Keyattie promised to do so. John who told me the story very gravely added his belief that now we should have fine weather. I told him it was all cultus talk, but he said no, that the Indians in former times were capable of making it rain or blow when they pleased. There was one of the Kwillehuytes who made bad weather... during the halibut season and the Kwillehuytes hung him, and immediately the weather became fine.

Billy Balch, Kyallanho & the others who have been absent since Tuesday returned this forenoon, the tenth of June. They were blown off out of sight of land for one day, and afterwards made land at Oquiet, and remained till this morning. There was a large crowd of their friends and relatives collected together this morning thinking they were lost, and some of the squaws seemed sorry that they did not have a chance to howl.

The Indians told me this morning, the thirtieth of July, that Hadassub one of the best and quietest Indians in the tribe died suddenly last night at Kiddekuhbut. I went down after breakfast on foot to the village and learned that he died of apoplexy. He had been very well all day and had joined in the dance at a potlatch given by Chekotte at Peter's house, and in the evening had taken part in a wrestling match and afterward partaken freely of rice and molasses. He had not eaten any molasses for a long time as it did not agree with him but on this occasion thought he would eat some... The Indians always attribute an unusual death to the operation of some bad Tomanawas, and as there is a party of Quinaults here I did not know but they might charge it upon them. I explained... the natural causes that would most likely have produced his death and strongly urged them in future not to bury any one until they had tried
every means of testing animation.

In the autumn, Swan about to mark his first year in the classroom, school woes return to his daily pages. For one thing, he has worked out the appalling calculation that to keep the drafty schoolhouse warm will require 100 cords of wood—that is, a woodpile four feet high, four feet wide and eight hundred feet long, every sliver of it needing to be wheedled from the Makahs by barter of buckets of potatoes. For another, the attendance at School has been very meagre... and this afternoon I sent for Youaitl (Old Doctor) and had a long talk with him on the matter.

I told him that the Government at Washington had been at great expense to have this school house built, and now I wanted the children to come and be taught, and wanted him to let his second son Kachim come and board with me and be one of a class with Jimmy... That if a few of the boys took an interest to learn others would be induced to come, and finally all the children could be taught. I also told him that the old men were dying off and these boys would shortly take their places, and if they would come and learn now they could be useful when they grew up, and could better adapt themselves to the white mens customs, than the old men who were so prejudiced against the whites.

Old Doctor said my talk was "all good," "all good," and he would send the boy and talk to the other Indians...

Two days later Swan has in residence with him at the schoolhouse Kachim, Jimmy, and five other boys. They spend the day working on the alphabet and amuse themselves in the evening, and that night's diary
page exults that Today has been the first time that it has seemed like a regular school.

Soon after this triumph of regularity, however, Swan wakes a little after five in the morning to a houseful of smoke. I found George in the kitchen with a big fire in the stove...and a pot of potatoes on cooking and the smoke just pouring out into the room. As it created an atmosphere like that which he has been accustomed to in the Indian lodge, he thought it was all right and that he was doing finely. Swan opened the damper and commended him for his zeal but told him he need not get up another morning till day light.

George's breakfast smoke seems to hang on and on in Swan's pages, clouding the earlier sanguine estimations of the schoolboys' new diligence...the principal inducement at present is the novelty of the thing and the plenty of food I give them to eat. They can be influenced by their stomachs much sooner than their brains...

After more than a year of the effort to hold classes and compel attendance, two notations even more glum. The twenty-seventh of December, 1864:

My whole time is constantly occupied from early in the morning till ten and often eleven o'clock at night without an hour that I can call my own. Cooking, looking after the house, attending the sick, prescribing medicines and trying to teach, and the results are far from being in proportion to the great care and anxiety I feel.

The next day: John had a talk last evening in Russian Jims lodge about the school...and among others who spoke Jim said that he did not want his boy to learn to read and write for it would be of no use to him, he could not get anything by it, but if he learned to kill whales and
catch halibut he would have plenty of things. . . . This attempt to form a school is the most unsatisfactory thing I have ever tried.
Day twenty-two

This morning, nagged by a murmur of memory, I finally found the entry, Swan's diary words of this exact date, one hundred thirty-nine years ago. The eleventh of January, 1860. *Cloudy and calm. This is my birthday day 42 years old. I trust that the remainder of my life may be passed more profitably than it has so far. Self investigation is good for birthday days.*

Tonight, after another coastal day back and forth between Swan's words and the actuality of Cape Flattery: "Some men and women are never part of the time they were born into," Carol's voice read to me as I hunched in the phone booth at Clallam Bay, "and walk the streets or highways of their generations as strangers... Reinforces our diminishing conviction that there is something special in American earth, in American experience and in the harrowing terms of American survival. Where there is no longer a house of sky..."

The words clatter back and forth between my ears. *Never part of time they were born into...walk their generations as strangers...* The sort of thing I might write about Swan, restless in Boston, studious on the frontier. Instead, in the pages of the New York Times Book Review it has been written of me.
Day twenty-three

From places here at the outer corner of the Strait it can be seen clearest how abruptly close the Olympic range of mountains stands to this coastline: like gorgeously caped elephants about to go wading. Along much of the Peninsula south of the logging town of Forks, for instance, peaks of 4,000 to 7,000 feet rise within thirty miles of the Pacific shore, rather as if the Rockies were to begin at Philadelphia, or the Sierra Nevada just beyond the east alleys of Oakland.

Such rare bricking closeness between the earth's ice-tipped summits and its arcing horizon of water is even more pronounced toward Port Angeles and Port Townsend, where from one particular swoosh of this roller coaster Neah Bay road the Olympics look as if they are striding right into the Strait. Some shore sites back there—the best for this, as so much else, is Dungeness Spit—open so directly onto an overhead wall of white crags that you lose sense of any ground between. Wave slosh and caping forest, and that is all.

There is a kind of stolen thrill, something unearned and simply granted, about the presence of the Olympics. The state of Washington makes its margin with the Pacific as if the land west of the Cascade Mountains had all been dropped heavily against the ocean, causing wild splatters of both land and water: the islands of Puget Sound and the San Juan group, streaky inlets everywhere, stretched stripes of peninsula such as Dungeness and Long Beach, and a
webwork of more than forty sizable rivers emptying to the coast. Amid this welter the Olympic Mountains stand in calm black-green
tall files, their even timbered slopes like fur to shed the wet. appear
The region's history itself seems to step back and marvel at these shoreline mountains. The coastal Indians seem not to have troubled to travel much in them. Why wrestle forest when the sea is an open larder? White frontier-probing too went into an unusual and welcome slowdown when it reached the Olympics. Although the range sits only some fifty miles wide and long, not until 1889 did a six-man expedition sponsored by a Seattle newspaper tramp entirely across it and leave some of the loveliest peaks of America with the curious legacy of being named for editors. Thereafter its terrific shaggy abundance of timber saved the range; giant fir and cedar and spruce stood so mighty along its shorelines and foothills that the heart of the Olympics was not logged before National Park status came in the 1930's. Good fortune for the northwest earth that was, for where the early loggers did begin whacks into the Olympic Peninsula forest, some of them butchered the country: you can see it yet in places beside the highway, obliteration where the ancient stumps lie about like knuckle bones after cannibals had done with them. Those cut-out-and-get-out loggers had some excuse, not understanding or having to care that felling the timber that denuded the slope that lost the silt that clogged the stream would kill salmon runs and other interties
of nature, and figuring anyway that the trees and salmon and 
all else would last forever, but we know by now that America’s 
forevers tend to be briefer than the original estimates.

What is still original, the Olympic peaks, rise to me when 
I climb to the rim of our valley as the great Sawtooth Range 
and other sharp horizons gnashed up to the west of my family’s 
Montana grassland. They were my first shore, those snow-topped 
headlands which stop the flow of plains in the Montana I was 
born to, and later, when I went back to write about that rock- 
at last to savvy 
tipped land, I began to see the geography as a vast archipelago 
of mountains and to remember how, like people in fast outriggers, 
we traveled in pickups and trucks the valleys between the high 
Buckhorn, The Needles, 
islanded clusters. Now it is Townsend, Olympus, Constance, Jupiter, 
The Brothers, two dozen Olympic peaks alive in jagged white 

rhythm like lightning laid lengthwise, that make the uneven 
but steady skyline. From the instant I saw them a dozen 
years ago I have felt exhilaration from these mountains like 
a gust down from their glaciers. If they did not exist, I 
think I would not live here; would need to be within sight of 
some other craggy western horizon. As it is, over the years
I have hiked into all the main valleys of the Olympics except a few of the southernmost, and go time upon time upon time to places along the Sound and Strait where I have favorite views of peaks.

And today I have spent hours studying the Olympics rather than Swan's past. I don't much mind; Swan undoubtedly did the same. I find him writing once for the San Francisco newspaper, The great Sierra of the Olympic range appear to come down quite to the water's edge, and present a wild forbidding aspect. Other times, I find him tallying into the diaries a morning when the Olympics happened to be spectacularly sunlit. But I do not find him ever exploring into the so-near fortress of peaks. Enough of Boston evidently remained in him that he would admire mountains with his eyes rather than his feet.
Day twenty-four

The Pacific's sounds climb into the forest to meet us, minutes before Alava Island stands through the firs as a mesa in the ocean. Alava, first and biggest and namesake of Cape Alava's strewn collection of seastacks, reefs, isles, boulders. Of this pepper-spill on the coast's map which a despairing cartographer simply summed as The Flattery Rocks.

The rhythmic pound of tidal surge underscores the reputation that, all the fifteen miles down from Cape Flattery to here, and south from Alava for thirty miles more, this coast constantly dodges and tumbles. Boulder formations and landforms sprawl random and ajut as vast weapon heads. Drift logs lodge high on the beach like colossal ax-hafts tossed on a forgotten armory shelf. Each cape and bluff seems braced, banked for the turns of winter storm that flow in from the southwest. While Swan lived at Neah Bay, itself an outpost of the back of beyond, the tiny community here was considered the truly remote settlement of the Makahs. Hosett, it was called then.

Carol and I arrive the one easy way, overland from the east, and the route has become more "over" than I am happy with. Nearly the entire trail, three and a third miles from Lake Ozette to Cape Alava, has been built up into a boardwalk of cedar slabs, the size of stair steps and nailed onto hefty stringers. Wonk wonk wonk wonk wonk, our boots constantly resound on the cedar, wonk wonk wonk wonk wonk. The boardwalk's height from the forest floor puts my head at an elevation of seven feet or so, and I feel like a Zulu clogging along
in a Dutchman's shoes.

"Just like Asbury Park," Carol offers in joke as we work along. But this is not the New Jersey shore at the bounds of boardwalk, but a weave of coastal forest, and because the cedar walkway is damp enough to be slick my eyes are pulled down to it too often from their pleasure of sorting the wealth of green: salal, cedar, hemlock, deer fern, huckleberry, an occasional powerful Douglas fir.

We come onto the beach at Cape Alava amid a spring noon which has somehow drifted loose into mid-January. No wind at all, rare for this restless coast, and a surprise warmth in the air that denies knowing anything whatsoever about this morning's winter chill.

As we stride north the mile or so to the archaeological dig, we find that winter storms have made the Alava beach a stew of kelp, rockweed, sea cucumbers and sundry unidentifiables. One ingredient is an ugly rotting bulb which we agree must be the ocean version of turnip. Gulls, turnstones and sanderlings patrol scrupulously along the tideline, while cormorants idly crowd the offshore rocks. Crows swagger now and again among the seaweed, right to ocean's edge. Some evolutionary instant from now the first one will swash in to join the gulls amid the surf and make the species seagoing.

The archaeological site has grown to resemble a tiny silver-strike town. Board houses and sheds dribble along the hillside, and then the laid-open ground where the excavation is underway. A difference is that the digging here is the most delicate of mining, done within two-meter squares of soil and performed by cautious hand sifting. Five buried longhouses have been found on the site, and the contents of the
three opened to date have sifted out as a kind of archaeological miracle. The scholarly guess is that the Makah residents of some five hundred years ago felled too much of the forest on the bluff above, probably to feed their fires; the defoliated slope gave way and an avalanche of heavy clay soil sealed everything below it as instantly and tightly as if in a flood of molten glass. Washington State University archaeologists and their student teams have been at work here for ten years, and the trove of artifacts is to go on display in the museum the Makahs are building at Neah Bay.

The diggers are proud of the site. The young woman from a Colorado university who shows us around says it is known as one of the ten most important digs being done in the world. She tells us, too, details unearthed since our other visits here: that shells of some sixty kinds of shellfish have been found in the longhouses, testimony to the prowess of the Hosett Makahs in trading very far up and down this coast, and that belongings of a head man of a longhouse were found in one building's northeast corner, the farthest from the prevailing weather and therefore the snuggest.

The dig deserves honor as a North Pacific Pompeii, an invaluable pouch of the Makah past. Yet I find as ever that I am stirred less by the treasure pit than by something almost invisible among the Alava tidal rocks. At low tide, if you know where to look amid the dark stone humps, a canoeway slowly comes to sight, a thin lane long ago wrested clear of boulders by the Makahs so they would have a channel into the Pacific for their fragile wooden hulls.
This dragway is the single most audacious sight I know on this planet. Muscle made, elemental, ancient, leading only toward ocean and the brink of horizon: it extends like a rope bridge into black space. Mountain climbers, undersea explorers, any others I can think of who might match the Makahs for daring are able to mark their calendar of adventure as they choose, select where and when they will duel nature. But this hand wrought crevasse through the beach rocks was the Makahs' path to livelihood, their casual alley, and out along it with their canoes of poise and their sensations cleansed by rituals slid generations of Hosett whalers, lifting away into the glittering Pacific.

The archaeology student mentioned Swan as we toured the dig, saying that a good deal of what is known about the Makahs' whaling implements was learned from the descriptions he wrote. The words of his that interest me today, however, begin in his diary on July twenty-second of 1864, when he commenced a trip for Hosett and the lake said by the Indians to be back from Hosett village. As we retrace our steps inland to Lake Ozette we will be on Swan's route, and the Makahs of the time assured him that he was the first white man ever to see Lake Ozette.

That may have been native blarney, but the known history of the Alava coast vouches for it. In the journals of the sea going explorers I have found there is no record of longboats rowing in to reconnoiter this unnerving rock-snagged stretch of shore. In July of 1785 at the mouth of the Hoh River, twenty-five miles south of here, the Spaniard Bodega y Quadra did send in from his schooner a boat crew of seven men to fill water casks. The waiting Indians killed five, and two drowned in terror in the surf.
The Lake Ozette corner of the Peninsula was to remain undisturbed until white settlers came to its shores—inland from Alava, along the trail Swan walked thirty years earlier—in the 1890s. Their homesteads never really burgeoned, and the lake even now remains remote, lightly peopled. Carol and I once hiked in to the southern end of Lake Ozette by a little-used trail to camp overnight. The solitude was total except for hummingbirds buzzing my red and black shirt.

Now, with a last memorizing look toward the beach and the Makah canoeway, to Ozette again. Swan's exploration on that day in 1864 we begin to duplicate with eerie exactness. The trail commences a short distance south of the village and runs up to the top of the hill or bluff which is rather steep and about sixty feet high. So the route still climbs. From the summit we proceeded in an easterly direction through a very thick forest half a mile and reached an open prairie which is dry and covered with fern, dwarf sallal and some red top grass, with open timber around the sides. The very grass seems the same. From this prairie we pass through another belt of timber to another prairie lying in the same general direction as the first but somewhat lower and having the appearance of being wet and boggy. This was covered in its ...lower portions with water grass and thick moss which yielded moisture on the pressure of the feet. Step from the boardwalk and drops of moisture from James Swan's pen were on our boots.

By now this second of the twin prairies has a name, and some winsome history. Maps show the eyelet in the forest as Ahlstrom's Prairie, where for fifty-six years Lars Ahlstrom lived a solitary life
as one more outermost particle of the American impulse to head for sunset. Through nearly all the decades of his bachelor household here, Ahlstrom's was the homestead farthest west in the continental United States.

Originally, which is to say within the first few dozen days after his arrival in 1902, Ahlstrom built himself a two-room cabin close beside the Ozette to Alava trail. That dwelling burned in 1916 and he lived from then on in the four-room structure which still stands, thriftily built with big tree stumps as support posts for its northwest and northeast corners, a few hundred yards from the trail.

Even now as Carol and I whap through the brush to this latter-day cabin, all signs are that Ahlstrom kept a trim, tidy homestead life. In his small barn on the route in, the window sills above a workbench are fashioned nicely into small box-shelves. At the cabin itself the beam ends facing west into the prevailing weather are carefully masked with squares of tarpaper. Inside, when Ahlstrom papered the cabin walls with newspapers, he wrapped around the pole roof beams as well, a fussy touch that I particularly like. Summers in Montana when I worked as a ranch hand I spent time in bunkhouses papered this way, and neatness made a difference. Always there were interesting events looming out at you—ROOSEVELT ORDERS BANK HOLIDAY or U.S. GUNBOAT PANAY SUNK BY JAPANESE—or some frilly matron confiding the value of liver pills, and the effect was lost if the newsprint had been slapped on upside down or sideways.

This rainbelt homestead of Ahlstrom's never quite worked out. Regularly he went off into the Olympic Mountains on logging jobs and other hire to earn enough money to survive the year. On the other hand, the homestead went on never quite working out for five and a half decades,
until Ahlstrom, at eighty-six, cut his foot while chopping wood and had to move to Port Angeles for the last two years of his life.

Here in the drowsing cabin I think of Swan and Ahlstrom, who missed each other by forty years on this mossy prairie between Alava and Ozette, and judge that if time could be rewoven to bring them together they would be quite taken with one another. Swan promptly diaries down the facts of the life of Mr Ahlstrom... arrived to America from Sweden at the age of 20 years... he and a neighbor have laboured to build a pony trail to the lake by laying down a quantity of small cedar puncheons... the rain here does not allow his fruit trees to thrive but his garden particularly potatoes grows finely... Ahlstrom, with his reputation for conviviality with travelers, pours coffee for Swan, watches to see whether he will take cream, Swedish style, or drink it black the way of the barbarous Norwegians. (Swan, resident of Neah Bay for a full two years before a milk cow arrived, takes cream whenever he can get it.) At slightest prompting, Ahlstrom entertains Swan with his story of coming face to face with a cougar here on the Ozette trail. I yelled to scare him. Instead it brought answer: the cougar snarled and I could see plenty of room inside there for a Swede. Ahlstrom spun and walked away--It was no use to run--without looking back. The next day Ahlstrom returned carrying a long-tom shotgun and discovered from the tracks that when he retreated, the cougar had paced along behind him for a hundred yards and then lost interest in Swedish fare.

The trail again, Swan's and Ahlstrom's and ours. After crossing the second prairie we again enter the forest and after rising a gentle eminence descend into a ravine through which runs a small brook. Exactly
so. The little stream that dives under the boardwalk runs very loud, and sudsy from lapping across downed trees. Where the water can be seen out from under its head of foam, it ripples dark brown, the color of strong ale.

And now the lake, obscure and moody Ozette.

Here we found an old hut made in the rudest manner with a few old splits of cedar and showing evidence of having been used as a frequent camping ground by the Hosett hunters. An old canoe split in two was lying in front, and bones and horns of elk were strewed about. Now the premises which come into sight are a National Park display center and rangers' quarters.

At last at the lakeside, Swan had a curiously threatening experience.

It was nearly sundown when we arrived and I had barely time to make a hasty sketch of the lake before it was dark. We had walked out very rapidly and I was in a great heat on my arrival, and my clothes literally saturated with perspiration. I imprudently drank pretty freely of the lake water which had the effect of producing a severe cramp in both of my legs which took me some time to overcome, which I did however by walking about and rubbing the cramped part briskly. I said nothing to the Indians as I did not wish them to know anything ailed me, but at times I thought I should have to ask their assistance.

So he saved face, and evidently something more. What was it that struck at him with those moments of dismay in his legs? Uncertainty of how the Makahs might react to an ailment? That tribal habit of burying first and regretting later? The remoteness of Ozette itself,
like a vast watery crater in the forest?

The next morning, the twenty-third of July, 1864, Swan intended to go out with Peter and sketch his way along the Ozette shoreline, but awoke to heavy fog. As I well knew that the fogs at this season sometimes last several days, I concluded that I had better return. Their return hike to Alava was memorably soggy. The fog and mist had saturated the bushes so that before I was a mile on my way back I was wet through and reached Hosett as well drenched as if I had been overboard.

Well drenched, and better pleased. I had accomplished two things I had proved the existence of a lake, and had made a sketch of a portion and as I was the first white man who had ever seen this sheet of water I concluded I would take some other opportunity when I might have white companions with me and make a more thorough survey.

Swan never did achieve that more thorough survey. But today, at least, he had the companions to Ozette.
Day twenty-five

I like about Swan that he has arithmetic in his eye.

When he and the Makahs dig around in the rubble of the short-lived Spanish fort at Neah Bay, the clay tiles they unearth find are 10 inches long 5 1/4 wide & 1 1/4 thick. When Swan visits the lighthouse on Tatoosh Island, the Fresnel lens measures 6 ft across and is composed of 13 rings of glass above 6 rings below. When he wonders how large the clearing behind the Indian lodges at Neah is, he finds out by pacing it off...235 paces long 60 paces wide this will give at a rough estimate 2 9/10 acres.

He scares me a little, though, about this winter's effort at precision, my try at knowing as much as possible of Swan. There is that easy deceit of acquaintanceship; in the months since This House of Sky was published I have heard again and again from schoolmates and Montana friends, "I figured I knew you pretty well, but..." (Echo: never part of the time they were born into...walk their generations as strangers...) If I myself am such an example of private code, how findable can Swan be in his fifteen thousand days of diary words? Findable enough, I still believe, for by now I have a strengthening sense of how it is that some of those coastal paths which for so many years carried him now hold me. But Swan does maintain boundaries, numerical ones,
with that deft pen. He may let me know exactly what size coat he wore, yet generally is going to make me guess about the inside of his head. Which perhaps is as much as one measurer can comfortably grant another.
Days twenty-six, twenty-seven, twenty-eight

The Neah Bay schoolroom once more, that wrestling site for Swan's tutoring and the Makahs' resistance to it. This morning after breakfast, the fourth of January of 1865, all the boys left without saying anything to me and have not returned all day.

Swan took the opportunity to do some housecleaning, inspect the trail being built from the village to the cattle pasture at Waatch Prairie, and spectate a real wrestling match in Captain John's lodge. The first who commenced were boys, stripped naked. They seized each other by the hair and twisted and wrung themselves about like snakes. Some were successful and threw their opponent while others after a spell of hair pulling had to desist. Some little girls also joined in the sport with the exception that they did not disrobe themselves. But in the diary, he stayed in a huff about the absence of his students, and his powerlessness to stop them from passing in and out of the schoolroom like hummingbirds. I think best for them to stay away till Mr Webster comes. I have said all I could and shall say no more. They seem to think they are doing me a great favor by coming and I want them to know that the favor is towards them and not me.

Till Mr Webster arrives was proving an elusive moment. The Indian agent's absence now counted up to two and a half months and the agency was running as low on supplies as on authority. The twenty-eighth of January: All hands out of work. Mr. Jones has been packing up his things to go home. Mr Jordan has no lumber to work with, and Phillips--the blacksmith--no coal. I have no boarders, as I have nothing but potatoes to give them and they won't eat potatoes without something else. A few boys come in to warm themselves and will look at their books a few minutes and then leave.
I can scarcely call it a school... 

The fifth of February, a rare open grumble against Webster: ... There seems to be some bad management in some quarter or another that detains him away so long... gone over three months and with the exception of a very short note sent from Port Townsend he has not communicated with the employees... almost entirely out of provisions, seven months pay in arrears, and no one to instruct or advise us how to proceed.

The next day Swan's mood was swinging from fulmination to reflection: My occupation is pretty regular every day. As soon as I get up, which is from half past 6 to 7, the Indians begin to come for medical treatment. Some who want prescriptions only I serve before breakfast but others who have sores to be dressed have to wait till I have done eating. Then it is dressing scrofulous sores, syringing out sore ears, bathing sore eyes and bandaging up wounds. Then round to visit patients. By this time it is eleven o'clock & I then sit down to write, or if any children come in, try to teach them. And with the exception of a walk to Jones or Jordans, keep in the house all the time so as to be ready either as teacher or physician.

Of these eithers, the Makahs plainly preferred Swan as physician, and logical choice it was. Mending an ill was welcome enough; changing the tongues of the tribe's children was not. For rickety and fumbling though it may have been, as it was, this new white men's governance of Cape Flattery, with the plow and schoolhouse as its cutting tools, meant rip after rip through the Makah way of life. ✎ Swan himself once honed the metaphor. We have indeed caused the plowshare of civilization to pass over the graves of their ancestors and open to the light the remains of ancient lodge fires.
Many of the Makahs must have known the consequences as well as Swan—probably better—and the wonder is that the tribe did not stiffen harder against the demand that they surrender their sons and daughters to alphabet and agriculture.

Part of the answer must be in the beguilement that Swan and his paper and pen represented. The Makahs respected any potent ability, and Swan as the Reservation's deftest practitioner of paperwork had a right hand of magic. He it was who would provide a "paper" by which anyone who brought him an amount of firewood would be paid off in potatoes, would draw up a document attesting that a canoeman had helped rescue shipwrecked sailors and so deserved the favor of whatever white man was reading the words. (Or occasionally provide a somewhat more wan endorsement: Gave a "paper" to Shekaupt...that he is as good as the average but requires watching.) Out of his books would produce strange winged creatures and their stories. Swan had surveyed and mapped the Makah Reservation, taken its census, noted down whenever a whale was killed and who the harpooner was, made arithmetic of the very weather by measuring rain and wind and temperature and giving it a history in his tremendous ledger. All his perpetual counting and scrawling added up to something the Makahs weren't quite clear on, no more than we would be if a tribe came out of the sea to us and spoke green sparks which hung in the air, except that it carried power.

The Indians have a belief that I can tell by referring to my book containing the census of the tribe what becomes of any Indian who may be missing, so last evening a great many came to ask me to look in my book and tell what had become of Long Jim and the others who had gone for seals and had not returned.
I told them my book told nothing but it was my opinion that Jim and his brother who are young and strong would return, but as for Old George and the boy who were in a small canoe I thought they would not get back so soon... His common sense prediction was right, and the Indians now think that my book tells the truth and they have increased confidence in it.

Some other matters about Swan must have been as puzzling to the Makahs as his ceaseless writing hand. He rejected coldly their attempts to bargain payments out of him for letting their children attend his school, yet he would pay rewards to have mere seashells brought to him from the beach. He scolded about the drinking of whiskey, indeed questioned the Makahs steadily about its purveyors so that he could report them to Webster, yet at Port Townsend it was said that Swan himself had a weakness for putting the poison into himself. Over the years Swan had arrived and departed among the Makahs entirely casually, but now he insisted their children must live steadily with him in the schoolhouse. (The boys will not come as day scholars, and there will have to be an entire change of things before the school will ever amount to anything.)

All of which is to say, here at this point in his winter diary of unease, that Swan, who even by frontier standards stood out as something of a drifter, himself, was irony's choice to bring white grooves of routine to the natives of Cape Flattery.

At last, the twenty-fifth of February of 1865, Webster and supplies. Evidently Swan promptly made a fist at him about the gaping absence of
authority at Neah Bay the past three months. Before Webster's next vanishing act a few weeks later, he handed me a document which he had written placing me in full charge of the government property during his absence.

Swan and diary ease out of their winter ire. Some of the Indians have purchased umbrellas at Victoria and today there was quite a display on the beach. This is quite an innovation on their old style of warding off rain with bear skin blankets and conical hats... Heard frogs singing this evening for the first time this spring... At work trimming shrubbery, training rosebushes and transplanting currants, blackberries and gooseberries...

Then, the evening of the fourteenth of April, a reverberation set off at Appomattox five days earlier: ... we heard several reports of cannon which proved to be the swivel at Baadah but as it was raining none of us cared to go to ascertain the cause although we supposed Mr Maggs had received some news from upsound of some great victory over the rebels.

And the next week the grimmer echo: Mr Jones brings the sad intelligence of the Assassination of President Lincoln... Dreadful news...
The result will be that the north will be more united than ever and will crush out the serpent that has been nourished...

The Reservation's potato field is planted. A day of fasting is observed in Lincoln's memory. Swan sets a hen on thirteen eggs in the schoolhouse basement.

The fifteenth of May, experiment by Swan's leading scholar. Jimmy took the tips of the Bulls horns which were sawed off yesterday and set them out among the cabbage plants. He had seen me set out slips of currant
& Gooseberries and thought if sticks would grow, the horns certainly
would.

Three canoes of Clyoquot Indians, faces painted red and black,
arrive from Vancouver Island to visit. At Hosett, a Makah canoe splits
on a reef, and a woman and a girl drown. Webster persuades Swan to stand
for a seat in the territorial legislature, and Swan is trounced. Swan
sets another hen on another thirteen eggs.

The eleventh of June, a Sunday of frustration and retribution:
Yesterday my cat killed all my chickens so this morning I shot the cat.

Webster sends a number of Makahs to the halibut waters aboard the
schooner Brant, hoping to encourage them to learn shipboard fishing.
The British gunboat Forward anchors in the bay overnight. On the Fourth of
July, Swan hoists the flag at five in the morning and bakes a gooseberry pie.

The sixth of July, a bit of provisioning. Barker came from Clallam
Bay this noon bringing some venison. I bought a hind leg... I strongly
suspect it is our tame deer.

Swan spends a week in Port Townsend, buys two sets of underwear
and a pair of pants. A few days after returning to Neah Bay he suffers
a bilious attack. He goes to Victoria for a few days. School resumes.
Annuities are distributed to the tribe's women: china bowls, bread,
molasses, a chunk of beef and two blankets each.
The twentieth of August, the imaginative Jimmy once more. Jimmy had his ears bored yesterday and since then has refused to eat anything but hard bread & molasses and dried halibut. The superstition of the Indians being that if other food is eaten the ears will swell to an enormous size.

Then autumn, and unease among the Makahs. Capt John tells me that the Indians predict a very cold winter. There will be according to his statement, very high tides, violent gales, great rains, much cold and snow. The Arhodets predict rain from an unusual number of frogs in a particular stream at their place. The Ouquets predict cold from the fact that great numbers of mice were seen leaving an island in Barclay Sound and swimming to the mainland.

The natives and the mice and the frogs are promptly right. Nineteenth of November: The wind this morning blew open my chamber door which opens out from the south side of the tower, and slammed it against the flagstaff breaking out the entire panel work.

Next day: Gales of wind... accompanied by a tremendous surf and the highest tide that I ever saw in the bay. The water was nearly up to the Indian houses. The Indians were out with their torches saving their canoes & other property.

And the day after that: Gale... lasted till sundown doing considerable damage to fences, and unroofing Indian houses. Frequent lightning with distant thunder during day and evening... The Indians were badly frightened and brought their children to the schoolhouse for safety.

The eighteenth of December. Commenced snowing at 1 PM--6 inches
by six that evening.

The nineteenth. Crust of ice on the snow. . . The Indians have inquired of me frequently during the month when the sun would begin to return north. They say the fish are all hid under the stones and when the sun commences to come back, the stones will turn over and they will be able to catch fish.

This queer, jittery year bites through its last days. The diary entry for the twenty-ninth of December: Katy was taken sick on the PM of the 27th and I gave her medicine and told her to keep in the house. But she went to the tomanawas & took cold. Katy was a slave girl belonging to John's squaw and early in the year had begun to do household chores for Swan. He found her intelligent and competent. During the summer and autumn she cooked at the house of the Reservation carpenter, then in early winter became cook for Swan at the schoolhouse. To all appearances a stout and remarkably healthy woman, her abrupt inclusion in Swan's running list of ill Makahs is disquieting. Then on the 31st, in the final several hours of 1865:

Katy died towards morning and was buried north of the schoolhouse near the beach. . . The attack was sudden and her death unexpected. . .
Day twenty-nine

Seventy-nine pages later in the diary, this:

I found that the dogs or skunks have been disturbing Katys grave and that the body is partly exposed and flesh gnawed from the bones. I spoke to John to have it covered up but as Indians are very averse to such work, I shall probably have to do it myself.

He then sawed up a plank, went out and protectively boxed in the grave.

I did this for the reason first that I wished to cover the body from sight, then, as she was a slave I wished to show the Indians that we considered slaves as good as the free persons, and lastly I wished to give the natives an idea how we made graves among civilized people.

Possibly. Possibly something more than that nervous rattle of reasons. The next day after noticing the grave had been disturbed, Swan planted daisies on Katy's mound of earth.
Day thirty

Year and year Swan's right hand shuttled on paper, pushing the quick daily threads into the pocket notebooks, the longer yarn across the broad ledger pages. In all his total of lines, forty steady years of them and tag-ends at either end of that, there is not as much typewritten material as I produce in a week. But more handwriting than I would beget in four hundred lifetimes.

Staring down into the diaries these weeks—a third of winter already flown, I begin to learn this constant route of Swan's pen hand. Rather, his pen hands, for the weave of words on these pages is not a constant tapestry; more like the output from some Hebridean isle of tweedmakers, steadily of a style but also of different and distinct wefts.

Pocket diaries: they generally are in pencil and the smallest several of them (1863 the size of a deck of cards) offer crimped little language indeed. One handwriting in these Swan simply tosses together of teensy stalactites and stalagmites. A word such as Webster jags along as if scratched onto the page with an icepick. This is Swan's casual-but-get-it-down hand, jab the day's doings into place and sit down to supper.

His second handwriting is slightly smaller—the comb from my pocket covers five lines at a time when I hold it across the page as a measure—but immensely more legible; the clerkly Swan, this one. These diary days procession along as if stitched by a sewing machine.
Lastly, Swan has a scrawling hand, evidently for use in a canoe or other deskless locales, and it asks a bit of crypto-analysis. After a half minute or so of blank staring, something like Prow & rum wood 8 will seep through to me as Snow & rain. Fortunately, comparatively little wind S. Thankfully, there is not much of this written mumble.

The notebook hands have rich cousins: the two handwritings of the Neah Bay ledgers Swan began in 1862. (That tiniest of pocket diaries, 1863, he elaborated into ledger entries as well.) The more prominent of these is done in lines about as high as the thickness of a pencil, and slanted on the page as rain is with a brisk breeze behind it. These are pretty pages, each headed with the year and month—Swan showed real flourish here; the M of March, for instance, will begin off in space with a loop that seems to be going nowhere but then swoops in to make the central pillars of the letter and next curlicues off into a smaller farewell barrel roll—and the day’s weather entries. Hard to believe that weather such as Cape Flattery’s could be made decorative, but Swan has done it. Each day’s temperature readings at seven in the morning, two in the afternoon and nine at night are stacked within an elegant bracket which Swan draws beautifully, featherlike lines meeting in a precise pucker.

Rarely in these big pages is anything crossed out, and never do blotched. Quirks show themselves. Swan’s alphabet tends to flip open at the top, an a or o only slightly more closed than his u; a d at the end of a word may have a quick concluding stroke away
from its top, so that it looks as if a musical note has dropped in from somewhere; commas, when they exist, are the briefest specks a pen can make, but overall this is a steady hand for which, again, the only word is clerkly.

His language is remarkably not out of date. He surprises me, for instance, by using pretty as loosely as any of us would: worked pretty constantly all day. The one off-word I find consistently is eat for ate, as when the schoolboys stay for supper with him: I boiled a shin of beef with potatoes...and they eat heartily and washed it down with cold water.

Swan's other handwriting in the ledgers, the fifth of the bunch, is simply more crouched than his standard ledger hand: about two-thirds in size. The reason could be in the deep springs of his psyche, Swan in these occasional pages showing some But my tightened mood. My guess is lamplight. That when Swan wrote at night, he hovered to the page more carefully to be within the narrow yellow puddle of light.

All in all, Swan the so-constant diarist puts me in mind of a story he once records, of meeting a seaman named John Johnson who had sailed aboard an American ship with three other Scandinavians of the same name in the crew and who told Swan I was called Johnson Number Four. All of these days of pages are the shared craft of Swan One, Two, Three, Four and Five.
Day thirty-one

Point No Point is the tiny peg of map line from which Puget Sound measures itself southward. Southward and southwestward, for the Sound at its farthest thrust begins to fringe toward the Pacific as if swept in a steady breeze. Those streamers of water extend the measuring considerably; because from here at the Point until the Sound has delineated its every last remote bay and channel, thirteen hundred and fifty miles of shoreline—the equal of the entire Pacific Coast from San Diego to Cape Flattery—edge the sprawling inlet's outline.

Evidently in derision, Point No Point was named by the Wilkes expedition of 1841, when that American naval survey team sailed up to what seemed from a distance to be a promontory prowling boldly into the coast, and isn't. The forested ridgeline lies a few hundred yards back from the shore, and the flat acres intervening between the dark bluff and the water, plus the nubbin of beach which provides a perch for the lighthouse, proved to be the maritime sum of the site. But eminent or not, Point No Point marks the entrance to the great Sound, and nobody now remembers who Wilkes was.

Except for the four of us, Carol, me, Ann and Phil, good friends newly moved to the height above our valley, today's visitors to the Point, all are out on the water with salmon as their purpose: twenty-five small boats in a bright shoal around the lighthouse. Many of them are red rowboats from the resort nearby, with dashing white script on their sides proclaiming Point No Point. The fanciness reminds me of another prank of language, that when his Mississippi townsfolk used to scorn Faulkner
as an overelegant scribbler they would call him Count No 'Count. Here
is a site in scansion I can see that sly squire enjoying, out in one of
the red rowboats with an antique bamboo rod and a flask of sipping whiskey,
affirming to fellow anglers that yes, none other, he is Count No 'Count
of Point No Point.

When the tide is down, as it is now, the beach can be walked for
a few miles southward from the Point into long views of the forested rim
of Puget Sound. In fact, an angled look across the water to a particular
patch of the quilled horizon on the Sound's eastern shore exactly reverses
my usual line of sight along the gray plain of water: the view from the
top of the valley which holds our house, across into this Point No Point
corner of the Sound. Now, here on the western shoreline, bluffs sit in
sequence along the Sound's edge like sterns of a moored fleet.

We begin to do the leisurely beach miles and the friends' gab
that goes with them.

Ann performs a squinched-up impression which she assures us is
an anemone.

I retaliate with my imitation of a tenpenny nail being driven:
rigid stance, hands at side, shuddering winces as my knees buckle downward.

Phil gently informs us that neither has much career ahead as sea-
life or spike.

Carol is first to see an inbound ship. Freighters entering the
Sound pass close by the Point—indeed, emerging from Admiralty Inlet to
round the bluff they give the illusion that they are going to carve away
the lighthouse as they come—and this beach is one of the few sites where
I can share in Swan's fixation on passing ships. Windships sail day on
day in his pages, rocking into view with the hidden push of air against
their groves of canvas, whitely slicing the Strait's breadth of blue, the very print of their names vivid enough to ferry the imagination horizonward. **Willamantic** and **Alert** and **Flying Mist** and **Naramissic**. The **Toando Keller**, the **Lizzie Roberts**, the **Jenny Ford**. **Orion**, **Iconium**, **Visurgis**. **Torrent**. **Saucy Lass**. **Wild Pigeon**. **Forest Queen**. **Maunaloa**. **Growler**. **Quickstep**. Up from San Francisco, **Nahumkeag**. **Aquilar de Los Andes**, eagle of the Andes and homebound to Santiago. **Lalla Rookh** and **Wavelet** and **Jeannie Berteux**.

Nothing in our world is so richly, gaily named any more, unless it would be racehorses, and the sails that come and go on these waters now fill are for pleasure rather than commerce. Saturday spinnakers instead of daily broadsails. Swan would like it, though, that the region still is water-mad, in its way. To walk down to the shoreline of any Puget Sound community is to find mast filled marinas, natural as coves of cattails. But schooners, barks, any of the working-canvas fleet that went past him, sometimes several a day: no.

Our version of a **Quickstep** sheers past the Point No Point light like strap-iron passing porcelain, then steadies massively into the shipping lane of the Sound. We try, and fail, to pick the name off the freighter's bow with field glasses.

Ann tells of a handy powerful monocular her father carries with him on hikes. A spyglass, it would have been in Swan's time.

As if the first freighter was the outrider, others now show themselves from behind the bluff regularly each half hour or so. The third black ship cuts past just at low tide, three p.m. As we have walked I have been watching a known place on the horizon for any glimpse of Mount
Rainier, where I will be at this time tomorrow, but a squall in the center of the Sound's gray plain of water is intervening. Soon the squall line moves north, off Whidbey Island, and try as we do to convince ourselves it can't boomerang toward us, it comes.

The Sound and sky go to deeper grays, the lighthouse begins sending out dashes of light, and we start back to the Point as the day's fourth ship, edges erased in the rain, passes indistinct as a phantom.
Day thirty-two

As I carry groceries from the car to the cabin, the forest challenges me. Rawf, it barks, Rowf rowf roof. Rawf. While showing me routines of the cabin, doorkeys and woodpile and pots and pans, Trudy and Howard had mentioned that a neighbor's small brown dog is fond of visiting. We would be instant friends, Trudy assured me. Dog friend is advancing on me now from the woods with his five-note salvo like a sentry triggering off warning bursts.

"Hullo, Solo, hey, Solo Solo Solo," I offer and coax him into being petted. At once he wags ecstasy, devotion, worship. But as I step down the path from the cabin Solo moves to my heels and yammers steadily all the way to the car.

Before gathering the next armful of cargo I again Solo Solo Solo him, stroke his back until the hair threatens to fray off, scratch his belly and the place between his ears, seem to have sent him irretrievably giddy. He then rolls to his feet and yaps me every step back to the cabin.

People sometimes comment, surprised, that I am remarkably at ease with their pets, in the same way they occasionally congratulate me—astonished, here—that I am good with children. But they are seeing a kind of social sleight of hand. In either case my heart is not much in the good manners. All I hope for, from youngsters
or from the animals that seem to take their roles in many house-
mildly holds, is respectful truce, whereby we gaze mildy at one another
across some line fixed in the air between us. That, of course,
is never the set of terms the other side wants. Solo evidently
has seen through me at once to the secret agent against dogs and
will bay the alarm through all eternity.

One more round trip we make, Solo yawping determinedly whenever
my hand isn't stroking him. I face the issue.

"Solo, goddamned if I'm going to spend four days petting you.
Go home."

He wavers, somewhere between another aria of barking and a
demand for further ransom of petting.

"Get-the-hell-outa-here."

Off Solo scampers through the ghostly alders, looking faintly
regretful about having overplayed me. The silence that arrives
along his retreating tracks fills the forest, reaches instantly
down from the upthrust of fir trees and the hover of the mountain,
vast Rainier, somewhere above their green weave. After
the unquiet introduction, an avalanche of stillness.

I am here for stillness. For pause in this winter at Swan's
heels and, I suppose, in my own strides across time. Coming to
this underedge of snow country is a brief reflective climb back
to my first life in the West, the Montana life. I grew up in
powerful winters of white, amid stories of even mightier ones: the
seasons which have swept western Montana each three decades since the first of them was registered, to the everlasting shock of the rangemen, in the late 1880s. 1919-20, which broke our family homestead under its six-month burden of frozen snow. 1948-49, when I watched my father struggle to save two thousand sheep, and our future, on the blizzard-lashed ranch at Battle Creek. Now, again, another thirty-year giant. For weeks Montanans have been telling me by phone or mail of the deep lock of cold in the Rockies, of snowdrifts across porch railings, concern for cattle soon to begin calving. Sentences from a Missoula friend: "Anything bad about this winter in Montana that you happen to hear, believe it. It is the worst ever, and it started November 9. The ground has been under snow since, and it hit -28 here on January 1, -50 in Butte."

I have had times of urge recently to return to Montana, go there for the experience of the great thirty-year winter. It may after all be the last to fall within my lifespan, and that ink of Swan's will not drain away in spring runoff. But I would be returning on a tourist's terms, on whim and mere spectatorship, which to me are tarnished terms for such an occasion. Any honesty about earth-dwelling tells me I have not earned this Montana winter by living with the land's other moods there, by keeping my roots within its soil. Half my lifetime ago I decided the point, although I did not then know how long-reaching the decision would be, that the ranch-country region of my grandparents and parents is no longer the site for me to work out
life. I could not divide myself, a portion to the words I wanted to make, another to the raising of livestock and coping with furious seasons. Not winters of white steel but the coastal ones of pewter, gray, soft toned, workable, with the uninsistent Northwest rain simply there in the air like molecules made visible, are the necessary steady spans for me to seek the words. Yet the white winters have not entirely let me go. A time or two a season, snowline will help me see the margins of what I am doing and I come to some place such as this, a white edge of the Northwest where I can sit above my usual life for a few days. Hear what is being said in my skull. Watch mountain dusk draw down.

scrutinize

And gaze at deer, as I am now. The boldest of them wintering here is a doe which made her appearance as Trudy and Howard were leaving, and has ghosted back into the near-dark now. Black tailed and gray furred for winter she eases past this cabin a time or two each evening, they told me, she can be recognized by the nick in her ear. A wide screened-in porch rambles around three sides of the cabin, a pleasant half-hidden promenade up among the first branches of the trees, and from it she can be seen for several minutes on her route.

As I watch down from the porch the motion of the doe's each step seems to recoil slightly into her as if some portion of poise is being pulled back each time in reserve. This tentative grace of deer which stops them just short of being creatures of some other element, hoofed birds, perhaps, or slim dolphins of the meadow. Who would have thought, on a continent of such machines of the wild as bison and elk and the grizzly, that it would be deer
to best survive? For once, the meek have inherited.

Before bed I look up Swan on deer. The blacksmith at Neah Bay was undertaking to raise one from a fawn. The twenty-sixth of January, 1865: Mr. Phillips' tame deer has been missing for several days and I strongly suspect the Indians have killed it in retaliation for sundry dogs which Phillips and Mr. Maggs have shot.

But the next day: The deer made her appearance this morning and much to my satisfaction...It is very tame, looks very pretty running about among the cattle.
Day thirty-three

New snow, two inches of dry fluff. The entire forest has been fattened by it, everywhere a broad white outline put onto all branches of trees and brush. The effect comes odd against yesterday's green and gray of the forest, like a white blossoming gone rampant overnight.

Time along the Nisqually River today, first at its freshly white bank and then atop its dike of small boulders which rises about half again my height. Even at winter pace the Nisqually rattled past faster than I could sprint. The sliding water measures about sixty feet across at this time of year, but in summer flood past year, its width bellied out to some hundreds of yards, which is the theory behind the dike. Howard described to me how the floodwater bashed open the predecessor wall of boulders and gathered into its flow nine vacation homes.

The lone survivor of what had been the rank of ten, a house brinked above the gravel-bottom scour where the river scooped past and looking still intimidated from the thinness of its escape, I crunched by during my dike amble; and was reminded by it that Carol and I once traveled casually into the Sierra Nevada foothills where the gold towns had blossomed and found all rivers bucking in high white fury, with reports daily of rafting Californians drowning themselves. "Damn river is like Niagara Falls laid out flat," some California official or another complained to a newspaper reporter, and so the waters of the lode
country all looked, so the Nisqually must have loomed when it decided to do something about habitations crowding its banks. I was careful to tell the river, in my mind where its rapid keen burble kept asking, that I am only visiting.
Day thirty-four

I intend as mild an afternoon as can be spent aboard snowshoes. Whop around on the slope above the National Park buildings at Paradise, watch the weather seethe around the summit of Rainier a mile and a half above. When my thigh muscles make first complaint about the pontoons at the bottom of my legs, ease off the fluffy ridge, try to keep the car from becoming a bobsled on the white packed road down to Longmire Lodge and coffee. and pie: then the forest's miles back to the cabin, and dusk.

But halfway above Paradise I wallow onto rodent prints stitching a path in and out of the stands of firs. Fate has jotted written in the snow. There is no choice but to become a tracker. Along tilts of slope, over drifts, up, down, across. After several minutes I glance back from the tiny pawprints to my wake in the snow. It is what a whale might churn up in hot pursuit of a minnow.

Shameless, I plow on, occasionally deserting the tracks for the pleasure of creating my own didoes in the white. I discover that the south face of every fir I pass is gray-white with ice: frozen melt at the very end of the branches, in fat cellular conglomerates sectioned by the green fir bristles. Grenades of ice. A sudden thaw would put me under bombardment. Doves of peace—no, gray jays ambling through the air to me, pausing just off my shoulder as if kindly offering to search
my pockets for any loaves of bread which might be burdening me.

The jays sortie off to elsewhere and time drifts out of mind after them, replaced by attention to the weather atop Rainier, lowering, rising, brightening, darkening. As though the mountain when it ceased being a volcano of fire became a cauldron for weather. Like all else in this region of the Cascades, this casual slope I am on, still not far above Paradise and its visitor center and lodge, points quickly up toward Rainier as if in astonishment at how it looms. I was myself, surprised far back along the highway when I was arriving to the cabin, how the lift of the mountain made itself felt even there, the road suddenly jerking into rising curves.

Inventorying the arc of mountains which surround Rainier, themselves lofty but less than half the giant peak’s height, I come onto the thought that the geographical limits of my Northwest winter are Tatoosh and Tatoosh. Tatoosh Island offshore from the outermost perch at Cape Flattery, the Tatoosh Range of crags in view to the south here at the crest of the Cascades, jagging white up through the high-country fabric of forest. At Swan’s first mention of a visit to the Tatoosh lighthouse I looked into a place-names guidebook, found that the derivation could be from the Chinook jargon word for "breast" or the Nootkan word for "thunderbird." Divvy the deriving, I decide: give these cleaved profiles their due, let the thunderbird have the island.

Bulletin from below. Thighs are threatening open rebellion. Snowshoes still want more country. Tatoosh-tatoosh tatoosh-tatoosh the webs sing into the snow as I go onto a fresh drift.
Day thirty-five

Strange, to be again in a house of entirely wood. Under the rough brawn of ceiling beams and amid the walls' constellations of pine knots. Almost two decades of suburban wallboard intervene from when ranchhouse and bunkhouse nightly surrounded me with board walls.

What is it about a cabin within a forest or beside a shore that sings independence from the common world of dwellings? Something more than hinterland site or openly-outlined strokes of beams and rafters; some natural stubbornness against ever being thought an ordinary house shouts through as well. Cabination or anti-domicility or some such rebellious shimmer of the atoms of wall-wood; a true surmiser of cabins would have the term. I simply know that cabin-y distinctness says itself, and I step across a cabin threshold as if going into some chamber of a far year. The broad central room of this cabin, for instance, trades adamantly back and forth between the family who spend summers and weekends here and the abiding forest outside. A wallbeam aligns the antique china plates which sit on it as if they were bright droplets on a branch; beneath runs a long bank of mullioned window, the small panes fondling separate bits of the forest as if they were scenes on porcelain. On another wall is the cabin item that interests me most, a crosscut saw. Blazon of sharpened steel, the crosscut is a remarkably elegant tool to have inspired its epithets: "misery harp" the least profane description Northwest loggers had for it as, sawyer at either end, they ground
the blade back and forth through a Douglas fir or red cedar. Having
cought from Swan the winter virus of measure-and-count I've learned
by yardstick that this slicer of forests is six and a half feet long,
by careful finger that it has sixty-eight beveled sharpnesses
interspersed with sixteen wider-set prongs which make space for the
sawdust to spill away. A giant's steel grin of 84 teeth, and as
innocent and ready in this cabin amid these woods as a broadsword on
a Highlands castle wall.

Sawed wood--firewood--decides my site when I am here inside
the cabin. I settle at the kitchen table, close by the cookstove
which must be fed each hour or so. (Howard has told me he will
harvest his own firewood when summer comes, from the stand of alder
woven within the mullioned window. A neighbor who owns a team of
workhorses will skid the downed trees in for sawing. I wish the
harnessed horses were there now, the leather sounds of their working
heft coming down the mountainside. Instead, if anything is out
there, it will be either Solo on reconnaissance to see whether I
have mended my anti-dog ways, or the slowly gliding deer.) Today
out of the mound of mail which has been building on my desk since
Swan's diaries moved into my days I finally have winnowed the
letter from Mark, in his faculty office in Illinois--we may be the
last two American friends who write regularly and at such length to
one another--and the quote which he found during his research on
mid-nineteenth-century frontier missionaries. The Reverend Summers,
reporting from Benton County, Iowa, in July of 1852:
"A young man recently left for California, who for two years has been very anxious to go, but during his minority had been restrained by the influence and authority of his parents. They offered, for the sake of diverting him from his purpose, to furnish him the means to travel and visit the Eastern cities. He derided the idea. He would not turn his hand over to see all that could be seen in the East, but he must go to the Utopia of the New World; and he has gone."

Gone west and cared not so much as a flip of his hand to know any of that lesser land behind him. In all but flesh, that young Iowan was my grandfather, my great-uncles, my father and his five brothers, me. After my Doig grandparents sailed from Scotland and crossed America to a high forest-tucked valley of the Rocky Mountains, nobody of the family for two generations ever went to the Atlantic again. When I journeyed off to college, I was spoken of as being "back east in Illinois." My father adventured to Chicago once on a cattle train and twice to visit me. My mother, after her parents moved from Wisconsin to the Rockies when she was half a year old, never returned beyond the middle of Montana.

This westernness in my family, then, has been extreme as we could manage to make it. We lived our first seventy years as Americans on slopes of the Rockies as naturally, single-mindedly, as kulaks on the Russian steppes. (Nights when I have been at my desk reading Swan's pages, I have noticed that my square-bearded face reflected in the desk-end window could be a photographic plate
of any of those museful old Scotsmen who transplanted our family
name to the western mountains of America. If we have the face we
deserve at forty—or thirty-nine and some months, as I am now—
evidently I am earning my way backwards to my homesteading
grandfather.) My own not very many years eastward—which is to
say in the middle of the Midwest—amounted to a kind of instructive
geographic error. (Instructive, literally: Montana as evaluated
at Northwestern University in Evanston, 1957: "youse guys," confides
my new college friend from The Bronx, "youse guys from Mwavntana
twalk funny.") The journalism jobs in the flat-horizoned midland
turned my ambition in on itself, impelled me to work the salaried
tasks for more than they were worth and to sluice the accumulating
overflow of ideas into pages of my own choice. Also, happiest
result of my brief misguess of geography (chiding from a friend who
had stepped back and forth among writing jobs: "It doesn't matter any more
where you live in this country." It matters.), I met Carol there, already
edging west on her own, and when the two of us turned together,
away from editorial careers and ahead to independence, we stepped
a fourth of the continent farther than any of my family had done.
Puget Sound's salt water begins six hundred yards from our valley-held
house close by Seattle.

And so with Swan, I judge. When the reverend wrote those opining
words—Swan of Boston already had been on the Pacific shore for
more than two years—twenty-three months, and was about to head onward to Shoalwater Bay
and ultimately the Strait and Cape Flattery. Finding the place to
invest his life meant, as it has to me, finding a west. (Roulette
of geography, of course, that the American frontier stretched from
the Atlantic toward the Pacific instead of the other way around. Erase Santa Maria and Mayflower, ink in Chinese junks anchoring at San Francisco Bay and Puget Sound four hundred years ago, re-read our history with its basis in Confucianism, its exploit of transcontinental railroads laid across the eastern wilderness by coolie labor from London and Paris, its West Coast mandarins—the real item—aloofly setting cultural style for the country.) What Swan and his forty-year wordstream will have told me by the end of this winter, I can't yet know, but already I have the sense from his sentences and mine that there are and always have been many wests, personal as well as geographical. (Even what I have been calling the Pacific Northwest is multiple. A basic division begins at the Columbia River; south of it, in Oregon, they have been the sounder citizens, we in Washington the sharper strivers. Transport fifty from each state as a colony on Mars and by nightfall the Oregonians will put up a school, a church and a city hall, the Washingtonians will establish a bank and a union.) Swan on the Strait has been living in two distinct ones, Neah Bay and Port Townsend (and sampled two others earlier, San Francisco and Shoalwater Bay) and neither of them is the same as my own wests, Montana of a quarter-century ago and Puget Sound of today. Yet Swan's wests come recognizable to me, are places which still have clear overtones of my own places, stand alike in being distinctly unlike the rest of the national geography. Perhaps that is what the many wests are, common in their stubborn separatenesses; each west a kind of cabin, insistent that it is no other sort of dwelling whatsoever.
Days thirty-six, thirty-seven, thirty-eight

At Neah Bay, Swan writes on. Writes the daily diary entries, frequent newspaper articles, writes letter after letter in the series which, as I began to crank 120-year-old words into sight filled a roll of microfilm thick as my fist. From the files of the Smithsonian Institution, "SWAN, JAMES G., Official Incoming Correspondence."

Eventually nearly four hundred pieces of correspondence flowed from Swan to the savants within the Smithsonian's castle-like museum. It was—is—a spellbinding cataract of mail. Swan's machine-magnified handwriting reads like lines from a Gulliver who every so often pauses on one North Pacific promontory or another to inventory his pockets and his thoughts. "I have now ready to ship by first opportunity a case containing 16 bird skins, mostly large #2 Indian skulls #1 backbone of fur seal with skull #2 grass straps for carrying burthens #1 dog hair blanket # specimen sea weed #1 fur seal skin #2 fur seal skulls #4 specimen fossil crabs #2 miniature hats #2 down blankets # shells taken from ducks' stomachs.

The Indians here judge of the weather for the following day by observing the stars whenever there happens to be a clear night in this humid atmosphere. If the sky is clear and the stars "twinkle brightly," they predict wind for the following day and with uncanny certainty. If on the contrary the stars shine tranquilly they say there will be but little wind, and consequently, prepare themselves at midnight to go off to their
fishing grounds some 15 to 20 miles outside Cape Flattery. They believe
the "wind in the air" makes the stars twinkle.

I have been reading with great interest the work on archaeology
by Mr Haven, which was received among other books from the Smith-
sonian... On page 148 Mr Haven remarks in his conclusion while speaking
of the Indians at the Columbia River & Nootka, "There too prevails
the singular and inconvenient custom of inserting discs of wood in
the lips and ears." Now the fact is, that there is not an Indian
from the Columbia to Nootka who has, or has had, a disc of wood in
either lips or ears....

...In 66 consecutive days there has fallen a little more than
2½ feet of water. I think that Astoria, which is usually accounted
the most rainy place on this coast, can hardly beat this quantity....

...I have got the names of the male descendants of Deeart the
chief from whom Neeah Bay or Deeah as these Indians pronounce it is
taken. There are twelve generations and by a little patience I can
trace the various collateral branches and by that means find out the
descendants. But to ask
these Indians as Mr Morgan lays down the rule viz "what do I call
my grandmothers great aunt" &c, the answer invariably is "Klonas"
or dont know.

...2 Indian cradles # 1 grass blanket # 2 medicine rattles
made of scallop shells # 2 birds nests # 1 little basket robins eggs
fossil crabs # baskets of shells # 1 bark head dress # 1 crab...
When we think of our once glorious Union, from its struggling commencement, to the culminating glory of its zenith, as Longfellow says, "We know what master laid the keel/What workmen framed thy ribs of steel..." and then look upon the old ship of state as she now lies wrecked, broken, and apparently a total loss, it is almost enough to make a man doubt whether that Providence who has hitherto watched over us, has not for some national sin withdrawn from us for a season his protecting care.... But I am digressing from a commonplace letter on bird skins into topics that have puzzled wiser heads than mine.

Most often, these bulletins from Swan's persistent pen emerged onto the desk of an even more prodigious creator of mail: Spencer Fullerton Baird, Assistant Secretary and second-in-command of the Smithsonian. Swan had met both Baird and the Secretary of the Smithsonian, Joseph Henry, during that interim of his in the national capital in the late 1850's. Henry and Baird added up to a most formidable museum team. While Henry, a practical scientist who had made pioneering discoveries in electromagnetism, enforced a tone of scientific enterprise for the Smithsonian, Baird was endeavoring to fill the place up like a silo.

He was one of those Victorian work machines, Baird, who could have run the world by himself if he'd had more writing hands. In 1860, he noted in his journal that he had dashed off a total of 3,050 letters that year, without the aid of stenographers, and he
soon got stenographers. Baird's passion was nothing less than to capture nature for the Smithsonian. When he moved from his post as a professor of natural history to the Smithsonian in 1850, with him arrived two freight cars of his own bird specimens. Ever since, he had been welcoming, as the institution's annual reports show, items ranging from dead garter snakes to meteorites. And perpetually, perpetually, churning out his messages of encouragement to an army of unofficial Smithsonian helpers who ranged from backyards amateurs—"Never fear the nonacceptability of anything you may send," Baird once wrote to an enthusiast who had been mailing in insects from Eutaw, Alabama, to such scientific eminences as Louis Agassiz and George Perkins Marsh.

Swan's enlistment date was January 10, 1860. He put a box of seashells aboard a steamer at Port Townsend, happy at all times, he assured the Smithsonian's caliphs of science, to add my humble collections to specimens in your museums.

Inevitably, Swan had to be on the short side of this proposition. The Smithsonian and Baird were rare eminences to such back-of-beyond existence while he was merely one, and the most distant one at that, of a battalion of science-struck gleaners. When the orb of microfilm begins to glow out its "LETTERS TO SWAN FROM SPENCER F. BAIRD," then, the differences between the letters of the man in the frontier schoolhouse and the man in the red-brick castle registers about as might be expected.
I should be pleased if your time permit it you could give me some reliable idea of the state of affairs at Washington, Swan will pen, exuberantly—wistfully?—filling all four sides of a folded broadsheet. I can gather very little from the contradictory statements of the newspapers and know about as much of the doings of the Khan of Tartary as of our own government. Back from Baird arrives a considerable fraction less of paper and bonhomie: We had the very great pleasure today of receiving the box of shells from Nee-ah Bay sent by you...

Master of perfunctory encouragement that Baird was, he none-theless did enrich Swan's life at Cape Flattery. The specimens Baird asked for—birds and fish, particularly—made a welcome change of task from the Neah Bay routine Swan once described as attending to the sick, listening to Indian complaints of various kinds and looking after things generally. (The Makahs occasionally had a dimmer view of Swan's specimen collecting. Last evening I shot a horned owl of the mottled gray species....This forenoon I skinned it and prepared it for the Smithsonian Institution. The Indians think owls are dead Indians and I had quite a talk with some children who assured me that the owl was not a bird but an Indian.) And as Swan freighted in his hodgepodge of promising items, Baird sent west to him an array of books of science, another bonus to a frontier life. (Swan was a reader. Over the years in the diaries I look over his shoulder to Stanley's account of tracking Livingstone, Mark Twain's Innocents Abroad, Thackeray's Pendennis, Melville's Omoo... Most vital of all in these Neah Bay years, however, Baird's encouragement sat Swan down to an ambitious piece of scholarly enterprise: an ethnological study of the Makahs.
Swan likely did not even think of his intention as ethnology, or its mother science, anthropology. Only in the wake of Darwin's theory of evolution, not all that many years before, were such fields of study becoming recognized. Language, not the net of culture behind it, was the original lure for Swan, the Neah Bay diaries every so often showing self-instruction in Makah: December Se-whow-ah-putl
January a-a-kwis-putl February Klo-klo-chis-to-putl... Eventually Swan is complimented by a visiting tribesman that he thought I was a real Indian as I could talk Makah so well....I said to him that I could only talk the Makah dialect a little. But Swan did have the necessary impulse, the flywheel of curiosity within him—or call it that penchant for eyewitnessing—to follow language into culture. I know the importance
of making these collections and writing the Indian memoirs now, while we are among them and can get reliable facts, he once writes to Baird. The time is not distant, when these tribes will pass away, and future generations who may feel an interest in the history of these people will wonder why we have been so negligent.

The Indians of Cape Flattery took Swan more than two years to write, and his constant deskmate was interruption. In order to have the work go on as rapidly as possible with the Government buildings I have been obliged to sink the teacher into the caterer for the...
mess, Swan reported to Baird in the midst of the schoolhouse construc-
tion, and a person arranging for the appetites of six hearty men who
must have three full meals per day cannot find much opportunity
for belles lettres.

But on the thirteenth of April, 1865, Swan could write Baird that
I have finished my paper on the Makah Indians at last and packed it
with the sketches which accompany it in a snug parcel...

"Paper" barely described the work: a 55,000-word ream of
manuscript about how the Makahs lived and spoke and believed. Swan's
fetish for fact is on the finished result like a watermark. He
describes the Makahs' canoes, how they fished and hunted seals and
whales, what their ceremonies and legends were, how their masks
looked, the tribal ailments, what games the children played, what
the tribe ate and wore, how they told time, what they called the
months of the year: think of a daily moment of life and Swan probably
set
has cut down for you how a Makah spent it. And what an interplanetary
meeting of wordmen it is to imagine Spencer Baird being introduced,
courtesy of Swan's pen, to Captain John: About three years ago he
had lost the use of one of his feet, probably from paralysis, but
which he attributed to a "skookoom," or evil spirit, entering into
it one day while he was bathing. He had been confined to his house
for several months, and was reduced to a skeleton. I saw him during
this sickness, and thought he could not recover. One pleasant day,
however, according to his account, he managed to crawl to a brook
near his house, and, while bathing, heard a rustling sound in the air, at which he became frightened, and covered his face with his blanket, whereupon a raven alighted within a few feet of him and uttered a hoarse croak. He then peeped through a corner of his blanket, and saw the raven with its head erect, its feathers bristled, and a great swelling in its throat. After two or three unsuccessful efforts, it finally threw up a piece of bone about three inches long, then uttering another croak it flew away. Remaining quiet a few minutes, till he was satisfied that the raven had gone, he picked up the bone, which he gravely informed me was of the Ha-hek-to-ak. He hid this bone near by, and returned to his lodge, and, after relating the occurrence, was informed by the Indian doctors that it was a medicine sent to him by his tamanawas, and this proved to be true, as he entirely recovered in three days.... Swan now steps into the narrative with a bit of exegesis: The tale of the raven alighting near him is not improbable, as ravens as well as crows are very plenty and very tame; nor is it impossible that the raven might have had a bone in its mouth, and finally dropped it; nor is it entirely uncertain that the circumstance so affected his superstitious imagination that it caused a reaction in his system, and promoted his recovery. The same effect might perhaps have been produced by a smart shock from a galvanic battery.

The manuscript done, Swan set back to await publication by the Smithsonian. It began to be a long sit. In the microfilm's blizzard of lines a year passes, two, three. Swan is writing heavier and
heavier nudges to Baird. The second of November, 1868: Can you give
one any encouragement that it will appear within the next decade?
Yet another year: sixteenth of November, 1869: When that Makah memoir
is published??!!! I should like some copies to send to several officers
at Sitka who are much interested in Indian matters....

Either the deprivation of the Sitka officers or the explosion
of punctuation did the job. At the start of 1870 The Indians of
Cape Flattery, even yet the primary source on the historical Makahs,
came into print.