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misunderstandings all play a part as Parisian sophistication collides with the affability and simple pleasures of the Great Plains. Touring America was Natalie's idea. But she had not planned on being accompanied on a cross-country bus by her playboy fiancé, Pierre. Nor had they anticipated being stranded in Seldom, Nebraska, population 395. But that is exactly what happens to this French couple, and they quickly find themselves being taken in by the obliging citizens of Seldom: Natalie by Mrs. Christiansen, a retired high school teacher who runs a rooming house for women, and Pierre by Owen, a gas station owner and ambitious winemaker in an unlikely part of the world. And here also, the separated couple become enchanted by the locals. Natalie is soon being wooed by Dick Tupper, a handsome and honest rancher with a rambling farmhouse and lots of wide open space. Pierre falls quickly for Iona, a beautiful, no-nonsense waitress in the local diner. Soon everyone is hatching plots to get what they want: Owen needs help from Pierre's world-class wine business if he is ever going to sell his Nebraska vintage; Pierre wants Iona; Natalie thinks she wants Dick Tupper, but maybe it's Dick who wants Iona, and Natalie who wants Pierre? The fun and surprises are many in this playful romance.

An anthology of stories reflecting more than twenty years of writing explores a diverse range of topics, from Oscar Wilde and murder to dementia and romance.

The Journey Continues: Ministry Facing Challenge and Change will travel though the mountain and plains states. The quest for meaning that began in Journey to God will be expanded through the challenges and changes of raising a family, facing the ever changing expectations of ministers, church, and faith in God. Our young family is now a family with teenagers, driver licenses, cars, and dating. The one-salaried family becomes a two-salaried family with positive and negative reactions. Maintaining a Christian presence in the face of negative comments and ridicule is part of the experience of serving God in our world. During the doctoral program, some role reversal takes place as teenagers ask dad to see his report card along with, "Have you done your homework yet?" The teens and dad take over cooking duties as Mom's work schedule changes. A new experience of "burnt offerings" at the dinner table becomes frequent. The ministry will face questions that challenge the role of ministers, campus ministers, and chaplains in the face of a fast growing improvement in health care, technological advances in communication, information, and office equipment. The computer age opens the doors to the inexperienced to enter the job market ahead of or replacing of older, experienced workers. As change continues, values are modified or set aside. The bottom line and compliance issues take the place of hard work and customer service. The idea of being kind to others changes to a "get yours before they get theirs" attitude. Attempting to serve when the church was moved from the mainstream to the sidelines is part of the challenge change brings. Having to prove something that once was taken for granted is part of regaining an awareness of the value of the Christian Faith.

In *Hotly in Pursuit of the Real*, the beloved bestselling novelist Ron Hansen opens the doors of his writing studio to share with us his passions for history, scandal, theology, Jesuits, the American West, and golf (which he plays even in bad

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soon they are conducting a white-hot affair involving hotel rooms, secret letters, clandestine travels, and above all, Ruth's increasing insistence that Judd kill her husband. Could he do it? Would he? What follows is a thrilling exposition of a murder plan, a police investigation, the lovers' attempt to escape prosecution, and a final reckoning for both of them that lays bare the horror and sorrow of what they have done. Dazzlingly well-written and artfully constructed, this impossible-to-put-down story marks the return of an American master known for his elegant and vivid novels that cut cleanly to the essence of the human heart, always and at once mysterious and filled with desire.

Suspecting that his errant son's death is murder instead of suicide, Colorado rancher Atticus Cody pursues his quest for the truth.

A fictionalized portrait of the legendary outlaw Jesse James, his violent career, and his murderer, Robert Ford, in an epic tale of the Old West

Gathers stories by Margaret Atwood, Raymond Carver, John Irving, Joyce Carol Oates, John Updike, and T. Coraghessan Boyle

In the tradition of Flannery O'Connor and Andre Dubus, *A Stay Against Confusion* explores the role that religious belief and literature play in one writer's life. All creative writing is, in the words of Robert Frost, "a stay against confusion." It tries to find a harmony and order that we only fleetingly detect beneath the chaos of everyday life, and to point out motivations and causalities in what seem to be random and often meaningless acts. Religion has also functioned in this way for Ron Hansen, and it shares with literature both a reverence for mystery and the use of metaphor to communicate another order that we will never fully perceive or comprehend. In this rich and deeply felt collection of essays, Hansen talks about his novels, his childhood and family, and about such mentors as John Gardner. He explores prayer, stigmata, twentieth-century martyrs, and the Eucharist. A profile of his grandfather, a "tough-as-nails, brook-no-guff Colorado rancher," finds a place alongside a wonderfully informative portrait of Saint Ignatius of Loyola. A brilliant reading of a story by Leo Tolstoy follows an appreciation of the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins. A surprisingly intimate book, *A Stay Against Confusion* brings together the literary and religious impulses that inform the life of one of our most gifted fiction writers.

Stories of the heartland by the National Book Award finalist and author of *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*. "Nebraska captures a rowdy, changing America. Written with wit and brawny lyricism, in voices ranging from hip to tender, the stories gathered here are as diverse and expansive as the country they celebrate...References to America's heartland abound throughout the book and serve as a central metaphor for what's close to American hearts, what connects us: dreams, myths and possibilities as vast as the Great Plains. Wise and smart-

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alecky, creaking with legend and crackling with modernisms, these tales are about American obsessions past and present.” –The Washington Post Book World “Just as Raymond Carver came to be identified with a Pacific Northwest populated by blue-collar workers, and just as Richard Ford has crafted a Montana full of drifters, so Ron Hansen has carved out his own geographical niche. His Nebraska is a distinctive mix of 19th century settlers and 1980s breadwinners, of sudden storms and life-long yearnings, of lost souls stranded in the middle of nowhere.” –USA Today “Beautifully crafted stories... Wickedness, evil, malice is called by name; and for Hansen’s people the snake in the garden never fails to appear.” —The New York Times “Breathtaking virtuosity...These short narratives are utterly clean and smooth; they click together like a collection of river-washed stones that are each remarkably different yet polished by the same hand.”—Publishers Weekly

Is God for real? Is there any meaning to life? These are the questions that urged a nine-year-old to start a quest that has lasted over sixty-nine years. The journey goes from coast to coast and from border to border. The events run the gamut of the last half of the previous century: racial prejudice, school integration, Vietnam debates, and the place of Christianity in our sociopolitical society. The accounts describe facing violence without fear, and finding solutions to complex problems. What is it like to raise a family in a parsonage? Raising a family anywhere is a challenge and a joy. Whether in a parsonage or neighborhood household, having a faith to live by is a resource that makes the difference. What is different about Journey to God? The approach is to use the experiences in our everyday life together and in language anyone can understand. One does not have to be highly educated or have special spiritual experiences to discover how the divine works in today's society. Journey to God demonstrates how an everyday person with everyday abilities can experience a presence today that is usually reserved for the days of the Bible. While the characters in the Bible seem bigger than life, one does not have to be bigger--one only has to be alive to experience the same sense of the divine most assume exists only in the past.

Traditional Chinese edition of *On Becoming a Novelist* by John Gardner.

Ron Hansen's sense of religious vocation is the impetus for his "faith-inspired" fiction, and that vocation is clearly discernible in the novels *Mariette in ecstasy*, *Hitler's niece*, and *Atticus*. Far from reticent about realities not often confronted by pulpits - such as sexuality and incest - and serious about the matter of a father's love for his children, Hansen delves particularly deeply into one or all of these issues in these novels. Hansen, with his Christian worldview, bravely confronts the realities in a way that Christianity itself has failed to do. This thesis examines both the literary and the theological merit of Hansen's faith-inspired fiction, which may well serve as a model for other writers of the genre. A new novel from Ron Hansen, the award-winning author of *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert*

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Ford, about an iconic American criminal of the old West: legendary outlaw, Billy the Kid. Born Henry McCarty, Billy the Kid was a diminutive, charming, blond-haired young man who, growing up in New York, Kansas, and later New Mexico, demonstrated a precocious dexterity at firing six-shooters with either hand a skill that both got him into and out of trouble and that turned him into an American legend of the old West. He was smart, well-spoken, attractive to both white and Mexican women, a good dancer, and a man with a nose for money, horses, and trouble. His spree of crimes and murders has been immortalized in dime westerns, novels, and movies. But the whole story of his short, epically violent life has never been told as it has been here. In *The Kid*, Ron Hansen showcases his masterful research and inimitable style as he breathes life into history, bringing readers back into the late 1800s and into Billy's boyhood as a ranch hand just trying to wrest a fortune from an unforgiving landscape. We are with Billy in every gunfight and horse theft and get to know him in full before his grand death in a hail of bullets in 1881 at the age of twenty-one. Original, powerful, and swiftly told, *The Kid* is an unforgettable read about a uniquely American anti-hero."

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