

cautioned me not to open my door to anyone without enquiring  
who was there, for the Indians say that the Quillehuytes  
have threatened to come here and attack the whites. This may  
or may not be true and may be only some scheme of these people  
to do mischief and charge it on the Quillehuytes.



Day twenty-two

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

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

The words clatter back and forth between my ears. Never part of time they were born into...walk their generations as strangers...The sort of thing I might write about Swan, restless in Boston, studious on the frontier. Instead, in the pages of the <sup>New-York Times</sup> ~~nation's largest~~ book review it has been written of me. most eminent Sky



Day twenty-four

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

The rhythmic pound of tidal surge underscores the reputation that, all the <sup>fifteen</sup> ~~00~~ miles down from Cape Flattery to here, and south from Alava for <sup>thirty</sup> ~~00~~ miles more, this coast constantly dodges and tumbles. Boulder formations and landforms sprawl random and ajut as vast weapon heads. Drift logs lodge high on the beach like colossal ax-hafts tossed on a forgotten armory shelf. Each cape and bluff seems braced, banked for the turns of winter storm that flow in from the southwest. While Swan lived at Neah Bay, itself an outpost of the back of <sup>Y</sup> ~~behind~~, 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's height from the forest floor puts my head at an elevation of seven feet or so, and I feel like a Zulu clogging along in a Dutchman's shoes.

"Just like Asbury Park," Carol offers in joke as we 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: *salal*, cedar, hemlock, *salal*, deer fern, *huckleberry*, an occasional powerful Douglas fir.

We come onto the beach at Cape Alava amid a spring noon which has somehow drifted loose into mid-January. No wind at all, rare for this restless coast, and a surprise warmth in the air that denies ~~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 unidentifiab<sup>le</sup>s. 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 <sup>swash</sup> ~~wade~~ in to join the gulls <sup>amid</sup> ~~in~~ the surf and  
make the species seagoing.

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



tell us, too, details unearthed since our other visits here: that shells of some sixty kinds of shellfish have been found in the longhouses, testimony to the prowess of the Hosetts<sup>Makahs</sup> in trading very far up and down this coast, and that belongings of a head man of a longhouse were found in <sup>one</sup> 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 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 canoe way slowly comes to sight, a thin lane long ago wrested clear of boulders by the Makahs so they would have a channel into the Pacific for their fragile wooden hulls.

This dragway is the single most audacious sight I know on this planet. Muscle-made, elemental, ancient, leading only toward ocean and the brink of horizon: it extends like a rope bridge into black space. Mountain climbers, undersea explorers, any others I can think of who might match the Makahs for daring are able to mark their calendar of adventure as they choose, select where and when they will duel nature. But this hand-wrought crevasse through the beach rocks was the Makahs' path



to livelihood, their casual alley, and out along it with their canoes of poise and their sensations cleansed by rituals slid generations of Hosett whalers, lifting away into the glittering Pacific.

The 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. 61

That may have been native blarney, but the known history of the Alava coast vouches for it. In the journals of the sea-going explorers, 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 men to fill water casks. The waiting Indians killed five, and two drowned in terror in the surf.



# The Lake Ozette corner

was to  
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 people. Carol and I once hiked in toward the southern end of Lake Ozette by a little-used trail, to camp overnight. The solitude was

total except for hummingbirds buzzing my red-and-black shirt.

Now, with a last <sup>memory</sup> look toward the beach and the Makah canoeway, to Ozette, <sup>again.</sup> 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 <sup>climbs</sup> 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 <sup>... lower</sup> 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 <sup>structure</sup> ~~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 <sup>unwrap through</sup> ~~battle~~ the brush to this <sup>latter-day</sup> 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 <sup>into the prevailing weather</sup> ~~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

*we pass*



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 eight<sup>18</sup>~~six~~, cut his foot while chopping wood and had to move to Port Angeles for the last<sup>two</sup>~~year~~<sup>5</sup>~~or two~~ of his life.

<sup>A</sup> Here in the drowsing cabin

I think of Swan and Ahlstrom, who missed each other by forty years on this mossy prairie between Alava and Ozette, and judge that if time could be rewoven to bring them together, they would be quite taken with one another. Swan promptly diaries down the facts of the life of Mr. Ahlstrom . . . arrived to America from Sweden at the age of 20 years . . . he and a neighbor have laboured to build a pony trail to the lake by laying down a quantity of small cedar puncheons. . . the rain here does not allow his fruit trees to thrive but his garden particularly potatoes <sup>grows</sup> looks finely . . . Ahlstrom, with his reputation for the way of conviviality with travelers, pours coffee for Swan, watches to see whether he will take cream, Swedish-style, or drink it black the way of

change

Here at cabin



the barbarous Norwegians. (Swan, resident of Neah Bay for a full two years before a milk cow arrived, takes cream whenever he can get it.) At slightest prompting, Ahlstrom

entertains Swan with his story of coming face to face with a cougar here on the Ozette trail. I yelled to scare him.

Instead, it brought answer: the cougar snarled and I could see plenty of room inside there for a Swede. Ahlstrom spun and walked away--It was no use to run--without looking back. The next day, Ahlstrom returned carrying a long-tom shotgun and discovered from the tracks that when he retreated, the cougar had paced along behind him for a hundred yards and then lost interest in Swedish fare.

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

And <sup>now</sup> ~~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 strewn 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. OK

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. As I well knew that the fogs at this season sometimes last several days, I concluded that I had better return. Their ~~hike~~<sup>return</sup> ~~back~~ to Alava was memorably soggy. The fog and mist had saturated the bushes so that before I was a mile on my way back I was wet through and reached Hosett as well drenched as if I had been overboard. OK



4 Well drenched, and better pleased.)

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

OK

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



In a week, Peter is stepping aboard a schooner to take the Makah accused of the murder to Port Townsend for trial.

Swan does his second quarterly <sup>the final one,</sup> report on the seal harvest, finds that the total is up to 6,268 skins.

July 16 1878

the sixteenth of July,

This has been another delightful day, the temperature  
just about right, with a refreshing breeze and everything  
looking charming. My flower garden looks very pretty Fox  
gloves, ~~which~~ white and purple, and blue Canterburybells...  
My roses are beginning to bloom and Lillies ready to expand.  
Then the sweet briar climbing roses  
...If our season is later than Up sound it is very welcome,  
for while everything here is green and fresh, at Port Townsend  
and on Whidby Island the ground is parched and flowers are done.

Swan has reason to find charm in his Neah Bay days. By regular steamship, he can go to Port Townsend once a month, tend to a few office chores there, see friends and be back at Neah within a day or so. Visits to Victoria are equally easy. His official duties are so light he can spend time on personal correspondence, and letters constantly flow off, to Baird, to Ellen, <sup>and other relatives,</sup> to any number of acquaintances out of his <sup>past</sup> two decades <sup>in</sup> the <sup>Pacific</sup> Northwest.

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Jan 1871  
etc.

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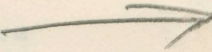


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Brief aggravation on the nineteenth of August:

Aug 19 1880

The calves have annoyed me so much by running in my  
back door whenever it is open that today I put  
up a temporary fence of poles but I doubt if it keeps  
them out. But then the year purls along again. Swan draws a  
salmon as the pattern for the new weather vane put atop the schoolhouse.





Oct. 29 1880

Sends off to tailor in Boston for "a suit of Navy Blue Beaver Cloth". Cheerfully reimburses Webster, that dogged practitioner of patronage, \$24

Sept 20 1880

Gave John Appleton to take to Mr Webster \$24.00 being the amount he paid for me as my assessment to National Republican Committee...

Has a chuckle when the chief of the Makahs reports his impression of Rutherford B. Hayes, the chief of the whites <sup>making</sup> on a visit to Puget Sound:

Oct 17 1880

David returned from Seattle & Port Townsend. Says he saw the President, but had about as ~~brief~~ lief see me... I think David expected to have seen him in ~~union~~ uniform.

Discovers that he himself has considerable tribal standing:

Oct 28, 1880

Mrs Webster told me that when President Hayes and wife called on her, they expressed their regret that I had not come up from Neah Bay as they had heard of me at Olympia. She said that President Mrs Hayes, Gen Sherman & Daughter, Gov & Mrs Ferry, Secretary Owings & others of the Presidential Party called at my office but I was not there and they then <sup>m</sup> learned that I was not in town.



Even early winter looks just dandy to Swan.

Dec 5 1880

AM, the fifth of December...

Driving NE Snow Storm 3 inches fell to 7 M. I think it  
auspicious to have winter set in at this time of year. The  
more cold weather we have now, the better the prospect there  
is for an early spring.



By the end of 1880, Swan has filled 365 sumptuous ledger pages with daily entries, done twelve elaborate tables of monthly weather, kept account of the seal harvest, written 413 letters (and received 185), and had the President of the United States knock on his door. Writ large in more ways than one, this year of Swan the Pen.



With the arrival of spring, Swan does his summary of the seal fishery for the quarter ending March 31--1,474 seals harvested by the Makah canoe crews and the schooners Lottie, Champion, Eudora, Teazer and Letitia. <sup>back to</sup> Then ~~more~~ notes of pleasure:

# Frogs in full blast tonight for the first time, this spring, the twenty-second of April. ~~Indians brought ashore several live seal pups which bleated like young lambs, the twenty-eight of May.~~

May 30, 1880.

# One of the Rhododendron plants which came from Port Townsend and was set out by me Dec 31 1878 has blossomed, and today is in full bloom. This is the first time a Rhododendron ever bloomed in this portion of Clallam County. They are found at Port Discovery but I think not farther west than Sequim Bay. I have 30 plants and think nearly every one will blossom next year.

# Neah Bay is not yet ~~so~~ so domesticated it can ~~go~~ pass a year without commotion. In late June, the body of a visiting Quillieute Indian is found in the forest, murdered and robbed. ~~Trate Quillieutes~~

When the investigation proceeds more slowly than the Quillieutes think it should, Swan has a talk with Peter. Said he

June 28, 1880--Peter accused of knowing about Qllt killing ~~peter said he was aware of what Santa Anna said but said he "you remember when I killed a man at Crescent Bay for helping to kill my brother Swell I thought I was right but Mr Webster put me in the fort at Steilacoom and kept me there a year I have learned better since then and now I am the head of the police and Washington pays me to look after the bad people."~~ <sup>proves</sup> Which is the way ~~ix~~ the case works out; in



Day seventy-five

Willi Unsoeld had<sup>S</sup> died on Mount Rainier. Yesterday afternoon at a pass known as Cadaver Gap, an avalanche broke down on him and a young woman climber as their group of twenty was descending the south face of the mountain. Within fifteen minutes the others managed to <sup>claw to</sup> dig out the buried pair, but they lay lifeless on the ~~bright~~ bier of snow, a mile into the air above the park lodge at Paradise.

Unsoeld <sup>had</sup> ~~he~~ suffered harder, at vaster heights. Sixteen years ago when he climbed with the first American party to attain Mount Everest, he and three ~~4~~ companions toiled to the summit just before dusk, then sat out the night at the 28,000-foot level: a height at which jet airplanes make contrails. Those unimaginable night hours, frostbite claimed nine of Unsoeld's toes. A fellow mountaineer recalls Unsoeld

later <sup>that much</sup> musing that the loss didn't hinder him, that now he could scale closer to the rock face of a peak.

Even the knife-cold of Everest lopping away his toes was not Unsoeld's fiercest time. During an earlier Himalayan trek he had been beguiled with the view of a peak called Nanda Devi---~~"Blessed Goddess"~~ "Blessed Goddess." in the Hindi language, <sup>When</sup> the daughter of Willi and Jolene Unsoeld



was born in 1954, her name became Nanda Devi Unsoeld. Twenty-two years later, daughter and father were together on a ten-member climb to scale the north ridge of the peak called Nanda Devi. At Camp Four, two thousand feet beneath the summit, Nanda Devi Unsoeld was stricken with stomach pains--evidently peritonitis or a perforated colon, Willi said afterward--and there on that high snow, she died. <sup>i</sup>Willi Unsoeld ~~they~~ made the decision to consign his daughter's body to her namesake mountain.

The passing of this man, the professor of philosophy who sacrificed flesh from his body and endured the death of a daughter on one of the severest reaches of the planet, spins me today from Swan's damp camp in the Charlottes, from the Peninsula forest, from all but a sense that something <sup>valuable</sup> is freshly absent. <sup>did not know</sup> I ~~never met~~ Unsoeld, for the fact <sup>is</sup> ~~was~~ that as many times as I readied to seek him out, try to entread his life into my tape recorder and typewriter, the same number I backed away. Even, a few years ago, when I did a series of interviews for a regional magazine about Northwesterners who live~~d~~ and work~~ed~~ closest to their landscape: month upon month, I would head the list with Unsoeld's name, and go put the recorder's microphone to some tamer mouth.



I suppose his bravery scared me a bit. If Willi Unsoeld could <sup>be drawn</sup> ~~go~~  
up the world's white heights as though he had special gills which  
demanded thin summit air, how can ~~I am~~ I be content to be a  
citizen of valley and coastline and mild mountain trail? Yet he  
did, I am. So because

our levels of <sup>western</sup> ~~existence~~ <sup>were</sup> ~~are~~ barely within sight of one another--

~~more than figure of speech:~~

~~literally~~ my snow-winter having consisted of squidding around on

snowshoes at Paradise while Unsoeld's was to lead a party of twenty

young mountaineers for two weeks ~~above~~ on the glaciated mountain--

~~I was~~ ~~held~~ with doubt that we could talk across them. I think

now, in this last lateness, that I was <sup>gravely</sup> ~~wrong~~ not to try. (As I

had with others who went through

life at precipices beyond my reach. The Forest Service man who was

the first <sup>the Northwest</sup> ~~in this region~~ to parachute to a mountain fire, become a

smoke jumper, he had watched the professional parachutists try out

the equipment, he told me, and ~~when the time came,~~ <sup>although he had never been</sup> in an

airplane he then went up over the Methow Valley and stepped off into

three thousand feet of air. "It was a real opportunity, as far as

I could tell, to get in on something new," he <sup>concluded</sup> ~~said~~, and I somehow

heard the entire life behind those flat words.) ~~Not just for myself~~ →



heard entire the life of natural dare behind those flat words.) ~~Not~~

~~simply wrong for myself as man and writer, but as a dweller of the~~

~~West.~~ # I think now that Unsoeld may have been <sup>what</sup> something like the

history-bearer, <sup>whom</sup> Bernard DeVoto once wrote of, <sup>frontiersman</sup> James Clyman. Clyman,

that <sup>uncanny</sup> ~~remarkable~~ accompanist to America's westward mood: born on George

Washington's land in Virginia in 1792, westering with the fur trappers

and explorers, battling Indians in the Black Hawk war in the same

company as Abraham Lincoln, traveling the Oregon Trail in the 1844

emigration, rambling in California when gold was struck in 1848--

ultimately <sup>settling</sup> ~~settled~~ to <sup>a</sup> ~~ranching~~ in the Napa Valley and <sup>living on</sup> ~~lived~~ until

December 27, 1881, in the presidency of Chester A. Arthur. In

~~some~~ the way Calyton was, Unsoeld too may have been a template,

an outlining human gauge: but of western possibilities rather than

western past. He literally was a being of <sup>our</sup> ~~the earth's~~ highest brinks,

and risk and endurance at the level he practiced them <sup>became</sup> ~~were~~ technical

skills. My questions would have tried to go to <sup>reach toward those</sup> ~~their~~ invisible <sup>inward</sup> lines,

those riggings of will power hung deeper in <sup>Unsoeld</sup> ~~him~~ than anyone else I

know of. Difficult to phrase, not say answer, but: is there a day-by-

day constancy learned of the forbearance you summon into yourself when



the cold fire of frostbite comes <sup>at</sup> into your body? When a daughter

is named for a lovely mountain and then killed on its armor of ice?

Questions which <sup>perhaps</sup> can never be fully met with words, and so keep us

straining to hear beyond <sup>such</sup> the tongue, *into the deeps of a Willi Unsoeld.*

4#

Night. I have been into the diary notes to see how Swan reacted to news of a specific death. The entry is there before he left on the Queen Charlottes journey, in that spring of 1883 when he was cited for habitual drunkenness, and it is like no other in his pages:

May 1, '83

Telegram from Mrs Webster San Francisco to Mr Biondi states that Mr H.A. Webster died yesterday morning April 30th.

Swan drew triple lines around <sup>this</sup> the entry, and crosshatched them <sup>darkly</sup> at the corners and center. The result looks eerily like <sup>the</sup> a sketch of a coffin.



~~Day~~ <sup>one</sup> ~~Day sixty-three~~

Nov 16, 1978

, the sixteenth of November of 1878,

4 Capt John came to my house this afternoon and told me the following queer yarn. He says that at the time Ah a yah's son died at Hosett, Peter, whose sister is mother of the boy, and Ah a yah were putting the body in a box for burial. They had that portion of the lodge screened with mats and fastened the door so that no one but themselves should be present. A woman however who was in the lodge unobserved made a hole in the mat screen and looked through. She first heard the dull sound of something chopping, and saw Peter and Ah a yah cut off both the boys arms below the elbows and then put the body in the box and bury it.

Some time the past summer the Indians found near a small brook which runs near Ah a Yahs house two human fore arms & hands or <sup>rather</sup> ~~rather~~ the bones, one end of which rested in a tin plate and the hands rested on a stick held by two forked sticks, so they could be roasted before a fire, the remnants of which were plainly seen. The marrow which had melted into the plate had mostly been removed but some remained which was hard and white. 4 These were lethal doings, Captain John solemnly ~~told~~ <sup>explained to</sup> Swan. With the substance in the plate Peter had cast a spell--bad medicine--which took the life of a boy of the tribe.



✓  
# I listened very attentively to the recital of this fabulous tale just to find out to what lengths Johns superstitions will lead him but the idea of Peter roasting the arms of his own nephew to extract grease to work bad medicine to kill his enemies, is to<sup>e</sup> monstrous and absurd for me to believe without better proof than Capt John <sup>...</sup> or Santa Anna, who is an arrant knave and a liar.

4# ———  
Captain John's busy tongue: the mysteries of Peter: Swan's  
recording pen. <sup>Unmistakably</sup> ~~Recognizably~~, life at Neah Bay. # <sup>came</sup> Swan had come back

<sup>Cape Flattery</sup> to Neah Bay in mid-August of 1878, <sup>once more</sup> ~~again~~ kited on the wind of Henry

Webster's political fortunes. ~~Webster~~ Newly appointed as collector of customs for Puget Sound, Webster named Swan his inspector at

Neah Bay. ~~It was~~ <sup>a job at last</sup>

The job ~~fit~~ <sup>fit</sup> Swan was exactly Swan's size and fit. ~~A few schooners~~ →



The first several months of each year, a small fleet of schooners in the fur seal trade now worked out of Neah Bay. Swan was to make sure their sealskins were the harvest of Makah <sup>canoe</sup> crews launched from the vessels, rather than any catch from the natives of alien British Columbia across the Strait. Another trader at Neah dealt in the oil of the small sharks called dogfish, a useful lubricant for sawmill machinery. Swan similarly was to see that the dogfish oil remained <sup>or had the proper import fee paid.</sup> all-American. As to the Makahs themselves, original merchants of Cape Flattery, they were to be regularly cautioned against trading dutiable goods with the British Columbia tribes. <sup>few</sup> And those tax-sentry tasks were the sum of Swan's new job: otherwise, he was free to read, write and, <sup>finally</sup> ~~meanwhile~~ <sup>one single</sup> at last, collect a salary he could live on.

4#

His new prosperity wasn't fancy--as assistant customs collector, he received about a hundred dollars a month--but it was steadier than his life had been in Port Townsend the past few years. The diaries of 1876-77 show a number of gaps, the dangerous silences when Swan is either ill or in whiskey; one void of ~~about~~ a month follows the note that he has <sup>been</sup> ~~enjoyed~~ <sup>ing</sup> Scotch whiskey punch with some <sup>chums</sup> ~~friends~~. But he begins to regain himself when ~~there~~ Neah Bay becomes a prospect again, in mid-September of 1877. Webster long since had lost his position as agent of the Makah Reservation, but his successor, named Huntington, was about to skid from Cape Flattery, too. Indian Bureau officials suspicious of the Reservation bookkeeping stopped by at Port Townsend to ask Swan what he knew, then invited him to cruise out with them to Neah Bay. Swan went gleefully:



~~Swan had a savory moment of revenge. Indian Bureau officials~~  
~~the Makah Reservation~~  
~~suspicious of the bookkeeping at Neah Bay stopped by to talk to~~

~~Swan, then invited him to cruise with them to Neah Bay.~~

~~(S 18, 1877)~~

When we landed at Neah there was a canoe just putting off which had fresh beef in it. Col Watkins asked Mr Huntington if it was Government beef--He said it was and he was sending it to Clallam bay to the US Brig Fauntleroy. All right said the Col, but when he examined the Agency books he found no account either of this beef or of 4 bullocks which had been put on the US Steamer Lackawanna.

Huntington said he had taken hard bread in pay for the beef which he had turned over to the poor school children....

Klonas!!

(s 19)

Col Watkins said he never had a more unpleasant duty to perform than in unearthing Huntington's frauds. He is a regular old knave and does his nefarious acts under the cloak of religion. Col W suspended the old hypocrite and we left for Port Townsend.



Huntington's successor was a former Puget Sound steamboat captain names Charles Willoughby, and when Swan arrived to Neah Bay in late summer of 1878, Willoughby promptly dealt Swan into the doings

of the agency by calling on him to interpret to the Makahs. Swan *in turn* thought well of the Willoughby style of administration, as when ~~he~~ <sup>was set up</sup> set up an election process to choose tribal leaders:

(Jan. 23, 1879)

*no 4* ~~are~~ One feature in the election was that several women be voted by permission of the Agent, thus establishing a precedent in this tribe of ~~women~~ <sup>womans</sup> suffrage which is right, as the women of the tribe always have a voice in the councils. This is the first election ever held by the Indians here, and will be followed by similar elections in Waatch Tsooess & Hosett.

*Swan's pen*  
# Another amendment to Makah life, however, ~~Swan~~ liked not at all.

May 29, 1881

While at the Lighthouse yesterday, Capt Sampson informed me that whales have been quite plenty around the vicinity of the Cape this Spring but the Indians have not been after them as they devote themselves exclusively to Sealing. I think the business as now conducted is a positive detriment to these Indians. They neglect all other avocations during the sealing season, from January to June, and the money they receive for the skins they secure is either gambled away or if spent for flour, bread, sugar &c, is distributed in potlatches to their friends.



In other ways besides the lapse from whale-hunting, the Makahs no longer were ~~now~~ as dramatic and turbulent as in the past. Instead, after twenty years of persistent Reservation administration, they had become not quite citizens of either their ancestral world or the new white world,

<sup>though the Cape Flattery</sup> but of some shifting ground between; as ~~if the~~ "earthshakes" Swan <sup>used to</sup> ~~in his schoolhouse tower were reading,~~ recorded ~~sent~~ tremors up through the tribal society as well. On the one hand, the customary ceremonies of the tribe lived roarily on:

Jan. 6 1881

4 The Indians had a great time last evening. They visited the various lodges and performed some savage scenes one of which was eating raw dog. A lot of boys imitated raccoons and climbed on Davids house and entered through the roof throwing everything down from the shelves and making a deal of mischief.

Other boys imitated hornets and had needles fastened to sticks with which they pricked every one they met. Today they had the thunder bird performance and a potlatch. These Makahs are as wild and savage in their Dukwalli performances as when I first knew them twenty years ago.

4 But another day, Swan is startled when the schoolgirls, <sup>holding</sup> playing in a corner of his office, pretend they are <sup>holding</sup> having a tea party and <sup>primly</sup> begin by reciting grace.



to the Makahs, perhaps a lunch -

There is a moment in the diary when the tilt to the future can almost be seen to be happening. Swan is called to the school to interpret as the Makah women bring in their children who are to begin classes. The schoolroom baffles the little newcomers.

youngsters. They were as wild as young foxes and some were quite

alarmed and struggled and bellowed. The school girls were standing

outside to receive them and they looked so nice and neat, that it

reminded me of what I have read about tame animals being taught

to tame and subject wild ones.

4# ——— <sup>in these years</sup>  
# And One mark further of change ~~in~~ in the tribe, Neah Bay ~~now~~ has a  
chief of police, and he is Peter.

4# ———



In other areas besides Peter's psyche Neah Bay shows <sup>ed</sup> itself as greatly

~~from place~~ than in the early 1860's.

Regularly each week, a steamship chugged in; no more three-day canoe trips to Port Townsend. Another vessel was on station in the bay with pilots to go aboard ships entering the Strait. There was even an official-but-underfunded lifeboat station. (When Swan and the Makahs watched <sup>a few annual</sup> practice rounds being fired from the station's mortar,

Old Doctor told me he thought the mortar would be a fine thing to kill whales with.)

May 27,  
1879

Willoughby's

The Reservation staff of whites was much expanded from Webster's original shaggy little crew of bachelors; wives and children, even a woman schoolteacher, were on hand now. This new Neah Bay is capable of social whirl which reads almost giddy in the pages where Swan used to record the pasttime of warring on skunks: (quote Ap 1, 1880)

April 1, 1880

4 Mrs Brash and Mr Gallich<sup>K</sup> came up today and dined. After dinner Mrs Willoughby, Miss Park, Wesley Smith and I sang, or tried to sing the Pinafore but with poor success as I had a bad cold and a head ache and the others were not feeling well and to crown all our discomfort the organ was badly out of tune, but we blundered through it some how and our audience said we did well, but I did not think so.



July 25 1881

4# Mr Fisher, Charley Willoughby and Mr Plympton came in this evening and I read from Scribners magazine the "Uncle Remus" stories which amused them very much particularly Mr Fisher who pronounced them "Doggoned good yarns."

4# If Neah Bay was changing, so ~~was~~ was Swan, at least the diarying part of him, and <sup>tremendously</sup> very much for the better. After years of crabbed pocket diaries, these thirty-six months at Neah--August of 1878 to August of 1881--are exquisitely, almost artistically, penned. Swan returned to the grand 1866 ledger, which he had been using only to copy letters of almighty importance, such as <sup>his</sup> ~~the~~ blandishments to the Northern Pacific, and resumed the day-by-day superior script he had practiced in the last years of his previous Neah Bay life. When he reached the bottom of the <sup>ledger's</sup> final ~~ledger~~ page on the last of June, 1879, he procured an identical leather-covered <sup>volume</sup> ~~book~~ and invented even more elaborate diarymanship, annotating events in the margins and summarizing each month with a stupendous double-page weather chart which recorded Cape Flattery's every nudge of temperature and drift of breeze.

In more than penmanship, these are high years for Swan. He is puttering usefully, staying sober and enjoying health. His days seem not only better kept, but glossed.



4#  
The fourteenth of July, 1881:

4#  
Last night was very calm and at 11 PM there was but little surf on the beach and the air being perfectly still the least sound could be noticed.... Everything was quiet on shore and as the <sup>swell</sup> ~~well~~ of the ocean gently fell on the sands and receded it sounded like harmonious music. I laid awake an hour listening to it. The air seemed at times filled with ~~distant~~ music like the steady notes of some great organ.

4#  
(Oct. 17 '78)

4#  
Indians out again tonight after ducks. Their torches make the bay look as if a number of vessels were lying at anchor.

4#  
July 15 1881

4#  
Capt Dalgardno, Pilot Stevens and Mr Fisher made me a visit this evening and we had a pleasant time telling stories in which Fisher as usual carried off the palm. He told about firing a 4th of July salute in a mining camp in California with a quicksilver can, which at the last discharge kicked through a pine stump then flew into a miners cabin knocked the top off a loaf of bread and finally jumped into a bunk among the blankets.



Fisher, the Reservation farmer, is a particular boon to Swan,  
the kind of rumbustious <sup>frontier</sup> character he has ~~likewise~~ savored ever since  
~~the days of~~ ~~first coming among~~ the oyster boyos at Shoalwater Bay.

May 15, 1881

Fisher shot two very fat wild geese a short time since  
and eat them both at one meal and drank up about a pint  
of Goose oil. It rather loosened him up for a couple of days....

July 13, 1881

Mr. Fisher sent an order to the "Toledo Blade" for a  
book on horse diseases and received by mail yesterday a  
copy of Pictorial Bible Biography with a postal card  
that they had sold out all the horse books and sent this  
pictorial Biography as a substitute.

But Fisher is a now-and-then performer, showing up <sup>when</sup> Swan's  
assiduous pen ~~will~~ take <sup>5</sup> time ~~out~~ off to chuckle. The most frequent  
figure in the diary of this second Neah Bay stint is <sup>his</sup> ~~Swan's~~ most  
affectionately-written ever:



June 10-11, 1881

4 Little Janji and Joe Willoughby amused themselves this forenoon in my woodshed splitting sticks for kindling. while so engaged they hear a noise and ran in and slammed the door too. Joe said "Something out there will bite us. — What is it, a squirrel or a rat? I asked No said Janji "big bee bumbel bee." I went out and saw nothing and told the boys there was no bee there. "yes said Janji, hear him sing." Just then the fog whistle blew at Tatoosh Island and the distance made the sound hum like a bee. I explained to the little fellows what it was but they didnt believe me and Joe ran home. Ginger said "Josie fraid, I not fraid I big boy I not fraid Bumbel bee." He then went out and caught a bee in a fox glove blossom which he killed by stepping on it and then showed it to me in triumph....

no 4 Janji caught a humble bee in a fox glove bloom and was much elated. I told him he is the chief of the bumble bees, and he is very proud. He still thinks the fog singal is an immense bee in my woodshed which he intends to kill with a hatchet....



mod # He reminds me of my own boyish days....is constantly in motion never at rest from the time he gets up till he goes to bed and is as healthy a little boy as there is....Janji is very polite and will open the and some other Pachina Indians. Jimmy's relatives were at Capt John's house, they were telling little Ginger how kind I am to him, when to the surprise of every one the little child said-

mod # "I love Mr Swan and when I am a big man I will marry a Boston klooohman and have a big house and Mr Swan shall come and live with me and I will take care of him when he is old...."

# Janji is very polite and will open the gate for me to pass through. The only instance of an Indian's politeness that I ever knew. If he lives, he will be a superior man and may be of great service to his tribe.

Jangi Claplanhoo--"Ginger"--was the son of Jimmy, Swan's first student nearly twenty years before. Swan, refugee from Boston family responsibilities for nearly half of his life, <sup>now</sup> ~~now~~ becomes a kind of honorary <sup>frontier</sup> grandfather. The diary is open about it: Ginger, he writes, is a dear little fellow and I love him very much.... Or, more open still, that fretful little earlier phrase about the boy: if he lives. Swan had written that of another Makah once, when he met Swell.

Jul 12, '80  
May 14, '81

4#



One other significant newness <sup>in the pages</sup> of this second Neah Bay life of Swan's. The Indians of the past--elip tillicums, the first people, the woman Suis had called them at Shoalwater all those years before--are having their effect on Swan's night hours. ~~Incident~~ The incident of Swan's-dream-of-the-dead-and-subsequent-gift-of-clams occurs, and another as well. The twenty-seventh of February, 1879:

(F 27, 1979)

4 I had a dream last fall that...Boston Tom came to me and requested me to move his wife's remains so that the salt water should not wash them away but I did not know till today where she was buried. A few more storms will wish the grave away. Dashio promised to have the remains removed as soon as the weather gets settled...

Swan seems not to know what to make of all this. And I certainly don't.



Day seventy

Recited in turn by each of Swan's three sets of pages during their early weeks in the Queen Charlottes, a legend, a belief, and a lore:

4# ————— Towats was a great <sup>Haida</sup> hunter, and once while hunting he found the house of the king of the bears. The king bear was not there but his wife was, and Towats made love to her. Arriving home to a much disordered house, the king bear charged his wife with unfaithfulness. She denied all. But the king bear noticed that at a certain hour each day she went out to fetch wood and water and was gone long. One day he tied a thread <sup>d</sup> to her dress. By following the thread through the forest, he came upon his wife in the arms of Towats. The king of the bears slew the hunter <sup>Towats</sup> by tearing out his heart.

4# ————— Called on Kive-ges-lines this PM to see her twins which were born on the 10th. They were pretty babies but the Indians are sure to kill one.  
Next day: One of the twins died during the night as I predicted. The Indian who told me said..."It died from want of breath" which I think very probable.  
These Haidas like the Makahs have a superstition that twins bring ill luck...

4# ————— Old Stingess...came to my house and...I asked her to tell me about tattooing and when the Haidahs first commenced tattooing. She said it was always practiced...as long ago as the most ancient legends make any mention. Formerly the Indians procured the wool of the mountain sheep which was spun into fine threads which were stained with some black pigment either pulverized charcoal and water, or with lignite ground in water on a stone, as at present, then with needles made of copper procured from the Sitka Indians, these fine threads were drawn under the skin producing indelible marks. When white men came they learned the art of tattooing with steel needles from sailors



on board the vessels, and have adopted that plan since...here the old woman  
became tired and went home.

4 # How elliptical--literally--the past becomes. Stingess culls from what may have been an evening-long legend an answer for Swan. He chooses as much of it as he thinks worth cramming into his diary pages. At a hundred years' remove, I select lines from his and frame them in trios of editing dots. The logical end of the process begun by my ellipses, I suppose, might be for the <sup>lore</sup> ~~lore~~ of Haida tattooing to <sup>compress</sup> ~~come~~ down to something like a single magical speck, perhaps the period after the news that Stingess has got tired of all the chitchat, and gone home. But I've heard it offered that a period is simply the shorthand for the dots of an ellipsis. That a story never does end, only can pause. So that would not complete it either, the <sup>elliptical</sup> ~~transit~~ from Stingess to Swan to me to whomever abbreviates the past next.



Day five

Christmas.

Carol steps from the airport ramp at 6:03 p.m., five lofted hours from New Jersey. Swan in his lifetime managed to go from one coast of America to the other, and back, a half dozen times. In the fourteen years of our marriage, Carol and I have crisscrossed the continent on family visits or business so many times we have lost count.

The ~~awful~~ retributive pun I have been saving for days--"Hey, I've heard of you. The Christmas Carol, right?"--draws her groan and grin. We hold each other, amid the community of hugs of families re-uniting. The New Jersey report is good; her parents are in health, and chipper.

Our car enters the freeway aqueduct of headlights streaming north to the city. We are to stop for Christmas dinner at the home of friends. On the table, we can predict, will be sauerkraut from her Baltimore, pecan pie from his Texas. Christmas Day of 1861 on the Strait, I read in the pages this morning, Swan set to work at this business of holiday dinner with similar seriousness. Duck stew and roast goose he produced for his guests, a pair of other batching pioneers, then brought out his gamble of the day. That autumn when a Makah canoeman had presented him a chunk of whale meat, Swan thoughtfully boiled it and chopped it, plopped in apples, raisins, wild cranberries, currants, brown sugar, salt, cloves, nutmeg, allspice, cinnamon and a quart of rum, then crocked the works in a stone jar. These months later, he cautiously offers to his guests



slivers of the baked result. Lifts a forkful himself, chews appraisingly for a moment. The eyes of the holiday trio light in elation, and they hurry on to further helpings of the whale-mince pie.



Day twenty

stood the neck hair on Swan  
Cape Flattery must have sent the hair creeping on the back of  
Swan's neck a few times, too. This morning I find that in one of the  
several articles he wrote about the Makahs, he listed in firm school-  
teacherly style the superstitions of the tribe, then let burst from  
him this uncommonly uneasy language:

The grandeur of the scenery about Cape Flattery, and the strange  
contortions and fantastic shapes into which its cliffs have been thrown  
by some former convulsion of nature, or worn and abraded by the cease-  
less surge of the waves; the wild and varied sounds which fill the air,  
from the dash of water into the caverns and fissures of the rocks,  
mingled with the living cries of innumerable fowl. . . all combined,  
present an accumulation of sights and sounds sufficient to fill a less  
superstitious beholder than the Indian with mysterious awe.

4# —————  
Yesterday's weather faded and faded, had gone into gray by sun-  
down. This morning is delivering sleet, blanking the coastline of the  
Strait down to a few hundred yards of mingled sky and water and rock. A  
worker from a construction crew stepped from the room next to mine and  
looked into the icy mush. He shook his head and announced: "I need  
this like I need another armpit."

4# —————  
The feel of Cape Flattery as an everlasting precipice of existence  
is strong as I repeat routes of Swan's here. When he established himself  
in the schoolhouse at Neah Bay in 1863, ready to reason the peninsular  
natives into the white culture's version of education, he became in  
that moment the westernmost frontiersman in the continental United States.



(Jones, the Reservation farmer at the moment, moved briefly into the schoolhouse with Swan while his own quarters were being built, but it was Swan who nestled for good into the room atop the school's square tower.) Away from the shared daws'-nest household at Webster's and out here on his pinnacle of the coast, he becomes now the Republic of Swan, newly independent. Population: one; Caucasion and male. Resources: ink, books, and an occasional newspaper off a passing ship. Languages: Bostonian, Chinook, Makah. Politics: Lincoln Republican, solder-the-Union-back-together-with-bayonet-steel. Industry: light, allotted mainly to educational manufacture. Foodstuffs: a variety ranging from halibut-head chowder to something termed beef hash a la Makah. Flag: a river of words against a backdrop of black fir forest.

4# Delightfully situated as he now was, with windows facing the north, west, and east, and a glass door opening south, in a matter of months after the move to his schoolhouse aerie came news from the east <sup>across the continent</sup> which reminded Swan how far he had flung himself. On the tenth of February, 1864: <sup>9</sup> . . . letter from my brother Benj L Swan stating that on Sunday Nov 29 my mother died aged 84 years 7 mos & 27 days and that on Wednesday Dec 2d my dear wife Matilda W Swan died of consumption.

4# The double deaths staggered Swan for days. As I read the lines, the same scimitar of bay before me as Swan stared to during the writing of them, his distress and realization thud and thud like a slow surf. <sup>9</sup> # nearly paralyzed with grief <sup>9</sup> had fondly thought that I might once again go home and be joined with my dear wife and children, but it was ordered otherwise <sup>9</sup> aching, breaking heart <sup>9</sup> but 'little sleep last night went to bed at two and got up at six <sup>9</sup> Severe pain in my teeth today. Sick in body and mind.

11. *do this section just as I've marked, no other punctuation.*



change to  
Day twenty-<sup>nine</sup>~~eight~~

Seventy-nine pages later in the diary, this:

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

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

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

Possibly. Possibly something more than that nervous rattle of  
reasons. The next day after noticing the grave's <sup>had been disturbed,</sup>~~disturbance,~~  
Swan planted daisies on Katy's mound of earth.



Day twelve

The new year.

On Sunday, January 1, 1860, his first New Year's Day on the coast of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, Swan opened a new tan pocket diary and inscribed on its first page:

May it be not only the commencement of the week, the month and the year, but the commencement of a new Era in my life, and may good resolve result in good action.



Day thirty-three

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

4#  
Time along the Nisqually River today, first at its freshly white bank and then atop its dike of small boulders which rises about half again my height. Even at winter pace, the Nisqually rattled ~~slur~~ <sup>bumpily</sup> past faster than I could sprint. The sliding water measures about sixty feet across at this time of year, but in summer flood ~~rock~~ last year its width bellied out to some hundreds of yards, which is the theory behind the dike. Howard described to me how the floodwater bashed open <sup>its predecessor</sup> ~~the~~ wall of boulders ~~knusknus~~ and gathered into its flow nine vacation homes. I saw the one remaining house <sup>of</sup> ~~in~~ what had been the rank of ten, brinked above the ~~unbush~~ gravel-bottom scour where the river scooped in and looking still intimidated from the thinness of its escape. I remembered that Carol and I once 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," some California official or another complained to a newspaper reporter, and so the waters of the lode country all looked, so the Nisqually must have <sup>loomed</sup> ~~seemed~~ when it decided to do something



about habitations crowding its banks. I was careful to tell  
the river, in my mind where its rapid keen burble kept asking,  
that I am only visiting.

But a corner of another sort was where Tom loomed in his  
private furies, and if steadfastness held her into the marriage  
and the ranch life, it did not overcome the pains of them.  
Gone to town for groceries, Tom might not return for days.  
When he did come back from such excursions, he arrived rasping at  
the way Bessie had done the ranch chores or was raising the  
children. Gosh sakes, times you wouldn't know he was a man  
you'd ever met. Ornerly old thing him, anyhow. She began  
to fight back at him with silence, and she could be as grimly  
silent as oblivion.

Then the rancher who owned Moss Agate died, and passed  
from the valley with a storied funeral where the track of  
whiskey coiled through the flower smells, and the drunken  
palimpsests nearly dropped the coffin at the graveside.  
Whiskey had poisoned Bessie's life at Moss Agate, and now



Day thirty-four

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

But halfway above Paradise I wallow onto rodent prints stitching a path in and out of the stands of firs. Fate has written in the snow.

There is no choice but to become a tracker. Along tilts of slope, over drifts, up, down, across. After several minutes, I glance back from the tiny pawprints to my wake in the snow. It is what a whale might churn up in hot pursuit of a minnow.

Shameless, I plow on, occasionally deserting the tracks for the pleasure of creating my own didoes in the white. ~~(Second joke~~ →



mod

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

The jays sort <sup>ie</sup> off to elsewhere and time drifts out of mind after them, replaced by attention to the weather atop Rainier, lowering, rising, brightening, darkening. As though the mountain, when it ceased being a volcano of fire, became a cauldron for weather. Like all else in this region of the Cascades, this casual slope I am on--still not far above Paradise and its visitor center and lodge--points quickly up toward Rainier, as if in astonishment

McGivra typified some of the growing opposition to the  
Albair for reasons rooted in his own personality.  
The sovereign people have created these great  
artificial persons, called Corporations; as they  
supposed for the public good. Is the creature  
greater than the Creator, and are these creatures  
corporations to blind, starve and enslave, their  
Creator, the sovereign American people? You will  
find that these creators can control and it neces-  
sary destroy, but this control or destruction will  
not be by an unlawful and unorganized mob, but it  
will be by the intelligent and patriotic sovereignty  
of these United States, through their lawfully  
constituted agents, and we bid the agent who  
refuses to obey their high behests . . .



at how it looms. I was surprised, far back along the highway when I was arriving to the cabin, how the lift of the mountain made itself felt even there, the road suddenly jerking into rising curves.

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

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



Day thirty-<sup>five</sup>~~three~~

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

What is it about a cabin within a forest or beside a shore that sings independence from the common world of dwellings? <sup>?</sup> Something more than hinterland site or openly-outlined strokes of beams and rafters; some natural stubbornness against ever being thought an ordinary house shouts through as well. Cabination or anti-domicility or some such rebellious shimmer of the atoms of the wall-wood; a true surmiser of cabins would have the term. I simply know that cabin-y distinctness says itself, and I step across a cabin threshold as if going into some chamber of a far year. <sup>The</sup> ~~This~~ <sup>of this cabin,</sup> broad central room I move through

~~now~~, for instance, trades adamantly back and forth between the family who spend summers and weekends here and the abiding forest outside.

A wallbeam aligns the antique china plates which sit on it as if they were bright droplets on a branch; beneath runs a long bank of mullioned window, the small panes fondling separate bits of the



forest as if they were scenes on porcelain. On another wall is the

cabin item that interests me most, a crosscut saw. Blazon of sharpened

steel, the crosscut is a remarkably elegant tool to have inspired

its epithets: "misery harp" the least profane description Northwest

loggers had for it as, sawyer at either end, they ground the blade

back and forth through a Douglas fir or red cedar. Having caught <sup>from Swan</sup> the

winter virus of measure-and-count, <sup>we</sup> ~~I~~ <sup>ed</sup> learn by yardstick that this

slicer of forests is six and a half feet long, by careful finger that

it has sixty-eight beveled sharpnesses interspersed with sixteen

wider-set prongs which make space for the sawdust to spill away.

A giant's steel grin of 84 teeth, and as innocent and ready in this

cabin amid these woods as a broadsword on a Highlands castle wall.



Sawed wood--firewood--decides my site when I am <sup>here</sup> inside the cabin.  
I settle at the kitchen table, close by the cookstove which must  
be fed each hour or so.

~~table, close by the cookstove which must <sup>also</sup> be fed each hour or so.~~

(Howard has told me he will harvest his own firewood ~~next~~ when summer  
comes, from the stand of alder woven <sup>within</sup> through the mullioned window.

A neighbor who owns a team of workhorses will skid the downed trees  
in for sawing. I wish the harnessed horses were ~~out~~ there now,  
the leather sounds of their working heft coming down  
~~the stolid brawn against the mountainside.~~ Instead, if anything is

out there, it will be wither Solo on a reconnaissance to see whether

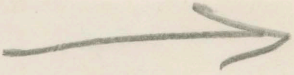
I have mended my anti-dog ways, or the <sup>slowly</sup> gliding deer.) ~~Trudy's geranium~~ →



Today, Out of the mound of mail which has been building on my desk since Swan's diaries moved into my days, I finally have winnowed ~~out~~ the letter from Mark, in his faculty office

in Illinois--we may be the last two American friends who write regularly and <sup>such</sup> at length to one another--and the quote ~~folded with~~ ~~it~~ which he found during his research

~~mid-nineteenth-century frontier~~  
on missionaries. The Reverend Summers, reporting from Benton County, Iowa, in July of 1852: "A young man recently left for California, who for two years has been very anxious to go, but during his minority had been restrained by the influence and authority of his parents. They offered, for the sake of diverting him from his purpose, to furnish him the means to travel and visit the Eastern cities. He derided the idea. He would not turn his hand over to see all that could be seen in the East, but he must go to the Utopia of the New World; and he has gone."





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

The westernness in my family, then, has been extreme as we could manage to make it. We lived our first seventy years as Americans on slopes of the Rockies as naturally, single-mindedly, as kulaks on the Russian steppes. (Nights when I have been at my

desk reading Swan's pages, I have noticed that my square-bearded face reflected in the desk-end window could be a photographic plate of any

those  
of ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> museful old Scotsmen who transplanted our family name to the  
western mountains of America. If we have the face we deserve at

forty--<sup>or</sup>thirty-nine and some months, <sup>as</sup>I am now--evidently I <sup>am earning</sup>have ~~earned~~  
my way backwards to my homesteading grandfather.) My own <sup>not very many</sup>years

eastward--which is to say, in the middle of the Midwest--amounted

to a kind of instructive geographic error. (Instructive, literally:

Montana as evaluated at Northwestern University in Evanston, 1957:

"youse guys," confides my new college friend from The Bronx, "youse



no 4

The journalism jobs in the

flat-horizoned midland turned <sup>my ambition</sup> in on itself, impelled me to work the salaried tasks for more than they were worth and to sluice the accumulating overflow of ideas into pages of my own choice. Also, ~~the~~ happiest result of my misguess of geography, I met Carol there. She already ~~was~~ edging west on her own, and when the two of us turned together, away from editorial careers and ahead to independence, we stepped a fourth of the continent farther than any of my family had done. <sup>Puget Sound's</sup> Salt water begins <sup>six</sup> ~~five~~ hundred yards from ~~shore~~ our valley-held house <sup>close by</sup> ~~outside~~ Seattle.

And so with Swan, <sup>A judge of Boston</sup> When the reverend wrote those opining words, ~~James G.~~ Swan already had been on the Pacific shore for twenty-three months, and was about to head onward to Shoalwater Bay. ~~A dozen~~ and ultimately, the Strait and Cape Flattery. Finding the place to invest his life meant, as it has to me, finding a west. (Roulette of geography, of course, that the American frontier stretched from the Atlantic toward the Pacific instead of the other way around. Erase Santa Maria and Mayflower, ink in Chinese junks anchoring at San Francisco Bay and Puget Sound four hundred years ago, re-read our history with its basis in Confucianism, its ~~legend~~ exploit of transcontinental railroads laid across the eastern wilderness by coolie labor from London and Paris, its West Coast mandarins <sup>the real item</sup> ~~deal mandarins~~ aloofly setting cultural style for the country.)



mod  
What Swan and his forty-year wordstream will have told me by the end of this winter, I can't yet know, but already I have the sense from his sentences and mine that there are, and always have been, many wests, personal as well as geographical. (Even what I have been calling the Pacific Northwest is multiple. A basic division begins at the Columbia<sup>River;</sup> south of it, in Oregon, they have been<sup>the</sup> sounder citizens, we in Washington the sharper strivers. ~~Tomorrow~~

Transport fifty from each state as a colony on Mars and by nightfall the Oregonians will put up a church and a city hall, the Washingtonians will establish a bank and a union.) Swan on the Strait has been living in two distinct ones, Neah Bay and Port Townsend (and sampled two others earlier, San Francisco and Shoalwater Bay) and neither of them is the same as my own wests, Montana of a quarter-century ago and Puget Sound of today. Yet Swan's wests<sup>come</sup> ~~are~~ recognizable to me, are places which still have clear overtones of my own places, <sup>stand</sup> ~~are~~ alike in being distinctly ~~unlike~~ unlike the rest of the national geography. Perhaps that is what the many wests are, common in their ~~stubborn~~ stubborn separatenesses--each west a kind of cabin, insistent that is no other sort of dwelling whatsoever.



forty-five,  
Days forty-six, forty-seven

Swan has come down with railroad fever.

How strong and delusory<sup>a</sup> frontier ailment, this notion that wherever  
you Xed in your town on the blankness of the west, a locomotive soon  
would ~~snore~~<sup>clang</sup> up to it with iron carloads of money, I admit for Swan  
and Port Townsend that they had a germ of reason for their railroad  
hopes: the attractive harbor sited closer to the Pacific and its  
trade routes than any other of the contending anchorages of Puget  
Sound. And a single germ can bring on delirium. Swan's breaks forth  
in letters to Thomas H. Canfield, an executive of the Northern Pacific  
Railroad:

