"We wanted a piece that would have the closeness of reality and the distance of myth, because if there is no distance you aren't amazed, and if there is no closeness you aren't touched."

--Peter Brook

...this grey town

that pipes the morning up before the lark

with shrieking steam, and from a hundred stalks

lacquers the sooty sky; where hammers clang

on iron hulls, and cranes in harbours creak,

rattle and swing, whole cargoes on their necks;

where men sweat gold that others hoard or spend,

and lurk like vermin in their narrow streets;

this old grey town...

is world enough for me.

They call it regional, this relevance--
the deepest place we have: in this pool forms
the model of our land, a lonely one,
responsive to the wind. Everything we own
has brought us here: from here we speak.

--William Stafford,
"Lake Chelan"

Someone has said that history that tries to be fiction is boring, and fiction that pretends to be history is specious. Ivan Doig seems to prevail over this dilemma of the historical novelist with the pure grace of his language. His work reminds us that style, after all, is substance, that how we say something is what we're saying.

--John Rolfe Gardiner

Fame brings a constant, admiring assault, a request from civil strangers to be brilliant or outrageous or at least informed. It wears one down and forces one to substitute a mask for a face--sooner or later, they fuse. This is doubly a danger for the writer, since privacy is the sine qua non of his work, and he has no training in the actor's life.

--Nicholas Delbanco about John Gardner

...the book, like all first-person dialect novels, is an impossibility: it converts a fluid spoken language into a fixed imaginary written one. It makes sound visible.

--Whitney Balliett

...the single, running, all-embracing manner of the storyteller. The manner of the story-teller must have a certain imperviousness. His fictional reality must replace the real.

--Alastair Reid

Anybody can write on a good day.

COWBOY IN ENGLAND



Life is the high wire. All else is waiting.

CONVERSATION ENRICHES THE UNDERSTANDING, BUT SOLITUDE IS THE SCHOOL OF GENIUS.

Irony is for people who don't have to decide at age 18 what they are going to be when they grow up.

--Russell Baker

Local color in a novel means that it has such quality of texture and background that it could not have been written in any other place or by any one else than a native.

--Hamlin Garland

The most innocent sentence has a trap of poetry.

I pray that your writing will continue to be sufficiently successful that I will have access to it, but not so successful that your life will be hampered by fame.

Are they ahead of us?

Give the imagination some place to go.

We are only as we find out we are.

--Charles Olson

The classic is the local fully realized,

words marked by a place.

--William Carlos Williams