

### PRAIRIE NOCTURNE quirks I want to retain

This is not intended to be a complete list of copy-editing guidance, but it is such items as I was able to note down in my final reading of the manuscript, to help the copy editor decipher my intention on these usages. Any other usage questions that the copy editor compiles, I'll happily help to resolve by phone call and fax. (This system worked exceedingly well, and saved everybody a lot of time and effort, in the copy-editing of *Bucking the Sun* and a couple of my other books back then.) So, when the copy editor gets a list compiled--and before changes are entered on the manuscript--please check them out with me at (206)542-6658.

#### individual vocal characterizations

Monty says "piana" for "piano"

Dolph says "git" for "get"

Wes a time or two says "Speaking of" without a definite object

Monty and Dolph and other relatively uneducated characters say "sort of",  
as in "it sort of keeps the curiosity going" on p. 110;

Wes and Susan and other more upscale characters say "kind of"

#### idiosyncratic sentences

Any irregular sentence structures are intended. Examples would be:

--phrases standing alone, as on p. 18: "Including his own."

--subjectless, as on p. 21: "Hesitated a moment."

--verbless, as on p. 35: "The dust-up over his fantan debt, nothing really hurt except his dignity..."

#### regional spellings which possibly don't match dictionary versions:

Fort Assiniboine (Acknowledgments explain variant from tribal name  
"Assiniboin")

Blackfeet (not "Blackfoot")

Metis (note placement of accent mark)

saddlehorse

workhorses

barkeep (in Zanzibar scene pp. 163-167 except single usage of "barkeeper"  
on p. 167 as aid to reader)

son of a bitch is intentionally spelled different ways as characters of different  
backgrounds use the word: it should not be standardized

grub line

Halvers (p. 23), not Halves

sheepdip

everyplace (p. 114)

bib and tucker

one-lunger (person with one lung)

stockyards

berglass

workshoe

half-ass

laundryworks

washhouse

butcherknife (one word when used as verb, p. 220)

stockbuyers

brushpoppers

siccing (as in siccing a dog onto...)

someplace

go-round

workings-over  
 short-timer  
 play-pretty  
 slaughter-beef  
 what-all  
 stand-to  
 flat-iron  
 sidepork  
 clothespegged  
 trapline  
 day-herders  
 medicoes (plural of "medico", militaryese for doctor)  
 heebie-jeebies  
 hipper-dipper  
 poorbox  
 fancypants  
 brockle-face  
 landclaims  
 runthrough (meaning "rehearsal")  
 sighted-in his voice (p. 427)  
 dead-level  
 dibdabs  
 shinnying (not "shinning")  
 washerwoman  
 wetnurse  
 sun-up (this goes against the dictionary version, but better reflects western  
 pronunciation of it)  
 misery-whip

intentionally spliced-together words, neologisms, and usages chosen for purpose of clarity, such as hyphenating when used as modifier:

choirsong  
 workspots  
 leave me off (not "let")  
 tinsmith  
 budbreak  
 downpayment  
 pathlength  
 tanyard  
 sin-eater  
 carpet-beater  
 cartman  
 pig-iron  
 empty-windowed  
 rowdy-dow  
 tumpy-tump  
 hunky-dory  
 voicebox  
 no-woman's-land  
 ink-teardrop  
 hotfooting  
 guardrailings  
 blood-boiling

windhover  
 put-upon look  
 windtunes  
 breathworth  
 johnnybox  
 centerstage  
 trouper when referring to stage performer, trooper when referring to cavalryman  
 lightninglike  
 a going-over  
 cross-streets  
 simmer-brown  
 air-promised  
 magic-lamp burnish  
 building-stone  
 eye-flicker  
 skip-step  
 the Observance (when the Nov. 11 event stands alone in reference; otherwise it's  
     the "Armistice Day observance")  
 distant-faced  
 fate-haunted  
 city-spangled  
 stock-still  
 puppet-play

fictitious historical references (i.e., don't try to look them up)

the poet Cheyne  
 the Flemish romantic Wasson  
 the Lincoln Theater house announcer, Charles York

place names and people's names

Princes Street in Edinburgh (not Princes' nor Princess)  
 Brevoort Hotel (double 'o')  
 St. Mihiel  
 Gatlinburg (no 'g' after 'n')  
 Roland Hayes, not Ronald  
 Bernarr Macfadden (not "Bernard" and no interior capitals in last name)  
 Joseph Field, not Fields  
 Sixteenmile Canyon  
 Garryowen (song title; one word)  
 Miss Pond Cream (colloquial for "Pond's Cream," a very white cosmetic)

standardizations I'd like to have and probably didn't achieve

plow, instead of "plough"  
 smidgen (with "e")  
 railcar (as in Wes's private car)

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How I came to write this book:

All of us went to school with some indelible kid whom we've wondered about ever since: "Whatever happened to--?" One inspired day in the writing of what turned out to be the best-selling of my books, *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, I had the luck to create Susan Duff at the age of nine and perch her on horseback, regally leading "the child cavalry of Scotch Heaven" from their homestead shanties to their one-room schoolhouse in 1893. Susan arrived onto my pages bossy, smart, indomitable, and possessed of an unforgettable singing voice. Naturally I had to know what would happen when she grew up, and that landed the two of us, intrepid character and intrigued writer, into an era so volatile that our shared American highland never recovered from it. In World War I, Montana suffered the highest toll of war dead, proportionate to population, of any state. The 11/11 of the time--the November 11th armistice that at last stilled the guns in 1918--became a necessarily cathartic day for that generation, expressed in observances and "Over There" memorial projects such as the one I involve Susan in. A homefront disaster was unfolding in the meantime as the great wave of prairie settlement crashed and broke, and on the currents of blame and fear the Ku Klux Klan maneuvered into the western states; at the Klan's peak in the mid-1920's, there was a white-hooded chapter in nearly every county of Montana. This fictional chance to explore led me into research caches such as the Klan records of the next town along the railroad from where I lived when I was Susan's "child cavalry" age, and a heartbreakingly vivid diary, retrieved from a city dump, of an officer killed on the Western Front just before Armistice; and much, much more. But I owe the *Prairie Nocturne* story to Susan, over whose squarely-set shoulder my imagination has wanted to peer since that first lucky writing day.

Author's description of the book:

Ranging widely through time and geographical arc--from the battlefields of World War I to a romance in Edinburgh to a ghostly cavalry fort to the Harlem Renaissance and the Harvard Club in New York City--*Prairie Nocturne* draws together an unlikely trio of

thwarted performers in one last inspired grasp at life's set of gold rings: love and attainment. In so doing, the book carries forward into the war-haunted harshness of the early 20th century a handful of characters first met in *Dancing at the Rascal Fair* and challenges them with new figures pushing forth from the baronial West.

Wes Williamson, once the political scion of a cattle-empire family, inaugurates the plot when he seeks out an old amour: Susan Duff, suffrage activist and song recitalist whose career has stalled into teaching tunes to moppets. He announces he has the pupil of a lifetime for her: Monty, his down-at-the-pockets black chauffeur. Monty, fully named Montgomery Rathbun, is distantly known to Susan from their growing-up years in the Two Medicine country--he is the descendant of a "buffalo soldier," the black troopers sent west to fight Indians--and yet an enforced stranger because of the racial divide.

When Susan realizes he possesses a singing voice of rare splendor, she joins Wes's Pygmalion-like project to launch Monty on a performing career. From there the book becomes a tantalizing melody of involvement and suspenseful peril in the form of night-riders set against Monty and the Williamson ranch by the Ku Klux Klan. The crossed fates of this trio of main characters, as Susan and Monty must cope with their growing attraction to each other across the era's dangerous barrier of color, as Wes's mysterious motives increasingly unsettle everyone including himself, make this a deeply longitudinal novel, into everlasting questions of allegiance, the grip of the past on us all, and the heart-held costs of love and career.

*Prairie Nocturne* finds her at life's longitude of forty, with scarring costs of love and career behind her but a revivifying crossing of fates just ahead. And in tracing Susan's redirected life onward, in her tantalizing melody of involvements with this pair of men who have little in common except ambition and her, the book is an exploration through time and

geography in search of heart-held motives, everlasting questions of allegiance, and the grip of the past on us all.