typist - ready, late Sept, '79

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Day one

3

"... Capt John was here today, Swan writes from a century ago, and I related to him a dream I had last night, in which I saw several Indians I formerly knew who are dead. John said it was a sign the "memelose" or dead people are my friends and I would soon see that they would do something to show their friendship." Fifteen ~~minutes~~ past nine. Out in the dark, the Sound wind visits favorite trees, is shaken off, hankers along the valley in stubborn search. The gusting started up hours ago, during the wink-like pause of daylight that is December evening, and by now seems paced to try to last the night. Until the wind arrived the day was nordic: sunless, but silent and dry. The neighborhood's lion-colored cat, inspector-general of such ~~days~~ weather, all this morning tucked himself atop the board fence outside the north window ~~of my writing room~~ as I read Swan. Out of his doze each several minutes a sharp cat ear would twitch; give the air a tan flick just to be certain it still could. Then the self-hug into snooze again.

The breakers, now the third morning after Swan's dream, tore up the beach and rooted out immense numbers of clams which were thrown up by the surf. I gathered a few buckets full and soon the squaws and Indians came flocking up like so many gulls and gathered at least fifty bushels....Nineteighteen. I see, by leaning to hear into the wind, that the night-black window which faces west off the end of my desk collects the half of me above the desktop and the steal of copied diary page into quiet of my own. My square-bearded face reflected there could be a photographic plate of any of the museful old Scotsmen who transplanted our family name to the western mountains of America. I think of another set of Swan's ~~writings~~ words. The time he tells of a Peninsula settler driven to highest fury when some visiting ~~Indians~~ Makahs were clumsy with a canoe mast being stowed for the night and crashed an end through the hard-bought one window of the homestead cabin.

This suburban house glints with thirteen more windows besides the glass my reflection occupies, windows to every direction and inclination. Wobbly mast-bearers could pass none of my walls without creating crystal.

Nine twenty.

Capt John told me, this the morning following the ~~clam~~ beach bonanza, that the cause of the great quantity of Clams on the beach yesterday was the dead people I dreamed about the other night and they put the clams there to show their friendship....

Nine twenty-one, and now winter. Winter, in fact, with a fat numerical bong: arrival at precisely 2121 hours of December 21. Captain John could ~~do~~ have done plenty with that. In his spirit, let it signify that we have been clocked auspiciously through solstice--the wind and I and the fencetop cat, and yes, Swan and Captain John and the restless memories of departed Makahs. From here, from the bend of this moment, we are in the coastal season of beginnings.

Day two

His name was James Gilchrist Swan, and we will see it to be more than a prank of language that his own era looked on him as distinctly an odd duck. I have felt my pull toward him ever since some forgotten ~~writing~~ frontier pursuit or another landed me into the coastal region of history where he presides, meticulous as a usurer's clerk, diarying and diarying that life of his, four generations and as many lightyears from my own.

This is the 18th day since Swell was shot and there is no offensive smell from the corpse. It may be accounted for in this manner. He was shot through the body and afterwards washed in the breakers, consequently all the blood in him must have run out. He was then rolled up tight in 2 new blankets and put into a new box, nailed up strong.

I know the beach at Crescent Bay where the life of Swell, ~~the~~ a chieftain of the Makah tribe, was snapped off. Across on the Canadian shore of the Strait of Juan de Fuca the lights of modern Victoria now make a spread of white embers atop the burn-dark rim of coastline. But on Swell's final winter night in 1861, only a beach campfire at Crescent on our southern shore flashed bright enough to attract the eye, and Swell misread ~~it~~ the marker of home as an encampment of traveling members of his own tribe. Instead, he stepped from his canoe to find that the overnighters were of the Elwha village of the Clallam tribe, among them chanced to be a particular rival of Swell, and his bullet spun the Makah dead into the cold surf.

It was a killing less casual than the downtown deaths my morning newspaper brings me three or four times a week--the Elwhas and the Makahs at least had the excuse of lifetimes of quarrel--or that I could go see in aftermath, eligible as I am for all manner of intrusion because of being a writer, were I to accompany the Seattle homicide squad. James G. Swan did go hurrying to be beside Swell's corpse, and there the first of our differences is marked.

Truth told, I find among Swan's words that more than one motive carried him west along the Strait from Port Townsend to the death scene. Swell was his best-regarded friend among the coastal tribes, a man he had voyaged with, learned legends from. Swan's diary pages show them steadily swapping favors: now Swell detailing for Swan the Makahs' skill at hunting whales, now Swan painting for Swell in red and black his name and a horse on his canoe sail. Swell said he always went faster in his canoe than the other Indians . . . like a horse, so he wanted to have one painted . . . But solid as the comradeship may have been, so was Swan's Yankee instinct to retrieve the goods which Swell had been consigned to bring home by canoe to another of Swan's coastal acquaintances, a trader situated at the western extent of the Strait. From the merchants of Port Townsend, Swan compiles a list of Swell's cargo, then in his small quick hand sums his resolve: Must therefore look for 1 British tea pot, 1 small brass

kettle, 1 tin trunk . . .

I ponder this, mulling what it would take to send me off on such an errand...a crate of books, the chance to hear a grand story...But then, this winter, this deliberate season of frontier, is itself a fetch of ~~this~~ similar sort...

A morning soon after learning of Swell's death, having traveled with a friendly chieftain of the Clallam band nearest to Port Townsend, Swan strolled into the Elwha village. Charley, the murderer, then got up and made a speech. He said that he shot Swell for two reasons, one of which was, that the Mackahshad killed two of the Elwha's a few months previous, and they were determined to kill a Mackah chief to pay for it. And the other reason was, that Swell had taken his squaw away, and would not return either the woman or the fifty blankets he had paid for her. Swan then haggled out of Charley the potwear, several blankets and a dozen yards of calico. I could not help feeling while standing up alongside this murderer, surrounded by the residents of the village (some 75 persons), that I would gladly give a pull at the rope that should hang him . . .

That day's chastisement ~~remained the product of~~ was administered with vocal cords rather than hemp, however. When Swan was done, it became the turn of the visiting chieftain to erupt to his Clallam cousins about the paltry compensation Charley was handing over. This talk produced two more blankets which closed the business.

Swan next carried the matter of Swell's death to the federal Indian agent for Washington Territory. Met inconclusion there. Sent a seething letter to the newspaper in the territorial capital of Olympia . . . an Indian peaceably passing on his way home in his canoe, laden with white men's goods . . . foully murdered . . . agents of our munificent government have not the means at their disposal to defray the expenses of going to arrest the murderer. . . And at last canoed once more along the Strait to accompany Swell, still nailed up strong, for the hundred miles to burial at the Makah village of Neah Bay.

There, Swell's brother Peter came and wished me to go with him and select a suitable spot to bury Swell . . .

I did as he desired, marked out the spot and dug out the first sand.

And this further: He also brought up the large tomanawas boards--the Makahs' cedar tableaus of magic which would be the grave's monument--of Swell for me to paint anew. . .

There, then, is Swan, or at least a start on him. A man from Boston asked to trace afresh the sacred designs of a buried Makah chieftain. I can think of few circumstances less likely, unless they are mine: an onlooker who has set himself a winter's appointment back so many dozens of years and across geography to the Olympic Peninsula and elsewhere along the coastal tracery of Puget Sound and the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and indeed into the life of a person born 121 years before him. Yet this is all a journey I have awaited for a decade, ever since I began to be aware of how powerfully, mortally, I am bonded to this last margin of the land. Swan was early, in stepping the paths of westering impulse that pull across America's girth of plains and over its continental summit and at last nip off here at the surf of the Pacific. I am interested to see how it is that those paths for so many years carried him now hold me.

James G. Swan had hastened west in the same scurry as

many thousands of other mid-nineteenth-century Americans. Their word isn't much known today, but at the time they were called argonauts, the seekers drawn by the finds of gold in California streambeds as if they had glimpsed wisps of the glittering fleece that lured Jason and his Greeks. Like Jason's, their journey generally was by ship, the very impatience for wealth-to-come evidently weighting the sailing vessels to slowness. Swan stepped aboard the Rob Roy in Boston harbor on the twenty-fifth of January, 1850, climbed off at San Francisco on August eighth.

check dates + route

What exact cache of promises and excuses this man of New England ~~had~~ left behind him ~~in eastern America~~ isn't known in detail, but they likely were considerable. Something of the bulk and awkwardness of my own, I suppose, when I went off from Montana ranching to college and a typewriter. Swan was 32½ years old when he set foot on the Pacific Coast. By the time of his birth in 1818--Turgenev's year, Karl Marx's year--in the north-of-Boston village of Medford, the Swan family name already had been in Massachusetts for eighteen decades, evidently the devout achieving sort of New England clan which began to count iself gentry from the moment the Indians could be elbowed out of sight into the forest. Merchants, doctors, educators, lawyers populate the generations. Swan's own older brothers stayed standard, Samuel as physician, Benjamin a minister.

But not James. He evidently took the excuse that occasional seafarers had cropped up in the family--a legendarily adventurous uncle, and more ~~recently~~ significantly his own father, said to have been lost in a gale while captaining a brig back from Africa in 1823--and in his mid-teens Swan started in on the try of a waterfront life in Boston.

Dallying around the docks, first as a clerk with a shipping firm and eventually as a merchandiser of ships' supplies, must have suited the young Swan comfortably enough. With forests of sail sweeping back and forth before his eyes, and the new steam vessels shuddering to life around him, this adventurer of the waterfront made no ocean voyage of his own until he was twenty-three. Then he embarked on a Boston-to-Liverpool jaunt with a chore or two of his employer's business attached, and seems to have been content to do it just the once.

That once to Britain, however, put Swan's writing hand into motion. The long, brownish, tatty-edged manuscript pages are ten years the earliest of all Swan's surviving paperwork, and must be a version he copied from his pocket notebook--it would have been the start of that habit, too--as soon as he returned to America. By my terms, this wan sheaf of paper comes as ancient and entrancing as a cave painting. Any comparable paperwork having to do with the Doig family would be drily governmental, in the Scottish archives, and likely would show us irretrievably in arrears on croft taxes or enlisting

one of our number to die an infantry death in Madras or the Crimea. It is a bonus of magic for me, then, that the pages of Swan's life from his own hand begin here on ~~March~~ the second of March, 1841, and recite the month in which he rambled interestedly around Britain.

And how keen, assiduous an account his squinched little lines of ink are. Weather, conveyance, schedule, meals, roadside fields, birds of those fields, even Swan's morning disposition: I was very stupid today, the sixteenth of March, from the want of sleep last night & for the first time since I left home I felt really homesick & would have been glad to have been home but as soon as I walked out I felt much relieved & hope to get my thoughts on a business train after a good nights rest, all come on report at the nib of his pen. So too the social impress of Britain of Dickens's time. Liverpool astounds and horrifies this Bostonian with the hurly-burly of its streets: . . . female scavengers. . . go round with baskets & collect all the manure & offal in the city which they put in heaps & offer then for sale. Their heaps are bought by the gardeners for a few pence to enrich the garden beds--It struck me as the filthiest work I had ever seen a woman engaged in & more especially as they use nothing but their hands to work with. Then the proverbial fishwives, a queer lot of beings & probably the lowest of the human race . . . ~~They go screaming round the streets like so many~~

gulls . . . Quickly, the unsurprising exclamation: Liverpool is a shocking dirty place & I am sick enoughof it.

But London he thinks a wondrous city . . . walked two hours this morning in one direction & every step of the way the street was crowded with people & vehicles. His young American eyes have not seen the like except possibly on a Boston market day when a drawbridge over the Charles River would hold up traffic, the crowd then is just the same as the streets are here all the time from sunrise to sunset.

He glimpses the young queen, Victoria, trundling out of the Buckingham Palace grounds on her way to church . . . had a good sight of her face as she was looking out the carriage window . . . quite pretty, Swan considers her, in a little blue silk bonnet. He is drawn back and back to the magnificent dome of St. Paul's, even though the Easter service there seems to him mumbled over in a very bad manner. Tours the new museum of wax figures shown by an old French woman & her son--the Tussauds--who are making a deal of money out of this affair. Rides the night mail train from London back to Liverpool: they go with the greatest velocity sometimes 50 miles an hour--the fastest travel in the world of its time--only stopping to get water.

I quote wholesale from Swan among the Britons because here I sense him testing his ~~stride~~ pen. This careful manuscript by a twenty-three-year-old begins the marathon of ink-and-paper

which will continue until a new century, our century, signals an end. He arrived at the last line of this British journey having seen a great deal to admire & much to censure. . .

That is the exact Swan I have begun to hear speaking to me, out of the accumulating day-by-day pages on my desk, here at our shared edge of landscape.

Banquet of details, snifters of opinion.

Something else of moment happened to Swan that year of 1841. He married rather above himself. Matilda Loring, of a prominent Boston printing and publishing family, a small neatly-built woman with a firm line of jaw, became his bride on the twenty-sixth of October. Of the courtship and its aftermath, Swan's heap of papers is conspicuously silent. But from the circumstances, this must have become one of those marriages where it afterward is unclear whether the wife chided because the husband took on the world's whiskey as a personal challenge, or the husband fled into the bottle because the wife was a shrike. What is plain enough is that Swan continued to court the bottle even after, in the eighth year of marriage to Matilda, he pointed himself west across America.

I hunger to have overheard the exact words of that decision. Swan and Matilda were living apart by the year 1849, he in a Boston boarding house handy to his waterfront life; she in Chelsea with the two children of the divided household, four-year-old Ellen and seven-year-old Charles--and did Swan simply come onto the porch one day and offer, Matilda, I have been thinking I will go to California? Whatever the severing sentence, a mass chorus of husbandly farewells could have been heard in the gold-struck America of that moment. Counts the excuse-makers

on their way out the door for El Dorado; in 1848, before gold, the non-native population of California seems to have totaled fewer than fifteen thousand. By 1852, that figure multiplied to a quarter million, and James Gilchrist Swan long since in the sum.

The many weeks to round Cape Horn in 1850, the long climbing voyage along the Pacific shores, arrival: and then Swan was like a good many of us ever since in not quite knowing what to make of California. I am reminded that only months ago Carol and I drove casually through the Sierra Nevada foothills where the gold towns had blossomed and found all rivers bucking in high white fury and daily reports of rafting Californians drowning themselves. "Damn river is like Niagara Falls laid out flat," somebody complained, and so the waters of the lode country all looked. To the annals of exasperation about forest fires, earthquake and drought heard during our previous California journeys we now added crazed streams, and wondered to one another when the place manages to catch its breath. Certainly California already was in full exotic gallop when Swan disembarked one-hundred-twenty-eight years ago. Dozens, scores of deserted ships clogged the San Francisco harbor, a fleet of Marie Celestes left ghostly by crews which had swarmed to the goldstrikes.

Swan himself completed the pilgrimage up the Sacramento to the mining camps, but only as a purser on a river steamer.

He hesitated in that job, and at the firm's dockside office in San Francisco, for only a matter of weeks, then signed on as the purser of a schooner bound for Hawaii to take on a cargo of potatoes.

Why he so promptly went sailing off for spuds is not known, but the jaunt into the Pacific seems to have been instructive enough. Swan managed to linger at Lahaina for twenty-five days, and one of his rare surviving letters to Matilda gives a dozen pages of blunderbuss observations of the islands and islanders . . . on great occasions or when the white men will pay the expenses they get up a feast called a Lu wow . . . This Lu wow consists of a series of Baked dishes such as Dogs Hogs Turkeys fowls fish Fruits and Greens . . . Their native dances being prohibited are only given by stealth or by express invitation of the whites. They are called Hoolah hoolah. I was desirous of seeing one. . . The natives all call themselves mickonaree or missionary which is the term they use to express their ideas of christianity. . . there are but very few really sincere & devout persons among them. and are mostly like one I saw in Mr. Bolles store, who was cutting up some capers, when Mr B remarked, I thought you was a missionary Yes said the fellow pointing to his mouth "me mickonary here, all rest no mickonary."

Say for Swan, however, that censorious as he sometimes

could be, generally when writing eastward, he most often ended up as he did now in final lines to Matilda. All these islands have something of interest attached to them which is well worth the time of the curious to investigate and I never yet found that information was useless to any one. . . much pleased with the result of my voyage and hope I may never be doomed to meet with worse people than I have parted with . . . Faithfully & Affectionately, your Husband. . .

Back from that Hawaiian sojourn, Swan at once settled again into a dockside way of life in San Francisco, through the rest of 1850, and through 1851, and through most of 1852. Money always slid through his pockets almost without stopping, and he evidently found life sufficiently interesting by just being away from Massachusetts and alongside the rougher torrent of California waterfront traffic. This routine indeed seems to have been very like the career he had left in Boston except that he could do it at about half-speed and without regard for hometown opinion: laxities which have been among the traditional rewards of the west ever since there was an America. Then, late in 1852, down from the Oregon country arrived Charles J. W. Russell.

A self-described oyster entrepreneur, this visitor from the shaggy north was better portrayed by Swan as possessing a good deal of the romancing spirit of the Baron Munchausen. Russell had gone to Oregon Territory in dream of some real-estate

stopped here

scheme at the mouth of the Columbia River, found that he was a number of generations ahead of his time with that notion, and instead began dispatching shiploads of oysters to San Francisco; even at the distance of 130 years, the man has a sheen. Russell in his swanky way invited Swan to his oystering enterprise on Shoalwater Bay just to the north of the mouth of the Columbia, and Swan seems to have accepted as rapidly as he could get the words out of his mouth.

I have prowled the Washington coastline where Swan plopped ashore at the end of 1852, and a misted, spongy, oozeful kind of place it is. On the western rim of bay, what seems from a distance to be a line of white-gabled houses proves to be the surf of the Pacific. The saltwater reaches hungrily in through this entrance and, in a tremendous splatter of inlets and fingers--the bay lying stretched from north to south for twenty-five miles, and nearly ten across its greatest width--mingles with the inflow of half a dozen sizable rivers and who knows how many creeks and seeps.

The mix yields a maximum of tan marshes and gray muddy tideflats. Mapmakers have granted names to twenty-seven of these Shoalwater Bay sloughs, and almost as many more haven't been thought worth the effort. Yet around its eastern extent the bay surprises a visitor with sudden timber-topped cliffs about a hundred feet high. Banks of a sandy clay, Swan once categorized them, intermingled with strata of

shells and remains of ancient forest-trees that for ages have been buried.

All in all, a vast estuarine pudding in a clay bowl. One of the few advances since Swan's time has been the amendment of the shallow bay's name from Shoalwater to the less embarrassing Willapa.

When Swan showed up here, more than likely shaking the rain off his hatbrim, Shoalwater Bay's sum of civilization totted up as a few huts, a temporary crew of sawyers cutting pilings, a shifting population of members of the Chinook and Chehalis tribes, and fourteen white "residents" who pottered away at oystering or homesteading. Fourteen kinds of Swan, it could be said. The whites hired the Indians to do the bulk of the oyster harvesting, the Indians had their own ebb-and-flow view of life. Put at its more generous, this colony on the eastern shore of Shoalwater Bay in the early 1850s --Bruceport, it was dubbed, in memory of a schooner which had ~~wrecked~~ grounded there-- amounted more to an episode of prolonged beachcombing than a serious effort at enterprise. And Swan, stretching ever more distance between himself and those 220 years of New England rectitude in his family line, Swan fit with the idling oysterers like a pinky in an opera glove.

Rapidly he made himself at home among the people of the Chehalis and Chinooks tribes as well. Russell, who could embellish as readily as he breathed, had told the Indians that Swan was a famous physician. Correctly regarding himself as able to improvise

on just about any frontier task, Swan did his part to ~~fulfill~~ advance the reputation. The tribal people arrive to him with complaints of headache or rheumatism; he doctors them with a liniment concocted of ammonia and whale oil, which was considered, from its pungency, to be very potent. Not, however, as potent as the frontier could demand.

~~All too soon, Swan's doctoring stopped being a jest.~~ Swan One evening ~~he~~ noticed that the face and neck of one of the Chinook women were covered with little spots like flea-bites. I said to Russell, "This woman has either got the small-pox or measles." Smallpox it was, and that frontier plague tore like ~~an assassin~~ flung knives through the Shoalwater community. Swan did what nursing he could; all his life he would show a fine compassionate touch for that task. But several of the natives died, Russell and a number of other whites were laid low for weeks. Somehow Swan himself went untouched. I trust, he wrote somberly afterward, I may not be obliged to pass through such another trial.

Life at Shoalwater thereafter proved to be seldom dull, hardly ever strenuous. In the spring of 1853, when the region north of the Columbia River was hived off from Oregon to become Washington Territory, several of the Shoalwater oyster-boys were inspired to file for land claims. Swan in May selected a site at the mouth of what is now the Bone River--the Querquelin, it was called by the Indians: Mouse River--on the bay's northeastern shore. Reasoning that the absence of a wife by

some three thousand miles didn't really lessen the marital status all that much, Swan claimed 160 acres for himself and a second 160 for Matilda. A half-mile square of frontier conquered by ink. I was perfectly delighted with the place, Swan enthuses in one breath, and notes in the next that the unwooded portion was overgrown with nettles and ferns three feet high. In that divided comment he sounds precisely like my kin who grew up on our pair of Doig homesteads south of Helena, entranced to the end of their lives with memory of the blue-timbered glory of the Big Belt mountains and still furious with the impossible winter snows as well.

Swan and a convivial old whaling captain whom Russell had invited up from Astoria set about to build a cabin on the new riverside estate. Their cabin work went at a creep. You can all but see the pair of them, day upon day, sighing regret at the blisters on their hands and settling onto a handy log for Captain Purrington to recite another sea story. With winter coming in fast, they at last cobbled together a shack from the split cedar boards of an abandoned Indian lodge. Swan inventively masoned a huge fireplace out of clay blocks cut from a nearby cliff. The first real storm of winter made mud of his handiwork, sluiced a couple of bushels of coals and ashes into the middle of the room, and very nearly set the place ablaze. Not long after, Swan caught a schooner back to San Francisco, to clerk under a dry roof until spring.

Fresh dollars in his pocket, Swan is found again at Shoalwater at the start of summer, 1854. For the first of numerous times in his life, he now wangled a brief, modest niche in the federal payroll. He was appointed assistant customs collector, for that portion of the coast north of the Columbia, including Shoalwater Bay and Gray's Harbor, to Cape Flattery; the duties of the office being to report all vessels arriving at or departing from Shoal-water Bay, and to keep a diligent watch on the coast to see that none of the Russian or Hudson Bay Companies' vessels came around either for smuggling or trading with the Indians.

Since this comprised an all-but-empty stretch of shore, with only the lackadaisical oysterers at Shoalwater, a handful of ~~few~~ stump farmers and sawmillers up around Grays Harbor, and the tiny drowsing tribal settlements at a few river mouths, Swan's precinct seems to have been spectacularly free of smuggling prospects. The only time he is on record as having had to exert himself was when the Indians, as a joke, lured him several days up the coast to check on a vessel which turned out to be a U.S. Geological Survey steamship. Swan being Swan, he did not much mind the futile jaunt: So far as related to smuggling, I had walked sixty miles up the beach for no purpose, but I did not regret having started, as I had seen a line of coast which few, if any, white men had been over before.

Months slid past, years began to go. Much of the lulling appeal of that beachside life at Shoalwater, as Swan recounted it, was simply the stomach's common sense. The bay in those days set a kind of floating feast, offering as it did clams, crabs, shrimp, mussels, sand-lobster, salmon, sturgeon, trout, turbot, sole, flounder and, naturally, oysters. The facet of Swan that was an interested and inventive cook--his victuals often make a sudden savory appearance in his pages--prized this easy bounty.

Just once in these plump years does Swan come onto a hungry time, and that was during the onset of winter when he was trying to homestead with the old whaling captain, Purrington. The captain was famous for cooking every thing that had ever lived. We had eaten of young eagles, hawks, owls, lynx, beaver, seal, otter, gulls, pelican, and, finally, wound up with crow; and the crow was the worst of the lot. The captain once tried to bake a skunk, but, not having properly

cleaned it, it smelt so unsavory when the bake-kettle was opened that he was forced to throw skunk and kettle into the river, which he did with a sigh, remarking what a pity it was that it smelled so strong, when it was baked so nice and brown.

While Swan carried on his love affair with food and leisure, he probably flirted often enough with alcohol as well. The Shoalwater residents, white and native, emerge out of his words and those of others as a boozy bunch who did as much roistering as oystering. On the Fourth of July of 1853, to take the prime example, after orations and eating and a feu-de-joie by the guns and rifles of the whole company, the Shoalwater patriots stumbled onto the idea to close the performances for the day by going on top of the cliff opposite, and make a tremendous big blaze. They found a colossal hollow cedar stump, filled it to the brim with dry spruce limbs, torched it off. It made the best bonfire I ever saw, Swan recollected in considerable understatement, and after burning all night and part of the next day, finally set fire to the forest, which continued to burn for several months, till the winter rains finally extinguished it.

A jolly conflagration of ~~five~~ four or ~~six~~ five months duration wasn't entirely usual, but much other unsober behavior was. And when Swan remarked of one of his compatriots that, like all the rest of the frontier people, he was fond of Old Rye,

the unwritten admission is there that Swan too numbered among the frontier people.

Yet the majority of Swan's time at Shoalwater couldn't have been spent aimed into the bottom of a bottle. He has left us a ~~frontier~~ view greatly wider and deeper than that. The maraud of smallpox, which ~~only~~ merely made the white men ill but slaughtered the Chinooks and Chehalis; the pride of place when selecting a homestead site; the casual reach of distance as Swan ~~walked~~ strolled sixty miles of wild coast to gaze upon an innocent steamship: ~~all~~ these carry ~~to us~~ a sense of this rough margin of the west as true as a thumb testing the teeth of a ripsaw.

He left us that view in a book, from which I have been quoting ever since Swan squished ashore at Shoalwater. (If Swan was diarying in those years, and I judge he was not, although he mentions having written and lost a collection of notes about the Indians, the volumes never have come to sight.)

~~wrote~~. The Northwest Coast, he titled the work, then thought he had better elucidate: Or Three Years' Residence in Washington Territory. Harper & Brothers published the ~~book~~ effort in 1857.

This coastal drifter, then, this dabbling man born a decade or so before my own great-grandfather, is found spending part of his ~~time~~ life at the enterprise I do: shaping words into print. Whether ~~this~~ the fact nudges Swan closer into resemblance of me or me to Swan, I am not ready to say, but certainly it fetches both of us into the same cottage industry at least some hours of the week. I imagine that Swan, like me, when he held pen in hand for another chapter of Northwest

Coast or to begin an article for a frontier newspaper, had his times of wishing he had chosen some sounder cottage job, such as tweed weaving or raising chinchillas. (Whether he occasionally talked into his silences is doubtful; it does not seem that a man born so close to Boston would unbend that far.) I imagine as well that in the next minute or so he was knuckle-deep into the words again. Cottagers have to be like that.

From those first pages, Northwest Coast stands as a jaunty grandfather of us all who face west above our typewriters. of the book to me: . . . Visit of Walter and myself to the Memelose Tillicums, or Dead People, . . . Method of preserving Cabbages from the Indians . . . Disinclination of Indians to impart Information in regard to their Medicines . . . Difficulty of rightly understanding the Jargon . . .

Monument of Oyster Shells to Russell...Besides Swan's remarkable knack for browsing through life, he had a couple of other individual advantages which shine out of Northwest Coast.

One is simply that unlike most writers on the Pacific Northwest before and since, he was not a man to be struck dismal by the coastal weather. During the winter the rain falls in the most incredible quantities, but it does not, as has been asserted, rain without intermission, Swan stated early on, then simply dealt with storms as a fact of life. That is unheard-of neutrality on the topic of this region's

moisture. "Eleven days rain, and the most disagreeable time I have experienced," wrote Captain William Clark on November 17, 1805, and that was at the very start of the Lewis and Clark expedition's four soggy months in winter camp near the mouth of the Columbia. From then, the topic of the rain of this coast has gone beyond lore, into catechism. My father would arrive from Montana and within an hour be joking about moss on our backs thick as a badger's nap. In turn, I would invite him to take some moisture home in a cup and show it around to his high-plains neighbors who might have forgotten what wetness looked like. A surprise and relief to find Swan outside the rain ritual.

More remarkable yet: to discover Swan's sentences from that time at Shoalwater conveying, as he would in the diary pages for all the length of his life, his rare knack of looking at the coastal natives as persons rather than the frontier's human rubble. He does not go all the way, sometimes dwelling ~~a bit too much~~ overmuch on the simplicities of the tribal people while he and the other oyster-boys were not exactly an advanced institute themselves. But more often than not, his remarks carry uncommon sympathy and insight about the Chinooks and Chehalis:

The Indians can see but little or no difference between their system of Tomanawos and our own views as taught them. For instance, the talipus, or fox, is their emblem of the creative power; the swispee, or duck, that of wisdom. And they say that the Boston people, or Americans, have for their Tomanowos the wheark, or eagle and that the King George, or English people, have a lion for their Tomanawos.

Or again: One day, while being more than usually inquisitive, old Suis. . . after trying to make me understand that the names I was asking about had no meaning, at last said, "Why, you white people have names like ours; some mean something, and others mean nothing. I know your name, Swan, is like our word Cocumb, and means a big bird; and Mr. Lake's name is for water, like Shoalwater Bay. But what does Mr. Russell's or Baldt's, or Champ's, or Hillyer's, or Sweeney's, or Weldon's name mean?"

I told her I did not know. "Well," she replied, "so it is with us. We don't know what those names you have asked mean; all we know is that they were the names of our ancestors--elip tillicums, or first people."

Thoughtful jots about first people, and the tamanoas of whites. The time of friendship with Swell, and the honor to repaint his funeral boards, lay not so far ahead.

With Swan, you never know where a competence is going to lead, if indeed it ambles anywhere. It was his skill with the native lore and languages which now transported him for awhile out of the Pacific Northwest. In the mid-1850s, territorial officials of Washington and Oregon began to call the Northwest tribes into treaty councils. These worked out as was usual in our continental history: the Indians got a chance for soulful rhetoric, and the whites got the land.

(no 4) When a treaty parley with five coastal tribes of southwesternmost Washington was held on the Chehalis River in February, 1855, Territorial Governor Isaac I. Stevens invited Swan to attend. There Swan noted with sympathy the objection of a Chinook chief to the governor's plan to place ~~all~~ the assembled tribes on a single reservation. We are not friends, and if we went together we should fight, and soon we would

all be killed. But Swan noted as well a chance for himself among the assemblage. Grasping at the coat-tails of Governor Stevens and other budding politicos of the Territory, by late 1856 he pulled himself to Washington, D.C. There somebody, and it is not clear who or how, arranged for him the brief job of writing about the burial customs and beliefs of the Chinooks, for the U.S. Indian Bureau's history of American tribes. In late 1857--a pointed fact about Swan is that a year or two could slip by before he turned to any next task--he became secretary to Stevens, who had been elected the territorial delegate to Congress.

Swan did clerkly chores until Congress recessed and his benefactor had to return home to woo votes. Swan himself then turned like a ~~compass needle~~ windvane to the Pacific Northwest again. On some amalgam of Stevens's advice that [redacted] the community was a comer and his own notion that he might set up a supply station for whaling ships, Swan ~~again. He~~ decided this time his site would be Port Townsend, the customs port for Washington Territory.

The location was, and is, one of the most intriguing on this continent. The Strait of Juan de Fuca swings broadly in from the Pacific, a fat fjord between the Olympic Mountains of Washington and the lower peaks of Vancouver Island, until at last, after 100 miles, and precisely at the brink of land which holds Port Townsend, the span of water turns southward in a long, sinuous stretch like an arm delving to the very bottom of a barrel. The topmost portion is Admiralty Inlet,

the rest of the thrusting arm of channel is Puget Sound. I live at its elbow. This small valley which holds my house is one of the wrinkles in the Sound's tremendous timber-green sleeves.

So it is that the last thing I will do, in this first full winter day of watching Swan try out sites along this coast, is to walk in the rain to the bluff above my house and look northwestward, to where the Sound bends off toward the Strait. Around that horizon, at six on the morning of February 13, 1859: Swan awakes aboard the schooner Dashaway to find the ship passing the lighthouse at Dungeness Spit, coming on the wind into these waters where he will spend the rest of his years.

Days seven, eight, nine, ten

I have begun to follow Swan year by year through his diaries. Sixty-six of them, they hold the second four decades of his life and at least a million and a half handwritten words. The span of three copies of War and Peace, accomplished in frontier town and Indian village and sometimes no community at all.

Out of their gray archival boxes at the University of Washington, the diaries could be the secondhand wares of an eccentric stationer. Most are the size to be held in the palm of a hand, some mere notebooks with cheap marbled covers, others with cover-and-clasp which contain themselves as neatly as a case for eyeglasses. Black, green, tan, faded maroon, the smaller volumes have in common the look of time spent in a busy pocket. Some years, an ordinary school exercise book sidles into the collection. And here another economy: Swan made use of his 1890 Standard Pocket Diary for entries from January 1 to March 2 of that year, then next used it in 1898 for April 4-December 31, the year's printed last digit carefully daubed from "0" to "8" by his pen each day.

Eighteen sixty-six is the aristocrat of the congregation. A fat tan ledger some nine inches wide and twelve high, it weighs four and a quarter pounds and displays an elaborately hinged and embossed spine and a cover panel of leather into the middle of which has been tooled, in rich half-inch letters, J.G. Swan. Lay it open to the first of its 380 pages, and handwriting neat as small embroidery--evidently Swan recopied these entries from rough jottings--begins to recite:

May 1866 Diary and private journal of James G. Swan, being a continuation of daily record commencing July 1862 at the Makah Indian Agency Neah Bay, Washington Territory.

Actually, Swan's daily words commence from the instant he stepped onto a gangplank toward a future along the Strait of Juan de Fuca: the January day in 1859 when he embarked at San Francisco on board ship Dashaway, Captain J.M. Hill...bound for Port Townsend, W.T. Even before that opening notation in the first of the pocket notebooks, which is to say during his stint in Washington, D.C., as aide to Isaac I. Stevens, Swan had done some diary-keeping. But as he afterward lamented in a letter to a member of the Stevens family, those pages somehow, and uncharacteristically, had vanished from him. It is as if the wind that filled the Dashaway's sails in earliest 1859 cleared away the recent years of Swan's life as well. Fresh ink from here on.

When the Dashaway hove into Port Townsend on morning in mid-February--a few weeks past Swan's forty-first birthday, almost precisely at the midpoint of his life--Swan at once aimed himself as many directions as there were routes of water spoking out from the little frontier port. The editor of the San Francisco Evening Bulletin had agreed to take from him a series of articles about Washington Territory, and there still was that proclaimed notion of Swan's to examine certain harbors, with a view of ascertaining the best locality for a whaling station. Whenever a ride could be hitched by schooner, steamboat or canoe, then, off Swan would jaunt along the Strait or into the serpentine length of Puget Sound, up amid

the San Juan archipelago or across Admiralty Inlet to long-cliffed Whidbey Island. His wake of ink shows him voyaging in and out of Port Townsend, his purported new site of enterprise, eight times in the first six months.

Inside all that motion, however, a pattern soon starts to take shape. Time upon time, Swan's loops of travel happen to stretch westward the same distance, like the whorls of a topographic map compressing at an abrupt face of landscape:

March seventeenth: ...came to anchor in Neah Bay and after dinner went ashore to Mr. Webster's house where I passed the night.

June fourth, fifth and sixth, again at Neah Bay.

September fourteenth, Left Port Townsend at 5 p.m. in Swell's canoe...for Neah Bay. Nine days, he stays this time.

October ninth, back at Neah Bay. Length of stay: fifty-five days.

At that time, Neah Bay had its place as the geographical pinpoint on the American map that, say, Alaska's Point Barrow holds today: a final tribal outpost before the north margins of the planet take over entirely. The eye of bay and its namesake village peek out between headlands at the entrance to the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The site nicks into the top--that is, the north-facing shore--of the coastal prow of rock which was dubbed "Cape Flattery" by Captain James Cook on his 1778 voyage, when a deceptive indent of the shoreline flattered us with hopes of finding a harbour there." It says much about the stormy remoteness of Cape Flattery that along its coastline, the luck of even the incomparable Cook was nil. Two and a half explorations around

the world by sail, ~~and~~ but here not only was Cook misled about a harbor prospect, he missed as well in the gray drifts of weather a chance to discover the twelve-mile-wide entrance to the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and the 1,350-mile shoreline of Puget Sound beyond.

It is safe to say that the inhabitants of Cape Flattery, the few hundred Makah tribal members at Neah Bay and four smaller villages dotted west and south along the peninsula, would have guffawed at seamanship of such low order. Out on their promontory into the Pacific which Swan began to share from them in 1859 and I now try to share from him, the Makahs casually launched away in canoes to hunt creatures ranging in size and threat from sea otters to gray whales. In land terms, that would be spaniels to dinosaurs. A prodigious sea-going people, these, and small wonder that from here on the Makahs come off Swan's page like people flinging open a door.

Two sudden and vital friendships emerge here in Swan's notations of these first visits to Neah Bay. The earliest, and the one that would last for decades, was with the single resident of Neah Bay who was not a Makah: the white man Henry Webster, owner of a trading post at the eastern headland of the bay. It is enough to say of him ~~here~~ now that Webster was a bleak-faced,

obstinate entrepreneur who did not get along with Indians ~~particularly~~ notably well. In these early months of Swan's acquaintanceship with him, an incident occurred in which, after an argument of some sort, five Indians pummeled Webster with rocks, dragged him far along

the beach, and threatened to kill him. The battering did not dissuade Webster from staying on at his trading post, or indeed from patiently pulling political strings for a couple of years until he won appointment as the first Indian agent for the Makah Reservation. For much time to come, then, Webster will be an unbudgable presence, something of an Easter Island visage of stone, looming in the lives of the Makahs.

The other immediate friend, supple and deft as Webster was granitic, of course was Swell. Swan was able to know the Makah chieftain for about a year and a half before the life was blasted from Swell in the breakers at Crescent Bay. As will be seen, the Makah tribe felt his loss like the ache of an amputation. Swan's time with him did stretch long enough to link the two in mutual curiosity and the trading of lore. They became winter brothers, as it were; men cupped together in a single happenchance season of closeness that, when it has ended, leaves with each man a part of the other's life.

Rapidly in the diaries it becomes evident how remarkable a companion Swell proved to be. The pages of Swan's eight weeks at Neah Bay in the autumn of 1859 bustle with the forming friendship: Went to Swell's house and made a sketch of some tamanawas boards...Swell told about their land, that they were not satisfied with the way the treaty was written...Went to Swell's house. He says that the past year there were 30 canoes engaged in the whale fisheries, eight men to each canoe, and

they averaged 1000 gals.--gallons of whale oil being the commercial yield of the hunts--to each canoe....Swell says that there are in the Macah tribe 220 men, 300 women, 200 children, 100 slaves. Total 820....Made sketch of Swell....Swell started for Dungeness this morning. Saluted him with the swivel, one gun....Made a carving today of Hahaketoak or the animal that makes the lightning, the thunderbird. I cut it on a piece of sandstone from the cliff and intend giving it to Swell...

But what of Swan? What, besides tireless ears, did a domestic fugitive from Massachusetts have to offer Swell and the other Makahs? That answer too emerges from these diary entries, in the remark of a sketch here, a carved gift there; clearest of all in the laconic and intriguing entry for October twenty-fifth, 1859: Worked carving a Swan on a sandstone cliff with my initials under it.

Artistry. There was Swan's ticket into the Makah community. Virtually the only skill-of-hand lacking in Swan was the ability to clutch a dollar, and in this instance, he could perform a number of tasks admired by a tribe which loved ornament: draw, cut stone, invent patterns of paint, produce creatures from within the covers of his books. What was more, nothing daunted him: Went to Billy Balch's house and finished the thunderbird. This was the hardest sketch I ever undertook. The lodge was dark and the board covered with smoke and grease and hid by baskets of food. The Indians removed these and washed the board with

urine and then the only way I could decipher the painting was to mark round the drawing with red crayon." The Makahs met him at least halfway in enthusiasm for picturizing, as Swan noted some years later when he wrote at ~~some~~ length about his role as a frontier ambassador of art:

I have painted various devices for these Indians and have decorated their ta-ma-na-was masks; and in every instance I was simply required to paint something the Indians had never seen before. One Indian selected from a pictorial newspaper a cut of a Chinese dragon, and another chose a double-headed eagle, from a picture of an Austrian coat-of-arms. Both these I grouped with drawings of crabs, faces of men, and various devices, endeavoring to make the whole look like Indian work; and I was very ~~very~~ successful in giving the most entire satisfaction, so much so that they bestowed upon me the name of Chā-tic, intimating that I was as great an artist as the Chā-tic of Clyoquot--a tribe living north of the Makahs, on the coast of Vancouver Island.

No small gifts, these--twin-headed eagles, dragons from beyond the rim of the Pacific, new flaunts of paint--to a people as vivid and showy as the Makahs. Similar sprigs of allegory, after all, throve in the tribal mind in the most day-to-day ways. The Makahs' version of the sun arrived robustly each morning by thrusting away the stars with his head and trampling night underfoot. Rainbows, they considered, had claws at either end to seize the unwary. As for the mysterious northern lights that

sometimes webbed the sky beyond the Strait, Swell explained them astutely to Swan:

Under that star, many snows' sail from here in a canoe, live a race of little men, very strong, who are dressed in skins. They look like Indians but they are not taller than half the length of my paddle. They can dive down into the sea and catch a seal or a fish with their hands. Their country is very cold and they live on the ice, where they build great fires. That light is the fires of these little people.

This halts me ~~for a time~~ in admiration, the report on Eskimo life. Along the wilderness that was the North Pacific coastland, a thousand miles of broken shore from Neah Bay even to southernmost Alaska, (and greater distances beyond that to the people of the ice,) ideas of the sort must have traveled like thistledown on the wind: canoeing tribe in wary touch with canoeing tribe, a seed of story deposited, to be carried along by the next barter-trip southward. By the time the Makahs had the story of the miniature ice-men of the north, lore had been nurtured into legend. I recognize ~~the~~ such alchemy, ~~my~~ for I live with it as well. A morning in the nineteen-twenties, a dozen riders are returning to their home ranches after a weekend rodeo. Whenever the horses' hoofs strike the dryness of a Montana county road, dust drifts up until from a distance the group looks like men of smoke. Most of the journey, however, cuts across open sageland, and the slap of the gray tassels of brush against leather chaps competes with their talk of the rodeo broncs. Unexpectedly, the loose troop reins to a halt. Across a stretch of pasture they have always ridden through, a fresh barbed-wire fence glints. The owner of the land emerges from a nearby cabin to explain that he intends to plow the ground, that they can no longer go across it. A rider with a notch-scar in the center of his chin--he ~~is~~ was my

father--grinned down at the man and said in his style of half-joke, half-declaration: "We never saw any place yet we couldn't go."

Turning his horse to the fence, he touched spur to flank, and mount and man went through the air above the blades of wire. One after another, the others soared after him, like boys on great birds of sorrel, roan, dapple gray.

The story and its impromptu anthem of the last horseback generation has come down to me, in the way the Eskimoes arrived south to Swell. "The same winds blow spring on all men's dreams," I read once from a folklorist; small wonder that freshets off Swan's Neah Bay pages can play against my own pores.

#50 What shows already in these first months of diary is that Swan was a listener, the kind who listens as if being paid by the word. Whatever the majority of the Makahs thought of this white newcomer--and just as surely as his constant mentions of some of them testifies that they were attracted to him in friendship or something very close to it, there would have been those who suspected Swan, thought him silly or perhaps even

vaguely dangerous--a great number of the tribal members would talk with him, allow him to shadow along on the rim of Neah Bay life. Even now in his ~~pages~~ words, their personalities breathe hotly. Swell, with his knack for fact and his easy competence. His brother Peter, a brawler and restless under the cleft of the white men's growing power over the natives. The obliging Captain John, ~~obliging and~~ something of a tribal bard, who drew on the first page of this book one of the skookums who cause the lightning by running out its tongue. Tsowiskay, an inveterate old savage implacable against white men; on his death a rarely harsh swan writes that the old fellow is no loss and his death did not affect the other Indians (except his own family) any more than if a dog had died. A second Makah named John, a constant confidante whom Swan considered without exception the biggest coward in the tribe and at the same time the biggest braggadacio, but also ~~at the same time~~ shrewd and smart and accomplishing by finesse and cunning as much as some of the others do by their physical prowess. It John it is who announces to Swan one evening that the time has come for new achievement:...he feels ashamed that he has not killed any whales and has concluded to go through the ceremonies to constitute him a skookum whaleman. This meant that for six days, he had to go without eating or sleeping, and in the meanwhile alternately bathe in the ocean water and run on the beach to get warm. John ~~makes~~ splashes in for the initial dip, but soon shows up shivering beside Swan's stove and amending his ambition,

he thought he could not stand it more than two days and if that would not suffice to make him a whaleman he could kill sharks.

Swan departs to bed, John having proclaimed that he would spend the night alternately at the fireside and immersing himself in the bay. In the morning, I learned that he was afraid to sit alone by my fire and had sneaked out about midnight with his courage completely cooled and had concluded that from shark killing he will be content with killing dogfish.

One by one, the Makahs may have been as full of foible and malarkey as villagers anywhere, including those of us hutched along the indiscriminate streets we call neighborhoods. But as a tribe, they glinted with at least one brilliant skill. Their sea-going hunting of whales, that enterprise which John yearned toward, sets apart in the history of this coast the Makahs and their Vancouver Island cousins, the Nootkas, ~~in the history of this coast.~~ From what Swan could judge, the Makahs by the late 1850's were not as avid about whale-hunting as they had been in their past. Whether the whales were more numerous, or that the Indians, being now able to procure other food from the whites, have become indifferent to the pursuit, I cannot say... Yet when Swell in the autumn of 1859 recited off for Swan the total of whales killed in the past year, the total came to seven, which seems not so indifferent a tally. Fully practiced or not, the ocean abilities of the Makahs were such that Swan set down his estimation in the most impressed terms a Massachusetts man could think of: They are, in fact,

to the Indian population what the inhabitants of Nantucket are to the people of the Atlantic Coast.

~~For the Makahs~~ As the Makahs, Swan discerned, went hunting their behemoths with methods and tools they had honed to stiletto keenness. Their canoes were swift, high-prowed blades of cedar which carried crews of eight. Helmsman, six paddlers, harpooner. This last was the gladiator, the one who triggered death for the whale. He ~~went against~~ stood above the whale with a harpoon eighteen feet long, twice the length of a modern javelin, made of two pieces of yew scarfed together with splicing bark. When the whale was struck this wooden shaft would detach, leaving imbedded in the flesh the harpoon point of sharpened copper or iron. ~~For its~~ To add clutching power, this point was barbed with spikes of elk or deer horn; they ~~held~~ clawed within the whale's body the way a fishhook snags itself with wicked angle inside a trout's mouth.

Roped to the harpoon point with a cord of whale sinew was a sealskin float made by the Makahs by skinning a seal and turning the pelt furside in, as if pulling a sweater inside out. Then the apertures of the head, feet and tail are tied up airtight, Swan explained, and the skin inflated like a bladder. When further harpoons were hurled into the body of the whale, it is not unusual for from thirty to forty of these buoys to be made fast to the whale, which, of course, cannot sink, and is easily despatched by their spears and lances.

Although Swan would, and did, journey almost anywhere with the coastal Indians in their canoes, I find nowhere in his diary pages or other writings that he ever went hunting whales with the Makahs, and he surely would have given epic treatment to that. The one time he was with a canoeload of Makahs when they encountered a whale, it broached innocently beside them in the Strait as they were paddling to Port Townsend, and Swan came out of the resulting commotion enormously grateful that no harpooning equipment was aboard and the Indians had to give up their excited notion of ~~attacking~~ pursuing the whale. ~~to the end of the earth or to his death, whichever happened~~ should to come first.

His knowledge of the whale hunts, then, stops at the shoreline, and my questions are unmet. Whether the seabirds shadowed the canoes in gliding flocks as the whalemen stroked out from Cape Flattery into the ocean. Whether there came--I cannot see how else it could have been--an audible silence of held breaths before the first paddler behind the harpooner judged the distance to the whale and cried: Now throw! Whether the crew made a united great cry when the harpoon blade snagged home, a chorus of conquest. And whether ~~there was a mix~~ tincture of fear mixed with whatever else they shouted, for success meant this: ~~the~~ their canoe lashed behind ~~the~~ the harpooned whale: a seagoing cart harnessed to a creature several times the size of a bull elephant and dying angry.

Whale hunters, art fanciers, allegorists, the Makahs also were a people who chafed more than a little under the pale regime of frontier bureaucrats who wanted to refashion the

tribe's life. The colors of this theme weave through Swan's written words year upon year, but never more blazingly than in the aftermath of Swell's murder at the start of March, 1861. Swan was once more at Neah Bay--his sixth stint there--~~that~~ the autumn of that year when the Makahs decided to exact their price for the death of Swell. What amazes is that it took six entire revengeless months by the territorial officials before the Makahs made ~~the~~ in decision to act. But once ~~decided~~ resolved upon, their vengeance on the Elwha Clallams began to be brewed, savored.

Conference, more conference, the Elwha village sketched on the sand, a plan of attack argued out. As Swan watched and jotted, Neah Bay's largest canoes were worked up into fighting trim; the outsides blackened, interiors daubed a fresh red. Lord Nelson, with his blood-colored battle decks, would have nodded approval. Bow and stern of each canoe were sprigged with green spruce limbs. Onto long poles were lashed faggots of pitchy wood, to torch the hapless Elwhas' lodges. Guns, knives, spears, clubs, arrows, bows were hefted judiciously, made ready.

At last, ~~September~~ the nineteenth of September of 1861, two hundred and two days after Swell's death, the war party milled together in final encouragement on the Neah Bay beach. Some speeches, a few dances, and they leaped to their decorated canoes and headed east the sixty miles to deliver holocaust to the Elwhas.

Twelve canoes, with eighty warriors, they aimed up the Strait past Swan like a volley of arrows on the water. His account of the scene was published in a territorial newspaper, and so has been polished and extended beyond the usual:

I stood on top of the rocks at Webster's point and saw them pass....Their green headdresses, black faces and brown arms, flashing paddles and beautiful canoes, urged to their utmost speed, presented a scene at once novel and interesting. I watched until a projecting point hid them from view.

Then the waiting, the war spirit still boiling in the Makah village. Women and children, seated on the tops of their houses, were beating the roofs with sticks and uttering the most piercing shrieks I ever heard. Every day at sunrise and sunset they performed these savage matins and vespers...

On the third day, the canoes flashed back into sight, the crews announcing themselves across the water by exuberant musket shots and songs of victory. The war, however, turned out to have been considerably less than total. The avenging Makahs landed on the beach opposite the monument of Swell...and forming into a line came up the beach in single file with old Cowbetsi, their great war chief, at their head. A short distance behind him came a savage holding with both hands a bloody head that had been severed from the body of an unfortunate Elwha. Two or three Indians followed this and then another grim trophy, held in the same manner as the first.

Swan learned that the war party had come upon the unlucky pair of Elwhas hunting seals at Crescent Bay, the precise site of Swell's murder. When blood was most ready to answer blood, ~~then~~, the two were simply the targets of opportunity. Having shot and beheaded them, the Makahs noted the alarms being shrieked by several Elwha women who had watched the ambush from a distance, held a rapid council, and decided revenge had been sufficiently done.

In all of this Swan took greatest interest, so much so that he made the mistake of spectating too close to the song circle which had formed around the severed heads on the home sand of Neah Bay. After they had finished their war song, I heard my name called, and thinking I was in the way of some of their operations was about moving off, when I was again summoned in a manner that left no doubt in my mind but that I was wanted.

The Makahs directed Swan into the circle, beside the heads. Cowbetsi and an Indian who was to interpret to Swan faced him. Cowbetsi orated to Swan that they had killed the Elwhas because the territorial Indian agent had not settled the matter of Swell's murder--an indisputable line of fact. Swan responded gingerly that the Indian agent at the time had been removed from office, consequently he could not come as he had promised, but that he had not lied for I knew that he fully intended to have done just what he had promised to do; that Mr. Simmons was a friend of Swell's and they all knew--a careful veer here--I was a friend also.

"Yes," said Cowbetsi, "we know you are our friend, and we are friends of yours."

Swan noted a degree of relief when I was assured of the fact; but I thought that their friendship was of the kind that might induce them, should I give offence, to stick my head on top of a pole for a memento... He stood silent through a ~~war~~ victory dance performed while four Makahs pointed guns at the heads and his general vicinity, and did not give offense. ~~It was~~ only the two heads of the Elwhas ~~that~~ went up on poles above Neah Bay like queer jack-o-lanterns.

Swan by this time has made his way through three diaries. Late in the third and early in the fourth--the volume for 1862--a different rhythm begins to be heard. He is at Neah Bay with the hope of staying on for some years, and a beat of ~~day~~ hour comfortably nudging ~~day~~ hour, of settledness, sets in.

Wind n.w. fresh, the seventeenth of March. Caught a large male skunk. Finished the tomanawas stone for John. Sundown, schooner Alert off San Juan harbor trying to beat out. A ship and two barks also worked out slowly. A year ago the salmonberry and other shrubs were in blossom. Now no signs of vegetation are visible. Peter came up today and I cut out a coat for him out of some blue flannel he had.

Wind east, cold, the eighteenth of March. Ship William Sturgis from Port Townsend hove to this forenoon and landed Charley Howard, who came down as pilot. Howard brought letters

and papers....Caught another skunk....measured 28 inches from nose to tip of his tail.

Wind s.e. very light, the twenty-first of March, foggy with constant rain. Brook very high. Peter came up today and told me that he had made up his mind to buy Totatelum, Colchote's daughter, but he didn't wish other white men or Indians to know it except myself. He wishes to make the girl a present and will bring it up to me and wishes me to give it to Totatelum ~~as a present....~~ I am curious to see the result of this courtship. ~~This evening Peter brought up his present consisting of some calico, needles and thread and two bars of soap.~~

Light airs from s.e., the twenty-second of March, with calm and thick fog. Walked down to Neeah to see Totatelum and announce to her Peter's desire. She was somewhat surprised and said she would think about the matter....Old Sally, the paralized woman, died last night, and the Indians buried her by caving in the bank of sand under which she has been lying since they turned her out of the lodges. They are cruel wretches to the poor and sick.

Calm, cloudy and some fog, the twenty-third of March. Carried Peter's present (--calico, needles, thread and two bars of soap--) down to Totatelum, who received it very modestly....

Wind s.e. Morning, cloudy and showery, p.m. calm, the twenty-seventh of March. John said that the people in Victoria told him

that Queen Victoria had ordered a very hot summer to make up for the cold winter. Caught another skunk--8.

Day and day and day, the diaries say it now: Swan's life is patterning itself to this frontier coast. Tomorrow, then, to the first of the coastal ~~places~~ sites where Swan's paths and mine braid together. To Dungeness.

Day eleven

The eagle glides a complete slow circle over the two of us, as if studying from the corner of his eye our surprising plaid skins. ~~He is~~ he floats, near enough, perhaps a hundred fifty feet above Carol in her jacket of gray and yellow and black, me in my red-and-black, that we can see the scalloped pattern of feathers at the ends of his wings, the snowiness of head and tail that marks him as a bald.

One more silent, exact noose of patrol, then the dark bird flaps off southeast across the bay. Swimming ducks crash-dive in fear, but they are not the target of the moment. When the eagle scrapes into the water with its claws, it is that a fish ~~is~~ lofted away to doom.

We stand atop Dungeness Spit's rough spine of driftwood to watch the eagle and his meal into the shore trees. vanish. All its bowed length into the Strait of Juan de Fuca--seven miles--Dungeness prickles into view like a gigantic hedgerow ~~magically~~ somehow built on water, age-gray drift logs tumbled atop each other to the height of a Dutch dike, fresher logs perpetually ~~angling~~ easing ashore, yellow and tattered from grinding across the gravel beach, to pile in turn onto the long heap. The rarity of Dungeness in all the dozen thousand miles of America's coastal edge ~~emerges~~ spears itself even in the dry intonings of scientists: ~~the~~ longest natural sandspit in the United States; ~~the~~ driest point on the West Coast north of San Diego. A thin hook of desert snagging the water, within walk of glaciered mountains and cool fir forests.

Swan, as I have told, sailed by here for the first time on a February morning of 1859, inbound for Port Townsend and his

resumed western life. The next several years, he is found time upon time in the vicinity of Dungeness, usually portaging across the base of the Spit as the most direct canoe route between Port Townsend and the Makah settlement at Neah Bay. If he happened to journey by ship, the route went close past the site of the lighthouse which rises like a white candle at the far end of the Spit....A keeper's house and a fine brick tower 92 feet high, Swan noted in that year of 1859, in which is placed a stationary light of the order of Fresnel.

The tower is now white-painted concrete, and not so lofty; that original ~~version~~ beacon proved to be so high it ~~shined~~ beamed above the fogs that drift on the face of the Strait. But there is a Fresnel light even yet, not the one Swan describes but an 1897 version, an exquisite six-sided set of glass bulls-eyes which flings a beam of brightness eighteen miles. On each of the faces of the great lantern, circles and louvers of magnifying prism were worked by the Paris artisans to angles as precise and deft as those of cut-glass goblets. Once Carol and I had the experience of being drawn the full length of the Spit, through the exact blackest center of night, by the focused blaze out of that elegant box of glass. I was to write a magazine piece about the Coast Guard families stationed there at the remote end of the Spit's ribbon of sand, and Carol ~~would~~ to shoot photographs for illustration. We arrived here to Dungeness about an hour before a November midnight and met a specter.

The bosun's mate in charge at the lighthouse had said he would drive in to meet us on the coastal bluff overlooking

the Spit. He wavered now out of the blackness like a drunken genii, clasping a hand to half of his forehead and announcing thickly that we had to hurry to keep the tide. Wait a minute, we said.

Instead we asked what had gone wrong with his head. Groggy but full of duty, he recited that when he judged ~~what seemed~~ the ~~best~~ time had come to drive in above the tide, he ~~had come~~ traveled fast. Racing through a bank of spume, his four-wheel-drive vehicle bounded over a log the way a foxhunter's horse would take a hedge, and when man and machine touched sand again, the his forehead clouted the windshield.

With woozy determination, our would-be chauffeur repeated that we would lose the tide if we did not hurry. I looked at Carol, some decision happened between us, and we climbed into the four-wheel-drive.

~~As the~~ headlights ~~felt~~ feeling out the thin route between driftwood debris and crashing waves, our Coast Guardsman bucked us through cloud upon cloud of spume ~~drifting~~ sailing thigh-deep on the beach. ~~The~~ That spindrift journey was like being seated in a small plane as it sliced among puffy overcast. From that night I have the sense of what the early pilots must have felt, Saint-Exupery's blinded men aloft with the night mail ~~over~~ above Patagonia, avid for ~~"one vagrant ray of light..."~~ even the flicker of an inn-lamp ~~--of little help indeed yet shining like a beacon, earnest of the earth..."~~ We had our ray of light, leading us with tireless reliable winks, but even it could not see into our foaming route for us.

hail-winged

rewrite to omit quote, or cut to "flecks"

At last at the lighthouse, with the ~~motor~~ engine cut, no next encounter between four-wheel-drive and fat driftlog having been ordained, the Fresnel lens wheeling its spokes of light above our heads:

~~ordained,~~ we breathed out and climbed ~~forth~~ down to the Dungeness sand for our weekend stay.

Two moments stand in my memory from that next day at the tip of Dungeness Spit. The first was seeing the ~~light~~ lens itself, coming onto the fact of its art here on a ledge of sand and upcast wood. What I had expected perhaps was something like a titanic spotlight, some modern metallic capsule of unfathomable power: not a seventy-five-year-old concoction of prisms which ~~took just one~~ employed a single thousand-watt bulb and stretched its glow across nearly twenty miles. ~~It~~ The magnifying power from this small cabinet of glass was as pleasantly astounding as Swell's explanation of the aurora borealis glinting up from Eskimo campfires.

The second memory is of the mustached bosun's mate himself. With what pride he showed off his domain, not only the glass casing at the top of the lighthouse but the radio beacon apparatus and the foghorn and even the flagpole with a red storm warning flag ~~bucking atop it.~~ madly at its top. "The wind wears out about ten of those flags a winter," he said to impress us, and did.

Lighthouse life dimmed a bit when he ~~took~~ escorted us in to talk with his wife, and the wife of the young petty officer on duty with him. Both were ~~thoroughly~~ edgy about the Spit. Mrs. Bosun's Mate calculated out loud to when their oldest child would start school, which would take the family to land duty:

"I WANT to move inland." Until that could happen, she was forbidding the children to leave the fenced yard around the quarters because they might injure themselves in the driftwood. The petty officer's recent bride, who lived in the rooms at the base of the light-house tower itself, was disconcerted to have in her living room one huge round wall ~~for her home, from~~ which emitted a mild night-long hum.

The bosun's mate heard them out, then led the pair of us off to see ~~some~~ any further feature of lighthousekeeping he could think of. The day, ~~was astonishingly clear.~~ blown pure by last night's wind, had astonishing clarity. Mountains rose in white shards far north along the Canadian coastline; ~~Mt.~~ Mount Baker lorded over the glinting horizon of the Cascades to our east, highest ice-flame among dozens of ice-flames, while the Olympic range crowded full the sky south and west of us. Dungeness seemed more unlikely than ever, a gift of ~~place~~ promontory grafted carefully amid the mountains and strait. The knot on his forehead barely visible beneath his cap bill, hands fisted for warmth into his jacket pockets, the bosun's mate looked around at this ice-and-water rim ~~it all~~ of the Pacific Northwest in a quick expert glance, then turned to us. "I'm a true coastie," he announced ~~through a grin.~~ as if introducing himself "A shallow water sailor."

The Dungeness light has blinked through a number of hundreds of nights since then, and today in bright sun the pair of us casually prowl the inside shore of the Spit, around to where smaller Graveyard Spit veers off from Dungeness. In outline from the air, Dungeness and Graveyard together look like a big barbed fishhook which has caught a dangle of moss at the curve

of its crescent--the dangle being the final few miles of narrow sand from Graveyard to the lighthouse site. Out there now, the lighthouse and outbuildings ~~are~~ sit in silhouette against Mt. Baker, a white peg and white boxes against that tremendous tent of mountain overtopping the skyline a hundred miles ~~away~~ to the northeast.

I am watching for snowy owls. This is the fourth year of the cycle which brings them ~~down~~ this far south from the arctic, and we once saw one here, a wraith of white against the gray driftwood. Pleased with ourselves, we returned to Seattle to ~~find~~ discover that another snowy had taken up a roost on a television antenna above a mid-city restaurant, and half the population had been out to see him. No owl today, nor the blue herons, who often stilt along Graveyard Spit.

We stay with the inside shore, the one facing Graveyard. This is the wildfowl side, the commissary for migrating ducks and brant, just as the outward shore is the lagoon for seals who pop up and disappear as abruptly as periscopes. Today's find presents itself here on the interior water: a half dozen eider ducks, making their kor-r-r, kor-r-r chuckles to each other, then, as if having ~~argued~~ discussed to agreement, all diving at once.

An edge of ice whitens the shoreline, a first, for all the times we have come here. Mountains stand in all directions with the ~~clarity~~ clear loveliness Swan observed during one of his first visits: unobscured by mist or clouds their snowy peaks shone most gloriously...Across the Strait at Vancouver Island, where we can

see in detail the tallest downtown buildings of Victoria, Swan had marveled at the endless timber level as a field of wheat, following the undulation of the ground with a regular growth most wonderful for such a dense forest.

How cold the day, but how little wind, in this restless spot; it balances out toward brisk comfort. That is not always the case. Swan, on an excursion past the Spit on a day in May of 1862:...stopped for the night at the lighthouse where Mr. Blake, the keeper, treated me very politely to a supper and a share of his bed. Next morning: Left the lighthouse at 3:15 a.m., calm. Passed round the spit where a breeze sprung up which freshened into a squall with rain. A tremendous surf was breaking on the beach and we for a time were in great peril. But finally we managed to get ashore at Port Angeles, where we found shelter...

Dark settles early, the sun spinning southwest into the Olympic Mountains instead of going down into the end of the Strait as it does in summer. We leave the Spit before dusk, heading back to Seattle to spend New Year's Eve in a traditional geographically diverse game of penny-ante poker. Baltimore--"Ballermer," she says it--will play her challenging, relentless style. Texas contents himself until a strong hand, when he raises and re-raises ruthlessly. Carol--New Jersey--is the steadiest of the bunch. By way of Montana--me--comes an erratic, fevered kind of style which can swathe through the game, either wiping out everybody else for three or four hands in a row, or wiping out me.

the game, if not our particular temperaments.

Swan ~~I know~~ would approve. He once passed up a chance to come ashore to visit with the lightkeeper at Dungeness, because he and the others concluded to remain on board, devoting our energies to the successful performance of a game of seven-up, or all-four, or old sledge, as that wonderful combination of cards is variously termed.

Day fourteen

Today Mr. Brooks, William Ingraham and myself finished setting the posts for the main building of the school house and when we had all ready, which was at noon, I told Capt. John to call the Indians. Some 25 or 30 came out and when Mr. Brooks was ready I told John, who then gave the word and the sticks were lifted into their places and the whole of the sills for the main building fastened together in about an hour. I told John that when the buildings were done Mr. Webster would give them a treat to pay for the good feelings evinced on this occasion. They have been opposed to having the building erected back of their lodges and I have had a deal of explanation to make to do away with the superstitious prejudices of the old men. But by the exercise of a great deal of patience I have succeeded in inspiring them with a confidence in me, which makes them believe not only what I tell them is true, but what we are doing is for their good.

That noontime came on the twenty-fifth of October, 1862, and the exertions which overtopped the longhouses of the Makahs with the grave framework of a schoolhouse more good for James G. Swan than he let his pen admit. Precisely when his mind had become set on securing the job as teacher at Neah Bay, there is no knowing. But hints murmur up from the diary pages. Likely Swan divined as early as those first visits to Cape Flattery in 1859 that Henry Webster would try for the appointment as Indian agent when the Makah Reservation came into being. Even more likely is that

Webster, ~~seeing~~ noticing Swan's knack of getting along with the Indians, advised or asked him to seek a Reservation job. ¶ Those discernments, and Swan's rummaging curiosity about Makah tribal life, were the pulls to Neah Bay. The push was that Port Townsend was not working out well for Swan, and a fundamental reason seems to have been whiskey.

¶ Once I happened across the lines of a diarying compatriot of Swan's, ~~once~~, a Scot named Melrose who also had arrived to the Pacific Northwest--to Victoria, north on the Canadian coast of the Strait--early in the 1850's. The alcoholic atmosphere of the frontier enthused Melrose ~~to admiration approaching~~ to near rapture. "It would almost take a line of packet ships," he wrote, "running regularly between here and San Francisco to supply this isle with grog, so great a thirst prevails among its inhabitants." He took care to note down how far his companions in thirst overcame their parching--whether each had become one-quarter drunk, one-half drunk, three-quarters drunk, or wholly drunk. Every so often, the Melrose diary presents the forthright notation, "author whole D." ¶ Swan, I hardly need say, was not a man to record himself as whole D or any other degree of it. But that he was tussling with the temptation of the bottle is ~~evident~~ plain enough in his diary even so. ¶ Joined the Dashaway Club of Port Townsend--a group who took a pledge of abstinence and whom one unsympathetic editor dubbed a claque of "high-toned drunkards." ¶ Cut my lip with a brush hook this evening in Gerrishes store in a scuffle with Maj. Van Bokkelin--Van Bokkelin one of

Swan's closest friends and a pillar of community respect, and a scuffle hardly thinkable of a sober Swan.

Days later, Made a pledge...not to drink any more liquor for two years from this date, the ninth of December, 1860.

That pact may have been as much with Webster, the gatekeeper to the Makah Reservation, future employment at ~~Neah Bay~~, as with himself.

Whether or not, most of the next twenty-one months, until Webster finally was able to pluck the appointment as Indian agent, found Swan odd-jobbing in sobriety at Neah Bay. Several months more had to pass before Webster could enroll Swan on the Makah Reservation payroll as teacher. But then, the first of July of 1862, at last Swan having secured position and salary, some immediate dignification sets in. Three and a half years of jotted doings in pocket notebooks leave off, and the first of Swan's ledger diaries, the pages long and officious and handwriting scrupulously clear and margined, begins.

What is recorded for the first year and more has nothing to do with ~~classroom~~ education, except that over this course of time Swan's classroom ever so slowly gets carpentered to completion. Instead, Swan ~~joins~~ spent the time lending a hand in the sundry chores of the other two white men of the Reservation work force, a farmer named Maggs who was to put Neah Bay on an agricultural footing and a blacksmith named Hitchcock. Hitchcock's Cape Flattery career was brief. Early on in Swan's first set of months on the payroll, the Makah named Captain John came down with smallpox. (Swan visiting the patient: John is alone in one corner, surrounded by a mat screen. He tells me that the small pox will collect in his head and when it leaves him it will come out of the top of his head like a puff of smoke. To prevent it spreading he has a large hole left open

in the roof directly over his head, through which the sickness is expected to escape. During rain a board is slipped over the opening, but a pole is left handy to punch it open as soon as John feels the gas escaping from him.) ~~Hitchcock~~ declared ~~himself~~ leery of the disease, ~~and~~ departed. Swan saw him off in the diary with entire lack of regret: His services will not be missed on this reservation, as he has done little else than shirk work ever since he has been here. He is about the most perfectly cultus--the Chinook jargon word for "worthless"--man I ever met with. Luckily Maggs, and a subsequent hardworking farmer named Jones, was more congenial, and probably more interesting to Swan. They were the earnest bearers of agriculture to damp Cape Flattery. "Making the earth say beans instead of grass," Thoreau teased himself about his garden at Walden. At Neah Bay, the official notion was that the coastal soil ought to ~~burble~~ potatoes.

There is a kind of Hibernian woefulness about this idea of remaking such a people of the sea as the Makahs into potato farmers. I think of the "potato Protestants" of Connaught in the Irish famine, forced to barter their religion for the meals of survival. The Makahs, however, were not at the edge of desperation, and so managed to make the best of the potato policy. As democratic eaters, they blithely claimed their spud allotments whenever a harvest was produced. But as uninspired agriculturalists, they left most of the plowing and other field labor to Maggs and Swan.

Through 1862 and most of 1863, then, Swan dabbled beside Maggs or Jones in the potato farming (...we plow the land twice, harrow it twice, then plow in the potatoes and harrow the whole over again.... If what we plant grows as thrifty as the wild raspberry, currant, gooseberry and elder and nettles, cow parsnip and other rubbish grew we shall have a famous crop.) Gathered lore from the Makahs. Sketched. Diaried. And otherwise disposed of days until the carpenter hired by Webster

would at last ~~finish~~ complete the schoolhouse. Webster himself was ~~gone~~ absent from Neah Bay much of the time, now that he had Swan and the others in place there, and Swan fairly often found himself ~~acting as~~ standing-in arbiter among the Indians. Finally, in mid-November of 1863, the potato harvest was in, the schoolhouse stood roofed and windowed, and Swan ~~undertook~~ take to begin school for the Makah children.

The school got off to a stuttery start. The first morning, a single student, ten-year-old Jimmy Claplanhoo, showed up. *This evening I got out the magic lantern and gave an exhibition of it as a reward. . .* ~~(N-17, '63)~~ Within a few days, four more Makah children came, and were treated to Swan's picture show. By the end of the first week, *Twenty children present today exercised them on the alphabet and then gave them a pan full of boiled potatoes.*

Success in the schoolroom, discord in the world. Something here set Swan to brooding about the ~~war~~ Civil War and its politics: *I do not believe in the principles of the Republican party as enunciated by Greely, Sumner, Phillips, Beecher. . . but I do believe that the country is in real danger and I believe at such times it is the duty of every true man to stand by his government (no matter what the party) in saving the country and ourselves from ruin.*

That out of his system, Swan went on to note that the Indians' dogs had killed two skunks in the lumber pile.

He next had to take three days out to supervise the digging of the schoolhouse cellar, introducing the Makah laborers to the wheelbarrow, which they thought a hilarious machine. Then, a drain to carry the runoff from the schoolhouse roof needed to be finished. Jimmy Claplanhoo came down from a cough so severe that Swan worried it might be consumption. The Makahs put on a raucous tamanoas ceremony

to boost Jimmy's health, just as a gale ripped across Neah Bay. Crows tipped over Swan's rain gauge. He went to work on them with shotgun and strychnine. More Indians arrived for Swan to dispense potatoes to. One of the Makah men brought his two-year-old son to school to learn the alphabet, and created uproar by spanking the tot for not mastering it. A number of the Indians embarked on a two-day drinking spree, which got rougher as it progressed. There were knife wounds, and one combatant smashed three canoes with a stone before other partyers knocked him out with a brick.

This drunken frolic shows how easily these people can be excited to deeds of violence, Swan's pen scolded. *We are powerless under the present circumstances either to prevent these drunken scrapes or protect ourselves in case of an attack, but I have not the least apprehension of any difficulty if liquor is kept from them.*

Now Swan caught a cold--*I have not felt so sick for a year certainly*. Jimmy Claplanhoo's health mended and he arrived back at school. The agency's winter larder began to be questionable: *Sometimes we are very short of provisions and have to depend on our beef barrel, then again the Indians will bring in such quantities of fish and game that there is a surfeit*. The agency cattle started dying. Cold damp weather held and held. On December 16 *we had the most remarkable fall of rain I have ever know.* It gurgled to the top of his

rain gauges twice, a total of nearly seven inches. A number of the Indians began another drinking party. One participant was blasted in the arm with a dragoon pistol, and another came to borrow a shovel from Swan. *He went where old Flattery Jack, Sixey's father, had been buried, and dug up one of his arm bones, which was taken and bound on as splints to the arm of Sixey, the Indians believing that the bone from the father's arm would cure*.

A weakened bull from the staggering agency herd had to be put in the basement of the schoolhouse for shelter. He took out a window on his way in. A party of Makahs from another village trooped in to purchase a bride: *They came in the house and rigged themselves up with masks and feathers and all went to Whattie's house to make their trade*. At last Webster sailed in with some supplies, Christmas came, and the coming of Christmas and an audible sigh lifts from the ledger pages as Swan notes the making of a plum pudding.

Day fifteen

I have not said what I should about the startling weather of this winter. In usual winter I can simply accept rain and cloud as our regional cloak, the season's garment of interesting texture and of patterned pleasant sound as well. "Rain again," a friend will growl. "Right," I will smile absently. But as rainless day after rainless day has glinted past, it dawns on me how different is this winter: drier, colder. It is like living in the Montana Rockies again, but without the clouting wind. There is a becalmed feel to this weather, a kind of disbelief the winter has about itself.

colder. Until yesterday morning, the temperature hung below freezing for four days and nights in a row, the longest spell of its kind I can remember here. I bury our kitchen vegetable scraps directly into the garden patch as immediate compost, and the shovel has been bringing up six-inch clods of frozen soil, like lowest-grade coal.

But what brings the weather to mind is the renewed presence of birds. This morning kindled into bright sun and already, just to be out in the fresh warmth, I have walked up to the rim of the valley. As will happen this time of year, clouds are lined across the southern reach of the mountains while clear weather holds the northern end. The view west from me is bannered in five blues today: the water of Puget Sound in two shades, azure nearest me, a more delicately inked hue farther out; the foreshore of the Olympic Peninsula in its heavy forested tint; the Olympic Mountains behind their blue dust of

across the southern reach of the mountains while clear weather holds the northern end, the Strait country. Such mornings shrug away time. Vessels on the Sound--freighter, tug harnessed to barge, second freighter, the ivory arrow that is the Edmonds-to-Kingston ferry--seemed pinned in place, and I had to watch intently before my eyes could begin to catch the simultaneous motion of them all, inching on the water. Then as I turned home, the flurry. Robins in fluster at the mouth of the valley, abruptly dotting suburban fir trees and frost-stiff lawns. Motion double-quick, headlong. Airful of flying bodies, a vigor in orbit around fixed beauty of Sound and mountains.

These past iced days, I have tried to picture the birds, up in the innermost branches, fluffed with dismay and wondering why the hell they didn't wing south with their saner cousins. It occurs to me also that the dozey tan cat, as well as the cold, may be keeping them from sight; that it may be time I invited the cat to be elsewhere for a while. But that the birds one way or another can be willed back, I dare not doubt. A birdless world, the air permanently fallow, is unthinkable. To be without birds would be to suffer a kind of color-blindness, a glaucoma gauzing over one of the planet's special brightnesses. Bushtits must bounce again on the thin ends of birch branches like monks riding bell-ropes. A fretful

nest-building robin--we always have one or two nattering in the trees at either end of the house--must gather and gather dry spears of grass until the beakful bristles out like cat's whiskers. Towhees, chickadees, flickers, juncoes, occasional flashing hummingbirds; seasonal grosbeaks who arrive in the driveway and, masked like society burglars, munch on seeds amid the gravel. Besides Carol and the pulse of words across paper there are few everyday necessaries in my life, but birds are among them.

And Swan, with his feathered name: birds perpetually aviate across his horizons. Time upon time I marker incidents of birds in his pages. This forenoon, the tenth of July of 1865 at Neah Bay, I saw a kingfisher fluttering in the brook and supposed he had a trout which he could not swallow. On going to him I found he had driven his bill into an old rotten stick with such force as to bury it clear up to his eyes...hard and fast. I took him with the stick to the house and called Jones and Phillips to see the curiosity. It was with difficulty that his bill was pulled out again. Two years previous, in the same week of July: I discovered a dead Albatross on the beach yesterday which had a large dogfish which it had swallowed partially but it was too large, and while the fish's head rested in the bird's stomach, its tail was out of its mouth.

Consequently the bird was soon suffocated....I never met with a similar instance of voracity.

Birds ~~routinely conjure~~ flash any number of instances which seem to have nothing whatsoever to do with human ken. ~~I remember of my bafflement about~~ last spring's haunting robin. Standing at the north window, trying to harvest words from the surrounding trees, I began to hear an irregular thumping sound. Tunk. Silence, then tunk. Tunk. ~~I thought~~ a neighbor ~~might be~~ unloading firewood, thought, but then at the tail of my eye a movement of color flicked along my own woodpile, to the right of the window. I stared. A robin was attacking the window of the workshop.

The bird would fling itself the few feet from atop the wood onto the glass, hit with the hefty tunk sound, drop back and catapult again. It had done so several times before I caught sight of it, and while I watched, performed nine more plunges in the space of less than a minute.

Wanting a head-on view, I carefully crossed to the door into the workshop and eased it open, but the robin had quit by then. The workshop window was centered with a nebula of white streaks, like a tense abstractionist painting; the bird evidently had been butting the glass for days.

~~The next day I was startled, while going for a book~~

from my desk-end shelf, to see the robin flutter up to the north window to the level of my face, veer off just before a collision, then repeat the foray two more times.

The bird's window fixation grew. A day later, on my way back into the house from the mailbox, I happened to step into the workshop just as the robin arrived outside the glass. Unmoving in the semi-dark, I stayed to watch. And counted, unbelieving, as the robin flung itself from the woodpile onto the window thirty-five consecutive times.

Over and over again, the small creature would fly up so hard its breast would flatten full onto the glass, feet scraping a quick grasping eeek on the pane, and drop back. A second or two of wait, then repeat.

Flurries erupted two or three times, a particularly frenzied one at the last when the robin flung itself to the window several times in a row as rapidly as it could launch-collide-rebound-launch again.

Once, it turned away and sidled off along the woodpile, then whirled as if to catch the window by surprise and whapped the glass cliff again.

Once, too, the robin paused long enough to open its bill very wide, as if swallowing--or making a silent anguished protest.

That effort of hurling one's body thirty-five times at near-full force against a solid barrier left me

dumbstruck. What would be equivalent for a human body, thirty-five rapid-fire fullback plunges into a stadium wall? The battering pattern also unnerved me. I try to stay clear of the birds' affairs, but neither do I have to put up with hara-kiri which employs my own windowpane. In front of the target window I stacked cardboard boxes until they loomed high as the spattered pattern of attack, hoping the robin would be nonplussed and go nest in a tree somewhere. Whether it did take itself to a tree, I cannot be sure. I do know that its haunting madness left my vicinity.

Swan, the twelfth of February of 1863: Quite a number of crows have been washed ashore dead. They have a rookery at Waadah Island and probably the stormy wind that has prevailed for several days with the thick snow blinded them and they fell into the water... There is catastrophe of that sort here as well, although fortunately not in bunches. This house I live in sits as a glass crag in the birds' midst. Badgerlike, I hunch in here at the typing desk and watch helplessly as the building every so often imposes itself athwart the birds' paths and once in awhile kills them. Grosbeaks have been the most frequent victims of headlong smash against a window. During one of their migrations, twice in two days I found corpses, flat on their

backs and feet curled in a final surprised clutch, below the north window.

One bird outside these transparent walls is invincible: the stellar's jay. Jays attack their way through life like cynical connivers in a royal court. A stellar's will alight on the garden dirt, cock his head in disdain, scream twice, burst off into the hemlock and set the lower branches dancing, almost before its blue sheen has blazed on my retina. What a vacancy a jay leaves in the air. The Makahs explained to Swan that the blue jay was the mother of a rascally Indian named Kwahtie. She had asked him to fetch some water, saying that she wished he would hurry, because she felt as if she were turning into a bird. Kwahtie ignored her and went on making the arrow he was at work on. While she was talking she turned into a blue jay and flew into a bush. Kwahtie tried to shoot her, but his arrow passed behind her neck, glancing over the top of her head, ruffling up the feathers, as they have always remained in the head of the blue jay. It seems to me as good an explanation as any for this sharp-hooded brigand.

And then a the most arresting of Swan's notations, the one that halts me in dismay: During the spring, when the flowers are in bloom and the humming birds are plenty, the boys take a stick smeared with the slime from snails,

and place it among a cluster of flowers....if a humming bird applies his tongue to it he is glued fast. They will then tie a piece of thread to its feet and holding the other end let the birds fly, their humming being considered quite an amusement.

That scene is doubly horrific to me--the doom of the hummingbirds, and the knowledge that had I been one of the Makah boys I would have had my own captive bird whirring like a toy on the end of a tether.

Day seventeen

Swan as disclosed by the few, damnably few, photos of him.

In a ~~Victoria~~ portrait studio at age sixty-five, he sits wearing a small round-crowned hat, brim serenely without crimp, and has trimmed his snug white beard, toyed a chain-and-fob into precise place above the middle button of his vest, and primped a little show of ~~white~~ handkerchief at the breast pocket of his jacket. His right hand, holding wire-rim reading glasses, rests amid books and sheafed paper atop a ~~table drapery heavily brocaded~~ tablecloth so Victorianly brocaded that it looks as if it would stand in place without the table beneath it. Just slightly, he faces to the left of the camera, the photographer's experience evidently having been that dignity is an

oblique matter. Angled as he is, a white wedge of collar stands out sharply between his high-cut vest and his left jawline. ~~This~~ This stiff bright fence of fabric at his neck and the dark orb of hat exactly flat across his head makes ~~Swan appear startlingly priest-~~ the portrayed figure like a missionary priest.

Five years later in a crowd scene at Port Townsend, his beard is fuller, and he ~~wears~~ sports a derby with the brim making a dapper little swoop onto his brow. Here he looks like an ~~exceedingly successful~~ highly accomplished confidence man.

Another shot, when I judge him to be perhaps fifty. Hatless this time, and his hairline arcing fairly far back. A comb has done ~~even~~ careful work, and scissors have tidied around ears and back of neck. White, or more likely gray, is wisping into the beard only at either side of his chin. According to what one writer of regional history has remarked, the dark cheek portions of beard and Swan's hair

portions of beard were brown, but I have no word yet from any contemporary of Swan's on that. One surprise: the corners of his eyes are touched with only a few brief lines. I conclude that dry Montana of the century, which early put a web of lines on the faces of my father and grandmother and made a noticeable start on me, is more erosive than Swan's maritime frontier of a hundred years ago.

Next, Swan older again, and in regalia. He wears a sash and a fez, evidently trigged up for a convention of the Order of Red Men, one of the several Port Townsend lodge groups he was a member of. As a frontier caliph, Swan looks splendidly silly, and there may be a hint held-in around his lips that he suspects it. The new feature here, fez and sash aside, is the clear profile of Swan's nose. "Nobody likes their own nose," a friend mused once, and for most of us it is an open hinge in the center of the face, shaped for no discernible purpose except revenge on us by forgotten ancestors. Swan came off rather well with his nose, a straight, moderate version, modest between the wide set of his eyes and the emphasis of his barbered beard. A restrained nose.

A smatter of other scenes exists--one I particularly grin over, Swan at ease in his Port Townsend office with a deluge of Indian regalia covering every wall and shelf around him--but they do not pass along detail. Except one pose, undoubtedly snapped the same day in the Victoria studio as the priestly

portrait. This time Swan perches on a queer chair-sized square of small notched logs, evidently the photographer's notion of a rural setting, and with casual care is holding a large canoe paddle slantwise across his body. If a flash flood should sweep through the studio, he will be ready atop his firewood floe. He has company in this photo, a blocky and strong-faced young Haida named Johnny Kit Elswa. Wearing a suit jacket which his chest and shoulders threaten to explode, Johnny Kit Elswa stolidly

who stands just apart from Swan, also grips a paddle, and a fistful of arrows and a small bow as well. Both men, one of Massachusetts and the other of the wild native coast of the North Pacific, are stiffly fastened by their stares to the camera's lens. But precisely between them breaks out a vertical riot of animated faces: a ceremonial Indian carving roughly the length and shape of the canoe paddles, but agog every six inches with some fantastic wood-faced creature or another popping its eyes in the direction of the camera.

Giddy, droll, mischievous, outright hee-hawing, the carvings are an acrobatic ladder of forest imps. In this company, the humans seem dry solemn stuff indeed.

Swan, then, in the entirety of this gallery, He appears to have been slightly narrow-shouldered and short-armed, with a tendency to build at the waistline. Perhaps five feet eight inches in height, maybe 160 pounds; a shape which could be pared and stretched a bit into my own, I notice. Not an elaborate man, but with a small dressy touch or two. A ring with a stone, there on the ring finger of the left hand; that chain and fob. In the ceremonial pictures, in his later years, he seems to have begun shaving his cheeks along the top of his beard, declaring a definite border such as a department store Santa's

beard has. Which leads to the thought that, like me, he may have been a touch overproud of a firm face of beard: a sack of hair from ear to ear may be less enhancing than we imagine.

Average vanities aside, Swan impresses as tidy; deft enough within his radius of interests; indeed, even painstaking about a sufficient matter, such as presenting his face for the world to see; and yet in every pose, more distance to him than merely the span from the camera's lens. An inward man, a winterer within himself as well as his far-frontier surroundings.

As I finger through the photographs, Swan seems more than half familiar to me, the kind of visage seen from the tail of my eye and not ~~immediately~~ quite willing to registering. At last the resemblance clicks. ~~He~~ Swan looked more than a little like the history-book portraits of the steel king of the nineteenth century, Andrew Carnegie. Similar line of mouth, a wide clear brow, same trim half-face of beard. Between brow and beard, however--exactly there across the eyes and cheekbones, entire difference arrives. Even as his most carefully benign, Carnegie's scrutiny comes off the page at you as ~~is~~ that of a man gauging just how far you can be tantalized with the gift of a public library. Swan blinks the middle-distance gaze of a fellow who would be in that Carnegie library thumbing through the collected works of John Greenleaf Whittier all the afternoon.

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. ~~The~~ Alava's first and biggest and namesake of Cape Alava's strewn collection of seastacks, reefs, isles, boulders; ~~this~~ Oh this pepper-spill on the coast's map which a despairing cartographer simply summed as The Flattery Rocks.

The rhythmic ~~noise~~ pound of tidal surge underscores the reputation that, all the 00 miles down from Cape Flattery to here, and south from Alava for 00 miles more, this coast constantly dodges and tumbles. Boulder formations and landforms sprawl random and ajut ~~like~~ 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, direction, 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 wonk, our boots constantly resound on the cedar, wonk wonk wonk wonk wonk wonk. The boardwalk ~~is a foot~~ 's height or

~~two above~~ from the forest floor, ~~putting~~ 5 my head at an elevation of seven feet or so, ~~I~~ and I feel like a Zulu clogging along in a Dutchman's shoes.

"Just like Asbury Park," Carol offers in joke, as we wonk 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: cedar, hemlock, salal, deer fern, 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 it knows anything whatsoever about this morning's winter chill.

As we stride north the mile or so to the archeological 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. You wonder how soon before the first one will wade in to join the gulls in the surf and make the species seagoing.

The archeological site has grown to resemble a tiny ~~mining~~ silverstripe

town. Board houses and sheds dribble along the hillside, and then the laid- open ground where the excavation is underway. ~~The~~ 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 archeological miracle. The scholarly guess is that ~~Evidently~~ 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 amber. Washington State University archeologists and their student ~~forces~~ teams have been at work here for ten years, ~~teams~~ and the trove of artifacts is to go on display in a 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 anywhere in the world. She tells us too details ~~that we had not heard~~ unearthed since our ~~on~~ here other visits: that shells of some sixty kinds of shellfish have been found in the longhouses, testimony to the prowess of the Hosetts in trading very far up and down this coast, and that belongings of a head man of a longhouse were found in the 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 ~~it~~ 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, ~~amid the dark stone humps,~~ 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. ~~I believe~~ this dragway ~~to be~~ 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 handwrought 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 slide generations of Hosett whalers, ~~and lifted~~ lifting away into the glittering Pacific.

The archeology 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 <u>commenced a trip for Hosett and the lake said by the Indians to be back from Hosett village</u>. 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 ~~until then~~ vouches for it ~~as truth.~~ In the journals of the sea-going explorers, there is no record of longboats rowing in to reconnoiter this unnerving rock-snaggled stretch of shore.

In July of 1775 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 ~~from his schooner~~ men to fill water casks. The waiting Indians killed five, and two drowned in terror in the surf. With that ~~bloody~~ convulsive exception, explorers cruised respectfully shy of the northern Olympic Peninsula coast in their scans for some major channel which would prove to be the phantom Northwest Passage through the top of America, and they had a tricky enough time even with that. (Recall Captain Cook, that tremendous discoverer, offshore somewhere here in heavy weather in February of 1778: "It is in this very latitude where we now were that geographers have placed the pretended Strait of Juan de Fuca. But we saw nothing like it, nor is there any possibility that any such thing ever existed.") Nor ~~were~~ was ever any shipwrecked crews, in desperation, likely to have set off overland and stumbled onto Lake Ozette; the Olympic Peninsula was known to be a firred jungle vaguely the size of ~~all of England~~ --well, nobody knew the size of what.

Indeed, there is a strange and welcome slowing-down of frontier-probing where the Olympic Peninsula, which actually is only a hundred miles in breadth, is concerned. Not

until 1889 did a six-man expedition sponsored by a Seattle newspaper traipse entirely across the Olympic Mountains; their exploit was sponsored by a Seattle newspaper and left some of the loveliest peaks of America with the curious legacy of being named for editors.

Even for a few more years after that the Lake Ozette corner of the Peninsula remained 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 toward the southern end 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 look toward the beach and the Makah canoeway, to Ozette. Swan's exploration on that day in 1864 we begin to duplicate with eerie exactness. The trail commenced a shore 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 goes. 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 the 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 drier portions with water grass and thick moss which yielded moisture on the pressure of the feet. Step from the broadwalk, and drops of moisture from James Swan's pen are 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 cabin which still stands, thriftily but sturdily 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 battle the brush to this 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 are carefully masked with squares of tarpaper to prevent weathering. Inside, when Ahlstrom papered the cabin walls with newspapers, he carefully 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--BANKS CLOSE; JAPS BOMB GUNBOAT--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 year or two of his life.

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 looks finely . . . Ahlstrom, with his reputation for

the way of the barbarous Norwegians. 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

conviviality with travelers, takes note of Swan's reputation as a cook and proffers the chance for him to chef a meal for the two of them--maybe halibut cheeks or some other of Swan's coastal favorites.

The trail again, ours and Swan's. 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 then 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 vasy 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. He and the Makahs prepared instead to hike back to Alava. 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 thirty-one

Point No Point is the tiny peg of map-line from which Puget Sound dangles like a long scarf. A long scarf, fanning southwestward at its bottom fringes as if ~~meeting~~ swept in a steady breeze; from here at the Point until the water has ~~margined~~ delineated every last remote bay and channel and inlet, thirteen hundred and fifty miles of shoreline--the equal of the entire Pacific Coast from San Diego to Cape Flattery--edge the Sound's strange trailing outline. ~~00 of those miles~~

Evidently in derision, Point No Point was named by the Wilkes expedition of 0000, which sailed up to what seemed from a distance to be a promontory prowing boldly into the Sound, and wasn't. The ~~high~~ forested ridgeline lies a few hundred yards back from the ~~water~~ 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, ~~the~~ Point No Point marks the northern entrance to the great Sound, and ~~I come here to see the ships enter like~~ nobody now remembers who Wilkes was.

Except for the four of us--Carol, me, Ann and Phil, good friends who now live above the valley from us--today's visitors are all out on the water with salmon as their purpose: twenty-five 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 townsmen used to scorn Faulkner as an overelegant scribbler, they would call him Count No 'Count. Here is a site in scansion I can see the sly squire enjoying, out in one of the red rowboats affirming to fellow anglers that yes, non other, he is the 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. Bluffs sit in sequence along the shoreline, like sterns of a moored fleet. I watch a known point 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. We do the leisurely beach miles, and the gab that

goes with them. Ann performs a squinched-up impression which she assures us is an abalone. I give my ~~xxxx~~ impression of a tenpenny nail being driven: rigid stance, hands at side, shuddering winces as my knees buckle downward. Phil ~~softly~~ gently informs us that neither has much career ahead as shellfish 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 ~~Swan's~~ his pages, rocking into view with the hidden push of air against their groves of canvas, whitely slicing ~~along~~ 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. ~~Winged Racer.~~ Maunaloa. Quickstep. Growler. Up from San Francisco, Nahumkeag, Aguilar de Los Andes, eagle of the Andes and homebound to Santiago. Lalla Rookh and

Day thirty-two

As I carry groceries ~~and clothing~~ 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 ~~firing~~ triggering off warning bursts.

"Hullo, Solo, hey, Solo Solo Solo," I offer and coax him into being petted. He wags ecstacy, devotion, worship. But as I step down the path from the cabin, Solo moves ~~behind~~ to my heels and yammers steadily ~~at my heels~~ 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 ~~xxxx the space~~ place between his ears, ~~evidently send~~ seem to have sent him irretrievably giddy. He then ~~barks~~ rolls to his feet and yaps me every step back to the cabin.

People sometimes comment, surprised, that I am remarkably ~~as~~ at ease with their pets, in the same way they occasionally congratulate me--astonished, here--that I am good with children. But ~~what~~ they are seeing ~~is~~ a kind of social sleight-of-hand. In either case, my heart is not much in ~~it in either~~ the good manners.

case. All I ~~wish~~ hope for, from youngsters or from the animals that seem to take their roles in ~~some~~ many households, is respectful truce, ~~in which~~ whereby we ~~gaze~~ mildly at one another across some line ~~drawn~~ fixed in the air between us. That, of course, is never the set of terms ~~they~~ the other side want. Solo evidently ~~sees~~ has seen through me at once to the secret agent against dogs, and will bay the ~~fact~~ alarm through all eternity.

One more round trip we make,

~~Solo~~ him ~~yapping~~ determinedly whenever my hand isn't stroking him. I face the issue. ~~"More in sorrow than anger,"~~ Solo, ~~but~~ goddamned if I'm going to spend four days petting you. Go home."

He wavers, somewhere between another ~~orgy~~ aria of barking and ~~demanding~~ a ~~for more~~ further ransom of petting.

"Get-the-hell-outa-here!"

Off Solo scampers through the ghostly alders, looking mildly 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 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 in my own strides across time. Coming up here to the underedge of snow country is a 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 arctic seasons which have swept western Montana each three decades since the first of them was registered, to the 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 their 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 ~~ink~~ will not drain away in spring runoff. But I would be returning on a tourist's terms, which to me are tarnished ones. ~~and that would belittle the season.~~ 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 entirely know how long-reaching the decision would be, that the region of my grandparents and parents is no longer the site for me to work out life. The snowline I need as margin is here. A white edge of the Northwest where I can sit above rain and feed a stove instead of ~~two thousand~~ someone else's sheep. Hear what is being said in my skull. Watch mountain dusk draw down.

And ~~gaze~~ 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 ~~is in~~ 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 ~~watched~~ seen for several minutes on her route.

As ~~the three of us~~ I watched down from the porch ~~a few hours ago, the cabin porch,~~ the motion of the doe's each step ~~she took~~ seemed to recoil slightly into her, as if some portion of poise was being pulled back each time in reserve. ~~That~~ 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 ~~forest~~ meadow. Who would

Another question out of westering: 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.

Another gem out of westering.

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:

~~January 26, 0000 (p. 54)~~: 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 much to my satisfaction...It is very tame and looks very pretty running about

Day forty-three

Whidbey Island, this first dawn of February. Admiralty Inlet, with the Strait of Juan de Fuca angling like a flat blue glacier into one end and Puget Sound ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ out the other. This promontory surge of the island's steep edge, lifting me to look west onto the entire great bending valley of water. And south to the trim farmland where on a summer ~~day~~ midnight in 1857, ~~the~~ Indians snicked off a head.

The beheaders were, no surprise, northern Indians: Tlingit warriors from an Alaskan island near Sitka, knifing downcoast the ~~0000~~ thousand miles in their glorious high-prowed canoes. The victim they caught and decapitated was a settler named Ebey, a militia officer and member of the Washington territorial legislature. ~~The raiding party had xxxxxx~~ There was no specific quibble ~~with~~ between the raiding party and Ebey; simply, one of their tribal leaders had been killed during a clash with an American gunboat the previous year, and the Tlingits now exacted a chief for a chief.

Strange, for a timber-and-water empire which looks so everlastingly placid, and was explored by whites and ~~settled by them~~ yielded by the natives with perhaps less bloody contention than any other American frontier, that the practice of beheading crops up in the Sound and Strait country ~~to the extent it does~~. Recall the Makahs bringing home to Neah Bay the pair of Clallam heads like ~~the~~ first cabbages of the season. ~~The first~~ earliest white expedition in from the Pacific, Vancouver's in 1792, was met with

"A Long Pole & two others of smaller size...put upright in the Ground each having a Human Scull on the top". ~~met the first white expedition~~

That trio of skulls rode the air at Marrowstone Island, in direct ~~x~~ line of sight across Admiralty Inlet from where I am perched, and the exploring Englishmen were blinklessly deferential about the display. Lieutenant Peter Puget, whose quote that is, ~~went on~~ proceeds to remark that he ~~did~~ does not wish to criticize a people

"whose Manners Customs Religion Laws & Government we are yet perfect Strangers to." Whether His Majesty's lieutenant would have been as ~~equanimitous~~ equable about the northern warriors' manners in carrying Ebey's head away from here with them and eventually swapping it to a Hudson's Bay trader for six blankets, a handkerchief, a bolt of cotton, three pipes and some tobacco--the trader then returning the prize to Ebey's family for burial--it would be interesting to know.

Come look from this eminence of bluff now, in the soft hour before ~~entire~~ daybreak, and you will ~~swear~~ declare on Bibles that the ~~Haidas'~~ Tlingits' act of 122 years ago was the last sharp moment on this landscape. The island's farm fields are leather and corduroy, rich even panels between ~~dark velvet~~ black-furred stands of forest.

Tan grass which broomed the backs of my hands as I climbed the path up to here now whisks soundlessly against ~~a~~ a four-wire fenceline.

The sky's only clouds are hung tidily on the southernmost Cascade Mountains, precisely at the ruin of summit where the sun will loft itself. ~~Along the path forest.~~ Yes: Rural America of the last century, your eyes say ~~right enough~~--or Westphalia, or Devonshire.

Directly below where I ~~am perched~~ stand is ~~a~~ an aging barn with ~~a~~ its long peaked ~~eve~~ eave pointing southeast, like the bill of a cap turned attentively toward sunrise. We will watch together. ~~The sky's only clouds are~~

As much as I ~~prize~~ value the half-dawn, all the secretive shadings it goes through to ~~show~~ hint how the world forms itself out of the mist of night, I am ready for sunlight and whatever heat it will bring against the frost. Hand by hand I put my

fingers in my mouth ~~to~~ warm them, dry them rapidly on a pants leg, pull on my too-thin ~~cotton~~ garden gloves again.

Across Admiralty, the ~~last~~ street lights of Port Townsend begin to quench into the day, and the timber-heavy shoreline angling westward out the Strait from the town seems not so black and barbed as it was minutes ago. That shoreline is my reason--one of my reasons;

the other is shearly that I love this blufftop arc above the tiering horizons of water and shore and mountains--~~for coming~~ to be here. Across there is the canoe route which

Swan traveled ~~by canoe~~ time on time during his six Neah Bay years.

~~It is~~ a hundred ~~miles by water~~ water stretch between Port Townsend and Cape Flattery, and the journey usually took ~~7~~ 3 days, along the fjord-like shore of the Olympic Peninsula. The Olympic range, recorded Swan from afloat, presents a wild forbidding aspect. But then:

> ...the line of foot-hills...disclosing deep ravines, with fertile valleys lying between them, and reaching quite to the base of the great mountains. As for the long rough-hewn channel of the Strait itself, Bays and points are bold, precipitous and rocky. The water at these points is deep, and, when the winds are high, dashes with tremendous force upon the cliffs, making a passage around them, at times, a difficult and dangerous matter.

almost out, 57

I can see ~~across~~ exactly to where one such matter occurred, ~~around~~ beyond the headland where Port Townsend ~~lies~~ nestles. Early in his years on the Strait, Swan was inbound from Neah Bay one afternoon when his Makah canoe crew pulled ashore to camp at Discovery Bay instead of ~~proceeding~~ paddling on the half dozen miles to Port Townsend. Since the Indians' canoe pace seemed to be regulated part of the time by weather savvy and prudence, and the other part by indolence, it took some knowing to tell the moods apart.

~~As many men~~ a similar puzzle of canoe etiquette

(Swan had mused on ~~this~~ during his time among the Chinooks and Chehalis at Shoalwater Bay. Speed will be kept up for a hundred ~~yards~~ rods, he wrote in Northwest Coast, then the paddles ~~pulled in~~ put to rest and all begin talking. Perhaps one has spied something, which he has to describe while the rest listen; or another thinks of some funny anecdote...or they are passing some remarkable tree or cliff, or stone, which has a legend attached to it...When the tale is over,...all again paddle away with a desperate energy for a few minutes...)

MWC 348

This day,
Swan decided the crew was being entirely too casual with his time, and insisted they continue. An old Makah woman in the canoe grumbled her disagreement, for she said she knew we should have a gale of wind from the northwest, but Swan prevailed. The weather as promptly lambasted them as she predicted. ... we met the tide-rips, and had a fearful time....On we flew like an arrow, every sea throwing a swash into the canoe, keeping two persons constantly bailing. The old squaw began to sing a death song... The paddlers at last managed to tester hold the canoe atop breakers which skimmed it to shore, and a shaken and wiser Swan hiked walked the rest of the way to Port Townsend.

almost out, V.93

Twin gulls break into my sight around the bend of the bluff. "Slim Robinson yachts of the element," Jeffers christened them, and taking him at his words these two are gentleman racers. They stay paired, the inshore bird ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ a few feather-lengths ahead, in a casual motionless glide past me, and on down the bluffline. Then one flaps once, the other flaps once--evidently the rules of this contest of air--and they flow on out of my vision.

4 After ~~that~~ his near-disaster,

~~Thereafter,~~ Swan ~~adjusted~~ slowed himself to the Indian pace of travel, and it seems to have been a pleasant enough one. He ~~once~~ recounted for a San Francisco newspaper ~~a~~ the canoe trip~~s~~ when a paddler named Tom Squi-qui commenced a Catholic hymn, which he sung in a fine clear voice, accompanied by all the others in chorus. John Fay then officiated as priest, and they went through the service in a regular and ~~de~~ devout manner, till the word "O-mah-sista," or Amen, when Billy Barlow gave a whoop, and struck off into singing "Old Dan Tucker," joined by the rest, who gave quite as much attention to the ~~re~~ negro melody as they had to the canticles of the church.

alt + end, 59

Ten minutes have passed since I joined the barn in peering for signs of sunrise. The light is slowed by the cloud lid.

Now, ~~Then,~~ overhead, a sudden dark constellation. Birds, ~~oh~~ oh god, birds in thousands, a complete swift seine of them sweeping the daybreak sky. Half a mile of wingdom at once swishing in across the water, flinging beyond into the farm fields. That quick flutter, brief glide: telltale marmalade breast: robins. Six times across Admiralty they come, the squadrons a minute or two apart. I can forecast that I will happen onto robins all the rest of the morning on the bluff, spillover of these ~~sudden~~ abrupt sky-filling migrations.

While I am monitoring birds, the first full daylight has reached into the peaks of the Olympic Mountains--the highest crags, far west into the range, rather than the front pyramids of white. So a ceiling of sunshine is somewhere up there, and in minutes I will be granted the floor of it down here.

I suck warmth into my fingers again and hurry north along the bluff, wanting to watch the light come onto the lagoon which bows out from the shoreline below. The lagoon is not quite like any other piece of coastwork I have seen: a narrow band of gravel beach which mysteriously has looped out from the base of the bluff--the curve of the gravel snare about two hundred yards across at its widest--and entrapped several acres of tidewater. Driftlogs by the hundreds float within it like pewter tableware spilled across marble. At two minutes before eight, the first beams set the lagoon aglow, the pewter suddenly is bronze.

The sun now is clear of the mountains, but so far onto the southern horizon at this time of year that its luster slants almost directly along the Sound and Admiralty Inlet, as if needing the ricochet help from the water in order to travel the extreme polar distances to the lagoon and, at last, me.

~~The water distances here~~, the canoes that slipped through ~~the miles~~ these water distances like needles. Beautifully modelled, Swan said of the canoes of the Makahs, ~~modeled~~, resembling in their bows our finest clipper ships... ~~They are~~ formed from a single log of cedar, carved out with skill and elegance. The best canoes are made by the Clyoquot and Nittinat tribes, on V~a~ncouver Island, who sell them to the Mackahs, but few being made by the latter tribe owing to the scarcity of cedar in their vicinity... Propulsion was either ~~by~~ the deft broadhead paddles carved by the Clyoquots or ~~by~~ square sails of woven cedar bark, which made the craft look all the more like small clipper ships, diminutives of that greatest grace of seafaring. Canoemanship introduced Swan to Swell, dressed in a new suit of Boston clothes, ~~and~~ commanding eight paddlers, bound out to Neah Bay on a mid-September day of 1859 with a cargo of flour, bacon, molasses and blankets. Swan climbed in for the ~~journey~~ jaunt, and ever after was impressed. Swell has been among the white men as sailor and~~r~~ pilot, and is one of the most intelligent Indians I have ever seen...He is still quite a young man, but if he lives, he is destined to be a man of importance among his own and neighboring tribes.

If he lives. Why these edged words amid the admiration, on a fine bright journey out the valley of water to Neah? Whatever the reason for those three uneasy jots of Swan's pen, they were ~~prophecy~~ augury, Swell long since dead by the time Swan canoed away from the Neah Bay teaching job seven Septembers later.

A second illumination of this sunrise. I realize that I come back and back to this bluff because here, scenes still fit onto each other despite their distances of time. What I am looking out ~~xxxxx~~ over in this fresh dawn is little enough changed from the past that Swan in a Makah canoe can be readily imagined across there, the sailing gulls slide through his line of sight as they do mine. Resonance of this rare sort, the reliable echo from the eye inward, I think should be prized like breath.

Day fifty

A day that promises better weather one minute and reconsiders the next. The valley is sought out by wind every so often, but no rain, and the thermometer is nosing 50. I would have known without looking that the mercury was up, for the cat is atop a post on the fence at the far side of the neighbor's yard. More than ever he looks like a lion seen from far off, adoze at the edge of some thornbush thicket, waiting for a rabbit-sized wildebeeste to patter into his dream.

What regulates this periodic cat, besides the day's warmth sliding in through his fur, or any other of the cats I have watched past my writing-room windows for the past dozen or so years, I have no conception. Those aloof encounters by day when any two, stalking like muffed-and-coated heiresses, will keep the full length of the backyard between them, then the rites by night when they try to murder one another as imaginatively as possible. The gray-and-white wanderer that one day walked into the garden dirt, scratched a hole, daintily settled atop it in hunched but poised position--Queen Victoria on a thunderbox--to do the necessary, did it, scratched the lid of dirt into place, looked uneasily around, spotted me watching from the window, and fled as if aflame. (No such episode from the tan cat; it would not be lionly.) Probably the mind of cats is territory we are better off not knowing. The winter Carol and I lived in London, I stretched back from my typewriter one morning and looked directly up at a cat on the ceiling.

Our flat was the below-stairs portion of a Georgian townhouse, a

a
along the walls like root systems and splashes of daylight at the

~~windows front and back. The back windows were a~~

rear, a kind of glassed-over porch with frosted panes as its roof.

The cat was roof-sitting, ceiling-sitting, from my point of view.

Into the middle of the roof-panes of glass a light fixture had been

webbed, on the English electrical principle that unless the electrician

has been told by the householder not to expend 232,000 miles of wiring

he can proceed to rig a a bulb ~~[illegible]~~ to the underside of the

moon, and the ~~glow of the~~ light as it glowed threw upward a small

By some instinct

circle of heat. The cat had ambled up from the alley to curl itself to

the warmth.

no 91

The rest of the day, I would glance overhead every so often and

find the cat absorbedly licking its paws, its midnight-and-snow face

dabbing

~~bobbing~~ in and out of focus through the frosted glass. That time of

an alley tabby

~~a cat~~ in wavery orbit over me convinced me that whatever their

daily

thousand pretenses, all cats are secret Chesires.

Day sixty

The Bone River is flowing into itself, turned backwards by the tide of Willapa Bay advancing between its banks. For some hundreds of yards here at its mouth, the Bone slowly, slowly creeps back toward its origin, like a bolt of olive-drab cloth surreptitiously trying to roll itself up.

The course of the Bone, here where Swan filed his riverside land claim in 1853, does some final indeterminate wandering before snaking into the northeast ~~end~~ side of sprawling Willapa Bay--or Shoalwater Bay, as it was in Swan's time here. Even today, with the highway and its sporadic towns, there is a sense of this area going its own geographical path indifferent to man. The ridge country around Willapa, for instance, is entirely single-purposed: it bulks there to produce trees in the way a porcupine exists to feature quills. The devoutest admiring mutters about the Northwest forestscape--thick as hair on a dog's back...timber till you can't sleep--~~come to mind~~ chant themselves when you gaze around this region. Yet, an onlooker will see too what already is in his eyes, and

As with nearly any other frontier site where white men could manage

to whittle a clearing, Shoalwater was declared by its earliest American inhabitants to have high metropolitan prospects. Swan almost at once was prophesying Shoal-water Bay, as a harbor, will be of great importance to Washington Territory as soon as its advantages are known...

He Swan was more specific about the glories of his own chosen site here: a fine level prairie, containing five or six acres of marsh, and as many more of elevated land above the reach of the highest tides...a fine grove of spruce trees sheltered the place from the north wind... Specific, if overoptimistic, for His real estate hopes were running away with him in those phrases. The meadow-like area is more bog than otherwise. Fen country, really, trying to decide whether to remain marsh or become something more. As for the spruce-shield against the north wind, the benefit is moot: weather roars through here from the southwest or west, fresh off the Pacific. (Weather, that is to say, such as the southwester--great gusts would come sweeping over the cliff, and, descending on us with a whirl, seemed as if they would tear everything before them--which sluiced apart Swan's fireplace in his new riverside cabin ~~beside the Bone~~ in 1853.)

~~warning signs, severe side wind ahead.~~

The weather today--the eighteenth of February--is only mildly fitful, an occasional shower rising in the hills east of the bay. however, Last night brought in a whooping storm ~~[illegible]~~. Wind screamed around the door of my motel room until I folded lengthwise strips of newspaper and jammed every crack. Then sometime in the middle of the dark, the door burst open, the newspaper strips flying through the room like white swords.

"What the Jesus...?" I shouted blearily.

"Security," intoned a voice outside. "You forgot to lock your door. Be sure to lock your door."

From security which flings open my door in the black stormy hours of the night, may I hereafter be preserved. I yawn and try to walk myself awake along the riverbank, ~~wondering whether~~ Swan Swan visited his empty ~~riverbank~~ land in 1868. (quote) ~~On my own revisit today,~~ it is still empty. Empty, that is, except of the sounds of water. Here at Willapa Water makes gradation upon gradation, ~~here at Willapa,~~ exists in almost every conceivable form except iceberg. Tide, stream, current, seep, all are steadily at work, sometimes almost within touch of each other.

Off the high clay cliffs on the south side of the river, a few jets of water as big around as my arm--the Willapa Bay version of a trickle--~~fall~~ dive loudly into the Bone.

A sharper sound: oyster shells clink as I walk across them. Swan mentioned such heaps, left over from an Indian settlement, when he took claim on the land, and probably there has been one such brittle midden or another on this riverbank since humanity arrived.

more on Willapa oysters

This oystery turf beside the Bone is Swan's path not taken, which is why I have come to take a look at it.

what did he do?

He arrived here to Willapa all those years ago with more mercantile knowledge than anyone on the coast north of San Francisco, connections in the Bay city, money in ~~the~~ his family, a temperament for the climate, understanding of the Indians. But when the beds of Willapa oysters made an eventual industry--they ~~resembled~~ rivaled English Channel oysters, Swan noted, having the same strong, coppery taste--and a few fortunes, Swan was years gone.

It can be seen now that he spent his ~~time~~ few years here on exactly the wrong shore of Willapa Bay. On this eastern side, ~~There is nothing~~ there is no longer a trace of Bruceport, the erstwhile "settlement" of Swan and Russell and the other earliest oystermen, (except for a commemorative highway plaque) but across the water is another matter entirely. There,

The Long Beach Peninsula, another of the geographic whimseys of the Washington coastline, ~~rests~~ stretches between the Pacific and Willapa Bay like a narrow but tremendously long (and crowded) picnic table. Modern pushy members of the family--the motel towns, Long Beach, Ocean Park, Oceanside--gather ed along the coastal side with their belly buttons out to the sun and their neon trinkets glinting wildly ~~against~~ all one another, while ~~off~~ away at the ~~far~~ north inland end drowses the gray-gowned maiden aunt of the mob, Oysterville. Had Swan poled across the bay from Bruceport to settle at Oysterville and work the oyster business from there, he might well have made it to ~~fortune~~ prosperity.

The village--it actually is less than ~~that~~ simply, a handful of handsome rangy houses of the last century, on wide lots opening out to Willapa Bay and the dark bristling ridges beyond--seems ~~now~~ these days to exist entirely on memory and cozy isolation,

but it had its era of oyster bonanza. ~~(insert about Willapa oyster industry.)~~

¶ ~~Undoubtedly~~ the

site was too far from activity for ~~him~~ Swan; in the end, he always was drawn to a busy port. Yet Oysterville ~~is~~ encapsulates exactly ~~of~~ the sort of frontier gentility Swan ~~aspired to~~ seems suited for.

I can see him there in one of the ~~xxxxxx~~ toplofty houses, spending an hour each morning on the accounts of his oystering enterprise and two hours on a monograph about the local Indians, his second wife-- a sea captain's widow, say, from Astoria, ~~xxx~~ and bearing ~~considerable~~ more than incidental resemblance to Matilda-- summoning him to noontime dinner of baked salmon, then, a long-bearded ~~chum~~ crony or two from the Bruceport days dropping by in the afternoon to spin tales. (Perhaps the single most comfortable ~~in~~ line in Swan's thousands of diary entries is an evening he records simply as telling stories and eating apples.)

But I also see him, this time in ~~his own handwriting~~ actuality, on his ~~actual~~ fortuneless side of the bay in 1868 when he is concluding his visit to the Bone River claim by penning an absentee landlord's plaint:

~~Jul 20, '68~~

] Notice [

All persons are hereby cautioned against trespassing upon my donation claim on the Querquellin or Bone River, either by cutting or removing timber or any other property or by pasturing stock or building residences.
All such persons will hereafter be dealt with according to law.
Mr Wm H Clark will attend to any business connected with my claim during my absence from the bay ~~and until further notice will be respected as my agent.~~

~~J G Swan~~

It was the last time Swan set foot there beside the Bone.

Day sixty-five

The water route to Port Townsend, hastily recreated now that the Hood Canal Bridge lies tumbled beneath three hundred feet of riptide. The big white-and-green state ferry Kaleetan now spins north out of the Edmonds ferry slip as if having decided to make a break for Alaska, and the newness of direction makes itself felt up from the deck plates through my body, an exhilarant return to the time when water transportation went up and down the Sound and Strait with day-long purposeful voyages instead of flat across the channels in quick commuters' hops. The fresh sense of truly going out onto the water world is not misplaced; the Kaleetan, at 00 knots, will take an hour and a half to reach Port Townsend.

A day of dark gray. The shoreline of the Peninsula juts like a heavy black ledge amid the gray canyon of water and sky to the west and north, Whidbey Island its mate to the east. I have brought along Swan in scholarly tatters, notes and photocopies and snippings, but the scenery keeps my eyes. Time enough for Swan's future at its two coffers I will examine in Port Townsend. For now, here is the first of the lighthouses to go by the Kaleetan on

the western shore, Point No Point. Tidy as a small farmstead, white-painted against the dark wooded bluff, its light like a lantern winking out to the ~~world~~ universe from a haymow.

¶ Some dozens of minutes and ~~North,~~ Foulweather Bluff, named by Captain Vancouver as the North Pacific rain ran into his ears, stands out as an elongated whale, square head into the water in profile to the ferry.

Strangely, Puget Sound and Admiralty Inlet seem wider, out here as now the ferry goes up the center of their joined water like a zipper up a jumpsuit, than when looked across from either shore. The expanse is that of a very large lake, a watercourse greatly more generous and impressive than its channels seem on a maps.

¶ More suspended time, until

The Kaleetan speeds ~~past~~ north Fort Flagler, opposite Port Townsend, as if still determined for Alaska, then at last turns slightly west with a grateful dip and begins to ~~spin~~ wheel direct onto the hillside town.

Seen here from the water, Port Townsend is a surprising new place.

handsome of its beginnings
It regains itself as the port site it began as, the great water-facing houses look correct and captainly on their bluff, the downtown ~~properly~~ is set broadside along the shore like a proper working wharf. ~~This Ten Port~~ Instead of the dodgy glimpses along it main street through too many cars and powerlines, this Port Townsend looks you square in the eye and asks where you've sailed in from.

maritime
The docking of the ferry too is from ~~port~~ days of the last century. ~~The~~ Kaleetan is far too massive for the tiny ferry slip--like an ocean liner trying to moor to a balcony--and the crew must show seamanship. One ferryman fishes out with a boathook, snags a large hawser off pilings at the port bow. With that ~~the~~ Kaleetan our vessel is snubbed like a roped elephant while a tugboat hustles up and butts the stern around to a proper angle. Slotted just so, the ferry then makes a careful final surge to the dock ramp. Those of us who step off as foot passengers could be ~~our~~ our great-grandparents coming ashore at Ellis Island, Montreal, Boston; a number of us are bearded and, as I am, in watchcaps and ~~xxxxx~~ waterproof jackets. Three ministers are prim among us, over from Seattle for the day on some missionary duty or another. Women carry children ashore, mothers greet daughters, husbands wives, huge trucks ease off the ferry, others snort aboard, turmoil of drayage and pilgrims.

But a block or so from the ferry landing, within a dozing quiet from some other vector of the last century, the carved cane rests in its glass museum case. I squat

the

~~it~~ and begin the astonishing inventory. The handle is ivory carved into a perfect fist the size of a child's right hand. Through the grasp of the fingers, like a held rattle, and out the circling grip of thumb pressed onto forefinger, twines a snake. The ivory reptile then writhes through air down onto the wrist. There above where the tiny pulse would ~~beat~~ hammer, the snakehead rests. Except that it is not at rest, but in mid-swallow of a frog, eternally doomed in its try to escape around the rim of wrist.

I check my notes. Swan first saw this ~~cane~~ creation in the village of Masset in the Queen Charlotte Islands on the tenth of July, 1883. The carver, one of the best Haida artists either in wood, stone, or in gold or silver, still was at work on the cane. Swan asked ~~his~~ the artisan's price--ten dollars--and said he would be back.

A second snake, this one of wood, drives up the cane from the bottom, in three precise writhes covering most of the length, until the head poises very near to the carved struggle of snakehead and frog. After snake-eat-frog, the outlook seems to be snake-eat-snake. This crawler along the cane length has a broad scalloped design up the middle of its back, with cross-hatched scales along either side of the broader cuts. It also has tiny blue-green abalone eyes, a gentle everlasting glitter.

Snakes white and brown, contorting a stick of wood into struggle, legend, art. You very nearly reel back from this example of Haida magic with a knife.

Over lunch in a restaurant which confusedly has tried to rig ~~itself~~ its interior up ~~inside~~ as a shipdeck, I think of Swan coming upon ~~onto~~ the snake-cane six hundred miles to the north of here. Keen as he was about the art of this coast, he must have felt like a prospector whose boot has kicked ~~kicks~~ up a nugget in front of him. The carved ripples ~~scene runs~~ the other way in me, from art out into life. I see back to the instant when a jay ~~watch again the jay which~~ attacked into the garden outside my window, ~~dirt,~~ its flash of blue and black and the high excited HEEP-HEEP-HEEP cry and then the toss of the garter snake which had been

sunning on the warm dirt. In a combination of grappling and chopping, the jay finished off the snake in an instant, then undertook to pull it apart, like a man trying to stretch an inner tube he is standing on. After a few minutes of tugging, the jay dropped the corpse in disinterest, bounded across the garden and flew off.

When I went out to look at the snake, I found that it was as long as the span of my hand, nine inches; gray-green, with three lengthwise stripes of yellow down its length. In three places the jay had frayed through the body, small ruptures like those a knife makes in rubberoid wiring. Even as I went in study of the snake, not three minutes after the jay's ambush had begun, an ant clambered on like a pirate coming aboard a derelict schooner, dashed in and out of the snake's open mouth and up to a quick circle of the flat skull, then raced off in exploration of the first body-rip. How sudden it all, the same eternal suddenness of the ivory frog going down the ivory snake's gullet.

End of the Port Townsend day, the Kaleetan churning a fast white current away from the town. In the early dusk I can see from the afterdeck back to today's second reference point of Swan's embarkment toward the Queen Charlottes that early summer of 1883. The bespired red-brick courthouse, and in it the records of the ~~probate~~ municipal court which Swan himself had presided over in earlier years, and within those records this verdict from the twenty-sixth of May, 1883:

It is Ordered, adjudged and Decreed that...James G. Swan is an Habitual Drunkard as described in Section 1674 of Code of Washington Territory. And it is ~~xxx~~ hereby further ordered ~~that~~...to every Dealer in Intoxicating Liquor and to all other persons residing in the County of Jefferson...not to give or sell under any pretence any Intoxicating Liquor to said James G. Swan...

Day sixty-eight

Two dawns for the price of one this morning. I clamber from bed early for the cosmic bargain.

At first daybreak, I am atop the eastern rim of our valley, scouting the viewpoints at Carol's campus, and in minutes am shivering like a sentry who has had to walk the high ground all night. The eclipse--a total one, the rare magical blot of moon precisely across sun--will occur above the southeast horizon. Among the college's terraces of walkways, I finally find, and settle to, the most direct parapet.

The sky is an impassive gray. I like it that the veil of cloud will add second mystery to the eclipse, the kiss of sun and moon will take place beyond our range and yet somehow invisibly pull light up out of our eyes. Like owls, we will be made to go more dim-sighted as the day rises.

A hundred and seventeen winters ago, Swan stepped into a December night at Cape Flattery to spectate the reverse of this, an eclipse of the moon.

There was a large party gathered that evening at the house of a chief who was giving a feast. I had informed some of the Indians during the day that there would be an eclipse that evening, but they paid no regard to what I said, and kept on with their feasting and dancing till nearly ten o'clock, at which time the eclipse had commenced.

So far this morning, only the birds have commenced, the weet-weet-weet of sparrows blithely insistent in tree and bush. Yet the day in some way does seem stalled, slipping cogs. At 7:18, an exact hour before the eclipse and some twenty minutes after sunrise, the morning remains wan enough that the breast of a seagull atop a light pole shines out white as a pearl on mud.

A third of an hour more and Carol joins me, having sent her class out to write about the double-yolked dawn. We sip coffee out of styrofoam and wait for the day's halflight to swoop away.

Swan cherished the sorcery of foretelling--of harkening to the tiny almanac calendar in the front of his 1862 diary--while the Makahs preferred to use the logic of the moment for their divinations. ~~logic of the moment.~~ The moon they believe is composed of a jelly-like substance, such as fishes eat...They think that eclipses are occasioned by a fish like the "cultus" cod, or Toosh-kow, which attempts to eat the sun or moon, and which they strive to drive away by shouting, firing guns, and pounding with sticks upon the tops of their houses.

A few minutes before eight, a helicopter buzzes across the southeast, a blacker bug now than in its pass a half hour ago.

Swan was rubbernecking interestedly up at the vanishing moon when the fact of eclipse began to ~~terrorize~~ terrify the Makahs. Some of them coming out of the lodge at the time, observed it and set up a howl, which soon called out all the rest...They told me that the toosh-kow were eating the moon, and if we did not drive them away they would eat it all up, and we should have no more....

Minutes past eight, a breeze restlessly tosses the dim colors atop the campus flagpole. The loophole beneath the clouds to a few bottom slopes of the Cascades is losing light. Students begin to ~~xxxx~~ shoal in front of all the campus buildings. One calls across to another, "Why do you wanna watch it get dark? It does it every day."

Swan eyeing the Makahs:

As the moon became more and more obscure, they increased their clamor, and finally, when totally obscured, they were in great excitement and fear. ....There was a most infernal din, and to help it out Jones and myself got out the swivel and fired it off....

By 8:14, the sparrows nearest our parapet are scrunching as far back into the middle of a tree as they can get, and muttering an apprehensive t-t-t-t. ¶ In the next minute, a flight of them whirls high overhead, flinging themselves over the forested fringe of the campus and evidently back to their night's refuge. ¶ A minute again, and

the college's automatic lights flick on, like blue-white flares struck against the dimness. The clouds go a deeper, ~~stockier~~ more glowering gray. ¶ At 8:18 a.m., totality, it is deep~~e~~est evening.

Swan with his ~~swivel gun~~ gunfire chased the eclipse from the Makahs' moon. ~~people roared~~. The noise, which was so much louder than any they could make, seemed to appease them, and as we shortly saw the silvery edge of the moon make its appearance after its obscuration, they were convinced that the swivel had driven off the toosh-kow before they had swallowed the last mouthful.

Within three minutes, we ~~are~~ stand in a quickening dawn. The birds ~~begin~~ pick up their day again. At 8:30, on the stroke, the campus's sensor lamps ~~blink~~ douse out [redacted] around us.

Day seventy-two

Sunshine, bright as ripe grain. Just before ~~noon~~ lunch as I looked out wishing for birds, a cloud of bushtits and chickadees imploded into the backyard firs. I stepped into the yard to listen to their dee-dee-dee chorus, watch~~s~~ed them become fast flecks among the branches.

No sooner had I come inside than the lion-colored cat, pausing for a slow slitted look in the direction of the sun, lazed up the hillside into the long grass.

Three times in four minutes he ~~has~~ tried to nest himself. ~~Now~~ Then ~~sits~~ sat casually and eye~~s~~d a number of items he evidently ha~~s~~d never noticed before, such as his own tail, a bug in the grass, every nearby tree. Sneeze~~s~~d, and ~~is~~ was astonished about it. I have decided there is no worry about him marauding the birds. More likely

the birds will mistake him for a fluffy boulder, ~~and~~ perch atop and drown him in droppings.

4th ¶ Now to Swan. I find him saying that →

The next ~~village~~ site, Chathl, has proved a disappointment: a few toppled memorial columns and ~~xxx~~ bones of seals, otters and fish, showing that it was the inhabitants of the water and not of the sands that constituted their food. ~~Edinso told them~~ Except for a few seasonal hunters of fur seals, Chathl was ~~long abandoned~~, another of the western Queen Charlotte ghost ~~towns~~ villages, as if the tribes one ~~morning~~ afternoon heard the ~~xxx~~ canoeing orders from Raven and in a single fleet followed him up the rays of a red sunset. Here again, ~~towns~~, Swan was struck with the wild shale and conglomerate coastline, which in the most fantastic forms imaginable seemed more alive than the villages. They ~~canoed past a~~ party passed one final height of sandstone thrown up in the form of a natural fortification, a ~~pet~~ last-ditch stronghold where the tribal people had held off enemies.

Sunday, the ~~twelfth~~ 9th of August, Swan arose at five intending an early start, but felt a southeast ~~wind~~ xx on his face and ~~looked out~~ peered seaward to a brilliant and perfect rainbow, a double one, which indicated rain. Within half an hour the ~~rain~~ downpour had begun. ~~Swan had Edinso's crew~~

Aug 12, pocket diary

I am disappointed as there is nothing to prevent our going but the rain, and I am anxious to be moving. ~~Instead~~ anxious or not, Swan had Edinso's crew clear out the brush from an abandoned lodge, everyone moved in with the provisions to a dry corner, Edinso built a big fire and the old house assumed a cheerful appearance.

Their interior weather improved furtherm with a halibut caught by Johnny Kit Elswa and a couple of crew members. Swan dined heartily of it, and of boiled halibut paunch...a delicate kind of tripe tender

and of a crane shot by Johnny which was stuffed and roasted, and of boiled halibut paunch...a delicate kind of tripe tender and delicious.

After that repast--a very nice Sunday dinner Swan writes, as if blandly as if he were dabbing away the last traces of baked beans and pot roast--the weather cleared enough for Swan and Deans to be guided by one of the canoemen

to yet another burial cave, in a high ridge near the headland called Cape Knox. ¶ Edinso gave the cave towering billing, he declared, in the legend time a fifteen-foot-long lamprey eel had inhabited the darkness....It could go on the land like a snake and would attack men and dogs. A celebrated hunter of ancient times who had a large pack of hounds, attacked this Lamprey in a small lake before the entrance to the cave, but the creature cut them with its sharp teeth and drove them off and then dived down into the lake and was seen no more.

The abode of a demon like the Dragon which St George slew, Swan mused, and plunged in under the daggering stalactites. ¶ The cave was one more stone womb of the Haida past, beyond the recollections of the present or former generation, littered now with fragments of boxes and bones torn from their resting place by some wild animal. None of these burial deposits had escaped the marauder whoever it was.... ¶ Back at camp, Edinso as usual told them they were the first white to have seen the place, which Swan eagerly accepted as no white men have been here to whom he has shown it, and no one

could find it except by accident which it not likely...as the geological formation of the ridge presents no attraction to either gold or coal seekers.

Monday, ~~third~~ thirteenth of August, a most disagreeable day, misty rain and alternate showers. I remained in my tent most of the time, writing and drawing, but the rain prevented out of door sketching. Edinso's sprained back remained ~~xxxx~~ a bother. Yesterday he put some hot sand in a sack and...sweated the part; now ~~he~~ evidently had taken cold. This makes it disagreeable to us as well as painful to him. The ailing chief passed the day by having ~~letterbk, Aug. 13, Edinso ordering up halibut—~~ ~~Edinso had~~ several messes of boiled halibut served up till Mr Deans and I were surfeited, ~~found very nice,~~ and one of the ~~xxxxxxx~~ paddlers forged a lot of square staples to mend our canoe which had got split along the bottom.

The rain ~~quit~~ was gone by the next morning, and on the ebb tide they set out again, Swan ~~still~~ uneasy about the cracked canoe bottom, but as I know Edinso is careful I don't think he will take any chances although I expect we will get some of our things wet, and we may have to lighten the canoe by throwing some part of our cargo overboard.

That mild fret put away in the diary,

We moved and paddled along, noting everything of interest in this, to me, most interesting region.

Rounding Cape Knox, a long promontory which on the map looks ominously like an ~~overturned Haida~~ flipped on its back, canoe, Swan and crew met a headwind which forced them to land on a rocky point and scramble for a camping site. They found a place sheltered from the rain, which was quite copious, by spruce trees and high grass. With tents up and a fire going, Swan decided to lift the party's spirits.

(p. 43) ~~The weather soured~~: This is a pretty rough time, with wind and rain, so to mark the event I had a ham cut and ~~fried~~ some fried slices for supper. The ham and a good campsite, warmed Swan's sense of ~~humor~~ whimsey. This same place had been occupied as a camp last summer by Count Luboff, a Russian who was looking ~~out~~ at lands for parties in Victoria. He had put up a notice on a board, that the place was taken as a coal claim. Some of the Indians not knowing what the board meant, split it up for fire wood, which was the best use that the board could be dedicated to, as there is no coal or or any indications of coal at this place except the charred remains of Count Luboffs fire.

There was, however, a rumor of copper, and the next afternoon Swan and Deans walked about three miles by a circuitous route to see a rock formation where the Indians said they once had plucked out pure copper. Again, the volcanic action had molded ~~incredible~~ phantasmagoric shapes. One great bluff looked like a gigantic roly pudding cut in two. Others reminded me of sheets of dough in a cracker bakery with a layer of flour between the sheets to represent the calcarcous spar or quartz which is between each layer of this metamorphic rock. Then lift this mass of dough and throw it into a heap, would give a good idea of the violent and terrible turmoil when this upheaval took place. Cataclysm galore, but cataclysm The visitors saw no copper.

The rain kept on--Our situation is more romantic than pleasant--and the expedition hunkered in for another day. Swan passed it by sketching ~~Swan sketched~~ the stone doctor...a sandstone reef washed by the surf into a form that certainly does not require much imagination to make one think as the Indians do that it is a giant doctor of ancient times petrified and fossilized...

Perhaps inspired by the offshore medicine man, Swan had made a salve of spruce gum and deer tallow for Edinso's ailing back. The chief was assuaged if not cured. He ~~presented Swan~~ bestowed on Swan a pair of shark teeth ear ornaments in return.

passed the time by foraging for Swan

The crewmen ~~foraged for him~~--fossil shells, a smidgin of coal dug from among the reefs, a ~~moss-like~~ plant ~~which~~ called Tl'kunite which the Indians ate with candlefish grease but which Swan thought tastes earthly like moss.

more

no ¶ The weathered-in site atop Cape Knox began to pall on Swan.

~~(15)~~ At 2 P.M. a schooner on the offing bound south with all sails set. ~~It was~~ a pleasant sight as there is nothing between us at this camp, and Japan, nothing but a dreary stretch of wild and monotonous ocean ~~and~~ the swiftly moving vessel gave a feeling of life....I am ~~quite~~ tired of this place and long to leave it.

aug. 16

4 II

The last of

Late dusk. Beyond Lake Quinault, northward along the Pacific edge of the Olympic Peninsula, we are passing through miles of tunnel of high firs. The line of sky is so narrow between the margins of our deep road-canyon that it looks like a blue path somehow hung along the treetops. I am sagging from the day of deciphering Swan's travel, readying for our own; Carol with her better attention to the dark drives this last blackening stretch of distance.

Mapping in my mind as the road slits the forest, I realize that the coast here, off through the timber to the west of us, is the single piece of Washington shoreline never visited by Swan. He came as far north as the mouth of the Quinault River in 1854, on that jesting report from the Shoalwater Indians that a British steamship was carrying on a smuggling trade with the Quinaults, and he once canoed down from Neah Bay to the Quillayute tribe at La Push. Between, the stretch of shore where the Hoh River flows into the Pacific, Swan somehow did not attain. But the two of us in this fat pellet of metal have, on some tideline wander or another. Since I have been everywhere else on the Washington coast that Swan was, this means I have out-miled him, along this shore.

Not surpassed, never that, just out-miled. ~~I grin out past the rush~~ →

I think over the fact of having set foot anywhere along this continental rim where the wandersom Swan didn't, and of sleeping tonight beside a fine Peninsula river he somehow never saw, and it whirls to me out of the rushing dark that I am becoming something of a winter brother myself.

Day seventy-four

A night that was several nights long. Our aged tent, which has been as far as Nova Scotia and up and down the mountain west in all manner of weather, never was soggier, droopier. Rain hit the canvas all night in buckshot bursts. Seepage ~~started~~ sprung in one corner and then around the doorway flap, until by morning we were scrunched in our sleeping bag into the exact center of the tent, islanded away from the sopping edges like a pair of frogs on a lily pad.

Vehement as it was, the rain made the night's lesser threat. When the wind arrived off the ocean, the tent walloped and bellied, tried to lift us off into the fir trees somewhere. All in all, as restful as trying to sleep inside the bag of the balloon, and every hour or so ~~[illegible]~~ Carol and I muttered inconclusively about the situation. It crossed my mind, and without doubt ~~am sure~~ hers, that this might be a repeat of the big windstorm. Somehow it got decided that if this was so, the weather would first define itself by swatting the tent down onto our heads, and at that point we would face the issue of sitting up in the car the rest of the night. More velocity did not arrive, we finished the night damp but stubbornly prone, then began the drive home through coastal rain moving almost solidly through the air, as if walls of water were dissolving down over us as onto the car. ~~[illegible]~~ mugged them.

4th

Swan's own overweathered site, the rainy perch atop Cape Knox, he concluded to leave on the morning of the seventeenth of August, even if it meant abandoning the journey ~~instead of continuing~~ down the western coastline ~~shore~~. I told Edinso if he did not feel better I would return to Masset. He said if he went back it would be as bad as if he goes on and he thought my spruce salve had done his back good. On They went, ~~on, [illegible]~~

11:30 a.m...we passed Salsthlung point and passed Natzun Bay into which three small streams empty, but there are no Indian settlements ancient or modern. Saw a school of whales rolling and blowing.

2:20 p.m....we reached Kle-ta-koon point, near which there is a snug harbor inside the reef. On the shore is the summer residence of the otter hunters, a cluster of houses forming a little village called Tledso

but at present unoccupied: a narrow rift...not over twenty feet wide, formed the dangerous and only passage for canoes and boats. Bouncing through the reef-cut, they came out in a quiet little harbor as smooth as a mill pond...After appeasing our appetites, we started out prospecting. What the rocks yielded here were oozy streaks of black pitch, a species of Trachite, which Swan found mystifying, ...This fossil pitch is forced up in a manner similar to quartz veins.... I took some...and chewed it....It burns freely in the fire....a most singular formation.

This bayside site also was notable for being almost empty of Birds--a solitary raven, two or three sparrows and a few sea gulls. Swan, old combatant of crows, edgily jotted that the quiet was too good to last, as soon as a camp of Indian otter hunters comes here for a few weeks, the place will be alive with crows and other birds which seem to follow the abode of man, like nettles, sorrel and other noxious weeds.

Storm returned the next day, heavy surf, strong wind. Swan spent the time packing his alcoholic ~~specimens~~ specimens of fish and mollusks in one large tin tank in ~~a~~ a wooden box. He noticed chunks of California redwood among the tide wrack on the beach and felt gratified. ...It shows the Northerly current which sets inshore all along the coast from California to Alaska....Some writers assert that the Southerly current--the Kuro Shiwo or Japanese current, he interjected in explanation--sweeps along the entire Coast, which is incorrect, as my observations

¶ The rain that night turned tremendous--fearful, Swan wrote--and the morning promised no better.

We are now 13 days from Masset and have advanced but fifty miles and at this rate we cannot reach Skidegate in three months and all our provisions

~~letterbk, Aug. 19, insert after "all our provisions":~~

will get exhausted ~~and~~ ...

¶ The weather, the wild broth of the North Pacific, was too much. Beside the campfire at Kle-ta-koon, Swan wrote finish to the exploration of the western shore of the Queen Charlottes:

... on consulting with Mr Deans have decided to return to Massett where I can leave some of my heavy articles and proceed to Skidegate ~~by inside or eastern shore.~~

...by the east side of the island.

¶ A final ~~line~~ spurt of--anguish? disgust?--in Swan's pages.

~~pocket diary, Aug 20~~

I cant understand this weather with the Barometer so well up. Edinso announced ~~the~~ his own baleful theory. Our present ill luck is occasioned by Mr. Deans stirring up the remains of the old skaga or doctor back at 00 nine days before.