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 ~~empty~~ 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 ~~at last~~ then 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~~ the portrayed figure appear ~~startlingly priest-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 ~~at~~ around ears and ~~at~~ 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, 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~~ small square 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~~ tethered 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 of likenesses, ~~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 register. 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 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~~ 00's this pepper-spill on the coast's map which a despairing cartographer simply summed as The Flattery Rocks.

The rhythmic ~~noice~~ 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, 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~~ silverstrike

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 on~~ unearthed since our other visits here: that shells of some sixty kinds of shellfish have been found in the longhouses, testimony to the prowess of the 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 commenced a trip for Hosett and the lake said by the Indians to be back from Hosett village. As we retrace our steps inland to Lake Ozette

we will be on Swan's route, and the Makahs of the time assured him that he was the first white man ever to see Lake Ozette.

That may have been native blarney, but the known history of the Alava coast ~~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 y Quadra Bodega 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 even 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 an expedition of six men and four dogs 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 lesser trail, to camp overnight. The solitude was entire 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 <u>long</u> scarf, fanning southwestward at its far 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 these water 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 sheal 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. Growler. Quickstep.) Up from San Francisco, Nahumkeag, Aguilar de Los Andes, eagle of the Andes and homebound to Santiago. Lalla Rookh and

Nothing else more

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 at once 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 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 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.

~~ease.~~ 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 me~~ 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,

~~him~~ Solo 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 a demanding 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 has ghosted back into ~~is in~~ 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.

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. 544):~~ 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 ~~[illegible]~~ 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 nothing~~ There was no specific quibble 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 so 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~~

"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 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 ~~where~~ ruin of summit the sun will loft itself. ~~Along the path forest.~~ Yes: Rural America of the last century, ~~right enough~~ your eyes say--or Westphalia, or Devonshire.

Directly below where I ~~am perched~~ stand is ~~a~~ an aging barn with ~~a~~ its long peaked ~~eave~~ eve 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 sheerly 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

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

water stretch
~~It is~~ a hundred miles ~~by water~~ between Port Townsend and Cape Flattery, and the journey usually took 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

exactly beyond
I can see ~~across~~ to where one such matter occurred, ~~around~~ 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.

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...)

NWC 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 lambasted them as promptly 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 teeter the canoe atop breakers which skimmed it to shore, and a shaken and wiser Swan hiked the rest of the way to Port Townsend.

almost out, p. 93

Twin gulls break into my sight around the bend of the bluff. "Slim yachts of the element," Robinson Jeffers christened them, and taking him at his words these two are gentleman racers. They stay paired, the inshore bird 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 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 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 negro melody as they had to the canticles of the church.

alt + ant. 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 Vancouver 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, 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 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 ~~teaching~~ Neah Bay 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 ~~across~~ 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. ~~Wind is seeking~~ 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 ~~afar~~ 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 ~~orange~~ tan cat; it would not be lionly.) Probably the mind of cats is territory we are better off not knowing. The

page cut?

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 ~~[illegible]~~ as it glowed threw upward a small

circle of heat. By some instinct, 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...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. Last night, however, brought in a whooping storm~~s~~. 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. ~~[illegible]~~ On this eastern side, there is no longer a trace of Bruceport, the erstwhile "settlement" of Swan and Russell and the other ~~oyster~~ 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--are gathered along the coastal side with their belly buttons out to the sun and their neon trinkets glinting wildly ~~against~~ off 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 (I suppose) 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 ~~regular~~ 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, ~~who~~ 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 ~~I~~ 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 ~~Next,~~ 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 now Admiralty Inlet seem wider, out here as 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.

It regains itself as the handsome port site of its beginnings, 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 Port~~ Instead of the dodgy glimpses along its 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.

The docking of the ferry too is from maritime 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 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 great-grandparents coming ashore at Ellis Island, Montreal, Boston; a number of us are bearded and, as I am, in watchcaps and 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

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~~ up its interior ~~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