on p. 11, for example, is pretty much guesswork, because you still do occasionally write articles; but what is the balance?

What were the intentions behind the writing of News? For the moment, let's ignore Bredahl's argument, which I may or may not use. What did you and Carol have in mind? Is the book intended as a text, or for the general reader as well as the student?

What about the two books published by Hayden? Were they commissioned? How did you go about compiling the excerpts and essays? Are they intended for high school students? College students? Are these themes of particular interest for you? The Utopia anthology has some echoes in your other work -- what's the connection?

I was interested in your foreword in Duncan Kelso's Inside book.

You mentioned that Carol photographs the places you are going to write about. How do you use those photos, beyond making sure your characters don't go up a down staircase? I am also curious about why no family photographs were included in Sky -- I have the notion that they would be inappropriate because Sky is a memoir, your memoir, and the book's beauty depends upon the triad of "Ivan's" in it -- the three-pronged narrative perspective. The book is interpretation, not reportage, and handing the reader photographs would make it a different book. Am I headed in the right direction here?

You told me the first time we talked that you do not work from a particular theory of history, but it seems to me that in all of your work there is a balance between the individual and the larger picture. That's clearly different from the fatalistic naturalism of Crane or London, where individuals are at the mercy of impersonal forces, or the **en masse** of Steinbeck where individuals are representative of a group. Your characters are certainly influenced by political, economic and environmental realities, but are also autonomous and self-directing. There almost always seems to be a perfect tension between individuals, community, landscape and history, with the exception of The Sea Runners. Is there a philosophy behind this, a way of thinking about the power and responsibility of individuals in their world?

What do you mean by writing "organically?" You have said that you did not outline the trilogy, nor even plan out one book at a time. You seem not to know what is going to happen in the current book until it happens. Am I right in assuming that the plot and characters grow from the writing, that one sentence leads to the next, and you don't know what you're going to say until you've said it? (That is the way I write, and I find it slow, frustrating and awkward, especially for a dissertation; it is also immensely rewarding.)

I would really appreciate your help with these first questions: there will be others as I revise the landscape and folklore chapters, but this is a beginning. Probably the easiest way would be our getting together with a tape recorder -- let me know if that's o.k., and when it would be convenient for you.

I hope Christmas break gave you and Carol a chance to dry out from the Washington winter, that you came back refreshed. I am dying for a peek at "Mariah," but will control myself until the book is out. Hope it is growing to your satisfaction.

Best wishes, many thanks,

Elizabeth

6272 19th Ave. N.E.
Seattle, WA. 98115

527-4549

16 Nov. '88

Dear Elizabeth--

I wondered about that Montana State Press. At least the sec'y thinks your work is terrific!

Just a quick note (Carol and I are, somewhat unbelievably even to ourselves, about to go to the Miami Book Fair, the Fla. Keys etc. for Thanksgiving week) to respond to your dinner invitation. Sounds great, but we traditionally meet Linda Bierds, with whom I'm reading that night, before either of us does a reading; maybe it psyches us up or something, but anyhow I think for simplicity's sake we'll stick with that, this time. Would certainly take a raincheck on your invitation, though--maybe after the 1st of the year, maybe when Chas. Johnson reads at the U Bookstore in Feb.? We can talk about it; see you Dec. 15. (Come a little early, unless I let you know I've been able to save seats; despite the tickets, it's first come first served for the ticketees!

November 14

Dear Ivan,

Thanks for your note and words of encouragement. If you have had problems with publishers, I'm not going to feel discouraged...- yet. My second attempt with the manuscript ended very comically. I sent it off to Montana State [illegible] that there was only justice in such a move, and four days later got a very nice call from a [illegible] at the University press at either U. of Montana or Montana State. I had gotten the address from a list of publishers, but apparently they produce only art brochures. Anyway, not only was it very nice of her to call rather than letting me languish at the mailbox, but she told me that she is a big fan of yours and that a scholarly text on your work was certainly called for, and she was sure other presses ought to be panting after my manuscript. No heavy breathing so far, but I'll see what Naomi Pascal at UW press has to say. Your idea about the Boise State Writers Series is a good one. If nothing else pans out, I'll look into that. Obviously I would prefer the thing out in full; by the time I get it done, I ought to be able to talk about the third Montana novel, though I'll exclude that from my dissertation, in the interests of getting the Beast done and through the academic mill.

I haven't had a chance to read the Robbins piece yet, but I'm grateful for it -- any and everything is helpful, sometimes in unexpected ways.

Henning and I are delighted at the idea of coming to hear you on Dec. 15, and would be even more delighted if you and Carol can join us for dinner that evening. If the reading starts at eight, you could come to the house at six, and we'll ply you with good food and libation and promise not to talk shop (though if I take notes during dessert, don't be surprised).

Our number here is 527-4549; Henning's office number is 543-6884. If you're free, we'd love to have you.

As ever,

Elizabeth

Nov. 4

Dear Ivan,

Just an update on the Perils of Publishing. My director liked the first three chapters so much that I hoped the Twayne folks would, too. But I just received a cursory note from them which said, "We regret to report that we do not see a place for the book on Twayne's list." I was disappointed, of course, but Henning (always the comforter) told me that he was not at all surprised. Apparently Twayne nearly went bankrupt a few years ago, and defaulted on some contracts -- knowing that, I wouldn't want the manuscript with them, anyway.

So, bloody but unbowed, I'm sending it off to Montana State University Press. Some poetic justice there. If they aren't interested, I have a list of about ten other University presses in mind, places that regularly publish literary scholarship.

Last month I gave a paper at the Western Literature Association conference, where there was a plenary session on This House of Sky. One of the presenters, Carl Bredahl from the University of Florida, gave two papers on Sky. In the first, he argued that traditional American literary criticism cannot illuminate contemporary Western writing because the language of the latter is representational, not self-reflexive, and the patterns of characters and ethical values of that writing do not respond to most of the critical tools we presently have. He's coming out with a book to that effect, using Sky as the test case for a new critical approach. Needless to say, he and I had several excited discussions, and intend to keep each other informed of our work.

My own work won't get much attention until the Christmas break, since family and teaching soak up so much time. But I'll have about two weeks then to write down all the ideas that are percolating, and hope to see some pages roll off. Is it all right if I hang on to the Sea Runners journal til after Christmas? I am not quoting from it at all, but reading it anchors me in your thinking. I have made some assertions (particularly about the avoidance of traditional symbol-and-myth patterns) based on the journal which seemed quite outrageous until I heard Bredahl say the same things, and, with the support of his scholarship, I'd like to back and strengthen what I've said.

Hope you are well and that the novel is moving to suit you. I am so delighted that the work I do now will really be work in progress. If you keep this up, you'll always be one volume ahead of me, and I'll always have new material to consider.

My best to Carol; Henning sends his greetings.

As ever,

Elizabeth

8 Nov. '88

Dear Elizabeth--

Tough news about Twayne. That's the damnable publishing business, though. When I started as a magazine freelance I got 10 rejections for every one acceptance; when I finally worked that down to a mere 3 to 1, I was regarded as a success! Had you thought of trying some kind of trimmed-down version for the Boise State Writers Series that Eugene Smith bailed out of doing? Might be more trouble than it's worth, to cut down so much...

No problem about keeping the Sea Runners stuff into the New Year. I read from it down at Evergreen State College last Friday, and while it turns out that even Evergreen freshmen are <u>freshmen</u>, it went okay.

I'm not sure there's anything you don't know in this PNQ piece, but I thought you'd want to be apprised. Despite the '87 date, it came out just this fall.

Certainly you don't need any more of my words in your life at this point, but Linda Bierds and I are reading in a lit'ry doubleheader at the U Book Store on Dec. 15. Advance tix (though free) are needed from the UBS, if you and Henning have a free evening; I'll understand if you don't. I mention it just because it will be the biggest batch of the next book that I'm likely to be doing in public for the next year or so.

Carol and I are doing okay, though a bit overbusy. Glad to hear of your pgogress, though I don't see how you get anything done and teach too, Keep pegging away. Regards to Henning.

see you

Mike

Box 1118
Lopez Island
WA 98261

August 2

Dear Ivan,

I arrived here from a weekend of bill-paying and researching in Seattle to find your letter and The Sea Runners' diary in my mailbox. Thank you so much for entrusting me with the copy. I will send it back when I've read through it and done my note-taking. The source is invaluable, because I have been searching for an approach to your work which does not require the comparative and developmental arguments that invariably accompany texts on regional literature. What is emerging as I write is a contextual/historical perspective, a "feel" for how you shape raw material into art, and the journal gives me a wonderful sense of your writing and revising processes. I am sure that I can simply cite the journal as a source for generalizations without having to quote it verbatim. It would be odious to repay your generosity by stealing your thunder. Again, I really hope you publish it. I am having a wonderful time just reading, and I save it for the evening, like dessert.

Thanks, too, for the note on the bibliographic files under the care of Jean Roden. The bibliography will continue to grow long after I put a lid on this, but I would like it to be up to date at the time of my defense.

My one regret is that, considering my progress this summer, I will probably finish the dissertation before the third part of the trilogy is published. Better leave something for other scholars to do, I guess.

Kerry Ahearn's article is interesting -- I like his focus on the complex women characters in Rascal Fair, and thought that the note on the "ice" motif was excellent. Ironic? Well, insofar that your Montana books explode the illusions so dear to the hearts of the writers of formula westerns, I guess so. The first introduction I wrote for the dissertation did a lot of the same kind of comparisons, but I have since thrown it out. To argue against the work of Louie L'Amour is to acknowledge its existence.

I am so sorry to hear of the death of Carol's father. I hope you are both recovering from the shock and the loss, and that life is taking shape around you again.

Best wishes,

Elizabeth

Ivan Doig
17021 Tenth Avenue N.W.
Seattle, WA 98177

July 22

Dear Ivan,

Just a quick note to keep you apprised of my progress. I neglected to contact you vis à vis the notes on Sea Runners because May and June swooped by without allowing me a single set of hours for dissertating. But now Henning is off to teach summer school in Oslo, the kids are in California with their grandmother, I am living on our farm on Lopez, and finally have time to write. When I came up here I had most of chapter one completed. Now chapter two is finished and three and four are outlined and partly written. The first two chapters are overviews/general analyses of your articles and books; I had to chop one long chapter into two. The only division which makes sense to me is nonfiction and fiction, since I don't want to argue some arbitrary criterion of development at this point -- each of your texts is unique. Each stretches its genre, too, but that's an observation I can make and still keep the division.

Chapter three is on folklore and folklife. Folklore is one of the few critical methods I am comfortable with, because it presents and analyzes information without first running it through a political sieve. After all these years of graduate school, I am still irritated by the practice of warping a text to fit a feminist or Marxist paradigm. Along that line, you may be pleased to know that I have given up trying to write about your work as "regional." I've discovered that it simply isn't possible. It will be challenging and rewarding enough to discuss aspects of your writing that I think readers ought to pay attention to.

Chapter four is on the uses of landscape, chapter five on style, chapter six a brief biography, if I may impose on you. The Twayne people will want one, if they accept the manuscript.

I would still like to look over the diary for Sea Runners, perhaps in September if that's convenient for you. It will add no more than a paragraph or two on composition process, and I will not submit it as part of the dissertation or manuscript without your approval. I do hope you publish those notes. As I told you, one of my cherished memories as a reader of Steinbeck was discovering his Journal of a Novel; my own cannibalistic desire to crawl underneath the skin of language and find the blood beneath, I suppose. The other imposition I will make one of these days is to ask you for a complete list of reviews. The reference books in the library -- damned if I can remember what they are called as I sit here -- are limited, and although I will contact local publications, I'm sure there are reviews and notes that will escape me.

Henning and I went to the annual Fourth of July VFW salmon cookout here on Lopez, and he has evidently been talking about me behind my back: one of the people he introduced me to commented with enthusiasm and at length upon my dissertation, and said, "Ivan Doig is my favorite author...I can't wait to read your rough draft!" And I replied, "I can't wait to write it." I intend to have most if it finished by the end of summer and to let it breathe awhile before I revise and submit it to the gimlet eyes of my committee.

When not reading/rereading/writing, I am enjoying our garden, the ever-present deer, the occasional eagle (who regards our two cats with a gourmandizing eye) the swifts which have built a nest under the eves and are busily feeding five nestlings whom our cats regard with a gourmandizing eye. Oh, dear.

I hope you and Carol are having a wonderful summer; my best to you both.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth Simpson

Box 1118
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(206) 468-3335

27 July '88

Dear Elizabeth--

Good to hear from you, and that you're progressing on the topic of me.

I guess I'm progressing, too--at least I've just finished the summer's quota of manuscript pages and can spend August away from daily duty at the keyboard. Been a bit of a rough summer until just recently. Carol and I were out in the extreme heat of eastern Montana, researching, when we got word that her father'd had a fatal heart attack. We're about through the aftermath of that, and beginning to get on with life.

I'm going to go ahead and send you a photocopy of the Sea Runners journal, tomorrow if I can get to it. I'd say you needn't feel you have to stint in commenting on anything it shows you about my process(es?) of writing and revising; my copyright concern is with much direct quotation. In other words, you're welcome to paraphrase a reasonably scholarly amount, and to quote a few times when you feel it's absolutely utterly inescapably necessary, okay? I do hope you get some fun out of the journal.

Brief biography: I don't have much of anything formal--am enclosing the current version. Contemporary Authors is doing a new expanded piece on me in its next edition, but I dunno when that is. Anyway, when you feel you'd like to talk to me, this fall or whenever, you can let me know what bio facts you need. Reviews etc.: the most complete file of them is at the Shoreline Community College library, lovingly tended by a friend of ours, Jean Roden.

While I'm at it, I'll pass along a copy of something Kerry Ahearn wrote about Rascal Fair. I'd never thought of myself as either ironic or Chekovian, but I guess I'm flattered anyway.

Happy writing.

p.s. The photocopied journal I'm sending, I will want back--as a spare copy--but only after you've had as thorough a look as you need for the dissertation.

28 July '88

Dear Elizabeth--

The photocopying of the Sea Runners journal turned out in reverse chronological order, so you may want to start from the bottom of the pile to have the earliest material first. Also, some of the entries--which are the size they are because the originals are 5x8 file cards--may be out of order, probably from when I pulled stuff out for the Seattle Pacific U. talk; feel free to rearrange into whatever order is most useful to you.

The "Blue" keyword on the entries refers to the working title I've had for this journal, "Blue as the Odyssey," which I can explain if you need to know (or maybe the pertinent entries will make it clear). The Tom Stewart referred to is my editor at Atheneum, and C is Carol.

all best

Elizabeth Simpson
6272 19th Ave. N.E.
Seattle, WA 98115
527-4549

January 1, 1988

Dear Ivan,

I just wanted to wish you and your wife the best of the season, and give you an update on the dissertation. I think I told you last year that I would be focusing exclusively on your approach to history, but I have since decided that, because this is the first dissertation on your work, it would be better to do an overview modeled on the Twayne American Authors Series.

The introduction (which is completed) places your work in context. My argument here is that the West has been represented in the American literary canon by two kinds of writing: the popular western, which is a redaction of communally created myths about the West, and Western regional writing, (a fairly recent form which marks a cultural coming of age) in which writers like you, Ken Kesey, Marilyn Robinson, Larry McMurtry, Norman MacLean, Bill Stafford, Scott Momaday and Leslie Silko examine the landscape (history, lifestyle, ethnography, etc.) of the West with fresh, personal, individual visions -- rewriting the West, as it were.

The first chapter will be an overview of your work, beginning with the pieces you have done for journals and then moving chronologically through the major texts. I want to discuss each text separately, and also comment on how each develops certain cross-canonical thematic and structural patterns.

The second chapter will focus on your approach to history: I am particularly interested in your use of oral narrative, memory, primary sources and limited narrators, and in the intricate interplay between English Creek and Dancing at the Rascal Fair.

The third chapter will deal with regional features in your work: the imaginative response to the landscape, the use of local folklife, regional expressions, culture world view. Unfortunately, many scholars and readers still regard regional writing as provincial, parochial, "local color." My notion is that all good writing is regional, embodying the universal in the particular, the abstract in the concrete.

The fourth chapter will discuss style. I've done no serious work on that yet, so I'm unsure about how it will be structured or argued: I'll be working on it as I write the other chapters.

I would like to conclude with a brief chronology and biography, and, if I may, include an interview with you. I have no idea at this point of the dissertation's being published -- whether it is or not, I'd like it to stand as a source work for other students to turn to.

I am hoping to be finished by June, to rewrite in the summer, and to defend in the fall. I must tell you that, even given the hurdles of writing a dissertation (which is a strange animal) working with your texts is engrossing and exciting, and this project has become a real labor of love.

Best regards,

Elizabeth

P.S. Lars Warme, who teaches with my husband in the Scandinavian department at the U., sends his regards. He said you consulted with him briefly on traditional Swedish dishes, and I came across the reference to "sweet porridge with cinnamon" in re-reading The Sea Runners yesterday, and grinned. If it's anything like the cream porridge we ate on festive occasions in Norway, it's incredibly rich and cloying. No wonder, after their spartan diet, Wennberg was dreaming of it!

E.

6 Jan. '88

Dear Elizabeth--

I appreciate the update. It sounds as if you've been doing an ungodly amount of work on the dissertation; I hope it doesn't become for you what William Safire cited in this morning's NY Times, a MEGO--My Eyes Glaze Over.

Anyway, quickly and mostly to pass along the main few reviews and interviews generated by Rascal Fair, which I thought you might want to see, if only for biblio purposes: yes, I'm still game for an interview sometime. Try let me know three weeks or a month ahead, if you can, so I can clear you some decent time; and summer isn't a good time; other than that, whenever. And about style: I don't know that either of these are helpful, but I find myself quoting or referring to them fairly often, so they must reflect something I think. Richard Poirer, NY Review of Books, Feb. 22, '79, according to my note to myself: "...The most obvious and powerful 'fictional substance,' the substance that can be said to hit you in the face, are the sounds that come off the page, and it can be and has been demonstrated that the language in Shakespeare or Melville, in Hawthorne or James, nearly always creates its own justification for being as it is and not otherwise." From my intro to the Penguin edition of R.G. Vliet's novel Scorpio Rising, though this is maybe more about regionalism than style: "Writers of caliber can ground their work in specific land and lingo and yet be writing of that larger country, life, as well."

Happy '88 to you and your household. The way Rascal Fair has gone, Carol and I are thriving.

February 18, 1987

Dear Mr. Doig,

I am a graduate student/teaching assistant at the University of Washington, and am presently researching material for my dissertation, which is on your work.

Your volumes, of course, are readily available, but the articles you have published in magazines, journals and during your work in journalism, are distressingly elusive. I have been tracking them down bit by bit, and enjoying the search. Unfortunately, I am leaving for Europe early in March, and will not have time before then to search them out thoroughly. If you have a readily available bibliography, or a list of the magazines which have published your work, I would so appreciate your sending it on to me, so that I can duplicate the articles and take them with me.

When I am a bit farther along, I would like to meet with you--some time in the fall, perhaps?

Thank you so much for your consideration; I regret intruding on you in this way. I hope your current work is going well. I am eager to see the second volume of your trilogy.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Simpson

Elizabeth Simpson
P.O. Box 33161
Seattle, WA 98133

362-8916

mar 19 deadline for my articles

22 Feb. '87

Dear Elizabeth--

As far as I know, you're the first to want to do a dissertation on my writing. So the good news is that you have a clear path at it, while the bad news is that none of the groundwork, such as a bibliography of my magazine pieces, has been done.

Your letter, though, did cross paths with a periodic good intention of mine: to talk to the UW archives about transferring my files of my magazine wook from here in my office to their shelves. I'll in fact try to get in touch with the archivist, Karyl Winn, this week and see what can be worked out. If you'd let me know how to reach you by phone, Elizabeth, I'll give you a call as soon as I talk to Karyl. (You can reach me here, between 2 and 5 weekday afternoons, at the above number; my answering machine is usually on until 2.) All in all, I think there must be 150 or more magazine pieces; their files take up 3½ file cabinet drawers. If I can't work out something quick and clearcut with Karyl--a way for you to have access to the collection before it gets tied up in the archives' cataloguing procedure, for instance--maybe we can arrange it for you to photocopy what you need from here at my place, though that'd be more cumbersome for both of us.

Meanwhile, you may have already discovered that Pacific Search--now Pacific Northwest magazine--did its own annual index, and my many articles for PS show up in there. There were interviews of me in Seattle Review, Spring '85, and ~~Montana Magazine~~ the couple I'm enclosing, besides the tapes made by Eugene Smith of the UW English Dept. (he would know the whereabouts of those). The Montana Magazine of Western History, winter '85, has a fairly long article I did about Montana's influence on my work. Besides the couple of interviews, I'm also sending you my current biography sheet, and copies of part of a packet of correspondence I recently provided to history prof Bill Robbins of Oregon State, to help him with an article he's doing on me. I think the cover letter to Bill Robbins explains that material for you. Beyond that, yes, I'll be game to talk with you this fall, to the extent my time and energy will let me--the trilogy's second novel, Dancing at the Rascal Fair, will be published then and I'll be traveling around to bookstores etc. on its behalf.

best wishes

6 March '87

Dear Elizabeth--

Before they get away from me, here are a couple of quick thoughts that came to me as I've been gathering my freelance magazine article files for the UW archives:

--The enclosed copy of The Rotarian (you can have it, it's an extra) is one I edited--that is, I was put in charge of the entire issue, assigned the articles to the writers, and wrote 2 of them myself. The rodeo article has in it what I think was my first bit of writing about my father. The other piece of my writing is the "Wandering the High West" photo essay, pp. 22-31, and while it's not a work of prose I'd defend to the death now, it was fairly ritzy for The Rotarian. For your purposes, you might be interested in the linkages I deliberately did from the end of one caption to the next--the caption on p. 25 ending with "know", the next on p. 26 beginning with "Knowing" and ending with "slopes," the next one beginning "Down the slopes" etc. Form, and making the language sing to itself, interested me even then.

--I know you're going to be pressed for time in looking at the collection of magazine articles when they reach the UW archives, so here's a hunch that occurred to me as I was coming across pieces I hadn't thought about in years: contrary to logic, some of the locally published articles may hold more ideas for you than the larger national pieces, on a quick first winnowing. Often the pieces I did for the Seattle Times Sunday magazine, or its Everett Herald counterpart, were more imaginative or personal than national publications wanted. The Seattle Times piece mentioned in one of the photocopied letters I sent you--the article is titled something like "The Hometown Boy"--for instance had no chance nationally, yet I seem to remember it as one of my more sophisticated pieces of writing and of drawing on the past. Also, in the folders there's a piece in a little publication called add 1 which I think is my first published article, adapted from a term paper I did while I was a junior(?) at Northwestern, and I guess it's more or less about history.

best, and happy traveling

September 18

Dear Ivan,

Here are the last two chapters -- the landscape chapter has been revised, the style chapter has not. When I've revised the last chapter and the whole thing has breathed by itself for awhile, Mark and I will reread all the chapters and see how they hold together. I suspect that I have rather "over-Stegnered" in a couple of places. Also enclosed is a copy of the paper I'll present at the WLA conference; Stegner again! There's no getting rid of the man. But it does seem to me that your work is a wonderful answer to the problems he raised in that essay. I'm not completely happy with the paper yet, but I'm already past the deadline for sending copies to other session members. I'll have some time to fool with it before the conference. I'm looking forward to your Wednesday night reading. See you then.

Greetings to Carol --

Best wishes,

Elizabeth

# Folklore as History in the Work of Ivan Doig

Elizabeth Simpson
University of Washington

The theme of this conference, "Old West, New West," touches on one of the major issues writers and scholars face today, the problem of history in Western writing. By "history," I mean a relationship to the past which gives meaning to the present, a sense of shared tradition and experience which are the foundations of regional and personal identity. It has been argued that the special circumstances under which the West was settled have created a sense of discontinuity for westerners, and for writers who try to articulate western experience. I would like to discuss some of the ramifications of these circumstances, and then explore one solution as it appears in the work of Ivan Doig.

In his classic study, "History, Myth and the Western Writer," Wallace Stegner argues that western writing suffers from the patterns of western history, which he describes as exploitive and disruptive. He notes that in the nineteenth century, settlement of the West often amounted to nothing more than a raid on its resources: one place after another was stripped of its minerals, its timber, its water, its grass, and then abandoned. Exploitation of their land left many westerners with a feeling of having been betrayed -- as if their Eden had been destroyed before it could be realized. Furthermore, the get-rich-and-get-out mentality created a large migrant population which precluded the development of stable communities in the West. The absence of stable communities, in turn, stunted the growth of tradition. Stegner writes:

> Despite their colorful history, there has hardly been a continuous community life in an Aspen or a Telluride; and when oilfields are superimposed on orchards in California, something disruptive has happened in the life of both people and towns...Few western places can show, even during their short life, the uninterrupted life of a Maine fishing village or a country seat in Indiana or Iowa or a southern town clustered around the courthouse square. (p. 191-192).

Stegner goes on to say that the patterns of western history have caused western writing to fall into two categories, neither of which has been able to demonstrate a meaningful continuity between past and present, nor to create a sense of community in the region. The first category is comprised of formula Westerns. These, according to Stegner, reflect myth rather than history, and furthermore, tend to elevate the lamentable lack of community to the status of a genre motif: the hero is a loner who might come to the aid of beleaguered town or schoolmarm, but rides off again into the sunset. "Community" in formula Western fiction is scorned as being a refuge of the weak rather than a source of tradition and strength.

The second category Stegner calls "western literature with a small **w**," in which he includes the work of Walter Van Tilburg Clark, Willa Cather and A.B. Guthrie, among others. He points out that these writers are usually western by birth and therefore write from a strong sense of place. But they are frequently overwhelmed by what has happened in that place, the urbanization and industrialization which have defiled a fragile landscape. Their attitude toward the past, therefore, is nostalgic, even

elegaic, and their attitude toward the present is one of disgust. Their work, according to Stegner, does not provide westerners with a sense of regional identity, nor a feeling that their lives are linked meaningfully with the past. He writes:

> One of the lacks, through all the newly swarming regions of the West, is that millions of westerners, old and new, have no sense of a personal and **possessed** past, no sense of any continuity between the real western past which has been mythicized almost out of recogniza-bility and a real western present that seems as cut-off and pointless as a ride on a merry-go-round that can't be stopped (p. 199).

Stegner's essay was published in 1967. In the twenty years since, there has been an explosion of writing in and about the West, some of the most innovative and vital writing anywhere in America. Many of these writers have responded to the problems Stegner pointed out by redefining the concept of community and by finding continuities between past and present which do not rely on myth, nor on feelings of nostalgia and disgust. There are many avenues to follow here, but I would like to focus specifically on the work of Ivan Doig, and examine how he uses folklore to expand the definitions of "community" and "history" and thereby finds significant connections between people and meaningful avenues to the past.

It is clear from Stegner's essay that he defines "community" largely in terms of place -- towns like Aspen and Telluride, whose development has been fitful and discontinuous. Doig is also aware of uneven urban development in the West, as he documents in

This House of Sky. The Montana countryside is dotted with abandoned homesteads, each named for the first family that tried, and failed, to make a life there. The towns are divided between ramshackle buildings which meet the needs of the present and huge empty carcasses of grander edifices which reflect a time when these towns were more ambitious about themselves. Both the buildings and the ambitions have been abandoned, and people are denied a sense of continuity in their town's history.

But Doig is also aware that the relationship between community and tradition is dual: communities create tradition, but tradition also creates communities. All of us are members of many tradition-communities: ethnic, familial, religious, occupational, fraternal, avocational, recreational, as well as local. We are guided in our work, our crafts, our aesthetics and foodways and dress codes, our sense of convention and propriety by the folk groups we belong to, and these groups are only partly created by location.

One brief example from This House of Sky will illustrate what I mean. This is from a scene where Ivan, his father Charlie and the rancher, McGrath, are tallying sheep:

> McGrath has kept the count steady with his chopping hand. When Dad does the count, he stands half-sideways to the river of sheep, his right hand low off his hip and barely flicking as each sheep passes. I have seen buyers, the men in gabardine suits and creamy Stetsons, with other habits -- pointing just two fingers, or pushing the flat palm of a hand toward the sheep -- as they count. The one trick everyone has is somehow to pump the end of an arm at each whizzing sheep, make the motion joggle a signal to the brain.

By redefining "community" to mean a group of people who share knowledge, traditions and values, Doig asserts that the rancher McGrath, and Charlie Doig and the buyers in gabardine suits are, regardless of where they live, members of the same community. They know the same things: the difficulties of finding good herders; how to dock lambs and castrate them; how to "jacket" a motherless lamb so that another ewe will take him; when to shear and when to sell, when to throw the flock on new grass; how to train a good sheep dog. Skills like these are informally acquired, passed from person to person, and connect the people who share them. The rancher carries these traditions with him like a snail carries its house on its back. And he will, therefore, have more in common with other sheep ranchers in other parts of the country than he will with the banker in his own home town.

Even though much of the working population in Montana is migrant, its members are not homeless, nor are they strangers to one another. In Doig's novel English Creek, for example, the same men come together year after year for seasonal jobs such as haying or lambing or firefighting, and form effective crews because they know each other well and know how to work together. The temporary communities they create are oddly cosmopolitan: the men swap stories, talk about other towns or ranches they have seen, learn from each other's experiences. Their communities are work-related, rather than place-related, but are nonetheless stable and meaningful.

Folklife creates bonds that are diachronic as well as synchronic, stretching across time as well as space. The traditions which comprise folklife are both stable and innovative: they have their roots in the past, but remain viable because they change with changing circumstances.

The first two books of the Montana trilogy, English Creek and Dancing at the Rascal Fair, follow the fortunes of the MacCaskill family through several generations from the homesteading period in the 1800's through the beginning of the Second World War. Doig examines the continuities and changes in the cultural life of the region in scenes which focus on its folklife: dances, rodeos, picnics, ranch life. For example, in Rascal Fair, which takes place in the late nineteeth and early twentieth centuries, homesteaders dance Scottish dances to songs they brought with them from Scotland, such as "Tam Lin," and "Sir Patrick McWhirr." Two generations later, descendents of these immigrants dance square dances, guided by a caller, to Western songs like "The Dude and Belle." The tradition of community dances has remained stable; the dances themselves have changed over time. Similarly, the turn-of-the-century rodeos in Rascal Fair are impromptu affairs, Sunday celebrations that young men hold informally in somebody's corral. The rodeos in English Creek, two generations later, are more sophisticated and professional, but still feature events that recall the past.

The past is important in Doig's work: he himself is an historian as well as a novelist, and historical events inform the

plots of his novels and shape the lives of his characters. In Rascal Fair, his characters move West in response to the Homestead Act, and spend their lives working to meet its demands and struggle against its shortcomings. They experience the development of the railroads, which expand their markets, and the establishment of the National Forests and the grazing acts that restrict their access to grasslands. They suffer from the devastation of the First World War and the influenza epidemic of 1918.

These events are history writ large, and comprise the formal written histories which order and interpret the past. But even though our lives are shaped by these events, we are usually unaware of their lasting significance -- they are best understood in retrospect. Our sense of a personal and possessed past, as Stegner calls it, is created by history writ small -- family history, local history, the kind that usually does not make its way into textbooks. Informal knowledge of the past is essential to the formation of personal and regional identity, and to a sense of continuity. In a passage from a book of stories read aloud by the school children in Rascal Fair, Doig illustrates the function of history writ small:

> "One more sun, sighed the king at evening, "and now another darkness. This has to stop. The days fly past us as if they were racing pigeons. We may as well be pebbles, for all the notice life takes of us or we of it. No one holds in mind the blind harper when he is gone. No one commemorates the girl who grains the geese. None of the deeds of our people leave the least tiny mark upon time...Why is

> it that the moon keeps better track of itself than we manage to? And the seasons put us to shame, they always know which they are, who's been, whose turn now, who comes next, all that sort of thing. Why can't we have memories as nimble as those? Tell me that, whoever can (RF, p. 131-132).

The issue for the king is one of memory. Without the ordering power of memory, events are discreet, isolated, meaningless. In This House of Sky, Doig notes:

> Memory is a set of sagas we live by, much the way of the Norse wildmen in their bear shirts. That such rememberings take place in a single cave of brain rather than half a hundred minds warrened wildly into one another makes them sagas no less. By now, my days would seem blank, unlit, if these familiar surges could not come (Sky, p. 10).

Just as individual identity is shaped by personal memories, communal identities are shaped by folk tradition, oral history, local legends. The king in the story solves his problem by appointing a "remembrancer," and Doig does the same. Each of his books is graced by a remembrancer, a storyteller, such as Charlie Doig in This House of Sky and Toussaint Rennie, who appears in both Rascal Fair and English Creek. Charlie Doig makes life in the valley meaningful to his son by telling him stories about it. In English Creek and Rascal Fair, Toussaint Rennie connects the past and the present by recounting events he has experienced. Part Indian, part white, very old but still vital in the 1940's, Toussaint belongs to two cultures and two centuries. By his own account, he has witnessed most of the history of Montana: the

decimation of the Native American tribes and the buffalo herds, the great cattle drives, the construction of the Valier irrigation project, the establishment of homesteads, the growth of the town of Gros Ventre. The stories that Toussaint tells remain alive in the men of the McCaskill family, who feel the resonance of history when they look over hay fields in the valley and picture the buffalo and cattle herds which once grazed there. Historical significance for them is not nostalgia for the past, but an understanding of how they themselves fit into the life of the valley which preceeded them and which will continue after they are gone.

Oral history is the provenance of the folk: it is literally "his story" and "her story," and its significance lies in the personalizing of events, the details of lives that are so often neglected in formal histories.

In Winter Brothers, Doig comments on the limitations of formal history and implies the need to supplement it with oral history. Winter Brothers explores the journals of James Swan, a pioneer of the Northwest Coast. Swan recorded much of the tribal histories of the Makah and the Haida Indians, and Doig notes that these histories, of necessity, become abbreviated through time as historians use them for different scholarly purposes. He notes that an old Indian woman, Stingess, a remembrancer in her own right, spent an evening telling Swan about the Haida practice of tattooing, and Swan recorded some of the information in his diaries. Doig notes:

> How elliptical, literally, the past becomes. Stingess culls from what may have been an evening-long narrative an answer for Swan. Who chooses as much of it as he thinks worth cramming into his diary pages. At my hundred years' remove, I select lines from his and frame them in trios of editing dots. From her Haida tradition to Swan's white tribe to my even paler version. The logical end of the process signaled by my ellipses, I suppose, might be for the lore of Haida tattooing to compress down to something like a single magical speck of print, perhaps the period after the news that Stingess has got tired of all the chit-chat and hobbled home. But I've heard it offered that a period is simply the shorthand for the dots of an ellipsis. That a story never does end, only can pause. So that would not complete it either, the elliptical transit from Stingess to Swan to me to whomever abbreviates the past next.

History writ large is essential: our lives are, after all, determined by the major events that comprise it. But a personal, possessed past, which links people one to another and connects them to the past, is the stuff of folklore. Stegner ended his essay with the lament that no western writer had, as yet, created a western Yoknapatawpha county or discovered an historical continuity comparable to that which Faulkner traced. I think it is clear that that is one of the tasks Ivan Doig has set himself, and through his explorations of folklife in Montana, he is well on his way to achieving it.